

A PNEUMATOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE: THE HOLY
SPIRIT AND THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MYSTERY OF GOD

IN AUGUSTINE AND BARTH

By

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TO HOLLY

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations for Augustine's works are those used in *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald, OSA, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

bapt. – *De baptismo*

civ. Dei. – *De civitate Dei*

conf. - *Confessiones*

doc. Chr. – *De doctrina Christiana*

en. Ps. – *Enarrationes in Psalmos*

ep. (epp.) – *Epistulae*

ep. Jo. – *In epistulam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus*

retr. - *Retractationes*

s. – *Sermones*

sol. – *Soliloquia*

Trin. – *De Trinitate*

vera rel. – *De vera religione*

But you were more inward than my most inward part.
-Augustine

As if pneumatology were anthropology!
-Karl Barth

The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently.
-Michel Foucault

Among the phenomena of repetition, resurgence, revival, or haunting, it is not the identical but the different that invariably counts the most.
-Jean-Luc Nancy¹

¹ Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. and ed. Henry Chadwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3.6.11. Karl Barth, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript on Schleiermacher," in *The Theology of Schleiermacher: Lectures at Göttingen, Winter Semester of 1923/24*, ed. Dietrich Ritschl, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 279. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 2: The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 9. Jean-Luc Nancy, "Opening," in *Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity*, trans. Bettina Bergo, Gabriel Malenfant, and Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1.

CHAPTER I

AUGUSTINE, BARTH AND THE PROBLEM OF *GEISTESVERGESSENHEIT* IN CONTEMPORARY TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

In the last third of the twentieth century, something like a consensus that the heart of Western theology had become fundamentally mendacious emerged in Christian thought: its doctrine of God lay at the heart of everything that was wrong with modernity. In keeping with an already venerable tradition, the accompanying jeremiad focused upon the complicity of Latin Christianity with varying forms of Platonism that locked the gospel's God away from the world in a frozen and inaccessible eternity. Bettering the atavism of those who attribute modernity's ills to the lonely figure of Descartes, these theologians, almost to a person, instead looked to Augustine, whose thought undeniably helped form Latin Christianity, as the prime culprit in the gospel's slow decline into irrelevancy. Only in a recovery of something more pristine and more pure, in a doctrine of the Trinity unsullied by the metaphysical hubris of Platonism's speculation, could the locus of identity for Christianity and its God be recovered. Every form of demon and unclean thing, loosed by the mind of a saint whose grasp of Christian revelation proved to be tenuous, would be swept away with a fresh vision of the transforming reality of God according to the gospel.

This (admittedly overheated) rhetoric characterized the theological discourse of what we now call the "trinitarian revival," as it has come to be known. The purpose of this dissertation is to interrogate that discourse, particular its perennial theme of the forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit (*Geistesvergessenheit*), a trope virtually universal among

those who worked in trinitarian theology in the late 20th century: the absent center of Latin Christianity proved to be the unthought and underappreciated doctrine of the third person, whose spectral absence rendered the doctrine of God an arid and lightless affair. This is a trope I wish to call into question in this dissertation. To accomplish this, I will examine two figures, Augustine and Karl Barth, who stand at opposite ends of that trinitarian tradition. One is the alleged originator of *Geistesvergessenheit*; and one is supposed to have provided a generation of theology with the tools to overcome that forgetfulness with a revitalized trinitarian theology, but who for all that also transmitted a stubborn Augustinianism in his thought that left much still to be overcome. Against this, I will argue that a way forward in understanding the integrity and significance of pneumatology can only occur in the context of a fresh rereading of the trinitarian thought of both Augustine and Barth.

Theological Realism and Idealism: Some Patterns of Critique

The trinitarian revival can in large part be characterized by two criteria:¹ first, it is that set of texts and thinkers who follow the lead of Barth's positioning of trinitarian

¹ Representative texts include Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society*, trans. Paul Burns (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988); Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1991), and *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988); Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), and *Systematic Theology I: The Triune God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992); Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), and *God's Being is in Becoming: the Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth: A Paraphrase*, trans. John Webster (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001); Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1984); Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991); Thomas F.

theology at the very inception of the *Church Dogmatics*, understanding it as the grammar of Christian theology itself, and who similarly follow Rahner's attempt to restore the doctrine to the center of Christian practice and theology, as advocated in his programmatic *The Trinity*.² Second, it is generally organized around what I will call a "standard narrative" that traces the decline of trinitarian theology in the Augustinian tradition, integral to which is a consistent attribution to Augustine's thought of a neglect, forgetfulness, or downplaying of the role of the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation. It is the burden of this chapter to show how criticisms of the theological adequacy of the Augustinian model for conceptualizing the trinitarian relations, especially in relationship to the so-called psychological analogy, are intrinsically linked to claims that that tradition has failed to articulate a sound pneumatology.

Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1996), and *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1988); John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985). In addition, consistently cited documents are the report by the British Council of Church's Study Commission: *The Forgotten Trinity: The Report of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* (London: British Council of Churches, 1989), and the WCC document, edited by Lukas Vischer, *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, Faith and Order Paper 103 (London: SPCK, 1981).

² This is to limit the scope of this dissertation to a focus upon those texts that take Barth and Rahner to have set some kind of agenda or opened up certain theological possibilities for 20th century trinitarian thought; this means that the neglect of a very diverse set of English and American works on the Trinity in secondary discussions of trinitarian doctrine must unfortunately continue in this study. I have in mind especially David Brown, Cyril Richardson, Leonard Hodgson, James Mackey, and Claude Welch. I also have not dealt with process treatments of the Trinity, such as those of Norman Pittenger, John J. O'Donnell, Joseph Bracken, SJ, and Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki. The focus upon Barth and Rahner as originators is consonant with received views on contemporary interest in trinitarian theology; for example, cf. John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Ted Peters, *GOD as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993); Colin E. Gunton, "The God of Jesus Christ," in *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 19, who also includes Lossky; Allan Coppedge, *The God Who is Triune: Revisioning the Christian Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 14; Neil Ormerod, *The Trinity: Retrieving the Western Tradition* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2005), 23; *The Forgotten Trinity*, 5 (also naming Lossky); Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2005), 36; Kilian McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God: The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 1; Bruce D. Marshall, "Trinity," in *The Blackwell Companion to Modern Theology*, ed. Gareth Jones (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 186; Fred Sanders, *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 53 (cf. 49n6, noting that Lossky, Florovsky, Zizioulas, and Staniloae deserve mention as well).

I shall discuss three influential thinkers in this first section: Colin Gunton, Robert Jenson and Jürgen Moltmann. Each of these theologians represents important lines of argument concerning the psychological analogy in Augustinian theology and its impact on the viability of his pneumatology. This section is intended to analyze these theologians with a view to establishing general patterns of critique within the narrative of Augustinian decline; furthermore, I will be developing a classification of the positions offered in place of the psychological analogy, which will illuminate my consideration of Augustinian and Barthian pneumatology in following chapters. Specifically, I will be examining the place of ontological assumptions in contemporary trinitarian theology, and the impact these assumptions have on the reading of Augustine in question. Finally, I will be isolating the role of the “Régnon paradigm” in these readings of Augustine: their indebtedness to an increasingly notorious 19th century classification of trinitarian models (the opposition of the Eastern/Cappadocian focus upon the divine triplicity against the Western/Augustinian emphasis upon the divine unity), which I will discuss in more detail in the second section of the chapter.

Colin Gunton: Augustine and the fate of the West

In a well-known essay, valuable for how representative it is of modern trinitarianism,³ Gunton finds Augustine’s thought to be a major factor in the decline of trinitarian theology in the West, in fact to be responsible for modern Western atheism.⁴

³ Colin Gunton, “The History. Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 31-57. In my discussion, I will use terms such as the “trinitarian revival” or “trinitarian renaissance,” “modern trinitarian theology,” “contemporary trinitarianism,” and the like synonymously, understanding by them all more or less the same group of figures identified in n1 above.

⁴ This is a major theme that runs throughout Gunton’s authorship, most notably in his *The One, the Three, and the Many*, where he contextualizes modernity’s Cartesian “disengagement” from world and body and resultant atheism in terms of the Western divorce of the doctrine of creation from the economy of

Gunton's indictment focuses on Augustine's purported suspicion of the material world, a Platonist hangover leading to his reluctance "to give due weight to the full materiality of the incarnation."⁵ Connected to this is a concentration that emphasizes the one substance of the divinity over the hypostatic identities of the three persons, with a corresponding tendency toward modalism.⁶ The import of these charges is that it prevents Augustine from following the "ontological revolution" of Cappadocian theology in properly understanding the divine being to be constituted by the communion of the persons, a communion known from their concrete relationships in the economy of salvation.

The reason, according to Gunton, for Augustine's misunderstanding of the Cappadocian trinitarian revolution is the thrall Neoplatonism continues to hold over his thought, the result being that the Platonic triads of the "threefold mind" become determinative of his trinitarian conceptualization.⁷ As such, Gunton reads the later books of Augustine's *Trin.* as a "hopeless quest" for analogies in experience, especially mental experience, for the basically *logical* puzzle of God's threefoldness, rather than explicating that threefoldness from the historical economy of salvation.⁸ This quest, centering in the triad of memory, understanding and will, then functions as a kind of Procrustean bed into which Augustine forces his doctrine of the Spirit. Absent another (economic) method of distinguishing the Son and Spirit, Augustine is driven to the

salvation, which in turn is grounded in Augustine's failure to properly articulate the mediating roles of Son and Spirit in creation; a significant source here is Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Taylor is a major inspiration for the contemporary psychologizing reading of Augustine's trinitarian theology as an early anticipation of Descartes, thus uniting two of the most common scapegoats for the modern decadence of Western thought.

⁵ "Augustine, the Trinity," 34. Gunton does not clarify just what would constitute "due weight."

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-3. Gunton's source for this invocation of the Régnon paradigm is the translator's preface to his edition of *Trin.* – an interesting insight into how casually authoritative it tends to be in contemporary trinitarianism. As the emphasis on an "ontological revolution" in the Cappadocians shows, the influence of John Zizioulas, who makes much of the Cappadocian-Augustine opposition, is highly influential for Gunton. See *Being as Communion*, e.g. 27-65.

⁷ "Augustine, the Trinity," 43.

⁸ Gunton, "Trinitarian Theology Today," in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 3.

distinction between understanding and will, and the result is that Augustine's controlling paradigm is driven by the "inner structure of the human mind" rather than the "'outer' economy of grace."⁹ Pneumatology becomes a way of completing the speculative equation, rather than a reflection on the historical work of the Holy Spirit. Gunton's contention in this is that, by assuming a metaphysically determined conception of the Son and Spirit's inner trinitarian roles, Augustine is forced to characterize the hypostatic uniqueness of the Spirit in non-biblical terms like "gift" and "love," the latter proving particularly insidious insofar as it further supports the monist conception of the inner divinity (since all three persons together are love, as Augustine says) and fails to yield a properly interpersonal understanding of the Spirit's work in uniting the community.¹⁰

All this is a common enough reading of *Trin.* in the current trinitarian literature. The content of the accusations will be discussed in some detail over the course of the next two chapters; but for the moment, it is essential to note how closely the psychological analogy and Augustine's problems with the Trinity are related by Gunton. For Gunton, as for many 20th century readers, Augustine's theology is almost entirely determined by its metaphysical underpinnings. Gunton's diagnosis is rather undifferentiated here – there is no discussion of what specific philosophical assumptions Augustine is making, other than the very general sense of a dualistic ontology and a utilization of "Platonic" mental triads – but it is clear that for Gunton, Augustine has failed to understand the "theological revolution" of Cappadocian theology (or in fact, his own Western predecessors, such as Tertullian) in failing to free himself from Neoplatonism. Further, it is his choice of the Neoplatonic mental triads, rather than the economy of salvation, as a source to

⁹ "Augustine, the Trinity," 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49-51.

understand the trinitarian relationships that controls Augustine's pneumatological fumbblings. Depriving himself of the witness of Scripture, Augustine is cast back on apparently more autochthonous philosophical categories to find analogies for the logical puzzle of God's triunity.

There is an important but relatively unexamined operative assumption in Gunton's argument, which bears upon important issues for this study. One of his two closing "desiderata" for a doctrine of the Trinity (the first being a proper conceptual distinction between the Son and the Spirit) is an "engagement with ontology."¹¹ This is a characteristically Guntonian theme, or rather, a characteristically Zizioulan theme that Gunton has appropriated programmatically, in keeping with the emphasis of both on the "ontological revolution" of Cappadocian trinitarian theology. The problem with locating the unity of the Godhead in an underlying substance apart from the hypostatic distinctions is that it leads to an unknowability of God such that "there can be no theological ontology at all."¹² For Gunton, the great yield of trinitarian theology is that God's knowability as Trinity underwrites a relational ontology, grounded in the communion of God, which articulates a relational understanding of church and creation. The problem with the psychological analogy is not just the scriptural or conceptual defensibility of its analogical status vis-à-vis the trinitarian reality, but rather that it is an analogy yielding undesirable (individualistic and intellectualist) implications. That is, trinitarian theology for Gunton is a matter of articulating an account of God's being that authorizes a social ontology in analogical correspondence to that divine being, in particular a theology of creation characterized by the relational priority of particulars, and

¹¹ Ibid., 52-3.

¹² Ibid., 31.

an ecclesiology grounded in the communion of persons.¹³ As such, his reading of Augustine assumes the latter to be engaged in a similar ontological enterprise, namely, articulating a general (although “intellectualist”) ontology on the basis of an analogical relationship between the trinitarian relations and created reality.

Robert Jenson: time and triune identities

For Jenson, the doctrine of the Trinity is the key battlefield in a kind of world-historical culture war: there is Hellenism, the theology of “Olympian-Parmenidean religion,” and there is the gospel, and the pathos of Western theology is its enfeebled corruption by the former.¹⁴ Augustine is, for Jenson, the representative and originator of this enfeeblement, and the problem is located precisely in the articulation of the Spirit within the terms of the psychological analogy. From Jenson’s early works on Barth¹⁵ to his two volume *Systematic Theology*, this opposition, simplistic as it is, has generated a remarkably fecund theology characterized by the refusal to speak of God except from God’s trinitarian self-identity to Godself in revelation.

¹³ For the former, see esp. *The Triune Creator* and *The One, the Three, and the Many*; for the latter, cf. “The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community,” in *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, ed. Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1989), 48-80. Ironically, Miroslav Volf finds Gunton’s proposals in *The One, the Three, and the Many* “excessively abstract,” and attributes this abstraction to Gunton’s inattention “to the concrete Trinitarian narrative of the historical self-donation of God.” Volf, “‘The Trinity is Our Social Program’: The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Shape of Social Engagement,” *Modern Theology* 14, no. 3 (July 1998), 421n40.

¹⁴ Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology* I, 11. The language of “enfeeblement” is Jenson’s, from *The Triune Identity*, 161. A representative comment: “Western reception of trinitarian reflection coincided with the collapse of paganism. Thus its *function*, to identify the gospel’s God over against other claimants, was not enforced by daily need,” 115.

¹⁵ Viz., *Alpha and Omega: A Study in the Theology of Karl Barth* (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1963), a revision of his doctoral dissertation on Barth’s doctrine of election; *God after God: The God of the Past and the God of the Future, Seen in the Work of Karl Barth* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1969). The latter is particularly important as a kind of programmatic study clearly anticipating positions advanced in *The Triune Identity* and *Systematic Theology*.

Jenson rigorously identifies that economic self-revelation *with* God's being in becoming *in* the economy of salvation, in order to reject any notion of an eternity of God's being in Godself apart from that revelation. In so doing, he intends to oppose the very heart of Hellenism's abstraction from revelation in a timeless eternity, which is precisely the abstraction wherein Jenson locates Augustine's great failure to appreciate the Nicene-Cappadocian breakthrough. Whereas for Gunton the Cappadocian revolution is located in an ontology of communion, for Jenson there is a temporal or historical ontology operative in the Nicene reception of biblical faith.¹⁶ In combining a reading of the Eastern privilege of personalism over against Western essentialism, with his own radicalizing of the Barthian schematic of the divine historicity,¹⁷ Jenson argues that the trinitarian relations are themselves temporal. The mutual relations of the hypostases are in fact temporal structures of evangelical history,¹⁸ the three hypostases or identities corresponding to the "three arrows of time." The Cappadocians take an (Origenistic) vertical axis of divine self-mediation with respect to the world and simply tip it on its side: "It is by the temporal dynamic between Jesus and his Father and our Destiny, that

¹⁶ There is, however, something of a shift in his thought, as he notes in *Systematic Theology* I, 117n7; in *The Triune Identity* and his entry "The Triune God" in *Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1: 83-191, Jenson argues that God is personal insofar as the person of God is the person Jesus, "the object as which God knows himself," (170) . In *Systematic Theology*, however, he reads the Cappadocian *tropos hyparxeos* as "plainly" indicating persons as relational and dialogical agents: "a person is one with whom other persons – the circularity is constitutive – can *converse*, whom they can *address*," 117, emphasis original. It is perhaps not accidental that Zizioulas's *Being as Communion* was published in the time between the articulations of these two positions.

¹⁷ Important here is Jenson's move concerning the relationship of the divine identity and the events of the evangelical history: "It is the metaphysically fundamental fact of Israel's and the church's faith that its God is freely but, just so, truly self-identified *by*, and so *with*, contingent created temporal events," *Systematic Theology* I, 47-8, emphasis mine. The step from identification *by* temporal events, to identification *with* those events, is a significant step toward Jenson's ontological outworking of the temporal triune relations.

¹⁸ *The Triune Identity*, 106.

the three are *God*.”¹⁹ Eternity, on Jenson’s interpretation, is faithful fulfillment of narratively articulated self-identity, the bracket or embrace of fulfillment around time.²⁰

Over against this temporal ontology, which trinitarian theology explicates and grounds, the West for Jenson fell to the Hellenistic temptation by locating God in a timeless eternity, and characterizing God negatively; God’s self-revelation is “left behind”²¹ for the positing of an ineffable, self-enclosed, static divinity in itself. On the one hand, it is Augustine’s Neoplatonism that causes him to run the Nicene faith through the mill of a conception of eternity that definitively divided God in Godself from God in the history of salvation;²² on the other hand, that same philosophical determinism destroyed the Nicene-Cappadocian idea of the triune identities, such that the trinitarian persons in their “mutual structure” become flattened into a – substantialist – “identical possession...of an abstractly simple divine essence.”²³ Thus, given this dichotomy of eternity and time, abstracted from the temporal structures of revelation, Augustine has no recourse but to cast about for analogies to understand the logical puzzle of the Trinity.²⁴

The great disaster of Western theology is that:

it is *this* reality – which in itself should not be denied – of the soul that knows and wills God, that in Augustine and after is the image of the Trinity by which trinitarian language has meaning, and that the incarnation

¹⁹ Ibid., 107. Evidently under the influence of von Balthasar, in the *Systematic Theology* this historical reading of the triune relations becomes cast in dramatic terms; the set of dramatic metaphors requires a personalistic recasting of the hypostases, as noted above. For an examination of the dramatic shape of Jenson’s late theology, see James J. Buckley, “Intimacy: The Character of Robert Jenson’s Theology,” in *Trinity, Time, and Church: A Response to the Theology of Robert W. Jenson*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 10-22.

²⁰ *Systematic Theology*, I, 54. It is important to note that Jenson understands this as an ontology of anticipation, rather than persistence (66) – of possibility rather than actuality, one might say. Further on this, cf. 207-23, where “God’s eternity [as] temporal infinity” (218), via Nyssa, is used to interpret the Thomistic *esse*, act of being, according to the correspondence of the triune roles with the “poles of time,” the danger of “modalist puerilities” notwithstanding.

²¹ *The Triune Identity*, 26.

²² Ibid., 116.

²³ Ibid., 120.

²⁴ Ibid., 128.

or the coming of the Spirit to the congregation do *not* achieve this. It is in that God is triune, and in that temporal being is ontologically dependent on inner analogy to timeless being, and in that for the intrinsically self-conscious soul the grasp of this analogy is its own active reality, that we can by analogy to the soul meaningfully say ‘Father, Son, and Spirit’ about God.²⁵

The relationship, hence, between the soul and God is for Jenson’s Augustine the true locus of knowledge of God, for this analogical correspondence of rationality and self-consciousness is the only ontological link in the Platonic eternity-time disjunction. But this means that the psychological analogy takes precedence over the structures of the evangelical narrative, such that the latter, the Eastern premise in understanding the Trinity, falls prey to the ineffability of the eternal God. And this means the separation of the immanent (eternal) and economic (historical) Trinities. In fact, the symptom of this separation is “Augustine’s hopeless problem with the Spirit”²⁶ – like Gunton, Jenson sees Augustine’s discussion of the Spirit as “gift” as irreparably misguided, in this case because Augustine’s requirement that the economic missions correspond to eternal processions poses an insuperable problem for that “identity.” How can the Spirit be eternally gift when she is only temporally given?

Two points are important before we turn to Moltmann. First, Jenson concedes, however grudgingly, that Augustine is genuinely on to something with his reflections on the self-conscious mind, for the latter inscribes a problematic into Western thought that forms the legacy of modern philosophy.²⁷ Jenson’s own constructive proposal regarding

²⁵ Ibid., 129.

²⁶ Ibid., 153 n97.

²⁷ Jenson also admits, following Schindler contra Schmaus, that Augustine is not attempting a “psychological Trinity-doctrine,” but seeking through the analogies to “give meaning to our language about the Trinity,” *ibid.*, 154 n109. Trinitarian language, thus, is exerting a certain ontological pressure and making exigent a reformulation of the ontology of the self. Michael Schmaus, *Die Psychologische Trinitätslehre des heiligen Augustinus* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967); Alfred Schindler, *Wort und Analogie in Augustins Trinitätslehre* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1965).

the Trinity, in fact, appropriates the “Augustinian-Hegelian discovery of God’s personhood” in terms of a communally-mediated self-consciousness of personal infinity as Subject, that Subject’s own Object, and the self-transcendence of the two as Spirit.²⁸ Second, Jenson returns to the problem of the Spirit as “gift” in his chapter on pneumatology in *Systematic Theology*. “Disallowing” Augustine’s question as to how the Spirit can be a gift without an eternally created term to receive it,²⁹ he notes the later Western debate on the Spirit’s indwelling as formulated by Lombard – in contemporary terms, the problem of uncreated and created grace. True to the guiding insight of his historicized Barthian emphasis upon the self-identity of God to God’s triune identity in the economy of salvation, Jenson argues that the gift of the Spirit can be nothing less than the Spirit herself: “If the Spirit is truly a personal being, he finally *has* only himself to give.”³⁰ Despite conceding that the Spirit cannot be a “person” in the sense that the Father and the Son are,³¹ on Jenson’s view the Spirit’s personhood demands a certain conception of the Spirit’s gift. There is a claim being made about divine agency here, which is important for the way in which Jenson understands Barth, for he reads the latter as failing to account for the Spirit’s hypostatic identity by assigning the Spirit’s agency to

²⁸ *The Triune Identity*, 144. Jenson is perhaps the most explicitly Hegelian of contemporary trinitarians; in addition to his explicit avowals of Hegel, one notes two characteristically Hegelian moves: first, his inscription of trinitarian doctrine into the agonistic conflict with paganism in history, the latter a kind of dialectical moment in Christianity’s own unfolding of its trinitarian ontology; second, his own performance of sublation of the Western concept of being – cf. his comment in *Systematic Theology I*, 159, “What has occurred in these last paragraphs is the final overcoming within the doctrine of Trinity [*sic*] of pagan antiquity’s interpretation of being as persistence.” I will discuss Hegel in the final chapter. For a (Milbankian) reading of Jenson’s reliance on Hegelian dialectic in his articulation of the triune relations, see Brian K. Sholl, “On Robert Jenson’s Trinitarian Thought,” *Modern Theology* 18, no. 1 (Jan. 2002), 27-36.

²⁹ *Systematic Theology*, 148.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 149; cf. 160 on the “vindication” of Lombard.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 160: the Spirit’s “I” is in the Son as the Son is the *totus christus*. Hence for Jenson the community is the telos (and thereby, a necessary moment) of God’s self-positing.

the *Son* – a continuation of the basic Augustinian error of occluding the trinitarian identities.³²

Jürgen Moltmann: political monotheism and social ontology

We have already seen in Gunton and Jenson an appropriation of the Régnon paradigm that attributes the reputed *Geistesvergessenheit* of the West to the Augustinian focus upon the one divine substance over the differentiation of the three hypostases. In the theology of Moltmann, this narrative receives perhaps its most sustained and radicalized presentation. In the hyperbolic rhetoric of Christos Yannaras, in Moltmann “perhaps for the first time in Western theological bibliography,” we see the exposé of the grounds of the schism that produced “two different directions in civilisation – that is to say, two incompatible *ontologies*...the cultural and especially the political consequences of the erroneous trinitology that prevailed in Western theology in the form of monarchianism.”³³ Yannaras adverts, naturally, to Moltmann’s well-known critique of “political monotheism,” which grounds its hierarchical political absolutism in “the figure of the omnipotent, universal monarch, who is reflected in earthly rulers.”³⁴ This

³² I will return to this problem complex in chs. 4 and 5.

³³ Christos Yannaras, “Consequences of an Erroneous Trinitology in the Modern World,” in *La Signification et L’actualité du IIe Concile Œcuménique pour le Monde Chrétien D’Aujourd’hui* (Genève: Éditions du Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarcat Œcuménique, 1982), 497, emphasis original. Yannaras betters even Moltmann in calling the adherence of Western theology to monarchianism “a womb for every form of totalitarianism in History,” 498. The “two ontologies” in question are generally dependent upon Régnon: an Eastern, communion ontology; and a Western ontology of the One.

³⁴ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 197, derivative of Erik Peterson’s “Monotheismus als politisches Problem,” in *Theologische Traktate* (Munich: Kösel-Verlag, 1951), 48-147. For a different reading of Peterson, with special attention to Eric Voegelin’s reception, see D. Vincent Twomey SVD, “The Political Implications of Faith in a Triune God: Erik Peterson Revisited,” in *The Mystery of the Holy Trinity in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Fourth Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 1999*, ed. D. Vincent Twomey SVD and Lewis Ayres (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2007), 118-30. Contra Moltmann, Twomey reads Peterson (and Voegelin) as arguing that Nicaea *broke* the analogy between the heavenly and earthly monarchy altogether. Strangely, Twomey seems unaware of Moltmann’s well-known use of Peterson, stating that “Peterson’s thesis...has been effectively ignored by modern theologians” (129).

monarchianism in turn is grounded in the psychological analogy of Augustine, which in prevailing over the Cappadocian social-familial model legitimated a history of imagining God as the one divine substance and subject ruling in remote transcendence.³⁵

It is evident that we see in Moltmann a similar application of trinitarian theology to that which surfaced in Gunton – the deployment of the doctrine in terms of an analogical structure that authorizes a political ontology, in this case, by repristinating a supposed Cappadocian social trinitarianism, a perichoretic concord of socialism and personalism in a “truly ‘humane’ society.”³⁶ But if, as I am suggesting, Gunton and Jenson offer two different forms of such a “trinitarian ontology,” one grounding a social imaginary, and one thematized historically, Moltmann represents something of a mixed case. This perhaps reflects the evolving and eclectic nature of his thought; for the early christological historicizing of the trinitarian relations that forms the core of *The Crucified God* develops into the “open Trinity” of *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, which in turn evolves into the stronger panentheist resonances of the vitalism of *God in Creation* and *The Spirit of Life*.³⁷ The polemical core of this conceptual malleability, however, resides in the critique of the Western monism of the divine substance in favor of an Eastern trinitarian sociality,³⁸ and it is to the former that Moltmann attributes the eclipse of the

³⁵ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 198-99.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 200.

³⁷ *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001).

³⁸ Moltmann has noted his debt to contemporary Orthodox theology for the development of his social trinitarianism in the context of ecumenical discussions of the late 1970's; he acknowledges the influence of Dumitru Staniloae in *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992), 179, and *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 306-8. On Staniloae, see *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Vol 1: The Experience of God*, trans. and ed. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994), 245-78. Recently he has credited Geevarghese Mar Osthathios with the inspiration for a social doctrine of the Trinity; *A Broad Place: An*

Spirit in the West. Perhaps the most succinct account of this narrative is found in a discussion of the *imago Dei* in *God in Creation*.

Following from, Moltmann attributes the Western predilection for a monotheistic concept of God and an individualistic anthropology to the Augustinian privileging of the psychological analogy. Rejecting Nazianzus's model of the "primal human community" of Adam, Eve, and Seth, Augustine sets up a correspondence of the human soul to the "single Being of the triune God, not to the threefold nature of God's inner essence."³⁹ It is this priority of the single divine essence, critiqued at the inception of *The Trinity and the Kingdom* under the twin rubrics of the "supreme substance" and "absolute subject,"⁴⁰ that resides at the heart of Moltmann's revolt against Latin theology, variously represented in Tertullian, Augustine and Aquinas, and exemplified in Barth.⁴¹ This prioritization of the essence and its legitimation in the psychological analogy is subject to twofold critique by Moltmann. First, because the one divine Being is reflected in a single human soul, God corresponds extrinsically to the soul as "an emblem of sovereignty," standing in a relationship of domination, just as the soul stands in a relationship of

Autobiography, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 292. See Osthathios, *Theology of a Classless Society* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), who argues for the equivalence of "one family and three persons" to the patristic formula "one substance and three persons," 149.

³⁹ *God in Creation*, 235.

⁴⁰ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 10-16.

⁴¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 16-20, 137-48. He likewise implicates Rahner. Moltmann's entire thesis of overcoming the Western monotheistic focus on divine unity in this book rests, naturally, on the Régnon opposition, although in my findings he never acknowledges Régnon; for one uncredited statement of the paradigm, see *ibid.*, 19. Moltmann is in fact in the habit of foregrounding the paradigm as a conscious methodological choice on his part: see, e.g., his foreword to Joy McDougall's *Pilgrimage of Love: Moltmann on the Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), xii: "While my opponents derived the 'threefold identity' of God from the unity of God, I went from the threeness of the persons to the 'threefold unity' of God." A similar narrative, deploying the Régnon opposition and criticizing Augustine and Barth as exemplars of Western substance/subject focus is Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:280-99; an earlier essay is "Die Subjectivität Gottes und die Trinitätslehre: Ein Beitrag zur Beziehung zwischen Karl Barth und der Philosophie Hegels," in *Grundfragen systematischer Theologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1980), 2: 96-111. The Augustine-Barth narrative also reappears in *The Forgotten Trinity*, 20.

domination to the body (and man to woman).⁴² Thus the psychological analogy is warrant for a body-denying hierarchicalism.⁴³ On the other hand, however, the soul corresponds to an “inwardly subjective differentiation into spirit – knowledge – love.”⁴⁴ The spiritual subject’s existence in self-awareness, self-knowledge and self-love is the image of the Trinity. But, according to Moltmann, this tripartite division itself has a monarchical structure, such that the one subject that is the origin of the two processions is in fact the archetype and reflection of the image: hence, the human being is in truth the image of God the Father.

There is an ambiguity here, insofar as Moltmann wants to attribute to Augustine an analogical correspondence between soul on the one hand, and both the divine substance *and* the Father on the other, reflecting his critique of absolute substance and absolute subject; and his alternative argues for a social image reflecting both the intra-trinitarian fellowship *and* the person of the Son, through whom the Trinity opens itself to creation.⁴⁵ Moltmann’s import is clear, even if his reasoning is not: as with Gunton, the psychological analogy bears responsibility for an anthropology characterized by intellectualism, individualism and, Moltmann adds, sexism and tyranny. If the soul is the locus of the image of God, and the soul is primarily characterized by consciousness and reason, then the dimensions of experience and love are devalued – and with them, the experience of the Spirit of life.⁴⁶

⁴² *God in Creation*, 236.

⁴³ A “theological decision in Western anthropology [that] has had far-reaching and tragic consequences,” *ibid.*, 239.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 237. For a similar account critiquing Augustinian theology’s focus on the experience of God as corresponding to experience of self rather than of others, cf. *Spirit of Life*, 220.

⁴⁵ *God in Creation*, 242.

⁴⁶ So the opening overture of *The Spirit of Life*, 17-38.

There is a second earlier “historical-ontological” line of critique that Moltmann offers against Augustine. Preeminently culpable for Western “essentialism” in Moltmann’s account is the Augustinian *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, and criticism of that maxim is frequent in his writings. But the consequences of Augustine’s monarchianism are not limited to anthropology and politics; they bear upon Western ideas of history itself. In the Western version of the Trinity, consisting as it does in the monarchy of the Father and the descending chain of revelation through the Son in the Spirit, “the Holy Spirit is once and for all put in third place in the Trinity, and subordinated to the Son.”⁴⁷ This has the effect of relativizing the Spirit’s work in Christ’s history, and thus of preventing the trinitarian inference from the economy of the salvation to the immanent Trinity: “[w]e always reach only the ‘God for us’ and discern nothing of ‘God in himself.’”⁴⁸ What seems to be operative in the argument is the assumption that the divine self-communication stands in a relationship to the economy in which the works of God are attributed to the persons arbitrarily, since it is only the one divine substance that acts *ad extra*; hence, the inference from economic works to immanent being is indirect and finally impassable. Over against the Western paradigm, then, in which the hypostatic identities are confused and indistinct by virtue of the priority given to the one divine subject as agent, Moltmann contrasts the “vertical eternity-time relation” with Joachim of Fiore’s theology of history, embodied in the “sequence of the times of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in salvation history.”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 293. The *filioque* is of course in view.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 292.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 295. The leveling of the hierarchical ladder of transcendence here – or, to put it differently, the shift from a spatial to a temporal metaphor – is reminiscent of Jenson’s move, as seen above. Once again, Moltmann shifts his position: whereas in *The Trinity and the Kingdom* Moltmann saw Joachim’s theology of history as combining Augustinian and Cappadocian eschatologies, in *The Spirit of Life* he more sharply contrasts the monarchical and the Joachimite historical concepts of the Trinity.

This Joachimist eschatology, whereby the kingdom of the Spirit is the anticipation of the eternal Sabbath,⁵⁰ enlarges upon and is the fruit of the dialectic of history first developed in *The Crucified God*. The dialectical switch from “God in history” to “history in God,” which makes of the event of the cross an eschatologically open history from which the Spirit proceeds,⁵¹ takes the form of a reversal of the Augustinian indivisibility of the *opera ad extra*. The *ad extra* event of the cross has a “retroactive effect on the Father and causes infinite pain”⁵² such that the (very much divided) *opera ad extra* correspond to the “*passiones trinitatis ad intra*.” In this manner, similar to the system proposed by Jenson, the hypostatic distinctions that preserve the true identity and personhood of Father, Son, and Spirit are elaborated historically, in the strict identity of economic mission and immanent procession, with the Spirit given a distinct, eschatological role.⁵³ But it means an explicit departure from the Augustinian rubric of

⁵⁰ *Trinity and Kingdom*, 220. As Twomey notes, Voegelin had a rather different interpretation of Joachim: modernity for Voegelin is rooted in the Joachimite speculations, duly secularized, in a “‘re-divinisation’ of the State leading to the cosmological orders marked by modern ideologies” (“Erik Peterson Revisited,” 129). Of course, Voegelin’s narrative can be seen as perfectly congruous with Moltmann’s in its eventuation, insofar as in Joachim there would be the reestablishment of a theologically legitimated political ontology – but this would be dependent upon understanding a link between theological ontology and ideology, which Moltmann does not see. The kingdom of the Spirit, for Joachim and Moltmann, is the kingdom where God’s children becomes God’s friends; but in the final chapter, I will discuss Derrida’s deconstruction of friendship as a concept that underwrites such ideological politics.

⁵¹ *The Crucified God*, 245-6, 255. It is to be noted that this an explicit historical ontologizing of the trinitarian relations: Christ’s cross is the “universal death of God today,” the “origin of creation and the embodiment of the eschatology of being,” 217.

⁵² *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 160.

⁵³ Yet once more, there is a tension in the way Moltmann conceives of the Spirit as proceeding from the event of the cross, which is an intra-divine event between Father and Son, and his position on the *filioque*. The former seems to be formulated with a view to articulating the Western position on procession of the Spirit from Father and Son, with an appropriate transposition to Moltmann’s eschatological-historical terms. But alongside this pattern, still employed in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, there is a critique of the *filioque*, following the Orthodox, that in postulating the Spirit’s role as bond of love in both distinguishing and uniting Father and Son “really has no organic connection with the doctrine of God the Father and the Son,” 169. Critiquing both Barth and Augustine, he argues that the *vinculum* doctrine “provides no justification for the Holy Spirit’s independent existence as Person in the Trinity,” 143; cf. 183ff. The adoption of the Joachimite historical eschatology seems designed, in part, to account for this tension insofar as the third kingdom, that of the Spirit, proceeds both from the event between Father and Son on the cross, and bears its own hypostatic independence and character. McDougall similarly notes Moltmann’s use of the Augustinian framework in *The Crucified God*; see *Pilgrimage of Love*, 48.

divine external indivisibility, which is closely correlated with the emphasis on the single divine subject/substance in that system.

Summary: Augustine in the trinitarian revival

I have briefly discussed the critique of Augustinian theology in Colin Gunton, Robert Jenson and Jürgen Moltmann with a view to grasping some of the major themes emergent in modern trinitarian readings of him. In Gunton, we saw a strong charge of “philosophical determinism” against Augustine: his manner of conceptualizing the procession and mission of the Spirit is almost entirely determined by his Neoplatonic predilections, including the very choice of an analogy based on the Platonic “mental triads.” For Robert Jenson, a similar choice on Augustine’s part for a Greek conception of God’s timeless eternity and simplicity means that the hypostatic individuality and identity of the Spirit is lost in the white noise of the abstract divinity; further, Augustine’s attempt to describe the Spirit’s personal self-communication as “gift” is deeply ambiguous on the basis of his essentialist presuppositions. Finally, Jürgen Moltmann’s polemic against Western monarchianism attributes to Augustine a focus on the single divine subjectivity which stands in a dominological correspondence to creation, promoting relations of tyranny and individualism in which the experience of the Spirit is occluded; further, the Augustinian focus on the unity of the trinitarian *opera ad extra* precluded a strong account of the Spirit’s unique work in the economy of salvation.

So much for a sketch of the Augustinian critique. Before proceeding, however, it is important to point out that a second thematic emerged in the above readings: common

to the figures treated was the assumption, following the work of Schmaus and du Roy,⁵⁴ that Augustine formulates a *psychologische Trinitätslehre*: a project of drawing upon Platonist intellectualism to formulate an analogy for the logical puzzle of the trinitarian divine life. Furthermore, each of Augustine's readers here assumed that that analogy had implications of a general ontological nature. In opposition to the individualist, dualist ontology connected to the psychological analogy, we found our thinkers to be engaged in the construction of alternate analogies corresponding to the purported Cappadocian trinitarian personalism. In Gunton, this analogical structure had marked practical/social overtones: trinitarian theology yields a relational ontology in whose image politics and ecclesiology can be rethought. For Jenson, on the other hand, it is a temporal-historical ontology that results: the "horizontalizing" of the trinitarian relations recasts conceptions of time and personhood as oriented to Jesus, his Transcendence, and their Destiny. Moltmann combined elements of both of these tendencies: there is his attempt to ground political and ecclesial understandings in his social trinitarian speculation, but there is also the explicit "eschatology of being" operative in his conception of the passion of Christ as the event of history in God, with its historical periodization corresponding to the trinitarian processions. The ontological move is explicit in these thinkers, but we must note that it is premised upon a kind of silent reserve of their trinitarian discourse: the function of analogy. Rarely is this identified – Gunton, Jenson and Moltmann leave unexamined just what *kind* of analogy Augustine allegedly deploys, or how the divine-created analogy functions in their competing trinitarian accounts. We can, however, distinguish two distinct tendencies on the latter point. At times, Gunton appears simply to

⁵⁴ Olivier du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi en la Trinité selon saint Augustin: Genèse de sa théologie trinitaire jusqu'en 391* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1966). Du Roy will be discussed in more detail in ch. 2.

posit the trinitarian analogate as a metaphorical inspiration; but elsewhere a much stronger ontological account of analogy seems to operative, as when he posits a Coleridgean “open transcendental” consisting of “a notion, in some way basic to the human thinking process, which empowers a continuing and in principle unfinished exploration of the universal marks of being.”⁵⁵ His account suggests a continuity of being between the divine and human, wherein divine relationality implies a relationality inherent to created existence itself. I will call this a *realist* account of analogy:⁵⁶ one that locates a social exemplar in the trinitarian God, who as God is the ground of being and thus the highest exemplar of human relationality.⁵⁷ On the other hand, Jenson’s concern with trinitarian ontology is oriented toward the historical realization of God’s self-revelation; the Trinity is an ontological principle that accounts for the kind of being that is narratively fulfilled and which overcomes Hellenistic conceptions of abstract, frozen eternity. The overriding concern in Jenson is offering a metaphysical explanation of how God’s trinitarian life and the world’s history can be contiguous such that the trinitarian

⁵⁵ *The One, the Three, and the Many*, 142.

⁵⁶ My categories of realism and idealism are derived from Barth’s use of them in “Fate and Idea in Theology,” in *The Way of Theology in Karl Barth: Essays and Comments*, ed. H. Martin Rumscheidt (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1986), 25-61. I will discuss this essay in ch. 4.

⁵⁷ This type of analogy is used widely in contemporary trinitarianism; the line is often blurry between the *realist* analogy just described and a purely pragmatic exercise in imaginative theological construction that takes the Trinity as a purely metaphorical resource. This is easily discernible in, e.g. Leonardo Boff’s *Trinity and Society*, who argues both for an ontological relationship of analogy between divine and human persons, and for the more exemplarist deployment of trinitarian relationality as a source of inspiration for utopian social programs; Catherine LaCugna’s *God for Us*, similarly to Gunton appropriating Zizioulas in service of constructing a relational ontology; Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), and ““The Trinity is Our Social Program,”” with special attention to the ecclesial implications to trinitarian relationality (including a helpful discussion of the limits of the trinitarian analogy in *After Our Likeness*, 198-200); and to a certain extent Elizabeth Johnson’s *She Who Is*, which is, however, much more guarded in apophatic reserve. For a recent application of a generally relational reading of trinitarian doctrine to the theology of religions, see S. Mark Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001); for an ecotheological use of Gregory of Nazianzus’s pneumatology in the service of a “trinitarian ecology” with environmentalist ends in view, see Sigurd Bergmann, *Creation Set Free: The Spirit as Liberator of Nature*, trans. Douglas Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005). In each of these cases there is an explicit appeal to a relational ontology, with correlative practices, based in trinitarian relationality.

relations, and in particular the life, death and resurrection of Christ are in fact determinative of God's being. This is an *idealist* account: inherently dialectical, the expression of the divine as a self-realizing concept of temporal/narrative being is central to filling out the Christian narrative of the passion.⁵⁸ Moltmann represents a mixed case: beginning with a clear example of a historical trinitarian ontology in *The Crucified God*, by *The Spirit of Life* his "social Trinity" is almost entirely an exemplarist ontology.⁵⁹ This shift from idealism to realism is instructive, for it points to certain resonances between two strikingly different accounts of trinitarian doctrine's significance. The project of the trinitarian revival appears to be not simply limited to the revisiting and repristination of patristic choices in the construction of trinitarian dogma; it is a far more ambitious attempt to conceive the meaning of being itself from a trinitarian point of view, and to postulate an analogical structure between divine and created being such that the latter bears the image of the Trinity – whether this is primarily expressed socially or historically. In Gunton's words, everything looks different in light of the Trinity.

⁵⁸ Wolfhart Pannenberg represents perhaps the clearest example alongside Jenson of such a historical ontology, as evidenced in his basic principle of the "ontological priority of the future." Most distinctively, Pannenberg problematizes the meaning of the unity of the triune God such that God's unity is itself eschatological; insofar as God's lordship is constitutive of God's deity, in handing over lordship to the Son and Spirit the Father hands over his lordship to the history of the economy of salvation. But this is in the context of the "world as the history of God and the [history] of the unity of the divine essence," *Systematic Theology*, 1:327. Pannenberg's appropriation (via Dilthey's hermeneutic of the human sciences – see *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976], 72-80, 160ff, 215ff) of the Schleiermacherian hermeneutical circle is the ground of an eschatological ontology of history itself – in which the unity of the triune God functions as the sense of the ending. A further example of an explicit temporal-historical ontology (verging close to process theism) is Ted Peter's *GOD as Trinity*; see also Eberhard Jüngel, *God as the Mystery of the World*.

⁵⁹ Jenson, too, is much more of a social trinitarian by the time of the *Systematic Theology*, as already noted. McDougall characterizes Moltmann's theological strategy as a "social trinitarian analogy of fellowship," *Pilgrimage of Love*, 10, grounding the rule of faith for right relationship in the divine archetype of a personal, relational ontology. McDougall stresses the "relational ontology of love" in Moltmann's later thought over the historical dialectical ontology of *The Crucified God*, with the role of the Spirit and his distancing of himself from Western *Geistesvergessenheit* as key in the shift; cf. *Pilgrimage of Love*, esp. 59-100. Alternatively, Anne Hunt would have us, with respect to Moltmann and especially Hans Urs von Balthasar, speak of an analogy of "paschal mystery;" see *The Trinity*, 47-54, and "Psychological Analogy and Paschal Mystery in Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 58 (1998), 197-218.

Rahner and the Pseudo-Régnon Paradigm: Historicizing the Revival

It is widely held – and the position of this dissertation – that the theologies of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner are the *sine qua non* factors of the trinitarian revival: it is only given Barth’s foregrounding of trinitarian theology in the first volume of the *Church Dogmatics*, and Rahner’s articulation of his *Grundaxiom*, that trinitarian theology was rescued from the oblivion of abstraction and disuse. So the narrative goes. But if Barth and Rahner’s trinitarianisms are the condition of possibility for the movement I am considering here, they are also its bane. Indeed, Barth and Rahner are – to the thinkers I have reviewed above, and their contemporaries – at once the first to rouse themselves from the dogmatic slumber of Western *Trinitätsvergessenheit*, and the apotheosis of the self-destructive heart of that tradition.

In chapters four and five, I will offer an extended reading of the trinitarian theology of Barth, and show how the pneumatological concerns operative therein were displaced in the later production of trinitarian thought that purported to follow his lead. Each of the theologians above is explicit concerning both their indebtedness to Barth, and their desire to go beyond him. Gunton, whose dissertation treated Barth and Hartshorne,⁶⁰ called *CD 1/1* “the most influential treatise on the Trinity this century;”⁶¹ as already noted, Jenson’s first two books were on Barth’s trinitarianism, and he self-consciously positions himself as radicalizing Barth’s work; and, as we have seen already, Barth is the foil for much of Moltmann’s work, from *Theology of Hope* to *Spirit in the World*. In

⁶⁰ *Becoming and Being: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). In this book, Gunton famously rebuked Barth for “not being trinitarian enough,” (218) a claim of nonpareil obtuseness: how trinitarian is trinitarian enough? Is trinitarianism the kind of thing that admits of quantitative measurability?

⁶¹ “The Question of God in the Modern World: Trinitarian Possibilities,” in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 19.

reply, I am concerned in this dissertation to show that the distance that separates Barth from these theologians and their contemporaries is the function of a kind of proximity with Augustine, and that, furthermore, the critiques that a theologian such as Jenson or Moltmann levels at Barth and Augustine in fact signify the trinitarian theologies of the latter at their most *successful*. By contrast, in this section I am focusing on the rhetorical antecedents to the trinitarian revival, having established some of the leading trends of that movement of thought. My intention here is to historicize the critique of Barth and Augustine found in contemporary trinitarians by showing how many of the predominant tropes of the “standard narrative” derive from a set of easily isolable sources. The most important of these is found in the short work on the Trinity by Karl Rahner.

Karl Rahner: The Augustinian analogy and the experience of salvation

A curious dynamic of the appropriation of Barth and Rahner among later trinitarians consists in the fact that, although both Barth and Rahner have significant critiques of the Augustinian tradition of the psychological analogy, these critiques were generally misunderstood, and although the form and rhetoric of their polemic against the psychological analogy were incorporated, the manner of that incorporation in fact tended to sit at odds with their constructive and critical purposes. A sort of free-floating polemic inherent to trinitarian theologizing, detached from its larger purposes and context, might very well be the only real legacy in fact resident in Barth and Rahner’s later followers.

The details of these discontinuities in Barth will concern us later; at present, a closer look at Rahner’s famed treatise *The Trinity* is in order. In Rahner, we meet the immediate vector of the Régnon paradigm, with all its well-worn talking points about the

East-West dichotomy upon which modern trinitarian theology seems to depend; but there is also a deeper ambiguity about the psychological analogy that warrants close scrutiny. It is worth remembering at the outset, however, that one searches in vain in Rahner for a complaint about Western-Augustinian *Geistesvergessenheit*, although it does remain the case that his arguments concerning the centrality of the incarnation and appropriation theory did set the stage for later complaints concerning Western pneumatology.

The broad lines of Rahner's lament over the fall of Western trinitarian theology are well known, although it is remarkable to note how quickly and uncritically the opening polemical fusillade of *The Trinity* was adopted by later readers, transforming *en route* into the standard account of Western trinitarian theology.⁶² The complaints about "mere monotheism" and the disjunction of trinitarian doctrine from the life of faith; the argument that the separation of the treatises *De deo uno* and *De deo trino* in Aquinas set the stage for the marginalizing of trinitarian doctrine; the preference for the "Eastern" doctrine that begin with the three persons, rather than the one divine substance; the charge that the one divine substance functioned as a quasi-fourth hypostasis in the West; the orientation of the Augustinian psychological analogy to speculation separated from salvation history; and, finally, the *Grundaxiom* of the identity of the immanent and economic Trinities⁶³ – all of these claims coalesced into the talking points of the

⁶² There is a deep irony here: Rahner regularly inveighed, particularly in his early years, against the "standard textbook account" of a particular doctrine (say, the incarnation, or grace), meaning of course the dogmatic manuals of the then-regnant neoscholastic theology. A strange fate, then, that the opening argument of *The Trinity* would become yet another standard textbook account, promulgated so uncritically as it has in modern trinitarianism.

⁶³ For all this, cf. Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 10-22. The real problem that drives Rahner's argument, however, viz. the relationship of the theology of the incarnation, the doctrine of appropriations, and the theory of proper missions, and further the subtending concern for a priority of uncreated grace – all this, being rather more subtle, has not gained nearly as much recognition. Originally *The Trinity* was published as "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," in *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss Heilsgeschichtlicher*

trinitarian revival, the narrative of decline that legitimized the very existence of such a “revival.”

Relative to Aquinas, Augustine figures rather peripherally in Rahner’s argument, simply providing a convenient *terminus a quo* for the history of the tendency Rahner diagnoses. The Thomist dichotomizing of the *uno-trino* theological treatises can, however, be traced to the Augustinian abstraction from salvation history in the psychological analogy,⁶⁴ which “begins with the one God, the one divine essence as a whole...as a result the treatise becomes quite philosophical and abstract and refers hardly at all salvation-history.”⁶⁵ The problem here is that, although the analogy has biblical validity and makes some effort toward defining “formal concepts” of trinitarian doctrine (e.g. procession, communication, relation, etc.), its starting point is the “human philosophical concept of knowledge and love.”⁶⁶ Furthermore, the analogy fails to capture the dynamic of the triune economy whereby “this intra-divine knowledge is seen as self-revealing, and this intra-divine love as self-communicating.” The point here, and it bears directly upon the function of the *Grundaxiom*, is that Rahner understands the Augustinian doctrine (at least as formulated in school theology) as premised upon abstract reflection upon the human spirit, and not the divine self-communication in the economy: the former concerns an *a priori* model projected upon the Trinity, whereas the other constructs the doctrine from the shape of human existence as revealed in the experience of salvation.

Dogmatik, ed. Johannes Feiner and Magnus Löhrer (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967), 2:317-97, itself an expansion from the 1960 essay “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘De Trinitate,’” *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1966), 77-102.

⁶⁴ Following Schmaus, Rahner generally refers to Augustinian “psychological theology,” or the “psychological doctrine of the Trinity,” *der «psychologischen» Trinitätslehre*.

⁶⁵ *The Trinity*, 17-8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

Although it may be reasonably doubted that Rahner makes this distinction as clearly as he thinks he does,⁶⁷ there is an extraordinarily important claim being made here. The psychological analogy as classically understood, he argues, forgets the economic Trinity insofar as it abstractly formulates a schematic for understanding the inner life of God on the basis of psychological data; the proposal he is offering, on the other hand, is a matter of understanding the divine self-communication as that occurs in the experience of salvation. The former is incapable of understanding the distinct manners of subsistence of the processions,⁶⁸ nor can it account for the modes of self-bestowal in grace according to which Word and Spirit are possessed as independent objects of knowledge and love, in their hypostatic particularity.⁶⁹ The yield of the rubric of the identity of the immanent and economy Trinity, on the other hand, is precisely to guarantee that God's self-communication is according to the two basic modalities of God's own self-relation – so that the self-communication will be *self-communication*. Self-communication implies an addressee, a personal recipient;⁷⁰ thus the divine revelation and self-giving that is the economic Trinity is an event that includes the elevation and participation of the human recipient, and it is as such that it possesses two basic modalities: truth and love.⁷¹ The difference, then, between the Augustinian *psychologische Trinitätslehre* as interpreted by the schools, and the form it takes in

⁶⁷ The “attempt to bring home to the intelligence of the faith an understanding of the threefold-distinct manner of subsisting of the one God by means of psychological categories and according to the model of the spiritual self-actuation of man differs considerably from the method used in the present essay,” *ibid.*, 115. A certain skepticism regarding this claim is warranted, among other things, by Rahner's claim on the following page that the articulation of the processions in terms of knowledge and love is warranted by the “metaphysics of spirit,” which knows only two basic activities of spirit – knowledge and love. It is not immediately clear in the text, at least, how this metaphysics differs from human spiritual self-actuation.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 117. Human knowledge and love, in other words, do not subsist as internal hypostatic differentiations constituted by their opposition of relations.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 34ff.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

Rahner, is one that speaks directly to its analogical status: on the one hand, it is a model of the divine relations, with greater or lesser explanatory power, extrapolated from an *a priori* account of human psychological processes, self-consciousness, or self-transcendence;⁷² on the other, it is an event of participation in the triune dynamic of God's own life, such that the doctrine of the Trinity is itself the "grammar" of that participation.⁷³

It is to be noted in all this that Rahner's concern for the connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and the life of faith – his manner of redressing the lament that opens the treatise – concerns the communication of grace⁷⁴ to the subject, and it is to safeguard this communication as divine self-communication that his axiom functions. But what Rahner does not do is articulate this communication ontologically; that is, he does not construct a social or temporal ontology that mediates analogically in order to legitimate and ground a relational praxis. This is not to say, of course, that Rahner does not have ontological concerns, which would be patently wrong, for his "metaphysics of knowledge" is an explicitly ontological account of human self-transcendence. Rather, it means that his concern with trinitarian doctrine does not take the form of the kind of "two story" analogical structure we have seen in Gunton or Moltmann – a construction of a relational account of trinitarian constitution that in turn is reflected, ramified, or reduced

⁷² This is precisely the accusation directed against Rahner by many of his critics; for one such sustained reading, see Paul Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 83-124 and passim. Unfortunately, however, Rahner's critique of just this method has not given Molnar or others pause in applying the same argument back at him – usually without evincing an awareness of that critique.

⁷³ In Rahner's words, the Trinity is a "salvific experience and an experience of grace," *The Trinity*, 39 (section title). Here is where the meaning must be located of his widely ignored account of the two processions in terms of *origin-future*, *history-transcendence*, *offer-acceptance*, and *knowledge-love*, 91-3. Anne Hunt, following a discussion of Rahner, ably connects the function of the psychological analogy to the "dynamics of grace," however going on to complement it with the communal dynamics of the social analogy; *The Trinity*, 173-81.

⁷⁴ As such it is a pneumatological concern, grace being a matter of the proper mission of the Spirit.

to a relational account of being itself, from which a political or ecclesial social ontology is warranted. It is this difference which marks a fundamental discontinuity between the trinitarianism of Rahner and that of many of his readers who appropriated his axiom. Furthermore, as the next chapter will show, his concern for the integrity of the trinitarian logic of the communion of grace actually places him in a profound *continuity* with Augustinian trinitarian doctrine; for all his polemic against the Western tradition, a polemic whose rhetoric formed the very poetics of the subsequent trinitarian revival, Rahner remains a deeply Augustinian trinitarian – perhaps even against his will.

The pseudo-Régnon paradigm: the revival as discourse

Heretofore the approach of this chapter, in keeping with the intent of the dissertation, has been more conceptual than historical; I am not attempting to give a genealogy of the development of trinitarian thinking in the 20th century, but rather am tracing heuristically the logic of a number of tendencies in the revival. Before drawing this section to a close, however, it is necessary to thematize further the rhetoric of the polemic Rahner mediated to a generation of trinitarian thinkers, for Rahner's account of Western trinitarianism is highly locatable, historically, in the transmission and reception of the Régnon "paradigm" in modern trinitarianism.

It is already evident that the basic Greek-Latin binary posited by Rahner – the priority of "beginning with" the three in the East and with the one in the West – recurs as something of a cliché in later proponents of the revival. Gunton, Jenson and Moltmann all make much of this claim, as do many other later readers of Rahner, such as LaCugna, Pannenberg and Boff. Throughout, I have labeled this the "Régnon paradigm," due to the

work of Michel Barnes, who in 1995 showed the source of this East-West opposition in the work of Theodore de Régnon at the end of the 19th century.⁷⁵ Since then, the paradigm has regularly been pointed out by Barnes' correspondence partner Lewis Ayres, and by Sarah Coakley, Matthew Levering and Bruce Marshall, among others.⁷⁶ The focus of this dissertation precludes any comparative attempt to judge the legitimacy of the *historical* claim regarding the priority of the "one" and the "three" in Augustine and the Cappadocians, and at any rate in the above sources it has been shown how historically inaccurate the distinction is. What is important for my purposes is to highlight the rhetorical function of this paradigm in its ubiquity amongst modern trinitarians.

One need not peruse the painstaking (and invaluable) work Barnes undergoes in "De Régnon Reconsidered," tracing the vicissitudes of the reception of Régnon's work in French scholarship, to note the way in which the de Régnon paradigm has set the rhetorical contours for contemporary trinitarianism. A quick survey, such as I have sketched in this chapter, shows the function of the "beginning point" of the one and the three surfacing repeatedly. That these words of Régnon are echoed almost verbatim, and

⁷⁵ Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *Theological Studies* 56 (1995), 237-50; "De Régnon Reconsidered," *Augustinian Studies* 26, no. 2 (1995), 51-79. The content of the "paradigm" is somewhat more complex, extending, as Barnes notes, to the texts and passages taken as definitive for Cappadocian theology, including especially Nyssa's *On the Trinity* and *On 'Not Three Gods'*, which take on the status of authority by anthologization. Barnes's work was anticipated (as he acknowledges) by a pair of important essays by André de Halleux in the 80's: "«Hypostase» et «personne» dans la formation du dogme trinitaire," and "Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères cappadociens?," dating from 1984 and 1986, respectively, collected in *Patrologie et Œcuménisme: Recueil D'études* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), pgs. 113-214, 215-268. As early as 1971, Edmund Hill was complaining about the superficiality of the paradigm: "I feel strongly that it is high time this distinction was seen for the crude generalisation it is, and dropped from all the literature. It is really most unscientific to apply to the fourth and fifth centuries a distinction between eastern and western theologies that is obvious enough in the middle ages and after." "Karl Rahner's 'Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise *Trin.* and St. Augustine,'" *Augustinian Studies* 2 (1971), 69.

⁷⁶ Most of whom follow Barnes. See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2004), 302-4; Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004) 24 n4; Sarah Coakley, "Re-thinking Gregory of Nyssa: Introduction – Gender, Trinitarian Analogies, and the Pedagogy of *The Song*," *Modern Theology* 18, no. 4 (Oct. 2002), 432-4 (the entire issue, edited by Coakley and devoted to Nyssa, is relevant); Bruce D. Marshall, "Trinity," 190.

usually without acknowledgment,⁷⁷ should be cause for some suspicion about the quality of the historical work being done by our trinitarian theologians:

La philosophie latine envisage d'abord la nature en elle-même et poursuit jusqu'au suppôt; la philosophie grecque envisage d'abord le suppôt et y pénètre ensuite pour trouver la nature. Le Latin considère la personnalité comme un mode de la nature, le Grec considère la nature comme le contenu de la personne....Aussi le Latin dit «trois personnes en Dieu»; le Grec dit: «un Dieu en trois personnes».⁷⁸

Furthermore, the Rahnerian lament over the disjunction of the unity and triunity of God in theology, and the loss of the Trinity in the life of faith, seems to be echoed from Régnon: “Sans doute, la distinction des théologiens, entre Dieu *ut Unus* et Dieu *ut Trinus*, est légitime et fondée en raison...Mais il faut éviter d'en abuser. Il semble qu'à notre époque, le dogme de l'Unité divine ait comme absorbé le dogme de la Trinité dont on ne parle que par mémoire.”⁷⁹

While Lossky is cited by Barnes as a vector for the de Régnon paradigm,⁸⁰ it is in Rahner's recapitulation of Régnon (without attribution) in the opening jeremiad of *The Trinity* that the rhetorical patterns are laid for the discourse of the trinitarian revival. Furthermore, Rahner's preference for “the Greeks,” and his claim for the alignment of

⁷⁷ As Barnes puts it, none of the authors that utilize the paradigm “shows any awareness that the paradigm needs to be demonstrated, or that it has a history,” “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology,” 238.

⁷⁸ Théodore de Régnon, *Études de Théologie Positive sur La Sainte Trinité* (Paris: Victor Retaux et Fils, 1892), 1:433-4. This is only the *locus classicus* of a formula that is repeated regularly throughout the fourth, fifth, and sixth *études*. E.g. 1:429, where Régnon explicitly contrasts the Latin and Greek theories in terms of being based (*fonde*) upon “l'unité de la substance divine” and “le dogme des trois hypostases divines,” respectively; also cf. 1:231-2, 262-3. What typically does not get repeated from Régnon, as Kristin Hennessy (see below) is at pains to point out, is Régnon's emphasis on the congruity of the two approaches: “Dans les deux cas, c'est la même foi, le même dogma; mais le mystère se présente sous deux formes différentes,” 1:433-4.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:364-5.

⁸⁰ “De Régnon Reconsidered,” 57-8; the important point is Lossky's 12 citations of Régnon in *Éssai sur la théologie de l'église d'orient*, all but two of which are elided in the English translation, thus occluding Lossky's dependence upon de Régnon's *Études*. I am not prepared to attribute the deliberate scholarly “shredding of the documents,” so to speak, to Lossky's translators, as Barnes apparently is.

Greek trinitarianism with the biblical perspective,⁸¹ when read alongside Lossky's specific championing of the Cappadocians and his anti-filioquist broadside, helped to set the stage to read Rahner's polemic as explicit warrant to connect the Western *Geistesvergessenheit*, the Augustinian psychological analogy, and the Latin focus on the unity of nature and the divine substance in an epic historical narrative of decline, and to oppose this narrative to a privileging of the purported Cappadocian stress on the "communion" of the hypostases in the economy. This further step is precisely that which we witness in Gunton, Jenson and Moltmann above, along with many others.⁸²

⁸¹ Cf. "Theos in the New Testament," concerning the New Testament use of *theos* to denote the "concrete, individual, uninterchangeable Person" of the Father who "possesses the divine nature unoriginately, and communicates it by eternal generation to a Son too, and by spiration to the Spirit;" Rahner notes that this is Régnon's "Greek view," which thesis of Régnon Rahner is explicitly trying to establish in the article. In *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst, O.P. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1982), 146-8.

⁸² Barnes identifies a number of authors – de Margerie, LaCugna, Brown, Mackey, O'Donnell, Moltmann – where the paradigm occurs, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," 238. The list is easily expanded: for further examples, cf. Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 137; Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity," 42-3; Jenson by allusion, *Systematic Theology I*, 116, 123, and as the very premise of *The Triune Identity* 103-60; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1:280ff (with respect to Western approaches); Coppedge, *The God who Is Triune*, 107-8, who cites Barnes and (thus) Régnon, but uses the paradigm uncritically regardless; Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, passim, citing it on e.g. 5, on the authority of Rahner and Gunton, but deploying it himself on e.g. 144; *The Forgotten Trinity*, which alludes to it in several places, e.g. 5, 20-22; "The filioque clause in ecumenical perspective," in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, 11; Christoph Schwöbel's "Introduction" in *Persons: Divine and Human: King's College Essays in Theological Anthropology*, ed. Christoph Schwöbel and Colin E. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 12, who notes that the approach typifies the then-emergent trinitarian resurgence; Alasdair I.C. Heron, *The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, the History of Christian Thought, and Recent Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 173-4; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 40, citing Rahner. Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 135, identifies it as a "stereotype" and "misleading" but does not mention Régnon; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 79-80, raises doubts as to its accuracy (though his engagement with the paradigm is third- or fourth-hand); E.L. Mascall, *The Triune God: An Ecumenical Study* (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick Publications, 1986), is perfectly aware of Rahner's and Lossky's reliance on Régnon (13), and in his understated way is "sometimes tempted to wonder whether the alleged opposition between the two traditions may have been over-emphasized by such Western experts as Théodore de Régnon and Father Karl Rahner," 24; Thomas G. Weinandy thinks there is "some merit in the customary distinction," but "that this distinction is simplistic and not entirely accurate historically," *The Father's Spirit of Sonship: Reconceiving the Trinity*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 56. Kasper, *God of Jesus Christ*, uses a form of the opposition, but between the Nicene and Constantinopolitan creeds and the Western substantialist approach, and attributes the beginnings of a "radically negative theology of a Neoplatonic cast" to the *Cappadocian* fathers (259, 261). The paradigm regularly shows up in Orthodox writers, as well: for example, in addition to Lossky, we may note Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), 214; John Meyendorff,

Kristin Hennessy has recently pointed out how divergent this universalizing narrative is from Régnon’s own intentions, and contextualizes his work in terms of his ecumenical interests and his implicit opposition to the late 19th century tendency toward Thomist hegemony in Catholic theology and scholarship. The intent of his massive *Études* is to “bring about a rapprochement of [the Latin and Greek] approaches in light of the persistent mystery of the Trinity and the failure of any single system, even neo-Thomism, to express this mystery fully.”⁸³ Thus it is not Régnon himself but particular appropriators of his work that are “the true authors of ‘de Régnon’s paradigm.’”⁸⁴ In order to qualify the Greek-Latin plurality-unity distinction that is now synonymous with his name, Hennessy argues that Régnon’s advocacy for the Greek system should be understood as a tacit way of resisting the tendency for neo-Thomist historians to measure every system by the authority of Aquinas; further (as Barnes himself notes⁸⁵) in the *Études* “Greeks” and “Latins” do not correspond, as they typically do for contemporary ears, to the Cappadocians and Augustine; rather, the terms are ciphers for the patristic (both Greek *and* Latin) and the scholastic eras, respectively, with Augustine functioning as the transition between the two. In fact, Régnon is “an ally, counseling us away from the evils of that paradigm for which he has been blamed, but did not create.”⁸⁶

Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 181, who explicitly quotes both Régnon and Rahner; Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1983), 19, where it is connected to the Augustinian “anthropomorphic analogy” with its deleterious “direct impact upon the theology of the Holy Spirit.” In Zizioulas, it functions as a systematic presupposition. Cf. also John Breck, “The Face of the Spirit,” *Pro Ecclesia* 3, no. 2 (Spring 1994), 174-5.

⁸³ “An Answer to de Régnon’s Accusers: Why We Should Not Speak of ‘His’ Paradigm,” *Harvard Theological Review* 100, no. 2 (April 2007), 181. The issue, edited by Coakley, is devoted to Ayres’s *Nicaea and its Legacy*, as well as cognate issues.

⁸⁴ “An Answer to de Régnon’s Accusers,” 182.

⁸⁵ “De Régnon Reconsidered,” 54.

⁸⁶ “An Answer to de Régnon’s Accusers,” 197. A propos of the last point, it is a sure sign of the influence of the Régnon paradigm when Augustine is treated as a medieval scholastic, despite his near-contemporaneity with the two Gregories.

In acknowledgment of this important corrective, I have been using the term “pseudo-Régnon paradigm.” It is, nonetheless, important to remind ourselves that, even as bowdlerized and distorted into a simplistic formula, Régnon’s work did postulate a basic distinction of Greek and Latin trinitarian “schemas,” starting from the persons and plurality, or the substance and the unity, respectively, that is of questionable historical accuracy. And he did identify Augustine as a proto-scholastic, thereby inscribing a tradition of reading Augustine in disjunction from pro-Nicene theology. If he emphasized complementarity rather than opposition between East and West, he still reified the distinction, even if he is innocent of absolutizing it. Having established this, however, the salient issue, with respect to Régnon’s incautious appropriators, is the tendentious use to which his paradigm has been put. The problem is not that a particular theological movement is characterized by a particular reading of certain historical texts and themes; rather it is the nearly universal forgetfulness of the origins of these readings in this one particular secondary source, such that the reliance of the trinitarian revival upon the pseudo-Régnon paradigm amounts to a kind of theological bottleneck. The diversity and breadth of the Christian tradition of trinitarian theological thought has been reduced to one narrow model derived from one particular source, and mediated to a generation of scholars by a particularly influential pair of appropriations – Lossky and Rahner.⁸⁷ In other words, the ubiquity of the Augustine-Cappadocian or West-East binary opposition is no mark in favor of its accuracy; it is simply the effect of a tightly enclosed echo

⁸⁷ Barnes characterizes this phenomenon as a “scholastic modernism,” by which he means that contemporary trinitarians “take as an obvious given a point of view that is coextensive with the 20th century.” “Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology,” 238.

chamber of historical scholarship in 20th century Europe.⁸⁸ There is something of a performative incoherency in this very fact: we are dealing with a movement characterized by a sweeping historical narrative and totalizing ideological claims; but in fact this narrative is reducible to a very small set of secondary sources, which themselves often languish in obscurity. The warrant for the claim seems to stand in inverse relationship to the scale of the narrative based upon it. It is as if the power of the proffered history derives from the simplistic framework imposed on history to reduce it to convenient textbook schemas.⁸⁹

Insofar as the trinitarian revival proves to be so determinately controlled by its narrow historical sources (beyond Régnon there is the work of Michael Schmaus, Alfred

⁸⁸ Indeed, just how insular is this pseudo-Régnonian narrative, as received in the largely German and American trinitarian theological scholarship with which I am concerned, is illustrated by the near-total absence of awareness of a significant minority report of French Catholic scholarship responding to Régnon that argues that the *West* is more personalistic than the essentialist East, which is dominated by *homoousian* concerns; cf. Barnes, “De Régnon Reconsidered,” 55, 59-62, who discusses Henri Paissac, Andre Malet, Guy Lafont, M.J. Le Guillou, and Bertrand de Margerie; and de Halleux, “Personnalisme ou Essentialisme Trinitaire,” who after refuting Zizioulas at length (219-41), critiques the essentialist readings of the Cappadocians in Malet, Le Guillou, and Lafont (242-65). De Halleux has an acute sense of how the Cappadocians become rhetorical pawns in both Catholic and Orthodox hands: “D’une part, en effet, des théologiens orthodoxes canonisent Basile et les deux Grégoire comme seuls docteurs œcuméniques et leur attribuent un personnalisme exclusif du langage de l’essence; et d’autre part, des théologiens catholiques croient devoir défendre la théologie trinitaire augustinienne et thomiste en imputant à ces mêmes Pères un apophatisme apocryphe et un défaut de personnalisme trinitaire,” 216. Mascall discusses a similar perspective in Jean Galot, going so far to suggest that Augustine is the great *opponent* of privileging the one divine essence in the West, *The Triune God*, 24.

⁸⁹ The trinitarian revival is of course far from the only movement in contemporary scholarship to deploy such patterns of historical legitimation. Furthermore, in diagnosing and critiquing such sweeping historical narratives and simplistic conceptual schemas as are endemic to modern trinitarian thought, Barnes and Ayres both tend to fall into the same pattern: Barnes’s characterization of trinitarians dependent upon the pseudo-Régnon paradigm as exhibiting a lust for encyclopedic totalization organized by polar oppositions, philosophical determinism, reductionism of original sources, and idealist predilections for reading history according to the logic of concepts, is an apt and incisive analysis of the very thinkers I have been discussing in this chapter. His accusations, however, rather too easily are extended to modern systematic theology *in toto*. Likewise, the final chapter of Ayres’ important *Nicaea and its Legacy* amounts to a wholesale indictment of the legitimacy of the discipline of systematic theology *as such*, based upon modern trinitarian theology’s failure to understand Pro-Nicene theology. This is extraordinarily simplistic thinking for a scholar so regularly characterized by caution and nuance: Ayres deploys precisely the kind of meta-narrative with regard to modern systematics that he denounces in historical theology. Cf. Coakley, “Disputed Questions in Patristic Trinitarianism,” *Harvard Theological Review* 100, no. 2 (April 2007), 135-38.

Schindler, and Olivier du Roy), it allows us to treat the revival in terms of its rhetorical, as well as its historical, legitimation.⁹⁰ In other words, in that the historical questions at issue in the narrative which legitimates contemporary trinitarianism are readily identifiable due to this paucity of sources, certain other questions arise bearing upon the character of this group of texts as organized around such a common rhetorical center. If we are dealing with a movement that constellates around a certain set of stereotyped formulae, what other common patterns of historical narration, strategies of argumentation, theological and philosophical presuppositions, structural assumptions, and semantic resources and limitations become evident when this body of literature is examined *as discourse*? Putting the matter thusly allows me to undertake a second set of investigations in this dissertation, alongside the more purely historical ones that will occupy the next four chapters: this would be the attempt to understand in some small degree, not just the way in which particular historical figures (Augustine preeminently, Barth more proximately) were misunderstood; but some of the factors operative that determined those misunderstandings, and what those factors might tell us about the assumptions and structures of modern trinitarian theology itself. My interest, thus, is not in the question of the existence of set of deep and fundamental divisions between the trinitarian theologies of Augustine and the Cappadocians, but rather the manner in which the narrative of those divisions serves to organize a history with a very particular authorizing function in modern trinitarianism. It is this interest, indeed, that has been

⁹⁰ Two caveats are necessary to nuance the broad intention discussed here: first, I by no means wish to imply that contemporary trinitarianism is a cohesive, united movement without diversity, internal disagreement, and independent lines of inquiry and development. Second, in asking the kinds of questions I will be throughout this dissertation, I am in part motivated by the desire to understand just why so many theologians in the late 20th century found the pseudo-Régnon paradigm so persuasive, and such a powerful explanatory tool; but this is not to underestimate the simple power of academic fads that often characterize the sudden density of a particular theme in theological publishing.

operative in my attempt to begin to trace out the manner in which ontology and analogy play out amongst modern trinitarians.

The Aporetic of Pneumatology in Augustine and Barth

I am now able to collect a set of consistently appearing factors in the critique of Augustine and the Western tradition among modern trinitarians, factors which constitute major tropes in the rhetorical construction of a “revival” or “renaissance” of trinitarian theology, and which often echo in the reception of Barth by that revival. In the review of Gunton, Jenson, and Moltmann, we saw a now-familiar constellation of themes, crystallizing around three issues, all of which are said to eventuate in a failed pneumatology. First, there is what I have called Augustine’s “philosophical determinism,” by which I mean the view that Augustine’s theology is determined by its (purported) philosophical influences, and thus in greater or lesser degree reducible to his Platonic-Plotinian conceptual framework. Second, there is his privileging of the psychological analogy as the primary way of conceiving of the triune life, which is connected, third, to his pathological focus on the divine unity and simplicity. The combination of these latter two factors, which are the primary examples of the Neoplatonist determination of his thought, lead in turn to an anthropology conceived individualistically, and a theology conceived monistically. In the first case, an Augustinian trinitarian theology leads to individuals imprisoned in their own heads; in the second, it leads to a God “in himself” frozen statically in eternity; the only answer, it is universally argued, is a turn to the East with its communion and/or social understanding of the Trinity.

The discussion of Rahner complicated the inquiry somewhat. Although he proffered a substantial critique of Augustinian trinitarian theology, and though he mediated much of the pseudo-Régnon paradigm and gave it the particular polemical twist for which it is now infamous, we find a concern fundamentally different from later readers: the problem is not that the conception of God is configured according to the psychological *analogy*, as it is that it is constructed on the basis of human self-reflection rather than revelation. Indeed, Rahner's own reconstruction of trinitarian doctrine looks rather like the Augustinian pattern of understanding the processions in terms of intellection and volition, suggesting that it is not the particular form of the analogy he finds troubling so much as its methodological starting point and justification.

In this dissertation, I will argue that Augustine and Barth turn to trinitarian theology in order to secure and explicate the self-identity of God to Godself in revelation; I will further seek to show how both are motivated by a similar concern to articulate the divine self-communication in rigorously christological terms that is at the same time an account of human subjective participation in that self-communication, and it is precisely this concern that articulates the grammar of their pneumatology – which is indispensable for their trinitarian thought. This is in congruence with the sketch of Rahner offered above. This is evidently a different concern than the one we see in later trinitarians like Gunton, Jenson, or Moltmann. In these latter thinkers, in common with other trinitarian “revivalists,” we found a consistent concern to connect the themes of (revitalized) trinitarian doctrine and ontology: the yield of trinitarian theology is not merely a more accurate or faithful representation of the being of God, but it is componential in a revisioning of the being *of being*.

Relationality is not of course the only such ontological deduction that trinitarian theology warrants in the revival, merely the most common one.⁹¹ We can safely say that in contemporary trinitarianism there is a consistent tendency to apply the pseudo-Régnon paradigm to privilege Eastern trinitarian thought and critique Augustinian psychological speculation, that this is in the service of constructing a suitably trinitarian ontology, and that the logic of the Western forgetfulness of the Spirit is a key plank in this program. This is not to claim, as it is sometimes argued by opponents of social trinitarian trends, that such thinkers necessarily base their trinitarian theology upon a predetermined general anthropology or ontology; as I will argue in chapter six, that trinitarian doctrine is understood to warrant some kind of ontological determination is itself already natural theology, understood in Barth's sense. This is simply because it requires some (implicit) reliance upon an analogy of being to authorize that ontological determination; and this would suggest a fundamental discontinuity between the thought of Barth, at least, and later followers. This naturally includes, correlatively, the rejection of what is assumed to be Augustine's way of articulating the analogy between God and creation; because our contemporary trinitarians are engaged in a process of reconstructing a Christian ontology on the basis of trinitarian doctrine, it is assumed that Augustine was engaged in a similar kind of analogical enterprise, one from the death grip of which the fate of the West must be liberated. The great failure of Augustine's analogy, we are repeatedly told, is that it

⁹¹ For helpful demurrals with respect to social trinitarian programs with attention to the function of trinitarian doctrine that to some extent reflect my concerns below, see Karen Kilby, "Perichoresis and Projection: Problems with Social Doctrines of the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 81, no. 957 (Nov. 2000), 432-45, and Peters, *God as Trinity*, 184-6. It will be, however, my contention that social and/or communion trinitarianisms, which differ only in degree, are merely a symptom of a more basic logic of transcendence and gratuity gone awry, and that the debate regarding trinitarian doctrines should not be carried out at the level of inquiry into appropriate analogical schemes.

obviates the hypostatic identities of Son and Spirit, and locks the economy of salvation within the skull of the solitary thinker bent upon the flight of the alone to the alone.

The consistent tendency we have already seen to thematize the issue of analogy in trinitarian reconstruction is not merely a casting about for suitably utilitarian exemplars upon which to model appropriate social programs, even if the sometimes flat-footed rhetoric of a Moltmann or Boff lends itself to be understood this reductively. Rather, I will be arguing that it should be understood in the context of a more fundamental concern to overcome a misconstrued account of eternity and time, and as deriving from a failed account of transcendence. The unrelenting attack in the trinitarian revival on the specter of a God “in himself” and removed from the world is a quest to bring God back into relationship with a world from which God was (putatively) exiled in the Enlightenment; and insofar as the Augustinian doctrine of God can be made to serve as a scapegoat for the fate of Western thought, the psychological analogy can be isolated as the very linchpin of the Augustinian failure. This vexed relationship between considerations of “God in himself” and “God for us,” God in eternity and God in time, surfaced in Gunton, Jenson and Moltmann, who, each in their own way, argued that trinitarian theology overcame the tragedy of a God removed from the world in a static and inaccessible eternity. Theological realism posits an inherence of creation in the ontological dynamics of God’s relational life, while idealism thinks of God’s relationship to the world in terms of an agonistic becoming of God on the cross.

I have already indicated that a concern with ontology links these two approaches to trinitarian revivification; but a further correlation can be established. Both are marked deeply by an overdetermination in personalistic language; because the trinitarian

hypostases are *persons* (something said to be discovered only by the Cappadocians), our understanding of the Trinity should be regulative of how we conceive of *human* persons. As I will note in the final chapter, this prevents most idealist trinitarianisms from being *truly* idealist (i.e., Hegelian). Thus Jenson or Moltmann want to preserve an intratrinitarian relationality, in order that God's life, opened up in the cross, might be a life of communion and love, and in order that Christian conceptions of sociality might be doctrinally legitimated. Augustine's failure to properly articulate a distinctive place for the Spirit in the trinitarian relations (usually said to be a symptom presenting in the *filioque* or doctrine of the *vinculum caritas*) is accordingly a failure to correctly imagine personhood, ecclesiology, and the like.

This pattern of response tends to install an understanding of the triune relations internal to the life of God, and then derive certain ontological implications from it, in a neatly symmetrical analogical structure. Apart entirely from the often question-begging assumption that persons divine and human are the same kinds of persons at all, this rests on a supposition that revelation delivers a picture of divine persons, ready made, from which our understanding of human persons can be constructed. This "top-down" approach, which is precisely the kind of exemplarist realism described above, suffers from a significant flaw, for it presumes that knowledge of God is the kind of knowledge that can be handled just like knowledge of any other object, from which we might *draw implications* as if from a syllogism. But in my reading of both Augustine and Barth, I will show that knowledge of God is *ethical* and *gratuitous*: it is a knowledge that has to do with the quality of our love, as those who have already been called and elevated to the divine life in our coming to acknowledgment *of* that knowledge, in a way that is

irreducible the claims of ontology, which is a science of comprehension. Knowledge of God occurs in the breakdown and overturning of any analogy between God and humanity. To put it in Thomist terms, God is not a member (even the highest member) of a *genus*; the kind of “being” God “is” is not like anything else in the field of our knowledge.⁹² There is no *analogy* between God and created being; thus both Augustine and Barth will employ a fundamentally *apophatic* trinitarian grammar, oriented around the deification of all our ways of knowing. Therefore a doctrine of the Spirit will follow a rather different logic than we seen thus far.

In fact, I will be arguing that pneumatology is not a doctrine at all, but a locus of apophatic discourse that articulates a *performative* element within the Augustinian theological dialectic that articulates a doctrine of the Trinity designed to safeguard the mystery of God precisely in God’s self-revelation as Father, Son, and Spirit. In this context, internal to the doctrine of the Trinity is the moment in which God the Trinity opens out to elevate humanity into God’s own life, and pneumatology is that discursive moment that follows after the performance of that elevation; in other words, the “doctrine” of the Trinity is not a set of ascriptive references to the nature of God, but the discourse of a practice of deification by that God who is triune. The problem with attempting to analogically articulate Spirit-talk is that pneumatology, in the texts which I

⁹² This is the heart of Nicholas Lash’s continual attack on “theism.” See, for example, the incisive article “Considering the Trinity,” *Modern Theology* 2, no. 3 (April 1986), 183-96, esp. 191: “whereas, in the tradition of modern theism, it seems to be supposed that naming God as ‘spirit’ describes the kind of thing that God is, I would take my stand in an older tradition according to which the insistence that God is not a body is a grammatical reminder that *Deus non est in genere*: that there is no particular kind of thing that God is.” One particularly good example of just what Lash has in mind is instanced at the opening of Gunton’s *Act and Being: Towards a Theology of the Divine Attributes* (London: SCM Press, 2002), 1: “To speak of God’s attributes is to attempt to speak of the *kind of god* that God is; of the things that characterize him as God; of what makes him to be God, rather than *some other being or kind of being*...The central difficulty of the situation as it meets us after nearly two thousand years of discussion is...how the identity of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit relates to the kind of things that have been, and are, said of the *kind of being* that God is,” my emphasis.

will be examining, limns the grammar of the subjective performance of participation in Christ, and the purpose of the “psychological analogy” is to encode this participation as a construction of the graced subjectivity of the deified believer. Modern theology has created the dilemma of *Geistesvergessenheit* for itself in failing to understand this aporetic of pneumatology in *Trin.*, and the manner in which this aporetic is appropriated, developed, and transformed in Barth. To call pneumatology an aporetic, thus, means that it is strictly non-conceptualizable just because it is the performance of grace in the subject herself: pneumatology, in short, is something *we do*, and something God does, in their performative unity. Pneumatology, and therefore trinitarian theology itself, has no “practical” implications – it is itself the grammar of a practice.⁹³ And that cannot be captured in speech, much less in doctrine; Western theology’s way of articulating this aporia is to understand pneumatology as an inherently and ineluctably apophatic theme. The psychological analogy is thus the textual strategy of pointing to the self-communication of God the Trinity as an event that is the elevation of the believer to the divine life in Christ: this is the work of the Spirit, and pneumatology is that faltering speech that attempts to describe this event of subjective participation. But in the thought of Augustine and Barth, this is simply the subject’s capacity to will the good, with a willing that is God herself, the Spirit.

⁹³ This is not the same as claiming that pneumatology or trinitarian theology grounds an *ontology* of practice. It is entirely different to say that the Trinity is a “mystery of salvation,” and to say that it must have practical *consequences* for the life of faith. For a critique of trinitarian ontology in some respects similar to my own, toward the end of understanding Thomas’s trinitarian theology as an exercise in contemplative wisdom, cf. Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, esp. 197-235. Although I cannot concur with Kilby’s Lindbeckian conclusion, I share her demurral regarding the understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity as a “descriptive, first order teaching...provid[ing] a picture of the divine,” “Perichoresis and Projection,” 443.

CHAPTER II

A PNEUMATOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE: THE APORETIC OF PERFORMANCE AND ASCENT IN *DE TRINITATE*

This is the first of two chapters which focuses on Augustine, the seminal shaper of the Latin trinitarian tradition, and examines some of the essential themes of his pneumatology. In this chapter, I will offer a reading of *Trin.*,¹ focusing especially on some of the charges leveled at this text by its 20th century detractors. Chapter 3 will follow up on themes adumbrated here through an examination of Augustine's *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*; there I will especially develop the relevance of *Trin.* for the issue of the "ethical" that I broached at the conclusion of the last chapter. Ever since Rahner, as we have seen, Augustine has been the central character in every narrative of Western trinitarian declension.² I noted some of the most common criticisms of Augustine's trinitarianism in ch. 1, mistakes which are supposed to have decisively enervated his pneumatology: his Platonism and, thus, his irremediable dualism, rationalism, and individualism; his focus on divine simplicity, immutability, and eternity; and, as legitimated by the pseudo-Régnon paradigm, his privileging of the single divine subjectivity at the cost of the hypostatic threeness of the Trinity. All of these share at least one common assumption, namely that Augustine's *memoria-intelligentia-voluntas* triad and its variations performed an analogical function – the positing of a relation of

¹ *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991); occasionally the somewhat less colloquial style of Stephen McKenna, *The Trinity* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1963) will be cited. Hill omits the traditional chapter numbers, which I supply. I will cite *Trin.* parenthetically in the body of the text.

² Aquinas is included by many in these decline narratives along with Augustine, though it exceeds the bounds of this dissertation to examine Aquinas's trinitarian theology. For replies, see Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, and Ormerod, *The Trinity*.

correspondence of terms between the individual human mind and divine Trinity – which was to be superseded by communion or social analogies in order to ensure the doctrine of the Trinity’s continuing relevance. Furthermore, I argued that that relevance in modern trinitarianism is consistently understood to be evinced in the construction of various trinitarian ontologies; a trinitarian analogy, thus, authorizes a kind of analogy of being for many modern trinitarians (even Barthians).

These criticisms invariably focus on Augustine’s Platonism, and they naturally have weaker and stronger versions. At one level, accusing Augustine of being a Platonist is rather like claiming that he spoke Latin – true and trivial. There is no intellectual in his era who is not influenced in some respect by the Platonic tradition(s), just as there is no theologian in the modern era who does not in some respect operate in a post-Hegelian context.³ Both are accurate but uninteresting points, insofar as they are statements about the episteme of a given historical epoch, and speak at the level of very broad generalities. At a second level, though, the charge of Augustine’s Platonism implies that Augustine is engaged in a project of synthesizing or correlating in some fashion, whether explicitly or unconsciously, Platonist (or Plotinian) philosophical and Christian theological imaginaries. This is a much more rigorous claim. Accusations of this type concerning Augustine’s Platonism have a long tradition in Augustinian scholarship: one might invoke Harnack, Prosper Alfarcic, or Régnon himself, or one might look to recent influential historians such as Pierre Courcelle, Robert O’Connell, or Olivier du Roy,⁴ or

³ A point that will quite significant in ch. 6.

⁴ As noted in ch. 1, du Roy, along with Schmaus and Schindler, is one of the most frequently cited authorities in the trinitarian revival. For the essential works on Augustine’s Platonism, mid-century (Courcelle, Solignac, du Roy, O’Connell, etc.), see Goulven Madec, “Le «Platonisme» des Pères,” in *Petites Études Augustiniennes* (Paris: Collection des études augustiniennes, 1994), 49.

contemporary scholars such as Philip Cary.⁵ I have elected to engage such sources, rather than those I discussed in ch. 1, in treating the vexed question of Augustine's "Platonism" in what follows; this is because, first, the questions of Augustine's Platonism are generally more credibly argued in this scholarship and, second, this literature is usually the background authority to those contemporary trinitarians treated in ch. 1.

Against this, I will be arguing that for Augustine pneumatology and indeed trinitarian theology itself is not so simply reduced to its metaphysical or ontological antecedents; it is at the center of the appropriation and transformation of Augustine's reception of Platonist ontology, in such a way as to constitute a displacement of that ontology. That is, to give an account of the Trinity for Augustine is at the same time (though not in identical fashion) to give an account of our participation in the Trinity, the very act of which is already pneumatological, and this pneumatological moment cannot but be an *aporia*. The task of *Trin.*, the *exercitatio mentis*, is one of contemplation, prayer, and purification; to do trinitarian theology one must learn to participate in the Trinity. This is, at heart, what I mean when I use the term "performative" in this dissertation: pneumatology is "actualistic" (to use Barth's term) discourse that concerns the knowledge of God which occurs insofar as it is *enacted* in the response to the divine self-giving of grace. Knowledge of God is self-involving, and is inextricable from, while not identical to, the *formation* of the self; thus in *Trin.* there is a performative dimension in the very text. This, I will argue, is irreducible to ontological or metaphysical categories, and ruptures any attempt to contain it within such a system. As such, the encounter of the self

⁵ *Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). A different twist on this tradition is represented by a school of thought that emphasizes Augustine's Platonism in a *laudatory* manner, as is the case with Radical Orthodoxy. Michael Hanby's *Augustine and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003) is the most notable and sustained example; see ch. 3.

with God in the community is an encounter which poses a unique dilemma for the theologian; for, given the very real exigency to draw upon the metaphysical and ontological resources which one has at hand in order to understand how speech about the triune God must be governed, there is at the heart of this attempt a permanent *ascesis* of language by virtue of the fact that the triune God is strictly incomprehensible, and this incomprehensibility is one *practiced* only in inhabitation and contemplation. This is the aporia of pneumatology for Augustine: one cannot speak of the Spirit without speaking at the same time of one's involvement in the Spirit, and that involvement escapes speech.⁶ This is the way we should understand what is called the "psychological analogy," though it is neither psychological, nor an analogy, at all: it is a dialectical discourse, articulated only as self-knowledge even as it is the self being acted *upon* in excess of its own capacities. This peculiarity of God-talk, for Augustine, means that his received metaphysical framework – which retains much of its integrity as the basic structure of his thought – is reshaped by a "decentering" in this aporetic of self-involvement.⁷

⁶ The perspective of this chapter in general concurs with that of Luigi Gioia, OSB, in *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's De Trinitate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), as for example when he writes that "The *De Trinitate* is based on the presupposition that it is impossible to dissociate questions concerning the identity of God we believe in from those related to the way we have actually come to know him," 3 (this is close to what I term below the "aporetic of self-involvement"). Hence Gioia approaches *Trin.* "from the angle of knowledge of God" insofar as Augustine "aims at introducing his reader into the *practice* of this knowledge." I obtained Gioia's book after this and the following chapter were conceived and (in large part) written, so it serves as a strong verification of the argument here that it so closely coheres with Gioia's remarkable study of *Trin.* I do have a few significant disagreements with Gioia, which I will note where appropriate; but this is not to negate my estimation of his text, which should become the standard work on *Trin.*

⁷ I use the term "aporia" in a strict sense to mean the act of knowing the unknowable God, as thematized in the subject's act of self-knowing in such a way as that knowing exceeds its own capacity. The term is intended to denote the sense of an "impossible possibility," to invoke the thought of Jacques Derrida. An aporia, as I use the term, is the necessary affirmation of two heterogeneous realities that are irreconcilable, yet indissociable (I take this way of putting things from Derrida's "To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible," *Questioning God*, ed. John D. Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael J. Scanlon [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001], 45). Hence, "the aporia is not a paralyzing structure, something that simply blocks the way with a simple negative effect. The aporia is the experience of responsibility," "On Forgiveness: A Roundtable Discussion with Jacques Derrida," *Questioning God*, 62.

A caveat should be noted here: I am not claiming in this dissertation that Augustinian pneumatology somehow is the “overcoming” of metaphysics, Platonist or otherwise.⁸ It is just as important to avoid positing an antithesis of “pagan” philosophy and Christian theology as it is to avoid their collapse. The mistake common to both those who posit the Platonizing of Augustine’s Christianity, and those who argue for the Christianizing of Augustine’s Platonism, is all too often a reliance upon uncritical and intractable Harnackianisms that oppose Hellenism and Christian theology as if they were pure essences easily distinguishable, the Christian gospel containing some kind of autochthonous biblical worldview and liturgical imagination that absorbs, or is absorbed by, the philosophical world.⁹ The matter must be rather more complicated: first, because “Platonism” in Augustine’s time was hardly a single, easily identifiable intellectual commodity; second, because the Platonic elements of Augustine’s thought were hybrid, coming from Plotinus but also from Cicero and Porphyry, as well as the already-mutated varieties of Ambrose, Simplician and perhaps Marius Victorinus; third, and most generally, because it is clear that Augustine was somewhat eclectic with respect to Platonic philosophy, appropriating some elements, rejecting others, transforming yet others.¹⁰ Although a close analysis of such a process is beyond the scope of this

⁸ Cf. John Milbank, “Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics,” in *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 36-52.

⁹ Robert Crouse offers an extended and nuanced survey of contemporary positions on Augustine’s relationship with Platonism in “*Paucis Mutatis Verbis*: St. Augustine’s Platonism,” in *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000), 37-50. He rightfully points out that in a century since Harnack so deeply marked by an “anti-Hellenic temper,” Platonizing criticisms of Augustine will be popular (39). Also helpful, though now dated, is Goulven Madec, “Le néoplatonisme dans la conversion d’Augustin. Etat d’une question centenaire (depuis Harnack et Boissier, 1888),” in *Internationales Symposium über den Stand des Augustinus-Forschung*, ed. Cornelius Mayer and Karl Heinz Chelius (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989), 9-25, who observes that the very notion of a “synthesis” of philosophy and theology presumes a “dualisme scolastique” (22).

¹⁰ Ayres characterizes this process as “piecemeal,” highlighting both the hybrid nature of Augustine’s Platonism and the ad hoc nature of his adaptation of Plotinian sources, in *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 391.

dissertation, I do intend to highlight, in this and upcoming chapters, the manner in which pneumatology in particular and trinitarian theology in general functions as a kind of grammar transforming the metaphysical resources, at decisive points, that a theologian appropriates in formulating the *intellectus fidei* of speculative theology.

Training the Reader: The Performance of the *Imago Dei* in *De Trinitate*

Contemplation and the intellectus fidei

My basic polemical claim in this chapter is that interpretations, such as those seen in ch. 1, that regard Augustine's trinitarian doctrine as abstracted from the economy of salvation, as focused upon an essentialist monism of an isolated eternal deity to the detriment of that God's triune self-communication, are simply implausible. Such misinterpretations only seem possible as careless or superficial misreadings, or as incautious reliances on secondary authorities and anthologization. For *Trin.* is nothing but a disquisition on the fact that God is revealed as triune in the economy of salvation.¹¹ In fact, for Augustine we know God only by God's works in God's creatures, and because humanity is the highest of God's works, we know God preeminently by knowing ourselves – but only insofar as we know ourselves experiencing God's self-gift, which

¹¹ Basil Studer argues at length for the historical, economic nature of Augustine's trinitarian theology, culminating in contemplative wisdom. "History and Faith in Augustine's De Trinitate," *Augustinian Studies* 28, no. 1 (1997), 7-50. To his credit, du Roy sees that fixation on the Régnonian opposition of "«partir de la personne ou de la nature»" is secondary to the significance of "beginning with" the economy of salvation; the connection between the incarnation and the knowledge of the Trinity, and thus between the economy of salvation and trinitarian mystery of God, is the determinative question for du Roy; *L'intelligence de la foi*, 452. By arguing for the precedence of "la Trinité créatrice," du Roy sees the anagogical understanding of the Trinity completed by a trinitarian ontology of "emanation et retour" (418), an understanding in which Plotinian metaphysics, rather than the incarnation, is determinative of knowledge of God. In this chapter, I intend to argue precisely the opposite. For a discussion of du Roy's argument, see Gioia, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 5-10.

means that ultimately we know ourselves insofar as we know God. Thus it is a rigorously apophatic text, for the central thematic, which is insolubly aporetic, of *Trin.* is the *ascesis* of thought involved in speech of the eternal God. Talk of God, therefore, is self-involving, and because it is self-involving, it is ethical, for the value of one's theological exercise for Augustine is finally a function of the kind of person one becomes in the course of that exercise.

The language of "exercise" is far from accidental, for it is Augustine's own. Book 1 in particular sounds this theme.¹² Augustine notes that he is writing the text because "it is necessary for our minds to be purified before that inexpressible reality [of God's substance] can be inexpressibly seen by them" (1.3.3). As Lewis Ayres describes it, a certain kind of "discipline" is inscribed in *Trin.*, and Augustine is exemplifying certain methods of discipline: "the mind here is being exhorted not simply to see in a certain way but to *seek to see* in a certain way."¹³ One of the central themes of Book 1, in fact, is contemplation: those who now live by faith will be brought to direct contemplation of God in the eschaton (1.8.16). This mention of contemplation then occasions a discussion that sets the context for the work proper, the contemplation which is the reward of faith, and which culminates in the "fullness of our happiness" which is "to enjoy God the three in whose image we are made" (1.8.17-18). Hence we have the theme adumbrated that will occupy Augustine throughout *Trin.* as an orienting principle for trinitarian reflection: its

¹² Although Book I belongs very organically with Books 2-4, for its discussion of the *canonica regula* (the hermeneutical rubric which concerns the dual ways scripture speaks of Christ – as God, *forma Dei*, and as human, *forma servi*) segues directly into discussion of the missions. However, I am treating it separately here in order to emphasize its contemplative poetics. There is a real distinction between the hermeneutical key of 1.7.14 and its application in 2-4, so that it does not do great violence to the text to treat Book 1 as introductory.

¹³ "The Discipline of Self-knowledge in Augustine's *De trinitate* Book X," in *The Passionate Intellect: Essays on the Transformation of Classical Traditions*, ed. Lewis Ayres (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 280.

ordering to the purification of the soul by faith, and its function as a kind of proleptic participation in the beatific vision.¹⁴ Ultimately, for Augustine, this will mean asking how it is that we as created beings reflect the creative and redemptive agency of God, which means to talk of the human as *imago dei*.¹⁵ In fact, at the inception of the final book,¹⁶ Augustine describes the project of *Trin.* as a plan of training [*exercere*] the reader for knowledge of the God by whom she is made, and it is in this context that the quest for God's image in the soul is to be understood: a contemplative exercise in purifying the soul and training the eye of faith to understand, not just the Catholic faith in the trinitarian God, but the fact that in the act of participating in that God we gain some understanding of that Trinity by virtue of that participation.¹⁷

To anticipate somewhat, contemplation, the goal of trinitarian theology, is the end of faith seeking understanding; speculative thought, for Augustine, is driven by the conviction that the understanding of faith, the *intellectus fidei*, is the venture of reason seeking to understand, that it might love. Augustine has no fear of the subtleties of technical and speculative theological questions, for they function as an *ascesis* for the

¹⁴ Crouse has a similar reading in "St. Augustine's *De Trinitate*: Philosophical Method," *Studia Patristica* 16, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985), 506-7, noting that Augustine explicitly rejected both argumentation by analogy of created things, as well as analogical argument (transcendence of the mutable by the intellectual).

¹⁵ The two best English language studies on the image of God in *Trin.* have received remarkably little attention by contemporary theologians. Both have in general informed and strengthened the reading proffered in these pages; see John Edward Sullivan, *The Image of God: The Doctrine of St. Augustine and Its Influence* (Dubuque: Priory Press, 1963), and David N. Bell, *The Image and Likeness: The Augustinian Spirituality of William of St Thierry* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984), 21-88. Sullivan constantly notes how the *imago*, for Augustine, consists in the movement toward the exemplar-principle, God. This is so precisely by *not* locating the image autonomously in the intellect of the individual subject: "Man does not image God by his rationality independently of some relation to God as object of his power," *The Image of God*, 50; cf. 136. *Pace* Sullivan, who devotes separate chapters to "The Image of the One God," and "The Image of the Trinity," and Bell, 37ff, it is not obvious that Augustine distinguishes between an *imago Dei* and an *imago Trinitatis*.

¹⁶ *Trin.* 15.1.1.

¹⁷ For a fascinating rhetorical analysis of the performative movement of *Trin.* as a training of the reader, see Brian Stock, *Augustine the Reader: Meditation, Self-Knowledge, and the Ethics of Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1996), 243-78.

mind, an exercise of purification leading to ever-greater apprehension of the mystery of God. In fact, the key to understanding the particular kind of performative discourse that is integral to Augustine's pneumatology lies in grasping that he understands theology in general, and trinitarian theology in particular, as a *practice, a spiritual exercise*.¹⁸ it is the training of the understanding for contemplation, the enactment of the transcendence of *scientia* into *sapientia*. The aporetic, dialectical moment in which thinking the Trinity opens into *performing* our life in the Trinity is the pneumatological moment in Augustine's thought.

The ascent motif and spiritual exercise in De Trinitate

It is in the context of these contemplative texts (which are merely instances of themes that are woven throughout the entire book) that the vexed question of the structure of *Trin.* should be understood. The conventional strategy is to divide the text into two separate sections: a discussion of the dogma of the Trinity as received by faith, and a philosophical attempt to understand that dogma on the basis of reason. The former proceeds by authority, and the latter by Platonist canons of introspective inquiry, seeking suitable analogies for understanding the trinitarian relations.¹⁹ The two halves of *Trin.* are treated as separate and relatively independent treatises, cleanly divided between faith and reason, or theology and philosophy. However, the anachronism of this latter division owes

¹⁸ Here is where Madec sees Augustine being misunderstood by medieval scholasticism, which in only retaining Augustine's *conclusions*, "sans retrouver le cheminement de la recherché, renverse et fausse la perspective," *Le Christ de Saint Augustin: La Patrie et la Voie*, new ed. (Paris: Desclée, 2001), 182. In general, the reception of *Trin.* is an excellent example of Pierre Hadot's diagnosis of readings that assume incoherence or error on the part of the ancient author, but fail to understand the "form that renders all the details necessary;" quoted in Arnold I. Davidson, "Introduction: Pierre Hadot and the Spiritual Phenomenon of Ancient Philosophy," in Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, ed. Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 8.

¹⁹ The classic exemplification of this view is du Roy, *L'intelligence de la foi*, 454-56; on 460-2, he connects this bifurcation of "raison et la foi" to the order of the theological treatises in the *Summa*.

considerably more to the clear distinctions of these discursive registers in scholastic and neo-scholastic theology than to Augustine's understanding of the relationship of the two;²⁰ and it certainly fails to account for Augustine's statement to Aurelius that "the inquiry proceeds in a closely-knit development from the first of [the books] to the last."²¹ Furthermore, it misses some extremely significant structural themes, among them the pivotal role of the christological sections of Books 4 and 13, and correspondingly, the thematics of *sapientia* in Books 5-7 and 12-14.

While too much can be made of the significance of the structure of *Trin.*,²² there is a very clear general contour to the work, and the relationship of faith and reason is in fact key to understanding the movement of the text.²³ An important passage for understanding this comes near the end of Book 7, which functions as a transition to the *modo interiore* of Books 8ff, where Augustine notes that until the mind is purified of materialistic modes of thinking, the affirmation of the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit must simply be believed: "if this cannot be grasped by understanding, let it be held by

²⁰ Cf. Crouse, "Philosophical Method," 502.

²¹ *Trin.*, prologus (*ep.* 174). This fact is why Augustine was so upset that *Trin.* was pirated incomplete.

²² Because copies of the book were stolen while it was still in progress somewhere in Book 12, Augustine laid the project aside for some time; we also know that he never edited it as he would have wished because unauthorized copies were already in circulation. He worked on the treatise intermittently over nearly twenty years, often putting it aside to write more pressing occasional material during the Donatist controversy, or the more immediately relevant *civ. Dei*. All this means that the careful literary crafting of *conf.* cannot be expected of *Trin.*, nor that we can expect it to be entirely internally consistent. For the dating of *Trin.*, the treatment of Anne-Marie La Bonnardière is the standard, although she focuses only on Books 12-15 and the final redaction, including the exhortative *prooemia* to most of the books. *Recherches de Chronologie Augustinienne* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1965), 165-77. For the dating of the earlier books, see Pierre-Marie Hombert, *Nouvelles Recherches de Chronologie Augustinienne* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2000), 45-80.

²³ I will not attempt to describe the structure of *Trin.* in any great detail here; what is significant for the purposes of this study is the relationship of the two traditional halves of the text, Books 1-7 and 8-15. See the helpful studies of Earl C. Muller, SJ, "Rhetorical and Theological Issues in the Structuring of Augustine's *De Trinitate*," *Studia Patristica* 27 ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters Press, 1993), 356-63; John Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De trinitate*," *Augustinian Studies* 23 (1992), 103-23; Edmund Hill, OP, "St. Augustine's 'De Trinitate': The Doctrinal Significance of its Structure," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 19 (1973), 277-86, the conclusions of which are substantially reproduced in Hill's edition of *Trin.*

faith, until he shines in our minds who said through the prophet, unless you believe, you will not understand.”²⁴ This does not imply that understanding is superior to faith, an elite activity for those with adequate subtlety of philosophical training; rather, it is an indication of their unity, for contemplation in faith leads to deeper understanding in transformative illumination.²⁵ The failure to understand (e.g.) the different ways that scripture varies in speaking of the unity and plurality of the divinity, or the impropriety of species-genus language with reference to the Trinity, betrays an undisciplined mode of thinking that is corrected and trained in theological speculative reflection. Ultimately, this correction of thinking is a matter of understanding how we participate in God: “one does not approach God by moving across intervals of place, but by likeness or similarity...not proximity of place but of a sort of imitation” (7.6.12). This imitation is a matter of refashioning, of renewal by grace.

Hence, the conclusion of the careful philosophical arguments of Books 5-7 leads to the realization that knowledge of God is a matter of affection, of rightly ordered desire. It is this context in which the sometimes torturous dialectics of Books 8-15 should be understood. Not only is it anachronistic to posit a sharp distinction between faith and reason in Augustine; it is also a failure of reading to overlook the fact that spiritual exercise and philosophical inquiry are inseparable in *Trin.* The *exercitatio mentis* (8.20.26) of these latter Books is hardly anomalous in philosophical writing of the day; in fact, *Trin.* is a paradigmatic case of the classical text of philosophical inquiry as itself an

²⁴ *Trin.* 7.6.12, citing Is. 7:9.

²⁵ Barnes puts this well: “The utility of faith for salvation lies in the fact that it marries an epistemology with a moral anthropology, and then grounds them both in Christology.” “The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology of 400,” *Modern Theology* 19, no. 3 (July 2003), 342. Mt. 5:8, that only the pure in heart will see God, is central to the contemplative themes of Books 1-4, as Barnes shows, and sets in motion the paradox of the latter half of the book as well (8.4.6), as I will show below. This text thus nicely summarizes the program of *Trin.*

ascent in the stages of spiritual progress, an object of intellectual effort oriented toward the contemplative life and the *epimeleia heautou*, the “care of the self.”²⁶ It is not the case, then, that speculative inquiry and spiritual formation can be dissociated in *Trin.*, precisely because self-knowing is an ethical act of cultivation, formation, and discipline. To inquire into the processes of intellection and volition in which we gain some understanding of the Trinity is at the same time to inquire into the theological construction of the subject insofar as the subject²⁷ is a self oriented toward the actualization of the image of God.

If the general performative structure of *Trin.* therefore finds a ready place in Augustine’s historical context, it is with his relationship to Neoplatonism that we must concern ourselves in particular in order to understand the project of Books 8-15. It is here that Augustine both owes the most to Plotinus *and* breaks most sharply with him at a decisive point. At least since du Roy,²⁸ the anagogical theme of the mystical ascent has

²⁶ Cf. Pierre Hadot, “Spiritual Exercises,” in *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107: *Trin.* “is not trying to present a systematic theory of trinitarian analogies. Rather, by making the soul turn inward upon itself, [Augustine] wants to make it *experience* the fact that it is an image of the Trinity.” However, I differ from Hadot on an important point; while *Trin.* fits into the classical model of philosophy as spiritual exercise, it also disrupts the paradigm of the spiritual exercise, for the ascent is oriented around the priority of grace, and the gift of charity in the soul, that realizes the ascent; further, the ascent occurs *within* the descending Christ, as I will argue in my discussion of Book 13. While Augustine’s relationship with Neoplatonist philosophy is nuanced, he clearly argues that, without the mediatorship of Christ, the philosophical program fails. In the opposite direction, I also differ here with Gioia, who in general posits a much sharper distinction between philosophy and theology in Augustine (*Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, passim, but see esp. 40-67); Augustine’s trouble is not with philosophy as such (as if he would have distinguished an autonomous philosophical discipline itself), but with philosophical pretension to the vision of the Good apart from the Mediator, Christ. It is in Christ, and in the speculative theological formulations that enabled him to articulate salvation in Christ, especially his understandings of grace, election and the Spirit, that Neoplatonist metaphysics are, as I describe it, “displaced:” it retains much of its integrity as a metaphysical system, though it is “re-centered” in Christ and the deified soul, both of which are unknown apart from revelation.

²⁷ I will be using the category of “construction” of subjectivity (with full knowledge of the anachronism involved) to highlight the way in which philosophical conceptions of the self are transformed in the course of Augustine’s recentering of the self as graced in the *imago dei*. In addition, the term “subject” is intended to highlight the aporetic of knowledge of God: the imbrication of grace with the *agency* of the self, and of knowledge of God with *self*-knowledge.

²⁸ *L’intelligence de la foi*, 72ff, 170ff. The language of *anagogia* is not itself Augustinian, as du Roy admits. See also Frederick E. Van Fleteren, OSA, “Augustine’s Ascent of the Soul in Book VII of the Confessions: A Reconsideration,” *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974), 29-72, for a helpful discussion, and “The Ascent of the Soul in the Augustinian Tradition,” in *Paradigms in Medieval Thought: Applications in*

been observed often in *Trin.* Indeed, the general anagogical pattern of movement is well established in Augustine, and it is central to the particular form of mysticism that would be so important for Latin theology:²⁹ the apprehension of earthly goods, the beauty of creatures, leads the mind to its own powers of judgment by which the good of creatures is judged, which in turn leads to the contemplation of the eternal good by which all things are good above the mind, God. As such, *Trin.* would be an enactment of the ascent to the vision of God, a performance of the intellectual and moral self-purification in which unity with the One is achieved. This is a thoroughly Plotinian theme, *Enneads* 1.6 being the classic template of the mystical ascent. But by the time of *Trin.* in the development of Augustine's thought, the ascent has taken on a rather different function.³⁰ John Cavadini has argued in fact that the latter books of *Trin.* are in effect a performative critique of "the Neoplatonic soteriology of ascent" which "becomes a declaration of the futility of any attempt to come to any saving knowledge of God apart from Christ...it is not simply that we have a new 'way' for completing an ascent which remains definitively Neoplatonic in its goal, but that the goal – *noesis* itself – has acquired a new character."³¹ Hardly, then, a

Medieval Disciplines, ed. Nancy van Deusen (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 93-110. The ascent is important in various of the Cassiciacum dialogues, especially *sol.*, as well as the Ostia vision of *conf. 7*.

²⁹ On this see esp. Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

³⁰ Gioia calls the anagogical reading – centered in created analogies of the Trinity – as the "mainstream reading" of *Trin.*, stating that it "mistakes marginal aspects of this work for its main purpose," *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 255.

³¹ John Cavadini, "The Structure and Intention of Augustine's *De trinitate*," 106, 109; cf. 110, where he characterizes *Trin.* additionally as a performative *auto-critique*: it "is in effect a re-issuing of [Augustine's] earlier philosophical dialogues, but here radically redone, as a critique of the position that there is any accurate or saving knowledge of the Trinity apart from faith in Christ." This way of putting it encapsulates Augustine's attitude toward Platonic philosophy in general – it provides a general metaphysical context of intelligibility, but both its method and goal is transformed christologically. Lewis Ayres admonishes Cavadini slightly for not connecting Augustine's *exercitatio* language with the christological context of Book 13, where the relationship of *scientia* and *sapientia* is directly correlated with the two natures of Christ. Ayres's emphasis on the generally embodied or performative dimension of the *exercitatio* is similar to mine here (he is likewise drawing upon Hadot); see "The Christological Context

proto-Cartesian process of introspection, nor a Plotinian flight of the alone to the alone, the dialectics of Books 8-15 function as a training of the self – a training that involves the whole of the Christian life, including its practical, material and social dimensions – to focus its knowing and loving on the trinitarian God and thereby, the neighbor.

However, that training opens up an ineluctable aporia resident at the very heart of the knowledge of God, for an examination of that knowledge reveals its own indissociability from knowledge of the self, such that self-knowing both imitates and participates in knowledge of God. This aporia yields a twofold understanding of the image of God: the *mimetic* acknowledges an ontological likeness between God and soul, but this is only actualized in the *participatory* image,³² which is an ethical praxis of self-formation oriented to realization of the likeness to God in performance of charity. As my reading of *Trin.* 15 will show, however, participation is finally premised on the fundamental *dissimilarity* between God and the soul – the *likeness* of soul and Trinity culminates in *unlikeness*. Participation in God therefore involves the aporetic of knowing the unknowable, or imitating the inimitable, a dialectical relationship in which knowledge of self and of God are so closely intertwined that one can only be spoken of via the other. Thus the image of God is ultimately not to be understood as the analogical correspondence of the mind's remembering, understanding, and willing to the persons of the Trinity, but rather the image of God is realized in the act of remembering, understanding and loving the Trinity. When understood in this way, the last thing *Trin.* 8-

of Augustine's *De Trinitate* XIII: Toward Relocating Books VIII-XV," in *Studies in Patristic Christology*, ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Portland: Four Courts Press, 1998), 95-101.

³² The language of "mimetic" and "participatory" is Turner's, *The Darkness of God*, 95. Cf. Sullivan's distinction of "analogy" and "image" in *Trin.*; they are distinct insofar as the former, "static" ontological one has self as an object, whereas the latter, a "dynamic" operational function, has God the Trinity for its object; *The Image of God*, 144-48. Gioia similarly differentiates between "image-exemplar" and "image-relation," with a similar judgment of priority as that in Turner and Sullivan; *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 275-97.

15 is about is a search for suitable “analogies” of the Trinity in the human soul. It is about the construction of the self in the image of God, through the gift of the Spirit.

The Simplicity of Wisdom: Trinitarian Faith in Books 2-7

In this section I will examine the first half of *Trin.*, showing how the logic of divine simplicity and economic self-identity follows upon the contemplative register of the first Book, and sets up the treatise on the *imago* of Books 8-15 (discussed in the remainder of this chapter). One of the great failures of the late 20th century trinitarian revival is the confusion with which the theme of the Pro-nicene logic of divine simplicity has been handled.³³ The matter of articulating coherently both the absolute unity of God and the relative distinction of the subsistents in the doctrine of the Trinity is a concern common to both Augustine and the “Cappadocians,” for Christian theology depends upon the fact that God is *one*, truly identical with Godself in the acts of the hypostases in the economy of salvation. This Pro-nicene concern, codified in the consubstantiality of the Spirit, Son and Father, and in the unity of operations of the three subsistents in the economy, is distinct from the 20th century concern (encapsulated in the rhetorical function of the pseudo-Régnon paradigm) for ordering the priority of the one and the three in the divinity, which implies a competitive relationship between the one divine essence and the three hypostases, since (we are told) only an emphasis upon the latter ensures the

³³ The language of “Pro-nicene” is that of Ayres and Barnes; the point of the term is to highlight that what is generally known as “Nicene” orthodoxy is the result of a variety of theological positions negotiated in a series of contestations and consolidations of Christian orthodoxy in the fourth century, in which Nicaea *acquired* its landmark ecumenical status through a specific strategy of rhetorical production in the 380’s. Pro-nicene theology is theology arguing *for* the constitutive significance of Nicaea. See, for example, Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 6, 167-8; for a fuller theological definition, see 236-40. Three points are salient for Pro-nicene theology: some explicit version of the person-nature distinction; the eternal generation of the Son; the unity of operations of the subsistents.

integrity of divine self-communication in the economy.³⁴ Augustine's problem is not one of such a "starting point;" it is, rather, one of articulating the aporia of the comprehension of the incomprehensible essence of God that occurs in the redemptive knowledge of and participation in God's self-donation in the Son through the Spirit.

The missions of Son and Spirit: Books 2-4

Both Books 2-4 and 5-7 are polemical in nature, controverting Homoian positions on the relation of Father and Son.³⁵ The former directly counters misunderstandings of the *canonica regula* of Book 1, whereby the notion of the "sending" of the Son would imply his ontological inferiority to the Father. But these books also continue the contemplative theme of Book 1, and in fact provide a direct link to the second half of the book in the particular way in which the Son and Spirit's missions are conceived. At issue is Augustine's understanding of participation in God, for the Athanasian logic of deification, which is the fundamental grammar of Pro-nicene theology, rests upon divine self-identity in the economy.³⁶

³⁴ See Richard Cross, "Two Models of the Trinity?," *Heythrop Journal* 43, no. 3 (July 2002), 275-94, and "On Generic and Derivations Views of God's Trinitarian Substance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56, no. 4 (Nov. 2003), 464-80, for arguments for the fundamental congruity of understandings of consubstantiality (Cross uses *homoousion*) in Nyssa and Augustine, and for the difference between Nyssa's "generic" view and the derivation model of Athanasius, Nazianzus, and Basil. In the latter article Cross particularly argues for the problematic nature of "derivation" views identifying the divine substance with the Father, popularized by Zizioulas and widely held in contemporary trinitarianism.

³⁵ As Ayres points out, "polemical" does not necessarily denote an occasional text explicitly confuting an opponent; it can also describe "arguments shaped by traditions of polemical debate... whether or not those arguments are, in any given text, actively being used against flesh and blood opponents. "Christological Context," 97 n6. I follow Ayres and Barnes in using the descriptor "Homoian" rather than "Arian," insofar as the latter is a rhetorical production of Athanasius, adopted by many following Nicaea, but which obscures the fact that Homoian positions (the Son is *like*, *homoios*, the Father in substance) often owed very little to Arius himself. See especially Michel Barnes, "The Arians of Book V, and the genre of 'de Trinitate,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 44, no. 1 (April 1993), 185-95, and "Exegesis and Polemic in Augustine's *De Trinitate* I," *Augustinian Studies* 30, no. 1 (1999), 43-59.

³⁶ In ch. 3, I will propose that Augustine's "daring inversion," "*Dilectio Deus est*" for "*Deus dilectio est*" ("Love is God" for "God is love") functions as a kind of equivalent for the Athanasian "the Son of God became human so humans could become God;" that is, it is his formula of deification. The language of

The inquiries of Books 1-7 as a whole coalesce around the consubstantiality of Father and Son, the particular manner in which the Son's relation to the Father, his begetting, is correlative with their identical possession of the divine being. In Books 5-7, this provokes a protracted and dense inquiry into the manner in which certain predications are made apropos of that relation, which will be vital to the treatment of divine simplicity in the second half of *Trin.* The preparation for this discussion is the consideration of the divine processions and missions in Books 2-4. On the supposition of the absolute equality of the persons in the divine substance, and the inseparability of the *opera ad extra*,³⁷ a problem arises: the language of the Father "sending" the Son quickly becomes ambiguous, for given considerations of the inseparability of the works *ad extra*, the incarnation must in some sense be the work of all three, including the Son. As fully divine the Son is already "in" the world as omnipresent with the Father, and thus "where he was sent to is where he already was."³⁸ So what meaning is there in the term "sending"? Augustine's resolution is that being sent, a *mission*, must mean a change, not in the Son, but in the world to whom the Son is sent: it means the invisible Son becoming *visible*,³⁹ being made flesh and appearing in (and as) creaturely reality, to the end that he becomes an object for our adoration and faith (4.20.28).

"daring inversion" is that of T.J. van Bavel, OSA, used by Roland Teske, SJ, in "Augustine's Inversion of 1 John 4:8," *Augustinian Studies* 39, no. 1 (2008), 49-60.

³⁷ Although Augustine utilizes the maxim *opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*, the principle, as he acknowledges in 1.4.7, is inherited. It is common to all Pro-nicenes, including the Cappadocians. This is one of the main theses of Ayres in *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, and is abundantly documented there.

³⁸ This is a short synopsis of the line of argument beginning with *Trin.* 2.5.7, which ties together Books 3-4 as well. It follows from the consideration of the *canonica regula* of Book 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.5.9,10: "the Son was sent to be visible by the invisible Father together with the invisible Son." There is an important disanalogy between the sending of the Son and Spirit: while the Son is made flesh such that he is God and human, it is not the case that the Spirit, who appeared under the guise of the dove at Christ's baptism, or the flame at Pentecost, is incarnate in or made one with those creaturely realities: "we cannot say of the Holy Spirit that he is God and dove, or God and fire, as we say of the Son that he is God and man," 2.6.11.

Setting aside the discussion of angelic mediation of theophanies and (for now) the discussion of Christ's mediation in Book 4,⁴⁰ the point here is that God is eternally self-giving in the Son, the Word. God has always been sending the Son; but he is said to be *sent* insofar as he is known. But this is not all, for Augustine notes, somewhat obscurely, that "he was not sent in virtue of some disparity of power or substance or anything in him that was not equal to the Father, but in virtue of the Son being from the Father, not the Father being from the Son."⁴¹ There is an indissoluble connection between the Son's filiation and his becoming known: because he is the Wisdom and Word of the Father, insofar as God can be said to be known, God is known through the Son – for knowledge of God is precisely *sapientia*, wisdom. To know the Father is thus to participate in some respect in the Son, which means knowing the Son as the Son begotten from the Father.⁴² Thus, for the Son to be sent means not just to be known in time, but precisely to be known *as* the Son, as the One who is begotten from the Father; and, as Augustine makes clear, likewise for the Spirit to be sent means for the Spirit to be known as proceeding from the

⁴⁰ With respect to the theophanies, it is important to observe that far from removing God from historical involvement, Augustine is concerned to give the "economy of salvation" a sharp – and exclusive – christological focus. Because God only works through creaturely means, prior to the incarnation, God worked through the mediation of angelic agencies. The upshot of this move is to make the incarnation absolutely unique in God's dealings with the world – one might say, with an eye to Barth, that Augustine is here intending to make the incarnation the beginning of all the ways and works of God. "Everything that has taken place in time in 'originated' matters which have been produced from the eternal and [reduced] back to the eternal, and has been designed to elicit the faith we must be purified by in order to contemplate the truth, has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the Son," *Trin.* 4.19.25. There can be no other work of God proper than the work in Christ. Cf. Gioia, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 109 – there is a "qualitative difference between the theophanies and the missions."

⁴¹ Gioia locates a hermeneutical rule to supplement the *forma servi-forma Dei* rubric in a similar passage in 2.1.2, namely that of "God from God" (Augustine: "We do, after all, call the Son God from God, but the Father we simply call God, not from God."). This modifies apparent subordination to mean "direction," (*de deo*, from God); *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 26-7; cf. 120-3.

⁴² The intrinsic link between the Son as the Word or the Wisdom of the Father, and the Son's mission in the incarnation, make problematic Rahner's complaint regarding the arbitrary relationship of procession and mission in Latin theology, at least with respect to Augustine; *The Trinity*, 23; cf. 94 n97 below. Gioia concurs with the argument here for the essential link between the economic and immanent Trinity on the basis of the mission of Son and Spirit (*Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 106-24, esp. 112-17).

Father (and the Son).⁴³ The point here is this: to know God means to participate in the Son who is the self-communication, the *verbum*, of the Father; and the mode of knowing the Father corresponds to the character of that self-communication, *sapientia*. To know God is to know the Son as the revelation of the Father, which is to say, is to order oneself to the beatifying contemplation of the Father.

Given the logic of simplicity, the Son in being sent is not a “mediator” in the sense of an ontological intermediary between God and the world, as a kind of emanation, such as that of *Nous* from the One in Plotinus. He is mediator, rather, as the mediator of life in his opposition to the mediator of death, the devil (4.10.13), through his teaching of humility in becoming flesh: the eternal wisdom of God who overcomes the devil is a Jewish peasant, the Son *as the incarnate human Jesus Christ*.⁴⁴ In keeping with what I term “the ethics of knowledge” below, Christ’s coming is a coming to teach humility and bond believers into one spirit through charity, for our distance from God is by our affections (4.1.2, 9.12).⁴⁵ When we are concerned with Augustine’s “displacement” of

⁴³ *Trin.* 4.20.29: “And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him.”

⁴⁴ It is remarkable that David Bradshaw fails to mention Augustine’s caveat about not finding the “Word made flesh” in the books of the Platonists in *conf.* 7.9.14, when he attempts to argue for Augustine’s “straightforward correlation of the One with the Father and Intellect with the Son,” “Augustine the Metaphysician,” in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. Aristotle Papanikolaou and George Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 240 (for the discussion of *conf.*, see 235ff). In part, this is because he reads *conf.* through the lens of *sol.* and *vera rel.*, very early texts that are manifestly unrepresentative of Augustine’s mature theology (a common strategy of Platonizing interpreters of Augustine). But it is also, as David Bentley Hart states, “simply irresponsible scholarship” (“The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics after Nicaea,” in *ibid.*, 209 n24) simply to ignore the plain statement of the text. Madec, as he often does, isolates the Platonizing problem succinctly: it limits the consideration of Augustine’s interaction with the *libri platoniorum* to his dependence upon Neoplatonist sources, while assuming Augustine’s intent is to modify and adapt Neoplatonism to Christianity; however, “Il s’applique à préciser l’identité et la différence entre les deux doctrines; il ne s’occupe pas d’en faire le mélange et la synthèse,” “Christus, scientia et sapientia,” 78.

⁴⁵ *Pace* Hanby, this is what Augustine means by the language of “similarity” (4.2.4), namely, an ethical ordering in humility and charity, rather than an ontological mediation, a principle of *harmonia* between God and creation. Augustine does of course operate on the basis of certain Neoplatonic metaphysical assumptions here, as his numerology in 4.7ff shows; but the point is that he is framing mediation in an ethical, historical sense, communicated in participation in the earthly Jesus.

Neoplatonism in this chapter, the heart of such a displacement rests precisely here: the continual theme of his Christology is a transformation in the meaning of “mediation,” for the mediation of Christ is one unavailable to the philosophers. Just as in *conf.* the Word made flesh was the thing Augustine did not find in the *libri platoniorum*, so in *Trin.* the incarnation is the stumbling block to those “who think they can purify themselves for contemplating God...by their own power and strength of character, which means in fact that they are thoroughly defiled by pride” (4.15.20).

The logic of simplicity: Books 5-7

Books 1-4 have established the consubstantiality of Father and Son and made intelligible the compatibility of sending/mission language with that of divine co-equality. In all of this the exigency of combating enduring Arianisms is operative; however, it is still possible to affirm the equality and coeternity of Father, Son and Spirit in terms of the divine *missions* and fail to suitably articulate the *processions* in such a way as to guarantee that Arianism does not find a second and safe haven in an incoherent account of the divine being. Thus, the language used of the divine essence – the being of God which just is Father, Son, and Spirit – must undergo a certain disciplining, not in order to intrude into the mystery of the divine essence and to posit a disjunction between mission and procession, but precisely in order to avoid an enervation of the economy of salvation. The stakes here are high: the previous books have pointed to an understanding of the missions which implies that God’s essence is that of a singular self-giving in Jesus Christ, and that in Jesus Christ God is fully encountered, fully identical to Godself in the economy. Books

5-7 now articulate the antecedent grammar to that economic self-giving: the logic of the trinitarian relations.

However paradoxical it may sound to contemporary theological ears, Augustine understands the logic of divine simplicity as the central theological claim that *secures* the integrity of the incarnation as God's proper self-communication.⁴⁶ But to understand how this logic works, one must clarify the relationship of the predications that can be made of the divine substance and of the hypostases. The moves here are vital to understanding the discussion of the image of the Trinity in the latter half of the book for two reasons: first, in terms of the mimetic analogy, so much revolves around two denotations, the Son as *sapientia* and the Spirit as *caritas*, and their correspondence in the ascent to God in human knowing, it is vital to properly articulate their relationship to the divine essence. Second, concerning the fulfillment of this mimesis in participation, these categories are the primary signifiers Augustine employs to articulate that ascent to God as a divine act *of* human agency, for the missions are the knowing of the processions in time.

The dilemma of divine simplicity, which is the guarantor of divine self-identity in the economy of salvation, is that both *sapientia* and *caritas* are predications associated with a particular hypostasis and assigned to the divine substance itself. This dilemma is the germ of the doctrine of appropriations, which Augustine adumbrates in this section of

⁴⁶ By this, I intend in part to show in this section that the logic of simplicity is not simply part of the Pro-nicene "grammar," but is in fact a metaphysical necessity if God's self-communication is to be truly deifying. Ayres no doubt would concur with this, but his language of a Pro-nicene "culture" can sometimes tend to lead one to forget this, as if simplicity served merely a negative function (regulating theological speech) and were not a speculative theological requisite of its own. Integral to this is my assumption that there are important theological advances being made in Books 5-7 – if the logic of consubstantiality is taken seriously, as it must, then something like the distinction of relative and substantial predications becomes necessary. Gioia overstates the utilitarian function of the metaphysical claims being made in this section of *Trin.*, arguing that Augustine's intent is to show the utter inadequacy of logical and ontological categories in articulating the mystery of the Trinity, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 154-7. They are, of course, inadequate; but this does not entail their superfluity, nor heterodoxy, as Gioia seems to be close to claiming at points.

Trin. To call the Son Wisdom or Spirit Love is to do so with the knowledge that these categories, taken strictly, are *improper* to these hypostases. The principle here is the following: if the substance of God is anything other than what is predicated of the subsistents in common, than the being of God is something *other* than the subsistents, which they participate in but are not identical to. Take, for example, the claim that the Son is the wisdom of the Father, in the sense that the Father knows through the Son, and God's wisdom is identical to the Son. This would mean that the Son does not possess divine wisdom or goodness identically with the Father (the Son himself is wise; the Father is not, for the Son is the Father's wisdom). This commits one to the heretical claim that the Father is not fully God, because God must be perfect wisdom; and second, to the logical absurdity that the Father is the begetter of the wisdom which the Father does not possess. The Father would be begetter of the Son, and thus by implication begetter of the Father's own wisdom, which the Father does not have.⁴⁷ Furthermore, the *Son* would be the begetter of the *Father*: if to be is the same as to be wise (as it must be in the divinity), and if the cause of the Father's wisdom is the Son whom the Father begets, then it follows that the Son is the cause of the Father's being.⁴⁸ This is the basis for the distinction of relative and substantial predications in Book 7: as Anselm would later formulate it, everything is said of the divine substance in common except what is predicated by way of relation.⁴⁹ Wisdom is not a relational but substantial term, and thus common to the divine nature; but image, Word, or Son indicate relation, and therefore the Son proper (7.2.3). Scripture talks of the Son as *sapientia*, says Augustine, with respect to his exemplarity as

⁴⁷ *Trin.* 6.1.2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.1.2: "Could you have a crazier notion?"

⁴⁹ See *The Procession of the Holy Spirit*, in *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury*, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: Arthur J. Banning, 2000), 469-70; codified at the Council of Florence, 1441 (Denzinger 703).

the *incarnate* image of the Father: “the model which is the image who is equal to the Father...[so] that we may be refashioned to the image of God; for we follow the Son by living wisely” (7.3.5). The Son’s being as Wisdom from Wisdom is expressed in his mission: he causes us to become wise in time.

This relationship of substantial and relational predications is so important to a coherent doctrine of the Trinity that it is necessary to dwell here briefly. Contemporary trinitarian thinkers tend to assume that making the Trinity sufficiently “economic” means rejecting the doctrine of appropriations: the Son must be properly the divine Wisdom, and the Spirit properly the divine Love, so that the hypostases have sufficient personal distinction. But as Augustine is showing, this confuses substance and relative predications: wisdom must be identical to the divine being because it is a substance term (it is not relational the way “Son” or “Father” or “image” are, all of which are only meaningful terms as correlates *of* another term). Therefore, if the Father is not wise the same way the Son is wise, and wisdom is a predication of the divine being, then it follows that the Father is not divine the same way the Son is. But that is Arianism (or technically, Homoianism), the whole problem of which is that it compromises divine self-communication. If *sapientia* is the divine essence, and the Son is *sapientia* from *sapientia* (if *sapientia* is appropriated to the Son as God’s *sapientia* eternally generated and known as such in time), then the Son is fully divine as the divine self-giving. To call the Son Wisdom is to say something about the character of the incarnation as God’s self-identity in revelation.

There is a further move here that follows from the same logic, which is the explicit rejection of a “substratum” in the Trinity: *contra* many of his readers after

Rahner,⁵⁰ Augustine denies that there is any sense in which the divine substance lies behind or under the three persons (7.5.10), for this would be to reassign the referent of substantial predications from the hypostases in common, as constituted by their relations, to an independent subsistence from which they derive their being. This is to reallocate the agency of God from that self-giving in the Son to something that occurs in eternal abstraction from that self-giving.⁵¹ But *this* entails that the language of person cannot be properly be predicated of the hypostases, for human persons participate in a kind of relationship that is inadmissible in God: the trinitarian “persons” are not three instances or species of one genus, as human persons, who are not consubstantial, are. This mode of thinking would mean that Father and Son together were more than they were individually, which would entail something less than the full deity of any one of the subsistents taken individually.⁵² This is the meaning of Augustine’s infamous claim that he does not understand the Greek language of *ousia* and *hypostasis*: he is denying a particular relationship of ontological categories that *cannot* consistently be predicated of God, precisely so that the integrity of the economy of salvation can be protected.⁵³

⁵⁰ See above, p. 25.

⁵¹ This point is made even more strongly in *ep.* 120.3.13: “now hold with unshakeable faith that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are a trinity and that there is, nonetheless, one God, not that the divinity is common to these as if it were a fourth, but that it is itself the ineffably inseparable Trinity,” *Letters 100-155*, trans. Roland Teske, SJ (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2003). See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 375ff, for discussion of this point.

⁵² Cf. *Trin.* 7.6.11, “as though there were three things consisting of one material.”

⁵³ On this, see Richard Cross, “*Quid Tres? On What Precisely Augustine Professes Not to Understand in De Trinitate 5 and 7*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 100, no. 2 (April 2007), 215-32; Cross shows that “person” is a genus term, for which there is no appropriate species term predicable of the divine subsistents; as Cross notes, this relationship was at times used as an (self-consciously imperfect) example by the Cappadocians, especially Basil.

The performance of participation in the Son

It is worthwhile to remind ourselves at this point that what is at stake in all of this is participation in the life of God. Simplicity is the guarantor of trinitarian self-identity in the economy of salvation, and what Augustine is doing is delineating how the Pro-nicene logic of simplicity articulates the singularity of God's self-giving in the incarnation. But simplicity is an apophatic signifier, indicating the mystery beyond which human knowing cannot penetrate,⁵⁴ the absolute ontological difference between God and world. Created beings, even pure intellectual realities like the angels, are not simple substances, for a simple "being" is unoriginate, not dependent for its being on any other. Thus only God is simple; but a simple being is incomprehensible, because it is unlike any other being we know – the language of *substantia*, which by definition admits of a certain inherent relationship with accidents or qualities, is improper to God.⁵⁵ Created minds that participate in materiality – humans – do not ascend beyond discursive knowledge (except, perhaps, in momentary "ecstatic" experiences); this is unlike God, who knows through pure intellection, without discursivity. God's knowledge is identical to God's nature, such that God knows only through Godself, not through a relationship to an object external to Godself. But if this absolute difference signified by simplicity (and its correlate, the unity of operations *ad extra*) is the proper way in which to conceive of the Triune God, then the very notion of participation must be rethought, because "likeness" to God cannot be an ontological property – it cannot cross this apophatic barrier. To the extent that some

⁵⁴ Cf. Cavadini on this point, "The Structure and Intention of *De Trinitate*," 106.

⁵⁵ God "is improperly called substance...He is called being truly and properly in such a way that perhaps only God ought to be called being." *Trin.* 7.5.10; cf. 2.18.35, where Augustine more generally indicates the impropriety of "nature, or substance, or essence, or whatever else you may call that which God is;" again, the point here is not metaphysical ineptness, but a recognition of the sharp boundaries of conventional metaphysical language.

degree of likeness exists, it is of course found in the inwardness of the soul, but to correctly understand how this mimesis functions, we must grasp that for Augustine the *vestigia* of the Trinity are actualized in the event of the performance of participation, which is the image of God *proper*: drawing near to God is to be conceived “in terms of likeness, which is essentially the actualization of participation.”⁵⁶ To recall Turner’s language, the mimetic analogy obtains precisely in the enactment of the participatory analogy. Augustine turns *in interiore homine* because the act of knowing and loving God says something about the very possibilities of human knowing and loving. The image of God is actualized in the remembering, knowing and loving of God, not self, and this actualization exceeds the difference of God and humanity because it is the work of grace – hence, the pneumatological performance of Books 8-15.

To contemplate God is to see God. But God is invisible – which is one way of saying, God is absolutely simple. Hence, the apophatic boundary is ensured by the divine simplicity: created reason cannot fathom a wholly self-identical, simple being. While created rationality remains an image of the divine reason, and in a real sense participates in the eternal ideas, this is not to *know* God, which means to be united to God.⁵⁷ This can only be a gift of God: the ontological difference between God and creation poses no obstacle whatsoever to the realization of the mystical ascent, or at least it poses no

⁵⁶ Bell, *The Image and Likeness*, 28. Cf. Rowan Williams: “The *image* of God (as opposed to the mere *vestigia* of triadic structures in the mind) is realised when the three moments of our mental agency all have God for their object,” “*Sapientia* and the Trinity,” in *Mélanges T.J. van Bavel*, ed. B. Bruning, M. Lamberigts, and J. Van Houtem (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), 319.

⁵⁷ The common mistake here is to confuse two distinct epistemological claims that follow from the generally Platonist assumption that God is, in some sense, an intellectual reality, *intelligibilis*: first, one can claim that for Augustine God is inherently knowable, that God’s essence is comprehensible; on the other, much more delimited, claim, one is simply distinguishing between modes of apprehension – *insofar as God is knowable*, God is known by the mind, not the senses. When Augustine is accused of rendering the divine essence comprehensible, as he is by David Bradshaw and Phillip Cary, there is a confusion of the second for the first.

obstacle to *God*. For it is precisely a proper understanding of transcendence, God's absolute difference from creation by virtue of being its creator, that allows Augustine to affirm God's intimacy to creation – God is more intimate to the creature than it is to itself. Because God is present to the soul in grace, God can elevate the soul to the vision of God. The obstacle, on our side, is twofold: first, our mode of (discursive) knowing is never adequate to the perfect simplicity of the divine nature; second, our knowing is fundamentally that of sinful beings, and we are separated from God by our love.⁵⁸

The consideration of simplicity in Books 5-7, in addition to their vital arguments on relative and substantial predications, thus form a crucial link between the contemplative theme that surfaces again and again as the orientation of Books 1-4 and the enactment of the contemplative ascent through grace in Books 8-15. Integral to the logic of simplicity of 5-7 is the realization that participation, *methexis*, is being fundamentally rethought as a performative, ethical union with the divine *sapientia* which is identical to the incarnate Jesus, and this reconception of participation is a component of the doctrine of the Trinity itself. In the consideration of the triune divine nature there is no possible abstraction from the fact that that divine nature is apprehended only in faith by grace, and in fact that the Trinity is the condition of possibility of such apprehension. This latter point is the performative aporia of self-involvement that is the textual site of Augustine's pneumatology. Two implications immediately follow. First, on Neoplatonist assumptions – assumptions which share this apophatic understanding of the divine simplicity – the created-uncreated diastasis is overcome by *methexis* in the One by virtue of the likeness to

⁵⁸ *Trin.* 7.6.12: the approach to God is one of "likeness or similarity," a proximity of imitation; cf. 8.7.11, a separation "not in terms of distance but of divergence of values."

the One inherent in the capacities of the rationality of the philosopher.⁵⁹ Augustine's displacement of the Plotinian ascent problematizes any kind of ontological basis for participative ascent, in the sense of an actualization of any kind of continuity of being between the divine and the created by virtue of some internal correspondence. In other words, Augustine's sharp focus on divine simplicity and invisibility, and his sensitivity to the human sinfulness, the difference of affections, that separates us from God, means that articulating a trinitarian ontology is insufficient as a Christian account of participation.

Second, because of the self-involving nature of God-talk, to think the mystery of the Trinity is for Augustine to be called to contemplation of that Trinity, which means to be called to participate in the Father's self-giving in the Son through the Spirit. If this is the case, then the entire second half of *Trin.* is a pneumatological performance of contemplation, a spiritual exercise answering *modo interiore* to the object of analysis in Books 1-7, the sending of the Son that reveals the ineffable consubstantiality of Father and Son in the Spirit. What Augustine is undertaking in the latter half of *Trin.*, then, is not the construction of any type of analogy, psychological or otherwise; he is thematizing the very act of knowing God that is componential to the doctrine of the Trinity. But, because God is unknowable, this act can only be considered indirectly, through a mirror, as it were. Because our elevation to the vision of God is an act of God that is more intimate to us than we are, that act is accessible only through the paradox of a self-knowing that operates on the presupposition of the knowing of God. But given the consideration of the mission of the Son already discussed, the *speculum et aenigmate* of participation is the

⁵⁹ This includes, for Plotinus, an ethical self-cultivation, a moral improvement of the self by the self in accord with the higher nature of the rational soul. But Augustine has a doctrinal issue to contend with here, viz. the Christian doctrine of sin: humankind cannot on its own merits attain the moral purification necessary to achieve union with God.

paradox of a self-knowing performed *in Christ*: this participation, which is the act of the Spirit, the *caritas* by which God joins the self to Christ, is what Augustine means by grace. As we will see in Book 13, the ascent to God takes place in the descent of Christ.

Alienation and Union: Embodied Knowing in Books 8-12

Faith, memory, and knowledge

In this section, I will be tracing a set of themes in Books 8-12, revolving around the relationship of knowledge and love in the psychological analogy. These books are extraordinarily complex, and not entirely linear, an issue not aided by the fact that the text was pirated somewhere in Book 12 and Augustine gave up writing *Trin.* for some time. It will be necessary to be selective in what follows, but the central thread of the text is easily stated: it follows a general ascent motif from bodies, the senses, and the flux of temporal knowledge, *scientia*, toward the gradually purified modes of human knowing of intellectual and eternal realities, which eventuate in wisdom, *sapientia*, finally seeking contemplation of the ultimate eternal good in which all such realities inhere, God. In dividing the latter half of *Trin.* thusly, I am not intending to argue for a sharp delineation between this division and that of Books 13-15 (indeed, Books 12 and 13 form a unity); rather, this enables me to trace the overriding theme of *scientia* and *sapientia* with closer precision. Thus, Books 8-12 will be read as revolving around the theme of the mutual interplay of knowledge and love, an interplay that leads to the direct treatment of *scientia* and *sapientia* in Book 12 and following. The present discussion will culminate in the provisional definition of the *imago trinitatis* as consisting of the triad *memoria*,

intelligentia, voluntas in Book 10, although this is not fully explicated until Book 14. A major issue in this argument, and one that sets the distinction between *scientia* and *sapientia*, is the nature of embodied knowledge, which was briefly adumbrated above in the mention of the discursive nature of created cognition. This issue trades on the ambivalence of alienation and union insofar as all knowing, for Augustine, is an ethical knowing. Our knowledge is a function of our love.

The first section of the second half of *Trin.* is organized around a basic conceptual puzzle: how can we love what we do not know?⁶⁰ We must be pure in heart to see God, so we must in some sense love the unknown, which is only possible insofar as we believe it by faith. However, in thus believing, “we must take care our faith is not fabricated... How then are we to love by believing this trinity which we do not know?”⁶¹ Because God is truth, to be called to contemplation of God is to be called to understand God insofar as one is able; but, as has been repeatedly seen in Books 1-7, the essence of God is ineffable, and the consubstantiality of the three persons of the Trinity in one simple substance is ultimately incomprehensible. Thus we are back with the apophatic function of simplicity. Two parallel themes are introduced in Book 8 that answer to this problem of the love-knowledge paradox: the illuminationist themes of the eternal ideas that leads to the development of the function of *memoria* later on, and the role of faith in providing its own kind of knowledge of God that provokes the quest for understanding.⁶²

⁶⁰ Turner’s discussion is illuminating; *The Darkness of God*, 81ff. See also the importance of Mt. 5:8 for Book I, as discussed in Barnes’s study “The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity,” above.

⁶¹ For this line of argument, *Trin.* 8.4.6-5.8.

⁶² Book 8 represents, in my judgment, something like a *précis* of the latter half of *Trin.*, thematized as it is around clinging to the good in love (4.6), which is mediated by the sacrament of the incarnation (5.7), and culminates in a pneumatology of charity (7.10-10.14). Structurally, therefore, it corresponds to Book I, as integral to the argument that follows, but remaining somewhat independent and prefatory. Cavadini sees Book 8 as a first attempt at a failed ascent, prior to the second ascent of Books 9-14; “The Structure and Intention of *De Trinitate*,” 106.

At one level, the solution is simple – faith is the source of some degree of knowledge of God on the basis of which we love God and understand God further. After all, Book 7 concludes with the Isianic admonition “Unless you believe, you will not understand.”⁶³ But a more complex dimension of the problem soon emerges. Augustine makes an immediate connection between this problem – loving what we do not know – and the same mysterious process of human knowledge involved in memory that he discussed at length in *conf.* Just as with material things (say, Carthage) a word is uttered in the mind when the image of Carthage is recalled from memory, so in dealing with intellectual realities like justice we invoke something from the mind, an idea of justness that is apprehensible to us and which we recognize immediately (8.6.9). Intellectual realities like goodness, justice, and the like are apprehended by the mind insofar as the mind by virtue of its rational nature already participates in the God who is the exemplar of those ideas. So to say that the apprehension of justice is the perception of something present to the mind even when the mind does not directly perceive it is to say something about this nature of participation – it is to say that the mind is fundamentally oriented to God in its knowing, because God is the exemplar and term of all human knowing.⁶⁴

⁶³ Quoting this verse, *ep.* 120.1.3 states the logic of faith and reason clearly: “In certain matters, therefore, pertaining to the teaching of salvation, which we cannot yet grasp by reason, but which we will be able to at some point, faith precedes reason so that the heart may be purified in order that it may receive and sustain the light of the great reason, which is, or course, a demand of reason!”

⁶⁴ Rowan Williams points out that rather than “innate data,” the discussion of the forms or ideas is at bottom more about the grammar of subjectivity rather than the content of the ego, for all that the argument concerning the idea of justice seeks to establish is that we are compelled by love of the saints to aspire to the form of life we find desirable in them, and that, in thematizing this form of life, we discover something about the nature of justice itself. Thus “what our moral longing longs for, loves, is love, in that it is directed to persons who are loving...that is why love of God and love of neighbor are not really to be distinguished.” “The Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge in the *De trinitate*,” in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, ed. Joseph T. Lienhard, Earl C. Muller, and Roland J. Teske (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 125. Here as everywhere, Augustine’s theology is fundamentally social or ethical.

However, here Augustine breaks with the Platonic understanding of *anamnesis*, at least in terms of the transmigration of souls.⁶⁵ Instead, *memoria*, which is where Augustine locates this capacity for recognition of eternal ideas, is the site of the apprehension of the ideas and thus where the mind gains some understanding of the nature of the eternal God, and thereby gains some understanding of itself, for it is its own rational capacity in which the mind recognizes its intellectual participation in God – its “illumination” by divine light. But this means that getting the distinction straight between created and eternal substances (i.e., the soul and God) is involved, and therefore, the distinction between the modes of *knowing* created and eternal substances. Knowledge of created things, *scientia*, must lead on to knowledge of eternal things, *sapientia*, if we are to make any headway toward understanding the ineffable and eternal Trinity of persons. To take up the question of knowledge of God is therefore to embark on an itinerary, a journey, from *scientia* to *sapientia*. But this itinerary is not so straightforward; as became clear in *conf.*, *memoria* signifies the fact we only seek God because God has sought us, because our desire for God turns out to be God’s desire for us which orders our own desire. Our “memory” of God in the ideas is also the recognition of the prior agency of God in orienting us to beatifying knowledge: *memoria* stands at once for the priority of the divine agency in establishing and ordering the self, and for a kind of pre-reflexive self-awareness or (to use a different idiom) habitual self-knowledge upon which human

⁶⁵ On this, see Bell, *The Image and Likeness*, 23ff, and Gerald O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 199-207. Augustine rejects the doctrine of the preincarnate state of the soul and its fall into embodiment flatly in *Trin.* 12.15.24; alluding to the famous *Meno* passage regarding the boy’s recognition of geometric truths, Augustine sarcastically observes that “it is unlikely that everybody was a geometer in a previous life...the conclusion we should rather draw is that the nature of the intellectual mind has been so established by the disposition of its creator that it is subjoined to intelligible things in the order of nature, and so it sees such truths in a kind of non-bodily light.” Cf. *retr.* 1.4.4.

intellection is based.⁶⁶ Thus the entire *itinerarium* of *Trin.* is propelled by the prior grace of God. The paradox of loving what we do not know reemerges, then, the mutual pullulation of intellect and will in the knowledge of God.⁶⁷

Love, the verbum, and the ethics of knowledge

The act of knowing involves more, for Augustine, than just intellectual apprehension: it involves a relationship of the will to that which is apprehended. Because the good of all things is grounded in that unchangeable good which is God, to perceive the good itself is to perceive God. But this is precisely the problem: knowing this God in order to love God and enter into bliss is only permitted to the pure in heart, but we need to know God to *become* pure in heart (8.3.5-4.6). “Thus it is in this question we are occupied with about the trinity and about knowing God, the only thing we really have to see is what true love is; well in fact, simply what love is...true love then is that we should live justly by cleaving to the truth” (8.7.10). At issue is the act of willing the good, of joining oneself to the good or justice present to the mind prior to the mind’s own self-presence, an act inherent to the nature of knowing itself. Therefore, the way the mind loves is inextricable from the way the mind knows.

⁶⁶ The language of “pre-reflexive self-awareness” is that of Denys Turner; Sullivan uses the neo-scholastic language of habitual self-knowledge. Involved here is the distinction between *se nosse*, innate self-knowing, and *se cogitare*, the active generation of a *verbum* in reflection upon oneself.

⁶⁷ It is this dynamic, with the interplay of *memoria* and faith, which regulates the production of the eventual triadic image *memoria-intellectus-voluntas*, which at this stage in *Trin.* is *mens-notitia-amor*. The shift from the latter to the former at the end of Book 9 is sudden, but driven by the need to talk about the image as a process of knowing, an activity of the one mind, rather than faculties of the mind: the act of *understanding* or *willing*, therefore, rather than the term of that act, *knowledge* or *love*. Cf. Ayres, “The Discipline of Self-knowledge,” 288, and O’Daly, *Augustine’s Philosophy of Mind*, 6: “the soul is none other than the coherence of its faculties of memory, understanding and will, whose co-operation is characteristic of all human behaviour.”

God is love itself, a self-diffusive good identical to the Trinity, and thus love is the central and essential question in the inquiry of *Trin.* It is salient to observe at this point the way in which Augustine ends Book 8, namely with the triad of love that is often viewed lamentably as a discarded *analogia trinitatis*: “There you are with three, the love, what is being loved, and love” (8.10.14). But this is neither intended as a trinitarian analogy that is discarded for a psychological one, nor is it, *pace* Rowan Williams, interrupted by the massive digression of Books 9-14.⁶⁸ It is, instead, setting the stage for the pneumatology of Christian knowledge that follows. Quickly dismissed by Augustine as having any explanatory or analogical force (9.2.2), what it does do is foreground the notion of love as a “kind of life coupling or trying to couple together two things” (8.10.14). It is this unitive power of love that is vital as shedding some light on the Trinity, for it gives some degree of illumination concerning the procession of both the Spirit and the Son, as well as our participation in the Son.

The act of love itself implies only two; but, Augustine notes, bracketing everything but the basic act of self-love itself, love implies knowledge of the object known, such that the mind loving and knowing itself are three things, the subject of the act and its two acts. Because the mind is one substance, these three are one and coequal.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ “Sapientia and the Trinity,” 323. Williams’s reasoning is that this triad is picked up again in 15.6.9 when Augustine seeks a trinity in wisdom; but it is picked up only to emphasize its dissimilarity to the Trinity. Hanby likewise sees this as the “chief analogue for explicating the Trinity (50), insofar as Augustine’s “doxological ontology” presupposes the aesthetic difference between Father and Son as a precondition for the manifestation of divine love. However, as I argue extensively in ch. 3 (discussing both Williams and Hanby in more detail) Augustine’s reason for rejecting this analogy is sound: the image of the Trinity cannot be intersubjective reciprocity; we cannot see the divine self-giving as a participation in the reciprocity of Father and Son. Christ is not the *manifestation* of an independent and prior triune love (75); the incarnation *is* the act of divine love.

⁶⁹ However, Augustine cautions, love and knowledge do not obtain in the mind as qualities in a subject, or as faculties; they are rather substantial predications, and identical to the mind – see *Trin.* 9.4.5 (cf. 9.4.7-5.8; 10.11.17-18). The problem with the analogy here, however, is that *mens* is still that in which *notitia* and *amor* inhere, rather than the specific act from which the generation of a *verbum* in the unitive force of *dilectio* arises, which, he will later argue, is *memoria*; this, at least seems to be behind the shift

There is, then, something in the mind's act of love and knowledge that is a mimetic image of the Trinity, although it ultimately falls short, because the object of its knowledge is ephemeral: "when the human mind knows itself and loves itself, it does not know and love something unchangeable."⁷⁰ So once again there is a problem inherent to our knowing: the mind must image the Trinity as the apprehension of something eternal; this apprehension occurs in its ownmost act of knowledge and love of itself. But our only means of apprehending the eternal as embodied, discursive reasoners is through the knowledge gained temporally, through the senses.

But this temporal act is not the full story: if we reflect on the process of cognition, it becomes clear that knowledge is the result of a judgment made upon sensory data in the light of the ideas through a kind of act of synthesis of the two. And the ideas are precisely the apprehension of the eternal. Hence in Augustine's "illuminationism," the eternal light by which the mind judges is not directly accessible, but functions rather prethematically, or in the *memoria*, that depth of the self that opens up outside of itself to the God above it; but this is only thematized insofar as the mind makes a judgment. Thus, in the act of knowing, the mind generates a *verbum*, an inner word, about sensible data in light of the eternal ideas in which that data is grasped.⁷¹ Here emerges the second vital moment, after *memoria*, in the construction of the psychological analogy, the function of the *verbum*. This has a twofold significance: first, it clarifies the act of knowing in the interplay of the eternal ideas and the mind's intellection, and thereby solves the problem of the priority of

from *mens* to *memoria* in 10.11.17. *Mens* is thus much more suitably an analogate of the whole Trinity, rather than the Father – it sheds no light on the specific issue under discussion, viz., consubstantiality. Cf. Gioia, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 278.

⁷⁰ *Trin.* 9.6.9.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9.7.12: "Thus it is that in that eternal truth according to which all temporal things were made we observe with the eye of the mind the form according to which we are and according to which we do anything with true and right reason." Ayres, "The Discipline of Self-knowledge," has a helpful bibliography on illuminationism, 274 n38.

love and knowledge in the act of knowing. Strictly speaking, there is no priority, or at least, the process is irreducibly dynamic, even if knowing is logically prior.⁷² But because loving and knowing do not name the interplay of two faculties, but internal moments in the single act of intellection, knowing for Augustine is an ethical act insofar as it is an intellectual one,⁷³ and this is because an act of knowing is completed insofar as love joins the mind to its object in the begetting of an inner word. Knowledge is *loved knowledge*. Knowing is an ethical act insofar as “that is called a word which we like when it is conceived by the mind” (9.10.15), and this means that every *verbum* is conceived in love either of the creature or the creator (9.8.13). So the act of human knowing is itself a mode of participation in eternal truth at both a prethematic level (the inhering in *memoria* of the ideas) and an ultimate referential level (the referral of the object of knowledge to eternal truth): God is both cause and term of the act of knowing.

Unity and alienation in knowing and loving

The argument ruling Books 11 and 12 revolves around the major problem already observed: the knowing of temporal objects, even the mind’s knowing of itself, is not truly mimetic of God because that act of knowing is not truly simple. This sets up the ascension motif of the next several books: the image, to truly participate in that which it images, must function in such a way that it is identical to itself and equal to itself

⁷² The *verbum* also illuminates the procession of the Son, and thus the other vexed paradox of *Trin.*, namely, why the Spirit is not a Son: the act of knowing is prior to the joining of the mind to the intentional object in love, but that love is integral to the generation of that Word. The remainder of Book 9 (12.17-18) is occupied with this question: why love is not a word or begotten. Gioia calls the “inseparability between knowledge and love” one of the theological foundations of *Trin.*, deriving from the “unity between the saving work of Christ and the role of the Holy Spirit;” *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 128. Cf. Rowan Williams, “Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge,” 127; A.N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 161-2.

⁷³ It would of course be more accurate to say that a bifurcation of epistemological and ethical is simply not a division it would have occurred to Augustine to make.

(9.11.16). That is, the knowing of an external, temporal object is finally adventitious; for the triadic relationship only exists as long as the will joins the intention to the form in the mind. Furthermore, love is a unitive force, an act of the will joining the mind to a known object in a *verbum*; but our knowing is never really united with the object of our knowledge, both because in an embodied, temporal state, this is impossible, and because our fallen desires are fundamentally acquisitive. In our fallen state, the perversion of our desire is such that our love for the beautiful is a joining of our desire to it to possess it as an ultimate end. But only God is an ultimate end, and our love for created bodies is to be a love that is loved *in God* as source and ground of that body.

There is nothing inherently problematic in the fact that our knowledge is discursive, unlike God's; the problem emerges because we do not join our knowledge to a body in love without seeking to acquire that object for our own enjoyment. Their good is from God, and it is only with reference to God that their good can be truly received *as good*, as a gift from the Creator; for the ultimate corruption of the created order is to use it for self-pleasure, which involves not least appropriating it as a *private* good, not a good shared in the human community.⁷⁴ Indeed, that our knowing is acquisitive reveals something of its possibility – self-knowing is a knowing of an other, and if we knew as God knew, we would know as giving ourselves to the other. For us, this means that the created embodied world would be precisely the sphere in which the perfection of our knowing could occur.⁷⁵ But in the present state, our knowing is not unitive: it is

⁷⁴ On the *uti-frui* relationship, see *Trin.* 9.8.13; 10.10.13, 11.17, as well of course the *locus classicus*, *doc. Chr.* 1.4.

⁷⁵ Rowan Williams makes a similar point when he says that “on the one hand, true self-knowledge is knowledge of what is timeless – the nature of love and justice; while on the other hand this can only occur within the temporal world in which the love of God and neighbor is learned and exercised,” “Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge,” 127.

alienation, because just in taking a created good for our own, we are alienated from the goodness of that good thing – God.⁷⁶

Because the mind joins itself to that which it apprehends, the mind in *scientia* cannot be the image of God, because it is always subjoined to something external to itself that is a frustration of its desire. Indeed, the mind, as a dynamic process of remembering, understanding, and willing, *is* what it joins itself to; so the most fundamental and consistent mistake of the mind is to join itself to the material images towards which its desire is oriented.⁷⁷ The mind joins its love to the material, confuses itself with the material (10.5.7-6.8), and so lapses into forgetfulness of itself. The desire-shaped force of habit causes it to forget that in *memoria* or pre-reflexive self-consciousness it is already familiar with itself.⁷⁸ To truly know itself would be to know itself as subject to God who created it; but this knowledge is occluded by the twisted force of acquisitive desire; self-knowledge is therefore a purification of desire such that the mind can remember itself, and in so doing, understand itself as referring beyond itself to its creator.

The image of God will be actualized in the itinerary toward the eternal light by which the mind acts in its judgment, the *sapientia* that is the eternal beholding of God. Here, once again, the importance of simplicity crops up: on the one hand (the mimetic image) the human subject is never identical to his act of knowing and loving as God is, because such a unity is fundamentally an ethical act, the perfect union of knowledge and

⁷⁶ At 11.5.9, Augustine states that to love a body is to be alienated from it; cf. the clarification of *retr.* 2.41.2 – this is with reference to loving it unto the praise of the Creator.

⁷⁷ Turner makes the point that inherent here is a potential critique of introspection: the materialist error emerges just in the act of turning the mind toward its own contents; *The Darkness of God*, 88.

⁷⁸ This is Rowan Williams's "central paradox" of *Trin.*: the self loves the idea of knowing itself, even when ignorant of itself, which means that it must know itself as a knowing subject in some regard. "Paradoxes of Self-Knowledge," 128. Ultimately, this means that self-knowing points beyond itself, insofar as our knowing is an activity fundamentally determined by its orientation toward the good – such that it cannot finally see itself as an "object" without reference to God and neighbor (*ibid.*, 131).

love, and thus predicated on the undivided orientation of one's desire to God. This is impossible for fallen creatures, who in loving acquisitively are alienated from the object of their love – especially if that object is self or God.⁷⁹ Thus on the other hand (the participatory image), love is a unitive act, a “coupling” of two, but there can be no sense in which the human act of love is proportionate to the divine essence, which is a perfect act of love. The upshot of this is that human reason insofar as it is directed toward the knowledge of temporal objects, cannot (alone) be the image of God; it must participate not only in *scientia* but in *sapientia*, which concerns not so much the object of knowledge but our disposition toward it: it involves the mind “mak[ing] judgments on these bodily things according to non-bodily and everlasting meanings,” that is, “by the dutiful piety of justice” (12.2.2, 1.1). Therefore the mimetic aspects of the image are secondary to the participatory aspects; “only in that part which is concerned with the contemplation of eternal things can one find something that is not only a trinity but also the image of God” (12.4.4). The embodiment of this image is the proper ordering of the reason such that the mind is intent on “eternity, truth and charity” while at the same time attending to the “changeable and bodily things without which this life cannot be lived” (12.13.21). Contemplation of God is not a flight from the world, but the proper ethical ordering of the subject in the unity of her action and contemplation (12.14.22).⁸⁰

⁷⁹ The implication here is that divine simplicity is the aspiration of human knowing and loving – the perfect act of wisdom, the union of knowledge and love. See ch. 3 below. Cf. Williams, *The Divine Sense*, 164: “the mind, when rightly engaged, burns always with the fire of love.” See also 171 on love as unitive.

⁸⁰ In this passage, Augustine dismisses a “social analogy” for the Trinity (12.5.5-7.9); this seems to be in response to the suggestion that the image of God in the Genesis account is found in some structure of community, namely that of father, mother, and child. Augustine, modern readers would perhaps be surprised to see, does not reject this analogy because it involves unseemly sexual associations; furthermore, for all the very real patriarchal logic ruling paragraphs 7.9-12, Augustine also shows that this analogy would mean that woman as such was not the image of God (he notes I Cor. 11, where Paul seems clear that “man” is the image of God). Augustine does, of course, associate man with the *ratio superior* and woman with the *ratio inferior* in paragraph 10, thus perpetuating the deeply problematic assumption of the times

The Pneumatological Aporia of The Image: Books 13-15

*Christ the mediator and the sapiential performance of the image*⁸¹

Having seen the emerging significance of that *sapientia* wherein the image of the Trinity is located, we come to the argument of Books 13-14. Here is the fulcrum of the entire book, showing the interconnection of faith, grace and Christology in the performance of participation that is the *imago trinitatis*. For the argument has led to an aporia. The image is actualized in sapiential contemplation, but this actualization founders before a twofold chasm: first, the overarching theme of the incomprehensibility of God, as signified in divine simplicity, and second, the disorder of the sinful mind whereby reason is degraded in the private enjoyment of temporal goods, i.e., concupiscence. The common link here is the nature of our love, or (in what is an identical statement for Augustine) our capacity to will the good, which is why the fundamental resolution is pneumatological. And it is pneumatological by being christological.

that construes male and female on the same hierarchy of *sapientia* and *scientia*. While Augustine is quick to offset the outright patriarchy of I Cor. 11 with the egalitarian statement of Gal. 3:26, there can be no disputing, and no defending of, Augustine's role in mediating the misogyny of late antiquity here and elsewhere in his authorship. On the other hand, it is worth noticing that he is destabilizing the ontological basis of that regnant sexism, for he stresses that contemplative reason is embodied in the woman just as much as the man, and that the *scientia-sapientia* binary, while still encoding a gender hierarchy, is not an *ontological* difference as such; it rather lies in the ethical disposition and orientation of the soul. This is not to claim that Augustine is a feminist; it is simply to note that he explicitly refuses the grounding of patriarchy in an ontological order. Sullivan notes that Augustine is in disagreement with "much of eastern patristic thought" in affirming equal participation in the image of God by men and women; *The Image of God*, 49. See also Kari Elisabeth Børresen, "In Defence of Augustine: How *Femina* is *Homo*," *Mélanges T.J. van Bavel*, who offers a cautious affirmation of Augustine's "inclusive intention, without repeating his tragic content," 428.

⁸¹ Seminal here is Madec, "Christus, scientia et sapientia nostra. Le principe de coherence de la doctrine augustinienne," *Recherches Augustiniennes* 10 (1975), 78, much of which is concerned, *pace* du Roy, to stress the christological unification, rather than platonizing dissociation, of *scientia* and *sapientia*, eternity and time, and the like; see esp. 84-5. For more on du Roy, see Madec, "Notes sur l'intelligence augustinienne de la foi," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 17 (1971), 119-42, and "La Méditation Trinitaire," in *Lectures Augustiniennes* (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2001), 197-219.

The christological discussion of Book 13 is the apex of this section: Christ is the object of faith by which we know the unknowable God and the means of human happiness in immortality. Just as Book 4, with its discussion of Christ's mediation, occupied the central place in the first half of *Trin.* and was the pivot upon which the argument concerning the mission of the Son revolved, so Book 13 is the climax toward which the entire *ascensus* argument revolves: the *point* in training the reader in the performance of participation in the Son is to lead her to understanding the work of the Son in overcoming the devil in the incarnation. Augustine couches this in terms of the *demonstration* by God of God's love for us: the purpose of the incarnation is not just a deliverance from the power of the devil, but a teaching of humility. This humility is connected to the overriding intent of the incarnation, a conferring of God's gifts upon us, which is its pneumatological *excess*:

God loves us...with a quite uncalled for generosity, without any good deserts of ours...For even what we call our deserts or merits are gifts of his. In order that faith might work through love, the charity of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us. And was given to us when Jesus was glorified in his resurrection...These gifts are merits by which we arrive at the supreme good of immortal happiness. (13.10.13-14)

Rom. 5:5, quoted here, is the *locus classicus* for Augustine's pneumatology, for the Spirit is the love of God given to us by whom we love God and neighbor, the outpouring of grace that elevates us to God.⁸² It is tied directly to the incarnation and resurrection: the Spirit is she who is given in order that we might participate in the life of

⁸² Joseph Lienhard calls it "his most convincing scriptural refutation of Pelagianism," "The Glue Itself Is Charity: Ps. 62:9 in Augustine's Thought," in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, 379. La Bonnardière compiles a list of the usages of this verse, counting at least 201 occurrences from 387 to 429, the vast majority after 411. "Le verset paulinien Rom. 5, 5, dans l'oeuvre de S. Augustin," *Augustinus Magister: Congrès International Augustinien, Paris 21-24 Septembre 1954* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1954-5), pgs. 657-65.

the Son. But it takes a particular kind of training, or demonstration, in order for us to love God, or will the good. And that is a training in justice and humility. The injustice of humanity in the fall necessitated their handing over to the power of the devil, but as this was contrary to the “kindly reconciliation of God,” (13.12.16), God resolved to overcome the devil by “not by power but by justice, [so] that men, too, by imitating Christ should seek to overcome the devil not by power but by justice” (13.13.17, McKenna). The redemptive work of Christ is operative in the injustice by which Christ died at the hands of the devil: “He found nothing in him deserving of death and yet he killed him” (13.14.18). In killing Jesus the devil forfeited his just claim on humanity; deliverance therefore takes place by justice, in the weakness of the cross.

Augustine’s understanding of the atonement has shifted somewhat from his earlier exposition in Book 4 – the polemical philosophical background has shifted from Porphyry to Cicero and the Stoics, and the metaphors have shifted from the semantic field of illness and cure to more explicitly political resonances⁸³ – but the theme of humility links them in 13.17.22: “man’s pride, which is the greatest obstacle to his cleaving to God, could be confuted and cured by such humility on the part of God...through a mediator like this, who comes to aid men as God with his divinity and to share with them as man in their infirmity.” The inscription of the process of human intellection under an ethical rubric continues, for the ascent to contemplation of God passes through the humility of faith in the incarnate Savior.⁸⁴ This is the linchpin of Augustine’s departure from Neoplatonism: even though knowledge of God is in some

⁸³ “Political” here is more appropriate than “judicial” as a descriptor for Augustine’s atonement thinking: the regulating principle is not the verdict rendered by the divine judge, but the site of struggle in a contest between two powers. Cf. Hill, *The Trinity*, 367 n36, who makes a similar point.

⁸⁴ On the importance of humility in Augustine’s Christology, see Brian Daley, “A Humble Mediator: The Distinctive Elements in Saint Augustine’s Christology,” *Word and Spirit* 9 (1987), 100-117.

sense available to the “most eminent heathen philosophers,” they philosophize “without the mediator, that is without the man Christ” (13.19.24, quoting Rom. 1:20). A similar point had been made in Book 4, where the Platonic philosophers (in particular, Porphyrian theurgists) imagined that they could attain sufficient purity of mind for the contemplation of God by virtue of the “keen gaze of their intellects,” and yet for all that neglected the “one true mediator.”⁸⁵

This mediator is not a principle uniting ontological contraries, a medium reconciling the many to the One:⁸⁶ it is the *human Jesus Christ* incarnate, crucified and buried, both fully God and fully human.⁸⁷ This is the second implication of the emphasis

⁸⁵ 4.15.20, 14.19; an emphasis, similar to that in Book 13, on faith as the means of purification for the contemplation of eternal things follows in 18.24; cf. *conf.* 7.9.13-27 on the *libri platonicorum*. Crouse writes that *Trin.* involves a “thorough-going reform in the basis and method of philosophy...the contemplation of the triune life of God, the essential aim of all *philosophia*, and the only adequate end of human reflection, could not be attained by ‘those who philosophize without Christ.’” (“Philosophical Method,” 504). This reformed philosophy would involve the reconstitution of *scientia* in light of revelation, 506. On the conception of mediation in Porphyry and Augustine, see Eugene TeSelle, “Porphyry and Augustine,” *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974), 123-33. As TeSelle points out, for Plotinus there is nothing intervening between the highest part of the soul and the divine Intellect (124, something echoed by Augustine in *ver. rel.* 4.113), but of course Intellect is precisely a mediation of the One; with Porphyry, on the other hand, we enter into the process of the proliferation of Neoplatonic intermediaries. On the displacing of *methexis* by a “radical Christianizing” through participation in the “flesh-taking of Christ the Mediator,” see Gerald Bonner, “Augustine’s Concept of Deification,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (Oct. 1986), 373 and passim.

⁸⁶ Cf. Gioia: “Christ does not become an epistemological ‘function’ destined to solve a Platonic aporia between time and eternity...what pertains to [Christ’s] humanity becomes for us the way (*uia*) to happiness and vision of God...through constant adhesion to the person of the only Mediator between God and us, the Word made flesh,” *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 69. Gioia, however, seems to see no significant difference between Books 4 and 13 and their account of mediation. Studer points out that Augustine’s conception of mediation has two emphases in the two books, one corresponding to the mediation between the One and the many, and one that focuses on the humanity of Christ as the mediator, respectively; *The Grace of Christ and the Grace of God: Christocentrism or Theocentrism*, trans. Matthew J. O’Connell (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 44. At bottom, Hanby’s reading of Augustine is determined to reinstall du Roy’s analogy of Plotinian mediation; strikingly, the “numerology” of Book 4 controls his reading of *Trin.*; *Augustine and Modernity*, 27-71.

⁸⁷ Such a mediatory principle can only be a *tertium quid*, neither fully God nor human, but a hybrid of them both; nor can it be identical to a historical singularity, the man Jesus Christ – instead, the life of Jesus would simply be a “concrete universal,” a historical instantiation of a metaphysical principle. While I am in agreement with much of David Bentley Hart’s historical argument in “The Hidden and the Manifest,” when he comes to speak of the conceptual revolution of Nicaea in overcoming “Logos metaphysics,” he replicates precisely this move.

upon humility: the eternal *sapientia* of God is the human being Jesus Christ.⁸⁸ Those things that the Word did in his flesh belong to *scientia* (19.24) but in truth “the Word made flesh, which is Christ Jesus, has treasures of both wisdom and of knowledge.” What has happened in Book 13 is that the Plotinian anagogy has foundered before the pride of humanity, before its failure to will its own happiness by willing rightly. But the incarnation of Christ is God’s self-giving, the humility of God becoming human, and thus the wisdom of God made flesh:

Our knowledge therefore is Christ, and our wisdom is the same Christ. It is he who plants faith in us about temporal things, he who presents us with the truth about eternal things. Through him we go straight toward him, through knowledge toward wisdom, without ever turning aside from one and the same Christ. (13.19.24)

What Augustine is doing here is reconfiguring (or perhaps better, recapitulating) the entire relationship of *scientia* and *sapientia* within the incarnate mediator Jesus Christ: in fact, Christ is the precise inversion of the anagogical ascent – as the contemplative ascends from *scientia* to *sapientia* by the purification of the intellect and encounters the barrier of his own sin and finitude, Christ descends as the embodiment of *scientia* and *sapientia*, enclosing within himself ascent in his own descent. The itinerary of the mind to God takes place *within* Christ, by means of and on the presupposition of faith in Christ. The descent of Christ is, by virtue of his two natures, the ascent of humanity. The human Jesus Christ is the *sapientia* of God, he in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

⁸⁸ Ayres draws attention to the parallel between the *scientia-sapientia* pairing and the two natures of Christ in “Christological Context,” *passim*; the overall thrust of this article is to highlight the parallels between Book 13 and Augustine’s Christology in his broader corpus, including Book 4 and the tractates on John. However, to stop with the overall parallel of human and divine, *scientia* and *sapientia*, is premature: as Madec notes, the point here is that *christus* is the unification of otherwise dualistic Platonisms; “Christus scientia et sapientia,” 81.

When Augustine returns to the ascent schematic and the aporetic of self-involvement that is the psychological analogy in Book 14, human-self knowing has been indelibly marked by this fact: knowledge of God, *sapientia*, is identical to knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is the ultimate expression of the inextricable linking of knowledge and love (and thus of Son and Spirit), because even as Jesus Christ is the revelation of the Father, *knowing* that he is one with the Father is only by adhering to him in faith by love – by the work of the Spirit. The “treasures of wisdom and knowledge” are *hidden* and accessible only to faith working through love; thus for Jesus Christ to be the *sapientia* of God is immediately to link the mission of the Spirit with that of the Son, for by the work of the Spirit Jesus is understood to be the eternal Son.⁸⁹

The image of God is this unity of knowledge and love, insofar as it is directed not toward self but toward *God*: “It is his image insofar as it is capable of him and can participate in him” (14.8.11). But this is not mimesis, formal analogical correspondence, but rather participation, the actualization of the capacity for knowledge of God.⁹⁰

This trinity of mind is not really the image of God because the mind remembers and understands and loves itself, but because it is also able to remember and understand and love him by whom it was made. And when it does this it becomes wise...the man who knows how to love himself loves God; and the man who does not love God...can still be said quite

⁸⁹ Gioia’s discussion is excellent here, and I am indebted to its clarity on this point; see *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 68-105; “it is only as object of faith through love (*dilectio*) that Christ’s humanity and his deeds allow us to see (i.e. know) the Father” (79); as he points out, faith and vision/knowledge are one, though they are distinct in modality, in strict parallel to the two natures and one person of Christ (to use Chalcedonian language): “even though the *modality* of faith and vision are different, the *object* is the same, i.e. God revealing himself in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The identity of the object of both faith and vision is grounded in the hypostatic union: Christ is our science and wisdom” (83). Gioia’s assessment of the essential link between the Christology of *Trin.* and its epistemological program is fully in accord with the argument of this chapter.

⁹⁰ As the tacit distinction between capacity and participation in the block quote shows, for Augustine the image is in fact located in the *capacity* for participation, which capacity is only *actualized* in participation by grace (cf. Gioa, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 286-7). Strictly speaking, both are the image, but in terms of capacity and participation, or potentiality and actuality; the problem is that human sin has stymied the possibility of realizing the image of God, which *ultimately* is simply participating in God through Christ.

reasonably to hate himself...When the mind loves God, and consequently as has been said remembers and understands him, it can rightly be commanded to love its neighbor as itself. For now it loves itself with a straight, not a twisted love, now that it loves God. (14.12.15, 14.18)

The human process of knowing is a prethematic mode of participation in its divine creator (by virtue of its participation in the divine ideas); but it is only insofar as its love is “straightened” by the christological index of *sapientia* that it is truly itself, which means, it becomes wise, and truly knows the creator; therefore for Augustine the image cannot be dissociated from the act of participating in Christ the incarnate mediator.

The question driving all this has been Augustine’s pneumatological grammar, because the text of *Trin.* is *performing* this purification of contemplative knowing. It is by the reception of the Spirit – by the outpouring of the love of God in our hearts – that we finally ascend to God: “When [the mind] rightly remembers its Lord, however, whose Spirit it has received, it feels with absolute certainty, because it learns this from an inward teaching, that it can only raise itself by the affection which He freely gives” (14.15.21). The consubstantial unity of Father, Son and Spirit means that, in knowing Christ, we are knowing God without reserve, and because the self-giving of God in Christ is at the same time the pouring out of the love of God in our hearts, the Holy Spirit, this self-giving is a giving by which our selves are given back to God.⁹¹ This gift of the Spirit, and this is crucial for understanding Augustine’s pneumatology, is not a different *work* than that of the mission of the Son: it is the “subjective” correspondence to that work in the soul – that unity of God’s work whereby it is the giving of God’s grace that joins us

⁹¹ The point here is to show that loving God is itself knowing God such that God’s unknowability is not diminished but infinitely enlarged by the fact that we participate in God in Christ through the love of the Spirit. Cf. *en. Ps.* 17.11: “He [Christ, speaking as the psalmist David] was raised above the full range of knowledge, so that no one should come to him by any means other than love, for the fulfillment of the law is love. And without delay he showed those who love him that he is ultimately unknowable, to prevent them from thinking that he is to be understood by the sort of thoughts we have in our bodily state.” *Expositions of the Psalms 1-32*, trans. Maria Boulding, OSB (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000).

to the God's self-giving in the incarnate Word Jesus Christ. But this occurs in the unity of human and divine act whereby Christ mediates knowledge of the Father as the Wisdom of God. The *excess* of God's self-giving in Christ is the gift of the Spirit, the act of participation in the Son that is both our act and God's act: the performance of participation in the life of God is the divinizing act of union with God the Trinity that is not different than the self-giving of the Trinity in the economy of salvation. The humility of God's wisdom is the cure of our knowing, revealed in the difference between our acquisitive knowing, ruled by pride and referral to self, and God's self-knowing, which is *sapientia*, the wisdom from wisdom that is Christ, fundamentally *bestowal*. And to receive that bestowal is to receive the Spirit. The task of the entirety of the second half of *Trin.* is to thematize this act of participation, this performance of the image; because we do not behold God directly, we behold her in a mirror – ourselves, insofar as we participate in Christ through his gift of charity, the Spirit. Augustine is not abstracting from the economy of salvation to locate the image in the interiority of the subject, but rather inscribing that subject within God's giving of Godself in the Son. And that inscription is a writing of the self with the pen of the Spirit, who is the gift of the Father's self-giving which is the Son.

The apophatic logic of the image

The human act of remembering self, knowing self, and loving self is then the image of God, but only as the implicate of remembering, knowing, and loving God. And it is the image as the *event* of participation in God insofar as it contemplates God's *sapientia* in the earthly, incarnate Jesus Christ, who is, precisely as incarnate in the realm

of *scientia*, the object of *fides* and thus both the *scientia* and *sapientia* of God.⁹² Our mode of participation in Christ is the charity of God poured out into our hearts, the Holy Spirit who is God loving us and thereby elevating our love to Godself: this act, both our ownmost act and God's act within that act, is the actualization of the image of God. However, there is one final step to the argument, for having suitably trained the reader (15.1.1) to contemplate God in themselves insofar as they participate in Christ, in Book 15 Augustine finally turns to the "trinity which is God" itself.

In this final subsection I will show how the concerns of Books 1-7 (the consubstantiality of Father, Son, and Spirit, as articulated in the understanding of divine missions; and the theme of divine simplicity, in the unity of the works of the Trinity *ad extra*) come to be correlated with the contemplation of the *imago modo interiore* in Books 8-14. I have already indicated above that the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father means that the logic of simplicity determines the act of knowing God as a contemplation of Christ, as a humility of the intellect; here, I will examine how this apophatic participation is a moment of rupture of the mimetic dimension of the image: *Trin.* ends with the *bankruptcy* of the possibility of trinitarian analogies.

Insofar as there are analogical components of the image-argument in *Trin.* 8-15, they function not to provide a model of the Trinity, but rather illuminate specific logical problems with understanding the processions, namely the relationship between the generation of the *Verbum* and the procession of the Spirit within a simple substance. The argument of Book 15 approaches "the trinity which is God" by ruthlessly eliminating any

⁹² In brief, our knowledge of Christ *is* knowledge of the Trinity. The perplexing opposition between knowledge of Christ and knowledge of the Trinity is a considerable source of confusion for du Roy; for Augustine (and, as Ayres has been quick to argue, for Pro-nicenes in general) there simply is no difference between the "doctrine" of the Trinity and Christology. There is no "interior" analogical knowledge of the Trinity apart from the "economy" of the incarnation. *L'intelligence de la foi*, 453.

proper correspondence of the attributes of God⁹³ with the hypostases. All the attributes can be reduced to *sapientia* (15.6.9), but all, including *sapientia*, are identical to God Godself by virtue of the logic of substance predications, since God is an “inexpressible and wholly simple nature.” The conclusion to this is that if wisdom – the exemplification of *intellectus* – is identical to God’s essence, then it follows that so is memory or will.⁹⁴ Thus Augustine *explicitly* denies the analogical correspondence of image and exemplar: “So here we are then with these three, that is memory, understanding, love or will in that supreme and unchangeable being which God is, and they are not the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁵

Before the apophatic signifier of divine simplicity, any analogy founders: there is no possibility of deriving a trinitarian ontology from a correctly understood doctrine of the Trinity – memory, understanding and will are not analogs to the divine persons such that any kind of ontological implications can be drawn from that analogy. What *Trin.* concerns, rather, is the way in which a metaphysics of knowledge is formulated *in light of the fact* that our knowing and loving of God is a knowing in God’s self-revealing, the Son, and loving in God’s own self-giving, the Spirit. The psychological analogy, whatever it is, is not an *analogy*. It is something much more differentiated and

⁹³ Viz., “eternal, immortal, incorruptible, unchangeable, living, wise, powerful, beautiful, just, good, happy, spirit,” 15.5.7.

⁹⁴ Du Roy laments that this failure of analogical ascent is where Western theology remains, unable to link the trinitarian processions to the trinitarian analogies and the list of attributes discussed below; *L’intelligence de la foi*, 446-7. He is right to see the theory of appropriations nascent here; but wrong to think this is an enervation of divine self-giving in the economy. I have been arguing that simplicity and unity of external operations (the basis of appropriations theory) is the *guarantee* of divine self-identity in revelation and salvation.

⁹⁵ 15.7.12. See for a similar denial of any trinitarian analogy *s.* 52.23: “I haven’t introduced these three things as though they were to be equated to the divine triad, as though they were to be marshaled into an analogy,” *Sermons 51-94 on the New Testament*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991). It is difficult to reconcile Hill’s contention that this sermon contradicts an analogical correspondence of *Trin.* in light of the above statement. Cf. *Trin.* 15.17.28: “the trinity which is God cannot just be read off from those three things which we have pointed out in the trinity of our minds...all and each of them has all three things each in his own nature.”

interesting, an account of the aporetic of self-involvement in the manner in which we know God, and thereby, participate in God. We know God only *per speculum et in aenigmate*: to know God is to know the self knowing God, and the aporetic of self-involvement cannot be eliminated in that knowing, for the closest thing to direct contemplation of God in this life is knowing God in the mirror which we ourselves are.⁹⁶ But this is an ethical question, for knowledge of God the Trinity in the self must mean the transformation of the self: in beholding God “we are being changed from form to form, and are passing from a blurred form to a clear one” (15.8.14).

Of course, as just noted, the “psychological analogy” does have some analogical moments, and one of these is the dim resemblance between the generation of a *verbum* in the understanding, in its interplay with the will in joining itself to an intelligible object, and the Son and Spirit of God. The rest of the book focuses on this twofold analogical relationship, but in both cases, Augustine is not intending to codify the analogy, but rather to further explicate the aporetic of deifying participation. To think of God speaking in the *verbum* Jesus Christ is to conceive our *verbum* as oriented to imitation of Christ: it is in knowing the Word “that we might live rightly by our word following and imitating his example” (15.11.20). This reveals something about the incarnation: just as our word is incarnate, as it were, as it “becomes a bodily sound by assuming that in which it is manifested to the senses of men,” so “the Word of God became flesh by assuming that in which it too could be manifested to the senses of men.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ “We see now through a mirror in an enigma. . .the only thing ever seen in a mirror is an image. So what we have been trying to do is somehow to see him by whom we are made by means of this image which we ourselves are, as through a mirror” (15.8.14).

⁹⁷ In addition, our word is manifest because it is “manifestable,” our self-expression revealed in the intersubjective space of language, which precedes our work – “we cannot have a work which is not preceded by a word.” So too the Word of God is that through which all things were made; when Rahner complained about the Augustinian tradition positing an arbitrary link between the incarnation and the

But the contemplation of the image, even accounting for the dim light shed on the procession of the Word by the consideration of the human *verbum*, eventuates solidly in one conclusion: “But now, in this mirror, in this puzzle, in this likeness of whatever sort, who can adequately explain how great the unlikeness is?” (15.11.21). Even the generation of an inner word is finally an unlikeness, for the *verbum*, as we saw above, is the adventitious production of a judgment regarding an external object for us; even with respect to self-knowing, we relate ourselves to ourselves as an object – but this is not how God knows Godself, for God knows Godself, against all modern trinitarian Hegelians, not through self-reflexivity, but immediately through Godself just because God’s knowledge is identical to God’s wisdom, and both to God’s being and substance.⁹⁸ Hence, at every point of likeness, an unlikeness erupts that does not preserve, elevate, or complicate the analogy: it ruptures it. This is the heart of the apophatic logic of simplicity: God’s knowing is through God’s being, because God knows as creator – the object of God’s knowing exists because God first knows it in creating it. God’s knowledge is bestowal: *scientia dei est causa rerum*.⁹⁹

procession of the Son, he failed to read the last lines of 15.11.20: “it was not God the Father, not the Holy Spirit, not the trinity itself, but only the Son who is the Word of God that became flesh.” Cf. above, 61 n42.

⁹⁸ 15.12.22; Augustine does not state this directly here, although it is the immediate implication of his argument: our *verbum* is finally accidental because we know through something, a body or object, which we do not have through ourselves, but God does not learn anything from something other to Godself. All creatures, including angels, know things because they are; but with God things are because God knows them – God’s knowledge of them is the principle of their being. From divine simplicity, then, it follows that God’s knowing is identical to God’s being. Cf. 14.23: “So the Father knows all things in himself, knows them in the Son; but in himself as knowing himself, in the Son as knowing his Word which is about all these things that are in himself.” Despite Rowan Williams’s critique of the “highly anthropomorphic plurality of agencies” of “modern trinitarian pluralism” in lieu of “the understanding of the divine *nature* as loving wisdom” (“*Sapientia* and the Trinity,” 332, emphasis original), his need to posit that nature as relational, as “something like a relation between subjects...a differentiation and self-reflexivity within one loving movement” (330-1) shares a moment of such pluralism: by needing the divine life to be *both* “sufficient to itself *and* productive,” Williams seems to posit something like a dialectical reciprocity of the subsistents as a presupposition of divine self-giving in Christ. I will discuss this further in the following chapter.

⁹⁹ Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros., 1948), 1a, q.14, art.16.

The image, thus, is not one that lies in mimetic correspondence to God, because there is no such correspondence. The image is participation in God, which occurs in love: so Augustine passes on to the Spirit, and the rest of the Book will be involved in the consideration of the particular way the Spirit's character as distinctively charity transforms the way in which we love God. We love God by the love God pours out in our hearts, which is the love of God herself. Charity just is the divine substance, and thus Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each charity; yet the Spirit is distinctively so, just as the Son is distinctively Word and wisdom, as the "gift" of God's love, which is God, that is given to us. Quoting Jn. 4:7, Augustine concludes "love therefore is God from God," which as the self-giving of God is that which is given of God "that makes us abide in God and him in us...it is God the Holy Spirit proceeding from God who fires man to the love of God and neighbor when has been given to him, and he himself is love. Man has no capacity to love God except from God" (15.17.31).¹⁰⁰ The Spirit, in other words, is love – *caritas* or *dilectio* – insofar as "the effect of the Spirit's work is the effect of love, as far as we are concerned."¹⁰¹ Just as God is eternally self-revealing and bestowing in the Word, so God is eternally the gift of that bestowal in the Spirit – but we experience that giving in time.¹⁰² This exposition of the Spirit as charity is the culmination of the entire book – the mystical ascent, we have already seen, founders on the unlikeness of God and human, but humanity participates in God nonetheless, insofar as we participate

¹⁰⁰ It is significant that this is an absolute statement, without reference to sinfulness as a hindrance to the otherwise natural capacity for the vision of God; Cary fails to reckon with this in his claim that, for Augustine, humankind has no need of elevating grace for the vision of God (*Augustine's Invention of the Inner Self*, 67); See J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1980), 111-12, on the shift from the natural desire for God to that of beatitude through the charity of the gift of the Spirit in Augustine's theology, as a result of the Pelagian controversy. Burns identifies this as one of the most significant developments in Augustine's theology, 184.

¹⁰¹ Rowan Williams, "*Sapientia* and the Trinity," 327.

¹⁰² Robert Jenson's failure to see this is fundamental to his misunderstanding of Augustine when he "disallows" Augustine's handling of pneumatological gift-language, *Systematic Theology*, 147-9.

in the Wisdom of God who is the human Jesus Christ by the love of God which is poured out into our hearts. This “caritological” pneumatology is the heart of Augustine’s understanding of the economy of salvation, which encompasses every event in which a divine person is known in time, as the self-communication of the Trinity in grace, or what amounts to the same thing, in the pouring out of the love of God in the heart.¹⁰³

The fact that this communication is strictly christological cannot be missed, for as the discussion of the *verbum* showed, the will’s coinherence with the intellect in the act of understanding culminating in the generation of a judgment renders knowing and loving indissociable; likewise, as the only true *analogical* moment in the psychological analogy, the missions of Christ and Spirit cannot be conceived in abstraction from one another: there is one work of God, God’s self-communication in the fleshliness of Jesus Christ, in whom we live and love by the gift of Christ’s Spirit.¹⁰⁴ What is more, for Augustine to speak of Jesus Christ is to speak at the same time of the *totus christus*, the “whole Christ” composed of those believers, the society of saints, who are united to Christ through charity. Indeed, Augustine proceeds immediately in *Trin.* 15.19.34 to connect language of the gift of the Spirit with the theme of the *totus christus*, the church: “through the gift which the Holy Spirit is in common for all members of Christ, many gifts which are proper to them severally are divided among them.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Note, once again, the citation of Rom. 5:5 at the end of 15.17.31.

¹⁰⁴ Augustine’s metaphysics of knowing is not totally precise when it comes to the mutual relationship of knowing and loving, and correspondingly not as illuminating as might be preferred for articulating the processes of Son and Spirit. It is clear that knowing must have some logical priority, since we cannot love what we do not know; and it is clear that the mission of Christ must in some sense precede that of Spirit, because the giving of the Spirit is a consequence of the incarnation, and is Christ’s act. Consequently, Augustine is not entirely able to answer the question as to why the Spirit is not a Son to his satisfaction – this will be one of the benefits of the beatific vision (15.25.45)!

¹⁰⁵ Cf. 15.26.46, where the baptism of Christ prefigures the anointing of the church by the Spirit. Ayres, in “Christological Context,” especially 108-13, emphasizes that the *exercitatio mentis* of *Trin.*, by virtue of being christologically articulated, is therefore located in the context of the *totus christus*.

I will discuss the corporate and intersubjective dimension of Augustine's pneumatology in the following chapter, where I will show that Augustine's account of the *totus christus* is his context for talking about divinization. Here however it remains simply to observe, once again, the pneumatological aporetic displayed. The paradoxicality of the gift of the Spirit is that it demands a different type of discourse, a distinct theological register, from that of Christology.¹⁰⁶ The Spirit's mission is not another work of God beside that of the Son's, and correspondingly Spirit-talk has a different function: pneumatology is that moment in trinitarian theology when theology opens onto something performative, when talk of Christ shows as its necessary presupposition participation in Christ, when theology becomes doxology: knowledge of the Spirit is the *performance of the Spirit's gift*.¹⁰⁷ Augustine's pneumatology is something woven into the very fabric of the text, the performance of the mystical ascent which is itself enacted in the *apophysis* of the practice of trinitarian theology. But, as the argument of *Trin.* is designed to show, this act of participation in charity is both God's act and our own act, and in this participation the exigency emerges of understanding that we, who are subjects, are somehow in our subjectivity graced and elevated, that the depths of our self-knowing cannot finally be separated from our knowing of God. Pneumatology is not strictly talk about God, nor is talk about the self: it is the discourse that emerges when God makes the self participate in Godself, and the only kind of discourse that can do this is an indirect, dialectical performative *ascesis* of speech that seeks the

¹⁰⁶ One implication of this is that pneumatology is constitutively economic, which perhaps might help explain why the Western (and Eastern) aporia of the Spirit's "proper name" or the distinction of the Spirit's procession from the Son's generation is not the theological embarrassment it is sometimes taken to be.

¹⁰⁷ I am much indebted to Nate Kerr for this emphasis on doxology.

traces of the Spirit in the soul, traces visible only in the soul's willing what it cannot will and acting as it cannot act: traces of deification.

Trin. is the daring attempt to think the aporetic of an unrepresentable act: the transformation of the subject who is elevated by the Holy Spirit to an act of contemplation of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The grammar of this act is what we now call the "psychological analogy," and it is the only way to speak of the Spirit, as the aporetic of self-involvement in the performance of participation in God. This performance is the point of the practice of theology itself, for Augustine – a training of the mind, a purification for contemplation. *Trin.* is the audacious speculative attempt to describe the subject's subjectivity as graced and deified, to perform the transformation of human self-understanding when it participates in true wisdom, the self-giving of God in Jesus Christ. It is precisely here, in the unfathomable mystery of a transformed soul, that Augustine's pneumatology functions – in the elevated act of understanding and will by which the soul finally comes to will the good, which is identical to the eternal life of the triune God. That willing, however, and thus the pouring out of the Spirit, is not a separate act from the self-giving of God, because there is no second work of God beyond that of Jesus Christ – rather, that act is a participation in the giving of Jesus Christ, and because it is an act of the will, it is an ethical act, an ordering of our love.

Olivier du Roy, whose platonizing interpretation of Augustine was so influential for the post-Rahnerian generation, could not have been more wrong when he said "ce n'est pas l'économie de la Rédemption qui est le point de départ de cet intellectus fidei de la Trinité. C'est au contraire l'économie de la création et de l'illumination intérieure de

l'esprit."¹⁰⁸ The entire argument of *Trin.* is oriented around God's self-communication in grace in the economy of redemption, and the aftershock of that communication in the perfection and transcendence of human knowing. It is Augustine's pneumatology that enables him to give an account of graced subjectivity as ethical performance in Christ. We do not, at the end of the day, *know* the nature of God in anything like what we call knowing, because the knowledge of God is a performative act of love that has a logic all its own. Insofar, then, as it is the gift of the Spirit that is the gift of that participation, to understand Augustine's pneumatology we have to understand it as a pneumatology of Christian knowledge.

¹⁰⁸ *L'Intelligence et la foi*, 454; cf. 455: "Telle est la situation de son intelligence de la foi au sommet du *De Trinitate*: d'une part la foi est représentée par des formules antiariennes statiques, d'autre part l'intelligence est représentée par un processus réflexif. La thème théologique de l'image en l'homme servira à établir un lien analogique entre ces deux pôles, l'*intellectus* et la *fides*."

CHAPTER III

THE APOPHATICISM OF ETHICAL PERFORMANCE: SIMPLICITY, RELATION AND DEIFICATION IN AUGUSTINE

In the first chapter, I showed that trinitarian theology's twentieth century renaissance is largely premised upon the power the doctrine holds, or is said to hold, in providing a model of human personhood and community on analogy with the divine communion of persons. Augustine has been widely blamed for the provenance of another analogy, one more deleterious, that is beholden to interiority, individuality, and rationality. The previous chapter argued that upon a reading of *Trin.*, the psychological analogy turns out to be something different – it is, rather, shorthand for the performative enactment of the *imago dei* through the gift of the Spirit, a formula for the self-communication of God in Christ. This christological reading was animated by a response to du Roy's contention that Augustine's conception of the *intellectus fidei* was grounded in an interior illumination of the spirit, rather than in the economy of redemption. But this reply to the charge that Augustine's trinitarianism is insufficiently economic is still only a partial riposte to the standard model described in ch. 1. For it still might be the case that Augustine's economy of grace is individualist and insufficiently relational; in terms of Régnon's binary, it might not be sufficiently "personalist." This issue is the theme of this chapter.

As has been previously noted, such trinitarian personalist ontologies generally obtain in either *realist* or *idealist* forms,¹ and if they are not purely metaphorical,

¹ See above, pgs. 21-2.

exemplarist schemes, they presume a deeper account of analogy, some kind of continuity of being between God and world. Sorting out the relationship of these forms of trinitarianism will be the task of the final chapter; but at present it is important to note that if, as I argued above, Augustine's trinitarian doctrine is to be understood as a form of apophatic theology, then such ontological aspirations begin to show some strain, for a continuity of being is difficult to sustain when an ontological *difference* runs through its heart. With Augustine, I will argue in this chapter, such a sanguine trinitarian ontology is impossible,² for apophatic theology by definition disallows a theological concept under which the "being" of God and the being of the world can be inscribed, and in fact the dual account of analogy in *Trin.* is designed to show the breakdown of just such a conceptual scheme. How, then, to understand the Christian doctrine of God if not as the description of an inherently "relational" quality to the nature of the ultimate that ontologically grounds our own relationality? What resources do we have then to conceive human relationality and intersubjectivity theologically – to describe, that is, the nature of the church? While the previous chapter was a focused exposition of *Trin.*, in what follows I will seek to synthesize many of the themes that arose in the reading of that text, while at the same time adverting to other significant texts in Augustine's authorship that further illuminate the function of a pneumatology of Christian knowledge as a caritological apophatic pneumatology.

Instead of engaging the personalistic question directly – i.e., instead of asking whether Augustine gives sufficient weight to the concept "person" in his trinitarianism –

² In this respect, Gunton was right: with Augustine "there can be no theological ontology at all," at least as Gunton imagines it; see above, p. 7. One of the themes that will occupy this dissertation henceforth is the following: just why is it that one would want such an ontology? What work does it do? How is it legitimated – and what does it legitimate? These will, in particular, be the leading questions of ch. 6.

I will argue that the issue trinitarian personalism is intended to address, the divine self-identity in the economy of salvation, and the corresponding integrity of human participation in the divine, is entirely determined by Augustine's Christology. One of the major complaints about Augustine's pneumatology has been that his notion of the Spirit as the bond of love, or *vinculum caritatis* (as scholasticism later labeled the notion), reduces the Spirit to a function or impersonal relation, rather than a fully distinct "person," a depersonalization which enervated the Spirit's mission. This critique, which generally corresponds to a suspicion of an untoward christological focus (or worse, "christomonism") in Augustine and Latin theology, depends upon the assumption that both Spirit and Son must be assigned distinctive missions that correspond to their personal particularity. But we have already seen that Augustine refuses to give any kind of content to the language of person, precisely out of concern for the integrity of God's self-giving in the economy; and I have argued that adequately understanding Augustinian pneumatology entails abandoning the notion that the mission of Son and Spirit stand in some kind of competitive relation, because pneumatology is the discourse of performative participation in Christ. There is a single work of God; our performance of participation in that work is part of that work. Therefore a stronger Christology entails the possibility of a stronger pneumatology. Taking this point as established, in this chapter I will approach the problem of "personalism" from the opposite angle; I will focus on the reading of Augustine that sees the *vinculum* doctrine of the Spirit as a *resource* for thinking human participation in the trinitarian communion, as a participation in Christ's relationship with the Father that is the Holy Spirit. This attempt at an Augustinian recovery shares key problems with the standard model described in the first chapter and

likewise weakens the all-important function of simplicity as a guarantee of the integrity of divine self-giving. Properly contextualizing the discussion will first require a detour through some aspects of Augustine's ecclesiology.

The *Totus Christus* and the Love of God and Neighbor

Augustine's incarnational realism

In the preceding chapter I argued that Augustine's pneumatology should be understood as a "pneumatology of Christian knowledge" – as a performative account of the knowledge of God as participation in Christ by the gift of God's love, the Holy Spirit. This pneumatology, because it is performative, involves a highly complex and dialectical way of speaking, for one cannot properly *speak* of the Spirit as such. To speak of the Spirit would be to speak of the act of knowing the unknowable God, or seeing the invisible God. It is in fact to the end of seeing the unseeable that Christ becomes flesh, and thereby is offered as both the *via* and the *patria*, the way and the goal: the eternal *sapientia* in the flesh of the man Jesus.

Recalling the inseparable relationship of knowing and loving in *Trin.*, and thus of the twofold mission of Son and Spirit as object of our knowing and the love that unites us to that object, here I will examine the way in which, for Augustine, we *know* Christ insofar as we *see* the face of our neighbor by being united to her in love. For of course we do not *see* Jesus. We are rather in a position to have Christ witnessed to us, and thus to see Christ with the eyes of faith, in the church. But the great boldness of what I will describe as Augustine's *incarnational realism* is to claim that thereby, we *do* see Jesus, in

the face of our neighbor. This is a theme adumbrated in the discussion of “loving love” in *Trin.* 8, and it is central throughout his meditations on the theme of the *totus christus*, given particularly concentrated attention in the *in epistulam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus* (*ep. Jo.*), which I examine here.³

Ep. Jo. is oriented by a paradox that is at the heart of the Donatist controversy, namely the presence of sin in the society of the saints. John, notes Augustine, presents us with the dilemma of the impossibility of a fellowship between light and darkness. On the one hand, God is light, and there is no darkness in God;⁴ she “who has been born from God does not sin.” However, “if we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”⁵ “Placed in the middle” between two irreconcilable demands, Augustine resolves the difficulty by identifying of the kind of sin at issue: the sin not committed by one who is truly in fellowship with God, which governs the forgiveness of all one’s sins,⁶ is the breaking of what Augustine calls “Christ’s commandment.” Christ’s commandment is simply to love one another; therefore, the particular sin that is the darkness with which light cannot be in fellowship is the sin of hating the neighbor.

³ *Homilies on the First Epistle of John*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008). The general consensus is that these sermons were preached on Easter week in 407. This timeframe places the sermons in the heat of the Donatist controversy and near the beginning of *Trin.* Secondary literature on this book is not large, and in any case I will not attempt anything like a full reading here; important studies include Dany Dideberg, *Saint Augustin et la première Épître de saint Jean: Une théologie de l’Agapè* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1975); Paul Agaësse’s introduction to the *Sources Chrétiennes* edition, *Saint Augustin: Commentaire de la Première Épître de S. Jean* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1961), 7-102; Eoin G. Cassidy, “Augustine’s Exegesis of the First Epistle of John,” in *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers: Letter and Spirit*, ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Portland: Four Courts Press, 1995), 201-20; Lewis Ayres, “Augustine, Christology, and God as Love: An Introduction to the Homilies on I John,” in *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 67-93.

⁴ *Ep. Jo.* 1.5: the phrase, from I Jn. 1:5, is repeated three times in this paragraph.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.1.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.3.

Momentarily I will explicate this simple claim in terms of the Donatist context which it is designed to address. Before discussing this, however, we must observe how the theme of neighbor love links *ep. Jo.* directly to *Trin.*, a link that lies in the motif of the *totus christus*. In *Trin.*, we recall, Augustine configures the incarnation as the precise inversion of the mystical ascent: as the contemplative ascends from *scientia* to *sapientia*, so Christ the *sapientia* of God descends and is known in time, by *scientia*. The mystical ascent in *Trin.* occurs therefore within the incarnate Christ. But Christ is not simply the *via*, the means of the ascent, but also the *patria*, the homeland and destination:⁷

Augustine's theology of mediation centers around an exchange, an *admirabile commercium*, for by participation in that descent humanity is elevated. Christ becomes temporal so that we could become eternal, says Augustine, even as he became temporal while remaining eternal;⁸ the incarnation is an assumption of flesh such that the descent of the Word that is the eternal *sapientia* of God is an elevation of our flesh into God's eternal wisdom. In joining himself to humanity Christ is made one with his church: "The Church is joined to that flesh, and Christ becomes the whole, head and body."⁹

The Augustinian theme of the *totus christus* is too complex to discuss in detail here; what is significant for my purposes is to point to the close relationship between the joining of Christ to his body, the church, and the deifying exchange inherent in that joining.¹⁰ Just as in *Trin.* the twofold *canonica regula of forma servi-forma Dei* points to

⁷ "What is the way on which we are running? Christ said, I am the way. What is the homeland to which we are running? Christ said, I am the truth. You run on him, you run to him in whom you take your rest," *ep. Jo.* 10.1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.2.

¹⁰ The Augustinian theme of the *totus christus*, especially in *en in Ps.*, has received an increasingly large amount of interest in recent decades; see esp. Michel Réveillaud, "Le Christ-Homme, tête de l'Église: Etude d'ecclésiologie selon les Enarrationes in Psalmos d'Augustin," *Recherches augustiniennes* 5 (1968), 67-84; Michael Fiedrowicz, *Psalmus Vox Totius Christi: Studien zu Augustins »Enarrationes in Psalmos«*

the training in humility and the transformation of the ethics of knowing so as to see the Word in the face of Jesus Christ, so when Augustine expands that rule to his famed threefold rubric, the point is to join the church to Christ as body to head, so as to elevate the whole church to participation in Christ's eternal life. This threefold rule, which is the hermeneutical key to the *Enarrationes in Psalmos* and *ep. Jo.*, is formulated in *s.* 341:

Our Lord Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters, as far as I have been able to tune my mind to the sacred writings, can be understood and named in three ways...The first way is: as God and according to the divine nature which is coequal and coeternal with the Father before he assumed flesh. The next way is: when, after assuming flesh, he is now understood from our reading to be God who is at the same time man, and man who is at the same time God, according to that pre-eminence which is peculiar to him and in which he is not to be equated with other human beings, but is the mediator and head of the Church. The third way is: in some manner or other as the whole Christ in the fullness of the Church, that is as head and body according to the completeness of a certain perfect man, the man in whom we are each of us members.¹¹

This corporate Christology is at least as important for working out Augustine's theology of the incarnation as is his proto-Chalcedonianism. This is an *incarnational realism*: the church is not a polis whose identity is constituted by a set of practices in *imitatio Christi*, but *is* really and organically the social existence and sending of Jesus Christ.¹² This incarnational realism immediately links Augustine's ecclesiology and Christology: the exchange of the *admirabile commercium* whereby the pneumatological

(Freiburg: Herder, 1997); T. J. von Bavel, "The 'Christus Totus' Idea: A Forgotten Aspect of Augustine's Spirituality," in *Studies in Patristic Christology*, eds. Finan and Twomey, 84-94.

¹¹ *S.* 341.1, in *Sermons 341-400 on Various Subjects*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995). The key biblical text behind the idea is 1 Cor. 12:12-27 ("You are the body of Christ and its members"); important as well is Acts 9:4 ("Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"); Col. 1:24 ("that I may fill up in my flesh what is lacking from the afflictions of Christ"), and the biblical theme of the joining of man and woman as one flesh (Gen. 2:24; Mat. 19:6; Eph. 5:31-32).

¹² In describing Augustine's "whole Christ" theology thusly, I am echoing Ingolf Dalferth's description of Barth's "eschatological realism," which I discuss in ch. 5. J. Patout Burns points out that, in the North African social context, Augustine's location of the true church in the invisible ties of charity "could not be translated into patterns of social experience and organization by his contemporaries" as could the Donatist church, which maintained a definitive social boundary through particular formal criteria; "The Atmosphere of Election: Augustinianism as Common Sense," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1994), 337.

ascent to the vision of God takes place within Christ's descent is thus identical to the union of charity in the church, whereby Christ and church are one as head to body. That all this is so, and *only* so, by faith and charity makes it all the more real in Augustine's eyes. This is the content of his pneumatology.

The link of the *forma servi-forma Dei* hermeneutical rubric of *Trin.* to the *totus christus* motif means that the incorporation of believers into the body of Christ is a moment integral to the sending of the Son by the Father. That mission, we recall, was realized insofar as Christ is known in time, so that to see Christ in faith is to see God, or in the terms I used above, to understand Jesus Christ as the eternal *sapientia* of God is to understand that Jesus Christ is the content without remainder of the divine self-giving. The pneumatological dimension is that moment in which we are given the capacity to receive that giving, and in so doing to participate in that sending. This pneumatological "excess" of the Son's mission is the ecclesial dimension of this Christology. In other words, if the *knowledge* of God, which is *sapientia*, takes the form of being joined to the incarnate Son by the *love* of the Spirit, then the unity of knowledge and love in *Trin.* must be correlated with the unity of Christ and church in *ep. Jo. Trin.* is the aspiration to the vision of God, culminating in a pneumatological apophysis that shifts the discursive register of unknowing to a performative enactment of the love of God by God's own love, the Spirit. This pneumatological performance then gives shape to the incarnational realism of *ep. Jo.* and *en in Ps*, where we find that the vision of God is nothing other than the vision of the neighbor's face.¹³

¹³ I use "neighbor" rather than Augustine's more common "brother" for two reasons: first, it corrects the latter's exclusivity, without using the slightly more cumbersome "brother and sister;" and second, it incorporates the extremely important extension of the object of charity to the enemy. I am also casting an eye to the Derridean deconstruction of fraternity in ch. 6.

Purity and the problem of Donatism

But who is the neighbor? What constitutes the identity of the church in which this vision occurs? The answer is at the heart of the anti-Donatist polemic of *ep. Jo.*, which involves Augustine's recasting of the notion of ecclesial purity. As *Trin.* showed, only the pure in heart, those with properly ordered desire, will see God; the question of the vision of God is a question of our love. In *ep. Jo.* 4.5 Augustine returns to the *canonica regula* of *Trin.* in order to highlight this point: purity of heart is prerequisite to properly seeing the form of God in the form of the servant.¹⁴ The wicked "shall see only the form of a slave; the form of God they shall not see."¹⁵ But insofar as in faith we see the form of God in the form of the servant, we eschatologically anticipate his appearance, when "we shall see him as he is." Participation in Christ by faith is an eschatological inhabitation of that anticipation (the same idea drives Augustine's appropriation of the Pauline *per speculum et in aenigmate* in *Trin.* 15), so that "the entire life of a good Christian is a holy desire."¹⁶

This exigency of purity, however, recalls the dilemma of the homilies with which we began: the one who has been born of God does not sin, but if we say we do not sin, we call God a liar.¹⁷ The genius of this text is Augustine's compression of John's theology of love with the latter's anti-Gnostic admonition about confessing Jesus Christ in the flesh, into a single point of counter-Donatist polemic: to hate the brother, and thus

¹⁴ Cf. Barnes's discussion of this important verse in *Trin.* above, p. 54 n25.

¹⁵ Cf. on this *en. Ps.* 85.21: "the wicked will see Christ's human form only, and be debarred from the vision of him who being in the form of God is God's equal;" *Expositions of the Psalms 73-98*, trans. Maria Boulding, OSB (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2002).

¹⁶ *Ep. Jo.* 4.6. In a particularly compelling image, he compares the soul to a purse that is stretched to contain more: "This is how God stretches our desire through delay, stretches our soul through desire, and makes it large enough by stretching it." In a theme that recalls the *exercere lectorem* of *Trin.*, he concludes "This is our life – to be exercised through desire." This language of purity, desire and charity is further linked with being the image of God in 4.9.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.1.

to cause division with the brother, is to be the spirit of Antichrist, and to deny the flesh of Christ in the flesh of the neighbor.¹⁸ The issue here lies in the fact that, via the doctrine of the *totus christus*, Augustine relocates the locus of the purity of the church. The Donatist position depends upon the church's identity and purity being mediated by the bishop *in persona christi* insofar as the bishop associates himself with the authorized sacramental body; for Augustine, however, the true church is simply constituted by intention, that is, by the bonds of charity, and thus by virtue of the fact that its members are united to Christ and to one another by charity, which is the gift of the Spirit.¹⁹

To divide the Catholic church is to fail to love, for it is precisely in charity that the church is united.²⁰ Against the Donatists, who maintained a specific set of formal criteria by which the purity, and thus the identity, of the church could be adjudicated, Augustine focuses solely on orientation and disposition: "love alone, then, distinguishes between the children of God and the children of the devil." In fact, "people's deeds are

¹⁸ Dividing the body, the Donatists effectively deny the body's fleshly reality as the body of Christ (*ibid.*, 6.12-13). This point shows just how seriously Augustine understands the *totus christus* hermeneutical rule in terms of his incarnational realism. Augustine's incarnational realism, it is worth pointing out here, is a profound discourse of embodiment: precisely because we are united to Christ in faith and love, the body of the neighbor is the embodiment of the Good. Here, as always with Augustine, the Spirit rests upon *bodies*, as Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., has pointed out in *After the Spirit: A Constructive Pneumatology from Resources outside the Modern West* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005).

¹⁹ The forgiveness of sins is "mediated" by the church only insofar as that church is the dwelling place of the Spirit as the body of Christ, and thus binds and looses sins simply through the common charity of the saints. In other words, sacramental efficacy and forgiveness of sin is mediated by the church only insofar as that church is the *totus christus*. That is, insofar as the church is the body of Christ (in an "incarnational realist" sense), the constitution of its sacramental efficacy through charity is a pneumatological category. This is to locate the church's identity wholly in Christ. On all this, see Burns, *Development*, 52-88, esp. 59-71. The reading of Augustine in this chapter is in general much indebted to Burns's work, which in particular shows the importance of the Donatist controversy for the development of Augustine's theology of grace, providing an essential (though still often overlooked) link between the early turn to Pauline theology in *Simpl.*, and the later mature development of the Pelagian controversy.

²⁰ In addition to *Development*, see also J. Patout Burns, "Christ and the Holy Spirit in Augustine's Theology of Baptism," in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, ed. Joanne McWilliam (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), 164 and *passim*.

indistinguishable apart from the root of charity.”²¹ This problem of outwardly identical fruits is the problem of the mixed nature of the church, which the Donatists cannot theologially accommodate; only charity distinguishes between the children of God and of the devil, and ultimately only the former love the neighbor, and in this alone preserve the unity of the church, which is therefore an eschatological unity. The logic is the same here, in the third moment of the hermeneutical rule, as in the first two: only by charity does one perceive the form of God in the form of the servant Christ, and by extension, only by charity does one perceive the form of Christ that is the form of the church. Charity, the gift of the Spirit that is only known in its enactment,²² is precisely what constitutes the unity of the church, and what constitutes it as universal, for only by charity, the gift of the Spirit, do we truly recognize the neighbor *as* neighbor.

Augustine returns to John’s language of darkness and light to drive home the truly revolutionary point of the *totus christus* idea: “if you love the brother whom you see, you will see God at the same time, because you will see charity itself, and God dwells within it.”²³ God is an invisible reality, and thus is seen not with the eyes but the heart, which must be cleansed for that vision (7.10). That cleansing, that exercising or formation, both occurs in the love of the neighbor, and is necessary to love the neighbor. The result is to make neither neighbor nor God an instrumental goal to the end of the other, but rather to

²¹ *Ep. Jo.* 7.8; in §7, in a particularly bold piece of exegesis, he notes that the only difference between God the Father and Judas – both of whom, after all, handed over Jesus to death – is that the one did it in charity, and the other in betrayal. This is also the context of Augustine’s famed *dilige, et quod vis fac* – “love, and do what you want” (cf. the slogan of *bapt.* – with charity nothing harms, without it nothing profits – cited by Burns, *Development*, 63).

²² The aporetic of self-involvement is every bit as integral to *ep. Jo.* as to *Trin.*; a notable example is found in *ep. Jo.* 6.8-10, where Augustine addresses the nature of the church’s unity as constituted by the pouring of God’s charity in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). How do we know that we have received the Holy Spirit (§10)? “Let one question one’s heart. If a person loves his brother, the Spirit of God is abiding in him.” We only *know* that we are participants in the Son if we love the Son – there is no external criterion that governs faith’s intelligibility apart from its object, Christ, and the love of him (cf. 8.12).

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.7.

unite them firmly and inextricably in a strict unity: love of God is love of neighbor, and love of neighbor is love of God.²⁴ In loving the neighbor, we love love, and thus love God – which, as *Trin.* showed, is to see God. If we read this theme of Augustine’s Christology alongside the program of ascent of *Trin.*, where the mystical ascent is displaced into a performative pneumatology of charity, then it becomes clear that insofar as the mystical ascent attains to the vision of God in Augustine, the goal of the ascent is the face of the neighbor. The vision of God is the face of the neighbor.

Augustine’s daring inversion: the ethical performance of deification

Ep. Jo. is an excellent example of Augustine the rhetor’s homiletical daring. Perhaps most noteworthy is his “daring inversion.”²⁵ In 7.5-6, following a reprisal of the antichrist theme aimed at the Donatists (§2), Augustine states “to act against love is to act against God.” If God is love, and if the church is joined to God as the body of Christ by the Spirit of charity, then for a person in the church to sin against another is to sin against God, for “love is from God. God is love.” Then he shifts quickly to the inversion: “How then, could it be a short while ago, love is from God, and now, love is God?” The answer is instructive, for it is a short demonstration of trinitarian logic:

For God is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Son is God from God, the Holy Spirit is God from God, and these three are one God, not three gods. If the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, and he loves him in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, then love is God, but it is God because it is from God.

²⁴ Augustine has shifted here from a position in *doct. Chr.* where the neighbor is just such an instrumental (and therefore narcissistic) end. Gioia notes this shift, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 210. Cf. *ep. Jo.* 8.10, 10.7.

²⁵ See Teske, “Augustine’s Inversion of I John 4:8”, quoting van Bavel. Teske makes clear that the shift from *Deus dilectio est* to *Dilectio Deus est* is intentional by Augustine, despite the sheepishness of translators in following him (49-50). The Latin copula construction does not require the translation “love is God;” but it is clear from Augustine’s argument that the inversion is intended. Teske also notes several other instances of the inversion, 51-5.

Augustine's intent in saying that "Love is God," is not, of course, to resort to a vague sentimentalism equating human affection with the deity; the intent is pneumatological, as the following quotation of Rom. 5:5 shows, as does the use of the formula "God from God."²⁶ In that love, true love, which loves the neighbor and thus receives the sacrament worthily,²⁷ the Holy Spirit shows herself to be given. Although the meaning of the statement *dilectio Deus est* has been much debated,²⁸ the trinitarian language that follows shows that Augustine intends it as a strict equivalent to the statement of *Trin.* that "Love is God from God" (15.17.31).²⁹ In the Spirit, the self-giving of God in Christ becomes our participation in God's own self-giving, and this giving of self to the neighbor is the work of the Spirit. This is shown quite clearly when Augustine immediately proceeds to discuss the perfection of love: Christ dying for us (*ep. Jo 7.7*), and in turn, our correspondence: "perfect love is love of one's enemy."³⁰

In *Trin.* 8 Augustine had shown that the common participation of lovers in a love that is ultimately identical to the form of justice in God united love of God and neighbor in strict identity.³¹ Moreover, in *Trin.* 13, Augustine subtly altered the metaphysics of participation in arguing that faith constituted believers in a unity insofar as the object of their faith is one;³² faith is a mode of participation in *sapientia* insofar as it is faith the

²⁶ See Gioia, *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 26-7, 120-3.

²⁷ Augustine quotes I Cor. 11:29 toward the end of the paragraph.

²⁸ See Teske, "Augustine's Inversion," 56-60, who arrives at a similar conclusion to the above.

²⁹ *Deus ergo ex deo est dilectio*; cf. 15.6.10. Later in the paragraph, the connection is made to the Spirit firing the person to love of God and neighbor.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.10; he goes on to say that this perfect love consists in brotherly love, for it is the love that loves the neighbor in God, which is to say, as one beloved by God, and which seeks to bring the enemy to the knowledge of God. There is, of course, ambiguity here, for love for Augustine is also "harsh" (7.11); love for another's welfare in his view includes discipline and even, as with his infamous invocation of compulsion, violence.

³¹ See. 77-78 above.

³² *Trin.* 13.2.5.

incarnate Jesus Christ. *Ep. Jo.* 10.3 joins these two themes in identifying love of the “sons” of God and love of the Son:

This is how this love is held fast in its entirety: just as it is joined in a single unity, so all those who depend on it make up a single unity, and it is as though fire fuses them. It is gold: a lump is fused, and it becomes a single something. But, unless the heat of charity blazes up, there can be no fusion of many into one. Because we love God, that is how we know that we love the sons of God.

As in *Trin.* the incarnate Christ is the object of faith, and being bound to him in love – by the excess of his sending that is the Spirit – constitutes the church in unity; so here the *totus christus* configures the love of the neighbor within the love of Christ: one

becomes a member by loving, and through love he comes to be in the structure of Christ’s body, and there shall be one Christ loving himself. For, when the members love each other, the body loves itself... When you love Christ’s members, then, you love Christ; when you love Christ, you love the Son of God; when you love the Son of God, you also love his Father. Love, then, cannot be separated.

Insofar as the church is the body of the incarnate Christ, the whole Christ, to love Christ is to love the neighbor, and to love the neighbor is to love Christ. The church, therefore, is animated and constituted by nothing other than its love – but this love is God from God, the Holy Spirit; the church is the event of participation in the sending of Jesus Christ. In other words, our love for the neighbor is the form God’s self-bestowal in Christ takes, and this is the gift of the Spirit.

In ch. 2, I argued extensively that the processions of Son and Spirit be understood strictly in terms of their mission – in the self-giving of God who is a pure act of self-diffusive love. *Ep. Jo.* then extends this by showing how exactly and really the church is the extension of and participation in that act of self-giving. As the reading of the “daring inversion” of *ep. Jo.* here shows, the Augustinian concept of “loving love” clearly has

something to do with the pneumatological presupposition of our love for the neighbor as participation in Christ, as an act of *deification*.³³ *Ep. Jo.* 9.10 clarifies the meaning of “loving love” in the terms of the identity of love of God and neighbor just shown: “it must be that you who love your brother love love itself. Love is God. It must be, then, that whoever loves God loves his brother.” To truly participate in the church is to participate in the self-giving of God which is the incarnation, and in so doing to give oneself to the neighbor. The love that is this self-giving is the Holy Spirit. As *ep. Jo.* 9.10 goes on to say, to have this love is to see God; once again, to see God is therefore to see the face of the neighbor and love her.

Two implications follow from this teaching: first, to love the neighbor in the Holy Spirit is to be deified. The Spirit is that love that is “God from God” who fires us to love of God and neighbor,³⁴ the prior agency of God which animates the ascent to God via the descent of Christ in *Trin.* This means that the act of love of the neighbor is the unity of God’s agency with one’s ownmost agency, and insofar as God’s act is always prior, it is a love beyond our capacity to love. This is the aporetic of *Trin.* that is identical to the unknowing of apophasis: the unrepresentable and quotidian act of giving oneself to the neighbor, in all her singularity, an act which cannot be determined in advance, because it is a singular relation. Augustine’s “daring inversion” is therefore a formula of divinization, and can even be understood as the Augustinian version of the Athanasian “God became human so humans could become God.” A person’s love determines a

³³ This is against interpretations, such as that of Williams or Hanby, that see the notion of “loving love” as adumbrating some kind of trinity in *Trin.* 8. They take this to mean that in the love of the other, a triad emerges – the lover, the beloved, and the love itself – that is a model for the trinitarian relations, and thus an exemplar of the intersubjective nature of Augustinian charity that corresponds to those relations. See above, 77 n68.

³⁴ *Trin.* 15.17.31.

person's "quality," says Augustine: "Do you love the earth? You will be earth. Do you love God? What shall I say? That you will be God? I don't dare to say this on my own. Let us listen to the scriptures: I have said that you are gods and that all of you are sons of the Most High."³⁵ In this pneumatological grammar of the performance of participation in Christ we are therefore seeing the development of a distinctively Western logic of deification – one that is fundamentally oriented to the ethical performance of the graced subject, where "unknowing" is translated into something social.

A second implication involves the way in which this logic of deification is predicated on Augustine's pneumatology. Following the strict logic of divine simplicity that is the precondition and guarantee of self-identity in revelation in *Trin.*, and the emphasis on divine self-giving there and in *ep. Jo.*, the function of Augustine's so-called *vinculum* doctrine of the Spirit will have to be reexamined. The reader will have noted that the "bond of love" was virtually ignored in the exposition of *Trin.* in ch. 2. I will discuss this idea in the next section, but it is worthwhile to anticipate the outcome: the Spirit as the bond of love is *not* the hypostatized relation of Son to Father in *Trin.* Rather, if the Son is the pure act of self-giving of the Father, then the Spirit is to be understood in the same case, as the self-giving that is God's giving of a people back to Godself. But this giving cannot be understood as a reciprocal exchange between Father and Son. Rowan Williams, among others, argues that by participating in Christ by the Spirit, we participate in the relationship of Christ the Son to the Father, the Spirit being that love of

³⁵ *Ep. Jo.* 2.14, quoting Ps. 82.6. More directly, s. 344.1: "he was God taking on a human being, in order to make human beings into gods," in *Sermons 341-400*, 49. The first clause of the sentence makes clear that for Augustine, deification is an ethical category: "Christ came to change our love." Cf. Gerald Bonner's seminal article "Augustine's Concept of Deification," *Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (Oct. 1986), 369-86, who especially focuses upon the christological function of deification in Augustine in terms of our adoption into filiation.

the two, the exchange between them that locates the church in the intersubjective space of love that is the being of God. But if God is simple self-giving, strictly speaking there *is* no reciprocity in God, or if there is, that term will have to be very cautiously nuanced. The Word is the *Word*, God speaking forth as pure bestowal; and the Spirit is participating in that self-bestowal. Seeing what is at stake in this distinction is the task of the next section.

“The Madness of Economic Reason:” For a Trinitarianism without Difference

Rowan Williams and trinitarian personalism

In this section, I will be discussing an increasingly influential interpretative trend of Augustine, exemplified by the articles “*Sapientia* and the Trinity: Reflections on the *De Trinitate*” by Rowan Williams and “The Second Difference” by John Milbank.³⁶ While Williams and Milbank explicitly posit this interpretation as a counter to the pseudo-Régnonian genealogical linking of Augustinian interiority and Cartesian subjectivity that attributes the source of the modern self to Augustine’s trinitarian essentialism, I will claim that this set of interpretations exhibits a close family resemblance to the “standard model” of trinitarianism in the late 20th century. In ch. 1, I argued that trinitarian theology’s renaissance was habitually linked to a kind of social or relational ontology, wherein the communion of persons in the godhead was said to somehow ground or inform human community. Persons, so trinitarianism (Cappadocian,

³⁶ The broad contours of this interpretation have since appeared in different forms in the work of Eugene Rogers, Lewis Ayres, David Bentley Hart, and Michael Hanby (among others). Gioia does not discuss Milbank, but points to Williams’s influence on Barnes, Hanby, and Ayres; *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 19ff. The reading is not of Radical Orthodox provenance, though it has been programmatically deployed by Milbank.

on most accounts) shows us, are inherently relational; this is the great gift of a suitably personalistic trinitarian theology.

The arguments advanced by Williams and Milbank are considerably more sophisticated than those found in those generally realist accounts of trinitarian relationality which posit a straightforward correspondence of persons divine and human, but a key premise of that model persists in their reclamation of Augustine. While they may not be concerned to claim a trinitarian personalism for Augustine in the manner that many French scholars did in reaction to Régnon,³⁷ the assumption that an ontological dynamic of reciprocity – an economy of *difference* and relation – signifies the import of Augustinian trinitarianism resides at the heart of these accounts. Williams’s “*Sapientia and the Trinity*” rests on the claim – very close to that advanced in ch. 2 – that “the *image* of God in us...is realised when the three moments of our mental agency all have God for their object.”³⁸ For Williams, however, this actualization of the image rests upon a self-relation which remains fundamentally mimetic of the divine self-relation, although in an inverted sense; the self-imparting of God is a movement of God’s own life “turned ‘outwards’” as our reflexivity is a “movement into our createdness,”³⁹ a paradox signified by the fact that such a movement inwards is directed outwards to the embodied state in which our createdness resides. As such, the human self-relation is mediated by something external to itself – “the mediation of the revelation of God as its creator and lover.”⁴⁰

³⁷ See above, 35 n88.

³⁸ “*Sapientia and the Trinity*,” 319.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 321.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 323. Williams’s point here is that, for Augustine, this mediation is an immediate relation, in distinction from the mind’s relating itself to itself through the mediation of external objects in the world, the source of alienation in the embodied state.

This function of mediation inheres in the way in which *caritas* is the pneumatological actualization of the image of God. Williams reads Books 9 to 14 as an “enormous digression” designed to show how our self-relation as creatures is a participation in the *sapientia* (inseparable from *caritas*) of God identical to God’s eternal being: “God is in love with God, and the God whom God loves is the God who loves God.”⁴¹ As such, God “cannot be other than relational, trinitarian;” to be God is to self-relate in love and as such, to seek to self-impart this divine life of relational love. This self-imparting rests, in turn, on the notion of the Spirit as “love in search of an object,”⁴² or, in other words, the opening of the relation between Father and Son to the possibility of outward relation and bestowal of the excess of the divine communion.

Williams argues, in my view correctly, that for Augustine the simultaneity of the trinitarian relations precludes a priority of the Father in which the Father communicates the divine essence to Son and Spirit,⁴³ for such a “communication” is precisely the abstraction of the divine essence from the subsistents as some kind of residue, a “fourth” (some *thing* must be communicated other than the relation of origin of Father and Son). Instead, the Spirit, the *vinculum caritatis*, is God as the agency that constitutes the relation of Father and Son as “active or productive,” a love that is turned “everlastingly to the exchange of generating and generated wisdom as its perfect object.” What is significant is that, for Williams, the Spirit is a *necessary* moment in the relation of Father and Son that both establishes their relation, and establishes that relation as productive – it

⁴¹ Ibid., 325.

⁴² Ibid., 329.

⁴³ Ibid., 328; this insight on Williams’s part is remarkable given his early work in Lossky, who spearheaded so much of the contemporary Orthodox polemic regarding the monarchy of the Father, popularized in turn by Rahner. However, when Williams speaks of *sapientia* existing as “being eternally loved, eternally contemplated” and by “generating an other” in such a way as to not to be identical to the Father, the category begins to sound like something more similar to the *sophia* of Sergius Bulgakov.

completes God's self-love, and thus enables it to open outside itself *ad extra*.⁴⁴ The divine self-reflexivity, complete in itself, is in the Spirit also a surplus of self-relation therefore in search of an "external" object to love. The human self-relation mediated by the excess of the divine self-relation is therefore constituted with reference to its exteriority – its being in communion, so to speak.

Radical Orthodoxy and the economy of relation

Williams is fond of pointing to Augustine's discussion of "loving love" in Book 8 as a warrant for his understanding of the Spirit as the mediating agency of relation, divine and human, in charity. John Milbank offers an account in a similar fashion to Williams, and is also concerned to show the "ontological 'necessity' of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁵ Here, Milbank's fundamental, and programmatic, concept is that of a "second difference" in the Trinity, a notion which allows him to both appropriate and counter "postmodernism" via his imagining of the poststructuralist "difference" of indeterminacy as an occasion for the creative relation of peace. Although Milbank does not cite the theme of "loving love" as such, the symmetry to Williams is clear: the mediatory agency of the Spirit who simultaneously structures the relation of Father and Son and opens that relation to participation by creation is here related to the very structure of the human act: both in

⁴⁴ Ibid., 329. Williams nuances the question of the subjectivity of the hypostases; it is neither the case that Augustine believes there to be three or one divine consciousness, for "the divine wisdom exists only as something like a relation between subjects. Yet the 'content' of what these subjects are conscious of is formally identical, differentiated only by the locus of this or that subject within the overall pattern of relation or interdependence...*sapientia* is a conscious life whose consciousness of itself exists only in a manifold interrelation of loving acts – or rather, a differentiation and self-reflexivity within one loving movement," 330-1. Balancing this, however, Williams states that this is different than contemporary "mythological" schemes of trinitarian pluralism articulated as "interactive drama" and "a highly anthropomorphic plurality of agencies," 331-2. Whether his suggestion is *sufficiently* different we will see.

⁴⁵ "The Second Difference," in *The Word Made Strange: Theology, Language, Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 173; the original version, in *Modern Theology* 2, no. 3 (April 1986), 213-34, bore the subtitle "For a Trinitarianism without Reserve."

community with the other and in the poetic act that is human existence, the difference or interval that obtains between the act and its object emulates the “second difference” of trinitarian relation. This difference is the opening of a dyad into productive excess: whether described as the relation between a self and another, or as that of signifier and signified, the second difference is that supplementation that is characterized by plenitude, rather than dissemination or *différance*.

However, this relation between the trinitarian and the human “second difference” rests on more than mere metaphorical exemplarity;⁴⁶ instead, it is inherent in the very nature of the relationship of Spirit and church. The Marian reception of the Logos signifies for Milbank the ecclesial reception of Christ’s incarnation and atonement.⁴⁷ Christ is a personal cipher, the establishment of a set of practices that is only eschatologically filled out as constituting an incarnation; the assumption of humanity by divinity⁴⁸ does not take the form of a person with “any particular, specifiable content” – it is instead an assumption by humanity and its creative production *tout court* in the form of the church, non-identically repeating the practices of its founder, Jesus.⁴⁹ In other words, revelation in the incarnation is a *formal quantity* given particular content in human agency that participates in a kind of aesthetic production of the good, insofar as that agency participates in that form which is identical to the church, the Marian body that

⁴⁶ More correctly, Milbank would protest the qualifier “mere” – metaphorical transactions would already be a form of ontological poesis.

⁴⁷ “The Second Difference,” 186; cf. “The Name of Jesus,” in *The Word Made Strange*, 152, where Jesus arrives “simultaneously with the Church.”

⁴⁸ The basic Milbankian move seems to lie in the convertibility of these terms: Milbank, in other words, does not conceive the incarnation in terms of the anhypostasis of the human nature.

⁴⁹ See “The Name of Jesus,” esp. 150-52. Operative here is the distillation of Milbank’s understanding of divine and human agency: the autonomous human creative act is “overtaken” by divine interposition that brings that act to its teleological completion, itself a participation in a broader matrix of cultural acts that together signify something like the city of God; “A Christological Poetics,” in *The Word Made Strange*, 130. Here, it should be clear, human agency is in some sense the prerequisite of the divine act, as the occasionalist language seems to suggest.

receives the Logos. In trinitarian terms, this means that the church is neither the continuing incarnation of Christ, nor the incarnation of the Spirit *per se*;⁵⁰ it is something more like Williams's pneumatological mediation writ large. Citing Hegel, Milbank argues that the community as the dialectical moment of concrete representation is the demonstration of and itself is "the objective foundation of reconciliation in God."⁵¹ Milbank seems to mean that the Church, as the pneumatological *presupposition* of the incarnation, hypostatizes the relation of Son and Father; the Spirit's *kenosis* in the church is the form by which God gives the response to Christ's atonement, for as we have just seen, human agency is the occasion of the divine agency, eschatologically understood.

The key to understanding Milbank's complex proposal here is to see that this kenotic act of the Spirit in the church is our participation in the "intradivine union-through-separation of *Logos* and *Pneuma*."⁵² The Spirit who is the bond of union between Father and Son is the Spirit bearing the church with her, which participates in and supplementarily fulfils that relation. Just as the relation of the human agent and her work is one of plenitude and aesthetic possibility, so the relationship of Father and Son is that of "an infinite aesthetic plenitude of expression."⁵³ But once again, the Spirit is she who is the surplus of that relation opening it beyond itself: the Spirit is, in a sense, divine *jouissance*, the "play" between the Father and his definitive expression, the Logos. The Spirit, as "second difference," is actually for Milbank a moment of distance (even, it seems, alienation) between Father and Son: "the very perfection of relation between

⁵⁰ "There is something like a *communicatio idiomatum* between Church and Spirit, without an identifiable point of union in either nature or personhood," "The Second Difference," 185. That is, Milbank seems to conceive the church as something like the *totus spiritus*; citing "the inherent dependence of the divine Son upon the reception by the Spirit," Milbank positions ecclesial reception as the precondition of the incarnation. It follows that the church is the precondition of the Son's relation to the Father.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 187. Milbank states that this plenitude *is* the Logos here.

Father and Son is in danger of obliterating the usual significance of personal relatedness in which the ‘reflective interval’ in which I am withdrawn from the other establishes my difference from the other.”⁵⁴ And this distance is the “trapping” of the Spirit in the darkness of human sin and suffering, where the church in making atonement fills the sufferings of Christ and thereby aesthetically enacts the relation of Logos and Father.⁵⁵

Michael Hanby’s *Augustine and Modernity* is in many ways a programmatic reading of *Trin.* on Milbank’s template. Not only does the productive plenitude of difference demand a moment of separation constitutive of the relation of Father and Son (indeed, for Hanby, the space of that relation becomes an *infinite* distance), but an infinite separation is posited between Christ and church – head and body – in order that human purposive activity, which requires a deferral from its object, may have an infinite openness of desire for its exemplar as object of love.⁵⁶ Hanby’s “aesthetics of salvation” rests on a similar view of poesis as that of Milbank – Augustine is made to say that human signification itself participates in (as *exitus and reditus*) “the gift and delight between Father and Son.”⁵⁷ The church both participates in Christ’s response to the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 188. This shows why, as I characterized above, the relation of Father and Son for Milbank is understood both on the model of intersubjectivity and in terms of signification; going beyond Hegel, one might propose, substance becomes *subject* and then *semiosis* in this system.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 198-90. Here Milbank concludes with the enigmatic words “the important thing for the future of Trinitarian doctrine is at once to reclaim the themes developed by all kinds of gnosticism in all their profundity, and yet to show that orthodoxy exhibits a wisdom which is beyond even that of the gnostics.”

⁵⁶ *Augustine and Modernity*, 53-4, 64; on 207 n195, Hanby states that the rubric guiding this claim – that *eros* requires a lack – does not obtain in the Trinity, insofar as the Son is the image in exact correspondence to the imaged, the Father; though why the “distance” between Father and Son must still be infinite, he does not explain. The simplest possible critique of Hanby, and Milbank, here is that the need to posit a separation or distance as a space for human intention and freedom already presupposes a competitive relation of divine and human agency – even in being the creative act that grants human agency, divine agency must preserve an autonomous space for natural human freedom (e.g. “A Christological Poetics,” 130). If *distance* is the space of freedom, then that freedom operates in a totally immanent frame. A devastating critique of Milbank’s position here is found in Joshua Davis, “A Critique of the Metaphysics of Ontological Poesis: Responding to *Theology and the Political*,” *Political Theology* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 2009), 153-65.

⁵⁷ *Augustine and Modernity*, 34.

Father and analogically “mediates” Christ liturgically to the world,⁵⁸ thereby extending the “economy of gift” between Father and Son that is simultaneously the production of the Spirit as gift and the excess of that gift in the nature of creation as signification.⁵⁹

Inherent to the readings of Augustine proffered here – for all their differences – is an account of trinitarian relation wherein the filiation of the Son takes the form of an *exchange* or *reciprocity* of mutual giving with the Father. Whereas I argued in ch. 2 that the divine essence *just is* the filiation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit *principaliter ex patre filioque*,⁶⁰ in such an economy of relation the divine being is constituted in a dynamic mutual bestowal of the Spirit by Father and Son. But if the Spirit as *vinculum caritatis* is the mediating agency of that reciprocity, the agent who receives and bestows the mutual charity of Father and Son, then the relation of the Father and Son is something *other* than the relation of origin of Son from Father, which is the Augustinian way of thinking about their unity. To articulate that unity otherwise is to abstract from the relations of origin that *constitute* God as Trinity in Augustinian trinitarianism; and it is to attribute the gratuity of God to something other than that by which God is eternally self-speaking, in a prior self-reflexivity without which God is eternally solipsistic. Both Williams and Milbank are evincing a different logic than Augustine: they are concerned to show the (ontological) necessity of the pneumatological moment in trinitarian doctrine, and both locate it in the opening of the dyadic relation of

⁵⁸ Ibid., 37. “Mediation” here is to be taken strictly – the historical community is intrinsic to the manifestation of Christ as “form.” This recalls Milbank’s formalist definition of revelation above.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 51-5. Positing the relation of Son and Father as such an economy requires Hanby to affirm both that the Son is intended by the Father’s “productivity,” and is the aesthetic principle of his own begottenness (51). That is, Hanby must affirm both that the Father and the *Son* are the principle of the Son’s generation.

⁶⁰ This statement is simply to point to the later Thomist codification of the “grammar” of relative predications in *Trin.* 5-7 as the natural extension of Augustine’s logic; the persons are precisely subsistent relations. But *relation* does not connote *relationship*: one is a logical category of the correlation of terms, the other is the content of the relation of *persons*. But this implies multiple subjects in the Godhead.

Father and Son by the Spirit, so that the Spirit constitutes the overcoming of an otherwise monadic or essentialist divine nature. The reciprocity of exchange of Father and Son becomes the condition of possibility of God's relation with God's other.

The similarities of this ontology of communion to the standard model discussed in ch. 1 should be clear, even if the portrait just described is articulated with a considerably heavier accretion of jargon, and postures as a defense of Augustine. I will discuss the problem of this economics of trinitarian relation further, both in this chapter and in ch. 6; first, however, the very notion of economy or gift operative here must be thematized more closely.

Derrida: the "madness of economic reason"

In this section, I argue that the logic of trinitarian difference predicated in terms of an intradivine reciprocity as the ground of human intersubjectivity falls prey to Derrida's deconstruction of "economic reason," particularly insofar as that logic partakes of Hegelian dialectic. Derrida's critique of Marcel Mauss's analysis of the gift is rather well-known at this point, having instigated a series of responses by Milbank, Kathryn Tanner, Jean-Luc Marion, and others;⁶¹ but it is important to revisit briefly. The introduction of the idea of the Spirit as the surplus or excess of the mutually bestowing relation of Father and Son⁶² above links directly to the core paradox Derrida deconstructs

⁶¹ See Milbank, "Can a Gift be Given? Prolegomena to a Future Trinitarian Metaphysic" in *Modern Theology* 11, no. 1 (Jan. 1995), 119-60; Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005). Marion has dealt with the issue in a number of works, which are listed by Sarah Coakley, "Why Gift? Gift, Gender and Trinitarian Relations in Milbank and Tanner," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 61, no. 2 (May 2008), 226 n6; Coakley offers a typically perspicacious overview and response in terms of the gender dynamics of difference involved in the discussion.

⁶² This is a concept Milbank explicitly employs in dialogue with Balthasar in "The Thomistic Telescope: Truth and Identity," in *Transcendence and Phenomenology*, eds. Conor Cunningham and Peter M. Candler, Jr. (London: SCM Press, 2007), 328-33. The "passage of Father to Son and of Son to Father"

in Mauss:⁶³ the “double bind” inherent in Mauss’s claim that the idea of gift exchange, such as the potlatch, in “archaic societies” is constituted by the certainty of the gift’s proportionate return, subject to a suitable delay. The giving of a gift incurs a debt (if only of gratitude), but precludes the rendition of that debt *as* debt. If a gift were not in some form reciprocated, then the recipient would be churlish; if it were returned immediately, he would be negating its gratuity. Thus “for those who participate in the experience of gift and counter-gift, the requirement of restitution ‘at term,’ ...the requirement of the circulatory difference *is inscribed in the thing itself* that is given or exchanged.”⁶⁴ Thus there is no gift without (deferred) obligation; but the very idea of the gift is that it is given without obligation; this is why the gift is impossible – indeed, *the* impossible.⁶⁵

The gift is the impossible because it is at once the exemplar of the circularity of economy, but at the same time is intended as fundamentally aneconomic, an exception to the “symbolic, sacrificial, or economic structure that would annul the gift in the ritual circle of the debt.”⁶⁶ In characteristically Derridean fashion, the problem lies precisely in the intention of the subject that is presupposed by the idea of gift exchange: if the gift is intended as gift, then it is so simultaneously as gratuity and obligation; and to recognize the gift as gift is already to acknowledge and receive one’s obligation of reciprocity.

Thus, in order for the gift to exist and to avoid this double bind, “at the limit, the gift as

is a mutual excess that gives rise to the Spirit “as the space of possibility for an infinite sharing by infinite others of their mutual love” (331). The grounding of this structure in a dialogical reciprocity is evident when Milbank objects against Balthasar that the Father must know himself and all being through the Son: “If this view is, as Balthasar says ‘Hegelian’ (but it isn’t) then Aquinas – and Gregory of Nyssa, Cyril and Augustine – were all Hegelians” (331 n56). More below; but it is worth noting that Augustine explicitly denies precisely this – that the Father knows all things through the Son; see *Trin.* 7.1.1-2.3 (apropos of *sapientia*, which is the term Augustine uses when speaking of God’s knowledge) and above, 63-5.

⁶³ *Given Time: 1. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1954).

⁶⁴ *Given Time*, 40, emphasis original.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

gift *ought* not appear as gift: either to the donee or to the donor.”⁶⁷ But insofar as it objectifies the intention of the subject, this bind suggests for Derrida an “odyssean structure of the economic narrative.” In an oblique reference to Hegel, Ulysses, who departs in order to repatriate himself, recalls the “economy” and “nostalgia” of Absolute Knowledge.⁶⁸ The circularity of gift exchange becomes that of a “subject identical to itself and conscious of its identity, indeed seeking through the gesture of the gift to constitute its own unity and, precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that that identity comes back to it, so that it can reappropriate its identity.”⁶⁹ Thus gift-exchange enacts the dialectical production of identity, the “movement of subjectivation.” So if there is *truly* to be a gift, it would have to take place “before any relation to the subject.”⁷⁰

In a move that recalls Bataille’s distinction of restricted and general economy,⁷¹ the function of the gift as a surplus or excess of economy that is at the same time the very instantiation of that economy, when read against the Hegelian dialectic of subjectivation, invokes for Derrida the “madness of economic reason.” It is madness, because the gift is both a good and a poison, reason and unreason, insofar as the exchange of the gift both depends upon and annuls the gratuity of that excess. It excepts itself from but exemplifies

⁶⁷ Ibid., 14. Further: “For there to be gift, not only must the donor or donee not perceive or receive the gift as such, have no consciousness of it, no memory, no recognition; he or she must also forget it right away...Forgetting and gift would therefore be each in the condition of the other,” 16, 18. It exceeds the scope of the present chapter to take up in detail the Heideggerian problematic operative here, for Derrida links this immediately to the forgetfulness of Being in *Sein und Zeit*, as he does with the question of temporality immediately interwoven with the logic of the gift – to give a gift, after all, is both to give and demand time in the form of the delay (41).

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7. The “being-next-to-self” of the Idea is evoked by the “being-with-self” of the counter-gift in the giving of the gift, 13.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 24; Derrida states enigmatically that the subject and the object are “arrested effects of the gift.”

⁷¹ See Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, vol. 1: Consumption*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1989); for Derrida’s response, see especially “From Restricted to General Economy: Toward a Hegelianism without Reserve,” in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 251-77, an early essay that deals with many of the same themes as *Given Time*, focusing upon Bataille’s reading of Hegel. Bataille discusses Mauss in *The Accursed Share*, 63-77.

the circularity of economy. The gift is excessive, immoderate, rupturing both the “closed circle of exchangeist rationality as well as frantic expenditure,” invoking both a process of capitalization or commodification, and forgetful prodigality,⁷² for it must be reinscribed in the terms of economic exchange and moderation, all the while being premised on immoderation and refusal of obligation. And for Derrida, this “madness” is that of the Hegelian subject, whose subjectivity is premised on realizing himself in the other, negating the self in the other so as to produce the self in that counterposition, that of “the giving-being who, knowing itself to be such, recognizes itself in a circular, specular fashion, in a sort of auto-recognition, self-approval, and narcissistic gratitude.”⁷³

The aporia of the gift is its firm lodging within the grim economy of the Hegelian dialectic of the master and slave.⁷⁴ Gift exchange becomes an economy of identity production, for to know oneself in the other, claims Derrida, is to posit the other as a mediation of one’s own identity (and vice versa), which must mean that the other is an instrumentality of the subject’s own self-identity. To subsume the other within one’s own self-reflexivity, in Levinasian terms, would be to murder the other, the erasure of the other’s face, the ineluctable presence of her singularity. Accordingly, the economic language here is not accidental, for an economy is a system of producing and distributing a limited amount of goods according to a particular system of value – to speak of an “economy” of identity production, then, is to claim that relation to the other, on the terms presently at hand, is inherently a competitive enterprise, in the sense that intersubjective

⁷² *Given Time*, 47. Derrida at this point is focusing on both the capitalist logic inherent in the potlatch, as well as the code of honor that becomes invoked in gift exchange; as when, for example, objects of subsistence received as gift are destroyed “so as not to want even to appear to desire repayment,” 46, quoting Mauss, 112.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁷⁴ I am using the epithet “Hegelian” here with some looseness; at this point, I am simply pointing to a particular dialectical structure of intersubjectivity that accords with Derrida’s deconstruction of subjectivation described above. I will take up a closer accounting of Hegel himself later.

“space” here shows itself to be an agonistic interval of self-positing – whatever the *pragmatic* utility of an economy of the gift marked by reciprocity.⁷⁵ There is, observes Derrida, a certain madness here – a cycle of solipsism and prodigality (which easily slips into violence, for formally they are identical – to act upon another without care for the other’s desire), a subject knowing herself in her giving of herself to the other, and never *seeing* the other as anything but an *alter ego*, another (my)self. There are, of course, greater and lesser degrees of realization of particular economies marked by justice, equity, and the like; and there are greater and lesser degrees of mutually fulfilling reciprocal relations among persons. But the trouble remains: one, the gift that one gives to another is always marked by a moment of solipsism, something of one’s self-giving held in reserve; two, that giving involves a subsumption of the other as a moment within one’s own self-knowing.

Where this becomes troublesome is in the attempt, therefore, to articulate the trinitarian relations in terms susceptible of “the madness of economic reason,” which, with Derrida, I am aligning with the dialectic of Hegelian self-reflexivity. This is so in a twofold respect. First, it ruptures the Augustinian conception of simplicity, which, I argued in ch. 2, means that to be God is to speak Godself in the Son, a self-bestowing that just is the act of a pure self-diffusive good. The Spirit is the gratuitous excess of that act, the assumption of the object of that act into a sharing of God’s life. A Hegelian economy of relation, such as that found in Williams or Milbank, on the other hand, would have us understand that self-giving as preceded by an internal moment of self-relation that is the *true* self-bestowal of God, Father to Son. In this sense, the mission

⁷⁵ Milbank’s reply to Derrida (and Marion), “Can a Gift be Given,” does not fail to rise above this pragmatism, as Robyn Horner points out in *Rethinking God as Gift: Marion, Derrida, and the Limits of Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 16-17.

of the Son is secondary to and different in character from the eternal constitution of the Son, which is to relate to the Father by the Spirit. In Augustinian terms, the distinction between procession and mission is that between eternity and time; in Hegelian terms, procession and mission are *fundamentally different* things. Furthermore, given the Derridean deconstruction of the economy of relation, if the relation of Father and Son is to be characterized as a mutual gifting of the Spirit from one to the other, as Milbank and Hanby especially imply, then this shades into the dialectic of mutual recognition and reciprocity which is a competitive and agonistic relation of self-realization in the other. This is especially so if the Spirit is *ontologically necessary*: then the Father and Son are not divine apart from their participation in an economy of relation. Indeed, as I already pointed out, the relation of Father and Son is something different than their relation of origin – the begetting of the Son by the Father does not constitute their unity, but a supplementary relation to that begetting identical to the Spirit constitutes their unity. But this is to posit something different than the relations of the hypostases as the basis of their relation – which is to posit something different than the hypostases in the Godhead. This is the Spirit masquerading as a “fourth,” as a substance distinct from the persons, that constitutes their unity.

Second, if the relation of God and world is grounded in a dialectical self-knowing, then the world is God’s *alter ego*; but this in turn is incoherent in a twofold sense. First, as I argued in ch. 2, God’s knowledge is not dialectical. God knows Godself immediately, for God’s knowledge is identical to God’s essence (this is saying the same thing as the above in a different form). Furthermore, God’s knowledge of the world is identical to God’s bestowal of being to the world, or more felicitously, identical to the creation of the

world. For God's relation to the world to be "grounded" in God's own self-relation (in the sense that a mediation of the relation of Father and Son by the charity of the Spirit is the necessary presupposition of an act of God *ad extra*), apart from the strange proposition of God's act needing *grounding* in something prior to itself, would mean that God were (competitively) involved in an economy of exchange with the world in which the world functioned only as a dialectical moment in God's own self-knowledge. But this is the erasure of any *gratuitous* relation to the world.

This means that the reception of the Augustinian notion of the Spirit as *vinculum* must be rethought. The reading that forms the template for Williams, Milbank, et al rests on a confusion inherent in the claim that the unity of substance of the Trinity is a unity of love, interpreted in the sense of a unity formed by a relation of Father and Son through the Holy Spirit as the bond of love (the Holy Spirit being that agent that therefore provides for the unity of Christians one with another).⁷⁶ If we recall the logic of simplicity in Books 5-7 of *Trin.*, any predicate spoken of God that is not a relative term is a substantial term and spoken of the persons absolutely and equally. Love is not, as such, a relative term, and in fact *is* the essence of God. Any absolute predication just is the divine being: God *is* love and wisdom and truth. If the Son is (e.g.) wisdom in any other way than the Father is wisdom *excepting the fact* that he is "wisdom from wisdom," he in fact is not of one substance with the Father. Therefore, if God is love, then God is love

⁷⁶ Gioia offers the standard account here, and this is the source of my most significant disagreement with his generally superb study; the ontological unity of the divine persons is not enough, says Gioia, but needs to be complemented with a unity of will or *dilectio* between Father and Son. *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 126-7. Gioia equivocates on the point at hand: he realizes and states (with admirable conciseness) the logic of simplicity of Books 5-7: "an understanding of consubstantiality rooted in soteriology cannot support the argument that the unity between Father and Son is a function of the relativity of the Father to the Son" (152), but also claims that the unity of substance is really a unity of love (e.g. 168) – what is this latter but a "function of the relativity of Father and Son"? The unity of love is not a unity *in addition to* the unity of substance; it just is that unity.

identically in each of the three persons. The Son is not the lover of the Father, but the love of the Father as love from love, and this means love as the incarnate Son Jesus of Nazareth, as the form in which that love is bestowed upon the world; and the Holy Spirit is the love of Father and Son insofar as she is the self-giving of God by which we love God, the gift of God.

Of course, it would be disingenuous to claim that Augustine does not speak in terms of the Father loving the Son, and the Son loving the Father, and the Spirit being the bond of this love. He clearly does.⁷⁷ But for Augustine to speak of the Spirit being the love (or communion or fellowship or friendship)⁷⁸ of Father and Son is to make a claim about the manner in which they are identically God and identically love – identically love such that to be Father is to be love, and thus to beget the Son is to love him insofar as he is consubstantial with him.⁷⁹ Furthermore, and crucially, soteriologically or ecclesiologically Augustine never says that our participation in the Spirit is participation in a common relationship of the two, or, similarly, that to call the Spirit gift has any sense

⁷⁷ E.g. *Trin.* 6.5.7; 15.19.37

⁷⁸ That Augustine habitually speaks vaguely and tentatively of this idea should give one pause as to its importance for him – Gioia is insightful to comment that “any account of the inner-life of the Trinity which yields to the temptation of systemization for its own sake, is doomed to fail under the strain put on it by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 166. This is a central claim of ch. 2: pneumatology is inherently aporetic, indeed virtually a “principle” of disruption in the aspiration toward systemization.

⁷⁹ There is a real ambiguity here in *Trin.*; strictly speaking, the statement “Father and Son love each other by the Holy Spirit” is the same kind of statement as “The Father knows all things by the Word,” that is, one that violates the unity of the divine substance, and makes the Spirit and Word distinct in substance from the Father. This Augustine has ruled out in Book 7. On the other hand, he repeatedly resorts to speaking of the Spirit in the sense of a *vinculum*. As noted below, this is generally intended in terms of the Spirit being the common *gift* of Father and Son to creation; but the language remains imprecise. It fell to Aquinas to clarify the logic here: for God to love can be taken either essentially or notionally (either in substance or relative predications, in Augustine’s language). In the former sense, Father and Son love each other “not by the Holy Ghost, but by their essence,” that is, inasmuch as the Father and Son love one another in strictly the same way that they are one substance with one another, and with the Holy Spirit. In the latter, Father and Son “love each other and us, by the Holy Ghost, or by Love proceeding.” That is, “to love” taken notionally is equivalent “to spirate love,” which would then mean that “Father and Son love each other by the Spirit insofar as they in common spirate the Spirit” (although of course the Spirit proceeds as from one principle). To speak of the Spirit as bond of love, then, is to speak of the Spirit as bestowed upon us from the Father and the Son. *Summa Theologica*, 1a q. 37, art. 2.

of the Spirit being the gift of Father and Son to each other. Rather, the Spirit is the love of Father and Son precisely as the gift of God given to the church. When Augustine speaks of the *filioque* or the bond of love, it is nearly always of the Spirit as the common gift of Father and Son to creation, never as a gift they share with one another. The Spirit is common to Father and Son as proceeding *from* Father and Son, or in the terms I used in ch. 2, the Spirit is the *excess* of God's full and unreserved self-bestowal in Jesus Christ.

However, if the Spirit is to be thought, in some way, as this gratuitous excess of the divine life by which we participate in that life – a point on which my account and that of Milbank and Williams concur – then that surplus must be thought in such a way as to not inscribe it within the competitive economy deconstructed by Derrida. Following Derrida's move in relating the economy of gift-giving to Hegelian self-reflexivity, I am arguing that to conceive the divine essence as some kind of communion of mutual bestowal and love, hypostatized in the Spirit, is both to retreat to a conception of divine unity and essence that has not learned from Augustine's articulation of the logic of simplicity (that remains, therefore, in some sense "Arian"); and it is accordingly to compromise the integrity and self-identity of the divine self-bestowal in Christ. In sum, I am claiming that Augustine has no concept of a trinitarian communion of persons in which we participate, in the sense of an inhabitation of a reciprocal relationship of Father and Son as legitimated by the *vinculum* doctrine. I have attempted to show that if our participation in God is anything like the reciprocal relations we share with one another, this would be to subject the divine self-giving to a certain economic logic by which we could not truly claim the self-identity of God in revelation. If God is to truly give Godself fully and without reserve – if, that is, we are truly deified – then the Trinity is nothing but

the doctrine of God's self-giving in Christ. The import of these chapters is simply that what is at stake in clarifying questions of trinitarian relation, hypostatic procession, and the divine essence – the task of speculative trinitarian theology – is the way in which we can understand God to be giving of Godself in Jesus Christ such that that self-bestowal is really identical to the being of God. But this means that the absolute unity of the Trinity is not the diminution but the presupposition of God's self-giving in Christ. The unity of the divine, the divine simplicity, is the prerequisite of our capacity to speak of God as self-giving love. But the divine simplicity is also the signifier that reminds us of the utter ontological difference between God and creation, a radical transcendence that is both the guarantee of God's unknowability and the guarantee of our deification. To this subject, Augustine's apophaticism, I now turn in closing this chapter.

Augustine's Apophaticism of Ethical Performance

In ch. 2, I argued that divine simplicity is an apophatic "signifier" in Augustine's thought, and that the argument of *Trin. 5-7* is a study of the apophatic "grammar" of his trinitarian theology. By terming this language grammatical, I claimed that it in fact functions to regulate coherent discourse about the divine essence insofar as that essence is precisely the three "persons" in their mutual relations, all the while rigorously precluding predications about the divine essence itself, for that essence is strictly unknowable. We can state *that* the divine essence is love, but only while we immediately state that at the same time and identically the divine essence is wisdom, goodness, truth, and the like. This is to say, then, that we really have no idea what the divine being *is*.

The argument in the preceding section suggests that formulating a trinitarian ontology of reciprocity, centering in the Holy Spirit as a hypostatized relationship of Father and Son, amounts to a violation of this apophatic grammar. The essence of God, so Hanby, Milbank and Williams are effectively claiming, is relationality, which is why it becomes so important to them to understand the *necessity* of the Spirit as some kind of logical moment in an ontology of relation. The paradigmatic Augustinian idea that “the unity of the Trinity is a unity of love” has shifted here, for rightly understood, this simply means that the unity of the Trinity is the single act of God’s self-bestowal in Jesus Christ, the excess of which is our own participation in that bestowal, which we call the Spirit – the unity of love is the unity of a self-giving act, and all that we can say about the essence of God on the basis of that act is restricted to what we can say about Jesus Christ. This is how we should understand Augustine when he states that Jesus Christ is the eternal *sapientia* of God (even if we have to go beyond him to say this consistently, as I will argue in the next two chapters with Barth). *Ep. Jo.* has confirmed my interpretation of this issue, for we have seen that to participate in the body of Jesus Christ by the Spirit is to be bound in love to the neighbor – to participate in the act of divine self-bestowal is to bestow oneself on the neighbor, and the ethical act of self-giving is, by the Spirit, one with the act of giving in Jesus Christ, for it takes place insofar as we inhabit his body. What this means is that to contemplate the divine essence is identical to being called to love the neighbor, and that these acts are a divinizing participation in God. This is where we encounter Augustinian pneumatology. The reading criticized in the preceding section, on the other hand, bears a different structure: love, or relation, generates a *concept* that authorizes a certain type of practice that, in turn, grounds social identity. Although

explicating this structure awaits elaboration in the final chapter, it should be clear why I claimed at the beginning of this chapter that the central thematic would be that of trinitarian *personalism*, for at issue in this chapter is the attempt to controvert the assumption, present in both the detractors of Augustine highlighted in chs. 1 and 2, and his would-be defenders of this chapter, that trinitarian theology's "use" or "relevance" lies in its significance for authorizing our construction of the *person* and her *relations*. The way in which we conceive of the persons of the Trinity, for my interlocutors, grounds the way in which we conceive of the persons that we are. My reading of Augustine suggests that the analogical link between persons divine and human that authorizes this claim simply does not, and cannot, obtain. This is not (necessarily) to deny some application of the category "person" to God – but it is to deny that that application has anything to do with trinitarian theology, where the notion simply functions so that we do not fall silent. The relations of the "persons" in the Trinity have nothing to do with our relations with other persons, for the categories "person" and "relation" in the Trinity are *sui generis*.

Divine simplicity is, of course, a metaphysical category; but, because it is Augustine we are talking about, the category immediately is transposed into a trinitarian (which is to say, christological) rubric for understanding the self-bestowal of God in Christ. The great mistake in interpreting Augustine is to suppose that these are two different or incompatible things. If the integrity of God's self-giving in revelation (i.e., the consubstantiality of Father and Son) is to hold, the necessity of something like the logic of simplicity is going to arise; and if this logic is to be sound, we cannot understand the unity of God as an intersubjective unity of love among mutually indwelling subjects,

an idea from which Williams, Milbank and Hanby do not escape. Instead, simplicity simply is shorthand for the principle that God's trinitarian being is a *single act* of self-revelation and self-giving, and this act is the incarnation, an act in which we participate in being united by love, a love that is also that self-giving in the Spirit. The unity of love and the unity of being in God are identical, even if their registers of discourse can be differentiated.

In closing, a short discussion of Augustine's apophaticism is needed to tie the threads of this chapter together.⁸⁰ Augustine argued in *Trin.* that only God is properly being, and he linked that idea, as he does often in his oeuvre, to the statement of Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am."⁸¹ The *locus classicus* for this connection is his meditation on the phrase *idipsum*, the "self-same," in the exposition of Ps. 121. This *enarratio* shows how closely the notion of simplicity and that of the unity of God's self-bestowal are linked, for this seemingly abstract category is linked immediately to the unity of the love within the church in the homily. The *enarratio* begins with a meditation, reminiscent of Augustine's famed statement on love's "weight,"⁸² on the manner in which one's love draws one

⁸⁰ For a measured analysis of Augustine's apophaticism, surveying a wide cross-section of his authorship, see T.J. van Bavel, OSA, "God in between Affirmation and Negation According to Augustine," in *Augustine: Presbyter Factus Sum*, 73-97. Van Bavel judges that, despite a very deep emphasis on divine ineffability in Augustine, he is not to be classed with the strict apophaticism of Plotinus. See also Deirde Carabine, *The Unknown God: Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition: Plato to Eriugena* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 259-77; while in general Carabine perceptively recognizes the importance of divine ineffability for Augustine, her analytical grid is largely the Greek model of *apophasis* more clearly recognized in Nyssa or Denys. She points out that the true Augustinian mode of *apophasis* is what she calls the "*via amoris*," "the way of faith in the unseen God" (274); however, she interprets this in terms of the Plotinian *ab exterioribus ad interiora, ab inferioribus ad superiora*, rather than the ethical pneumatological performance I am arguing for here. She rightly says, however, that "his Christo-centric theology is precisely the most important indication of how Augustine attempted to guide his flock to the vision of the unseen, unknowable God" (277).

⁸¹ *Trin.* 5.2.3; 7.5.10; the meaning of the Exodus saying is the object of eternal contemplation at 1.1.2.

⁸² *Conf.* 13.9.10: *pondus meum amor meus*.

downward to “turpitude,” or upward to God.⁸³ The psalm, one of the psalms of ascent, is interpreted by Augustine as portraying the ascent to the eternal Jerusalem, and like the transformed ascent of *Trin.*, that ascent is configured in terms of a pneumatological ethics: the love of God by which we ascend is united to the love of neighbor “like a pair of wings,” and the ascent is likened by Augustine to the “holy love” that enkindles many hearts into a “single flame” at festivals of martyrs.⁸⁴ That ascent to the heavenly city shares, he states, in the “*idipsum*,” the Selfsame⁸⁵ and is encapsulated in the “I am who am” of Ex. 3:14. As in *Trin.*, this notion of simplicity bears both metaphysical and theological significance (once again, a distinction itself which Augustine does not grant recognition): God’s simple essence resists all attempts at definition, for it is the eternal and absolute “being” that only properly *is*, because it is uncaused and wholly self-identical; but to speak of the *Idipsum* is at once to speak of Jesus Christ: “hold onto what Christ became for you, because Christ himself...is rightly understood by this name, *I AM*

⁸³ *En. Ps.* 121.1: “Every kind of love has its own energy, and in the soul of a lover love cannot be idle; it must lead somewhere.”

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 5. Boulding translates *idipsum* as “the Selfsame” in quoting the psalm, but then glosses it as “Being-Itself” throughout the passage. Jean-Luc Marion argues that this surreptitious tendency on the part of translators to read *idipsum* as Being-Itself betrays a tradition of importing a neo-Thomistic metaphysics of *ipsum esse* for what Marion sees as a “radically biblical and apophatic de-nomination,” “*Idipsum: The Name of God according to Augustine*,” in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, 178 (see the survey of texts and translations, 174-8). Marion’s point is well taken – *essentia* or (*ipsum*) *esse* do not appear in *en. Ps.* 121.5, Boulding’s translation notwithstanding. His reading of this passage concurs with the above: “the *idipsum*, thus, remains radically and definitively apophatic; it does not provide any essence, does not reach any definition, but only expresses its own inability to speak of God,” 180. *Idipsum*, argues Marion, emphasizes the “transcendence of God through the privilege of immutability,” even as a “name for immutability, *nomen incommutabilitatis*,” 183, 181; he is particularly concerned to defend Augustine against Gilson’s judgment that Augustine’s ontology of essences fell short of Aquinas’s formulation of being as *actus essendi*; Augustine’s thought “unfolds within a completely different horizon than the horizon of metaphysics,” 188. In my judgment, Marion’s concern to exempt Augustine from the problem of ontotheology may make him somewhat overstate his case; nevertheless it is true that Augustine’s primary concern is not to make an ontological claim about the *being* of God; even in *Trin.* 5.2.3 and 7.5.10, the emphasis is upon the way in which the *essentia* of God, *whatever it is*, is simple, eternal, invisible and immutable: it is characterized, in other words, by its apophatic remove from whatever else we call “being,” and thus the only thing that truly *is*. This is not an ontological claim proper, but rather the refusal of one, and this is why I have claimed that Augustine’s trinitarianism is the severing of the possibility of a theological ontology.

WHO AM.”⁸⁶ In *Trin.* 13, we saw that the relationship of *scientia* and *sapientia*, which orders the mystical ascent, is inverted and transformed in the incarnation; here again the mystical ascent of love occurs in *the descent* of Christ: “that you might participate in Being-Itself, he first of all became a participant in what you are; the Word was made flesh so that flesh might participate in the Word... ‘I am coming down to you, because you cannot come up to me.’” To participate in Christ is to be deified, for it is to see “Him Who Is,” and in so doing, to truly *be* by participating in the being of God the *Idipsum*,⁸⁷ which, as the sermon shows in closing, means to love the neighbor.⁸⁸

Bernard McGinn has shown how Augustine’s understanding of the mystical ascent shifts throughout his theological development, to the point that, in his mature theology, the locus of the mystical vision of God occurs *in the church*.⁸⁹ Even from the time of the Ostia “vision” with Monica in *conf.*, of course, the “flight of the alone to the alone” had been broadened into a dialogical affair; but the decisive importance of the Donatist controversy for Augustine means that he comes to understand the community itself as the site of the vision of God. As I have already claimed, both in *Trin.* and in *ep.*

⁸⁶ A similar passage is found in *s.* 6, which is closely related to the discussion of the theophanies in *Trin.* 2-4; speaking of the appearance of the angel in the burning bush, and thus pointing to the significance of the incarnation as the epicenter of the divine appearing visibly, Augustine points on the one hand to the name of God as the eternal and abiding “I AM WHO AM” of Ex. 3:14 (§4), and on the other immediately links this “metaphysical” name to “another name” of Ex. 3:15: “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob,” which means for Augustine that the unchangeable God “out of mercy” took on mortal flesh as the Son (§5). This second name of God (identical to Jesus Christ) is thus the name whereby God unites Godself to humanity in faithfulness and mercy. Gioia, to whom I owe this reference, makes much of the “name of *esse*” and “name of compassion” exhibited here – see *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 56-7.

⁸⁷ “No human being *is* in his or her own right, for we are inconstant and subject to change, unless we participate in him who is the Selfsame. A human being truly *is* when he sees God. He *is* when he sees Him Who Is, for, in seeing Him Who Is, the creature too comes to be in his measure.” *En. Ps.* 121.8.

⁸⁸ §§10-11 are a consideration of “the peace of Jerusalem” which is embodied in works of mercy and charity – Augustine considers in particular acts of compassion for the poor. As with *ep. Jo.*, to love God is to bestow one’s good upon the poor.

⁸⁹ See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism: Origins to the Fifth Century* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991), 228-62, esp. 239, 251-5.

Jo., the face of the neighbor himself is the face of God, or better, the face of Christ, because the strength of Augustine's incarnational realism is such that for the ascent to occur in the relation with the neighbor is *identical* for it to occur within Christ. The descent of Jesus Christ is our ascent, and insofar as that descent is the divine self-bestowal on the other, so our ascent is to the face of the other.

But in Augustine, we have the startling claim that the simplicity and inscrutable unity of God is the *presupposition* of this self-giving;⁹⁰ far from an ontology of difference grounding the difference in relation that is realized in the church, the simplicity of God is the simple and single act of God giving Godself in Christ. Later, I will have to consider the ontotheological question in light of this (presumptive) appeal to a revisionist metaphysics of the One; here, I simply want to point out that Augustine's apophaticism is an apophaticism of ethical performance. Apophaticism implies an end of unknowing to theological speech; it is my claim here that, for Augustine, this unknowing is simply the ethical obligation to love the neighbor, and to love God in the neighbor – the silence of thought passing into praxis. For at the end of *Trin. 7*, having established the “grammatical” contours of trinitarian predication about the divine essence, Augustine makes no attempt to speak of the divine essence as such; instead, he turns to the image of God and the transformation of the mystical ascent. The aporia of that book is what I called the aporetic of self-involvement – the fact that knowledge of God is articulated only dialectically, by virtue of the thematization of the act in which we know and love

⁹⁰ The burden of the argument here is to show that, by virtue of the logic of simplicity whereby Christ is one with the Father, the unknowability of the divine nature lies precisely in the simple and perfect act of self-giving love that is the Trinity, rather than in an “immanent” Trinity held in reserve, or yet again, in the unknowability of the Father mediated by the Son and Spirit. The latter tends to be the type of apophaticism of contemporary trinitarianism, and this is one of my few significant disagreements with Gioia; despite admissions that the Son and Spirit partake by nature in the Father's invisibility, he tends to make statements like the following: “for the Father to reveal himself while remaining unknowable we need Christ and the Holy Spirit;” *Theological Epistemology of Augustine*, 3; see esp. 107-17.

God; all that we can do is conceive God insofar as God gives Godself to us in Christ, and the very act of that conception is pneumatological. This is a dialectical structure, one that speaks of God only by speaking of the self, and in understanding the self to be called to love. We know that God is a perfect act of self-giving love, an act so perfectly identical to God's own being that we cannot conceive it – we can only act *with* and *in* it.

This “aporetic knot” that I have called the pneumatology of Christian knowledge is a pneumatology of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ, which is the content of Trinitarian doctrine, and this pneumatology culminates in an identity of love of God and neighbor. But, as I have just argued, this love of the neighbor is not authorized by nor grounded in a prior set of relations between the trinitarian persons; it is simply the call to love inherent in the fact that God has given Godself to us in Christ, for that giving is the existence of a set of persons in the church, who only *are* the church insofar as they answer that call as a singular and concrete community, whose identity therefore simply is constituted in the bonds of charity that unite its members. The grammar of trinitarian relations serves to guarantee that the divine self-bestowal is identical to the being of God, that Jesus the Son is one with the Father insofar as he is sent into the world and known in time, and that the love shed abroad in our hearts by which we participate in that sending and knowing is in turn one with the Father, in the hypostasis of the Spirit. The problem of the ontological “grounding” of human relation in a divine relation is that it requires recourse to an authorizing and mediating *concept* to give structure and content to that relation, and that this conceptual mediation is a form of the madness of economic reason – it inscribes the relation to the neighbor and to God within the solipsistic circle of narcissism and violence that Derrida unveils at the heart of economic exchange. But if we

learn from the apophatic function of divine simplicity, we learn that a fundamental ontological difference runs through the relationship between God's being and our own; whereas God *just is* self-bestowal, we are never wholly identical to our act of giving, but insofar as we act with the grace of God, the shedding abroad of the Spirit in our hearts, we approach God by similarity, for God's transcendence is a transcendence of love.

The truly ethical relation therefore has no conceptual authorization, for the ethical relation is always to the nature of a God known only insofar as we *perform* that nature in the Spirit, and to a singular other, and that relation is always singular, unrepeatable, unrepresentable, and unstable. This is how we should understand "unknowing" in Augustinian terms: as the aporia in which my act of love and service is the act of the Spirit, who is known only in that act, toward a singular other. A truly ethical act would be to risk giving oneself entirely, without expectation of reciprocity. Of course, as Derrida showed, such an act is impossible – or, as I have been arguing, unrepresentable, for the Spirit is the love of God from God, by which we act in that love. But love remains a risk, a venture into the unknown, and that is precisely the unknowing of an ethical apophysis.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE AS ELECTION: BARTH'S DIALECTICAL PNEUMATOLOGY OF PARTICIPATION

Criticisms of Barth's trinitarianism in general, and his pneumatology in particular, are not difficult to locate, and they tend to invoke tropes remarkably similar to those for which Augustine is criticized: an incipient modalism due to an excessively monistic focus on the one divine subjectivity; a pneumatological deficiency owing to the failure to conceive the trinitarian subsistents with a suitable ontological density of personhood; and a tendency to isolate the trinitarian God's true nature in eternity, at a remove from history. As with Augustine, Barth has been the foil for many contemporary attempts to reconceive trinitarianism with a greater emphasis on relationality and immanence, although Barth is in the unique position, as I noted in ch. 1, of simultaneously having enabled the 20th century renewal in trinitarian theology, while sharing much of Augustine's blame in transmitting many of the deleterious tendencies of Latin trinitarian doctrine. All of the standard critiques, for example, are invoked by Robert Jenson in a well-known article in which he judges Barth's doctrine of the Trinity ultimately to be a "binity."¹ Because Barth follows the tendency of Western trinitarianism in failing to theorize "the three as *parties* of divine action,"² his use of the *vinculum* doctrine of Augustinianism entails an evaporation of the Spirit as a subject of divine action: "The personal agent of this work in fact turns out at every step of Barth's argument to be *not*

¹ Robert Jenson, "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," *Pro Ecclesia* 2, no. 3 (Summer 1993), 296-304.

² *Ibid.*, 299.

the Spirit...but Christ; the Spirit is denoted invariably by impersonal terms.”³ And, finally, because the Spirit is merely the actuality of the dialogical fellowship of Father and Son in which they eternally covenant for the salvation of humanity, the work of God remains eternally past, with no real eschatological space in which the Spirit might work.⁴

Rowan Williams, in an early article, advanced similarly damning criticisms. Famously, Williams suggested that there are in fact *two* doctrines of the Trinity in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics*, a linear “interpretative” model in vol. 1 based on the address of the divine subject in revelation, and a “pluralistic” model of dialogue between Father and Son in vol. 4.⁵ While the former entails a kind of obsession with guaranteeing the infallibility and inviolability of revelation in its sovereign address to receiving humanity, the latter is premised, in terms similar to those Williams found in Augustine in the previous chapter, on the mutual exchange of life and love between Father and Son opened out by the Spirit, who in turn animates the human respondent to not merely receive passively, but “to learn a language and so to join a society, to take seriously the ‘strangeness’ of revelation...as the manifestation of a life and a system of relations which men are invited to enter and share.”⁶ The focus upon the single divine subjectivity in a revelation of address “leaves almost no room for a conception of free, creative, and *distinctive* human response.”⁷

³ Ibid., 303. Cf. 304: “When does the Spirit disappear from Barth’s pages? Whenever he would appear as someone rather than as something.” See 301-2 on the culpability of the *vinculum*.

⁴ Ibid., 303. This theme assumes Jenson’s peculiar temporalization of the trinitarian relations, for which see above, ch 1.

⁵ See Williams, “Barth on the Triune God,” originally in *Karl Barth: Studies of His Theological Method*, ed. S.W. Sykes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 147-93; now in Williams, *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology*, ed. Mike Higton (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 106-49, from which edition I quote here. For one statement of the above point, see 130-1. Richard Roberts, “Karl Barth’s Doctrine of Time: Its Nature and Implications,” in Sykes, *Karl Barth: Theological Method*, likewise is concerned that the absolute unity of “God’s being-in-act” as the “ontological *fundamentum*” of Barth’s thought correlates with the absolute priority of eternity over time, to

These citations are intended to do no more than signal a problem: the intimate link between pneumatology, Christology and human agency in Barth. This idea complex has been the focus of my chapters on Augustine, in which I have argued that it is precisely Augustine's understanding of divine simplicity and his strict focus upon the unity of the work of Son and Spirit that is the condition of possibility of the gratuitous self-giving of God in Christ, a giving that includes our own response as animated by charity. At one level, a similar task awaits in this chapter, namely, arguing that the points where Barth's trinitarianism is most critiqued are where it is most vital (if most misunderstood). However, my larger intent here is to continue a constructive argument begun with Augustine: to seek ways in which Augustine's pneumatology of Christian knowledge is enlarged, expanded, or corrected in Barth's *Church Dogmatics* (and vice versa), but with particular attention to Barth's own peculiar theological idiom and concerns. It is to that end that in this chapter I will offer an interpretation of the trinitarian-pneumatological trajectory of the *Church Dogmatics*,⁸ which means that I will largely focus upon its Christology; for as with Augustine, Barth conceives of the doctrine of the Trinity as the discourse that theologically encodes God's *one work* of gratuitous self-giving in Christ, a work that includes our own free response to that giving in the Spirit. As the brief look at Jenson and Williams has already shown, a major point of contention in Barth is this human response.

the expense of the integrity of the latter. The "real existence" of God in eternity is not, for Roberts, relatable to "that experience experienced by the human subject as a mere percipient being" (107-8).

⁶ "Barth on the Triune God," 133. Williams has important things to say about Barth's understanding of the *filioque* in this regard, something to which I will return when I discuss this essay in more detail in the following chapter.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁸ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols. in 13 parts, trans. G.W. Bromiley et al. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1956-77). Hereafter *CD*.

The Problem Of Human Participation In Reconciliation

*“In the peace of the analogia entis:” the twofold temptation of theology*⁹

The thesis of this chapter is that Barth’s pneumatology, which is the discourse of the subjective reality of revelation and therefore, the grammar of humanity’s participation in that revelation, is the heart of his famous dialectic of revelation. That is, the dialectic is designed to configure human participation as the Spirit’s work as a performative, ethical or “actualistic” (to use Barth’s term) event of correspondence by faith to the divine act of self-giving in Christ.¹⁰ The way in which Barth conceives human participation in God is the problem that drives the development of *CD*, and it is always controlled by his Christology. The issue is his ability to provide for a proper correspondence of divine and human agency, first in the incarnation and on that basis in humanity. In this sense, he is approaching the same aporetic knot we observed in Augustine: pneumatology is the theological moment that signifies God as the agent of our performance of participation in Christ, and is the historical and temporal correspondence to the divine self-giving. As with Augustine, I will claim that that *aporia* signals the way in which participation in Christ is an *ethical* reality that is expressed only in practice, in *performance*. In

⁹ The quote comes from a letter of Barth to Thurneysen, commenting on a visit of Przywara to Münster in 1929, cited in Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-36* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 383. In what follows, I will not be treating the idea of the *analogia entis* on its own terms at all; I am rather concerned to trace Barth’s thinking on the function of this theologoumenon, with its discursive function as Barth understands it.

¹⁰ Although I will develop later on just what is intended by the term “correspondence,” *Entsprechung*, it is important to recognize at this point is that it does *not* signal the term of an analogical relationship between God and world, but rather, the performative participation of a divine enactment of grace. The differentiation here will become clear in due course, particularly in my discussion of *CD* vol. 3.

explicating this development, I will follow Bruce McCormack's work on the Barthian *Dialektik*, for the Barthian dialectic is the very logic of his pneumatology.¹¹

When Barth is misunderstood or is criticized, it is often the dialectic that is in question; many criticisms of Barth proceed by way of relaxing, denying or resolving his tension of the divine-human paradox. There are two basic directions in which the dialectic can be undermined: first, the unendurable contradiction of holy God and sinful humanity may be denied, or relativized, in favor of a more fundamental and originary ontologically peaceful relation between God and world. Because God is creator and first cause, the source of all being as *ens realissimum*, God is a given – however mysteriously and paradoxically – in being as such, and therefore a possible object of experience apart from grace, even despite human sin and limitation. Indeed, as pure actuality, God's givenness is the reality through which our own reality of self and world is real. This, for Barth, is the temptation of *Schicksal*, "fate," – theological realism or romanticism. It is the first form of the analogy of being: the continuity of being between God and world by virtue of that fact that God *is* being itself, and created being God's similitude.

The second temptation is that of idealism. In contrast to the relative naiveté of realism, idealism recognizes the necessary moment of critical reflection in apprehending

¹¹ As such, I will be offering something of a genetic study here, though quite limited in scope; apart from a short discussion of two early essays, I will restrict myself to *CD*. This genetic approach is especially appropriate because of the tendency, since Von Balthasar's *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans. Edward T. Oakes, SJ (San Francisco: Communio Books, 1992), to understanding Barth's project developmentally. Evaluating some of the key proposals on this front – namely, Von Balthasar, Williams, and McCormack – will be a subtheme of these chapters. In addition, a qualification is important at this stage: by arguing that the issue of human participation is the pneumatological problem of *CD*, I am *not* concurring with the rather common interpretation of Barth as a monist – as so emphasizing the sovereignty and reality of God, eternity, and grace so as to deny the autonomy or integrity of the created order at all. This critique, central to von Balthasar's study, has perhaps its most well-known expression in Richard Roberts, "Barth's Doctrine of Time." Rather, Barth's issue is so construing the dialectic of revelation that divine and human agency properly correspond. There is no question that humanity and the created order is very real for Barth, and that humanity really participates in Christ. The trick is rather explaining *how* this occurs; the problem is not that of filling in a glaring lacuna, but rather reconciling two apparently heterogeneous realities.

the true, which is to be located in the non-objective ontological presupposition of the given; instead of a continuity of being between God and world, idealism recognizes that the *rational* is the real. This is a dialectical relationship: thought's correlation with truth is the basis of the analogy between God and humanity, because thought cognizes the dialectical nature of revelation – God's givenness entails God's nonobjectivity, for reason is always guided by something superior to and prior to itself, to which it is not adequate, and which is apprehended in the critical analysis of its limits. Therefore, the similarity between God and not-God is grounded in ever greater dissimilarity, but because this dialectical relationship is adequated in thought, it is ultimately the occasion of human self-transcendence – of the sublation of the antithesis.

This is Barth's well-known schematic of "*Schicksal und Idee*."¹² It is, of course, oversimplified, and like all typologies never fully applicable to any given thinker. But it is a powerful heuristic for understanding *Barth's* thinking, and the way he reads his interlocutors. The place of the *analogia entis*, scattered throughout the essay, is significant, for it shows the underlying continuity between the two positions:¹³ in both cases, the agency of participation in God may ultimately be attributed to the creaturely side, whether that participation is the subject's actualization of a fundamental givenness identical to the dynamism of her ownmost orientation to God, or is the self-transcendence emergent from the subject's critical reflection upon his own self-reflexivity. That the analogy of being can be understood in both a realist and idealist sense is significant, for it allows one to see that the Barthian dialectic is posited in opposition to both alternatives;

¹² "Fate and Idea in Theology," 25-61. I applied this basic typology in ch. 1, pgs, 21-2.

¹³ That this essay should be read as a reply to Przywara's reworking of the *analogia entis* is McCormack's suggestion; *Critically Realistic*, 384ff.

further, insofar as Barth can admit degrees of truth in both sides,¹⁴ one begins to grasp his lifelong fascination with two figures: Schleiermacher and Hegel. Though Barth names many examples, it is clear that Schleiermacher is the consummate realist for him – the monism of the *Deus sive natura* that is realism’s deepest intuition is found in both outward objectivity, giving “the name God to the universe as piously experienced,” as well as in subjectivity, in “God in the feeling of absolute dependence as such.”¹⁵ And Hegel is finally the great idealist; idealism’s genius is the differentiation of the non-given from the given, the idealist synthesis of negation and affirmation in the “superior and reconciling *tertium*.”¹⁶

The point I want to make here is that Barth’s dialectic is intended to navigate a way through these two alternatives, the realism/romanticism of Schleiermacher, and the idealism of Hegel. That Barth is more sympathetic to the idealist principle at this point (1929) is patent in the essay – but in true Barthian spirit, this means that it is the greater temptation. For it is just as egregious to equate reason with God (*ratio sive Deus*)¹⁷ as nature, for neither acknowledge the ethical antithesis of God and humanity, and both attribute human knowledge of God to a natural capacity of the human *as such*; indeed, idealism is the more pernicious because for it, human reason in a very real sense is the actualization of the divine-human dialectic. Against both, the particularly Christian kind of knowledge is faith, which means knowledge as obedience, and knowledge as *election*.

¹⁴ How Barth learned from both realism and idealism is the guiding insight of McCormack’s study: *pace* the “critical realism” of T.F. Torrance or George Hunsinger, Barth’s realism “was built on a foundation laid by idealism,” *Critically Realistic*, 235; McCormack points especially to the influence of his brother Heinrich, and the Marburg Neo-Kantianism of Cohen and Natorp; 43-9, 218-26.

¹⁵ “Fate and Idea,” 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53. In truth, both realists and idealists synthesize their dialectical opposite from their own side, a “*primum*” and a “*secundum*” in a sublating third. The difference lies in whether the “superior and reconciling principle” is “being” or “logos” (52). In some sense we might understand Hegel, who unites the two principles, as the synthesis of the two types for Barth.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

Theology is grounded in the hearing of the Word, argues Barth, and “God’s Word means God’s election;” we only stand in hearing the Word by obedience.¹⁸ What Barth is inveighing against here is the claim that theology’s object lies anywhere other than the revelation of God, which revelation is grounded ineluctably in the agency and subjectivity of God. Only in God’s address by the Word does humanity stand before God – there is no sense in which the subject of that act can be the autonomous human agent. For our knowledge to be knowledge of God, God must first give Godself in Christ, and in that giving, be the principle of *our* knowing (in *Christ*). The problem presented in that aporia is the heart of the Barthian dialectic, and the secret of his pneumatology. The way in which that divine self-giving is conceived is at the heart of the christological intelligibility, and pneumatological correspondence, that Barth will give to revelation in *CD*. In this and the next chapter, I will be arguing that Barth’s trinitarianism is marked by a significant ambiguity; in what I will label his “Augustinian” trinitarian tendency, he privileges a conception of trinitarian self-giving marked by an Augustinian emphasis on divine simplicity, and correspondingly, a consistent articulation of the divine self-identity in revelation in Christ. But Barth also has Hegelian tendencies at times, and when later readers have picked up on a “pluralist” emphasis in the trinitarian doctrine of *CD* 4, it is this trajectory in his thought that is being identified. I claim, however, that both tendencies are in his theology from the beginning of *CD*, and the pneumatological arc of *CD* is in a very real sense the battle between two very different theological sensibilities working itself out.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58-9.

¹⁹ Corellatively with this claim, I am challenging the neat developmental thesis found in both Williams, with his oft-repeated theory regarding two doctrines of the Trinity in *CD*, and McCormack, with his privileging of the watershed moment in Barth’s theology in *CD* 2/2. Williams’s thesis of two trinitarian

The Barthian Realdialektik: the McCormack thesis revisited

The scope of Bruce McCormack's landmark study, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, is wide-ranging, but a central point bears directly on my argument in this chapter.²⁰ So far I have been using the word "dialectic" in a general sense; it should be clear already, though, that the dialectic is not merely a rhetorical strategy, as Balthasar read it – a paradoxical juxtaposition of statement and counter-statement, intended to highlight the infinity and inconceivability of God.²¹ Rather, it represents the dialectical nature (the *Realdialektik*²²) of the object of theological knowledge itself and cannot be opposed to analogy as an alternate *mode* of theological discourse. McCormack's contribution is to show how the dialectic of revelation was a consistent theme in Barth's development from the 1922 edition of the Romans commentary onward, and that with the discovery of the anhypostatic/enhypostatic principle of patristic Christology in 1924, Barth located that dialectic in the person of Christ: in revelation (unveiling), God veils Godself in a creaturely medium (the human nature of Christ), such that the "infinite qualitative distinction" between God and

doctrines in Barth has a certain plausibility, but their relationship is far more complex than he sees. In fact, Barth *explicitly* returns to the trinitarian language and logic of *CD* 1/1 in 4/3. The correspondence between Williams and McCormack on this point was first suggested to me by Benjamin Myers, who was kind enough to share a paper of his to that effect, "Election, Trinity and the History of Jesus: Reading Barth with Rowan Williams," forthcoming in *Trinitarian Theology after Barth*, ed. Myk Habets (Eugene, OR: Pickwick).

²⁰ Apart from McCormack's own comments in *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 291-304, a helpful overview of McCormack's contribution is found in Paul Dafydd Jones, *The Humanity of Christ: Christology in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 19-26. Jones is especially helpful regarding the *anhypostasis/enhypostasis* christological motif, which will be central to my argument concerning Barth.

²¹ *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 79; the whole chapter, 64-85 is relevant.

²² I am following McCormack here, who in turn attributes to Michael Beintker, *Der Dialektik in der 'dialektischen Theologie' Karl Barths* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987) his insight into theological dialectic as not merely a *Denkform*, but as inhering in "the inner dialectic of the *Sache*;" McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 10-12.

humanity is inscribed in the person of Jesus Christ himself.²³ It is because the Logos is the subject of the anhypostatic human nature of Christ that the knowability of God in Christ remains unintuitable and at God's disposal; the person of Jesus Christ is therefore *indirectly* the revelation of God – veiled even in unveiling. In this respect, the time-eternity dialectic of the *Römerbrief* is articulated in christological terms. Following this decisive move, Barth's theology simply had to take the remaining steps from a "pneumatocentric" construal of revelation, focused on the existential, actualistic understanding of the address of God in the moment of revelation, which lasts through *CD* 1/2, to the "christocentric" understanding of revelation that emerged with Barth's decisive insight into election in vol. 2. From that point, Barth's understanding of revelation would be thoroughly controlled by his Christology, in that the history of Jesus Christ would be the reference point for the intelligibility of theological discourse.

McCormack disputes Balthasar's thesis of a shift to analogy with the Anselm book, and in fact notes an ambiguity in Balthasar, for McCormack shows both how consistent Barth is in refusing the *analogia entis* that Balthasar sees emerging in *CD* in the 30s,²⁴ and conversely, how the *analogia fidei*, most thoroughly thematized in *CD* 2/1, is in fact nascent in the second edition of the Romans commentary, and is tentatively articulated already in the Göttingen Dogmatics.²⁵ Finally, McCormack argues, in my

²³ *Critically Realistic*, 327ff.

²⁴ With *CD* 2/1, and Barth's Christology. However, Balthasar's evidence is largely located in *CD* 3, a fact whose significance goes unremarked upon by McCormack. One of McCormack's intents is to minimize the impact of some traditionally accepted "turns" in Barth's theology, notably concerning the Anselm book that is crucial to Balthasar's thesis. McCormack also downplays the difference between the so-called "false start" of *Die christliche Dogmatik* (indeed, between the Göttingen lectures) and *CD* I/1, arguing that external pressures, in particular the break with Gogarten and the "dialectical theologians," led Barth to exaggerate the divergences (*Critically Realistic*, 442-7). He argues something similar about Barth's construal of the relationship the first and second editions of the *Römerbrief*.

²⁵ *Critically Realistic*, 340-1.

view correctly, that the *analogia fidei* itself is “an *inherently dialectical concept*,” for it is grounded in the dialectic of veiling and unveiling: it

refers most fundamentally to a relation of correspondence between an *act* of God and an *act* of a human subject; the act of divine Self-revelation and the human act of faith in which that revelation is acknowledged...the analogy which is established in a revelation event is an analogy between God’s knowledge of Himself and human knowledge of Him in and through human concepts and words...human knowledge is made by grace to conform to its divine object.²⁶

One final point is salient here. It should be apparent at this point that the Barthian dialectic is oriented around the issue of *agency*: it is the way Barth configures the subjectivity of God in revelation, and the human participation in that revelation, as fundamentally asymmetrical; and like Augustine’s transformation of the mystical ascent, Barth’s mature insight is to inscribe that dialectic in Christ himself, for in the person of Jesus it is God the Son who acts, and even in his act veils himself by acting enhypostatically in a human nature. The problem here is the way in which one properly conceives the participation of human nature, and by extension, all of humanity, in that divine act.²⁷ The dialectic, as I will be showing, provides the grammar of this participation, and adequately articulating this is the pneumatological logic that develops throughout *CD*. But this means that the problem is a Chalcedonian one – once it became

²⁶ Ibid., 16-7. As McCormack goes on to say, this analogy is thus completely dependent upon its correspondence to the *Realdialektik* of veiling and unveiling in revelation.

²⁷ Put thusly, I am hoping to dispute the reading of Barth, especially attributed to Trutz Rendtorff, that the language of “subjectivity” implies a dependence on Enlightenment models of self-constituting identity on Barth’s part when speaking of God. The latter generally bears with it all the anxieties about divine individualism and solipsism that critics of *CD* 1/1, like Williams, fear in Barth’s early trinitarianism; cf. Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 77, who notes that this is a way of foisting the charge of Feuerbachianism back on Barth. On Rendtorff and his followers, see John Macken SJ, *The Autonomy Theme in the Church Dogmatics: Karl Barth and His Critics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 124-43. In my view, *subjectivity*, divine and human, is a way for Barth to talk about agency in concrete terms; in addition, it brings his relationship with the Hegelian transformation of categories of substance into subjectivity to the fore; this latter point will be discussed in ch. 6.

clear to Barth in Göttingen that an/enhypostatic Christology held the answer, a clear articulation of the hypostatic union became necessary.

Concurrent with this emergent insight was a continuing alienation of Barth from his Lutheran colleagues, and preeminently the Lutheran dialectical theologians, especially Gogarten. In Göttingen the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity became clear to Barth as the way to avoid the “‘Jesus Christ pit’ of the Lutherans,” which meant, as McCormack notes, “a concept of revelation which was guilty of a deification of the creature – even if the creature in question was named Jesus of Nazareth.”²⁸ The issue here is the Lutheran understanding of the *communicatio idiomatum* in terms of the ubiquity of the human nature of Christ: that is, the participation of the divine nature in the properties of the human nature (which everyone affirms in an orthodox Christology) and the participation of the human nature in the properties of the divine.²⁹ For Barth, the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum* eased the dialectic of revelation by making this participation mutual and direct, and in so doing, confused (against Chalcedon’s *inconfuse*) God and humanity. But if we understand the relationship of divine and human natures in Christ dialectically, argued Barth, if the subject of Jesus’s history is the Logos that is nonetheless apprehended only in that human history, then the relationship of eternity and time or revelation and history is *indirect*, and humanity’s orientation toward God is God’s own work. Relaxing the dialectic in the equanimity of a mutual co-

²⁸ Ibid., 351; cf. 363ff for a fuller discussion. Cf. Timothy J. Gorringer, whose superb *Karl Barth: Against Hegemony* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), is an important supplement to McCormack’s study in terms of a contextual reading of Barth’s theology, 102.

²⁹ I will be discussing the issue of the *communicatio idiomatum* at length in these chapters, but, as with the *analogia entis*, I will not be considering the historical accuracy of Barth’s understanding of the issue (nor, for that matter, of an/enhypostatic Christology – Paul Dafydd Jones has raised questions about the latter in *The Humanity of Christ*, 24 n22); what is important here is the status of these positions as *representations* – the way Lutheran and Reformed understandings of the *communicatio idiomatum* functioned in debates within *CD*.

participation of divine and human natures meant that humanity was agential in revelation itself. But this meant that a door was opened for humanity to stand before God autonomously and for revelation to be construed as a symmetrical relationship, because it suggested a capacity within humanity for participation in God, a *capax infiniti*.³⁰ Much later, in *CD 4/2*, Barth would characterize this step as a secret theology of glory – as a covert denial of the mystery of divine gratuity, for revelation and history could be identified, and thus, finally, God could simply be humanity spoken with a loud voice; the Lutheran Christology was an incipient Feuerbachianism.³¹ It is important to note that there is a deeply political motivation here, for this return to 19th century views of faith and history meant a return to the bourgeois *Kulturprotestantismus* the “red pastor” of Safenwil had opposed so stringently. This is clear already in “Fate and Idea,” where idealism’s “second, more audacious step” in recognizing thought’s dialectical adequation to its object threatens to become ideology.³² The significance of the claim that a pneumatology of Christian knowledge concerns knowledge as *election*, then, is a displacement of the impulse that configures theology as the discourse of ideological projection and identity production. It is Christian knowledge as *acknowledgement* of a mystery always already given in grace.

³⁰ The corollary to this is that generally, such a strong position is taken by the Lutherans on the humiliation of God in the incarnation and crucifixion that a subtle hominization of the divine takes place (hence, the “Jesus Christ pit”). What is at stake is the suggestion of a fluidity or univocity of divine and human natures – something like the “peace of the *analogia entis*” he opposed in “*Schicksal und Idee*.”

³¹ See *CD 4/2*, 82-3. Much of the language above follows McCormack’s account in *Critically Realistic*, 392, detailing Barth and Thurneysen’s emerging worries about Gogarten. Gorringer likewise draws attention to this understanding of an/enhypostatic Christology for Barth, beginning in Göttingen, for opposing a non-dialectical understanding of Christ’s person; see especially *Against Hegemony*, 100-4. Gorringer draws attention to the significance of the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum* for Barth at several points; see for example 79, 98.

³² “Fate and Idea,” 47; cf. 52.

CD 1 & 2: Christian Knowledge As Election

In beginning my analysis of *CD* in earnest, it is important to recall a major point made in ch. 2, concerning Augustine. A major motif of that study was the aporetic of self-involvement in *Trin.*, by which I mean the pneumatological performance of participation in Christ. For Augustine, to talk of knowledge of God is self-involving, a performative enactment of the likeness to God by virtue of the gift of the Spirit. In Augustinian terms, the *per speculum et aenigmate* of *Trin.* 15 is therefore not simply that knowledge of God is indissociable from knowledge of self by virtue of the fact that God is the soul's origin and goal – that much Plato or Plotinus could have said. Rather, *given* this (and this Platonic point *is* a given for Augustine), the *imago* is a performance of this likeness possible only on the basis of God's self-giving; God is therefore only truly known and spoken of in that performance, in the actualization of the *imago*.³³ That is, the description of that knowledge cannot abstract from the act of participation itself, and the act always shows itself to be given in the prior grace of God. As Paul put it, no one can say Jesus Christ is Lord except by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3).

Insofar as Barth and Augustine share a common pneumatological grammar, it is located here, in the performative dialectic of christological participation: to speak of knowledge of God is to speak of God as both subject and object of the act of knowing, while at the same time to affirm humanity as the free subject of that act as well. This is Christian knowledge as election³⁴ – its grounding in God's gracious and prior decision,

³³ This dynamic captures the complexity of the function of *memoria* for Augustine; it is both the signifier of the ontic likeness of God and soul – the soul in knowing God recognizes its ownmost source and goal, the good through which all things are good; and it is, more importantly, the recognition that in the soul's journey to God it is always already captured and impelled by the prior grace of God, even as that grace is known only in its enactment. This is the aporetic of *conf.*

³⁴ This is, I take it, what Eberhard Jüngel means when he states that God's being precedes theological questioning; *God's Being Is in Becoming*, 9-11. Thus the "hermeneutical question of theology" is inherent

which means that ultimately knowledge of God is *self-grounding*, but only insofar as this ground is the divine act of self-knowing itself operative by the Spirit in the human agent, with Christ as its object. The function of the doctrine of the Trinity is to articulate the gratuity of God's self-giving in Christ, and pneumatology functions to so understand human participation in Christ that it is, itself, componential to that self-giving of God.

The Function of the Analogia Fidei and Gottförmigkeit: CD 1/1

But everything depends on how one articulates human participation in that act. For Barth claims that Augustine will leave a residue, a space within which the human self-knowing inherent in the act of participating in the divine self-knowing can shift, ever so subtly, into a divinization of human self-knowing. That space resides within the first moment of *memoria*, the soul's ontological likeness to God, even if that likeness is only actualized by grace – it remains, for Barth, a form of the *analogia entis*, a means by which human autonomy can assert itself, and therefore, a usurpation of God's subjectivity in revelation, a competition for the agency of revelation.³⁵ And that way lies Feuerbach.

in Barth's logic of antecedence: "in what sense God *must* be spoken of in order that our speaking is about God," 1.

³⁵ This argument is advanced in *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life: The Theological Basis of Ethics*, trans. R. Birch Hoyle (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993). We have observed the problem already in ch. 2, in the ambiguity between a metaphysics of illumination, by which the mind is always already is participant in the good, and Augustine's Pauline emphasis on this participation as an event of grace. For Barth, this preserves a germ of the Pelagian idea of righteousness of works – grace as the actualization of the ontological grounding of the creature in the divine. For Barth, however, "the fundamental significance of the Holy Spirit for the Christian life is that this, our participation in the occurrence of revelation, is just our *being grasped* in this occurrence which is the effect of the *divine action*" (6). That the Augustine here is Przywara's is patent, but even allowing for this, Barth's harsh words for Augustine's "sweet poison" (22) show a real disagreement between my two interlocutors. Though I eventually will claim Barth is perhaps closer to Augustine than he realizes, it is not my intention here to effect an artificial synthesis between Augustine and Barth. This would be both artificial and disingenuous. My intention rather is to highlight how both respond to a particular problematic of human participation in Christ via their pneumatological "grammars." I will offer a more detailed analysis of Barth and Augustine's relationship in ch. 6.

The analogy of faith that Barth proposes in its place is one which functions insofar as a correspondence (*Entsprechung*) to God, a *Gottförmigkeit*, occurs in the act of decision in accordance with the divine decision. This term is vital for understanding Barth's handling of analogy; *Entsprechung* denotes not an analogical mimesis to an exemplar, but rather a participatory enactment of participation in a prior act of grace:

Not a being which the creature has in common with the Creator for all their dissimilarity, but an act that is inaccessible to any mere theory, i.e., human decision, is in faith similar to the decision of God's grace for all its dissimilarity...In faith man is in conformity to God, i.e., capable of receiving God's Word, capable of so corresponding in his own decision to the decision God has made about him in the Word that the Word of God is now the Word heard by him and he himself is now the man addressed by this Word. One is not to seek this capability among the stock of his own possibilities.³⁶

This correspondence, exemplified in proclamation, is in truth a "human thought and a human word" yet "a true copy for all its human and sinful perversion, an unveiling of it even as its veiling."³⁷ This dialectic of veiling and unveiling, which Barth goes on to describe as a "mutual indwelling or union" of divine and human word, occurs insofar as humanity in faith is "opened up from above."³⁸ Thus, the dialectic is one of agency: God's agency in revelation, in which humanity participates by grace through faith. The claim of this chapter is that the doctrine of the Trinity is the apparatus Barth employs to articulate this dialectic of revelation, and the way in which human participation is explained is the pneumatological moment of his thought. However, as with Augustine, this is not to say that this second, participatory moment is a different work from the work of revealing proper, which occurs in Christ. Quite the opposite – God has one work of

³⁶ *CD* 1/1, 239-40.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 241.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

revelation, God's self-giving in Christ, and the work of the Spirit is the moment of participation in Christ that is at the same time inherent in that work.

This is all a way of paraphrasing what Barth himself describes as the "root" of the doctrine of the Trinity: that revelation is *Dei loquentis persona*, the identity of God's Word with Godself, means that revelation is identically God as revealer, revealed, and revealedness: "this subject, God, the Revealer, is identical with His act in revelation and also identical with its effect."³⁹ Understanding this trinitarian logic depends upon the christological fixing of the dialectic of *Römerbrief* already described: if it is understood that the an/enhypostatic person of Christ is the action of God in unveiling Godself, then the trinitarian shape of the "root" of revelation encodes the fact that "revelation in the Bible means the self-unveiling, imparted to men, of the God who by nature cannot be unveiled to men."⁴⁰ Christ, even as self-unveiling, is the veiling of the *hidden* God,⁴¹ for the form of revelation, the *humanitas christi*, is not strictly identical to its content; if the humanity of Christ *as such* were revelation, it would mean "the possibility of having God disclose Himself through man, of allowing man to set himself on the same platform as God, to grasp Him there and thus to become His master."⁴² For revelation to be directly accessible in Christ means the divinization of the human nature such that the divinity is

³⁹ Ibid., 296.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 315. Adam Neder, in *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), sees the "existentialism" of *CD* 1/1 being overcome in the historical actualism of 4/1, thus following McCormack's general chronology; but, against the McCormack developmental thesis of *CD*, I would argue that the trinitarian doctrine of *CD* 1/1 functions at a different register than that of vol. 4, all the while following the same logic. This holds even given the vacillation between two tendencies, Augustinian and Hegelian, that I will trace in the trinitarianism of *CD*.

⁴¹ Cf. Jüngel: "the *deus absconditus* is not a God who is hostile to revelation. Rather, precisely as the *deus absconditus*, that is, in his hidden mode of being, God is the subject of revelation." *God's Being Is in Becoming*, 31.

⁴² *CD* 1/1, 323. Interestingly, this statement occurs in the section concerning the inscrutability of revelation, which is attributed to the Father. This is an early sign of the instability of Barth's trinitarianism, for the dialectic of veiling and unveiling in revelation is really that of the two natures of Christ, as the excursus quoted above shows. For the former to be appropriated to the Father betrays a Hegelian slippage here; I will describe this instability further in short order.

immediately given in the human nature. Instead, for revelation to be a history, the history of the Son, means that it is an act of “concrete relation to concrete men...an effective encounter between God and man,”⁴³ and this encounter is the specific historical density or intensity, the *being revealed* of revelation – the moment of reception in that encounter in history that is simultaneously the excess of the act of God in Christ and identical to it. This third moment is how Barth describes the pneumatological correspondence to unveiling in Christ, the “self-disclosing unity, disclosing itself to men, of the Father and the Son.”⁴⁴ Thus conceived, the *subjective* reality of revelation has the same historical objectivity as the *objective* reality, Christ himself, even if that is a secondary objectivity. That relationship is the concern of *CD* 2/1, but before discussing this theme, a discussion of Barth’s understanding of trinitarian language is necessary.

The logic of antecedence

It is commonly supposed that the formal trinitarian language of revelation (*CD* vol. 1) and the narrative trinitarianism of reconciliation (vol. 4) are in some tension, if not contradiction, in Barth’s thought.⁴⁵ But this relies upon a misunderstanding of the function of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is simply the dogmatic guarantee that the church’s talk of divine self-impartment in Christ makes theological sense. If we understand Barth to be following Augustine in understanding Jesus Christ as the entire content of the divine self-revelation and self-bestowal, then it immediately follows that for Barth (insofar as he is Augustinian) the *referent* of speech of revelation is the Word

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 325, 331.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 332.

⁴⁵ See above on Rowan Williams’s suggestion to this effect. Alan J. Torrance, in *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), makes much of this division as well.

made flesh, even if the *register* of the two discourses, revelation and reconciliation, are not identical. The doctrine of the Trinity is a way of encapsulating the self-involving nature of theological discourse: to have Jesus Christ as an object of knowing and to know him as the revelation of God means to participate in the divine act of self-knowing that is *identical* to the divine self-giving in Christ, and this occurs pneumatologically, namely, in a concrete and actualistic sense (what I am calling “ethical”), an event of knowing as being taken up into that self-knowing. That this revelation is identical to the Word made flesh⁴⁶ therefore means that to properly talk about revelation is to talk in terms of God’s saving address to humanity, reconciliation, which further means that some way of describing the mode of humanity’s participation in that revelation, human persons’ participation in their individual and concrete historicity, is integral to describing the dialectic of that address.

The way Barth handles this aporetic is located in his construal of the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinity in terms of what I will describe as the “logic of antecedence.” The logic, which simply posits that God is antecedently in Godself as God reveals Godself in history, follows from the root of the doctrine described above: the doctrine of the Trinity is, first, nothing but the necessary presupposition, the condition of what must be the case in eternity, for God’s revelation to be a true communication of Godself in history; second, it is the context in which the statement “God reveals Godself as the Lord” is made meaningful, for that revelation is simultaneously God’s self-giving love, and God’s freedom to dispose Godself in love – the unveiling and veiling of Godself in history, therefore. The logic of antecedence guarantees, against the aversion of

⁴⁶ “Revelation in fact does not differ from the person of Jesus Christ nor from the reconciliation accomplished in Him. To say revelation is to say ‘The Word became flesh,’” *CD* 1/1, 119; “The Word of God is Jesus Christ and...its efficacy is not distinct from the lordship of Jesus Christ,” *ibid.*, 153.

Ritschlian theology to speak of God *in se* as “evidence of an illegitimate, metaphysical speculation,” avoidance of all forms of Sabellianism that would ultimately dissolve God’s self-identity in revelation in agnosticism.⁴⁷ In this sense, the logical distinction of the economic and immanent Trinity functions to undermine the illusion that such a distinction has any purchase on a distinction in *God*.

Describing the necessary presupposition of revelation, the doctrine is thus a secondary description that answers the question “who it is that reveals Himself, the question of the subject of revelation.”⁴⁸ Thus the language has a very particular function: it answers how one distinguishes a particular man acting at a particular time in history as the Son of God. On the one hand it gives an account of the identity of Jesus with the Father, such that his presence is analytic with God’s self-giving, and our participation in Jesus as a moment in that identity, so that we can know in revelation that we have to do with God Godself, a subject whose subjectivity is that of a total claim upon ourselves. On the other, it guarantees that by positing a depth of freedom and love in the mystery of that subject’s self-revelation that is beyond our comprehension, but still identical with that man, we do not understand something *behind* that subject’s self-giving, an area of reserve that is God’s *true* deity, untouched by time. Christ’s eternal nature is not of a true identity abstracted from history; it has rather to do with the excess or overdetermination of that historical presence. As with Augustine, then, trinitarian language has but one function, to guarantee the self-identity of God in revelation: “the doctrine of the Trinity tells us...how

⁴⁷ The quote is from McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 358. Gorringer quotes Barth’s letter to Thurneysen in which he states that the *Wesentrinität*, not just the economic Trinity, is necessary to overcome this “Jesus Christ pit:” “I understand the Trinity as the problem of the inalienable subjectivity of God in his revelation,” 102. See also Jüngel, who notes Barth’s careful deployment of trinitarian theology to avoid both adoptionism and modalism: “The *Dogmatics* is a brilliant and diligent attempt to reconstruct in thought the movement of the statement ‘God corresponds to himself,’” *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 36.

⁴⁸ *CD* 1/1, 380.

far the One who reveals Himself according to the witness of Scripture can in fact be our *God* and how far He can in fact be *our* God. He can be our God because in all His modes of being He is equal to himself, one and the same Lord.”⁴⁹

This is significant because it clarifies the question to which the doctrine of the Trinity is the answer; it is not an answer to *what kind of being* God has in revelation, the question about *how* it is that God can reveal Godself in Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ That is a question that would have to be answered in ontological and analogical terms because it concerns the relationship of the being and act of God: what kind of eternal being can act in time? Instead, it is a question about *who* God is: who is the agent of this act, what subject is it that we encounter in this particular peasant from the first century C.E., and in what sense is that encounter the very ground of our being?⁵¹ This is how Barth’s “actualism” should

⁴⁹ Ibid., 383; the above paragraph is a short paraphrase of Barth’s characterization of the two positions execrated in trinitarian theology, subordinationism and modalism, on the pages immediately preceding. Herein lies the significance of Barth’s oft-lamented descriptor *Seinsweisen*, rather than *Personen*; the unavoidable connection of the latter with self-consciousness (ibid., 357-8) makes tritheism a very real possibility (hence Calvin’s comment about *trois marmousets*) that would disrupt the singularity of the divine address and self-bestowal in Jesus Christ.

⁵⁰ Barth regularly refuses the “how” question of revelation, insofar as the “how” question presupposes an independent access to the event of revelation apart from a self-involving recognition of its claim upon oneself in God’s act; to ask *how* revelation occurs is to abstract from the fact that it has *always already* occurred, for we can only ask about it insofar as we are claimed by it. Put thusly, the “how” question is ineluctably pneumatological: it is the question of participation in the prior act of God, and thus aporetic. See, for example, *CD* 1/2, 33-4: “In the work of becoming man, common to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...the Father represents, as it were, the divine Who, the Son the divine What, and the Holy Spirit the divine How...Even here, where we see what has actually happened in His Son, there can be no question of understanding how the condescension of God acts. We can only know and worship its actuality.”

⁵¹ Here again, is the importance of Barth’s emphasis on the *subjectivity* of God in revelation. Torrance, in *Persons in Communion*, however, in the course of quoting Barth to the effect that the language of “subject” denotes an “irreducibly ‘personal quality’ of God’s speaking,” worries about the “individualistic tinge to Barth’s conception of divine personhood,” (34-35, citing *CD* 1/1, 138-9), all the while failing to register Barth’s caution against anthropomorphism on the very page of *CD* Torrance cites. Torrance’s (very considerable and rigorous) deliberations on analogy (see esp. 120-212) do nothing to lessen the anthropomorphism in the claim of Zizioulas that establishes his premise, namely that the language of “person” is univocally referential of God and humanity (ibid., 121) and that the term has “direct semantic continuity” between its use of trinitarian and human persons. Torrance’s central claim is that, in using language of *Seinsweise* instead of *Person* (with its “unique referential potential,” 121), Barth refuses “to lay claim to the fact that ‘being’ may be given theological reinterpretation in dynamic, relational and personal terms” (186), but he fails to see that Barth’s actualism, as Hunsinger points out, is developed precisely to talk about God’s being in terms of personal address and relationality (*How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape*

be understood: it is an ontological concern, of course, but one which refuses the ontological question, for to ask the question about the ontology of God's act is to assume that there is something more fundamental to that act that grounds that act. But there is no such grounding for Barth – to equate act and being is to claim that being is always singular. The difference between the ontological question and the logic of antecedence is, in this respect, crucial; therein lies the difference between the Hegelian and Augustinian logics of Barth's theology.⁵²

But if this is true, it would seem to follow that the logic of simplicity that we examined in Augustine will hold for Barth as well; and in fact, the logics of antecedence and simplicity have the same function. This may seem unobvious, for the logic of antecedence concerns the eternal nature of a historical act, and simplicity concerns the identity of essence inherent in the genetic relations of the Trinity. But for Barth, these are the same claims: the one explicates the eternal trinitarian relations that are the condition of possibility of economic claims about the divinity of Christ; and the other the identity of essence of Father and Son such that the Son is God's one, total and undivided act of self-diffusive goodness. They both, in other words, are the theological guarantors that in Jesus Christ we have to do with the very essence of God, which essence we participate in by virtue of his Spirit. But to put it this way is to claim that, for Barth, the relationship of eternity and time, as the guiding rubric for understanding the differentiation of the immanent and economic Trinity, must be rethought.

of His Theology [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 30-1) all the while explicitly avoiding the Hegelian need to ground this relationality in the ontological register; for more on this, see ch. 6. This is obvious when Torrance claims that the difference between "theological" and "mythological" statements are the former's "ontological grounding" (*Persons in Communion*, 192). What else is this but the sublation of representation into the concept?

⁵² I will return to this claim in ch. 6, after having illustrated further the difference in these two logics over the course of my reading of *CD*.

If God really is to reveal Godself in history, then God must be antecedently in eternity what God is in each of God's modes of being in history. But *prima facie*, this can only mean one of two things: namely, that that historical self-manifestation is actually constitutive of God's being, such that the distinction between God's eternal and historical being is that of potentiality and actualization (in that God's eternal being is characterized by a historical *becoming*); or that God's eternal being is fully revealed in history while remaining free, counterfactually, to have done otherwise in eternity, and while remaining immutably unchanged by the incarnation.⁵³ I will argue in more detail later that both of these rest upon a misreading of Barth's understanding of eternity, as if eternity and time were incompatible terms that require either collapse or static opposition, respectively. At the moment, however, it is sufficient to state the matter this way: eternity and time, or the immanent and the economic, if understood in terms of veiling and unveiling, concern the divine subjectivity giving itself in the human nature of Jesus Christ the man. It is here that Barth's fundamental insight in trinitarian theology lies: in the human Jesus Christ lies everything we have to say about the nature of the eternal God, but grasping this fact means participating in the history of this human being, in being claimed by the power of his Spirit, such that knowledge of him is knowledge of God. Put differently, the objective historicity of a man's life is the objectivity of God's own eternal being, even as that objectivity is the objectivity of a subject who is not known like any other object in the

⁵³ The former, roughly, is the position McCormack has come to take, along with such earlier "revisionist" Barthians as Jenson, Jüngel, and Moltmann; whereas the latter "traditionalist" position is taken by George Hunsinger and Paul Molnar. In what follows, I will be attempting to navigate both sides of this increasingly unfruitful debate in Barthian interpretation. The labels used here are those of Hunsinger, "Election and the Trinity: Twenty-Five Theses on the Theology of Karl Barth," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 2 (April 2008), 179-98. The crux of the debate centers around the place of *CD* 2/2 in the development of Barth's thought. The center of my argument rests on my resistance to both McCormack's neat developmental thesis and Hunsinger's consistent reading of *CD*. An explicit discussion is found in ch. 5.

range of our knowledge – it is the objectivity of the fullness of eternity in a historical moment.

The objectivity of revelation and the ambiguity of Barth's trinitarianism: CD 2/1

The competing interpretations of the significance of Barth's construal of eternal "antecedence" are not, in fact, foreign to Barth's own pages, and the tension just named focuses it sharply. Barth must claim that knowledge of God's economic self-manifestation – of Jesus – is real knowledge that has God for an object, but that the ground of that knowledge is not the same as the ground of our typical knowledge, which entails an adequation of the knowing human subject to its object.⁵⁴ Thus knowledge of God must be indirect, for God is both object and subject of our knowledge, and our subjectivity is only *secondary* to the act of our own knowing – and therefore dialectical, because it is not given to our disposal, and therefore our knowledge of God is gracious election. The objectivity of God in our knowledge is mediate, veiled insofar as a creaturely reality represents the divine objectivity, but *really* represents it.⁵⁵ There are therefore two problems in the issue of knowledge of God: how to conceive God as subject of the knowledge of Godself (i.e., how to conceive the self-grounding nature of knowledge of God); second, how to conceive the human participant as a real but secondary subject of that knowledge. The answer to both, correctly conceived, is the same; it lies in Barth's pneumatology.

⁵⁴ Human cognition implies both that the human subject "resembles" what she can apprehend, and that she is a "master" of what she can apprehend; the objects of our knowledge are those "which we can always subjugate to the process of our viewing, conceiving and expressing and therefore our spiritual oversight and control." *CD 2/1*, 187. The problem Barth is dealing with here is (as he reads it) traditional construals of divine ineffability, from Plotinus to Kant, which presume a logic of the infinite as the negation of the finite; but, as Barth points out in a Hegelian insight, this is already to posit thought's comprehension of the infinite as simply its own negative determination.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

I will take these problems in reverse order, for the second is quite consistently answered by Barth, while the first introduces a deep problem. The problem of human *subjectivity* is handled in terms of primary and secondary *objectivity* of the divine subject.

The objectivity of God is not restricted by the fact that we have to understand God Himself as the real and primarily acting Subject of all real knowledge of God, so that the self-knowledge of God is the real and primary essence of all knowledge of God...He is therefore objectively present in a double sense. In His Word He comes as an object before man the subject. And by the Holy Spirit He makes the human subject accessible to Himself, capable of considering and conceiving Himself as object.⁵⁶

God is first objective to Godself, and secondarily objective in revelation – knowledge of God in revelation is grounded in God’s own self-knowledge, which by the impartation of the Spirit causes us to participate in that self-knowledge.⁵⁷ Thus, while the Spirit, in the terms of *CD* 1/2, is indeed the subjective reality of revelation, this does not imply that the gift of the Spirit is to be understood as *subjective*, that is, correlated with our own religious apprehension, our self-consciousness or subjectivity.⁵⁸ She is identically the *reality* of revelation as is Jesus Christ, an *objective* reality. But she is that reality, the eternal reality of God, by which we are made subjects of a knowledge that participates in God’s own self-knowledge.⁵⁹ But this objectivity is secondary to God’s own self-objectivity. This means pneumatology is operating at a different level than Christology (which is what all this talk of objectivity concerns): it is the excess, the surplus, the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁸ For Barth, this is Schleiermacher’s mistake. *CD* 2/1 is taking on a problem inadequately addressed in *CD* 1/2, with its christological-pneumatological relationship of “objective” and “subjective” realities of revelation; this way of framing the matter largely leaves the knowledge of God in the terms of active disclosure and passive reception, without accounting for how the latter is a free act in its own respect, while at the same time partaking of the same character as the first.

⁵⁹ “In the Bible faith means the opening-up of human subjectivity by and for the objectivity of the divine He, and in this opening-up the re-establishment and re-determination of human subjectivity,” *CD* 2/1, 14.

intensity of divine self-giving in Christ by which we participate in that giving. It is a second level of description or meta-discourse with reference to Christology as a performative reality. Our knowledge of God, which is faith,⁶⁰ is, as participation in the Spirit, wholly gratuitous – even superfluous!⁶¹ With this superfluity, the *Überfluss*, of the Spirit as subjective reality of revelation, Barth hits on the center of Augustinian pneumatology, and proffers a riposte against the fundamental error of interpreters who lament this inadequate pneumatology in both himself and Augustine. For, if God is to truly give Godself in revelation without reserve, everything in trinitarian theology functions to guarantee the undivided simplicity of that self-giving, which is identical to the human Jesus Christ. The Spirit's work is not a *second* work to that of the Son; rather, it is the excess or effulgence of that work by which we stand in relation to that work.⁶² Humankind is entirely superfluous to God's self-knowing, even if that self-knowing is identical to a self-giving *to* humanity. Accepting this, Barth well knew, was the obstacle to his theology – that humanity, for all God's gracious condescension, is finally superfluous.

⁶⁰ "It is when we understand faith as knowledge that we understand it as man's orientation to God as an object... which makes it possible and necessary not only as knowledge but also as love, trust and obedience," *ibid.*, 13, 14.

⁶¹ This is exactly how Barth will later describe faith: "the additional element – the surplus, or, as we might almost say, the luxury – which constitutes the distinctive feature of the faith of those whom we see moving towards the miracles of Jesus... Grace is so truly grace, and so truly free as grace, that it is capable of this... superfluity [*Überfließens fähig ist*]," *CD* 4/2, 245-6. I have gratefully learned here from Eugene Rogers on the point of the Spirit's "superfluity" in Barth, by which he means the gratuitous excess of God's work that is the human response to God, as well as his performative (he says "therapeutic") reading of Barth (*After the Spirit*, 30-32).

⁶² This is precisely the meaning of grace – that even in God's self-determining for humanity, that self-determining is a characteristic of God's own nature to give of Godself. Grace is not a manifestation of a need on the part of the divine. As Barth would say in *CD* 1/1, 468, pneumatology is the crux of this difficult thought, where human pride is troubled by the gift of grace: "by the doctrine of the deity and autonomy of the Spirit's divine mode of being man is, as it were, challenged in his own house." This might be measured against the Balthasarian line of argument that connects Barth's "christomonism" with his "denigration" of human autonomy, such as in Philip J. Rosato, S.J., *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), who laments Barth's "second article" pneumatology (188) and his "pan-christological" treatment of the Trinity (183). Neder, *Participation in Christ* 105 n51, effectively replies to Rosato's false dilemma.

But correlative with this qualification, the work of the Spirit inheres in precisely the same objectivity as the objective reality of revelation, Jesus Christ. This is why revelation's character as self-grounding is not fideistic, which is to say, *ungrounded*: its ground is precisely the ground of being itself, God's own self-knowing. But this is where the first problem noted above enters, for there are two respects in which God can be objective to Godself. It is here that Barth admits a fracture into his trinitarian thinking that will take the remainder of *CD* to resolve, and which explains, in part, deep divergences among his interpreters. The ground of God's objectivity, Barth tells us, is God's objectivity to Godself. "He is *immediately* objective to Himself – for the Father is object to the Son, and the Son to the Father, *without mediation*."⁶³ On the one hand, Barth understands that if the Son is to be identical in essence with the Father, then God cannot know Godself as subject to object, which implies a moment of intratrinitarian negation resolved by the mediation of the otherness of God to Godself in Father and Son.⁶⁴ Jesus Christ must instead simply *be* the self-demonstration of God, a self-demonstration identical to the God's self-knowing, which in turn is identical to God's being. Further, that God's self-knowing was thus non-reflexive, identical to God's self-giving, would fulfill perfectly the Augustinian-Thomist axiom already encountered in ch. 2: *scientia dei est causa rerum*. Jesus Christ would be in truth the ground of creation.

All this would fulfill perfectly the logic of antecedence of 1/1: the Word addressed to humanity would be the Word that is always God's self-expression.

⁶³ *CD* 2/1, 16, emphasis mine.

⁶⁴ As I argued in the previous chapter, this makes the divine essence a "fourth:" if God's knowledge and being are identical, then for God's self knowing to be that of the Father knowing the Son as subject to object, means that the divine essence is a *production* of the relation of Father and Son: as knowledge is produced in differentiation of otherness and reconciliation of that differentiation, so divine being is a production of that differentiation; but this is, again, to differentiate the self-giving or mission of the Son from the generation of the Son, insofar as the latter occurs prior to this divine self-causing.

However, in 2/1 Barth is seriously beginning to work with a problem that complicates this model of revelation. Although it is driven by the need to conceive human participation as a historical reality, this solution involves a conception of divine self-knowledge incompatible with the one just described.⁶⁵ In order to accommodate human subjectivity as a secondary participation in God's self-knowing, Barth differentiates the moment of subject and object in that self-knowing, in order that God may not only be the I of revelation, but the Thou that knows that I, in which Thou a place for the "outside" of revelation, humanity may participate:

God is object in Himself and for Himself: in the indivisible unity of the knowledge of the Father by the Son and the Son by the Father, and therefore in His eternal and irrevocable subjectivity. But in his revelation God is not only I. He is known – from outside, for in an incomprehensible way there is an outside in relation to God – as Thou and He...the actuality of revelation and of the knowledge of God based on revelation is just this:...that He also become an object Himself for these objects created by Himself.⁶⁶

The problem here repeats an equivocation that occurred already in 1/1, where Barth inconsistently applied his own insight about the veiling and unveiling of revelation by differentiating the referents of those terms within the Trinity and attributing the dialectic to the relationship of Father and Son: the Father remains hidden as the I while the Son is the Thou and He given in revelation, in God's work *ad extra*.⁶⁷ To consistently locate

⁶⁵ Barth is already anticipating the moves he will make with respect to election, though they are not yet being consistently deployed to solve this problem; see, e.g., *CD* 2/1 150, 1: "the readiness of man included in the readiness of God is Jesus Christ. And therefore Jesus Christ is the knowability of God on our side...[this] means that the only begotten Son of God and therefore God himself, who is knowable to Himself from eternity to eternity, has come in our flesh, has taken our flesh, has become the bearer of our flesh, and does not exist as God's Son from eternity to eternity except in our flesh." He immediately goes on to note that this is the meaning of God making Godself an object for God's own knowledge in Christ in the flesh of Christ, although it is just this latter point that is ambiguously articulated. It will take the rethinking of election to make this idea fully coherent, as we will see shortly.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 57-8. Cf. the reading of Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, 72-3.

⁶⁷ *CD* 2/1, 58. Cf. *CD* 1/1, 323. While following the deeply traditioned instinct that God is known in God's works, Barth is here coming perilously close to the Palamist split of essence and existence he

that dialectic in the person of Jesus Christ is, following the logic of antecedence, to affirm a *Realdialektik* insofar as the entire essence of God veils itself in unveiling itself in the human medium of Jesus Christ. But instead, Barth is grounding the possibility of human knowledge and participation in an analogical relationship to an ontological ground in the Trinity itself, in the reciprocal differentiation of Father and Son. The possibility of revelation then resides in God's self-objectification, not in God's self-bestowal; there is in the divine essence a moment of internal negation in order to provide the possibility of knowing God as an other. But this means that knowing Jesus Christ is something other than knowing God the Trinity.

I have noted that the problem Barth is trying to solve here has to do with human participation; our accessibility cannot be on the basis of any other basis than that of God's lordship.⁶⁸ "God's good-pleasure is His knowability"⁶⁹ – which means, God's knowability is at the disposal of God's grace. Positively, this means that to know God is for God to give Godself utterly to us. Negatively, it means that this is wholly grace, and thus unsolicited and inaccessible except insofar as it gives itself. But against this, I am claiming that, with recourse to an ontological "ground" within God, Barth is in some sense vitiating this restriction to the singularity of God's subjectivity in revelation; this intratrinitarian dialectic produces a real difference between God's self-knowing in the Son, and the self-speaking in revelation which follows from the resolution of God's self-knowing in otherness. For revelation to be different in character from the relation of

elsewhere execrates, and which, he (rightly) claims, posits the essence of God as a *Deus absconditus* that is indeterminate, contentless, and the remainder concept behind God's self-revelation.

⁶⁸ Any other basis is precisely the latent Pelagianism Barth detects in Augustinian illuminationism in *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*. On the relationship of *analogia entis* and natural theology, see Gorringer, *Against Hegemony*, 132-3.

⁶⁹ *CD* 2/1, 74.

origin of Son from Father is for revelation to be adventitious *in character* to that origin; mission and procession are fundamentally different “moments” in God, one being a transient moment of God’s mediated self-presence, which functions “behind the scenes” to ontologically ground God’s self-speaking. In short, the Trinity would be the ontological mechanism that would allow God to speak Godself in revelation; but then God’s being (and thus, unity) would be different than God’s knowledge (and thus, knowability).

The ambiguity Barth is introducing here is one of the coherence of his account of revelation. This is not yet manifesting as a tacit *analogia entis* and natural theology, as, I will show, it does in *CD* vol. 3. But in advance of this, it is significant that Barth’s opposition to the natural theology of the *Vaticanum*⁷⁰ is configured in terms of simplicity: the knowability of God must accord with the unity of God, which means that the knowability of God cannot be grounded elsewhere than in God’s revelation, implying that the noetic and the ontic components in the knowledge of God cannot be distinguished. The unity of God is the unity of God’s work and action – the simplicity by which God is as God reveals Godself to be in Jesus Christ, which further means that our participation in that revelation, the revealedness of the revelation, is identically God’s work in the Spirit as the subject of the history in which we know God. The only analogy between God and humanity is that which “is posited and created by the work and action of God Himself, the analogy which has its actuality from God and from God alone, and

⁷⁰ For what follows, see *ibid.*, 79ff. Barth is replying to the decree on revelation in the first Vatican Council, which decrees that “God, the beginning and end of all things, can with certainty be known from created things by the natural light of human reason.”

therefore in faith and in faith alone.”⁷¹ Thus the problem of human participation remains under the disavowal of analogy; insofar as God is Subject in revelation, human participation cannot be a matter of a sharing of being. But the alternative to this disavowal, God’s self-objectification, which is Barth’s attempt to answer the problem, is ambiguous. Self-identity in revelation, from which the refusal of natural theology follows, is a matter of unity, or simplicity. To introduce a distinction between God’s essence and work is to introduce a diversification of the essence of God. And this is to enervate revelation in Jesus Christ of all integrity. To posit self-reflexivity in God’s essence as a basis of that work risks compromising simplicity.

Election and the mystery of gratuity: CD 2/2

This connection of gratuity and revelation is precisely the starting point for understanding the fulfillment of Barth’s development of human participation in *CD 2/2*. Barth’s famed doctrine of election is first of all a polemic against an understanding of the economy of grace as an arbitrary choice of an abstract deity, which is the inevitable result of abstracting from the person of Jesus Christ. It is an understanding of election as what follows from the concrete life of Jesus Christ as the revelation of God. This much has been widely recognized among readers of Barth; but it also follows from this that, if election is to be understood *concretely*, then the life of the concrete humanity that is taken

⁷¹ *CD 2/1*, 83. On 81-2, Barth discusses the view of Gottlieb Söhngen, who posits the *analogia entis* as a consequence and expression of the *analogia fidei*: “the divine word assuming human nature is our analogy of faith assuming the analogy of being...the Word of God must always be the sovereign Subject in every living movement of faith.” In the face of this, Barth admits “If this is the Roman Catholic doctrine of *analogia entis*, then naturally I must withdraw my earlier statement that I regard the *analogia entis* as ‘the invention of the anti-Christ’...But I am not aware that this particular doctrine of the *analogia entis* is to be found anywhere else in the Roman Catholic Church or that it has ever been adopted in this sense.” Indeed, against Söhngen, Barth avers that the (valid) principle *esse sequitur operari* cannot be reversed into *operari sequitur esse* without the abstraction of the analogy taking place (*ibid.*, 83). The noetic and ontic order must strictly correspond for Barth.

up into Christ is not abstractable, and as that revelation is thoroughly actualistically grounded, then that participation will be as well. Human participation must have precisely the same kind of objectivity as does revelation itself. Thus *CD 2/2* gives the articulation of Barth's pneumatology in its historical actualism, and this lies in his adaptation of the Augustinian *totus christus* motif.

In *CD 2/1*, Barth had discussed the important relationship of "encroachment" and divine hiddenness; the former arises insofar as, against a Ritschlian refusal to "speculate" about the eternity of God, the trinitarian logic of antecedence requires discursive ascriptions about the nature of God as such, as the presupposition of their economic intelligibility. But this, warns Barth, is not unwarranted encroachment on our part, an arbitrary projection into an intrinsically contentless abstraction. God's knowability is the objective reality of God's self-giveness – of "the encroachment which God Himself has made in His revelation in Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit...this self-demonstration is his revelation as the triune God."⁷² Thus God's knowability is a function of unknowability, for it is the knowability of the mystery of gratuity. Divine hiddenness is not abrogated – quite the contrary. Revelation simply redefines the meaning of that term. As already noted, the hiddenness of God cannot simply be a function of our epistemic limits, for to posit the infinite as the unknowable surplus of the finite is simply to extend the reaches of cognition beyond its limit, to comprehend the incomprehensible under a concept. Instead, the divine hiddenness is the freedom of God to love without reserve, the judgment and grace under which humanity falls by God's act in revelation: "the very hiddenness in which He is here revealed is only the mark of the grace of His revelation, with the knowledge of which our knowledge of God must begin and from which it must never

⁷² *CD 2/1*, 67.

depart.”⁷³ The veiling of God is the unfathomable condescension of the incarnation, the gratuity by which the divine nature undergoes the alien and the strange in taking on human flesh.⁷⁴ As we saw in Augustine, Barth is constructing an apophaticism that conceives the incomprehensibility of the divine nature as an ethical claim, not an epistemological one: it is the utter gratuity of a nature which is fully and completely love, which is so fully free as to be characterized by a total self-giving, whose self-identity is self-donation. To this self-giving belongs our correspondence in trust and obedience – our performative participation in God’s self-knowing. To claim agnosticism about God’s nature is an abstraction from the concreteness of the divine self-giving in Christ; the logic of antecedence requires very specific claims about the mystery of God that is the ethical depth of God’s encroachment in history. To rate our epistemological limits higher than God’s capacity to reveal Godself in love is an act of blasphemy.⁷⁵

Understanding *CD 2/2* as a treatise on the mystery of revelation in this way is illuminating, for it shows that we are to read Barth as working with a particular kind of ethical apophaticism. “What is the meaning of the mystery of the freedom of this divine work? The will of God in His grace knows no Wherefore. God’s decision is grounded in His good-pleasure, and for that reason it is inexplicable to us.”⁷⁶ The great temptation in election is to think divine eternity, the antecedent presupposition to the economy, as empty and contentless, an indeterminacy that only commits itself to the incarnation in a

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 210.

⁷⁴ In *CD 2/1*, Barth is speaking of divine hiddenness in somewhat more richer terms than in the section of the mystery of God in *CD 1/1*, where the discussion is primarily restricted to the nature of the dialectic. In *2/1*, however, the important framing of the dialectic in terms of love and freedom gives shape to claims of divine hiddenness.

⁷⁵ *CD 2/1*, 201.

⁷⁶ *CD 2/2*, 30.

decretum absolutum, a voluntaristic arbitrary determination.⁷⁷ This is the same error as correlating the Father exclusively with the term of the dialectic concerned with hiddenness; the divine life is posited as the indeterminate eternal reserve of an immediate givenness in history. Barth's innovation in introducing Jesus Christ as the *subject* of election with the Father is to take so seriously the unity of revelation and its antecedence as to claim that the election of Jesus Christ, as the eternal (supralapsarian) will of God, is in fact the *act* of Jesus Christ. The divine self-identity in essence and act is total. While Barth is clearly rejecting a *logos asarkos* here, the dialectical relationship of the divine and human nature of Jesus remains carefully framed in Reformed terms, as I will show shortly. Thus talk of divine mystery – even, or perhaps *especially*, mystery as the gratuity of grace, of God's good-pleasure – must carefully clarify just how the mystery is not that of an indeterminate abstraction, a vacuum without content expressed solely in the voluntarism of a self-grounding will. This is the great problem Barth sees with traditional predestinationist theories of an absolute decree, which eventuate in sheer determinism, or, in a term already seen, *Schicksal*, fate. His antidote is the strict restriction of theological discourse to the revelation in Jesus Christ, such that talk of God's eternal decision to determine Godself for humanity in Jesus Christ entails that the incarnation is in some sense an eternal event within the trinitarian life of God. Later I will discuss in detail what this latter point might mean; what is important for our purposes here is the way that the Barthian dialectic is here continuing to take a christological form.

The dialectic is meant to express the asymmetry of divine and human agency in revelation and redemption, the fact that human participation and divine participation operate at fundamentally different levels such that *human* participation is itself a *divine*

⁷⁷ Ibid., 100.

work by the Spirit. This is simply a way of talking about divine transcendence, which, as Augustine knew,⁷⁸ is the prior condition for God's "immanent" act in history. But if God's mystery is the mystery of a self-disclosing gratuity, of an essence that is so identical to its act that its act of self-giving just is its essence, then – again as with Augustine – God's transcendence is a transcendence of "affections," of love. God transcends us by the perfection of God's love, and God's act of loving self-giving so perfectly corresponds to God's nature that they are identical – God is the simplicity of self-giving love. Our participation – our reception – of that love that is the knowledge of God, what Augustine called *sapientia* and Barth will call *Entsprechung*, correspondence, is therefore an ethical act, a question of the orientation of our love. It is oriented to and centered in our faith in Jesus Christ, which is the eternal self-giving of God precisely as temporal. It is the quality of a temporal act invested with eternal content because that eternity itself is given in history. But Barth takes a step Augustine does not here, for Augustine contents himself with saying that the Son is the temporal manifestation of an eternally self-speaking God. Barth will now say that the history of Jesus Christ is in fact the eternal existence of the Son of God – that the history of Jesus Christ is, without remainder or qualification, what it means to describe God as self-donating.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Everything I have argued about the work of the Spirit in Barth and Augustine can be summarized in Augustine's famous *interior intimo meo*. Transcendence is the condition of possibility of immanence; understood correctly, transcendence does not stand in a binary with "immanence;" like "eternity" and "time," the terms do not even function at the same level of discourse.

⁷⁹ We have seen this adumbrated already in *CD 2/1*, 151 (see above). This is *contra* what is, in my estimation, a misunderstanding of Barth's concept of *Urgeschichte* (at least at this point in the development of his thought), which criticizes him for portraying the history of reconciliation deterministically as a temporal copy or reflection of a pre-existent eternal archetypical history. Rather, Barth understands predestination, "the beginning of all things with God [that] is itself history" as the concrete history of Jesus Christ – *this* is what was in the beginning with God, and thus with it, "this history, encounter, and decision between God and man," *CD 2/2*, 185. This view on *Urgeschichte* is represented well by Roberts, "Barth's Doctrine of Time," and is followed to some extent by Nathan Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009). I will say more about Kerr's work in ch. 5.

All this is the importance of Jesus Christ as the *subject* of election. When combined with Jesus Christ as the *object* of election, what Barth has done is, effectively, to retract the flaw of the trinitarian model of *CD* 2/1, where the trinitarian relations function as an ontological ground for otherness as a condition of participation in God. Instead, Jesus Christ's "otherness" as human is precisely the form God's self-giving takes. The creature is not an ontological *other* to God, for God's self-bestowal is the presupposition of the existence of the creature. The existence and act of the human being Jesus, and all others in him, is the act of God, and thereby, free. The human act, just as free, is enclosed within the divine act; there is an asymmetrical relation between divine and human agency in revelation and reconciliation. Recognizing this entails reminding ourselves of the oft-overlooked significance of Jesus Christ as the object of election. In part, this subject tends to be deemphasized due to Barth's own admission that he is not innovating wholesale on this point, and because, true to his intent, attention is paid to the divine act in reconciliation, the divine determination towards humanity in the history of Jesus Christ. But it must be the case that this objective reality has a subjective reality of what is in fact reconciled, whose objectivity obtains precisely as the objectivity of Jesus Christ. To abstract from this reality is just as egregious as to abstract from the concreteness of God's act in Christ: theology proceeds by speaking insofar as the theologian herself is always already caught up in that act.

Here, once again, we see an important confluence of Barth and Augustine. In the reading of the latter's *Trin.*, we saw that pneumatology as a *performative* enactment of participation, as an ethical act of love with God's own love shed abroad in our hearts, gave the trinitarian treatise a performative form itself; *Trin.* is the spiritual exercise of a

mystical ascent (duly reconfigured in christological terms) to the loving union with God that is *sapientia*. Pneumatology is an inherently performative, dialectical discourse of self-involvement. So with Barth in *CD 2/2*; in keeping with his insistence that the history of the covenant between God and humanity is a concrete, particular one (“*this* God and *this* [person],” as he put it in the *Römerbrief*), the nature of theological discourse itself shifts. Election and predestination means that God has determined Godself, not in an abstract eternal act towards humanity in general, toward which we can take a position of neutrality and indifference; rather, the content of that eternal predestination, as it is enacted in the history of Jesus Christ, is the encounter and exaltation of *ourselves*. Our performance of that participation is the witness to the fact that our participation is accomplished already. Election takes the form of a summons and address to a subject. Thus theology becomes something altogether different – it becomes witness of that event. As Barth says, “we abandon not merely the language and style but also the intention and attitude of definitive investigation and exposition, and pass over directly to what is...the *genre* of preaching and pastoral admonition.”⁸⁰ The latter pages of *CD 2/2* become a direct address to the reader, an *enactment* and *performance* of the address of election.

The theological context for this address is located in the covenant, described in terms which directly recall Augustine’s theme of the *totus christus*:

In this name [of Jesus Christ] we may now discern the divine decision as an event in human history and therefore as the substance of all the preceding history of Israel and the hope of all the succeeding history of the Church...under this name God Himself realized in time, and therefore as an object of human perception, the self-giving of Himself as the Covenant-partner of the people determined by Him from and to all eternity.⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 323.

⁸¹ *CD 2/2*, 53. Cf. 118: “And as He became Christ, so we become Christians. As He became our Head, so we become His body and members. As He became the object of our faith, so we become believers in Him.”

It is in these terms – the headship of Christ – that the final step of Barth’s profound rethinking of the *an/enhypostatic* configuration of the dialectic takes place.⁸² Although the dialectic always had the Word made flesh for its content (*pace* Williams), the more formal terms of *CD* 1/1 largely functioned to christologically situate the interplay of veiling and unveiling in human flesh and divine Subject; here, Barth is unfolding the implications of this in terms of this person’s history. This means that the divine act of self-determination has its content in the election of a man who, as the member of a covenant people, represents that people by his obedience to God: “in and with the existence of this man the eternal divine decision has as its object and content the execution of the divine covenant with man, the salvation of all men.”⁸³ In other words, the objective reality and subjective reality of revelation *are* the person of Jesus Christ, for his obedient correspondence to God is the divine act of determining humanity’s determination for Godself. Jesus Christ, as human, is both the destiny of human nature as exaltation to fellowship with God, and *the manner* of participation in that exaltation.⁸⁴ Participation language is pneumatological language; but as with the epistemological discussion of *CD* 2/1, the subjective reality of revelation partakes of precisely the same objectivity as the objective reality, for the subjective reality – participation in Christ by the Spirit – has the same content as its object, the self-giving act of God. And now, we see that that act is the humanity of Christ to which we correspond in faith and love, by

⁸² Jüngel likewise sees the doctrine of election in Barth to be understood in terms of the *enhypos-tasis* and *anhypos-tasis* of the human nature of Jesus; *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 96.

⁸³ *CD* 2/2, 116.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 118.

recognizing and acknowledging ourselves as members of a covenanted people – as in Christ our head, our lives hidden in Christ with God.⁸⁵

An important implication of this move – that the humanity of Jesus is the content of the eternal self-giving of God – is that we must rethink the relationship of the human Jesus and the divine Father. As we have seen, it is common among Barthian interpreters (and, increasingly, sympathetic Augustinian interpreters) to talk of reconciliation as a participation in the relationship of the Son and the Father, as an entry into the communion of the Godhead through the humanity of Jesus. But if Barth is right and Jesus Christ is subject *and* object of election, which means that he is in his humanity the self-identity of the divine act as a dialectical inclusion of humanity in the divine being, then his human existence as the covenant man entails a representation of all humanity. Unfolding the full dimension of Jesus Christ as *Stellvertreter* will take place in *CD* 4; but for now, it is important to see that everything about the relationship of the Son to the Father has to be conceived exactly as the subjective reality of revelation in the Spirit – as God’s agency of our act. In other words, God’s self-relation *is* God’s self-donation, for God’s self-giving is Jesus Christ, just as our participation in that self-giving is Jesus Christ. The pneumatological reality of revelation is Jesus Christ as the *totus christus*, we ourselves, responding to God insofar as that response is a form of the divine act toward us. And that act has the form of witness and mission as an ethical act of historical existence, for the church’s essence is identical with Jesus Christ, the self-speaking of God in act.

⁸⁵ Col. 3:3, quoted in *CD* 2/2, 323; this text is a linchpin of Barth’s pneumatology.

CD 3: Barth's "Brazen Identification" and the *Analogia Relationis*

I have argued that *CD* volume 2 represents an important turning point in the development of Barth's thinking on the pneumatological dialectic of revelation. 2/1 inscribes that dialectic within a rigorous disquisition on knowledge of God, but also introduces a serious trinitarian ambiguity; Barth's desire to ground knowledge of God in God's own self-knowledge (thus preserving Barth's version of Augustine's "paradox of prevenience," the priority of the divine act in revelation) meant that he started to think of the immediacy of that self-knowledge in terms more like that of Hegelian reflexivity – God's self-knowledge meaning the Father's knowing of the Son as an object, and therefore the Son being a mediating self-knowing of the Father. 2/2 does not directly mitigate this tension; instead, the focus is on grounding human participation in the humanity of Christ as covenantal participation in his headship, and on that covenantal history as the *Urgeschichte* that is in some sense the eternal trinitarian history.

The four part-volumes of *The Doctrine of Creation* cannot be given extensive attention here; however, I do want to argue that a particularly notorious theme of volume 3/1 and 3/2 has an important bearing on my reading of *CD*. This is Barth's infamous account of gender relations and the human I-Thou relationship as constitutive of the image of God. I want to suggest here that, however much Barth's thinking on this point might simply lapse into an ideological blind spot,⁸⁶ there is a much deeper issue at play, connected to the themes just discussed, which will have implications as far as *CD* 4/1.

The issue revolves around the issue of analogy, specifically, the function of the *imago dei*

⁸⁶ A blind spot for which he should not be excused, especially given the sharply anti-ideological tenor and insight of so much of *CD*. Gorringer offers a nuanced reading of Barth on this point in *Against Hegemony*, 200-8, pointing out that many resources for a feminist reading of Scripture are in Barth while allowing that "there is no possibility that Barth's teaching on the relation of men and women can be followed," 207.

as an analogical correspondence to the life of the Trinity. The *analogia fidei*, while it is not described by Barth as the image of God, is nonetheless an *Entsprechung* of the knowledge of God to God's self-knowing, insofar as both of these are identical to the act of divine self-disclosure in Christ; alongside this, however, in *CD 2/1* we saw another analogical relationship emerge, one in which a subject-object otherness in God functioned as the ontological ground of the relationship of humanity and God. This is something far closer to the *analogia entis* Barth attacked so thoroughly in that very volume: a personalist ontology of I and Thou in which both God and humanity participate, the divine relationship providing an exemplar for the mimesis of the human. Interestingly, Balthasar's famous developmental thesis about the turn from dialectic to analogy in Barth is largely grounded in evidence from *CD* vol. 3.⁸⁷ This reading would locate an analogical turn in volume 3, in Barth's *analogia relationis*. Here Balthasar has read rightly: Barth does make an analogical move in his doctrine of creation, but this is part of a tension in Barth's trinitarian thinking that is superseded by *CD 4/2*.⁸⁸

What Barth is attempting in vol. 3 is to think the history of creation as the history of the covenant foregrounded in *2/2*, and to think that with due christological rigor. Jesus Christ is both the noetic and ontic ground of the knowledge of creation as creation:

⁸⁷ Note the prevalence of *3/1* and *3/2* (vols. 5 and 6 in Balthasar's citation) in the chapter devoted to "The Centrality of Analogy," *Theology of Karl Barth*, 114-67. As McCormack notes (*Critically Realistic*, 2-3), Balthasar in fact advances two hypotheses of an analogical turn in Barth's thought: first, he explicitly claims that the *Anselm* volume is a conscious shift; second, he seems to think, though this is stated less clearly, that a turn occurs within the *CD* itself, pointing especially to the Christology in vol. 2, even if his evidence largely draws from vol. 3.

⁸⁸ Which of course Balthasar did not have available to him at the time. Although I have learned much from Jones's generally fine study, his indebtedness to McCormack's hypothesis regarding the treatment of election in *CD 2/2* is deployed rather uncritically when he states, "the doctrine of election brings to Barth's thought a new and conclusive stability...while small shifts in perspective are noteworthy, there is less need for an interpretive approach sensitive to moments of development within the *Dogmatics*" after *2/2*; *The Humanity of Christ*, 118. Likewise, he sidesteps the question of the relationship of trinitarianism in *CD 1* and *4*, adverting to the *Aufhebung* of the former in the doctrine of election in *2/2* (211). Rather, as I am arguing throughout this chapter and the next, Barth's theology is marked by a set of tensions that persist until well into *CD 4*.

creation is known as God's insofar as we understand it as the presupposition of the covenant enacted in Jesus Christ, and creation *is* because he is its goal and origin: "Jesus Christ is the Word by which the knowledge of creation is mediated to us because He is the Word by which God has fulfilled creation and continually maintains and rules it."⁸⁹ But the way in which this ontic basis is articulated leads to a substantial problem that replicates the pattern of *CD* 2/1 in sharper clarity. That knowledge of God is grounded in God's own self-knowledge cannot entail a strict correlation of the *mode* of knowing, as if God the Father must know himself in the Son, as we know the Father in the Son. This is incoherent, by virtue of the logic of simplicity Augustine articulated in *Trin.* 5-7. In 2/1, the awkwardness of this claim is balanced by the careful pneumatology of Christian knowledge Barth articulates, wherein the subject of the knowledge of God is God in the person of the Spirit, such that the subjective reality of revelation, the historical reality or intensity of participation in revelation, is grounded in the same objectivity as its object, Jesus Christ the Word of God. Put in dialectical terms, any "analogy" between human and divine knowing occur only insofar as that human knowing, which takes the form of faith by virtue of its object (which demands knowing as fidelity), is a free knowing that occurs as a receptive participation in the divine act of self-knowing. Human participation is in fact the encounter of the divine veiling, the mystery of gratuity, which means that it is a performative enactment *of* that gratuity.

But Barth's doctrine of creation does not follow this dialectical logic, and that is its failure. Here the ambiguity of a divine self-objectification, noted earlier, manifests in a covert reinstatement of analogy, which legitimates something very like natural theology. Deploying the same problematic logic that crops up in 2/1, the relationship to God as

⁸⁹ *CD* 3/1, 28.

creator has its analogue in a relationship internal to God Godself – the begetting of the Son: “creation denotes the divine action which has a real analogy, a genuine point of comparison, only in the eternal begetting of the Son by the Father, and therefore only in the inner life of God himself.”⁹⁰ Thus the creation of humanity is the creation of a counterpart to God that mirrors God’s own non-solitariness:

The creative basis of [humanity’s]⁹¹ existence was and is a history which took place in the divine sphere and essence; a divine movement to and from a divine Other; a divine conversation and summons and a divine correspondence to it. A genuine counterpart [*Gegenüber*] in God Himself leading to unanimous decision is the secret prototype which is the basis of an obvious copy, a secret image and an obvious reflection in the coexistence of God and man, and also of the existence of man himself.⁹²

It would of course be one thing were Barth simply to claim that the analogate to God’s relationship to Godself were the relationship of God and humanity (this is the extent of the analogy in 2/1); but Barth is also going on to claim that that analogy has a mimetic correspondence in the existence of “man himself,” in the “true confrontation and reciprocity which are actualised in the reality of an ‘I’ and a ‘Thou.’”⁹³ Furthermore, he locates this I-Thou personalism in the creation of humanity as male and female. But here he has entered into decided non-Barthian territory, for “the *tertium comparationis*, the analogy between God and man, is simply the existence of the I and the Thou in confrontation.”⁹⁴ This *analogia relationis* is beginning to look very much like an *analogia entis*, a stable, structural analogical relationship in the ontological order

⁹⁰ CD 3/1, 14.

⁹¹ The translators have a capitalized third person pronoun here, but it is clear that the antecedent of *seiner Existenz* is *Menschen*, earlier in the sentence.

⁹² CD 3/1, 183. There is a play on words in the last sentence which demonstrates the close relationship of “prototype” to “copy...image...reflection” – *Urbild...Abbild...Vorbild...Nachbild*. It is worth pointing out that this relationship of eternal prototype to temporal image or reflection very nearly fulfills the picture of *Urgeschichte* which Richard Roberts attacks; but is really only in vol. 3 that Roberts’s caricature approaches an accurate critique.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 184.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

independent of revelation: the relationship of man and wife bears a mimetic correspondence to the relationship of Father and Son.

It is, of course, not quite so simple, for Barth is quick to add that the *analogia relationis* occurs only in an act of freedom, in the actualistic terms of encounter and decision.⁹⁵ But the underlying problems are not thereby removed. First, the heteronormativity operative here is, put simply, arbitrary. Whatever the control the biblical text holds in the argument,⁹⁶ Barth must take recourse to something very like the ideological legitimation of natural theology he so deplored in the German Christians to reinforce it, for here gender binaries are grounded in the structure of creation, such that, ominously, the realization of one's humanity is connected to these patriarchal norms.⁹⁷ Helmut Gollwitzer draws attention to the "brazen identification" of the social order and the order of creation that legitimated the German *Kriegstheologie*, opposed so strongly in the *Römerbrief*.⁹⁸ It is the very essence of ideology to invoke revelation as the legitimation of a social institution, as Barth well knows; but this is precisely the structure of the *analogia relationis* in *CD* 3/1 and 3/2. The "completion of man by the woman"

⁹⁵ Ibid., 195.

⁹⁶ Eugene Rogers has argued perceptively that Barth's reading of scripture here is rather flat-footed, for in Genesis the I-Thou encounter is linked immediately to the fall; just at the point where Barth most needs to maintain his christological articulation of *wirklich* humanity, Jesus Christ becomes entirely secondary to an a priori I-Thou personalism; *Sexuality and the Christian Body: Their Way into the Triune God* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 182-3; Jones makes a similar point; *The Humanity of Christ*, 118-19. Barth, notes Rogers (181), avoids a Feuerbachian projection of man's desire onto God, only to project it onto woman.

⁹⁷ "The encounter of man and woman is not in any sense an encounter of two freely disposing or disposable factors which can be shaped or reversed at will. Only as ordered by God at creation can this encounter be normal and good in its relationship to God. *Any other form of the mutual relationship of man and woman alters their relationship to God*," *CD* 3/1, 308, emphasis mine.

⁹⁸ "Kingdom of God and Socialism in the Theology of Karl Barth," in *Karl Barth and Radical Politics*, ed. and trans. George Hunsinger (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 80: "it made a difference [in the 2nd edition of the Roman commentary] whether we perceive an identity between God's kingdom and social, or whether we identify our socialism...with God's kingdom." The "brazen identification" of the natural or political order with God's kingdom is the very structure of natural theology for Barth, which in turn is the structure of idolatry and ideology. The misstep of *CD* 3 is thus all the more remarkable. Jones's response is very similar; *The Humanity of Christ*, 120 n8.

(which must entail woman's ontological dependency upon the man) is in fact "*the* secret, the heart of all secrets of God the Creator."⁹⁹

The problem here is even more palpable in *CD 3/2*, where Barth extends many of these themes in an explicitly anthropological fashion. But here the tension between Barth's two tendencies in trinitarian thinking is highlighted once again. On the one hand, the covenantal-historical theme emerges, for humanity is real humanity only in Jesus Christ, in which the eternal election of God toward Jesus Christ is the election of his humanity, and thus the revelation of God's election to the *totus christus*. When Barth draws an opposition between "phenomenal man" (*CD 3/2*, §44.2) and "real man" (§44.3), this is grounded in the fact that Jesus as representative is the true man, and that his history is the *Urgeschichte*¹⁰⁰ from which human history is derived. The christological dialectic is reaffirmed: Jesus's true humanity, just as true and genuine humanity, is God's own work,¹⁰¹ and because this humanity is a history, an act, so humanity's fundamental nature is the nature of its act, its decision and history vis-à-vis God, of which God is the agent in whom humanity acts in faith.¹⁰²

In this, Barth is waging an assault against "abstraction," against the presumption that the concrete and eventual – the ethical – relationship with God is something ancillary to a general human nature as such; if being is act, if to be a human being is to act in decision, then humanity just is its decision; and if *real* (*wirklich*) humanity is Jesus Christ, then Jesus in his decision for God means that real humanity is humanity for God.

⁹⁹ *CD 3/1*, 295. This is because the relationship of man and woman prefigures, as the relationship of creation to covenant, the relationship of Yahweh and Israel, and ultimately Christ and church (322); but this hardly helps matters, for it simply instrumentalizes the encounter of the *analogia relationis* as a shadow of its eternal exemplar.

¹⁰⁰ *CD 3/2*, 157, 161.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 62; cf. the gesture toward the doctrine of *an/enhypostasis* on p. 70.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 124-5.

Thus, “the ontological determination of humanity is grounded in the fact that one man among all others is the man Jesus...we are condemned to abstraction so long as our attention is riveted as it were on other men, or rather on man in general.”¹⁰³ Thus the being of humanity is fundamentally to be called by God, and to correspond to God in responsibility and gratitude – gratitude being the act in which humanity becomes a *subject* vis-à-vis God insofar as it is first the *object* of God’s grace.¹⁰⁴

But then Barth makes a disastrous mistake. Following the pattern of *CD* 3/1, where the logic of antecedence that characterized *CD* 1/1 is transmuted *both* into an ontology of divine relation *and* an ontology of creation as the presupposition of covenant, Barth invokes a kind of *potentia obedientialis* on humanity’s part. What defines *wirkliche Mensch* becomes an abstract quality: “the concept of freedom is thus the decisive definition of what we mean when we describe man as subject” that is the latent and unfathomable abyss behind this subject’s positing of itself in its freedom to say I and Thou.¹⁰⁵ As in 3/1, Barth is of course not defining freedom as such as an *analogia entis*; but he is abstracting from humanity’s freedom for God as a predicate of God’s singular act of grace, where the human being is confronted by God’s address, to a capacity of humanity’s creatureliness as such.¹⁰⁶ It is in this context, then, that humanity’s

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 174; this is an excellent statement of the *analogia fidei*; cf. *CD* 1/1, 245: “Man acts as he believes, but the fact that he believes as he acts is God’s act. Man is the subject of faith. Man believes, not God. But the fact that man is this subject in faith is bracketed as a predicate of the subject God, bracketed in the way that the Creator encloses the creature and the merciful God sinful man, i.e., in such a way that man remains subject, and yet man’s I as such derives only from the Thou of the subject God.”

¹⁰⁵ *CD* 3/2 194.

¹⁰⁶ Barth states that creatureliness cannot be conceived as alien to the grace of God, even if this does not constitute “an ability on the part of man to take up the relationship to God in covenant,” *ibid.*, 224, and indeed it is not a true *potentia obedientialis*. Barth claims on 321 that all this does not constitute a point of contact for natural theology, for this capacity of human nature is only actualized by grace; however, it still clearly constitutes a potency, a capacity or determination; and it certainly *is* an abstraction from the christological form of the *analogia fidei*. In fact, it is exactly what he once criticized Augustine for: a positing of a potency that exists independently of its actualization by grace.

Grundform is its being in I-Thou encounter, and exemplarily (following the same logic as 3/1) in the male-female relation.¹⁰⁷ As with *CD* 3/1, the primary significance of the man-wife relationship is its analogy to that of Yahweh and Israel and Christ and his church; but this is only because the human being is characterized by its capacity for relation to a Thou in which it produces its identity.

Barth's argument here may be *exegetically* plausible. But the underlying theological structure is showing dangerous flaws. The problem, I submit, lies in the way in which Barth is developing the *analogia fidei*; the pattern in Barth's trinitarianism I have tracing since *CD* 2/1 that has tended toward trinitarian pluralism, that grounds human knowledge in a self-reflexive divine knowledge, tends increasingly toward an enervation of his own dialectic, because it reifies the dialectic in a divine ontology, instead of allowing the tension of the dialectic to stand as a historical, actualistic event in Jesus Christ. If human knowledge analogically replicates divine knowledge, there is no reason for that knowledge to be dialectical, which means, for it to be a *human* performance of a divine act. This pattern is characteristic of *CD* 3/2, even more explicitly: "God repeats in this relationship *ad extra* a relationship proper to Himself in His inner divine essence. Entering into this relationship, He makes a copy of Himself...It is a question of the relationship within the being of God on the one side and between the being of God and that of man on the other."¹⁰⁸

Over against this, as I have been arguing, is the construction of *CD* 2/2 in which a consistent christological version of the dialectic develops that accounts for human participation in Christ's representation. The problem that has emerged with full clarity in

¹⁰⁷ See the argument, *ibid.*, 244ff, in which a phenomenology of I-Thou relation is set forth; and 292ff, where the "original and proper form" of this fellow humanity is man and woman.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 218, 220.

vol. 3 is this. The second model, which I have labeled as Hegelian, demands the *economy* of grace described in the previous chapter. In seeking a ground for God's capacity to relate *ad extra*, in seeking an *analogia relationis*, Barth has given us a set of relations characterized by strict ontological necessity. Just as God needs another to know Godself and escape the confines of a static and monistic substance, just as God's life becomes a dialectical economy of identity production, so *man* needs another – *woman* – to know *himself* and escape the solipsism of the solitary self. But, as I argued in the previous chapter, the ontology of the recognition of the self in the other is a very ugly ethic: it operates under the instrumentalization of the Other, the reduction of her to the Same as the medium of the ego's self-positing. Consistently articulated, as here, it cannot but be an ethic of the master and the slave, or, patriarchally, man and "helpmate."

The Augustinian model has rather different results. In the much-maligned "revelation model" of the Trinity in *CD* 1/1, which is filled out in the careful christological articulation of 2/2, Barth trades on an account of simplicity similar to Augustine's – where the Trinity is the articulation of a singular divine self-giving in Christ, where the history of Jesus Christ is what it means for God to be self-diffusive goodness. There is no dialectic of relation in the Godhead, an eternal history, which is expressed in time; God simply *is* eternally self-bestowing, and the form which this takes is the history of Jesus. Here, we have no need of a *ground* for God's self-giving in an antecedent economy of self-reflexivity; grace is self-grounding, for God's self-relation is immediate, without reflexivity, which means that it requires no mediation. By an act of total grace, humanity is incorporated into the covenant body that Christ takes on, its identity as church and as human totally gift, which means that participation will take the

form of an ethical performance – a correspondence to God’s goodness in the Spirit. And the result will be an ethic that cannot be characterized by the grim necessity of the economy of identity that Barth offers in *CD* 3/1 and 3/2. It is not until 4/2 that Barth obtains the christological clarity on this point that allows his pneumatology to emerge in its fully Augustinian sense. Thus I will turn in the next chapter to a reading of the monumental *Doctrine of Reconciliation*.

CHAPTER V

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION AND THE VICISSITUDES OF AUGUSTINIAN TRINITARIANISM IN *CD* 4

In the previous chapter, I traced the development of Barth's trinitarian thinking through *CD* 3, and argued that a tension characterizes Barth's doctrine of the Trinity throughout this period. Rather than a neat division between a linear, revelation-oriented model in vol. 1, and a pluralist, communion-oriented doctrine in vol. 4, as Rowan Williams argues, Barth's trinitarianism from the beginning tends to equivocate regarding the pluralist tendencies in his thought. In ch. 2, I argued that Augustine transformed his Plotinian metaphysical inheritance¹ by a strategy of appropriation and displacement, and that the grammar of this deconstructing is his pneumatology – the subjective enactment in charity of God's self-giving in the incarnation. Something similar is happening between Barth and Hegel across the broad landscapes of the *Dogmatics*. Barth was frank in “*Schicksal und Idee*” about his own idealist sympathies, and as McCormack has rightly argued, it is precisely idealism that gave his realism its christological vividness in the dialectic of revelation.

In this chapter, I intend to complete my reading of the pneumatological dialectic of *CD*, tracing the grand scope of vol. 4, before discussing the reception of Barth's trinitarianism by two of his most influential interpreters, Rowan Williams and Bruce McCormack. The reason for this choice of interlocutors will become clear in due course,

¹ I use the word “inheritance” with some deliberateness; it would be too much to claim that Augustine or Barth knew Plotinus or Hegel extensively, and were engaged in a highly intentional process of adaptation and subversion; in both cases, their knowledge of their philosophical forebears seems to be eclectic, and “Plotinus” and “Hegel” stand, if anything, for a general metaphysical framework and sensibility.

but to anticipate, it revolves around the interpretation of the Barthian dialectic – specifically, the christological dialectic of the an/enhypostatic person of the Son, as read through Barth’s understanding of the Lutheran-Reformed debate over the *communicatio idiomatum*. Finally, I will analyze a fundamental issue that has heretofore remained in the background: Barth’s understanding of eternity and transcendence.

In vol. 4, both of the tendencies I have been analyzing in Barth come to a head; the Hegelian pluralism that characterizes vol. 3, and which, I argued, legitimates a deeply problematic patriarchal personalism, persists into *CD* 4/1. But beginning especially with 4/2, Barth’s better instincts reemerge, when he reinforces his position on the *communicatio idiomatum*, which leads him to clarify unresolved issues that led to the problems of vols. 3 and 4/1. By *CD* 4/3, he has effectively returned to the trinitarian model of vol. 1 (in fact he claims he has done so²), incorporating all the insights of 2/2 in the process – he has now fully accounted *both* for the divine subjectivity in revelation/reconciliation (the terms are perfectly synonymous at this point) and the mode of human participation in that revelation by virtue of his Christology.

The Ambiguity of *Urgeschichte* in Barth’s Christology

In the previous chapter, I adverted to Barth’s uneasy relationship with Lutheranism, a relationship that is imbricated with his status for many years as a Swiss expatriate in Germany. His break with both the *Kulturprotestantismus* of his teachers, and with the dialectical theologians like Gogarten and Bultmann, was due in part to

² This is not to privilege Barth as an infallible interpreter of his own thought. In fact, my reading of the trinitarianism of *CD* obviously takes some issue with Barth’s statement about the “inward and outward continuity” of the course of the *Dogmatics* (*CD* 4/2, xi). I do, however, take it to be the case that the direction Barth set out upon in 1/1 does in fact remain the constant of the development of *CD*, even allowing for some deviations, particularly in vol. 3.

underlying theological issues that crystallize in his understanding of the dialectic of revelation. His Reformed opposition to the Lutherans lies in his appropriation of patristic an/enhypostatic Christology, articulated in the dialectic of revelation. At a stroke, this position eliminates two undesirables: first, the static law-gospel dialectic in light of the clear Reformed priority of gospel; and second, the Lutheran interpretation of the *communicatio idiomatum* in favor of the Reformed emphasis upon the *unio hypostatica*. At first glance, these seem opposites: against the former, Barth advocates a “teleological” direction to the dialectic of revelation – God’s revelation is always oriented toward and based in God’s grace. Against the latter, Barth sharpens the dialectical tension between humanity and divinity by means of his dialectic of veiling and unveiling as an act of the Logos enhypostatic in the human nature of Jesus Christ. But as always with Barth, the issue is christological – correctly articulating the relationship of the divine and human essences of Jesus Christ, and therefore, divine agency and human participation in reconciliation, what Barth describes as the “irreversibility of the relationship between God and man.”³ This irreversibility is the clear priority of the divine agency in the dialectic of its mystery as grace.

This mature form of the dialectic gives *CD 4* its shape as a whole,⁴ which progresses from a consideration of the Son of God in 4/1, to the Son of Man in 4/2, to the unity of the divine and human essences in the person of the Mediator in 4/3. Thus, the divine act is self-unveiling veiled in a human history in which God nevertheless attests Godself to faith in Jesus Christ – the dialectic always tends to knowledge of God, to grace, and this means, to the work of the Spirit that *is* the reception the self-authenticating

³ *CD 4/2*, 83.

⁴ Paul Dafydd Jones gives a helpful table of the architecture of *CD 4* in *The Humanity of Christ*, 266.

witness of Jesus Christ. But this is not to say that the theological perspective of vol. 4 is fixed; in fact, as I have already suggested, a shift occurs between 4/1 and 4/2, with 4/3 bearing the fruits of that shift.

Wirklich humanity, eschatological realism, and the importance of election

With the full scope of the doctrine of election and its ingenious handling of human election in Christ as its presupposition, Barth's full eschatological realism emerges in vol. 4:⁵ the actuality of the atonement and the covenant in Jesus Christ, and therefore, the eschatological identity between humanity as such and the humanity as Jesus Christ – or more accurately, the full eschatological identity between *wirklich* humanity and phenomenal humanity. Jesus Christ, who is the covenant between God and humanity and the eternal Word of God insofar as he is the eternal act of God's self-disclosure, is alone "very God and very man in a temporal fulfillment of God's eternal will to be the true God of man and to let the man who belongs to Him become and be true man. Ultimately, therefore, Jesus Christ alone is the content of the eternal will of God."⁶ Therefore, the act of God in Jesus "is the most actual thing in heaven or earth."⁷ From

⁵ This is a term used by Ingolf Dalferth to describe Barth's commitment to Jesus Christ as the "reality which determines what is to be counted as real and what isn't," "Karl Barth's Eschatological Realism," in S. W. Sykes, *Karl Barth: Centenary Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 22. Dalferth's article is a direct riposte to Richard H. Roberts's influential critique in "Karl Barth's Doctrine of Time." Hunsinger is after something similar when he points out that Barth does not operate on the basis of a bifurcation of "real" and "ideal," but "real" and "unreal." In the former binary, phenomenal reality is the ultimate arbiter of the real; but for Barth, the eschatological reality of God in Christ is the truly and ultimately real; *How to Read Karl Barth*, 38-9.

⁶ CD 4/1, 54. Attention must be paid to exactly what Barth is saying: the *human being* Jesus Christ is the eternal Word and will of God; the implication thus is the rejection of the *logos asarkos*, which would be the retrogression to the *Deus absconditus* behind revelation, *ibid.*, 52.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.

this follows two things: first, the singularity (the simplicity) of the act of God in reconciliation, and second, the historical character of that act.⁸

In fact, these are two aspects of the same point: Jesus Christ is *the* covenant in person. As *wirklich* humanity, and therefore *Stellvertreter*, Jesus Christ in his history is the act, and *one* act, of God binding Godself to humanity, and determining humanity for Godself.⁹ Barth has become lucidly clear about this in *CD* 4/1, a fact which announces itself in the title of §57.2, “The Covenant as the Presupposition of Reconciliation.” The classically Barthian term “presupposition,” *Voraussetzung*,¹⁰ is important here, for it typically means something very like *wirklich* – the eschatologically and eternally real, the act of God in election which is antecedent to and therefore determinative of reality. But it is not without ambiguity, for the intelligibility of Barthian talk of self-determination here can be understood two ways. The first, Hegelian, sense takes the form of God’s self-objectification to Godself, Father to Son, in which the act of being which is God’s essence is to be differentiated from the act of being in which God determines Godself to relate outward. In this case, the antecedence of God’s act in the economy in Godself in eternity has an analogical structure that produces a created prototype on the basis of a prior self-production. In the second sense, with Augustinian logic, God’s act of self-determination is identical to the begetting of the Son, in that the Son, Jesus Christ the

⁸ It is instructive that, following the quote immediately above, there is an excursus on the unity of grace over against the “Romanist” distinctions in the doctrine of grace; in Barth’s eyes, it is the abstraction from the singularity of Jesus Christ inherent in the move, rather than the validity of the conceptual distinctions as such, that rules this rejection.

⁹ Nider also connects the theme of the *Stellvertreter* and participation in Christ the *wirklich* human: “Barth brings participation and substitution together in such a way that neither can be described apart from the other.” *Participation in Christ*, 23.

¹⁰ Torrance insightfully remarks that “presupposition,” *Voraussetzung*, in Barth really means *Nachaussetzung*, “post-supposition:” “It is *nach* with regard to the revealing act of God and it is only *vor* in so far as it is *therefore and for this reason* epistemologically prior to any statements that we might make, methodological or otherwise, about God.” *Persons in Communion*, 26.

electing God, is simply God's act of self-bestowal and disclosure. The Son is the procession by nature of a God whose nature it is to be the self-diffusive good; there is no distinction between self-determination for humanity and an essence whose essence is goodness. In the first, possibility is prior to reality, for the possibility of God's relation in God's *self*-relation grounds the reality of God's relation *ad extra*. In the second, reality is prior to possibility – the reality of God's relation *ad extra* is the presupposition of its possibility: God *just is*, eternally, self-giving in Jesus Christ. This is a trinitarian equivocation because the first model in a very real sense must posit a divine essence in abstraction from the relation of Father and Son (which is begetting), in which a neuter God first determines to be self-relating, to self-actualize, prior to God's being as Father and Son. These need not be actually distinct moments in God's being; it is enough that these are logically independent moments, for then act and being, essence and existence, have been differentiated.¹¹

The great Barthian innovation, of course, is to actualize the doctrine of the Trinity – to understand the history of Jesus Christ *as* the act of divine self-determination, to so fully identify act and being that to seek an ontological ground of an act is superfluous, and an abstraction from the reality of that act. This is the reason for the rejection of the *logos asarkos*, which differentiates between the enactment of the covenant and an eternal basis for it in a prior trinitarian eternal history. Jesus Christ as the eternal self-giving love of God is the covenant in which God is eternally joining humanity to Godself *and* performing humanity's partnership in the incarnation. What this does is eliminate any

¹¹ That McCormack has come to argue that self-determining and begetting actually are distinct moments performs the abstraction with remarkable clarity. Nevertheless, when put this way, *both* sides of the contemporary debate over election reduplicate a similar, Hegelian, logic. I will discuss this in more detail in the final section.

sense of a self-relation which is the ontological ground of an external relation – for this would be to posit a supplement to revelation, a *Deus absconditus* “behind” revelation, a mysterious and inaccessible realm of divine decree; instead, the mystery of God is precisely the fact that the total self-giving in Jesus Christ is an act of inconceivable love.

The Hegelian option would thus fall prey to the arbitrary voluntarism Barth went to great lengths to oppose in *CD 2/2* as the ground of election. In fact, Barth targets just this doctrine of an eternal self-determination in a rejection of Reformed Federal theology, in which covenant history is eternally based in

An intertrinitarian decision, in a freely accepted but legally binding mutual obligation between God the Father and God the Son... Was there any need of a special decree to establish the unity of the righteousness and mercy of God in relation to man, of a special intertrinitarian arrangement and contract which can be distinguished from the being of God? If there was need of such a decree, then the question arises at once of a form of the will of God in which this arrangement has not yet been made and is not yet valid.¹²

The “astounding conclusion” of divine obedience: the persistence of Hegelianism

There is a tension in Barth’s thought in 4/1, however. Barth is being consistent in following his logic of “actualizing” the incarnation when he says that the history of Jesus the Son is a history “which stands in the greatest possible contradiction to the being of God...this man wills only to be obedient – obedient to the will of the Father.”¹³ But the trick is to understand this in such a way as to not explain away the suffering and humiliation of the Son as if the divine nature did not truly participate in the limitations of human flesh (which is Docetism), while at the same time avoiding the Arian or Ebionite

¹² *CD 4/1*, 64. Further, regarding the divine persons as contractual subjects in a legal partnership is a “mythology” (65).

¹³ *CD 4/1*, 164.

trap of so alienating Jesus from the essence of God that he is God only in (ontological) contradiction with the Father.

If God is God in virtue of the fact that God is perfect simple self-donating love in Jesus Christ, then it is not an abrogation of but the perfect fulfillment of God's immutability for God to become human in a history of humiliation.¹⁴ But to conceive this humiliation dialectically – that is, by virtue of a self-differentiation or alienation in the essence of God, a split between Father and Son – is “supreme blasphemy.” “God gives Himself, but He does not give Himself away...of what value would his deity be to us if – instead of crossing in that deity the very real gulf between Himself and us – He left that deity behind Him in His coming to us?”¹⁵ Barth's alternative is, again, to affirm an “ethical” form of simplicity: God's full unity, which is to be learned precisely from the revelation of the divine nature in the humiliation of Jesus Christ, is exhibited in that “He is absolute, infinite, exalted, active, impassible, transcendent, but in all this He is the One who loves in freedom, the One who is free in His love...the *forma Dei* consists in the grace in which God Himself assumes and makes His own the *forma servi*.”¹⁶

But then Barth commits a considerable misstep. For seeing clearly the “blasphemous” alternative to be avoided here (which would soon be fulfilled with astonishing literalness by Jürgen Moltmann),¹⁷ he still takes recourse to a move that is

¹⁴ This is what Barth meant when, in *CD* 2/1, §31.2, “The Perfections of the Divine Freedom: The Constancy and Omnipotence of God,” he redefined immutability as constancy: God is the eternal actuality of free love, preeminently in the incarnate Word of God.

¹⁵ *CD* 4/1, 185. Thus Barth rejects the *kenosis* doctrine of the Lutherans, which stands as a piece with the *communicatio idiomatum* – that the humanity is divinized entails that the divinity is hominized. On the *kenosis*, see 180-3. Both divinization and hominization mean, not *participation*, but *transformation*, alteration of an essence into another. This point is vital for grasping Barth's argument.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 187-8. Note the language of *forma Dei/servi* that evokes Augustine's *canonica regula*.

¹⁷ In *The Crucified God*. Even Jüngel, whose interpretation of Barth has led to many of the Lutheran-leaning readings I will critique in the final section, observes cuttingly of a Moltmann who *believes* he is correcting Barth with his talk of “trinitarian differentiation,” that “what is intended as progress in theology

remarkably similar to it: an ontological explanation of “how” God became human, an explication of its possibility in abstraction from its reality. This consists in positing a history and relationality in God prior to the work of reconciliation, in relationship to which God’s work *ad extra* is a “reflection...an image and likeness” that is the analog to the “twofoldness of the existence of man...in the inner life of God Himself.”¹⁸ This is Barth’s “astounding conclusion of a divine obedience.”¹⁹ Because there is in the economy a first and a second, an above and a below, a *prius* and a *posterius*, there must be in strict exemplarity an above and a below, Father and Son, in the Trinity. What is more, it is the “Third,” the Spirit, who maintains the unity of God as fellowship between the Father and Son; thus, “He is God in their concrete relationships the one to the other, in the history which takes place between them.”²⁰ What is problematic here is, once again, how Barth has taken recourse to a trinitarian model that works against his best instincts, and how the real power of his dialectic has been enervated by a mapping of that dialectic onto the trinitarian relations. If, as I have been arguing, the dialectic of revelation and reconciliation is ultimately a *christological* dialectic, then this is irreconcilable with a *trinitarian* dialectic.²¹ What Barth will do more consistently in *CD*

never gets beyond setting up statements than which nothing greater can be conceived, but into which no thinking can penetrate,” *God’s Being Is in Becoming*, 136 n24.

¹⁸ *CD* 4/1, 203.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 202; the whole discussion runs from 196-210.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 203. Cf. this against the statement in *CD* 1/1, 470, apropos of the Spirit, that there is no higher principle in which the unity of Father and Son is achieved.

²¹ The distinction I make here rests on the argument, central to this dissertation, that the divine self-donation in Christ is the content of trinitarian theology, and that the function of that theology cannot form anything prior to Christology other than what antecedently articulates the unity of Christ with the Father in terms of their subsistent relations. The false opposition is nicely illustrated by Peter S. Oh, *Karl Barth’s Trinitarian Theology: A Study in Karl Barth’s Analogical Use of the Trinitarian Relation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), who grounds his reading of Barth’s theological ontology in Barth’s supposed trinitarian *perichoresis* rather than in his Christology (as if these were two different things), allowing him to make the astonishing claim “the context of Barth’s Christology is largely limited to the doctrine of reconciliation...of the three doctrines of creation, redemption and reconciliation, which form the three pillars of Barth’s entire theology, he classifies only the latter within Christology,” 77. Neder has a different read of this: although

4/2 and 4/3 is to understand Christ's obedience as the form divine love takes in its self-giving, a self-giving that humanity participates in, by the act of the Spirit, insofar as Jesus is their *Stellvertreter*. This is to think the atonement truly historically and actualistically; it is to think God's transcendence as a transcendence of love, of an ethical act, to which corresponds an ethical act of love, rather than a transcendence of distance, to which corresponds a mirroring of being, an *analogia entis*. Indeed, this last point is where the troubling ethical implications of Barth's personalism reemerges; for just as in *CD* 3/1 and 3/2, the I-Thou dialectic of the Trinity was analogically replicated in an I-Thou personalism in humanity, an I-Thou relationship of master and lord, which for Barth goes by the name of husband and wife; so the "mirroring" that Barth is speaking about in *CD* 4/1 means that the *prius* and *posterius* of Father and Son also demands a mimetic reproduction. This time, it is the positing of obedience and humiliation as an ethical exemplar. If *this* is the pattern, then *Entsprechung*, correspondence, becomes mimesis, and we have an ideological reification of tyrannical power relations.²² Further, this ontological ground functions as just the kind of *Urgeschichte* – an eternal exemplar in relationship to which time functions as a mere moving image – the Barth's critics fear in his Christology, and which goes against the clear articulation of *Urgeschichte* as the history of Jesus in *CD* 2/2. Thus, to think the history of Jesus differently, we have to look to the account of the "royal man" in *CD* 4/2.

he notes the development of Barth's thinking on the "ground" of human fellowship with God from *CD* 2/1 to 4/1, he stops with the *prius* and *posterius* of 4/1, without considering how the stance on the *communicatio idiomatum* in 4/2 might alter this picture; *Participation in Christ*, 116 n82. The site of the dialectic is in God's encounter with humanity, not in God's encounter with Godself.

²² Jones sees the "ethically and doctrinally injurious" shape of Barth's "crudely hierarchical relationship" of obedience in 4/1, and also links it to Barth's sexism; *The Humanity of Christ*, 212. He does not go as far as I do, however, in seeing operative in this crude hierarchy a significant tension in Barth's thought, which for Jones, following McCormack, has achieved its final shape in *CD* 2/2.

CD 4/2 & 4/3: The Communicatio Idiomatum and the Pneumatological Übergang

I have said that *CD* vol. 4 as a whole takes the form of the christological-pneumatological dialectic of revelation, or, more accurately, performatively corresponds to that dialectic. However, the dialectic is not an easily isolable, structural element of Barth's thinking; rather, it characterizes every moment of his theology, because revelation *is* inherently dialectical, a *Realdialektik* which cannot be abstracted from without the loss of its power. Thus any given theological moment, including the consideration of the humanity of Jesus Christ, is articulated according to the an/enhypostatic character of revelation itself, for any given theological moment takes its shape in relationship to its christological center. This fact explains the complex structure of §64, "The Exaltation of the Son of Man," particularly section 2, "The Homecoming of the Son of Man." It is here that Barth takes on the technical christological problems of Protestant theology's encounter with Chalcedonianism most directly, for it is here that the aporetic of the dialectic – human participation in revelation – becomes sharpest. *CD 2/2* has provided the solution to this problem in the election of Jesus Christ as *Stellvertreter* of humanity. In *4/2* Barth has to articulate how, precisely, the history of Jesus Christ bears the dialectical shape of election. Thus *4/2* contains the most potent articulation of Barth's pneumatology, just because his explication of the humanity of Christ is precisely where his pneumatology functions.

The problem with the communicatio idiomatum, and the Reformed option

The heart of 4/2 is §64.2.2,²³ the consideration of the incarnation as such, which, following Barth's continual emphasis upon an/enhypostatic Christology,²⁴ concerns the eternal election of God in its historical fulfillment in the incarnation, in "the act of divine majesty which is the meaning and basis and power of this event and therefore of the humanly temporal being of Jesus Christ."²⁵ As such, the divine act is both *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi*, the strict correlation of the ground of being and the ground of knowledge of Jesus Christ the Son – our knowledge of God in Jesus is, following the pattern of *CD* 2/1, a secondary act whose objectivity obtains in the primary objectivity of the reality of God; it stands in *recognition* of the new act of God which is identical to God's self-knowledge, God's giving of Godself, the newness of God's being in Jesus Christ.²⁶ This is the pneumatological logic of the dialectic: God has veiled Godself in acting in the human history of Jesus the man, and this act "discloses and declares and attests and reveals itself," but only insofar as "the participation of the knowing subject in the new thing" occurs in the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*.²⁷ Knowledge (*Kenntnis*) of God takes the form of recognition (*Erkenntnis*), a subjective participation in the divine act which is identical to the secondary objectivity of that act, the objectivity of God Godself in history, because the ground of that knowledge is the ground of being itself.

²³ *CD* 4/2, 36-116.

²⁴ Note the excursus on 49ff. On this point, I differ from Jones, *The Humanity of Christ*, both with the claim that "*Natur* and *Wesen* take up no meaningful role in Barth's Christology" after *CD* 1/2 (33) and that the an/enhypostatic distinction also becomes "incidental" by the time of *CD* vol. 4 (147); it is certainly the case that Barth does not stay within the bounds of Heppé's categories in vol. 4, but the *an/enhypostasis* continues to function as a fundamental principle of articulating the "actualization" of the incarnation.

²⁵ *CD* 4/2, 37.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 39. Barth has just given a précis of the logic of the dialectic that structures *CD* 4 here, as the discussion of 4/3, with its focus upon the self-attestation of revelation, will bear out below.

In contrast to the picture of pneumatology noted above in *CD 4/1*, where the Spirit is the third moment reconciling the alienating dialectic of *prius* and *posterius* in the Trinity, here the Spirit is the act of love that is God's self-giving, "the divine act of majesty" that is the "eternal love in which God is the one God outwards as well as inwards."²⁸ The work of God *ad extra* is, of course, the history of Jesus Christ; what Barth is saying here is that the Spirit is the intensity or excess, the "majesty" of God and therefore "eternal love between the Father and the Son," which means that the Spirit is the *Seinsweise* of God in which the overflow of the act of God in the Son incorporates humanity into that act, into Jesus Christ. This is a different kind of logic than that seen in *4/1*:²⁹ instead of the "humility of God" being a transaction of lordship and submission, sovereignty and obedience, between Father and Son, here the Son is the mode of being of God *as* the humble God. The Son is the Word or act in which God determines Godself for humanity in the history of a human being. Thus the determination of Godself for humanity is identical to the determination of humanity for God, for the humanity the Son assumes is "*humanum*, the being and essence, the nature and kind, which is that of all men... which is posited and exalted as such to unity with God."³⁰ As such, Barth reminds us that, in speaking of the election of Jesus Christ, we are speaking of "Jesus Christ and

²⁸ *CD 4/2*, 43.

²⁹ To be sure, I am sharpening what are tensions on Barth's page into oppositions; Barth is still comfortably talking about the obedience of Son to Father (*ibid.*, 44), although carefully qualifying this with the axiom *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* and with his personalist-defeating vocabulary of *Seinsweisen*. On the *vinculum* language deployed above, see ch. 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 48, 9. At first glance, this appears to contradict Barth's earlier insistence that the particular existence of Jesus Christ as one person among others is ontologically determinative of humanity (*CD 3/2*, 132); but what he is pointing to here is that God's act of reconciliation is not directed toward a particular individual who is arbitrarily selected as a substitute for all others; rather, in becoming human God has elected humanity *as such* for Godself. In essence, God has redefined what it means to be human.

His own...Jesus Christ as the Head of His body.” The Son acting as a man acts as *Stellvertreter*, as the head in which the body of the elect is contained, the *totus christus*.³¹

Having noted this, I can examine Barth’s treatment of the *communicatio idiomatum*. McCormack has downplayed the significance of the an/enhypostatic Christology for this seminal section of the *CD*,³² but in fact Barth is very clear about the relationship of divine and human agency in the incarnation, and this clarity is absolutely fundamental to resolving the trinitarian ambiguities I have been noting.³³ When Barth speaks of the unity of the subject Jesus Christ in *communio naturam*,³⁴ in which unity there is a “true and genuine participation” of both divine and human essence in the other,³⁵ it remains the case that “the unification of divine and human essence in Him...rests absolutely on the unity achieved by the Son of God in the act of God...in the one Subject Jesus Christ divine and human essence is united, but it is not one and the same.”³⁶ What makes this point so important is that it is a careful guarding against

³¹ *CD* 4/2, 59; cf. 36. The parallels here to Augustine should be clear.

³² See McCormack, “Karl Barth’s Historicized Christology: Just How ‘Chalcedonian’ Is It?” in *Orthodox and Modern*, 201-33; note Jones’s similar claim above, 202 n24.

³³ Jones articulates the significance of the *an/enhypostasis* well: “God alone brings into existence the totality of Christ’s person, uniting to the divine Son an individuated human essence. On another level, there is only *one* subject in Christ, and this subject is God in God’s second way of being. God does not merely indwell a human; Christ’s unity entails the divine Son’s being the defining and exclusive subject of his person.” *The Humanity of Christ*, 129-30. Jones locates Barth’s understanding of Christ’s human agency in the obedience of 4/1 (see esp. 204-16), which in being obedient to God the Father is a mutual actualization of his personal simplicity (132-3). Jones is careful to maintain that this mutuality is (in my terms) asymmetrical, but in my reading, this actually runs counter to Barth’s best insight, which is to understand Jesus, as a man among fellows, as the content of God’s eternity – the decisive manifestation of his humanity, in other words, is the incarnation as a singular history that in its singularity is the history of every human being. This is to claim that the narration of the “royal man” and the “direction of the Son” in 4/2 stands for something larger than simply the obedience of the cross.

³⁴ *CD* 4/2, 60-9.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 63. It is important to balance this with the affirmation, on the preceding page, that “Jesus Christ, then, does not exist as the Son of God without also participating as such in human essence.” Granted the denial of the *logos asarkos* that is operative for Barth at this point, the mutual participation of divine and human essences is still asymmetrical. At stake lies Chalcedon’s *inconfuse and immutabiliter*, even as Barth is quick to affirm the *indivise* and *inseparabiliter*; but of course that indivisibility and inseparability is that of a Subject – the subject of the one act of God.

abstraction, in the service of a clearly thought trinitarian logic. To speak of a *communio naturam* without the controlling category of the *unio hypostatica* is to indulge in a dangerous piece of reification – for there is no divine essence, or human essence, as such; there is the one Logos (among the three hypostases) speaking and acting, and in that speaking and acting actualizing the divine essence and hypostatizing the human essence.³⁷ Any “properties” of divine or human essence exist only as determinations of that one subject acting in unity with, and as, God in a human history. Thus, in a theme that will occupy the rest of §64.2 (and had been a motif at least since Göttingen), Barth takes a clear preference for the Reformed option for the *unio hypostatica* over the Lutheran emphasis upon the *communio naturam* and *communicatio idiomatum*.³⁸ For on the one hand, the Lutheran preference dissolves the dialectic of revelation as the act of God the subject insofar as the communication of attributes means that “the Godhead can be seen and grasped and experienced and known directly in the humanity of Jesus Christ” – that humanity becomes agential in the event of revelation. In the latter case, Barth worries about a “de-divinisation” of the divinity, and thus a loss of the singular gratuity of the incarnation.³⁹

This “de-divinisation” or hominization of God is balanced with an inappropriate *divinization* of the human nature.⁴⁰ To correctly articulate the matter of human

³⁷ “The Godhead as such has no existence. It is not real. It has no being or activity. It cannot, therefore, unite with that which is existent and real and has being and activity... This is done by the divine Subject in and with His divine essence, by the One who exists and is and is actual, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and therefore *in specie* God the Son.” *CD* 4/2, 65.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 66. It is worth reaffirming that I am treating Barth’s handling of Lutheran-Reformed polemics as representations; it is not material to the argument of this dissertation to investigate the historical accuracy of Barth’s categories. What is significant is the manner in which the themes are deployed in *CD*.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁴⁰ This is what Barth had in mind when he remarked that an abstract *theologia crucis* was in reality a covert *theologia gloriae* – the convertibility of the terms of the dialectic in the *communicatio idiomatum* of the Lutherans which is the dissolution of that dialectic. *Ibid.*, 29.

participation in God, and thus of human agency in revelation, it is vital that the relationship of divine and human essence be asymmetrical. The movement of the incarnation is identically a humiliation of God and an exaltation of the human, but the mutual participation is not commutation: “the determination of His divine essence is *to* His human, and the determination of His human essence *from* His divine...the word mutual cannot be understood in the sense of interchangeable. The relationship between the two is not reversible.”⁴¹ If the divine agency in reconciliation is one of total self-giving, the human essence of Jesus Christ is what happens when God reveals and gives Godself in the incarnation. For humanity to be wholly passive here (including the humanity of Jesus) means that its participation is its calling to receive and to correspond, to be the agent of an act whose subject is God, and in so doing to be made free. Barth’s concern about the “divinization” that would occur in the transformation of the human essence means, in christological terms, that the human essence of Jesus is agentially contributory to the act of the Son in the incarnation.

Barth does note that the Lutherans were careful to forestall the latter possibility,⁴² but the fact remains that the *communicatio idiomatum*, despite the Lutherans’ intentions, involves a “compromise [of] both the true deity and the true humanity of Jesus Christ.”⁴³

The integrity of reconciliation is well-served by neither compromise; in the first case, true

⁴¹ Ibid., 70-1. Cf. 71: “this means that the two elements in the history...are not in simple correspondence;” 72: “For all their reciprocity the two elements in this happening have a different character. The one, as the essence of the Son of God, is wholly that which gives. The other, exalted to existence and actuality only in and by Him, is wholly that which receives.”

⁴² This would have been a *genus tapeinoticum*, a category of humility, signifying the “humanization of the divine nature by its conjunction with the human,” in balance with the *genus majesticum*, the category of majesty, “the divinization of the human by its conjunction with the divine,” *ibid.*, 78.

⁴³ Ibid., 79. Barth notes how close Lutheran Christology is to the “distinctive Eastern Christology and soteriology of the Greek fathers,” presumably because of the emphasis upon the function of deification just discussed. Cf. the canny displacement of Athanasius on 106: “God becomes man in order that man may – not become God, but come to God.” This is a rare instance when the English translation provides a felicity the German does not: *nicht Gott werde, aber zu Gott komme*.

deity, the problem is not an untoward allegiance to an *a priori* commitment to immutability or principle of *finitum non capax infiniti*, but rather a concern to focus upon the subject and history of Jesus Christ, and thus of the saving act of God. This is a concern for the singular gratuity of the incarnation, the excess of grace that *is* the eternal nature of God. On the other hand, if the human essence of Jesus is deified, then, because the human essence of Jesus is that of all human beings, “through this door it is basically free for anyone to wander right away from Christology,”⁴⁴ for humanity *as such* gains a potency for deification. Indeed, Barth ties this Christology directly to the anthropology of the “wonderful flower of German Idealism,”⁴⁵ recalling the warning we saw already in “*Schicksal und Idee*.” Thus the reason Barth is meticulously guarding against reciprocity in the relationship of the two nature in Christ, and correspondingly, in the relationship of divine and human as such (for that relationship is identical to the communion of the two in the Son), is that reciprocity would be precisely the convertibility of subject and predicate in which Luther becomes Feuerbach.

The consideration of the *communicatio gratiae* and *operationum* then fills out this concern for preserving the “true salvation and saving truth” of Jesus Christ: the act of God that is the incarnation is not the exaltation of the human essence by virtue of an alteration and divinization, but an address and communication of grace. This means that

⁴⁴ Ibid., 81. “The recognition of Jesus Christ as true salvation and saving truth is not really strengthened, as intended by the theory of a divinization of His human essence, but weakened and even jeopardized completely,” 80.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 82. The question of historical plausibility aside, the idealist resonances with the Lutherans that Barth encountered earlier in his career, both among his teachers and the dialectical theologians, are patent; the *communicatio idiomatum* provides a point of contact in human nature, a readiness for revelation, which is both the enervation of gratuity and the inception of ideology. Cf. on deification and the *communicatio idiomatum*, Nider, *Participation in Christ*, 65-9; 86-92.

from the asymmetrical relationship of divine and human act,⁴⁶ the self-determination of God for humanity in God's election unites all of humanity in Christ their head such that human exaltation takes the form of a participation in the divine act, the correspondence of gratitude to grace.⁴⁷ This address and correspondence is the actualization, *operatio*, of divine and human essence in the act of the Son that completes this picture, with its famed declaration, "We have 'actualized' the doctrine of the incarnation...we have re-translated that whole phenomenology into the sphere of a history."⁴⁸ Barth's great insight is located just here – the actualistic, historical understanding of the incarnation, with its highly particular focus upon the man Jesus Christ as *the* act of God in which reconciliation is accomplished. It is worth pointing out that it is upon this last point that everything rides: language of God positing Godself and actualizing the divine nature is in the service of the life of Jesus Christ as that history in which "God becomes very God and very man."⁴⁹ Whether or not Barth is as radical as he supposes in his actualism,⁵⁰ he has taken a decisive step in his focus upon the act of God as a singular history, in which, nonetheless, human participation as such is accomplished: "when we say that Jesus Christ is in every age, we say that His history takes place in every age. He is in this *operatio*, this event."⁵¹

Because the hypostatic union is the act of God in which God determines Godself for

⁴⁶ Note the reaffirmation of the *an/enhypostasis*, CD 4/2, 91, the "sum and root of all the grace addressed to Him." On headship, cf. 89: "as the recipient of the electing grace of God, His human essence is proved by its exaltation to be the true essence of all men. It is genuinely human in the deepest sense to live by the electing grace of God."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 105-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁵⁰ It is not difficult to suppose that Barth's equation of act and being (108) accomplishes something very similar to the equation Aquinas formulates between essence and existence in the divine substance, for all the very real differences between them; indeed, Barth had earlier reaffirmed the *actus purus*, though with the addition of the *et singularis*, his true innovation. Analyzing this possibility is outside the scope of this dissertation, however. For a start, see Eugene F. Rogers, Jr., *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: Sacred Doctrine and the Knowledge of God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

⁵¹ CD 4/2, 107.

humanity, and humanity for God, God in the Son *becomes* in a “special actualization” that is the “great divine and the great human *novum*.”⁵² As will become clear in the final section of this chapter, what Barth is doing here lies on a complete rethinking of the divine eternity.

The Übergang and the “direction” of the dialectic

I have said that the vitality of Barth’s pneumatology rests upon the basic asymmetry of the dialectic of revelation, which means, the asymmetry of his Christology, or his *an/enhypostasis* formulation of the incarnation: the fundamental priority of the divine act that operates in and as a human history. The mystery of a particular human life is that it is the perfect, self-bestowing life of the divine. That we know and acknowledge and respond with gratitude to this act *is* that act, is that act as it announces itself and authenticates and grounds itself in its own objectivity. Our subjective participation in and performance of the self-giving of God is the historical intensity or excess of that act’s objectivity. This asymmetry, thus, is not a “static” dialectic of no and yes, law and gospel; it tends always to reconciliation, knowledge of God, to sharing in the *novum* that is the act of God in history. It is, as Barth says, teleological (or better, eschatological), which means it has a *direction*, which is the content of the history in which we participate in the history of the Son. It is in the transition from his history to ours, from *wirklich* humanity to our humanity, that Barth’s pneumatology emerges with full clarity.

Every part-volume in *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* is organized similarly: a “transition” (*Übergang*) section bridges the christological paragraph proper, and the

⁵² Ibid., 113, 115.

consequent paragraphs on sin, reconciliation, and ecclesiology.⁵³ These are §59.3, “The Obedience of the Son of God: The Verdict of the Father;” §64.4, “The Exaltation of the Son of Man: The Direction of the Son;” and §69.4, “The Glory of the Mediator: The Promise of the Spirit.” It is in these sections that the *function* of Barth’s pneumatology is clearest: while later paragraphs in the volumes concern the Spirit and ecclesiology and ethics (e.g. §67, “The Holy Spirit and the Upbuilding of the Christian Community,” and §68, “The Holy Spirit and Christian Love”), in each case the *work* of pneumatology has already been done in the *Übergang*. For, as I have been arguing throughout these two chapters, the content of Barth’s pneumatology is Christology, just as the content of *wirklich* humanity is Jesus Christ. This in no sense denies the reality and integrity of the former, but what it does is establish the dialectical principle of all our theological knowing in Jesus Christ. If the singularity of the history of Jesus Christ is the form of God’s self-giving in grace, then there can be no further work of God. Our own very real existence, and our own very real participation in Christ, both take the form of a gracious surplus, one might say a *superfluous* excess, to the work of God in Christ that is the content of our freedom. The *Übergang* from Christ to us is where the work of the Spirit occurs: the subjective performance of participation in Christ as *Überfluss*, overflow.

Every christological paragraph has such an *Übergang*; but additionally, because the *Doctrine of Reconciliation* as a whole is structured according to the dialectic of

⁵³ “In the third part of this section [viz. §59.3] we must engage in a kind of transitional discussion between the problems and answers we have just given and the questions we will have to add to them...Our christological basis [§59.1-2] includes within itself the fact (and with it quite simply ourselves, our participation in that event), that the turn from Jesus Christ to us has already been executed and is a fact in Him, that in and with Him we, too, are there as those for whom He is and has acted,” *CD* 4/1, 284, 5. The transitional sections are the basis of Joseph Mangina’s reading of Barth’s notion of participation in *Karl Barth on the Christian Life: The Practical Knowledge of God* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 51-90. Mangina’s highlighting of the self-involving character of knowledge of God in Barth is a helpful verification of my emphasis upon Barthian pneumatology as performative in these chapters. I am grateful to Joshua Davis for bringing this book to my attention.

revelation, the entire content of one volume, 4/3, is *übergänglich*, for it concerns the unity of the act of the Son as mediator between God and humanity. But *CD* 4/1 establishes the content of that act: the history of the Son as the eschatological elevation of humanity into union with God as an ethical determination of our existence. The *Übergang* is thus a question of contemporaneity with the history of Christ; it is the very character of the historical existence of reconciled humanity, a transition from a past of sin to a future of life, from judgment to grace, toward the “future man” Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ The resurrection is the revelation of the new act of God which is the incarnation, for it is in the resurrection that the eschatological quality of that act which objectively justifies and sanctifies humanity is made contemporaneous to us. Insofar as human nature is exalted in the history of the *wirklich* human being Jesus Christ, our histories have their human reality by participation in that history. This eschatological relationship is grounded in the resurrection, for it is here where God’s act is declared for our acknowledgment and participation. Recalling the dialectical structure of the knowledge of God in *CD* 2/1, the knowledge of that act is self-grounding: the witness of the Spirit, the *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*, participates in precisely the same objectivity as the act itself, the incarnation, for it is itself that act insofar as it is the act of God’s self-giving in revelation, in the history of Jesus. The power of the Spirit is both that in which “the Son of God assumes human essence and therefore becomes the Son of Man, exalting human essence to fellowship with the Godhead” and also where “there takes place the self-revelation of Jesus Christ as the One He is.”⁵⁵ The witness of the Spirit is itself the *Übergang* from

⁵⁴ *CD* 4/1, 555; cf. the entire discussion of this theme, 543ff, concerning “the transition from that past to this future [which] is our present” (547) that is our history as justified.

⁵⁵ *CD* 4/2, 125. It is of the very essence of the question that the power of the Spirit be understood as “the powerful and effective presence of Jesus Christ Himself – not...a second force beside Him,” 128.

him to us: “The witness of the Holy Spirit brings about this transition – the transition of the self-witness of Jesus Christ into Church history, into the history of individual lives, into world history.”⁵⁶

Thus the resurrection is the act of transition, the teleological direction of the dialectic of revelation – that moment in which the dialectic of hiddenness and unveiling issues decisively in unveiling, when the new act of God is made known as the act of God just because it is known by taking us up into itself in acknowledgment: “As His self-revelation, His resurrection and ascension were simply a lifting of the veil. They were a step out of the hiddenness of His perfect being as Son of God and Son of Man.”⁵⁷ This is not to say that revelation loses its character as mystery – quite the contrary, it is the very essence of its character as mystery that God acts to reconcile the world and takes up humanity into the true humanity of Jesus Christ the Son.⁵⁸ This means that this act of revelation nonetheless has a space within which it occurs, the *totus christus* that corresponds to that act in its eschatological character. It is important to be clear here: for all the space Barth has devoted to arguing for the objective reality of justification and sanctification, for its accomplished character, this reality is eschatological, the future that is our destiny. Thus, it is known in the performance of participation; it is not given *as*

Jesus Christ is the act of God, something that is already a trinitarian formulation: in a human being, Jesus, we see the act of the eternal God who gives Godself in that human being, and by virtue of the fact that we are confessing knowledge of the unknowable God, we testify that we act as subjects of knowledge by the agency of that God’s own self-knowing.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 131. Dalferth’s comment captures this pneumatological reality well: “Barth claimed every time and every person to be immediate to the eschatological reality but unable to grasp it unless the Spirit opens his or her eyes to the final revelation of God in the life, death and resurrection of Christ,” “Barth’s Eschatological Realism,” 26.

⁵⁷ CD 4/2, 133.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 146: “the event of revelation participates in the majesty of the will and act of God revealed in it...it awakens and underlies a human knowledge which is comprehension only to the extent that it consists in a comprehending of this incomprehensible. By its sacred incomprehensibility we mean its necessary and essential and distinctive newness and difference and strangeness as the event of the revelation of the hidden presence and action of God in the flesh, and therefore of the will and act of God within a world and humanity which are estranged from it.”

such, as if the knowledge of God could leave behind its dialectical character and proceed on to something more direct, immediate, and unveiled. The knowledge of God is always a correspondence, a performance of mystery, for the resurrection is known in the reality of the Holy Spirit, which means, in a temporal act invested with eternity.⁵⁹

It is important to recall the question driving these *Übergang* passages: just *what is it* that makes the incarnation, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the power that grants humanity participation in God? What is *real* about the realism of our knowledge of God in Jesus Christ? Just *how* is it the case that Lessing's great ugly ditch is crossed, and that Jesus Christ is our contemporary? Here we are at the very heart of the problematic of Barth's dialectic of revelation, his attempt to render an account for the fact that in God's No and God's veiling, the Yes of grace, God's unveiling that is God's self-donation, does in fact take place. In short, the question is simply: "how it is possible and actual, and can be said in truth, that a man becomes and is a Christian."⁶⁰ Earlier, in my discussion of *CD* 2/1, I noted the rhetorical performance that emerged as Barth pursued a similar question: the participation of the *totus christus* in the election of Jesus Christ as elected man, the correspondence of our history to his own, as the surplus of that history, which are one as the content of the eternal act of God. Because Barth is an actualist, because the nature of this act is that of a historical event, the content of that correspondence is likewise actualistic and historical – what I have been calling ethical and performative. The question of election is decided insofar as one comes to understand that one is, in fact, the person to whom God's claim of election in Jesus Christ is oriented. The issue of election

⁵⁹ This is why so much of the talk of the resurrection in 4/1 is taken up with discussion of Lessing's ugly ditch; the resurrection immediately relativizes Lessing's problem, for it is the eschatological reality in which Christ's history is contemporaneous to every history. More on this in the final section.

⁶⁰ *CD* 4/2, 318.

is one which is performed – a call to take up one’s bed and walk, as it were.⁶¹ I argued that this rhetorical performance is Barth’s pneumatology of participation enacted, and that this performative element draws it very close to Augustine’s performative pneumatology of ascent in Christ. A similar rhetorical force obtains in the *Übergang* passages: Barth is attempting to represent what is finally unrepresentable, the *enactment* of participation in God, to account theoretically for what is finally a *performative* manner of the taking up of a call to live into an eschatological future. If my argument is at all right, we know that Barth’s tactic is pneumatological – but we also know that this tactic consists of undergoing the performative therapy⁶² of continually redirecting the reader to the fact that this solution is already given in God’s self-giving, in Jesus Christ. Thus, over 50 pages after the initial question concerning the “meaning, or better the power, of the existence of the one man Jesus Christ for those among whom and for whom, as the Reconciler, He, the Son of God, became also the Son of Man and one of them, their Brother,” Barth states it plainly: the problem is a non-problem, for the question presupposes that we look for some other “power” than that already given: “The answer is

⁶¹ Although Mangina sees the connection between *Entsprechung* and the *analogia fidei*, he worries that that it is “highly problematic,” for in its location of human agency in the objectivity of Christ, it “excludes the co-occurrence of divine and human agency” (*Barth on the Christian Life*, 87 n17). My reading, of course, could not be more different; it is precisely the asymmetry of correspondence, its privileging of the priority of grace in Christ, that is an enabling of human freedom as participant by the Spirit in the *Weisung* of the Son. A “higher doctrine of church and sacraments” will not provide for a greater place for human agency; only the character of the graced human act itself, in the singularity of its act, can provide for the realization of human agency. Roberts offers the popular complaint that by locating the compression of election and rejection in Jesus Christ, the fulcrum of the divine act is shifted from history to eternity, which makes the “path of salvation a merely noetic realization,” “Barth’s Doctrine of Time,” 120. This does not allow for the expression of act of God in “adequate temporal terms” and thus remains “frozen in eternal election” (121); likewise, this positing of God’s eternity as the *Urgeschichte* disallows any proper integrity for *Geschichte* (118). However, this depends upon Roberts’s assumption that for Barth eternity is the *negation* of time by virtue of its privilege over time and history, and that *Urgeschichte* is a kind of Platonic ideal that is realized in the history of Jesus. Precisely this misunderstanding of eternity and time in Barth runs throughout virtually every critic of Barth’s trinitarianism in these chapters; the beginning of a reply will be given below.

⁶² On Rogers’s use of this term, see above, 167 n62.

staggering in its simplicity. He is the Holy Spirit in this supreme sense...because He is no other than the presence and action of Jesus Christ Himself...Thus the Spirit who makes Christians Christians is the power of this revelation of Jesus Christ Himself – His Spirit.”⁶³

Notably, in making this statement Barth is opposing an “ecclesiological” answer to the question of the constitution of the Christian, even as the context is that of the *totus christus*, Jesus Christ as *wirklich* humanity. Thus the Spirit’s work is not a second work alongside that of the church, epiphenomenal to a work within the institutional locus that identifies the sanctification of the Christian and sets her apart,⁶⁴ even as the identity of the church and the identity of the Spirit are referred directly to Jesus Christ: he is the agent of the Spirit’s work and thus the identity of the community that participates in the Spirit’s work, the “sphere of His presence and action and lordship.”⁶⁵ The anxiety that seeks a separate “power,” a distinguishable work of the Spirit, is the same as that which seeks to stabilize Christian sanctification and holiness in a setting apart that constitutes the church as possessing an “identity” in distinction from the world. Both are misplaced. To be anxious about the fact that the power that makes us Christians is that of the Spirit,

⁶³ CD 4/2, 322-3. It is this answer, of course, that bothers Rogers, as well as Robert Jenson and Rowan Williams, who argue that the Spirit is thereby depersonalized. I will develop Barth’s answer to this critique in the next two sections.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 321. “The Spirit is not a second thing side by side with a first, which is a Christian institution and order and doctrine and morality that are given elsewhere and stable in themselves.” Post-Weberian worries about institution and charisma are in view. I note this against Rosato, *The Spirit as Lord*, who seeks a human and ecclesial mediation for Barth’s pneumatology, and John Yocum, *Ecclesial Mediation in Karl Barth* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004).

⁶⁵ CD 4/2, 323. Articulating how the history of Jesus as the “royal man” is the direction of the Son and therefore of the *totus christus* is the focus of the rich scriptural exegesis of §64.3; here the *content* of the term *Entsprechung* is filled out. Jones has an excellent discussion in terms of “correspondence,” *The Humanity of Christ*, 150-69; esp. 170: “Correspondence means answering. It means human freedom – an event constituted by (a) an act of genuine human spontaneity and (b) the consequent exercise of agency that is (c) directed by, sustained by and performative of God’s loving intention.” Cf. 169 n35. Neder also notes that objective participation in Christ is the establishment of “freely responsible human subjects,” *Participation in Christ*, 47.

which means, the performance of participation in Christ as an ethical act, an acting into the mystery of God's gratuity, is to be anxious about the fact that (recalling *CD 1/1*) as graced subjects we are suspended in mid-air. Pneumatological talk is dialectical because it is dispossessing; it speaks of our participation in God only by pointing us back to our own act, but reveals that act to be the agency of God. It challenges us in our own house.⁶⁶

Full circle: revelation as reconciliation in CD 4/3

As we turn to *CD 4/3*, one major thematic remains to be identified: what characterizes Barth's pneumatology as a pneumatology of Christian *knowledge*. A starting point can be found in clarifying further what Barth means by the confoundingly vague language of the "direction" (*Weisung*) of the Son in *CD 4/2* to describe the all-important category of participation and sanctification. I have been using the (non-Barthian) language of the ethical and performative to describe this category, which is summed up in the following quote:

The point at issue is how we can ever see and know our being Jesus Christ, and therefore ourselves as those who are established in Him...What is needed, and therefore the point at issue, is its attestation in a *corresponding* way of thought, *direction* of will, type of attitude and orientation and determination of our existence which come to us in relation to it, and which we have to fulfil in relation to it, so that in response to the love with which God has loved us we love Him in return. We have to do this because the being of Jesus Christ, and our being in Him, is irrefutably, incontestably and unassailably grounded in itself...Between this love, between Jesus Christ (and our being in Him) and ourselves, who have to correspond to His and our objective being, there arises for us the question of truth, the question of *recognition*.⁶⁷

Barth's concept of "direction" can be characterized as an eschatological reorientation of the existential character of our temporal histories, as the configuration of

⁶⁶ *CD 1/1*, 468; cf. the talk of anxiety in *4/2*, 321.

⁶⁷ *CD 4/2*, 296-7. Emphasis mine.

our being as act as the ascent to God by virtue of that fact that our being as act occurs within Jesus Christ. It is the teleological *direction* of the dialectic of revelation, the fact that the dialectic of veiling and unveiling is always oriented toward grace, that mystery is the mystery of abundance and excess. This means that the dialectic of revelation, by virtue of its own power as the act of God, presses to be known, in the Barthian sense of knowing as participation and transformation.⁶⁸ This is the theme of *CD* 4/3: the gratuity of our act, in all its integrity, as participation in revelation.

The oft-neglected third installment of *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* corresponds to the traditional locus *de officio mediatoris*, although of course Barth is concerned to hold *de officio* in unity with *de persona*.⁶⁹ Thus it concerns the union of God and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ in his act insofar as it encompasses both God and humanity. But in the rigorously christological logic of the *Dogmatics*, this means not humanity's cooperation with reconciliation in sanctification – sanctification was accounted for in 4/2 by virtue of Christ the *Stellvertreter* acting as *wirklich* humanity – but humanity's *recognition* and *attestation*. Barth has been criticized for limiting human participation in salvation to the passivity of acknowledgement; but if, as he argues, reconciliation is already accomplished in Jesus Christ, electing God and elected man, then it follows that humanity's part is not to cooperate or appropriate, but simply to acknowledge – to allow itself to be illuminated with the knowledge that it is always

⁶⁸ Cf. *CD* 4/3, 183-4, a discussion of “knowledge” (*yada, ginōskein*) in scripture: “What [knowledge] really means is the process or history in which man, certainly observing and thinking, using his sense, intelligence and imagination, but also his will, action and ‘heart,’ and therefore as whole man, becomes aware of another history ...in such a compelling way that he cannot be neutral towards it, but finds himself summoned to disclose and give himself to it in return, to direct himself according to the law which he encounters in it, to be taken up into its movement, in short, to demonstrate the acquaintance which he has been given with this other history in a corresponding alteration of his own being, action and conduct.”

⁶⁹ *CD* 4/3, 275.

already claimed by and reconciled to God. The only possibly reaction to a gift is recognition and gratitude.

This is not merely an epistemological claim; to understand it as such would be to forget how Barth has so assiduously labored to unify the ontological and the ethical (“being” and “act”), to show that knowledge of God is a sharing in God’s being. But if the asymmetry of the dialectic of revelation is to hold, then this third moment of participatory, transformative, elevating knowing must *as well* be God’s work; and this means that the dialectic of revelation is the principle of its own knowledge: “this intrinsically perfect and insurpassable action has a distinct character. For as it takes place in its perfection, and with no need of supplement, it also expresses, discloses, mediates and reveals itself.”⁷⁰ This explicit return to the language of revelation thus brings *CD* full circle: as *CD* 1/1 explicated the logic of reconciliation by the categories of revelation that are identical to the doctrine of the Trinity, God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ, so in 4/3 “revelation takes place as the revelation of reconciliation.”⁷¹

The pattern here is identical to the objectivity of theological knowledge in the relationship of primary and secondary objectivity in *CD* 2/2, with one important exception. Although Barth always held to the objective-subjective/reality-possibility relationship of the dialectic of revelation established in 1/2 (with the exception of 3/1), by the fourth volume the function of the *Übergang* has largely replaced the function of subjective language. This is because the dialectic of revelation does not obtain primarily

⁷⁰ *CD* 4/3, 8. Barth also returns full circle to the Barmen Declaration: the thesis paragraph to §69 simply repeats the first statement of the 1934 document (cf. 86).

⁷¹ *Ibid*; cf. 114, which recalls the threefold form of the Word of God in *CD* 1/1 in the context of the well-known discussion of “other lights.” This explicit recall of categories from *CD* 1/1 is not, in my estimation, sufficiently attended to by interpreters such as Williams and McCormack who posit a sharp disjunction between the trinitarian doctrine of vols. 1 and 4.

in the relationship of objective and subjective, which remain reciprocal vis-à-vis one another, but in the Reformed pattern of an/enhypostatic Christology: Jesus Christ is the Son acting in human essence, which act establishes itself in the life of humanity. The dialectic of revelation has a *direction*. Jesus Christ is his own knowability.

It is the *Übergang* section of 4/3, “The Promise of the Spirit,” that makes clear the pneumatological theme of the transitional sections. Their eschatological notes are explicitly thematized here, insofar as the coming of the Spirit is the unity of the divine act in the resurrection and the parousia: the time that the church inhabits is the last time, the time of a history oriented to God’s eternity, having the direction of the Son. “The impartation of the Holy Spirit is the coming of Jesus Christ in the last time which still remains...it is the promise, given with and through the Holy Spirit, by which the community, and with it the world in which it exists and has its mission, may live in this time which moves towards its end.”⁷² The coming of the Spirit *is* the transition, the *Übergang*, from the divine eternity to human history by virtue of the act of Jesus the Son in human history, for the Spirit is the excess of that history that is our own. “In this reality [the promise of the Spirit] there takes place the transition and entrance of the prophecy of Jesus Christ to us and to our sphere, and all we who exist in this sphere...are drawn into the history of salvation and given a part in it.”⁷³

Concerning this eschatological promise of the Spirit, it is important to reinforce that the promise of the Spirit is the coming of Jesus Christ (and vice versa). In no way does this pneumatology of the *transition* differentiate the unity of the work of God, the singular and simple act of self-donation and declaration in Jesus Christ that is the content

⁷² CD 4/3, 295.

⁷³ Ibid., 350.

of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is here that Robert Jenson laments that the work of the Spirit has been subsumed into that of Christ; but in reality, we are seeing the final shape of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity crystallize in all its richness.⁷⁴ In *CD* 1/1, we had begun with a "linear" understanding of the Trinity organized around God's self-speaking in the Son, and here, with the Reformed Christology of 4/2 having eliminated the need for the personalism of *CD* 3, Barth has fully articulated this christological focus. But now, with all the fruit of the doctrine of election and Christ's *wirklich* humanity in place, this self-giving includes a self-diffusion into all of human history, and this is an elevation of human history into the eschatological time of God's eternity. What the union of the work of the Spirit and of Christ does is refuse to posit an interval of divine absence that could be filled by an institution as Christ's vicar;⁷⁵ instead, the community that participates in the divine eternity that is the Son's history has its being in the Son by virtue of the Spirit that is the temporal excess or intensity of that history. The Holy Spirit, "i.e., Jesus Christ acting and speaking in the power of His resurrection,"⁷⁶ is not, however, subsumed within the agency of Jesus Christ, for this is to assume that there are multiple agencies in the Trinity that could be subsumed to one another. In Barth's Augustinian logic, there is one common agency and work of God, in the form of God's self-giving in Jesus Christ, a single and simple self-donation that proceeds from the Father and incorporates us in the work of the Spirit. "If the promise of the Spirit is one of the forms of the prophetic work

⁷⁴ "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 303. Cf. Mangina, *Barth on the Christian Life*, 72: "Is the agent of this knowledge [of God] the risen Jesus, or the Holy Spirit? Barth would undoubtedly refuse the terms on which the question is asked."

⁷⁵ "There can be no question of Jesus Christ being even temporarily directed in His absence to let Himself be represented by an honoured Christianity and the holy Church," *CD* 4/3 349. There is a clear sense that something like this is what Jenson seeks in "You Wonder Where the Spirit Went," 303, appealing to Nissiotis and Ratzinger.

⁷⁶ *CD* 4/3, 351; this crucial phrase, or close variants, is repeated five times in the following pages, a rhetorical enactment of the unity of pneumatology and Christology for Barth.

of Jesus Christ, then quite apart from the dignity to be ascribed to the Holy Spirit on a sound doctrine of the Trinity, we cannot possibly think less of His work than we do of that of Jesus Christ Himself.”⁷⁷

Schicksal und Idee: The Evasion of the Barthian Pneumatological Dialectic

Having offered at some length a reading of *CD* oriented around the development and the perdurance of the pneumatological dialectic of revelation understood as the grammar of the performance of participation in Christ, I now want to return briefly to a consideration of some of Barth’s interpreters, critics and defenders, to clarify the stakes of the reading I have offered. In particular, I intend to argue that my early analysis of “*Schicksal und Idee*” can be brought to bear upon the theological presuppositions of contemporary Barthian interpreters in such a way as to illuminate the originality of Barth’s christological-pneumatological innovations, as well as his own ambiguity towards his Augustinian heritage that provided the basis of those innovations.⁷⁸ In particular, I want to suggest how his self-professed predilections for idealism relate to idealist-leaning interpretations of his thought among some of his interpreters.

As we have already seen, part of the thrust of Barth’s argument in “Fate and Idea in Theology” lies in showing the tacit correspondence of realism and idealism at the ontological level – both operate on the basis of some kind of understanding of the analogy of being, in the sense of a continuity of being between God and the world.⁷⁹ How

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 358.

⁷⁸ There is thus a certain symmetry between this chapter and the third; as with Augustine, I am concerned to situate this reading vis-à-vis some dominant modes of Barth interpretation. In particular, I hope to show the common basis upon which some prominent critics and defenders of Barth operate.

⁷⁹ A similar thesis, *mutatis mutandis*, is offered regarding the function of the *analogia entis* in Barth and Przywara by Joshua Davis, “The Fruit of the Tree: On the Affirmation and Use of Analogy,” *Princeton Theological Review* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 21-34.

this analogy or continuity functions is, of course, the issue – realism posits this analogy as fundamentally passive, as the actualization of an inherent participatory dynamism of created being toward its exemplar, God. Idealism, on the other hand, is contingent upon the identity of thought and being, so that analogical continuity is a synthetic act of realizing the dialectical relationship of God and world in thought – here, echoing Hegel, the rational is the real.⁸⁰ Although according to McCormack Barth must finally be read as a realist (a position with which I am in agreement), in that early essay Barth actually expresses an inclination toward – as well as a wariness of – idealism as coming closer to the truth of things. In no small part, that ambivalence is indicative of the ambivalence between the Augustinian and Hegelian tendencies in his doctrine of the Trinity, which I have noted throughout these two chapters. In the next chapter, I will examine the function of idealism in contemporary trinitarian discourse more closely; in what follows, I will restrict myself to examining the reading of Barth by Williams and McCormack with an eye to the way the *communicatio idiomatum* functions in their reading of Barth vis-à-vis Barth’s position as argued in these chapters. In both cases, they miss the final Augustinian shape of his trinitarianism in *CD* 4/3, and instead take the path of Hegel – a path Barth refused.

The issue lies, as might perhaps be anticipated from the course of the foregoing argument, in the way in which the Barthian dialectic is understood, and insofar as this dialectic is a question of Christology, the way in which Barth’s use of an/enhypostatic Christology is interpreted. The asymmetrical relationship of divine agency and human

⁸⁰ It is helpful to recall McCormack’s thesis at this point – Barth is a “critical realist” insofar as God constitutes a real object of knowledge independent of the human critical faculty, yet that critical faculty is needed to apprehend God’s transcendence to human knowledge. Thus I have argued, following McCormack to this extent, that the Barthian dialectic is intended to navigate the dilemma of *Schicksal und Idee*. More on this in short order.

receptivity in the dialectic of revelation is simply a speculative way of talking about the relationship of the divine and human essence in Jesus Christ. The Logos or Son, the second *Seinsweise* of the Trinity, is the hypostasis and agent of the person of Jesus Christ who is a human actor. As we have seen, from very early on this christological idea complex is deployed with a preference for the Reformed option for the *unio hypostatica* against the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum*. The latter constitutes for Barth simultaneously an enervation and a freezing of the dialectic; indeed, it shows these to be the same thing. On the one hand, the *communicatio idiomatum* enervates the dynamic by divinizing the humanity, therefore attributing agency in revelation to the human actor and confusing the all-important difference between uncreated and created being. The dialectical “tension” between God and world is relaxed into something more homogenous, something more like the peace of the *analogia entis*.⁸¹ On the other, the dialectic is frozen, for it becomes a “static” binary opposition of that difference, for the presupposition of the confusion of natures is their ontological commonality, such that differentiating them is only possible on the basis of their ontological univocity – their obtaining on the same plane of being.⁸² In both cases, circumventing the dialectic constitutes an exigency for *mediation*, the positing of a *tertium quid*, a hominized deity and divinized humanity.

The tendency to confuse Barth’s Reformed option on the dialectic, and therefore the *communicatio idiomatum*, can be traced in all three of my major interlocutors in these two chapters – Rowan Williams, Robert Jenson, and Bruce McCormack. Thus, each has

⁸¹ Of course, to speak of dialectical “tension” can imply antagonism, as if God and world are ontological opposites. This mistake, which would be disastrous, will be addressed in the final section.

⁸² Roberts represents this problem exemplarily; by supposing that Barth disallows for any reality apart from revelation posits the “inescapable contradiction” between “reality and the purveyor of revelation and all reality apart from revelation,” “Barth’s Doctrine of Time,” 123.

mired themselves in the “‘Jesus Christ pit’ of the Lutherans” Barth early identified as the problem inherent in that theologoumenon.⁸³ Moreover, this problem arises from the attempt to be true to the very issue the doctrine of *an/enhypostasis* is designed to address, which is the self-identity of God in revelation, the total givenness of God in the history of Jesus Christ. The fundamental mistake here lies in misunderstanding the mode of this givenness. In Barth, as we have seen, this givenness and self-identity is total, while still being *indirect*. God is not simply given in the humanity of Jesus Christ, for that is to make the human nature/essence of Jesus the *agent* of revelation.⁸⁴ There is an identity, but an indirect identity, between the essence of God and the act of Jesus Christ, for that act is the assumption of a human essence and history by the essence and eternity of God.⁸⁵ However, to call it indirect is not to call it mediated, and herein is precisely the problem of the *communicatio idiomatum*. In their attempt to do justice to the self-identity of God in revelation, in the name of avoiding an *arbitrary* link between revelation and history, each of our Barth interpreters are in fact seeking the *immediacy* of God in revelation, and push Barth in the direction of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Ironically, however, this places them in a paradoxical position: just as the “static” Lutheran form of the dialectic simultaneously flattens and reifies the dialectic of revelation, so the desire for immediacy requires mediation. Before discussing Williams and McCormack, it is important to reiterate a point already made: there are real tensions in Barth’s trinitarian thought, and the readings offered by Jenson (who I cannot discuss here), Williams and

⁸³ See above, p. 153; McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 351.

⁸⁴ On Barth’s logic on this point in the 2nd edition of the Roman commentary, see *Critically Realistic*, 250. This in turn can only be monistic or adoptionistic, for either Jesus Christ evinces a fundamental identity of human and divine essence, or Jesus Christ is the sign of the antagonism of divine and human agency. This dilemma shows again the significance of Augustine’s logic of simplicity in *Trin.* 5-7.

⁸⁵ On Barth’s substitution of *Wesen* for *Natur*, *CD* 4/2, 26ff. See more on this below, 234.

McCormack represent plausible readings of one side of Barth; what I have offered in these chapters, on the other hand, seeks to follow the genetic development of Barth's thought to its final conclusion. Thus, I will argue that both Williams and McCormack miss significant points in Barth's thinking, which makes for a one-sided reading of his (admittedly complex) theology.

Human freedom and trinitarian personalism: Rowan Williams

Rowan Williams has two concerns with the handling of the Trinity in *CD*: the need for a "plurality of agency within the Trinity" and the "inclusion of the history of man in the being of God."⁸⁶ At issue in both is his concern that, in Barth's dialectic, God is not identified *with* the contingent and historical events of salvation, thereby rendering their relationship adventitious. A "pluralist" doctrine of the Trinity would mean that in Jesus Christ God is really participant in the risk of "failure and deficiency" in the contingency of Christ's history, by virtue of the "event or transaction between Father and Son" that takes the form of the contradiction of the cross bridged by the Spirit.⁸⁷ A differentiation between Father and Son allows God's life – which is the relation between Father and Son as united by the Spirit – to simultaneously be eternally free and subject to the historical becoming of a real identification with humanity in the incarnation. Human history would in some sense be determinative of the trinitarian relations, with the result

⁸⁶ "Barth on the Triune God," 131. In context, Williams is considering von Balthasar, and it is clear that von Balthasar's development of the dialectic of obedience and command of *CD* 4/1 in the *Herrlichkeit* is Williams's point of departure; indeed, the suggestion that Barth moves toward a "pluralist" model of the Trinity is of generally Balthasarian provenance, dependent on the christological turn to analogy posited in Balthasar's *The Theology of Karl Barth*.

⁸⁷ "Barth on the Triune God," 133ff.

that human participation in the divine life would be characterized by its own proper freedom, creativity, and integrity.

Positing this trinitarian pluralism is the way to correct Barth's signal failure, a coherent doctrine of the Spirit.⁸⁸ The "lovingness" of God that is the Spirit must constitute the "ground for God's loving movement towards the world,"⁸⁹ a ground that is the opening of the transaction of the Father and Son to humanity. Thus Williams's desire for a "*distinctive* human response"⁹⁰ and the inclusion of human history in the being of God come together in the Spirit being the ground of participation in the relational, social life of God – an opening of God's I-Thou self-absorption to the risk and contingency of the world.⁹¹ For Williams, this is the shape of a trinitarian doctrine more authentically determined by the events of salvation history, rather than epistemological concerns;⁹² however, Williams's concern to posit a Balthasarian "contradiction" between Father and Son so as to allow human history a determinative function in the divine life relies upon two fundamental problems, when viewed in light of Barth's Christology (and thereby, his

⁸⁸ Williams does not quite say this, but he does argue that the "linear" model of vol. 1 leaves Barth without any compelling reason for talking about the "ontological necessity of the Spirit," as Williams put it in his discussion of Augustine (see above, ch. 3); cf. "Barth on the Triune God," 124-6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁹¹ Cf. 126, where Williams makes a revealing comment: he takes the "linear/epistemological" model of revelation in *CD* 1/1 to mean that God is "self-showing" in that God reveals Godself to Godself, Father to Son. Unsurprisingly, Williams then finds it hard to understand how Barth can conceive of the Spirit's role of revealedness, of guaranteeing the reception of revelation, antecedently in Godself: "it is distinctly odd to say that he *reveals* himself to himself, and assures himself of his self-revelation" (126). Williams then notes that this is similar to a "Fichtean self-positing *Ich*" knowing itself over against its other which then "establishes a balance of mutual limitation within the over-all *absolute-Ich*." Two comments are in order here: first, Williams has *assumed* that God's self-knowing and speaking is a reflexive movement, a dialogical relationship of subject and object. Little wonder, in such an understanding, that trinitarian pluralism would better do justice to this presupposition! Second, Williams does not seem to grasp just how close his Balthasarian model of a "contradiction" between Father and Son in the crucifixion is to a Fichtean positing of the Ego in its negation – in fact they are identical. This supposition is further supported by the fact that the Hegelian "trap" of Trinity and world (execrated by Barth) that is "one organically evolving 'manifestation'" which circumvents the dialectic of hiddenness and revealedness (123) looks remarkably similar to Williams's portrait of an "adult" relationship with God characterized by human growth and diversity.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 113; 137-9

pneumatology). First, his conception of human freedom goes totally awry. Williams reads what I have described as the “asymmetry” of divine and human agency as precluding real “distinctive” human freedom. But in this, he seems to be understanding “distinctive” humanity in a way that has not accounted for Barth’s treatment of *wirklich* humanity as the humanity of Jesus Christ; for Barth, Jesus is free for God because the Logos is the agent of his history, and by grace – by the Spirit – we participate in that history as freed by the grace of God for God; but by treating human freedom as an abstract quantity to be inserted into a space within the Trinity vacated of divine agency, so to speak, and by supposing that divine self-limitation, divine “risk,” is the condition of possibility of human freedom, Williams effectively supposes that the divine and human act are ontologically competitive. Only if we suppose that God’s otherness and transcendence is competitive with human freedom can we complain, as Williams does, that “God’s absolute ‘otherness’ can only impinge upon human awareness, human will, human self-reliance as negation.”⁹³ The asymmetry of divine and human agency in revelation is intended to avoid any opposition of one to another in any form. In the terms popularized by Kathryn Tanner, these forms of agency are not to be conceived as “competitive” or “contrastive”⁹⁴ – indeed, to even speak of divine and human agency as different “forms” of agency mistakenly implies that they are the same kind of thing at all.

A corollary of the problem of confusing divine and human agency is the need to raise the status of the human nature of Jesus to something co-participatory in the event of salvation, and in so doing, to compromise the integrity of the divine act. Williams quotes with some approval Wingren’s complaint that “Barth has no doctrine of the humanity of

⁹³ Ibid, 118.

⁹⁴ See Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988).

Christ” and that Barth’s “residually Nestorian (or too radically Calvinist) Christology” is connected to an absence of a doctrine of creation.⁹⁵ But what happens here is that in order to make God *immediately* present and identified with the events of history, Williams has pluralized the divine agency (Father and Son) so that God can both be identified with salvation history in the Son and remain eternal and free in the Father. This trinitarian pluralism thus accomplishes an *immediacy* of divine presence in history; but at the same time, this is only by way of making Jesus a *mediating* function between the transcendent Father and the immanence of history. God’s involvement in history occurs only on the consequence of an internal “contradiction” mediated by a Jesus who is not identical to God’s self-giving. God is given in history, but only at the expense of a fracture of the integrity of revelation. Moreover, because Williams has misconstrued the humanity of Christ as true humanity, yet a third agency, that of the Spirit, must be introduced to account for human participation. This means that he has at once valorized Jesus’s humanity (by making it agential to reconciliation) and abstracted from it, for the work of the Spirit has become something other than the *übergänglich* participation in that humanity.⁹⁶

Bruce McCormack: the reemergence of the Lutheran reading of Barth

Bruce McCormack has contributed one of the truly great contemporary works of Barthian scholarship in his *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, a seminal work whose cogent and well-documented thesis has been assumed in much of

⁹⁵ Ibid., 128; 142-3.

⁹⁶ The problem here is that Williams draws upon the picture of human agency in the *communicatio idiomatum* by virtue of God the Son’s eternal humanity as conceived in Barth’s doctrine of election (cf. *ibid.*, 131ff); but his mistake is to misconceive the nature of *Urgeschichte* and thus, the eternity-time relation, operative in Barth’s doctrine of election. More in short order.

the preceding two chapters. Since then, he has written a series of articles expanding his reading of Barth, radicalizing the Barthian project and giving new life to the current wave of Barth scholarship.⁹⁷ The direction McCormack has gone in Barth interpretation has proven to be polarizing;⁹⁸ indeed, in this subsection I want to point out how McCormack's current position is in considerable tension with his reading of Barth in the earlier volume, and replicates the patterns of some of Barth's earlier Lutheran opponents. I will focus upon two texts: the seminal "Grace and Being: The Role of God's Gracious Election in Karl Barth's Theological Ontology," and the newly-translated "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology: Just How 'Chalcedonian' Is It?"⁹⁹

The core of McCormack's current project stems from the radicalization of his insight in *Critically Realistic* that Barth's understanding of the dialectic of revelation attained its final form in his doctrine of election – that the christologically grounded form election takes in *CD 2/2* constitutes an act of self-determination for humanity, an eternal "being-toward" history, as it were.¹⁰⁰ In "Grace and Being," McCormack argues that this entails something important for the identity of the Logos: Barth's worry about abstracting the decree of election from the fact that Jesus Christ is both subject and object of election is a worry about there being an *Logos asarkos* not already essentially determined by his status as *Logos incarnandus* (the Logos "to be incarnate"). If the Logos is not eternally

⁹⁷ For the most part, these are collected in *Orthodox and Modern*.

⁹⁸ In many respects, Princeton Theological Seminary is the heart of the polarized climate in current American Barth scholarship. Hunsinger's "Election and the Trinity" can be read as documentation of the (more or less) current state of the debate. See the literature cited in "Election and the Trinity," 196 nn1-2. As noted in ch. 4, the present work is an attempt to navigate outside the boundaries of the conversation imposed by this debate, as well as to query the theological assumptions at work on both sides.

⁹⁹ Originally, the articles were published, respectively, in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92-110, and as "Barths Grundsätzlicher Chalcedonismus?" in *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 18 (2002), 138-73. The latter's English subtitle evinces the polemical interest vis-à-vis Hunsinger's "Karl Barth's Christology: Its Basic Chalcedonian Character," originally in the *Cambridge Companion*, as well as in *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 131-47.

¹⁰⁰ See *Critically Realistic*, 453-63.

the man Jesus Christ, then his being as redeemer in history “tells us nothing about who or what the Logos is in and for himself. It is merely a role he plays, something he does; but what he does in time has no significance for his eternal being.”¹⁰¹ The Son’s historical being as mediator must be *essentially* related to his being as Son in eternity.

For McCormack, this means that a question about “divine ontology” is at stake, namely, how to conceive the possibility of God’s being as becoming such that God’s *historical* act can be determinative of God’s *eternal* life. Affirming this “becoming” has two implications: first, the Son’s historical act is in some respect constitutive of God’s eternal life, such that the “death of Jesus Christ in God-abandonment, precisely as a human experience... [is] an event in God’s own life.”¹⁰² Thus, second, the issue with Barth becomes that of advancing an “‘actualistic’ ontology” vs. an “‘essentialist’ ontology;” Calvin’s doctrine of election, grounded in the latter, located the unchangeable essence of God in eternity hidden from human knowability, whereas Barth has understood God’s being in act, thus correlating God’s eternal being and God’s act in history and rendering that being knowable and perceivable in God’s *essential* self-determination in Jesus Christ.¹⁰³ Thus Barth’s project, for McCormack, has become one characterized by speaking about God’s act and being “without engaging in speculation,”¹⁰⁴ a quest to do theology without metaphysics or substance ontology.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ “Grace and Being,” in *Orthodox and Modern*, 188.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 189, emphasis removed. The language of “being as becoming” deliberately echoes Jüngel; McCormack acknowledges Jüngel’s influence in *Orthodox and Modern*, 9, and 220 n50. What is less clear is how McCormack positions his work against the rest of the first generation of post-Barthian German theology, such as Moltmann, Pannenberg, or the Heidelberg-trained Robert Jenson. The above sentence could have been written, by any of these thinkers.

¹⁰³ “Grace and Being,” 189-90.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 183, emphasis removed. The upshot of this move is to allow McCormack to *reinstate* the *analogia entis* he had so carefully showed was opposed by Barth throughout *Critically Realistic*; see “Grace and Being,” 200; cf. Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 76.

As McCormack sees things, however, the real innovation in Barth's theology actually requires going beyond Barth. If God's essence is given and constituted in the eternal act of self-determination in election, and if the content of election is the history of Jesus Christ, which history is essential to the identity of the eternal Son, then two things follow for trinitarian theology: first, the immanent Trinity is identical to the economic Trinity in content;¹⁰⁶ and it further follows, and this is McCormack's signal advance (as he sees it) that God's being as triune is in fact a *consequence* of God's self-determination in election.¹⁰⁷ As he puts it, "the works of God *ad intra* (the trinitarian processions) find their ground in the *first* of the works of God *ad extra* (viz., election)...God gives himself (by an eternal act) his own being."¹⁰⁸ In this way, one avoids any "mythological speculation" about an eternal being of God beyond or behind God's historical self-determination in Jesus Christ. This is not, McCormack concedes, a move Barth makes; calling it a "critical correction" of Barth, he states that "Barth either did not fully realize the profound implications of his doctrine of election for the doctrine of the Trinity, or he shied away from drawing them for reasons known only to himself."¹⁰⁹ At least part of

¹⁰⁵ E.g., "Foreword to the German Edition of *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*," in *Orthodox and Modern*, 292-4; the sweeping anti-metaphysical rhetoric McCormack has adopted has become increasingly strong, though I would argue that it is not as well substantiated in Barth's text as he implies. McCormack is at his strongest when he is claiming that this putative post-metaphysical stance is of a piece with Barth's self-conscious attempt to think orthodoxy under the conditions of modernity, a claim with which I largely agree (Barth is demonstrably neither neo- nor classically orthodox). But he is at his weakest when he posits "classical metaphysics" as a straw figure for Barth to demolish; this tendency to combat metaphysical caricatures is, of course, one Barth occasionally indulges in, but with rather more acumen, and certainly less programmatically, than McCormack claims. It is not at all clear just what constitutes "classical" or "Greek" metaphysics on McCormack's part, other than the use of the word "substance."

¹⁰⁶ "Grace and Being," 191.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 193-4; to be sure, McCormack is quick to add that this is not modalism, as there is no chronological priority – there never was a time when God was not triune.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 194-5.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 193. This point is often overlooked in discussing McCormack's suggestion; by admitting he is advancing or "correcting" Barth here, he has moved the debate outside of the limits of Barth interpretation *per se*; thus, when Hunsinger or Molnar adduce textual evidence that Barth's position is not McCormack's,

those reasons, McCormack elsewhere says, are the vestiges of classical metaphysical thinking not yet purged from his thought.¹¹⁰

Momentarily, I will return to the serious error operative in McCormack's trinitarian logic here. For now, I simply want to point to his *de facto* deployment of the *communicatio idiomatum*. Repeatedly in "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology," McCormack complains about the "abstract metaphysical subject" that Chalcedon presupposes in its preservation of Platonic metaphysics to posit an unchangeable divine essence with which the *Logos asarkos* must be identified.¹¹¹ But by way of taking Barth's "actualizing" of the incarnation as controlled by ontological rather than christological purposes, McCormack has in fact inverted the intent of the latter volumes of *CD* 4 by transforming Barth's *an/enhypostasis*. Barth affirms, in concert with "classical" theology, the Logos as the agent of Christ's history; but rather than positing an "abstract metaphysical subject," this signifies the asymmetry of God and humanity in the history of Jesus Christ. But McCormack makes Barth's actualization of the incarnation the controlling category by reading the divine and human essences as *histories*, and in so doing loses the strict christological control upon the meaning of this actualization that Barth maintains by his focus on the *union hypostatica*. In focusing upon the manner in which the human and divine histories converge in Jesus Christ without a consideration of the *subject* of those histories, McCormack has done precisely what Barth feared – abstracted from the singularity of Jesus Christ as the act of God in a human history. For

this does not constitute a refutation. It is in fact irrelevant. Of course, it does not help that McCormack continues to publish more or less under the guise of Barth scholarship.

¹¹⁰ E.g. "Seek God Where He May Be Found: A Response to Edwin Chr. Van Driel," in *Orthodox and Modern*, 263-4.

¹¹¹ The phrase recurs at least ten times in "Karl Barth's Historicized Christology," 206-28. But the essay is a marvel of obfuscation, for not once does McCormack define precisely what an "abstract metaphysical subject" is, nor why it is so pernicious.

example, for McCormack the participation of Jesus in the being of God is a “‘sharing’ *in God’s history* through active obedience to the will of his Father...in the sense that the history of the human Jesus is a history of obedience to the will of the Father, which brings his history into complete conformity or correspondence to the history of God’s Self-humiliation...and, in doing so, *is made the vehicle of it.*”¹¹² For McCormack, the history of Jesus as the subject and object of election is constitutive of the existence of God insofar as God has self-determined to become in that history, and that history is the history of the Son insofar as Jesus wills to live in analogy with the mode of existence of God.¹¹³ Both God and humanity receive their essential determination in the history of Jesus Christ. God and humanity *become* what they are in Jesus Christ. But this implies that (McCormack’s) Barth “comes up to the very edge of the Hegelian identification of the Son of God with a human being...all there is on the side of the ‘Son of God’ is the human will.”¹¹⁴ Because we are in an “actualistic” ontology, the divine agent, the Son of God, the subject of election, “*is the history in which the human willing of Jesus conforms to the will of his heavenly Father.*”¹¹⁵

McCormack’s intent to make the history of Jesus determinative of the being of God has been pushed to the verge of adoptionism because he has refused to give the Logos any reality apart from that history itself; but a history is not a subject.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Ibid., 226.

¹¹³ Ibid., 227.

¹¹⁴ “Participation in God, Yes; Deification, No,” in *Orthodox and Modern*, 242-3.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 243, emphasis original.

¹¹⁶ Jones (*Humanity of Christ*, 103) points to Jenson’s *Systematic Theology*, 1:138-44, as a place where the human being Jesus Christ simply *is* the second person of the Trinity, but does not associate McCormack with this position. I would suggest McCormack has come right up to this position, if not fully embraced it. Jones, with his talk of “linguistic cross-attribution” of human and divine by virtue of Christ’s “ontological complexity” within his “personal simplicity,” follows, to some extent, McCormack’s embracing of the *communicatio idiomatum*, while at the same time avoiding McCormack’s mistake above, retaining a firm focus on the asymmetry of the hypostatic union. In part, this seems to be a function of the fact that Jones

McCormack claims that Barth has replaced the Chalcedonian category of *nature* with history;¹¹⁷ but in fact Barth replaces *Natur* with *Wesen*, “essence,” which is a subject whose being is act *as historical*.¹¹⁸ McCormack’s concern is not to safeguard the priority of the divine agency, for he fears that would be to posit an abstract metaphysical subject acting behind Jesus Christ; it is simply to proffer an ontology of historical becoming whose only subject is the human Jesus. Barth’s avoidance of the *communicatio idiomatum* is in the service of accounting for this priority of grace, which is identical to the *wirklich* humanity of Jesus Christ. But McCormack, in pushing Barth’s Christology to the point of adoptionism, has in fact performed the very thing Barth feared: in giving the Logos no “abstract” eternal content apart from the Father, he has made Jesus’ human agency constitutive of his being as the Logos. The dialectic of revelation has been simultaneously enervated and reified: enervated, in that a human history that wills to be analogous to God’s self-humiliation is agential of the event of reconciliation; reified, in that the unity of the work of God is destroyed – the subject of the history of Jesus Christ is no longer identical, but merely *analogous* to the divine act of self-giving.

Just here is McCormack’s critical error of trinitarian logic. This concerns the relationship between the generation of the Son and the Son’s self-determination in election. The entire linchpin of his argument in “Grace and Being” is that it is by virtue of the Son being the *subject* of election that God’s essence is necessarily self-determining in the act of election; otherwise, as is (notionally) the case in classical theology, the election

does not indulge in McCormack’s extraordinary *abstraction* from the person of Jesus Christ with his concern for “divine ontology.” Jones much more effectively follows Barth’s intent by virtue of his leading question, concerning the nature of Christ’s humanity within his “personal simplicity” as a question about the subject Jesus Christ; *The Humanity of Christ*, 135.

¹¹⁷“Karl Barth’s Historicized Christology,” 222.

¹¹⁸*CD* 4/2, 26ff; cf. above, p. 227.

of the Son as a historical act would be adventitious to the Son's eternal being and thereby the eternal essence of God. But then McCormack *abandons* this claim: in election, he states, God gives Godself an identity as Father who begets the Son and spirates the Spirit. Hence, the *Father* becomes the subject of election.¹¹⁹ But thereby McCormack has done exactly what Barth feared in the doctrine of election – rendered the being of God “abstract” and indeterminate by virtue of the fact that the doctrine of the Trinity has become secondary to a more primordial and hidden eternal being. The problem is that McCormack is making two mutually exclusive claims: that Jesus Christ the Son's status as subject of election entails the self-determination of God for history and humanity *in toto*; and that the existence of Jesus Christ the Son is a logical consequence of God's self-determination for history and humanity. In order to preserve the second claim, he has to reassign the agency of election to the Father, correlating trinitarian Fatherhood with the patristic *fons deitatis* and *autotheos*,¹²⁰ but in so doing he distinguishes the begetting of the Son and the self-determination in election. If God, as Father, self-elects to “become” in the Son, then the begetting of the Son is subsequent to that election. Yet in this case, there must be an essence of God prior to that self-determination that is *neither* Father nor Son. And this indeterminate essence is in actuality the subject of election and therefore precisely the “abstract” *deus absconditus* that Barth's doctrine of election *was designed to exclude in the first place*.

¹¹⁹ “Seek God,” 266: “we would be speaking more accurately if we were to speak of the ‘Father’ as the subject who gives himself his own being in the act of election;” cf. 272. This is in response to Van Driel's protest that understanding Christ as the subject of election means, tautologically, that “Jesus Christ elects to be Jesus Christ,” *ibid.*, 269. Cf. Edwin Chr. Van Driel, “Karl Barth on the Eternal Existence of Jesus Christ,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 60, no. 1 (Feb. 2007), 45-61.

¹²⁰ “Seek God,” 266 n16.

The problem here will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, but it is important to see why this is a trinitarian problem. What McCormack has done has introduced an ontological ground of being in God prior to God's life as Trinity,¹²¹ and which in fact is determinative of that trinitarian being, while at the same time attributed that ground to a trinitarian property, the *autotheos* of the Father. Effectively, he has confused the begetting of the Son by the Father with a self-causing divine essence, a *causa sui*, and in so doing rendered the singularity of the divine act in the incarnation secondary to a more primal self-determination located behind the trinitarian relations.

The price to be paid is the nature of human participation in the life of the divine. The categories of *indirectness* and *asymmetry* of revelation have shifted to *immediacy* and *analogy*. The former are consequences of positing revelation as the act of a divine subject that is enacted only in its subjective performance in the Spirit, who *is* that divine subject acting in our ownmost act;¹²² the latter are ontological categories of divine becoming through the mediation of a historical agent who actualizes that becoming in analogical correspondence.¹²³ McCormack's question is how to account ontologically for

¹²¹ In what follows, I am indebted to conversations with David Belcher and particularly Joshua Davis. I have been helped as well by John Webster's analysis in "Life in and of Himself: Reflections on God's Aseity," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 117-19.

¹²² An observation by Gollwitzer is apposite here: theologians, in their inveterate idealism, tend to the epistemological concept "analogy" rather than the Barthian terms "parable" and "correspondence," whose reference is to praxis, to describe the relationship of divine grace and human action: "*analogia fidei* corresponds at the theoretical level to 'parable' at the level of social praxis; the former is necessary in that it grounds and secures the correct occurrence of the practice of the Christian life," "Kingdom of God and Socialism," 97. This idealist reading is illustrated nicely when Roberts construes the *analogia fidei* as "a grace-given correspondence between theological language and its object," "Barth's Doctrine of Time," 91. Gollwitzer further points out that the difference here lies "between the Lutheran *est* and the Reformed 'however,'" a contrast precisely exemplified in the debate over the *communicatio idiomatum*.

¹²³ This is also the basic incoherence of Torrance's argument: recognizing that Barth's focus in trinitarian theology is on the *who* of revelation means allowing the object of theology to be recognized as the *subject* who addresses us, and means the relativizing of our a priori methodological and epistemological assumptions (*Persons in Communion*, 72-3), he still critiques Barth on the basis of his individualistic conceptions of subjectivity and address – but what else is this but an a priori assumption that language of the divine persons is so analogous to the language of human persons that "individualism" could become a

God's determination by history; but this is not Barth's question, which is simply to ask who it is that encounters us in history, and what the performance of that encounter entails for us. This is the function of actualism.

The Mystery Of Gratuity: Barth's Ethical Eternity

In this final section, my primary intention is to provide some precision regarding the importance of eschatology, and therefore the conception of eternity, that is crucial to my reading of Barth's pneumatology. This understanding of eternity has been central to the use of the *Übergang* as an eschatological category, which I have spoken of in terms of the Spirit as the "intensity" or "excess" of the history of Jesus. In addition, I intend to flesh out how this reading differs from the current polarity represented by McCormack's present position and that of his opponents (particularly Hunsinger and Molnar) on the crucial place of God's freedom. This twofold concern will also serve to point toward the thematics of the next chapter, in which the concern with Hegel that has subtended much of this dissertation will be made explicit. Ultimately, I argue here that understanding Barth's conception of eternity is crucial for understanding his trinitarian theology and his pneumatology, particularly insofar as his "revolutionary" doctrine of election sets the terms for how his theology is understood, and that at least part of the divide between Barthian "traditionalists" and "revisionists" rests on a misconstrual of this conception.

It is perhaps most helpful to begin with a brief look at the "traditionalist" side of contemporary Barth interpretation. The crux of the issue as represented by Hunsinger and

problem in the first place? Ultimately, Torrance's problem, like that of Gunton (cf. *ibid.*, 105-6), is that he cannot quite understand why Barth is not Zizioulas, with the latter's inexplicable compulsion to reduce theology to personalistic ontology (he more or less admits this on *ibid.*, 256). If the category of *Seinsweisen* "obscures the concept of communion in God," (115) then perhaps "communion in God" is being deployed in *petitio principii*.

Molnar, over against McCormack, concerns the freedom of God vis-à-vis the world; they have argued that if McCormack is right, the self-determination of God for humanity in election implies that the world becomes necessary for God. Instead, they point to Barth's clear insistence that God would be God without the world, that God is "antecedently" in Godself what God is in history, and Barth's distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity, a distinction that collapses in McCormack's reading. Molnar in particular has argued that the *logos asarkos* and a clear differentiation between Trinities economic and immanent is necessary to preserve the divine freedom: "For Barth, God exists eternally as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and would so exist even if there had been no creation, reconciliation or redemption. Thus, the order between election and triunity cannot be logically reversed without in fact making creation, reconciliation and redemption necessary to God."¹²⁴ Hunsinger likewise adduces Barthian texts to confirm that "Barth says repeatedly throughout his career that God would be the Holy Trinity whether the world had been created or not."¹²⁵ In addition, Hunsinger alleges that, Barth's "Hegeling" aside, "the logical and ontological priority of the Holy Trinity, as eternally perfect and complete in itself, over against the primal decision of election, was essential to Barth's strategy for avoiding Hegel's errors."¹²⁶

There are, of course, complexities to both Molnar's and (particularly) Hunsinger's positions. Both speak to the matter of the *Logos asarkos* and the relationship of act and being in some detail; but it is immediately evident that the heart of the matter in the

¹²⁴ *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity*, 63. He goes on to state that "the covenant of grace is a covenant of *grace* because it expresses the free overflow of God's eternal love that takes place in pre-temporal eternity as the Father begets the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit." For Molnar, preserving God's freedom preserves room for God "to be God in a new way as God for us."

¹²⁵ "Election and the Trinity," 181; this is thesis 4, and cites texts from *CD* 1/1 to 4/1.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 190 (thesis 12).

debate is over the status of a counterfactual: whether God's freedom (all sides admit God is free) implies the veracity of the statement, "God could have done otherwise than creating and/or redeeming the world insofar as God is eternally perfect and complete in Godself." McCormack, for his part, argues repeatedly that God is indeed free for Barth, and that the latter does not commit the Hegelian error of making God's relationship to the world *necessary* because God's self-determination for humanity from eternity is undertaken freely; God gives Godself God's trinitarian essence in freely determining to be for humanity and history.¹²⁷ To say otherwise, for McCormack, is to engage in speculation and submit to the abstraction from the particularity of Christ that Barth's actualistic ontology is designed to circumvent.¹²⁸

At least one crucial locus of the debate, then, lies in the question as to whether God remains freely and eternally God if the incarnation, and thus the history and world in which the incarnation takes place, is made determinative of God's essence. Both sides are predicated on a common assumption, namely that God's freedom lies in God's capacity "to do otherwise" historically in light of God's eternity.¹²⁹ Answering this question, however, requires a detour, not least because the consideration of Hegel in the next chapter will be needed to gain clarity on it. Here, on the other hand, I will discuss the conception of eternity at play; this is because the way in which divine freedom vis-à-vis

¹²⁷ See, e.g., "Grace and Being," 190-1; Adam Eitel has followed McCormack and (fittingly) gone beyond him in arguing outright for the congruence between Barth's handling of election and the Hegelian becoming of the divine in relationship with the world in "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: Karl Barth and the Historicization of God's Being," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 1 (Jan. 2008), 36-53. Kevin Hector's judgment is that, for Barth, the world must be "contingently necessary," in "God's Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 3 (July 2005), 246-61.

¹²⁸ "Seek God," 76.

¹²⁹ A clarification is important here: McCormack and the "revisionists" argue (rightly) that God's freedom is a freedom *for the world*, not an indeterminate arbitrary freedom *from*. Nevertheless, as far as I have been able to determine they all concede the traditionalist counterfactual; and at any rate, at heart McCormack's position *must* be an arbitrary voluntarism inherent in that capacity to self-determine, which I have already argued and will discuss further in ch. 6.

the world is articulated is a function of the relationship between the economic and immanent Trinity – between God’s historical act and eternal being. Thus, is God perfect and complete from eternity, prior to God’s decision to enter history in Jesus Christ (traditionalism)? Or, did God determine Godself from eternity to “become” historically in the incarnation, such that God’s eternal being as Trinity is a function of that self-determination (revisionism)?

What I would like to suggest here is that both sides understand time and eternity antagonistically in a way that Barth does not. Both suppose that time and history are something God comes to from without; and both seem to imagine eternity as some form of pre-temporality.¹³⁰ Both, that is, operate on the basis of a spatial metaphor for the relation of time and eternity, as if they were distinct spheres or alien elements that require the adaptation of a divine essence whose *difference* from the world were a *distance* from the world. Traditionalists maintain that God cannot undergo change, and are therefore left open to the charge of arbitrariness by revisionists: there is no way to posit a real and integral relationship between God’s being in revelation and God’s eternal being, in that God cannot truly step outside of Godself and into the event of history to self-disclose. Revisionists, on the other hand, argue that the historical event of the incarnation is so

¹³⁰ On this, cf. Bruce Marshall’s review of Richard Roberts’s “A Theology on Its Way? Essays on Karl Barth,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 44, no. 1 (April 1993): “Roberts supposes that for Barth God’s eternity and the time we actually inhabit are opposites; this assumption underwrites his alternating criticisms that in the Church Dogmatics God’s eternity either keeps him from making contact with time, or allows God to be temporal only by including a peculiar sort of time which is not our own...As an attribute of his freedom, God’s eternity is not his opposition to mundane time, but his transcendence of the opposition between time and timelessness” (458). Marshall’s response is germane to all attempts, such as that of Torrance (who approvingly quotes this review, *Persons in Communion*, 64 n12), or indeed, McCormack, to assess Barth’s thought at the level of ontology: “Barth denies that his theology has, or ought to have, any abstract conceptual or general ontological key. All the ontological concepts used in theology - explicitly including those of eternity and time - get their proper and decisive sense, he argues, from the narratives which identify Jesus, and not the reverse.” Marshall rightly notes that Roberts’s desire for an “immanent starting point” amenable to the “cultural *Sitz im Leben* of the theologian” is simply another cry for natural theology, and its susceptibility to ideology.

“taken up into the life of God” that it is determinative of God’s essence to be what it is that it inhabits history at a particular time and place. Even given the protestation that this is a free decision by God, revisionists are left open to the charge that the world has become necessary to God.

This is perhaps clearest when talk begins regarding the *logos asarkos*, which tends to be couched about the state of the *Logos before* his incarnation. But the way in which Barth understands eternity is not a pre-temporal state from which God emerges to intersect history on God’s way to a post-temporal future. On any coherent conception of the eternal, it is strictly speaking a senseless proposition to ask about a “before.” There is, of course, a historical moment *before* the incarnation (from our perspective), but it does not follow that this is the case for God’s eternity, for whatever one means by eternity, all points in time must be simultaneous to it. There is no *before* the incarnation, nor is there a way in which God has self-determined for humanity in any sense that implies a prior or posterior state to that determination. If we are to adequately address the way in which God’s self-giving in history correlates with God’s eternal nature, we will have to incorporate some kind of grammar that is not temporally structured, or change the structure thereof. And this is just what Barth does.

Hunsinger describes Barth’s understanding of eternity as determined by his trinitarian theology, and this is clearly correct. However, I would argue that the trinitarian presuppositions Hunsinger deploys to articulate that doctrine of eternity are fallacious. He discusses these presuppositions in terms of the “grammar of *perichoresis*,” which correlates the mutual inhabitation of the three hypostases with the “three temporal forms of eternity – beginning, middle, and end” that coexist with “mutual unity-in-distinction

and distinction-in-unity.”¹³¹ *Pace* the traditional notion of eternity as *nunc stans*, eternity is a trinitarian notion of the “unique time of the triune God...the time of God’s self-identity, self-differentiation, and self-unification.”¹³² Because the trinitarian life of God is a dynamic life in relation, so eternity takes on the perfection of a perichoretic trinitarian life, argued Hunsinger. This is a particular mode of temporality, and because God has this kind of trinitarian eternal time, God can have creaturely time, grounded in the fact that God is pretemporal, supratemporal, and posttemporal in Godself as Trinity.

Barth does indeed talk with some regularity about a trinitarian basis of his understanding of eternity; the eternal life of God is a life in movement insofar as that life is eternally constituted in begetting, being begotten, and procession. Indeed, Barth at times explicitly uses the language Hunsinger invokes to describe that trinitarian life.¹³³ But this pattern of argument arises primarily in *CD 2/1*, which I earlier identified as a period when the Hegelian tendency in Barth’s trinitarianism is particularly strong; indeed, it exactly follows the pattern of argument we saw in Barth’s theological epistemology whereby knowledge of God is grounded in God’s self-reflexive self-knowledge. But the more explicitly Augustinian conception of eternity that Barth uses to articulate the eschatology of *CD 4* is oriented around his ethical understanding of simplicity and mystery. Simplicity and eternity, even in *CD 2/1*, are for Barth that by which God is undividedly Godself, seen above all in the love by which humanity understands itself to be claimed by the utterly unique self-giving of God which is identical to Jesus Christ.¹³⁴ But if simplicity is a characteristic of the singularity of the act of self-donation, then it is

¹³¹ “*Mysterium Trinitatis: Karl Barth’s Conception of Eternity*,” in *Disruptive Grace*, 198.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 199.

¹³³ Namely, pretemporality, supratemporality, and posttemporality; *CD 2/1*, 619.

¹³⁴ See esp. *CD 2/1*, 445-50. This is what Barth means when he quotes Boethius’s *Aeternitas est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio* in his discussion of eternity; *ibid.*, 610.

identical to the mystery of God that is the unfathomable depth of an essence that is wholly its act of self-bestowing. In the mature development of Barth's dialectic of revelation, this mystery is that of Christ's history as the eschatological act of God, the *Urgeschichte* that is the center and meaning of all history. The hiddenness of God is the hiddenness of God's yes, which only appears as an event, not a state, insofar as it is an irruption into the ambiguity of our history – “not yet a steady, all-embracing and all-pervasive light.”¹³⁵ It is in these terms, indeed, that justification is configured by Barth as the judgment of God by which the present becomes a transition – an *Übergang* – between past and future, sin and redemption, a division which cuts across the being of humanity:

The work of the dividing of man on the left hand and the right [is] the putting into effect of a history in which the man on the left hand is the Whence and the man on the right hand the Whither of the one man, the former being this man as he was and still is, the latter being this man as he will be and to that extent already is. The truth of human life under the control of the righteousness of God and therefore of His grace is not a being divided into two, but something which it is impossible to consider, which can only be lived by the passive and active participant, the drama of the one human life in its dynamic sequence and co-relation.¹³⁶

Time itself takes on an actualistic, ethical character – one might even say, an existential one – whereby every moment is simultaneously the whence and the whither: the moment of judgment and decision, the correspondence to and participation in our *wirklich* being in Jesus Christ or the impossible possibility of living as if our *wirklich* being were not hidden in Jesus Christ.¹³⁷ The eternal is the intersection of human life at every moment with the fullness of the eschaton as one of judgment and decision. Time is “actualized,” made pregnant with the call to an act; it takes on an ethical character, in that God's very

¹³⁵ *CD* 4/2, 286.

¹³⁶ *CD* 4/1, 543-4.

¹³⁷ It is to be noticed how dramatically this differs from the rather crude literalization this idea undergoes in Robert Jenson's thought, which maps the trinitarian hypostases directly onto the “arrows of time.”

nature is purely ethical – purely love, purely act, purely an act of love whose essence is to bestow life. Thus every moment is a transition, the pneumatological *Übergang* that is a passage from Christ to us, Christ’s history inhabiting and bearing up our history. The Spirit is the eschatological act by which we are made contemporaneous with the history of Jesus, which history is the eternity of God.¹³⁸

The coherence with the very early theology of *Krisis* in the *Römerbrief* will be evident here; what has changed, however, is not that Barth has worked out the trinitarian character that provides a ground for a “stable” analogy between trinitarian life and temporal history, but rather the enclosure of the dialectic of revelation in Barth’s Christology.¹³⁹ The former, to be sure, constitutes a direction Barth’s thought explores between *CD* 2/1 and 4/1; but as the preceding argument has shown, it is the latter tendency that emerges most dominant by *CD* 4/2 and 4/3. It is in this latter, christological, context that the other categories I have mentioned become intelligible. By

¹³⁸ Roberts’s utter failure to see this lies at the heart of his description of a “profound theological totalitarianism” and “tortuous ontological double-bind” (“Barth’s Doctrine of Time,” 144, 190) in Barth’s Docetic isolation of God’s act in an eternity isolated from time, the transcendence from which constitutes an erasure. At heart, Roberts reads Barth’s Hegelian tendencies as winning out: the contradiction of eternity and time is sublated in the inclusion and therefore annihilation of the latter by the former. When I have criticized Barth’s Hegelianism in this chapter, it is precisely this problem I have had in view as well; but as I have attempted to show, a wholly different logic of christological self-donation and pneumatological participation wins out by the end of *CD*.

¹³⁹ Here lies my disagreement with the cogent argument of Kerr’s important book *Christ, History and Apocalyptic*, 63-92, who regards Barth’s actualism as an ontological framework by which history is externally determined by the intratriune duration of God’s eternity; similarly to Roberts, the eternal *Urgeschichte* remains locked in God’s triune life, with history remaining merely a simulacrum and secondary representation of that eternal reality. In this scheme, inspired by a residual Hegelianism, Christ is the concrete universal that mediates particular and universal (to his credit, Kerr sees the problem construing mediation in this way poses, whereas McCormack openly affirms Christ as concrete universal – see “Karl Barth’s Historicized Christology,” 224 n55). Against Kerr, I will observe that, while we must allow for real tension in Barth’s thought, his articulation of pneumatological participation in revelation and reconciliation, and his understanding in *CD* 2/2 of the historicity of Jesus Christ as itself *Urgeschichte* and therefore the content of the eternal life of God, makes the Hegelian problem looks rather different. I wish to acknowledge the influence of Kerr’s book on my own thoughts regarding eschatology here; my use of the notion of the “excess” throughout these chapters on Barth owes a debt to Kerr’s reading of Benjamin. I am grateful to Natalie Wigg-Stevenson for reminding me of the Benjaminian provenance of this category.

reading the dialectic of revelation as the speculative grammar of the relationship of divine and human in the hypostatic union by way of the an/enhypostatic articulation of their asymmetry, Barth has made the person of Jesus the measure of the eternity. This means that the human history of Jesus is *Urgeschichte*, the “primal history” that is the peculiar kind of temporality God’s eternity has. The controlling category here is not temporality – this is not the existentialism of the early Barth, and the “moment” should not be understood in a punctiliar sense, as if this implied that eternal life is a fragmented and occasionalistic reality. Rather, this posits eternity in terms of Barth’s eschatology of the *Übergang*, such that the “transition” from Christ’s history to ours has to do with the character or direction, the *Weisung*, of our act as a correspondence to that history. Eternity is the ethical content of God’s transcendence, for we approach God in terms of the correspondence of our “affections,” by a determination of our will that participates in God’s self-giving good; in Augustinian language, *Weisung* and *Entsprechung* are a matter of orientation and disposition. *Every* moment is the ethical moment; it is a question whether we act in correspondence with that ethical quality, or act as if our humanity were not already ascended and hidden with Christ in God.¹⁴⁰ Just as God is present in full at every point in the universe, so God is present in full at every moment in time: this is the meaning of divine eternity, and it is determined by the fact that that presence in time is a correspondence to the history of Jesus Christ. For that history, and thus that eternity, is the act of a subject who is the subject of our histories in the Holy Spirit.

¹⁴⁰ To clarify: this does not (necessarily) entail a voluntarism, or, as Mangina argues (citing Hauerwas), an “ethical occasionalism;” it is simply to point to the singularity and unrepresentability of the ethical act in Barth’s thought – knowledge is *performed*, and an emphasis on virtue, habitus, and (thus) created grace would be a fundamentally alien element in Barth’s thought. This is not to deny the continuity in the ethical subject, or to avoid the question of “character” – it is simply to refuse an anthropocentric ground for that character. See *Barth on the Christian Life*, 167 and more broadly, 165-98. Cf. Neder, *Participation in Christ*, 114 n40.

For Barth, as for Augustine, we have to stop misunderstanding eternity and time the same way we do transcendence and immanence: namely, as oppositional terms, as mutually exclusive categories that operate at the same level of discourse; rather, in both cases the former terms are the condition of possibility of the latter, and are the *excess* or *intensity* of the latter. The present moment in Barth is the moment of judgment and justification, the moment of *transition* from human history to the eschatological gift of the Spirit that is the participation in the history of Jesus, that has the character of an act – nothing more and nothing less – of correspondence to that history. While Barth has shifted the speculative logic of that correspondence from a subjective-objective relationship between Christ and Spirit, to one of primary and secondary objectivity, to one characterized simply in terms of the *totus christus*, it is the constant trajectory of his thought that the Spirit is the act of God in Christ and the *transition* to human history that is the excess of that act, the possibility of every historical moment participating in that act. This is the mystery of revelation – the presence of eternity in the encounter with a crucified criminal who lived in the first century.

The significance of a Barthian understanding of eternity as *ethical* is that it characterizes eternity as a matter of the perfection of our love. Just as the self-giving of God is the human person of Jesus in his fidelity to the Father, so the form the agency of God takes in revelation is *our own act*. The gift of God is the gift of freedom and grace to act in correspondence to God, who is transcendent to us by the perfection of God's love; revelation is a self-giving that is the gift of a grace identical to the ethical act that acts beyond its capacity. The gift of God is only known insofar as it gives rise to a corresponding act; we *know* God in *performing* the mystery of God's self-giving. It is this

dialectical reality, which is the aporetic of self-involvement, that is the reality of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROBLEM OF TRINITARIAN ONTOLOGY AND THE ETHICS OF GRATUITY AFTER HEGEL

God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:5

Your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3

You...were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people.

Ephesians 1:13-14

The preceding four chapters have traced the contours of a pneumatology of the ethical performance of participation in Christ in Augustine and Barth, with close attention, so far as was possible, to the integrity of each theologian's thought. I have not attempted anything like a comparative venture between these two thinkers; instead, this dissertation is a constructive attempt to think *with* Augustine and Barth, allowing their thought to interpenetrate and mutually enlighten. In this final chapter, I have two tasks: first, to bring this implicit pullulation to a more explicit comparison and synthesis; and second, to take up the major alternative to Augustinian trinitarianism that surfaces in Barth's thought, namely, Hegel. Indeed, Hegel's importance is far broader than simply as an influence on Barth; as I will show shortly, the same limitations that show up in Barth's Hegelian tendencies more fundamentally subtend much of the contemporary trinitarian thought discussed in ch. 1.

The major theme that concerns this chapter is the relationship of Christology and mediation in trinitarian theology. This relationship is vital for understanding the function of pneumatology, for I have argued that both Augustine and Barth think of pneumatology as an inherently self-involving, performative discourse that concerns the imbrication of Christology, anthropology and ecclesiology. It is where one theologically renders an account of participation in Christ, and both follow the advance made at Nicaea in repudiating any kind of mediating term between the divine act of self-giving and the human reception of that act, which means, indeed, to think of human reception as assumed *within* that act. The perennial Christian temptation is to think of Christ as just such a mediation, a *tertium quid* that stands halfway between the infinite and the finite. The problem with the indelible Arianisms of Christian thought, which always betray themselves in succumbing to this temptation, is that the very reality of participation in the divine is negated. We can no longer claim that, in participating in *Christ*, we are participating in *God*; nor can we claim that, in assuming flesh, God is assuming *us*. The integrity both of God's act and our reception is fatally compromised.

This temptation is rendered stubbornly recalcitrant in Christian theology because it is an attempt to represent what is finally unrepresentable in thought: the reality of our participation in Christ and our knowledge of God, inasmuch as both that participation and that knowledge are *the work of God*. As Barth never tired of repeating, revelation and reconciliation *happens*: it takes place and is an event of contemporaneity with Christ, and occurs insofar as we acknowledge, receive and confess it as a reality that occurs only on its own terms. What he early derided as the "peace of the *analogia entis*" is any attempt to reduce that act to something resident in being as such, some stable relationship and

connection between God and humanity that is available on human terms, something one can appropriate, reject, or remain neutral toward as one more item encountered in the world of one's own agency. Rendering such an equanimous concord between eternity and time is not the function of Christology; rather, it is the signifier for the stark paradox that in a crucified criminal from the early decades of the Common Era we encounter the definitive act of God in history, and that *act* is *enacted* in a correspondence on our part. That correspondence, too, *is* that act of God, and we call that act the Holy Spirit. Arianisms are all too ready to ease this dialectical tension by allowing the eternal act of God to stand somewhere safely behind the person of Jesus Christ, all the while making this person something less than fully one of us. An object of wonder and spectacle, perhaps, a model for emulation; but certainly not the eternal mystery of God hidden in the face of one of our fellows.

Augustine and Barth on a Pneumatology of Christian Knowledge

The indissoluble link just discussed between trinitarian self-giving and human deification, between Christology and human participation *in* Christ, which is pneumatology, provides the guiding motif of this section. I have suggested in my discussion of both Barth and Augustine that the rejection of mediation in Christology is the place in their thought where available metaphysical resources were simultaneously employed and altered, even displaced. Augustine's Neoplatonism, which provides him with the all-important notion of divine simplicity and his illuminationist metaphysics of the eternal ideas, stops short before the "Word made flesh;" and in the course of accounting, pneumatologically, for our participation in the Word, the Plotinian mystical

ascent is radically altered by being recontextualized as a christological *descent*. Likewise, Barth's Hegelianism provides him with a way of describing the nature of reality in fundamentally historical, actualistic ways, and allows him to account for God's act as that of a *subject* who encounters us; but by locating the dialectic of revelation in Christ, he immediately accounts for the divine act and human participation as a history of a human subject and unhinges its metaphysical hubris. However, both Augustine and Barth, just at this point of displacement, still remain constrained by their metaphysical assumptions, and at this point can usefully correct one another.

A mutual correction

It is perhaps easiest to begin with Barth's correction of Augustine, although in the end it is less drastic. As observed in ch. 4,¹ Barth finds a latent Pelagianism and a precursor of Przywara's *analogia entis* in Augustine. The basic problem is that, in a Platonist metaphysics of illumination, the mind by virtue of its nature is participant in the good; Augustine corrects this with a strong emphasis on the sinfulness and finitude of the human mind, the need to "philosophize with a Mediator," but a slippage still remains by virtue of which access to God might plausibly occur without the benefit of divine revelation. The problem is sharpest in Augustine's articulation of the *imago dei*: the fact that the mimetic image is only enacted in the participatory image still leaves the former autonomously (though potentially) in likeness to God.² In the *vestigia*, Barth argued, the

¹ See above, p. 156, esp. n35 for a brief discussion of Barth's *The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life*.

² So Barth's criticisms of the *vestigia trinitatis* in *CD 1/1*; unlike later readers of Barth who worried that Augustine's "psychological analogy" was too *psychological*, Barth was worried that it was an *analogy*. His concern was not with the appropriateness of psychological analogs to the Trinity, but rather with the inability of any analogy to attend to "the indissoluble unity and the indestructible distinction of the three elements," *CD 1/1*, 374.

laudable intent to “explain the world by the Trinity in order to be able to speak about the Trinity in this world” had the opposite result: the language of the world became determinative of the language of revelation.³ This is the precise structure of natural theology for Barth, with all its ideological susceptibility, and furthermore was premised on the same *analogia entis* he feared in Augustine’s doctrine of grace.⁴

I have argued extensively that the mimetic analogy in Augustine is actualized only in the performance of participation, and that criticisms of Augustine’s “psychological analogy” that presume it to be some kind of exemplarist scheme for comprehending the trinitarian relations miss his point altogether. If the human person is *imago dei*, this is only insofar as her act of faith and charity participates in God’s own act of self-giving by the outpouring of the Spirit. But Barth’s problem is different, and it applies far more directly to contemporary trinitarians than it does to Augustine proper: positing some kind of analogical relationship between persons divine and human presumes a continuity of being between them in which (to recall his criticism of the *communicatio idiomatum*) the door is opened to wander right away from Christology.

Indeed, the real crux between Augustine and Barth is christological. It is here where Barth does register a definitive correction against the bishop of Hippo, concerning the way with which each theologian’s Christology contextualizes the relationship of time and eternity. In my reading of Augustine, I pointed to the radical implications of

³ CD I/1, 341. The reversal is the difference between interpretation and illustration, between “saying the same thing in other words” vs. “saying the same thing *in other words*,” *ibid.*, 345. The problem with the *vestigia* is that they are an abstraction from the biblical language of revelation, and such abstractions, in themselves innocent, are the failure to allow revelation to speak for and authenticate itself.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 334; this is a trespass insofar as it is an attempt to speak the language of revelation apart from the miraculous event of faith. A “general anthropology” or “ontology” within “a greater nexus of being” (36-7) need not posit such an analogical structure as the *basis* of an understanding of revelation; that such a nexus be posited at all, even subsequent to revelation, is already for Barth a capitulation to the analogy of being and to natural theology.

Augustine's claim that the eternal *sapientia* of God – that ontological realm composed of the eternal, immutable ideas, of the Good itself – was identical to the crucified man Jesus Christ; the eternal self-expression of God, the Logos, is united with a human being, which means that the ascent to God has already taken place in this human being. However, the implications here remain implications: eternity is decisively manifest in Jesus Christ, but Augustine cannot say, as does Barth, that eternity, *Urgeschichte*, is in fact identical to the determination of God for the incarnation and history of the man Jesus Christ; he cannot say that the human Jesus Christ is the *subject* of God's electing and reconciling act. Augustine will say that the Word became flesh because the Word is already the eternal self-manifestation of God; he cannot say, as does Barth, that that enfleshed self-manifestation is the totality without remainder of our knowledge of God. And this is finally the crux of the issue between the two thinkers, for the richness of Augustine's category of *memoria* is also its flaw; if the mind is always already participant in the Good itself, even if only potentially, is it not the case that there is some reserve in the being of God other than what we encounter in the flesh and face of Jesus Christ? This is Barth's concern, and this is Barth's radical correction against Augustine.

However, Augustine has a riposte against Barth at this point. One of the leading themes of my reading of Barth concerned Barth's own equivocation on the point just named, and here he has not fully learned from Augustine. For Augustine's advance in Pro-Nicene theology, encapsulated in his formulation of substantial and relative predications in *Trin.* 5-7, is governed by a strict grasp of the significance of divine simplicity. In Anselm's later formulation of Augustine's logic, everything is said of the divine substance in common except what is predicated by way of relation: except insofar

as the Son is Wisdom, or the Spirit Love, as Wisdom from Wisdom or Love from Love, the divine essence (which is nothing but the subsistent relations, Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is one and singular in its act of self-giving. The gain to this move is to slash the lifeline to any form of Arianism, for it guarantees that the Father, Son and Spirit are identically God. But this implies that Father and Son do not relate to one another as subject and object, which would differentiate God's knowledge from God's being, and this would imply that God related to Godself, in some degree, mediately – that God would in truth be the mediation of this relation, which in turn implies that there are parts of God non-identical to other parts of God. It is here that Barth falls short, for he cannot resist at times giving place to Hegel, and inscribing the dialectic of affirmation and negation in the Godhead itself – most notably in the master and slave hierarchical pattern that legitimates both the misogyny of *CD* 3 and the “eternal obedience” of 4/1.

The problem here is twofold. Introducing a moment of negation, a self-relation that simultaneously posits a distance of God from Godself and locates this relation anterior to God's self-giving in the economy, is exactly the pattern of *Urgeschichte* for which Barth's critics have criticized him: history and economy, indeed, the person of Jesus Christ (the precise area of Barth's great gain!) become a simple simulacrum of an eternal history and relation forever inaccessible to us who sojourn in the region of dissimilarity. Ironically, Barth's own advance against Augustine is undermined by the precise metaphysical resource (Hegel) that makes that advance possible; and Augustine's Neoplatonism, which lies behind his most significant flaw, is also his resource for thinking the singularity of God's self-giving in a way that Barth fumbles.

The site of this disagreement resides, in no small part, in the incomplete way with which both theologians handle the question of mediation that I have already alluded to. This is a subject I will take up in the next section, in a discussion of Hegel and an argument that a trinitarian adoption of Hegel, as is found piecemeal in Barth and more wholesale in many post-Barthians, is fatally flawed. This point, however, rests on clarifying the trinitarian logic that Augustine's theology makes possible, and which underlies Barth's best insight. This concerns what, precisely, it means to talk of trinitarian theology as the discourse of the singularity of God's self-giving in Christ.

The trinitarian logic of mission in Augustine and Barth

In this section, I want to offer a sketch of the trinitarian logic made possible by Augustine and Barth, which has learned from both Augustine's insight into the necessity of simplicity and from Barth's christological reorientation; subsequent to this, in following the pneumatological link of Christology and participation in Christ, I will discuss the aporetic of pneumatology proper. To frame this first theme, it is worthwhile to return to a problem observed in ch. 1 – namely, just how difficult it is (apparently) for modern trinitarianism to handle the relationship of the terms “God in Godself” and “God for us;” resident here is a difficulty in relating trinitarianism's function in a way that is not either a purely exemplarist scheme of analogy (God's self-relation of communion is a model for own relations of communion) *or* a process/Hegelian conception of the world as the mediating principle of God's historical becoming. On the one hand, the character of God's act in history is one of *superfluity*, an accidental occasion for what is essentially a purely idealistic relation to “God in Godself.” On the other, the God-world relation is one

of *necessity*, insofar as God's being is in becoming in God's other. Neither of these, I claimed, is a relation of *gratuity*, and I have been arguing that this relation of gratuity, which is identical to the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Spirit of participation in the Son, is only secured by a trinitarian conception in which the singularity of divine self-donation in Jesus Christ is both the material content of trinitarian doctrine as such, and that the corresponding doctrinal articulation of that act is a trinitarian "grammar" configured around God's eternal nature as self-donating good. This grammar is decisively stymied by a social-communion doctrine of the Trinity.

The crux of this matter lies in the vagary of that great myth of contemporary trinitarianism, the impersonal "fourth" that is reputed to lie behind the trinitarian subsistents in Augustine's and Barth's theologies, as the unity of the divine substance anterior to and privileged over the plurality of persons. My reading of Augustine has demonstrated the complete falsity of this charge, historically speaking; and I have argued that, in a rich irony, only a communion-oriented doctrine of the Trinity actually employs such a "fourth" in order to articulate the intelligibility of the divine act. In fact, this implicit dependence upon a "fourth" in the Trinity is a trait that is common to both detractors of Augustine like Gunton or Jenson, and to his defenders, such as Williams or Milbank. That this is the case is evident from the way the communion of the persons, or, in Williams and Milbank, the relation of Father and Son, is handled as a category such that it itself is understood to be agential and the term of human participation. To say that God's being is one constituted in communion – that God's unity is that of the communion of persons – is to say, correlatively, that to be a divine hypostasis is to participate *in* something, or to *communicate* something, which is more primordial than the hypostasis

itself. It is extraordinarily difficult to claim that “God is a loving communion of persons” without hypostatizing that “communion” as the real referent of the term “God,” of which the persons are mere instances.

Let us explicate this further. My reading of *Trin. 5-7* maintains that we should accept that the Anselmian axiom *in Deo omnia sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio* is an accurate dogmatic formula for Augustine’s contention that all predications about God concern the one divine essence, unless they are predications that concern the relations of origin of the subsistents. *Wisdom* applies to the divine substance, for wisdom is an absolute term; *Word* or *Image* or *Son* are relative terms, and therefore denote the second subsistent proper. But if we think of the unity, or nature or essence, of God as a communion of persons, as an economy of identity produced in the dialectic of Father and Son, then to say *God* really is to say something different than that the one divine essence subsists as the Father’s begetting of the Son and spirating of the Spirit *filioque*. It is to say something like the following: the Father and Son and Spirit are God insofar as they are participants in an event of communion, which is really distinct from them as the principle of their unity and deity. As I argued in the previous chapter, this equivocates because the divine essence self-causes by its differentiation in Father and Son, and unification in the Spirit. The divine essence here in fact functions as a fourth behind the trinitarian relations, an abstract negativity that (as we saw with McCormack) self-determines to exist as Father, Son and Spirit. Thus the problem of the “fourth” is a problem concerning a logic of the *production* of the deity attributable to a common divine essence that is *different* from the Father’s *begetting* of the Son: the becoming of the divine essence in communion is a process that is distinct from the begetting of the Son, which must return

into the divine essence by the Spirit to complete the infinite circularity of a self-referential *causa sui*. When Augustine rejected the over-literalization of the language of “person” or “hypostasis” for the trinitarian subsistents (as if they were three statues made of the same lump of gold), he rejected this problem, which differentiates between the essence of God that is produced in the relation of Father and Son through the Spirit, and the persons who are moments in that becoming. In the Augustinian reception of Pro-Nicene logic, *Deum de Deo...Deum verum de Deo vero* means that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are each in themselves God, all the while being God not without the others, nor constituting three Gods.⁵ The only way to preserve this Pro-Nicene grammar is to embrace the logic of *Trin. 5-7*.

It has to be remembered why these distinctions are important: to preserve the unity of substance of Father and Son such that, in Jesus Christ, we participate in the being of God without reserve; that the external unity of operations are indivisible (*opera trinitatis ad extra indivisa sunt*) means that the act of God in Jesus Christ is the act of God entire. But this axiom functions in correspondence with the Anselmian one just mentioned, which means *positively* that there is no essence of God other than that which subsists in those relations. The work of God *ad extra* is one, but this unitary work of God is constituted by its reference to the terms of the Trinitarian relations. In other words, the work of God *ad extra* is that work that occurs insofar as God speaks Godself in the Son, *Deum de Deo*. Just as God *is* the Father who begets the Son and spirates the Spirit with the Son, the God whose unity is one that inheres in the opposition of relations, so to act as God is to act by virtue of the fact that the character of that act is determined by the opposition of relations. For God’s being is God’s act, and vice versa. In other words, God

⁵ This is the formulation of the so-called Athanasian Creed.

acts insofar as God the Father eternally generates a Son who is Word and Image; but this means that God is eternally self-speaking, and there is no other act of God than that by which the Father speaks in the Son. For Augustine and the mature Barth, a strict correlation of procession and mission prevents this problem: the only distinction between procession and mission is that between an eternal self-speaking of God and the *knowing* of that speaking in time. God is always self-giving, although the created term of that giving is contingent, not necessary for that self-giving. To posit history as the necessary becoming of God would be to posit eternity as a *time* when the Son *was not*, or, to put the same thing differently, would confuse the one *work* of God *ad extra* with the generation of the Son *ad intra*. This is important for grasping Barth's doctrine of election: it does not require the necessity of the world for God, although there is no sense in which we can conceive God apart from God's determination for the world. God, who is eternal, has chosen to create and thus elect Godself for humanity from eternity. There is no going behind this election, because that would be to conceive something in God prior to the generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit.

Thus in the Augustinian logic of the Trinity, the Platonic notion of the Good as self-diffusive receives a decisive modification, for that self-diffusion occurs insofar as the divine essence speaks itself in the hypostasis of the Logos; in fact, it *is* the divine nature to speak itself eternally in the Logos. But what Barth can contribute to this point is to point out that this is only really meaningful, in Christian terms, if that Logos is identical to the person Jesus Christ; if that eternal self-speaking is the eternity of God identical to the history of the incarnation. To claim with Barth that the history of the incarnation is *Urgeschichte*, the primal history that is the secret of all history, and to claim that the

Logos is Jesus Christ, is to claim that the one work of God is that by which the self-giving of God is known in time. This is what it means for Barth to claim that Jesus Christ is *wirklich* humanity: the relation between God and humanity occurs in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. But it is also what Augustine meant when he characterized a divine mission as one of the trinitarian subsistents becoming known in time: God is eternally self-diffusive good, just because there is no temporal “prior” or “posterior” relative to the many, particular acts of acknowledgement of Son and Spirit as proceeding from the Father. Every such act of knowledge is the content of the eternity of God, and every such act of knowledge is the act of God.

This is the heart of the pneumatology I have been limning in this study of Barth and Augustine. If the Son is eternally Word, then he is eternally the self-communication of God, and he is eternally the principle of God’s self-knowing, but in a fundamentally different sense than is true of human knowing. A *verbum*, we recall, is the joining of *intelligentia* with the known object by the love of *dilectio*; but our knowing of the object is alienation from the object, argued Augustine, because the adventitious act of knowing says little about the nature of the knower in question. God’s knowing, however, is identical to God’s being, by virtue of divine simplicity. This has two consequences: first, as Aquinas would later formulate, *scientia Dei est causa rerum*: God’s knowledge of objects is the origin of their being, for in knowing an object God is knowing it insofar as God has created it, and *is* creating it. But, second, the reflex of this axiom is essential christologically: if, by virtue of divine simplicity, God’s knowing and God’s creating are identical because both are identical to God’s being, then God’s self-knowledge is identical to God’s being, an immediate knowledge that does not partake of the same

epistemic relation as obtains in creation. If it did, God's knowledge would be productive of God's being – God would be *self*-caused, rather than uncaused, the creator of Godself, God's knowledge being the ground of the production of a second and diverse moment in God's being. Thus, *ad intra*, Father and Son do not know one another as subject to object, and *ad extra*, God's knowledge of creation is God's *bestowal*, which means that the Son as the subsistent act of the divine self-speaking is the subsistent act of that bestowal. The Son is eternally what the medievals called the exemplar of creation: he is the one act of God by which creation comes into being, and in accordance with which creation is likened to its creator.

In correspondence to the logic of the *verbum*, the Spirit, for Augustine, is not a second act that runs parallel to the first, but the excess of that act that is the fullness of the life of God experienced in participation in the body of Christ: the Spirit is the gift of Father and Son. As a *verbum* is an inner word joined to its object by the “glue of love,” so God as eternally self-giving good takes the object of God's act of self-bestowal to Godself in the outpouring of the love of God. The Spirit is eternally the gift of God, but this does not imply the necessity of a term for that self-giving, just because it is the nature of God to overflow in goodness; but the Spirit is only *known* as gift in time, which means that the mission of the Spirit is the temporal form in which her eternal procession continually occurs. Likewise, the Son is eternally Word; but the Son is only known as the Word in time as Jesus Christ. But more importantly: if the mission of the Son is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, then the mission of the Spirit is the *knowing* of the Son as Jesus Christ in time. The mission of the Spirit is that by which the history of Jesus Christ is *Urgeschichte*, by which we are contemporaneous with Christ and therefore, by which

Jesus Christ is *wirklich* humanity – that act by which God acts for and in all history. This is a pneumatological reality, the excess of the already-gratuitous self-giving of God. The Son is Word and Act of reconciliation of the Father, his human history being *itself* an act of self-giving. In a rigorously christological dialectic of revelation, the singular act of God is articulated in the form of a human history, and the Son’s relationship with the Father is the Son’s assumption of humanity in himself as *totus christus* enacted in the pneumatological correspondence of that humanity.

The performance of participation in Christ and the aporia of the Spirit

The preceding section has outlined the christologically-oriented logic of trinitarian self-giving, as understood in terms of the mission of Son and Spirit, in Augustine and Barth. In this section, I want to relate this to the underlying grammar of trinitarian theology: deifying participation in Christ. The Spirit is the power of Jesus Christ by which the act of the Son in Christ is its own knowability and historicity, the *intensity* of the encounter with the risen Christ in history. To talk about participation in Christ, therefore, is to talk about the way the life of the human subject is oriented in correspondence to the life of God. That correspondence is why, in this dissertation, I have argued that Augustine and Barth together offer a “pneumatology of Christian knowledge” that is fundamentally *aporetic* and *performative*, or rather, is the aporetic of performance. This is so because both conceive the Holy Spirit as the gift of God by which we know God, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by which we, as ethical subjects in our orientation toward the good of God’s self-giving, correspond to and participate in God. Knowledge of God is a *performance* of the life of God, partaking in the nature of God’s

being, a self-diffusive good of love. Thus when Barth focuses his trinitarian exposition on the problem of revelation's knowability in *CD* 1/1, the last thing he is concerned with his epistemic matters – he has the logic of grace in mind; he is following the same path as Augustine in understanding our relation with God as a transformative enactment of response, of a “knowing” that takes the form of an ethical response. The grammar of this enactment is aporetic just because it is the enactment of grace, the act of God known only insofar as one performs that act, an act that transcends one's own by indwelling it in deepest intimacy. The knowledge of God takes the form of a self-knowledge that is closer to me than myself. This is a participation in the self-donation of God in Christ, and it is what deification looks like in an Augustinian logic of grace.

This aporia and dialectic is the sphere of pneumatology. The claim of this dissertation could, perhaps, be summarized in the claim that the person and work of the Holy Spirit is only intelligible in the context of an Augustinian doctrine of grace; that I have argued this without any real discussion of Augustine's labors over that doctrine against the Pelagians is due to the fact that that doctrine is itself one step removed from that discourse that is Christian theology degree zero – Christology. Everything that is to be said about God, and about ourselves in reference to God (thus, about ourselves as such), is to be said concerning Jesus Christ, including that sphere of discourse that we call “pneumatology.” This explains the statement that Jesus Christ is the *material content* of trinitarian doctrine. Trinitarian doctrine has but one purpose, which is to provide the grammar of our deification, or put differently, the antecedent logic of our participation in God in the whole Christ. The doctrine of the Trinity articulates the way in which that participation is the work of God: God acting in our *response* to God's act of self-giving.

Thus it has two moments: the identity in being of Jesus Christ with the Father, and the character of the act of God in Jesus Christ as grace. Because the Trinity is the concept that substantiates the antecedent logic of primary-level Christian discourses of Christology and grace, it is simultaneously referentially identical and semantically distinct from those doctrines. Indeed, as both Barth and Augustine saw in their different ways, these two discursive domains are the same: because Jesus Christ is *wirklich* humanity, Christology already describes both divine self-giving in grace and human reception of that grace in the person of Jesus Christ. The fundamental asymmetry inherent to the dialectic of God's act in Jesus Christ is the fundamental asymmetry that obtains in the encounter of God and human as such. It is only insofar as participation in God is wholly God's act that it ever becomes our own proper (empowered) act.

All this immediately needs qualification: I am not claiming, and it is far from obvious to my mind that Barth would claim, that every theological statement is to be translated into one concerning Jesus Christ. This has been the trend in readers of Barth, particularly Lutheran-leaning ones, from the beginning; but it is a particular kind of reductionism, even demythologization, that is evident in the misunderstanding of Barth's logic of antecedence – as if *formal* talk about “revelation” in *CD* 1/1 were not *materially* talk about Jesus Christ, even as it retains integrity in its own proper discursive register. Every theological statement is referred to its concrete and actual relationship to the Word in Jesus Christ – predications concerning the work and nature of God have their criteria of intelligibility and their ultimate *referent* in discourse about Jesus Christ, even as the register of theological discourse varies widely. This is a significant point, for once it is understood that pneumatology is ultimately referred to Jesus Christ and our participation

in him (which participation is in fact componential to Jesus Christ's person), even as it operates at a different register, one at a certain remove of inference, implication and synthesis, we lose the temptation to assume that "christocentrism" precludes a suitably "robust" pneumatology. Christology and pneumatology are not in competition, because they do not operate at the same level of theological discourse; the stronger one's Christology, the stronger one's pneumatology. Pneumatology does not concern a second sphere of reasoning concerning a second work of God alongside that which concerns Christology, for there is one work of God, that which takes its meaning and basis in Jesus Christ. Pneumatology is that theological site where various theological loci – Christology, ecclesiology, anthropology, God, sin and grace – converge in a "metadoctrine" that centers their unity in the construction of an ethical, graced and deified subjectivity. Pneumatology is not an autonomous sphere of Christian discourse and logic; it is that speech that concerns that discourse and logic insofar as it is *enacted*.

This differentiation of theological registers has a further implication. If contemporary trinitarians tend to assume that Christology and pneumatology operate univocally (and thus competitively), they also tend to assume that ascriptions that concern the *unity* of God, and those that concern the *threeness* of God, likewise operate on the same level of logic, which entails that one's trinitarian "model" operates on a continuum of emphasis upon one or another of these poles.⁶ But trinitarian theology is not a Faustian exercise in delicately balancing sufficient emphasis upon "oneness" or "threeness," or in privileging one or the other as a methodological "starting point." The problem lies, again, in the confusion of reference and register. Substantial and relative

⁶ It also entails that judgments about a theologian's trinitarian doctrine can be made about that doctrine's adequacy at the aesthetic level of sufficient "emphasis" on one or another pole, rather than at the somewhat less affective level of intelligibility and coherence.

(or, Thomistically, essential and notional) statements do different kinds of work and concern different modes of description of God in God's work. The unity of God is that of an act, for God's being *is* an act of self-diffusive love in Jesus Christ, and the character of that act has reference to those relations by which that act subsists eternally *as* a self-donation that already is the assumption of the donee. This is why the differentiation of ascriptions *ad extra* and *ad intra* do not concern an entity whose homogenous exterior conceals an internal differentiation that stands in more or less accidental relationship to that homogenous whole; rather, they have to do with the character of an act with reference to its term – the elevation of the world to deifying participation in God – and to its origin – the character of that elevation as a self-speaking of God. Here is where Barth's logic of antecedence is important: the trinitarian life of God is not something different than the incarnation of Jesus Christ, as if it were something "behind" the incarnation rendering the latter meretricious; rather, it is simply what *must be the case* in God's eternal nature if God is indeed to be incarnate in the human Jesus.

Pneumatology, therefore, is simply an extension of that logic, for it concerns the fact that our act of participation in Christ is of precisely the same eternal origin and nature as is the person of Jesus Christ himself. But it is *our* response. It is inherent to pneumatology that it concerns the *deification* of the human subject. The term "subject" has been used deliberately (if anachronistically), for it concerns the human person as agent of its act and as self-reflexive with respect to that act. The consequence of the Augustinian logic of grace is that the gift of the Spirit as the love of God poured out within our hearts is a conceiving of the agency of God, and the agency of humanity, both in their integrity. God's act *is* the empowering life of the subject's act, and this is

precisely a thinking of the Spirit. But this is a thinking of something that cannot be thought, for it concerns a love only known as a performance of a prior gift of grace. What emerges from Augustine's incorporation of the logic of grace and the aporetic of self-involvement in *Trin.* is the construction of a subject whose performance is predicated upon a prior and prevenient act of God's self-giving. It is in performing the ascent to God that we encounter God's descent in Christ as the basis of that act and as the outpouring of the love of God in our hearts. To call this deification is to say that the graced subject is one whose agency is a partaking of the divine essence, even as it is wholly and without reserve that subject's own agency. And insofar as God's transcendence is one of affections, of the quality of God's love, the nature of that graced and deified agency has to do with what Barth called the subject's *Weisung*, and what Augustine labels her *intentio*; it has to do with the ethical quality and orientation of a self whose love loves more than its own capacity. Once again, trinitarian logic is the necessary antecedent to and the grammar of this logic of deification.⁷

That an Augustinian logic of deification is one premised on the singularity of God's self-giving in Christ means that it is a particular kind of ethical apophaticism, one that articulates God's knowability as that of an incomprehensible gratuity, the undivided mystery of an essence whose essence just is its act of bestowing itself upon the creature in the obscurity of a Jewish peasant. To combine, once again, Augustinian and Barthian idioms, for the Spirit to be the love of God poured out in our hearts means that our life is hidden with Christ in God: an Augustinian-Barthian pneumatology of Christian

⁷ Calling this a "distinctively Western" discourse of deification, as I have occasionally in this dissertation, is not necessarily to make a comparative claim vis-à-vis Orthodox logics of deification so much as it is to claim that language for a tradition that, in contemporary parlance, is often assumed to be lacking this logic.

knowledge concerns the way in which the life of the graced subject is fundamentally eschatological, precisely in its quotidian everydayness. The hidden eternity of our life in God is that of the ethical intensity and eschatological excess of our relationship with the neighbor. It is in the depths of our own ethical act, in the recognition of a fundamental transformation by a grace in the intimacy of our deepest interiority, even and precisely in the ambiguity of its tension with the failures and treacheries of our faithlessness and *unlove*, that we recognize the eternal mystery of a self-giving of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

All this is involved in the logic of pneumatology, which at its root concerns the way in which human subjects are constructed in theological discourse.⁸ One of the implications of this logic is that pneumatology is inherently and indelibly *economic*, a speculative reflection on the economy of salvation. Because it concerns a performative dimension that corresponds to the more strictly referential concerns of Christology, it will always be aporetic insofar as it shades into the irreducible grammar of praxis. The nature of revelation, at least insofar as it functions in Augustinian and Barthian theology, is that of a divine self-giving known only insofar as it has always already claimed us and been enacted in our response. Talk of God is inherently self-involving; thus to formulate trinitarian concerns, and *especially* to concern oneself with the aporia of pneumatology, is to “start from” that divine self-giving in Christ insofar as Christ is the one who lays claim upon the speaker. The *referent* of this doctrinal discourse is always going to be

⁸ My emphasis upon the construction of the subject as one of the subthemes of this dissertation has revolved around how a theological understanding of selfhood is transformed and rearticulated vis-à-vis the metaphysical resources the theologian draws upon; thus involved in Augustine and Barth’s relationships with Neoplatonism and Hegelianism are strikingly different speculative conceptions of the human self. Furthermore, to talk about the pneumatological construction of the subject also points to the fact that the conception of subjectivity itself, post-Hegel, is an unresolved question for theology.

Christology, and pneumatology is only ever going to be given to speech in that it concerns itself with this fact.

Here is where the scandal of the Holy Spirit in 20th century theology was doomed to misunderstanding from the beginning; finding a richer and more robust pneumatology was never going to emerge from a (social-communion) reconstruction of trinitarian doctrine. This “top-down” approach, as I (perhaps clumsily) labeled it in ch. 1, is naively idealistic, for it is premised on the incoherent notion that the source of knowledge of God, and the “practical implications” of that knowledge, are distinct noetically. The folly of many contemporary trinitarians is to imagine that a “model of God” could be constructed which would prove regulative for the construction of the human. In Barthian terms, this is hopelessly Feuerbachian logic, simply the positing of the nature of God as the epitome of human predicates. In such a peace of the *analogia entis*, theology’s God is the epiphany of its desires and the sum of its hopes that preserves the quietude of its own self-duplicity. But the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is always apprehended at the moment of breakdown in all of our analogies, the unlikeness to our likeness. And this luminous darkness is the very heart of what it means to be deified.

Hegel: The Problem of Conceptual Mediation in Contemporary Trinitarianism

The final section of this dissertation is devoted to answering the driving question of the first chapter: *just why is it* that the doctrine of the Trinity is so commonly, indeed reflexively, connected to a social ontology in contemporary trinitarian theology; *what is the nature* of that connection; and *why* is that connection predicated on an overcoming of “classical” or “metaphysical” concerns for divine simplicity and eternity? In addition,

here I want to redress a very significant (although deliberate) neglect in this dissertation, namely, the concern of the so-called *vinculum* understanding of the Holy Spirit in the Augustinian tradition, concerning the Spirit as the “bond of love” between the Father and the Son. While some (e.g. Robert Jenson, Colin Gunton) have argued that the *vinculum* represents a disastrous depersonalization of the Spirit in Augustinian thought, others (e.g. Barth in some places, Rowan Williams, Milbank) see it as absolutely fundamental to an understanding of the Trinity as a living unity of love. Yet apart from a short discussion in ch. 3, I have ignored this trope and the explanatory power it holds for understanding the Holy Spirit’s work in revelation and in the church.

It may not be immediately obvious that these two subjects are connected; but the answer to the first set of questions, and the reason for the second omission, lies in the philosophy of Hegel. It goes without saying that a comprehensive examination of even Hegel’s trinitarian thought is outside the scope of this chapter; instead, I simply intend to show here how Hegel’s thought underlies many of the predominant motifs of contemporary trinitarian thought discussed in ch. 1, and through a brief examination of critiques of Hegel in Derrida and Levinas, illuminate the contrasts between the Hegelian assumptions of this trinitarian thought vis-à-vis the pneumatology of Christian knowledge my reading of Augustine and Barth has suggested.

The Trinity in Hegel’s dialectic of spirit

I earlier argued that social or communion-oriented doctrines of the Trinity are, ironically, precisely those that instantiate a “fourth” as the locus of the true unity and substantiality of the divinity. A look at Hegel’s understanding of the Holy Spirit within

the Trinity will further explicate this counterintuitive claim more clearly.⁹ Prima facie, for Hegel the Spirit is the *third* moment of reconciliation, and the mediation of the diremption of the Father and Son in the becoming of God as absolute spirit. The self-conscious subject only knows itself in the other, but in this knowing it is both negated – the other is other precisely as the negation of the subject’s universality, as its *contradiction* – and elevated in the reconciliation of this negation in its own self-knowing. Thus the Spirit represents the concept of the absolute in and for itself, the One as eternal love, for love, says Hegel, is “both a distinguishing and the sublation of the distinction...in friendship and love I give up my abstract personality and thereby win it back as concrete. The truth of personality is found precisely in winning it back through this immersion, this being immersed in the other.”¹⁰

It is no accident that virtually every Christian theologian finds it necessary to modify Hegel on the Trinity, as we will see shortly; but first, it is absolutely essential to remind ourselves of the famous and epochal Hegelian claim operative here, because it is foundational to the logic of contemporary trinitarianism. At its heart, the dialectic concerns the replacement of a metaphysics of *substance* with a metaphysics of *subjectivity*.¹¹ Hegel’s system is nothing if not a massive outworking of the nature of knowing come to full self-consciousness, and God is exemplarily reason and the self-conscious subject *as such* – the concept of *Geist* in and for itself. Thus if it is the case that

⁹ I will primarily depend upon Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984-5), 3 vols. The lecture series of 1827 is my basic source, as these represent the most mature form of his thought on the philosophy of religion, and most closely correlate with the final 1830 edition of the *Encyclopedia*, where the Trinity is decisive for the ascent of the dialectic to absolute knowledge.

¹⁰ *Lectures*, 3:276, 286.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1:432; cf. *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), §§17-18: “everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*...the living Substance is being which is in truth Subject...actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself,” (p. 10).

the subject knows herself only in recognizing herself in another self-consciousness, then for Hegel it necessarily follows that God must know Godself in God's other. To be sure, the subject knows herself *immediately*, but this is only an abstract and prethematic knowing, consciousness that does not yet fully grasp itself *as* consciousness, for in so doing it stands over against itself as another and takes that otherness into itself as the ground of its own subjectivity. But just here lies the irreducible rupture that separates Hegelian trinitarianism from Augustinian trinitarianism.

God simply in Godself, as the universal concept, is *das in sich Verschlossene*,¹² the "enclosed," pure substantiality. For Hegel, the abstract universality (*Allgemeinheit*) represented by the Father posits itself in finitude and particularity (*Besonderheit*) in the Son; this distinction is a separation between the two that is reconciled and sublated in the individuality (*Einzelheit*) of the self-conscious infinite subjectivity of the Spirit.¹³ The One is in unity with itself simply as a universal, without concrete realization as *Geist* and subjectivity; it is both the Father and the immanent Trinity, for each moment of the grand trinitarian dialectic is itself dialectical;¹⁴ thus the abstract infinity of the immanent Trinity is internally already the speculative idea, which means that it has distinguished itself from itself and sublated that distinction in the eternal reconciliation of love as the reuniting of opposites. This is the Trinity *in nuce*, in ideality, but not yet in actualization – in the economy. But this eternal and abstract self-differentiation, in itself already a self-positing

¹² *Lectures*, 1:369-71.

¹³ For a concise explication see the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, §§567-71, translated in *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. W. Wallace and A.V. Miller, rev. M.J. Inwood (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 264-5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:375-90, esp. 379-80. I use the terms "immanent" and "economic" Trinity with some liberty here; as Peter Hodgson points out, these are not categories Hegel actually employs; *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 130-1. The pattern is that of a trinity within a trinity, of Father within Son within Spirit." See also Hegel's own linking of the "kingdom of the Father" and the doctrine of the Trinity as the first moment of universality in Strauss's 1831 notes, *Lectures*, 3:362.

in particularity and otherness, is therefore already the passage from the abstract concept to *being*, and thus into actuality. Thus the eternal principle of the Logos comes into actuality coterminous with the creation of the world, a particularized other in which the One *becomes* by a positing of itself in negation of itself. This relationship of the Son and the world is vital, for God can have an other to Godself only insofar as that other is *finitude*, the negation of the abstract or spurious infinite which is the *Verschlossene One*. The Son is an eternal *principle*, but that principle is actual only inasmuch as it is posited in separation from the One.¹⁵ It is in the sublation of that rupture, God's knowing of Godself in God's negation, that God is infinite love, life and subject, which is the work of the Spirit as the unifying and elevating love of God fully at one with Godself. Therefore, the Son/world is identical to the economic Trinity, the concrete becoming of the eternal infinite abstraction of the Father, an economy elevated and sublated by the Spirit to reconciliation with that infinity as the concrete infinite subjectivity.

I have argued repeatedly that the triumph of Augustinian trinitarian logic is its deployment of divine simplicity in service of guaranteeing the integrity of divine self-donation in Christ. If Christ is anything other than identical in substance to the Father, then participation in Christ is something other than participation in God. Every question of Arianism stands or falls with this simple proposition. But the Hegelian dialectic fundamentally changes its terms, for *substance* is simply the first moment in the becoming of the concept, which for Hegel names the undifferentiated abstraction of the universal concept which has not self-determined in concrete particularity. Indeed, substance as such is *non-being*, for it is infinity as the implicit negation of the finite, pure

¹⁵ See esp. *Lectures* 3:292-3. The incarnation epitomizes this for Hegel, for it signifies the unity of spirit and nature, finitude and infinity in a particular whose particularity is his relation with the universal.

immediacy without distinction and determination. Thus for Hegel the negativity of the infinite is mediated in its relating itself to itself in representation and particularization, a determination that is a negation of the negation, the essence of the concept as *becoming*:

Being, considered as such on its own account, turns out to be the untrue, even turns out to be nothing; and the next determination, the truth of being, is becoming. Becoming is a simple representation relating itself to itself, something wholly immediate, although it contains with itself the two determinations, being and nonbeing.¹⁶

It is this becoming that renders *Geist* living and active,¹⁷ a dynamic reality that in its sublation of its concrete particularity is the absoluteness of the infinite subject who recognizes its own infinity in its always already having gone beyond the finitude of its determination. This will perennially be Hegel's devastating riposte to Kant: to recognize a limit is already to have transgressed it, for indeed subjectivity is *precisely* the recognition of the infinite beyond of the finite that is reason. Thus in Hegel's paradigm shift from *substance* to *subject*, adjudicating the adequacy of trinitarian logic cannot simply rest on positing the identity of *substance* of Father and Son, for if God is to be thought as Subject, then being and non-being are moments of dialectical becoming in the reconciling love of the Spirit. Divine self-identity and divine self-alienation are, in fact, identical – a claim that cannot even be comprehended in Pro-Nicene logic.

It is not my intention to launch an internal critique of Hegel's trinitarianism proper here, a project which would require a far more detailed encounter with a system of thought which, after all, is designed to assimilate contradiction within itself. The beginning of such a critique would begin from this point just isolated – what,

¹⁶ Ibid., 1:410. Cf. 426-7: "Absolutely necessary essence, taken in the general or abstract sense, is being not as immediate but as reflected into self, as essence. We have defined essence as the nonfinite, as the negation of the negative – a negation that we call the infinite. So the transition is not made to abstract, arid being but to the being that is negation of the negation."

¹⁷ For the most concise summary of Spirit as "developed vitality" as Trinity, see *ibid.*, 3:273-4.

ontologically speaking, the gain made in the Augustinian understanding of simplicity might mean in a fundamentally different and post-Hegelian episteme.¹⁸ For my purposes, I want to return to the point that has more directly occupied this dissertation, and which the Augustinian distinction is designed to safeguard. This is the *gratuity* of God's self-giving in Christ, understood in the sense of the singularity of the divine act as eternal self-bestowing in the Incarnation and the excess of that act in the Spirit who is our participation in that act. This, in a sense, is the beginnings of a reply to Hegel by way of a detour and side-glance.

Sittlichkeit and reconciliation in Hegel's pneumatology

This side-glance concerns the nature of *love* and thus the ethical, the pneumatological proper. Lest it be objected that considering diremption as a separation or alienation connotes an inappropriate normative valuation on what is in reality a cognitional process, it is notable that Hegel reads the story of the Fall and the knowledge of good and evil as a *Vorstellung* of the process of the cognitive judgment, the *Urteil*. To differentiate and negate the negation is to alienate oneself from the infinite, and thus, to become evil:

cognition or consciousness means in general a judging or dividing, a self-distinguishing within oneself...the cleavage, however, is what is evil; it is the contradiction...only in this cleavage is evil contained, and hence it is

¹⁸ The Son/world identity just mentioned would be an important starting point: the Son cannot but be a production of will, rather than a generation by nature, in Hegelian terms, for Spirit posits itself in its negation, thereby *producing* its negation in its own self-affirmation. Operative here is a fundamentally different sense of *mediation* than discussed earlier, where the sub-Nicene Christ is a mediation of infinite and finite as a *tertium quid*; in Hegel, the Son is the mediation of the infinite and the absolute, the internal negation of the infinite – not yet the other posited by that negation. It is difficult to conceive how the intent of divine substantial identity in the *Deum de Deo*, understood in the sense of the singularity of the act of the divine subjectivity (viz. unity of operations *ad extra*) could be preserved here, however.

itself evil. Therefore it is entirely correct to say that good and evil are first to be found in consciousness.¹⁹

The double evil here is that of infinite anguish in alienation from and antithesis to the infinite, and unhappiness in the state of being in contradiction to nature which occurs in the irrationality of this unsublated antithesis, the unfulfilled aspiration to spirit.²⁰ But this double evil (*felix culpa!*) is also the precondition for freedom. For “spirit is the process of self-differentiating, the positing of distinctions,”²¹ and just as the diremption in God is eternally posited and eternally sublated in the reconciliation of love, so in Christ the unity of divinity and humanity sublates the particularity of the human into the absolute knowledge of the Spirit.

To be conscious of this eternal truth of reconciliation is to be spirit, which means to be a citizen of the kingdom of God.²² It is important to follow Hegel closely here: he is not simply saying that God reconciles God to Godself through the community; the community or kingdom of God is *itself* the reconciliation of God as divine-humanity: “thus the community itself is the existing Spirit, the Spirit in its existence, God existing as community.”²³ Thus the Son/world, equivalent to the economic Trinity, is sublated into the Spirit. Of course, this is itself the inception of a new dialectical syllogism, for this is merely the *concept* of the community: the community realizes itself just in its positing of itself *as* the kingdom of God, and this differentiation in knowledge is its particularity in its determinateness as church (which implies that it is one particular

¹⁹ *Lectures*, 3:301.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 305-7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 311.

²² *Ibid.*, 329.

²³ *Ibid.*, 331.

community among others – this is its finitude). From here, the determinate religion is sublated into the nation-state, the third moment in the dialectic.

Thus in truth, in Hegel the economic Trinity is sublated into an *ideological* Trinity – a Trinity of the polis realizing itself in the Enlightenment state. This point is vital in understanding Hegel’s pneumatology, and therefore his social ontology as expressed in his concept of reconciling love. From the beginning, in the *Phenomenology*, to the mature stages of the *Encyclopedia* and the *Lectures*, revealed religion is always sublated in the freedom of *Sittlichkeit*, in the state as the “reconciliation of religion with worldliness and actuality.”²⁴ This is because the content of revealed religion is the concept of absolute spirit (which is identical with the content of philosophy), a concept that is actualized only in the freedom of subjectivity *an und für sich*, the human community possessing its concept in actuality and reconciliation with the infinite.

Absolute spirit must take the form of *Sittlichkeit*, of the ethical community, for absolute spirit is the subject positing its negation in its other and sublating that distinction in reconciliation with that otherness as a subject. Subjectivity, *Einzelheit*, as individuality or singularity, is the reconciliation of universality and particularity in the intersubjectivity of free subjects who are the concept of freedom itself, the divine realizing itself as the reconciliation of the many in the one. This is the context of Hegel’s infamous statement that “the state consists in the march of God in the world, and its basis is the power of reason actualizing itself as will.”²⁵ The divine – specifically, the Spirit – realizes itself as the idea of the rational will, which is freedom. What is important for us to recall here is that, for Hegel, *Sittlichkeit* is not merely the *realization* of the subject’s freedom; it is in

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 342.

²⁵ Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §258 (p. 279).

fact the *mediation* of it, for it is the rational itself.²⁶ As the rational, it is the reconciliation of subjective spirit, the individuality of persons with their individual ends, with objective spirit (the universal substantial will, the realizing of the divine) in the concrete universal of the idea of rational will itself. That is, it is the *Begriff* of freedom particularized in the multitude of individual ends that are sublated in the self-consciousness of a *Ganzheit* that has the end of freedom itself for its content in and for itself, the realization of freedom in the world. It is the state come to self-knowledge in the infinite affirmation of itself.

Here is where we come up against the vacuity of conceptions of divine freedom currently regulating debate in trinitarian thought. For the entire question of God's freedom in terms of a counterfactual – whether God is God apart from the creation of the world, or, in terms more a propos, whether an independent immanent Trinity is the eternal precondition of the economic Trinity – remains at what Hegel describes as a “freedom of the void,” a freedom that consists in the capacity to “free myself from everything, to renounce all ends, and to abstract from everything.”²⁷ This is a freedom that is simply the denial of particularity and affirmed only in its annihilation, for it consists in the absence of determination upon the will, absolute voluntarist freedom. This primitive form of freedom – which Hegel connects with the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution²⁸ – is simply the universality of the self. As such, the question of whether God is God apart from the world is, as a means of judging the Hegelianism of a position on God's freedom, deeply wrong-headed.²⁹ Rather, freedom is the self-positing of the

²⁶ Ibid., p. 275.

²⁷ Ibid., §4 (p. 38).

²⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁹ Cf. McCormack's continual protest that his trinitarianism is not Hegelian because God posits Godself in creation freely, viz., not according to necessity. The question is of course legitimate; it simply says little about the Hegelianism of a position, or gets to the heart of what is at stake in divine freedom. The

subject in the sublation of its negation and reconciliation with the other, freedom incorporating its determination by another:

Otherness is requisite in order that there may be difference; it is necessary that what is distinguished should be the otherness as an entity. Only the absolute idea determines itself and is certain of itself as absolutely free within itself because of this self-determination.³⁰

Freedom, in Hegelian, is a question of *mediation*: it is a coming to self in the *affirmation* of the *negation* of oneself in the other and thus, the *sublation* of that otherness in absolute freedom to embrace one's particularity as *determined* by one's other.

It thus it is also here that we come up against the troubling side of Hegelian reconciliation and love, and the true problem of divine freedom. It is the final break with a trinitarian theology grounded in a grammar of gratuity. The above description of freedom appears to be the ideal description of an ethic of intersubjectivity, and the germ of a social ontology; even, perhaps, of a theology of being as communion. But in the next section I argue that even if we grant that the concerns of divine simplicity, understood in Pro-Nicene terms as the substantial unity of Father, Son and Spirit, must be adjudicated on fundamentally different terms in the shift from *substance* to *subject*, it still remains the case that the Augustinian understanding of simplicity – of the gratuity of the incarnation as the singularity of God's act – is lost here. The Hegelian concept of intersubjectivity, of its ground in the trinitarian life and its expression in *Sittlichkeit*, is a transformation of an ethic of gratuity into the grim narcissism of an economy of identity production.

question is not whether God needs the world to “become,” but whether the character of God's gratuity is compromised by God's relationship with the world.

³⁰ *Lectures*, 3:292. Correlatively, “it belongs to the absolute freedom of the idea that, in its act of determining and dividing, it releases the other to exist as a free and independent being. This other, released as something free and independent, is *the world* as such.”

Mediation and identity production: Derrida's reading of Hegel

In ch. 3, I discussed Derrida's analysis of the gift in terms of the Hegelian dialectic of intersubjectivity operative in the Maussian potlatch, which at heart is precisely the structure of reciprocity and relation that I have identified above. The Hegelian conception of intersubjectivity – of the sublated negation of consciousness in the other – is one in which the subject's knowledge of himself is a function of his recognition of himself in his alter ego, and a winning of that selfhood from the other.³¹ It is a major motif in both Derridean and Levinasian thought that this conception is necessarily violent,³² for it is inherently a dialectic of struggle – reciprocity occurs only in the other appearing to the subject as the negation of that subject's selfhood, which entails both the instrumentalization of that other in recognition of self *and* the erasure of alterity in the winning back of the self. The other only appears as challenge. But Derrida and Levinas have different reads on the economy of the same operative here: Levinas, as we will see shortly, worries that this dialectic is inscribed within comprehension and ontology; but Derrida sees a covert appeal to nature as an unthought surd in this moment of relation. Both of these critiques bear upon the problem of the trinitarian "fourth" that has concerned this chapter; by the conclusion of this section, I intend to show that the confusion concerning the Spirit in contemporary trinitarianism concerns the elision of the trinitarian *third* with this ambiguous *fourth*.

³¹ The masculine pronoun is used deliberately; as we shall shortly see, one of Derrida's more cogent critiques of Hegel lies in his identification of the basically phallocentric nature of this agonistic dialectic.

³² To say nothing of Blanchot and Bataille, among others. The basis of the 20th century French reception of Hegel in Alexandre Kojève's analysis of the master-slave dialectic is illuminated in Stuart Barnett's superb "Introduction: Hegel Before Derrida," in *Hegel After Derrida*, ed. Barnett (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1-37.; cf. also Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). For a helpful analysis of Blanchot, Levinas and Derrida, see Simon Critchley, "The Other's Decision in Me (What Are the Politics of Friendship?)," in *Ethics-Politics-Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought* (New York: Verso, 1999), 254-86.

It is notable that Derrida's notorious study on Hegel, *Glas*,³³ concerns itself with the transition from *Moralität* to *Sittlichkeit* in *The Philosophy of Right*, and in turn, with the syllogism internal to *Sittlichkeit*: family-bourgeois society-state. In fact, it is the structure of the concept of *love*, just discussed, as the basis of the family that interests Derrida.³⁴ He begins from Hegel's own description of the indelible contradiction of love: "I do not wish to be independent...I experience autarky as a lack," on the one hand; but "what I count for in love, the price of what I dispossess myself of is fixed by what the other finds in me."³⁵ Derrida notes with some interest the ontotheological structure of this moment in *Sittlichkeit*: the father/son relation that provides the paradigm of the family relation is grounded in the "infinite father/son relation, of the relation of infinite spirit freely relating to itself as to its own rebound, its own resource."³⁶ In the relation of Father and Son, Derrida writes, "the knowledge relation that organizes this whole scene is a third, a third term, the element of the infinite's relation to self: it is the holy spirit. This medium obtains the element of *familiarity*: God's familiarity with his very own seed...the spirit is neither the father nor the son, but filiation, the relation of father to son...the element of the *Aufhebung* in which the seed returns to the father."³⁷ The element of the *seed* is employed by Hegel to illustrate spirit's return to itself, for it is both the origin and

³³ *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). I have been helped tremendously by Critchley's "A Commentary Upon Derrida's Reading of Hegel in *Glas*," in *Hegel After Derrida*, 197-226, in interpreting this infamously difficult text.

³⁴ *Glas*, 4-6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18; cf. *Philosophy of Right*: "The first moment in love is that I do not wish to be a self-subsistent and independent person and that, if I were, then I would feel defective and incomplete. The second moment is that I find myself in another person, that I count for something in the other, while the other in turn comes to count for something in me. Love, therefore, is the most tremendous contradiction; the Understanding cannot resolve it since there is nothing more stubborn than this point of self-consciousness which is negated and which nevertheless I ought to possess as affirmative," addition to §158 (p. 199).

³⁶ *Glas*, 29.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

result of the individual,³⁸ but Derrida uses the image to interrogate the structure of *Sittlichkeit*. The seed passes through femininity as through a “short detour...the insignificant exception of an inessentiality (the wife here is as it were matter),” just as the divine man has a father existing *an sich* but a merely “actual” mother.³⁹ The problem is not simply the marginalization of the woman, although Hegel is just as patriarchal as Kant here,⁴⁰ but the ontological determination of the woman: the feminine represents a moment of pure indeterminacy (which is not the same as negativity, for it is unsublated) through which the seed passes unchanged. Woman is a moment of excess within the dialectic, an unthought moment that is simultaneously the condition of possibility of the system *and* the exception that destabilizes its totality.⁴¹

This figure of femininity, which he characterizes as an abyss in Hegel’s thought, recalls Derrida’s analysis of *khōra*, the *tertium quid* that marks a “place apart” from the opposition of father and son which functions as a nonrelation that resides prior to the cosmos and its paradigmatic form as “receptacle, imprint-bearer, mother, or nurse.”⁴² This unthought and “quasi-transcendental” moment,⁴³ one which calls to mind the impossibility of the gift or Heidegger’s *es gibt*, is a perfect example of a Derridean *indécidable*, a constitutive component of a text that nonetheless is inadmissible within the strictures of that text. The text is predicated on its impossibility even as it *requires* the

³⁸ Ibid., 28.

³⁹ Ibid., 36, 94; the reference is to the *Phenomenology*, §787 (p. 478).

⁴⁰ See Crichtley’s references, “Commentary,” 206-7.

⁴¹ On this, cf. Crichtley’s discussion of Antigone, the sister, who both prefigures the essence of *Sittlichkeit* but who does not enter into the dialectical struggle for recognition with her brother (*Glas*, 149); in so doing, she represents “the femininity of the ethical relation with the other that is not based upon dialectical structures of recognition, reconciliation, and reciprocity,” “Commentary,” 209.

⁴² “*Khōra*,” in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit, trans. David Wood, John P. Leavey, Jr., and Ian McLeod (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 124, 126.

⁴³ This is a term generally associated with Rodolphe Gasché’s reading of Derrida; see *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).

possibility of that aporia. This “excess” (as I have used the term in this dissertation) is to be precisely differentiated from the *reserve* or *residue* that is the self-persistence of nature in the Hegelian love relation. The Derridean problem is not Hegel’s contradiction just identified, but the *medium* of that contradiction: Hegel’s need to substantize the master-slave relation by virtue of the medium that renders the relation the realization of the concept. Spirit is always self-identical, even in its negation; the social relation is the realization of the concept, a concept that functions, like the seed, as both the determination of the process and the silent recalcitrance that passes through it in opacity.

This Hegelian dialectic of father and son, which is the dialectic of nature sublated into spirit, recurs in *The Politics of Friendship*. Derrida’s argument here concerns the Aristotelian definition of friendship, run through Carl Schmitt’s Hegelian politicization of that classical definition. The political, Derrida reminds us, “rarely announces itself without some sort of adherence of the State to the family, without what we call a *schematic* of filiation...this is once again the abyssal question of the *phúsis*, the question of being.”⁴⁴ This *phúsis*, just like the seed in the Hegelian dialectic, presents something of a surd – a fourth element that passes unchanged through the *Aufhebung* as if it were the residue of substantiality. Classical friendship rests on fraternity and consanguinity, on the subject’s acknowledgement of himself in the other as the same, a symmetry of reciprocity that founds an elect community. In fact, this surd *is* the subject, the subject’s redoublement of himself in the dialectic even as the dialectic is the presence of the subject to himself. As he did with Hegel, Derrida traces the androcentric structure of

⁴⁴ *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (New York: Verso, 1997), viii. The resonances to the concern of *Glas* with *Sittlichkeit* are clear here: “no dialectic of the State ever breaks with what it supercedes and from which it arises (the *life* of the family and civil society)...it is rarely determined in the absence of confraternity or brotherhood.”

fraternity in the classical structure of friendship (why is there never a sister?)⁴⁵ in this agonistic circularity: a friend tells me *who I am* by subjecting the *who* to the *what*, the move that is the foundation of politics: “there is no belonging or friendly community that is *present*, and first present *to itself, in act*, without election and without selection.”⁴⁶ Thus the “axiom which holds that the friend is another self who must have the feeling of his own existence...which makes friendship proceed from self-love” is only disrupted by the dissymmetrical relation that obtains in finding “the other in oneself.”⁴⁷

It is a remarkably short step from here to the distinction of friend and foe that grounds Schmitt’s concept of the political: the *hostis* (foe) is the external function that is a “‘structuring’ enemy,” the figure who gives the state its contours as a community with a frontier or boundary over against its other who is both the possibility of war and of the (determinate) state;⁴⁸ the *hostis* is inherently the public enemy, an exception to the enemy the gospels enjoin us to love, which is the *inimicus*, the personal enemy and internal adversary. The *inimicus* is still the brother in being united against a common enemy.⁴⁹ Therefore, just as the brother/friend tells me who I am as my alter ego, so “politics could never be thought...without the *identification* by which the enemy is identified, himself, and by which one is identified, oneself.”⁵⁰ Indeed, the dialectic of “reciprocal recognition of recognition” comes to a climax in the startling claim that *the enemy is the figure of the brother* (and vice versa): “Whom may I finally *recognize* as my enemy?...In so far as I

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 6, 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 24. The latter is “a logic of the gift” that “calls friendship back to non-reciprocity, to dissymmetry or to disproportion...in short, it calls friendship back to the irreducible precedence of the other.” Ibid., 63.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 84. “Here is the Schmittian axiom in its most elementary form: the political itself, the being-political of the political, arises in its possibility with the figure of the enemy...the disappearance of the enemy would be the death knell of the political as such.”

⁴⁹ Ibid., 88.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 106.

recognize him as my enemy, I recognize that he can put me in question. And who can effectively put me in question? Only myself. Or my brother...the other is my brother. The other is revealed as my brother, and the brother reveals himself as my enemy.”⁵¹ The Hegelian dialectic, taken to its startling conclusion by Schmitt, ends up in the indiscernibility of the friend and enemy, for the other as alter ego is by the nature of the case indifferent to one’s own subjectivity except inasmuch as the other can be the alter ego of oneself. But this can occur as easily in murder as in love.

It is not my intention to follow Derrida in his deconstruction of the fraternal friendship in lieu of an “aneconomic” friendship,⁵² nor into his well-known meditations on the name, the gift, or democracy to come that he views as preoriginary to the Hegelian dialectic of the same. Instead, I simply want to point to the congruity of this logic of the same with the Hegelian function of the Spirit (identified by Derrida above), as the bond or *vinculum* of reciprocity and intersubjectivity *and thus* the very essence of this totalizing relation. In this sense, the Spirit as this bond of union is an ideological function: it signifies the identity production of the elect community, the narcissism of the subject inscribed in the construction of a *polis* that mediates the subjectivity of its members in a phallogocentric fraternity.⁵³ This ideological reality, which is Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*, is in fact identical to the logic of the trinitarian “fourth” already described in this chapter. For the trinitarian fourth is a configuration of *identity*, or the assignation of a *nature*, in something other than those relations in which the substance of God inheres.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibid., 160, 162; the latter is Derrida quoting Schmitt’s *Ex Captivitate Salus*.

⁵² *Politics of Friendship*, 155.

⁵³ Were we to follow this logic in a different direction, we could point to Foucault’s concept of biopower and note that this is the very structure of power/knowledge that *subjectivates*, and to Agamben’s relocation of the Schmittian enemy in the *homo sacer*.

⁵⁴ To be clear: *identity* is the correlate of *nature* in the shift from *substance* to *subject*.

And this is the positing of an identity that sublates and thereby evaporates those relations. The Hegelian structure of intersubjectivity is the erasure of the other – whether this means the self and neighbor, or the Father and the Son, makes no difference whatsoever.

The structure here is the relation of the self and the other as they are mediated by a third and neutral medium which is both the condition of possibility of the relation and the subsumption of that relation as a moment of a greater totality. Here is where Derrida's well-known (and acknowledged) Levinasian debt emerges. For Derrida depends upon Levinas's critique of Hegelian reciprocity as the inscription of the ethical relation within *comprehension*; this means that the social relation is a modality of the realization of the *real* as the *rational* which is thereby subsumed to the dialectical self-becoming of the speculative intellect. The identification of substance and subject is the "reduction of subjectivity to consciousness," which is the Ego "mastering itself in self-equality."⁵⁵ Indeed, the function of recognition in Hegelian intersubjectivity is a function of *consciousness* – of self-relation as comprehension. When related to Levinas's critique of Heideggerian ontology,⁵⁶ the problem for Levinas is the inscription of the alter ego in terms of the identification of being and thought – in the horizon of being that is the theme of ontology. The Heideggerian *es gibt*, rather than the luminosity of the disclosure of being, is the restless negativity of the *il y a*, a neuter that mediates the social relation in the same respect as *Geist* in Hegel. The face of the neighbor, on the other hand, is the *ethical* demand that is prior to the ontological and irreducible to it: to ontologize the

⁵⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being: Or, Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1981), 103, 102.

⁵⁶ See especially "Is Ontology Fundamental?" in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 1-10.

social relation is to inscribe it in the masterful gaze of the subject.⁵⁷ Once again, we see a *third* shade into an impersonal, reified *fourth* that mediates the terms of the social relation, and in so doing, erases those terms in an *Aufhebung* of the concept of those terms into a higher *Ganzheit*. This reified fourth is fundamentally different than the Derridean idea of *khōra* or the maternal, it bears saying, for these “quasi-transcendentals” signify the excess of rationality in a system, what cannot be assimilated in it as such; on the other hand, what I am describing is precisely the mediation of the *concept* in Hegel, the *reserve* that renders it always self-identical and self-referential. That is, the social relation is a moment in the unfolding of the concept, and functions as instrumental to that end – indeed, the social relation takes its meaning and its reality from its inherence in the self-explication of the concept. When expressed sociopolitically, which perhaps Schmitt did with the greatest purity, this is an ideological reality – whether its name is state or church is irrelevant. What Derrida’s reading of Hegel yields is the structure of this conceptual mediation – *Sittlichkeit*, fraternity, or economy – as the logic of the same that inscribes any relation of gratuity within the dialectic of identity production, and as we might recall from Barth’s appropriation of a similar I-Thou relation, the logic of identity production is the logic of hierarchy and violence.

Conclusion: specters of Hegel and the possibility of a trinitarian ethics of gratuity

We learned from Barth in the previous two chapters that the structure of ideology is the structure of natural theology. Natural theology is the subtle, but catastrophic, shift

⁵⁷ In this sense, my use of the term “ethical” in this dissertation is Levinasian in provenance; for, as I argued in ch. 3, an Augustinian ethical apophaticism is one in which the relation of *caritas* with the neighbor is the goal of the mystical ascent. Thus the passage from *ratio inferior* to *ratio superior* occurs in the unity of knowledge and love in *sapientia* – but this is apophysis not as an epistemological principle, but concerning the singularity of love.

that occurs as the “brazen identification” of the social order with God’s revelation, and it occurs via the mediation of *nature* – the economy of creation functions as the middle term between the two, which means (to adopt an entirely different idiom) the natural and supernatural are conflated. This implies, in turn, that revelation is the legitimation of regnant sociopolitical structures: society simply reflects “what is natural.” This is what Barth has in mind when he polemicizes against the “peace of the *analogia entis*,” and it resembles uncannily Derrida’s deconstruction of ontotheology – that grounding of *beings* in *Being* which is the first moment of an ontology of presence.⁵⁸ And while the unstable function of nature in Derrida’s reading of Hegel points to an instability in the assurance with which the concept realizes itself in *Sittlichkeit*, it also points to the nature of the *Aufhebung* of the gathering of beings in the *Ganzheit* of being as a political reality.⁵⁹ And if we recall Levinas’s point about ontology and comprehension, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the ontological grounding of the social is an exemplarily ideological, or ontotheological, move. It is the reduction of the social relation to the economy of the same even as it is the former’s ontological legitimation. This problem of economy is, in fact, precisely the logic of social or communion trinitarianism. The problem with a trinitarian ontology is not simply that it inscribes the narcissistic economy of the same in the deity, thereby short-circuiting the logic of gratuity at its heart; it is also that it has recourse to an *ontology* at all. It makes no difference whether a social ontology is

⁵⁸ See, for example, “*Différance*,” in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-27.

⁵⁹ Cf. the Heideggerian notion of *Geist* as *Versammlung* – the gathering together that inflames – in Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 65 (see esp. 99 on Hegel). The ease with which the anti-metaphysician Heidegger assimilated an exemplarily metaphysical discourse of *Geist* in the twenty years between 1933 and 1953 (“and what years!”, 83) points to an uncomfortable persistence of the metaphysics of subjectivity in the thinking of Spirit in ontological terms (cf. 40).

grounded in unity or multiplicity; that the social relation requires ontological grounding is in itself *precisely* the structure of a metaphysics of the One.

What then is the *use* of trinitarian theology, if not to ground a social ontology? To answer this, two problems with the Hegelian inheritance of late 20th century trinitarianism need to be identified: the persistent problem of the ‘fourth,’ and the consequent elision of pneumatology and patrology; and the requirement of a prior relation in Godhead in order for God to relate *ad extra*. I have already argued, through a discussion of Derrida’s complicated reception of Hegel, that the Hegelian structure of intersubjectivity is one that is inherently ideological (a distinctly non-Derridean word). Hegelian reciprocity, as “having in another the moment of one’s subsistence,”⁶⁰ is both the negation of the other, who functions as a transitional moment in my own becoming (the slave to my mastery), and it is the erasure of the relation itself, for that relation is sublated into *Sittlichkeit* as the realization of the concept of freedom. I have claimed that the reconciliation of negation and negation of the negation in affirmation, the becoming of *Geist*, in fact functions, in trinitarian terms, as a “fourth” that subordinates the trinitarian hypostases to a higher substantiality – the self-mediating concept – which is in fact a *subjectivity* that is identical to the Spirit; Father and Son are mediating moments in the becoming of Spirit, and it is only in the Spirit that God is the in-and-for-itself, an infinite subject. Thus, the Spirit must be the *being* of the first two persons, their union and their substantiality – the *vinculum caritas* – in the sense that the Spirit is the reconciliation and sublation of the self-alienation of the Father in the Son. But – if we are to be true to Hegel – this can only

⁶⁰ This is the formula used by Jean-Luc Nancy in “Shattered Love,” in *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 87, a remarkable essay that both subverts Hegel and puts important questions to Derrida, and Derrida’s Levinasian conception of the ethical.

mean that the Father is pure negativity, the “spurious infinite.”⁶¹ In a Hegelian modality, the person of the Father has no content, agency or reality other than as pure undifferentiated infinity. It is only in the Spirit, as the sublation of the cancellation of the bad infinite in its death, that the Father *becomes* a subject with content; but in Hegelian, the Father remains the eternal idea, the first moment in an abstract posteriority, “frozen in eternity.” The Father can have no content or role other than as an inaccessible and unthinkable One in Hegelian terms, and thus, the problem of *pneumatology* is really one of *patrology* once a Hegelian grammar is accepted. The Spirit becomes the dodge by which the evasion of the Father is accomplished, even as the Father’s authority is inscribed in duplicity.

The second problem is that, in Hegelian, every moment of the dialectic is internally dialectical, such that there is a necessary presupposition or ideality of relation internal to the Father/immanent Trinity which grounds the becoming of God in relation *ad extra* in Son-Spirit, or the economic Trinity. That is, as we saw extensively in Barth, for God to be a subject God must be in relation internally. But this sits very uneasily within the doctrine of the Trinity. If one is to go with Hegel, then that relation *ad intra* is both abstract and empty of content, forever inaccessible in the *extase blanche* that is the sublime and terrifying abyss of infinite negativity;⁶² it is a self-relation that is negated in the relation *ad extra*, which is itself simply a moment in infinite self-becoming. If one is

⁶¹ The spurious infinite is the accumulation of finite determinations without the sublating mediation of the infinite taking up these determinations into itself as spirit; but this is equivalent to the non-differentiation of the abstract infinite in that it is the unmediated immediacy of the in-itself. If the Father is taken as an absolute, the Father is identical to the spurious infinite.

⁶² See Michel de Certeau, “White Ecstasy,” in *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader*, ed. Graham Ward (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 155-8: “To see God is, in the end, to see *nothing*; it is to see nothing in particular...a great dazzling blindness is created: the extinction of things seen...the whiteness that is beyond all division, the ecstasy that kills consciousness and extinguishes all spectacles, an illuminated death.”

to attempt to modify Hegel into something resembling the classical doctrine of the Trinity, which still affirms the absoluteness of the Incarnation as the revelation and reconciling act of God, then that antecedent self-relation takes on a significant ambiguity. Either it is the “eternal history” of God of which the economy of salvation is a simple simulacrum, a repetition grounded in and adventitious to a prior eternal interior reflexivity;⁶³ or the relationship of the two fatally compromises the logic of gratuity, as I spent much of the prior two chapters arguing: the divine self-giving is contingent upon its realization in history, which means that the human Jesus is agential in the divine self-giving. But that way lies a Pelagianism in which the divine self-giving is a stopping-point on the road to human self-divinization, the self-realization of divine-humanity. This is Barth’s ultimate charge against the Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum*, of which the Hegelian dialectic is the metaphysical apotheosis.

At stake in both of these compromises, and in the Hegelian question overall, is this logic of gratuity. I have argued in this dissertation that the doctrine of the Trinity just is this logic, the antecedent grammar of participation in Christ as the pneumatological logic of deification. Any articulation of trinitarian theology that compromises the singularity of divine self-giving in Christ – whether through a weakening of Christ’s substantial identity with the Father, through a relocation of the divine act in an eternal reflexivity in abstraction from Christ’s history, or through an assignation of the role of reconciliation to the Spirit as a *second* agency in the *singularity* of the divine act – is an enervation of that logic, and the ruin of the fundamental Augustinian insight: God is love, and what is more, love is God. Every ethical moment is the moment of God’s eternity, the pneumatological participation in the self-diffusive good that is the life of Jesus.

⁶³ Thus the charge against Barth’s idealism, from Balthasar to Roberts to Kerr.

If things are understood in this manner, the problem is not so much that contemporary (which is to say, post-Hegelian) trinitarian theology tends to be irreducibly Hegelian; in fact, very few modern trinitarians *are* Hegelian, for most flinch in the face of the speculative boldness of Hegel's philosophy of religion. It is only if one is willing to accept the infinite vacuity of the Father, the subsumption of the Son into creation, the sublation of the Spirit into the State and the supersession of religion by philosophy – only then is one really following Hegel's thought. Thus, the theological reply to Hegel has not really begun – it is only insofar as the legacy of the Hegelian ontology of the *subject* is addressed that trinitarian theology will be able to articulate the meaning of the life of the triune God again.⁶⁴ In contrast, the regnant personalism of contemporary trinitarianism appears anemic at best – a half-hearted compromise gesture and naïve dependency upon a speculative logic that is far too hubristic to be so easily adapted. The key Hegelian insight – conceiving the absolute not merely as *substance* but as *subject* – is borrowed, but without the far-reaching implications of that move, in order to legitimate a social ontology that might prop up a revenant ecclesiology. But a Hegelian social ontology is always the motor of its own erasure; everything is lost, in trinitarian terms, once the idealist motif of self-consciousness as the recognition of the self in the other is accepted, for this is both the inscription of the social relation in an ontology of narcissism and the configuration of divine self-consciousness in an auto-opacity that attains gratuity in its own extinction.

To learn from Augustine's conception of the Spirit as the love that is the joining of God's Word to the world in love, as the grace that is the return to God that is itself a moment in God's eternal self-giving; and to follow Barth when he argues that this self-

⁶⁴ The irony does not escape me that this is, in a very real sense, a Hegelian position.

giving, and thus the eternal nature of God the self-diffusive Good, is identical to the history of Jesus Christ, to whom we are made contemporaneous in the eschatological transition that is the gift of the Spirit: this is to conceive of pneumatology as the performance of grace, as the love of God shed abroad in our hearts with an interiority closer to us than we ourselves. This is a transcendence of affections, of a love that transcends by dwelling in a deepest intimacy, whose proximity is that of the neighbor. And it is to understand our life as hidden in God – to understand the true locus of our identity to be identical to Jesus Christ, the true human being, who in the hiddenness of God's mystery is the singular act of a self-bestowing love that is the intensity and overflowing effulgence of our histories. This is a conception of the Spirit as the promise and gift of God, the pledge of an eschatological inheritance and the ascent to God in the face of the neighbor.

I have not attempted, in this study, to thematize what this social relation might look like; the larger, polemical, intention of this study is to *break* the analogical connection between a putative trinitarian sociality and human sociality, for that connection, ubiquitous in contemporary trinitarianism, both compromises the divine self-giving in Jesus Christ, and inscribes the conception of charity within a totalizing economy of the same that all too easily becomes an ideology of the polis and a dialectic of the master and the slave. Against the narcissistic ontology of relation that obtains in a quasi-Hegelian personalism must be posited an ethic of gratuity, one that imagines the social relation less as the subject's production of its identity in a self-referential fraternity and more as the venture of mystery that is the inscrutability of friendship. And this after all is how Augustine's most famous reader described reconciliation: friendship with God.

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