

# Chapter 1

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## Trinity and Creation

### INTRODUCTION

The tree of the Trinity casts its shadow over all of creation, even to the uttermost reaches of the world. Therefore it is fitting to identify its traces, and to appropriate them to each Hypostasis.

### THE APPROPRIATION OF PRODUCTIVE CAUSES

The three Persons of the Trinity have only one will, one action, one operation. But such or such an aspect of the creative act, and therefore of created being, may be more especially appropriate to such or such a Person. This is the unanimous teaching of Catholic theology. St. Athanasius summarizes this doctrine in the following formula: “The Father has created everything through the Son in the Holy Spirit, for wherever the Word is there is the Spirit, and what the Father produces receives its existence through the Word in the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> In fact the Word contains the exemplary causes of all things, and so it is that the Father creates the world *through him*: “All things were created by the Logos who is as it were a divine nexus, the threshold from which flow the creative outpourings, the particular *logoi* of creatures, and the center towards which in their turn all

created beings tend, as to their final end.”<sup>2</sup> And, in the same vein, St. Thomas declares: “To the Father is appropriated power which is chiefly shown in creation, and therefore it is attributed to Him to be the Creator. To the Son is appropriated wisdom, through which the intellectual agent acts; and therefore it is said: *through whom all things were made*. And to the Holy Spirit is appropriated goodness, to which belong both government, which brings things to their proper end, and the giving of life—for life consists in a certain interior movement; and the first mover is the end, and goodness.”<sup>3</sup> But St. Basil of Caesarea already had declared: “In the creative act, it is necessary to understand the Father as ‘principal’ cause of all that has been made, the Son as ‘demiurgic’ cause, the Spirit as ‘perfecting’ cause. . . . There is only one sole principle of beings which creates through the Son and perfects in the Spirit.”<sup>4</sup> In this way the perfecting role of the Holy Spirit is clarified. As to the relationship between charity and perfection,<sup>5</sup> we see that the Holy Spirit, he who is Love itself and within whom God has created, actualizes the perfection of all things, since through him all things are led to their ultimate fulfillment that is God. God cannot create *in* anything else but the Holy Spirit, since the Holy Spirit is hypostatic charity. The Father gives being; in other words, being is a gift. Now Gift is one of the proper names of the Holy Spirit. And so, for creatures, being is conferred on them in the Holy Spirit; it is the Holy Spirit who conveys being from the Principle to creatures. But, through the fire of his charity, it is also he who restores all things to their Principle. Equilibrating the centrifugal effects of creative power exerted toward the periphery of the Cosmic Wheel (*Rota Mundi*), he is the universal magnet that holds together the totality of created beings with the attractive power of love, a power that “spirates” the circumference toward its uncreated Center. If mankind lives, if plants grow, if stars rotate in the sky, it is because they are moved by the Holy Spirit. He alone prevents them from falling into nothingness. Thus, for creatures, Creation is a redoubtable act since, in its creative explosion, it alienates them from the Principle. But it is likewise and simultaneously a permanent return from exteriority toward the interiority of the One, since the Holy Spirit gathers up this cosmic scattering by encompassing everything within the arms of his eternal Love.

## APPROPRIATION OF EFFECTS

### The Triple Reflection of the Uncreated in the Created

From the appropriation of productive causes, we turn now to the appropriation of their effects in creatures through which we discover the *vestigia* or traces of the Holy Trinity. But, in this respect, a distinction has to be made between man and other beings. Thus, if man exhibits a true image of the Trinity, other beings show only traces; in man there are both vestiges and the image, in other beings only vestiges: an image in his spiritual being because man is (= the Father) intellect (= the Son) and will or love (= the Holy Spirit), in other words an image in his active and conscious being:

But in all creatures there is found the trace of the Trinity, inasmuch as in every creature are found some things which are necessarily reduced to the divine Persons as to their cause. For every creature subsists in its own being, and has a form, whereby it is determined to a species, and has relation to something else. Therefore as it is a created substance, it represents the cause and principle; and so in that manner it shows the Person of the Father, Who is the *principle from no principle*. According as it has a form and species, it represents the Word as the form of the thing made by art is from the conception of the craftsman. According as it has relation of order, it represents the Holy Spirit, inasmuch as he is love, because the order of the effect to something else is from the will of the Creator. And therefore St. Augustine says (*De Trinitate* vi) that the trace (*vestigium*) of the Trinity is found in every creature, according as *it is one individual*, and according as *it is formed by a species*, and according as *it has a certain relation of order . . .* and also (*QQ.* 83, qu.18): *that which exists; whereby it is distinguished; whereby it agrees*. For a thing exists by its substance, is distinct by its form, and agrees by its order. Other similar expressions may be easily reduced to the above.<sup>6,7</sup>

### The Holy Spirit Vibrates the Architectures of the Logos

This caption conveys what I would like to say about the Holy Spirit. And so from one perspective we see that, in creation, the Divine Word and the Pneuma are opposed to one another, since one distinguishes and the other unites. This view is, however, much too superficial. These appropriations by no means exclude but mutually imply each other. Nothing can be systematic here, for each one may be found again in the other two. The hierarchical ordering of beings with respect to each other, and of all creation with respect to the Creator, is appropriated to the Holy Spirit; but, basically, it lies in the nature of things, in the quiddities, essences, or forms of things that are appropriated to the Word, the place of the Intelligibles. The respective functions of the Word and the Holy Spirit's "traces" therefore need to be made specific here.

When we studied charity *in divinis*,<sup>8</sup> we saw in the Logos the prototype of the subsistent relation,<sup>9</sup> and so we need to realize that creatures are analogically connected among themselves and to the Principle by their *logoi*, by their "intelligible forms," since it is in the Logos that they have their exemplary causality. Therefore insofar as they bear a trace of the Logos, insofar as the Logos is manifested in them, they are ontologically related. But this hierarchical ordering, depending as it does on the essence of the Logos, would be a pure state of being as well as a pure ontological situation, and, as such, would not manifest itself if not somehow dynamized by the Holy Spirit who supports and expresses this ordering throughout all creation. It is the Holy Spirit who is the revealer of this cosmic and metacosmic congruence. A being is not only a state of existence; it is also a will. As a pure state of existence, as a pure intelligible structure one being is clearly ordained to all other beings, but, we could say, simply by interior relationships, as each point on the circumference is connected to all others through its relationship with the center, whose projection, following the radius, it is. On the other hand the Holy Spirit is "circular." Through his presence he created the circumference of the worlds, where each point is exchanged for all of the other ones; he makes of this circumference a vibration emanating from the supreme Center and, through these spiritual vibrations, brings back to the Center that desire for eternity which animates everything from the angel to the dust of the road: "The

whole creation has been groaning in travail,” says St. Paul (Rom. 8:22). These groanings and sufferings are the work of the Holy Spirit. And, in this, he is indeed cosmic charity; he is cosmic charity in this universal interconnectedness and exchange, where each thing gives itself to the others and all give themselves together, through the priesthood of man, to God in order to fulfill their nature.

### Order and Ordination

Matters could also be expressed in this way: through the Word created being receives a form (or essence or *logos*). This form *determines* the existence of the created being. But this is a dual determination: it simultaneously defines both the nature of a created being and its hierarchical situation in the cosmic order. To determine the nature of a thing, its quiddity, what it is, is also to determine everything that it is not and, hence, is also to assign a thing its rank among all creatures, for its nature is not the only nature—possibility (nature) is not exhausted by itself alone. Nor is it completely separate from all of the other possible natures either, otherwise it would be as if nonexistent for the rest of creation and vice versa. Because it is what it is (cardinal determination) a creature is also an element of universal order (ordinal determination). Thus a musical note, *because it is itself*, that is, such or such a specific note, simultaneously defines its place within the octave. By its very nature a creature is a nexus of relationships implying the entire universe. And this is why it is right to appropriate this function of ontological relationship to the Logos. Without doubt this doctrine of a dual—cardinal and ordinal—determination asks that we see the creature as an harmonious totality, as a cosmic hierarchy in which each thing has its *raison d’être* and occupies a position suitable to its nature. Doubtless, it also has as a consequence the doctrine of universal correspondence, the doctrine that corporeal, animic, and angelic creation, which define, for man, the three basic degrees of cosmic reality, are like so many reverberations of the Unique Logos. Thus, the doctrine of universal correspondence is just another way of expressing the unity of creation in the multiplicity of its aspects and, hence, the very notion of cosmic hierarchy. But it is clear that these notions are actually inseparable from

the notion of creation, and that, in the Bible, the goodness and beauty of the universe do not represent poetic themes but metaphysical axioms. Here, briefly summarized, is what St. Thomas calls the “Word’s work of distinction.”

However, a created being does not possess its nature in act ab initio; it realizes it by passing (relatively) from potency to act. In this sense it provides the end for which it was created, an end that cannot be attained for it by any other creature. But the realization of this end is tied to the ordinating work of the Holy Spirit. It is he, the *vinculum perfectionis*, the “bond of perfection,” who actualizes and perfects creatures while ordinating them to their end. Now such is the condition of every creature that it can fulfill its proper end, and therefore realize its own nature, only by giving itself to another creature. Only through otherness does it discover its own identity. And likewise all creatures realize themselves by giving themselves to creation, while all creation does so by giving itself to God. For the end of everything is truly endless, infinite; otherwise, for a creature to realize its end would simply mean its destruction and annihilation. By this we see that the two meanings of “end,” end/annihilation, and end/perfection, are two aspects of one and the same realization: “If the grain of wheat does not die, it will not bear fruit.” The end as death is the means to the end as fulfillment. Thus the roots of the tree give themselves to the sap-bearing trunk, finding their fulfillment therein; the trunk does the same for the branches, and the branches for the leaves, flowers, and fruits. The fruit has its end solely in the continuity of the species, but the species is not an end in itself—it manifests an aspect of Divine Beauty, and, through it, incarnates an archetype of the Eternal Truth that instructs us. Then, *through the ministry of the contemplative spirit*, the species itself becomes conscious, for consciousness, that cosmic chimney which burns on its hearth the tree of creation and bears it in its flames up to heaven, “is a *raison-d’être* for the states concerned.”<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, Love ordines everything to everything else. If the Word is order, the Holy Spirit is ordination, the One who animates and reveals the universal intersection of cardinal and ordinal determinations. In this way we glimpse the metaphysics of charity in all of its unity. According to the order of fraternal charity, the Holy Spirit is animator and revealer of ontological proximity,<sup>11</sup> which

should be related to the Word; according to the order of Divine Charity, we see him through his function of hypostatic maternity, revealer of the Logos; now we see him as animator and revealer of the “word” of creatures in his function as cosmic charity—the work of creation requires the concurrence of the “two hands of God,”<sup>12</sup> the Word and the Holy Spirit. If a palpable reality can symbolize an intelligible reality, it is by virtue of an ontological correspondence, the work of the Divine Word. But it is the work of the Third Person to *set* palpable and intelligible realities in correspondence, to *bring* the symbolizing toward the symbolized (i.e., the symbol itself in its ordinating function of relating the one to the other). Creation thus proceeds like a musical score: the staff and notes have been composed by the Logos, but it is the Holy Spirit who sings it.