Trinity *spermatiké*: The Veiled Perception of a Pagan World[1] (Part 1)

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"The Trinity is inevitably present in seed form wherever God is sensed."

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Non chiederci la parola
che squadri da ogni lato
l'animo nostro informe . . .

1. *"Trinity* spermatiké*"*

1.1. *The central concept*

I have argued elsewhere[2] that one way to approach the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is to explore the experience through which the reality behind the dogma came to be apprehended in the New Testament; and that the Old Testament experience of Yahweh, already essentially trinitarian, was as if a catechumenate that ultimately made

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[1]This is the first part of two installments and includes sections 1, 2, and 3. The second installment, with sections 4 and 5, will be published in the Spring 2013 issue of *Communio: International Catholic Review* 40.

[2]"Yahweh, the Trinity: The Old Testament Catechumenate," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 34 (Spring and Summer 2007): 38–75, 292–327.

such apprehension possible. By way of contrast, I have also argued[3] that the polytheistic stance towards the divine is essentially non-trinitarian, because it emphasizes the aspect of control and ownership vis-à-vis the monotheistic stance that sees an interpersonal sharing within the absolute as fully real without implying fragmentation.[4]

I will argue here[5] for a converse point of view that will complement the considerations made in the second paper. While a pagan, or polytheistic,[6] ethos is indeed essentially non-trinitarian in the articulation of its sensibilities and thought processes, it cannot, at the same time, escape from the deeper trinitarian dimension of the divine reality. The explicit polytheistic opposition to a mono-theistic dimension is dramatically complemented, in my view, by a deeper, inescapable apprehension of what is ultimately the only proper configuration of the divine, i.e., the Trinity. The Trinity is inevitably present in seed form wherever God is sensed. The Church

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[3]"The Trinity in a Mesopotamian Perspective," was presented at a conference on "The Historical-Critical Method and Scripture, the Soul of Theology" (Mount St. Mary Seminary, Emmitsburg, MD, 23 June 2006). It is now published as "La Trinità in un'ottica mesopotamica" in *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* 104 (2012): 29–48.

[4]This fundamental contrast has been highlighted by David L. Schindler in *Heart of the World, Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), see esp. 193: "The intelligibility is that of discrete entities. . . . Understanding of such entities can be thought of only in terms of control and manipulation"; and 200: "trinitarian theism" should be seen as an alternative "method" to the analytical method and its "impulse for breaking up and controlling"; the two "methods" can be defined as "that of the machine (simple identity) and of love (relational identity)."

[5]I am grateful to my friend and colleague, Don Giorgio Paximadi, and to the anonymous *Communio* readers for pointing out some basic errors in the original text of this article, which I have sought to correct to the best of my abilities. It goes without saying that the final version remains my own responsibility.

[6]It must be noted that for the purposes of this article the terms "polytheistic," "atheistic," "pagan," "secular" are all equivalent, and that the semantic and semiotic opposition with their counterparts does not presuppose two neatly distinguished camps. There is a religious, theistic (in fact, trinitarian—this is my argument) urge in secular polytheistic sensitivity, while, conversely, common Christian trinitarian awareness is streaked with a hidden, deeply polytheistic, understanding of reality.

Fathers spoke of a *lógos spermatikós*[7] referring to the inevitability of Christ being present as seed in the human experience of the divine even when not so recognized explicitly. But recognizing the Logos as seed implies, inevitably, a seed-like trinitarian apprehension—a Trinity *spermatiké*. The equivalent Latin term, *semina verbi*, "the seeds of the word" is also central to the understanding of the commonalities among world religions.[8]

We should then ask: what, if any, is the difference between the Old Testament catechumenate and such a veiled polytheistic perception of the Trinity? And in turn, how does the fuller disclosure, as offered by Jesus, impact our human experience of divine reality? In other words, how is our basic human confrontation with God enriched as a result of being, through Christ, more explicitly trinitarian?

The thrust of this article aims to give an answer to this question. We will first elaborate in some detail the strands of trinitarian apprehension that I consider to be hiding in polytheistic spirituality, both ancient (2) and modern (3), and then, in the next installment, those strands that I consider illuminating by virtue of the more explicit contrast (4). At the end (5), I will look at the missionary effort

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[7]Justin, *Second Apology*, VIII (Philip Schaff's translation): "And those of the Stoic school—since, so far as their moral teaching went, they were admirable, as were also the poets in some particulars, on account of *the seed of reason [the Logos] implanted in every race of men*—were, we know, hated and put to death, Heraclitus for instance, and, among those of our own time, Musonius and others." The concept may be traced back to Paul: "In him we live and move and exist, as some of the poets amongst you said: We are of his kind" (Acts 17:28). An analogous metaphor may be seen in the use of the term "first grace" to refer to natural law, see Glenn W. Olsen, "Natural Law: The First Grace," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 35 (Fall 2008): 354–373.

[8]See the explicit use of this term in John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), to explain the intent of the Council's document *Nostra Aetate*: "The words of the Council recall the conviction, long rooted in the Tradition, of the existence of the so-called *semina Verbi* (seeds of the Word), present in all religions. In the light of this conviction, the Church seeks to identify the semina Verbi present in the great traditions of the Far East" (81); "In another passage the Council says that the Holy Spirit works effectively even outside the visible structure of the Church (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 13), making use of these very *semina Verbi*, that constitute a kind of common soteriological root present in all religions" (*ibid.*); A balanced approach to a possible, exaggerate amplification of the Fathers' thought is found in Giandomenico Mucci, "I semi del verbo. Gli elementi di verità nelle religioni non cristiane," in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 3685 (2004): 47–53.

in the light of the relationship between such perceptions, more or less veiled, and revelation. First we will review, in the rest of this section, some fundamental presuppositions.

1.2. Monotheism and trinitarianism

Semantically, it would appear sufficient to say that trinitarianism is not three-theism: the three persons are not three gods. But there is a more subtle conceptual dimension that may easily hide behind the semantic veneer. It emerges when, in a converse sort of way, monotheism comes to be understood as "one-theistic": there is only one god, but with the emphasis on the numerability of the "one." He is still subject of counting. This means that conceptually he is seen as one in a series of units, a series that belongs to a broad set where everything is numerable. "One-theism" is not very different from henotheism, a term which refers to the process of rarefaction whereby pre-eminence is given to a single deity out of a pantheon of many, to the point where the other gods almost disappear. In such a perspective, the characteristic of oneness remains one of superiority rather than of utter otherness.

It is such utter otherness that is, instead, the hallmark of monotheism. Oneness means, in this case, a one that is not so much *above a multitude of other ones* as it is, rather, *wholly set apart*. The semantic trap to which I was alluding lies in assuming that the one is opposed to the many. Where polytheism admits many deities, monotheism is assumed to admit one. It comes down to a matter of scale: the one is of the same order as the many, except that it is numerically limited. But it is a trap. The insight of monotheism lies in proposing an altogether different scale, a different plane of reality where, we might say, *one is opposed to one*. The "one" of polytheism is a mononumerical set, but remains a set within a series of numerical sets. The "one" of monotheism is outside any such series of sets.

The notion of transcendence refers to just such an understanding. The monotheistic God transcends human concepts in the way described by Kierkegaard as a *metábasis eis állo génos*, a "rising to another genus," using language borrowed from Aristotle. The "other genus" is not something higher within the same range. It is rather a distinct range altogether. Nor is it a truly parallel order of being, because it is wholly outside our concept of order, related to ours

only analogically. If we take seriously transcendence as *metábasis*, and parallelism as *analogia entis*, then the point made above, about the importance of considering the oneness of God outside of any notion of numerical sets, will become clearer.

So will, also, the realization that there is no contrast between monotheism and trinitarianism. The Trinity is not a set any more than the One God is a set. We may think of the Trinity as the inner articulation of the altogether different order of being which we call absolute. An excessive conceptual reliance on the notion of oneness may easily work against the very impetus of monotheism, as if the reductiveness of the single count could give us control on transcendence, as if transcendence could in effect be imprisoned in the immanent function of the numeric concept.

1.3. *"Understanding" God*

If transcendence implies transference to an altogether different plane of reality, an *állo génos*, then how is it possible for humans to rise to this other level, how does the *metábasis* take place? In particular, within our present context, what kind of basic human understanding is possible of the trinitarian mystery? Is the trinitarian *állo génos* so alien that there are no footholds in normal human experience on which to stand in order to reach for some kind of plain and simple human comprehension? Are we called to love what we cannot possibly understand? But if our love is to be genuine, how can it not be human, how can it be directed to what is alien to experience, to understanding?

These considerations are valid for any attempt to reach the divine sphere, but they are especially pertinent when reflecting on the Trinity. If revelation is seen as merely the acquisition of information, then we may develop the wrong feeling that knowing about the Trinity means that we can "explain" God. But we would be wrong in equating understanding with explanation. Understanding does not mean explicating in the sense of dissecting, analyzing, breaking down a composite into its constituent parts. In the traditional sense of wisdom, understanding means to apprehend the whole as meaningful apart from, or rather beyond, its being the sum of its components. When reflecting on the Trinity, we must, accordingly, relate to the mystery as a whole, without the tacit pretense that by describing it

as a triadic sum we have exhausted its inner significance. Knowing about the Trinity is not a call to acquire and exchange information, it is not an explanation. It is, rather, a call to develop a relationship.

Ultimately, this means that "understanding" the Trinity entails an inner disposition of love. We cannot love without understanding the target of our love, nor can we understand without the inner thrust of a full and genuine human love. Not, however, as though love were an irrational feeling. True, it would be a sad day when we could "explain" why we love someone, for explanation would entail love as a necessary consequence. But it would also be a sad day when we felt love to be irrational, i.e., wholly divorced from reason. Rather than in conflict, love and reason are in a mutual relationship of harmony, and it is through reason that we, lovers, "understand" our beloved.

It is in fact valid to say that explanation plays a propaedeutic role in nurturing understanding, hence love. We cannot *convince* someone, through argument, that he or she must love someone else. On the other hand, arguments can direct the inner movement of souls to where, beyond the dissecting arguments, the whole explodes in its own clarity. Analogously, no amount of analytical criticism can force you to enjoy a poem or a painting; but the same criticism can predispose your sensitivity so that it is trained to accept modalities and styles that might at first have seemed alien. It is in this sense that we can bridge the gap between positive and negative theology, by seeing the first as preparing the ground for the second, by seeing argument and explanation shaping our consciousness and preparing it for the explosion of understanding.

There is an analogous distinction between knowing and understanding. "Knowing" relates to capturing information, "understanding" to an inner disposition of apprehension and readiness. Thus it is that when we seek to do the will of God, we do not properly seek explicit orders or a clarification of situations, wherein we are told do A rather than B. Explicit divine requests are the exception. Consider the three *fiats*. Only the first is Mary's response to an explicit "word": *fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Lk 1:38). The second is the Our Father, where we are asked to accept a will that does not necessarily translate into any explicit word: *fiat voluntas tua* (Mt 6:10). The third is Jesus' own Our Father, when, in the agony at Gethsemane, he contrasts his own instinctive desire to avoid the Passion with the will of the Father that the Passion should take place, a

will that is perceived but is not confirmed as an articulate command: *fiat voluntas tua* (Mt 26:42) | *non mea voluntas sed tua fiat* (Lk 22:42).

This last *fiat* is especially tragic and meaningful. It is preceded, in each of the two gospel narratives, by an if-clause that projects uncertainty. Jesus does not seem to "know" for sure what the Father's will is: "Father, *if it is possible*, let this chalice go away from me—except, not as I wish, but as you do. . . . If this cannot go away unless I drink it, let your will take place" (Mt 26:39.42); "Father, *if you wish*, remove from me this chalice—except, not my will, but let yours take place" (Lk 22:42). It seems as though part of the agony is the obscurity that involves uncertainty about the Father's precise intentions.[9] Jesus' surrender is more important, it would appear, than his acceptance of any specific marching orders. The will of the Father is not information to be articulated in words that one can "know," but rather a creative power to be adhered to with understanding.

The if-qualifications of the last *fiat* do not seem resolved as, in his agony, Jesus cries from the height the cross: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mt 27:46 | Mk 15:34). No direct answer is forthcoming. No explicit explanation. No spoken word of comfort. Instead, the final understanding of the Father's will comes to the dying Jesus, extraordinarily, through a fellow human being: one of the two men who have been crucified alongside him—Dismas, as tradition calls him. There is a startling dimension to this episode (Lk 23:39–43), one that can nurture much awed reflection. Think about it: Jesus finds the strength to accept his final collapse (Lk 23:46) through the unexpected support of an unknown criminal. It is, mark well, the lowliest human on the social scale, one who had never received anything from Jesus, one whose name was unknown to even the few bystanders (Dismas being a later appellation). It is this very man who is called to give the Father's answer to the Son, to give Jesus the courage to die. Remember: Jesus had been asking for help from the three apostles he took near him at Gethsemane, and they fell asleep; there, he had asked the Father for direction, and had

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[9]According to the narrative frame, the apostles whom Jesus had called to share his anguished prayer were asleep, nor would Jesus' words to the Father necessarily have been spoken aloud. Unless we consider the two accounts as a later literary invention (which I do not), we must assume that in some way the inner attitude of Jesus, if not the *ipsissima verba*, may have at some point been made known by him to the apostles, whose memory would then be crystallized in the narratives as we have them.

met with silence; as he is led to the summit of the skull, he sees his closest friends disappear (except for his mother and a young disciple), and it is the outsiders who then begin to rally around his loneliness. In this darkness we can see how Jesus' own fiat, his "understand-ing" of the Father's will, is not rooted in the acquisition of a specific, overt, articulate command that might confirm his mission, but in his fundamental posture of availability and openness, ready to accept whatever sign may come his way. Any source, even the most unex-pected, may be the effective conduit to an understanding of what we are to be available for. For Jesus, it was, first, a foreigner along the way (Simon of Cyrene, Mt 27:32 | Mk 15:21 | Lk 23:26), and then, at the top, an unnamed confessed criminal.

Jesus lives a profoundly human situation as he seeks through uncertainty the will of the Father. So did his mother when facing the behavior of her adolescent son. Having found him in the Temple after an anguished search, and having heard his explanation as to why he had not alerted them regarding his whereabouts, we are told that Mary and Joseph "did not comprehend the spoken (explanation) (*ou sunē'kan tò rē'ma*)[10] which he had spoken to them" (Lk 2:50). But reflect on it they did, after the fact, and intensely so: "His mother was watching-and-guarding-through-and-through (*dietē'rei*) in her heart all the spoken (events) (*pánta tà rē'mata*)" (Lk 2:51). She accepts and basically understands her son even when, offered an explanation, she does not fully comprehend it. At the root, and in a nutshell, this is the Christian epistemology, particularly when facing the Trinity.

1.4. "Intentionality"

It is also, in a way, the *common* trinitarian epistemology, i.e., the non–Christian confrontation with the Trinity. The central ques-tion we are asking here concerns precisely the way in which, how-ever veiled, the Trinity may be sensed outside of the framework un-veiled through the Incarnation of the Logos. If even in the wake of

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[10]In the Annunciation, the "word" to which Mary assents is *lógos* in Greek. The term used here instead is *rē'ma*, which has more the connotation of "say-ing, speech, statement," hence "explanation" and then even "event, fact." The same term is used in the plural in what follows immediately in the text, where it is said that Mary pondered in depth "all the spoken (events) (*pánta tà rē'mata*)."

that revelation our "understanding" is at once piercing and obscure; if even Mary and Joseph "did not comprehend the explanation" explicitly offered by Jesus; how then do the countless humans who are not privy to the same revelation face the inescapably trinitarian dimension of the divine? The phenomenological concept of "intentionality" is helpful in this respect.[11]

On the analogy of planets held in orbit by the pull of their sun, so are we tending towards objects that exert their attraction regardless of how explicit our perception of their precise identity may or may not be. We are, in other words, conditioned by the identity of the object towards which we tend. If so, it stands to reason to say that, God being the Trinity, every human relation to the divine sphere is "intentionally" trinitarian. But how?

There is, in the first place, a universal apprehension of the divine: in other words, the divine commands our attention, our intention. Reduced to its most universal common denominator, such intentionality is found in facing that which we cannot control but which *de facto* conditions, and limits, us. The recognition of such uncontrollable external conditions is and has ever been an objective factor in the life of every single human being. There is, however, a fundamental difference in how we articulate our perception of this reality, a difference that comes down to two basic alternatives. Common to both is the realization that we can progressively gain an ever greater measure of control over what could not previously be controlled—for instance, control of the outer spaces through astronomy, of disease through medicine, of our own remote past through paleontology and archaeology. Peculiar to the first mode of thought is the belief that this "progress" is, itself, unconditional. In other words, nothing will ultimately condition progress because progress will achieve full ultimate control on whatever external conditions seem to limit us now (see in the next installment, 4.3). Peculiar to the second mode of thought is instead the belief that there is an ultimate "beyondness" that conditions us in ways that escape all possibility of control on our part. The intentional aspect is the same: in both cases the existence of conditioning factors that

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[11]For an excellent description of the topic from a philosophical standpoint see Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Another way to look at intentionality is through the concept of referentiality, see in the next installment, 5.2.

cannot be controlled is undeniable, and un-denied. The difference is in the perceptual resolution, both positions being a matter of belief. We either believe, in the polytheistic frame of mind (the first mode of thought), that full ultimate accretion is possible (there is an ultimate explanation of everything, the last bit of which will come from the ultimate accumulation of all previous knowledge). Or else we believe, in the monotheistic frame of mind (the other mode of thought), that accretion is itself conditioned, that our own ability of control is framed by uncontrollable conditions. Neither belief can be demonstrated. But both are the result of an objective, "intentional" confrontation with a reality which we experience: a conditioning that is beyond our control.

The point I wish to stress in this context is that there is a trinitarian dimension even to the polytheistic perception of the "beyondness." Therein humans face, "intentionally," a dynamics at work in the divine reality, through the very paradox of progress understood as the ultimate goal. The paradox lies in the notion that a never ending progress may in some way end. Progress entails the capturing, along the line, of fragments of a dynamic absolute, yet progress will, by necessity, come to an end when there are no more fragments—at which point the dynamics ends. The paradox, then, is in the belief that stasis is the final outcome of forward movement, that this dynamics can be seized—do we not, in fact, gradually appropriate an ever greater share of the universal progress? In this light, the death of god appears in an even more tragic light: at the very moment that we appropriate the dynamics of the absolute, we nullify the absolute. The death of god (as in Nietzsche) is the final stasis: what we presume to kill is, in reality, the dynamics of the absolute. We kill, in fact, that veiled perception of a trinitarian reality wherein we saw the absolute as endowed with an inner vitality and particularity. The death of god is, in fact, the abrogation of the trinitarian dimension within the absolute.

1.5. "Vectoriality"

Central to the present article is the notion of vectoriality, i.e., the quality of a vector, which is in turn a quantity specified by a magnitude and a direction. Instinctively, we think of change and motion in a vectorial sense, such as a point traveling along a line.

Everything about this is intrinsically finite—the origin, the destination, the transition from one to the other.

A great stumbling block is faced when we seek to overlay these categories to the notion of the absolute. If the absolute is dynamic, how can such dynamics be conceived otherwise than vectorially, i.e., as moving from point to point? But then, how can this be reconciled with that property of the absolute that calls for the absence of partitioning into discrete points? If, on the other hand, the absolute is static, how can there be interaction with the world of points, the real world as we know it?

The trinitarian intuition, which is deeply rooted in the notion of divine reality as present already in the Old Testament, is that there is a non-vectorial dimension within the absolute, whereby direction is possible between the persons (the "non-points," to put it in terms of our essentially vectorial mindset).

A fundamental corollary is that direction is also possible between the divine dimension (the "non-points") and our world of points. This interaction, which may be called "trans-vectorial," is manifested through creation (where the vectorial dimension is posited in the first place), through incarnation (where the divine himself assumes vectoriality), and through grace (where the divine interacts even from outside the vectoriality it has assumed). On our part, we are analogously called to transcend our vectorial mindset by seeking to accept a "trans-vectorial" relationship.

Schematically, this may be rendered as follows:

vectorial	from point to point	finite world
non–vectorial	from non–point to non–point	immanent Trinity
trans–vectorial	from non–point to point, and vice–versa	economic Trinity

This article is, in a way, a history of our common human attempts and inner urges in just that direction—the attempts and urges to deal with vectoriality as an echo of trinitarian dynamism.

1.6. The deeper urge

The emphasis, then, is to focus on that aspect of trinitarian reality that seems to be more readily sensed within common human experience. In my estimation, this aspect is not the triune nature of

God.[12] It is rather the apprehension of dynamics within the absolute. There are four particular aspects that make this specifically relevant to a discussion about the Trinity. In each case, the urge present in the initial apprehension points in a trinitarian direction, but this direction is then twisted because of the modalities through which it evolves.

(1) The first is the one we have reviewed under the heading of intentionality. The absolute that conditions us is sensed as being endowed with an inner thrust, a dynamics that validates our own urge for life. Progress is the model, from early historic Mesopotamia (2.1) to our own days (3.5.1). The twist that pulls us away from trinitarian reality is, as I have already intimated, the understanding of progress as a purely vectorial line that takes us through a series of finite steps, towards an eventual ultimate point that aims at being the ultimate climax, but is instead the negation of progress itself. *The urge is to see dynamics, the twist is to translate it into vectorial progress.*

(2) Dynamics is rightly sensed as a foundational dimension of the absolute. And just as it is felt that there is dynamics within the absolute, so our deeper human urge tells us to go beyond all perceived limits, through our own dynamic effort to reach closer to that absolute factor that conditions us. We are pulled into its dynamics. But as we reach, we aim to grasp, and this results in the concomitant twist, which is the relativization of the absolute. If we can break up the dynamics by controlling each of the links in the chain of progress, to where we might eventually hold in our hands, in our power, the ultimate moment, then the absolute is no longer such, it is relativized. *The urge is to acknowledge our being conditioned by the absolute, the twist is to impose our own conditioning so as to reduce the absolute to a merely relative reality.*

(3) The instinctive perception of dynamics in the absolute is to view it in terms of interaction. But since its very nature has been relativized, what emerges is an interaction between alternative poles that are essentially limited by each other. And this reciprocal limitation is universally expressed in terms of strife. *The urge is to see interaction, the resulting twist is to see it but as conflict.* The proclamation of inner trinitarian love (4.3) is a powerful countermanding of this age-old perception: interaction

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[12]This aspect is emphasized by others, certainly with good reason. See in particular the major confrontation that Rosmini had with idealism, to which I refer briefly below (3.1.2; see also 5.8).

within the absolute is in fact the supreme non-strife, i.e., love.

(4) The climax of trinitarian revelation is the essential correlate of the point just made. If there is an interaction of non-strife (love), there must be an interactive relationship between loving subjects, persons. But if the interaction is one of strife, then the subjects emerge as even more relative because they must, by definition, limit each other. The notion of absolute persons becomes meaningless. *The urge is to confront an interactive personal dimension within the absolute, the twist is to project self-limiting pseudo-persons, the gods.*

There are two main reasons why considerations of this nature seem important in more than an abstract way. On the one hand, we can learn from these deeper urges what it is that trinitarian reality actually evokes in our human experience: our own sense of the Trinity becomes more vibrant and alive in the process. On the other, we may more easily configure our own Christian experience in terms that speak more readily to shared sensitivities, shared with all humans, precisely because we touch the raw nerve of human experience (5.5).

2. Trinitarian apprehensions in early historic times

2.1. The Babylonian frame

On the face of it, the contrast just outlined seems to echo the opposition that found its classic formulation in the sixth century B.C. within the Aegean sphere, with Heraclitus (in the east, on the Anatolian coast) and Parmenides (in the west, on the southwestern Italian coast). It was the opposition between change and permanence as the driving forces behind reality.

In fact, the opposition goes back much further in time. An early example of it may be found in the Mesopotamian creation myth known, from its incipit, as the *Enūma elīsh*.[13]

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[13]The earliest extant cuneiform texts date to end of the eighth century B.C., but the central themes go back much earlier, to at least the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Note also that I speak of a "Babylonian" frame of mind for the sake of simplicity, since the final recension is, indeed, from that milieu. But in fact everything that is being said applies to a pan-Mesopotamian cultural sphere.

1	*When up above*	*the heavens were not identified*
2	*and down below*	*firm ground was yet without a name,*
3	*when only primeval Apsu*	*the begetter*
4	*and Mummu-Tiamat,*	*the universal mother*
5	*did blend their waters*	*into one,*
6	*ungirdled as to meadows,*	*undefined as to marsh reeds,*
7	*when no god at all*	*was manifest as yet,*
8	*none was identified by name,*	*determined as to personality;—*
9	*out of within their midst*	*the gods were then created:*
10	*Lahmu and Lahamu*	*became manifested,*

came to be identified by name, . . .

This text frames the question in clear and explicit terms.[14] There exists a static and amorphous whole, which is described with the expanded metaphor of a physical world as yet wholly undifferentiated. Within this and out of this, the seed of change germinates and specific gods emerge, distinctiveness out of undistinctiveness. The primordial staticity is thus pierced by change. The remainder of the myth develops at length the theme of change: out of the initial differentiation come endless causes of conflict, and the contrasts that ensue dominate the bulk of the narrative. Evil is never presented as a moral choice, but only as the necessary result of progressive change. The state of perennial strife is finally sublimated in the emergence of one prime deity (who happens to be, in the final recension we have, the god of Babylon, Marduk). The formula which expresses this resolution is the attribution to the deity of fifty appellatives: diversity (the fifty names) is now reconciled with unity (the single subject). It is as if the initial static dimension of total undifferentiation (the chaos) were finally to be revisited and reclaimed by a maximal

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[14]My translation highlights grammatical aspects that justify the interpretation offered, in particular by accurately rendering the difference between predicates that express state or condition (1: *lā nabū* "not identified"; 2,8: *šuma lā zikrat* "unmentioned by name"; 6: *lā kiccurū* "ungirdled"; 6: *lā še'ū* "undefined"; 7: *lā šūpū* "not manifested"; 8: *lā šīmū* "not determined") and those that express action or becoming (5: *ihīqū* "did blend"; 9: *ibbanū* "were created"; 10: *uštāpū* "became manifested"; 10: *izzakrū* "were named'). Note that in two cases (*lā zikrat~izzakrū*, *lā šūpū~uštāpū*) the same verbal root is used in either of the two forms in order to emphasize the contrast.

degree of differentiation (the fifty names).

The Babylonian myth gives frame and shape to an important conceptual construct. The absolute is perceived as a single whole that remains amorphous as long as it is, precisely, whole. But an inner thrust leads irresistibly to "morphing"—from the initial germination of the watery gods through the conflicts of the central part of the story to the eventual issue of a superior deity endowed with fifty character traits. Morphing, then, destroys the wholeness, that is recomposed in the end only as cumulation. This is a profound insight that defines the polytheistic frame of mind[15] as it was at the dawn of history and as it will remain for centuries to come (down to our age, as we will see). Dynamics within the absolute entails fragmentation, and hence the relativization of the original absoluteness. Differentiation is an intrinsic thrust inescapably built into the fabric of the absolute. But as soon as it is set in motion it unavoidably disfigures and corrupts the inner fabric of the absolute. Once torn asunder, there remains only the effort to construct a new absolute out of fragments which are hopelessly relative. Polytheism is, we might say, the ontological correlative of original sin. There is a glimpse of wholeness, and yet coterminous with it there is the realization of a fundamental breakup, of a cracking into component parts. The urge to reconstitute the absolute in its original wholeness yields only the broadest possible aggregation of what have become, irreparably, finite fragments. The tragic dimension of the polytheistic effort is the urge and yet, at the same time, the inability to reconfigure a wholeness that has forever come apart.

But it is this urge that betrays what we may call a trinitarian sensitivity. The central perception is that the absolute cannot be forever static, or else it is a frozen and impotent entity, incapable of serving as the primordial motor from which everything originates. Nor can change properly coexist with immobility. My point is that, in the Babylonian frame of mind, the urge to show that morphing comes out of a primordial chaos reflects the need to account for the inescapable presence of an inner dynamics within the absolute. That

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[15]See R. Sokolowski, *Christian Faith and Human Understanding: Studies on the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006), 101 on the relationship between spirit and matter, 103 on the polytheistic "background," and 144 on the "context in which [the pagans] can accept the Gospels."

it should ultimately falter in no way diminishes the sincerity and seriousness of the attempt.

Another important point I wish to stress is that dynamics within the absolute is inevitably seen as a form of strife. This remains a fundamental dimension of polytheism in all its incarnations, and what is meaningful is its profound contrast with trinitarian mono-theism. The great insight here is that non-strife defines the relation-ship among the divine persons—or, as we would say, love. We may take this for granted, imbued as we are by a millennial doctrinal tradition. But if we reflect on the contrast with the polytheistic frame of mind, we will be helped to rise above the cliché. Trinitarian love means that the dynamic energy within the absolute does not translate into an insane and endless whirl of cosmic fights, but rather thrives on harmony.

2.2. The pre-Socratic dichotomy

The classic formulation of Heraclitus and Parmenides, to which I have already alluded, is, in some respect, a step backwards, rather than forwards, vis–à–vis the Babylonian frame.[16] And this is for two reasons. First, while the Babylonian myth seeks to integrate the two contrasting positions into a unitary vision, the pre-Socratics bring to their respective logical extremes each position (change vs. permanence) as separate one from the other. Second, while the Baby-lonian frame proposes individual agents as participants (the gods), the Greek philosophers argue for broad general principles that have no proper agency of their own. Let us review both points in some detail.

From what we know, it appears that the opposition as such (between change and permanence) is not built into either of the re-spective modes of thought, not, at least, within the boundaries of the fragments we have: Heraclitus does not argue against permanence, nor Parmenides against change. The reason this matters to us here is that this dichotomy may be seen as the extreme result of the logical effort to analyze reality, i.e., to break it down into its component

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[16]It is interesting to note that the later Babylonian recension is roughly contemporary with the appearance of Buddhism and only slightly earlier than the Greek pre-Socratics. It is not inconceivable that Heraclitus, on the coast of Asia Minor, might have been vaguely familiar with the central themes of Babylonian mythology.

parts, at the risk of forfeiting the vision of the whole. This in turn limits the validity of even the central insight. For the finality with which change is advocated in Heraclitus highlights an essential antinomy, namely the inability to conceive dynamism other than as becoming. This is the central issue. The act of becoming is understood in a fully vectorial sense, i.e., as a movement from one point to another. Raised to the status of an absolute principle, it emerges as a cosmic whirlpool. But it remains essentially vectorial. There is a fundamental inability to see the dynamic dimension of an absolute that remains properly such, an absolute that is not degraded to the level of intrinsic change, one that retains all the dynamics of life. The grand syntheses that will follow in Greek philosophy will attempt in various ways to recover that higher vision, wherein permanence is not frozen and life is not just restlessness. But this will remain an effort to swim upstream, an effort to recover the unity of what had been (irrevocably, it would seem) shattered.

Such fragmentation is the same intellectual process that I see at the root of polytheism. And this takes us to the second point that is relevant for us here with regard to the pre-Socratics. Their emphasis is on broad aspects of reality, perceived in a generic manner, without a concern for the particularity that would emerge were there any proper "actors" on the scene—God or the gods. When Heraclitus says that "War is the father of all and the king of all" he is not referring to an individual agent, but rather to a broad perception that might best be rendered by inverting the terms of the proposition, paraphrasing it as follows: "conflict is the universal divine principle." It appears as though the process of abstraction, left to itself, leads away from the particularity represented by the gods, seen as a degradation of the broader principles. Yet, as it seeks to ennoble, conceptually, the multiplicity of an excessively fragmented "divine" world, it falls prey to a more subtle, but at the same time more wide-ranging, fragmentation. Those broader principles (change vs. permanence) are seen with an exclusivity that reduces, in effect, their universal import, and with a generality that eliminates their capacity for agency. Recomposing an absolute that is also an agent proves, inevitably and increasingly, a utopia.

Herein lies the trinitarian significance of the pre-Socratic experience. The very fact that change and permanence should be proposed as autonomous forces, as if their conciliation did not matter, heightens the realization of the central importance of each. It

posits the terms of the problem, and thereby sharpens our aware-
ness of it. There is an intuition of the central dynamics within the
absolute, an urge for an answer that can best be enucleated through
a reflection on the trinitarian dimension of God. It is as if Augus-
tine's description of his psychological restlessness could be applied
to humanity's ontological search. We sense the trinitarian dynamics
even as we collapse it, through our analytical efforts, into component
parts, destroying in the process the very fabric of the absolute.

2.3. The Buddhist disembodiment

The same propensity to see action only as purely vectorial,
to conceive dynamism only as becoming, and thus the inability to
conceive the possibility of life and energy within the absolute, would
seem to be at the roots of the eastern "enlightenment," the Bud-
dha experience.[17] In answer to Greek polytheism, the pre-Socratics
emphasized the dichotomy between being and becoming as the su-
preme intellectual goal. Conversely, and in contrast with the poly-
theistic view of Brahmanism, Buddhism proclaims a psychological
goal: precisely because change is at the root of our actions it is, at the
same time, at the root of our suffering. Hence we must resist that all-
consuming greed that seeks a constant alteration of our present state:
our ultimate goal should be to let go of our very desire for change.
Emptiness emerges therefore as the natural state of the absolute.

Seen in the light of the pre-Socratic experience, such an ex-
treme conclusion seems inevitable. If what is raised to the level of
ontological standard is mere becoming, i.e., the vectorial dimension
of change, then abrogating it emerges as the safest counteraction.
The subtle implication of the Buddhist "way" is that conversion it-
self should not be interpreted as change. Nor is there properly any
reincarnation through which a subject changes state and nature: the
possibility of even such a change is denied because the soul's selfhood
is denied, so that instead of re-incarnation (in the sense of re-birth
or metempsychosis) we should properly speak of ad-incarnation (in
the sense that the death of one being is the occasion that conditions
the start of another). Indeed, it might seem that *engaging* in any ef-

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[17]I should stress that my knowledge of Buddhism derives primarily from
secondary sources.

fort; that *striving* to acquire a new attitude; that *walking* along a linear interior path—that all of this would take us from one point to the next, hence commit us to that very change we are to shun. Therefore the Buddhist *metanoia* is not a turning toward something outside us, but a self-divesting of accretions. The "path" is ultimately not a path, nor is the "vehicle," whether major nor minor, properly a vehicle, because one does not really wish to go from one point to another. The goal is more like an evaporation.

Such a radical and all-pervasive conviction that change must be eschewed because it can only be vectorial is at the extreme antipodes of the Christian view, more so than with any other system of spirituality. The concepts of communion and love, advent and acceptance, transformation and forgiveness reflect, in their authentic Christian dimension, a conception that is diametrically opposite to that of Buddhism—not to mention the Trinity as the supreme dynamics of the absolute, and the incarnation as the targeted issue of this dynamics. The very idea that the absolute may be engaged in any sort of event, and thus, ultimately, the very notions of creation, grace and sacred history, are at total odds with a spirituality that aims instead for a radical disembodiment, i.e., for jettisoning our very becoming rather than accepting the external gift that allows us to become what we can be.

Where are, then, the trinitarian implications? Is there any seed-like sense of the Trinity in Buddhism? The answer focuses, I suggest, on the perfectly specular nature of the relationship. The denial of all that is central to the Biblical and, specifically, the Christian perception highlights the very nature of what is denied. Through the dark brilliancy of denial, Buddha defines with utter precision the contours of a conceptual black hole, at the very edge of our experience. The black hole is the possibility of dynamics within, and out of, the absolute. The contours are in the awareness of how this impacts us. Change is indeed our fundamental experience. And seen only as vectorial, it cannot possibly be inscribed within the absolute. To regain the absolute, we must jettison "vectoriality," i.e., the steps along the linearity of change. Change as temporal fragmentation and vectorial linearity is identified as the essence of the non-absolute. Herein lies the consonance between the two positions. The divergence emerges when we seek to deal with it. On the one hand, Buddha teaches that we must let go of the fragments, which will leave only a blessed nothingness where there are no pieces. This is

the fundamental reduction proposed as a way to overcome the meta-physical original sin of polytheism, the fragmentation of the absolute. As such, it evinces the most profound realization of the core issues of the specularly opposite trinitarian message. Let us consider the two that are most important—(1) the non-linear dynamics within, and (2) the sacramental "embodiment" without, the absolute (the *ad intra* and the *ad extra* tropes of trinitarian theology).

First, it is our experience that events bespeak change: what happens, happens at a given point in time. It was not there before. Thus it is that change as we know ("suffer") it, is only vectorial, because it leads from one point to another. What emerges then from Buddha's insight is the most precise delineation of the nature of change as it dominates our lives, of the essential "linearity" of the human condition. Escaping from this linearity becomes the goal he proposes: to annul not the chain of events, but our insertion in it. The contours he outlines define (this is the black hole) the converse of his position, namely the possibility of a dynamics that is not lin-ear, a dynamics that is inscribed within the absolute. What Buddha's perception evokes in our trinitarian sensitivity is that change as we know it cannot possibly be predicated of the absolute, that God's time is indeed not our time. Precisely because Buddhism seeks ref-uge (salvation) in total immanence, in a total abdication of change, it teaches us the true dimension of transcendence. It teaches us that, if a dynamism is to be found in the absolute, it is not in the nature of the vectorial change in which we are enmeshed. Rather, it is a dynamism that is properly trinitarian.

Second, our own posture vis-à-vis the absolute will naturally be determined by such conception of change/dynamics. Disembodi-ment is the logical outcome of Buddha's insight—extracting oneself from the flow, finding an anchor outside of, and apart from, the vortex and the vertigo. From a trinitarian point of view, this *reductio ad absurdum* highlights, by virtue of its very specularity, the serious-ness of the Christian conception. This views sacramentality as the insertion within the very dynamics of the absolute, the Eucharist as acceptance of the advent's issue, salvation as something to be accept-ed rather than conquered. Buddha's insight showcases the awesome dimension of all this. The Incarnation, the Cross, the Resurrection, the Ascension, are not just major and significant events. They define history as the setting where the absolute is found because *he* descends into our nothingness. By urging that *we* descend into an even greater

emptiness to find therein a changeless stasis, Buddha sheds the most brilliant light on the meaning of nothingness as the place where we do indeed find the absolute. Only that, as Christians, we seek the exact converse: the greater the realization of our nothingness, the purer is our attitude of proper adoration and, through it, our acceptance of the redemption, conversion, and final focusing (the resurrection) of our vortex, our vertigo.

2.4. Love: the ad intra dynamics

Against the three perspectives just outlined, the notion of trinitarian "love" emerges with sharper contours than the term, made trite through repetition, may at first convey. I have already stressed the significance of love as non-strife when compared to Mesopotamian polytheism and to the pre-Socratic understanding of becoming, and of love as communion when compared with Buddhist disembodiment. We may pursue this a bit further.

Two facts are remarkable in this respect in the configuration of the Mesopotamian pantheon. One, for all the variety of staged interactions among the deities, love as rooted in friendship (i.e., as distinct from lovemaking) is altogether missing. And, two, there is no deity that serves as icon for love understood in that sense. The goddess of "love" (Inanna/Ishtar) is indeed one of the major protagonists of the mythical world, but she stands for "love" understood (through a variety of syncretistic episodes) as the embodiment of sexual attraction, in addition to representing strife and warfare. (In the sixth tablet of the epic of Gilgamesh, her advances are explicitly rejected by the hero because of her inability to offer friendship and commitment.)

Not that love as friendship is unknown, far from it. There are countless episodes of spousal love, of genuine friendship, of filial devotion in Mesopotamia as in Greece or India or everywhere else. It is, rather, that tenderness, commitment, surrender of self are never inscribed in the absolute as they are in the Christian trinitarian perspective. Here, love constitutes the very structure[18] of the absolute in the specific sense of an interaction that evokes, precisely, tenderness,

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[18]I have dealt with the ramifications of this in my article "Religious Vows and the Structure of Love," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23 (Fall 1996): 562–578.

commitment and surrender within the absolute without introducing an element of vectoriality that would impinge on its intrinsic nature. This insight allows us to better understand the profound sense of liberation that the coming of Christianity, with its trinitarian message, brought to a world where the perception of the absolute was wholly devoid of that most human of feelings. And this not just because the pagan world did not somehow think of it. Rather, it is because of a profound structural incompatibility in the very conception of the absolute. This incompatibility was shattered not through the development of a doctrine, but through the living witness that the Logos incarnate gave of tenderness, commitment and self surrender to the Father from whom he came and to the Spirit to whom he handed over "his" Church.

We gain thereby an insight into what may rightly be called (looking at events in terms purely of secular history) the "genius of Jesus": to him alone do we owe the assuredness that the absolute admits of internal interaction while both remaining absolute and while not being rent by strife; that within the absolute there is love; that, in fact, the absolute is love. This is all the more remarkable, historically, in that this assuredness does not come from the development of a doctrine or a mythology. Jesus never develops an argument to prove his vision nor does he describe it. He only interacts. He displays his assuredness because he lives the vision while framed by our time and space. He is a witness to the trinitarian inner life, and he lets this witness speak for itself.

2.5. Prayer: the ad extra confrontation

For each of the three positions (Babylonian, pre-Socratic and Buddhist) I have articulated a core that can be understood as a trinitarian apprehension. We will now consider, in a comparative mode, the different ways in which human confrontation takes shape within these systems when attempting to involve the absolute in our affairs—what we normally call prayer. I will seek to clarify how vectoriality impacts the different efforts at establishing a bridge with the absolute when one aims at affecting "it," through an initiative (a "prayer") that intends to elicit a response from an absolute whose very ability to respond is in question. And we will elucidate in this perspective the correlative Christian (i.e., trinitarian) attitude.

Babylonian prayer (in fact, polytheistic prayer as a whole) is so profoundly vectorial that it aims in the end at predicting rather than asking. It is vectorial in the sense that it sees change wholly and uniquely inscribed in the unfolding of events: predictability lends the supreme comfort, because it gives humans a handle on process understood in a mechanical sense. Thus prayer takes, on the one hand, the form of an omen that identifies the recurrence of patterns, and, on the other, the form of an incantation that enables humans to best conform to this pattern. Direct prayer to the gods is seen as a request made to a better craftsman, one who knows better than us how to identify predictability, and is asked to share this knowledge with us. Gods do not posit reality, they conform to it. And so do we, if on a lesser scale.

The pre-Socratic and Buddhist approaches leave little room for an agency from which one might expect a direct intervention. Hence prayer is seen more as recognition than as request, recognition of an order of being of which one strives to be a part. The result is meditation seen as self-fulfillment rather than as confrontation with an autonomous active center. Instead of expecting a trans-vectorial (see above, 1.5) initiative, i.e., an event that reaches out to us humans, in whatever form we might be able to elicit it, we are understood as the very centers of this vectoriality. Simply defining it allows us, in the pre-Socratic view, to cope with it. In Buddhism, instead, we are called to extricate ourselves from it.

The trinitarian dimension of the Christian approach proposes an altogether different answer to the question of vectoriality in the absolute, specifically in relation to prayer. The absolute is not vectorial, and yet is imbued with the dynamics of personal interaction. Vectoriality emerges therefore as an aspect of creation: humans are created in his image, and even vectoriality can be seen as a reflection of trinitarian dynamics. By the very fact that vectoriality is posited through creation, the absolute can relate to it without being "corrupted" by it. It is through the Incarnation that the supreme fulfillment takes place. Through it, sacramentally (and thus at a deep level of reality, not just intellectually), humans are identified with the Logos, and are thus absorbed within the trinitarian whirlwind. Prayer is then seen not as something that hooks onto the absolute from without, but rather as the way through which God speaks to God (trinitarially!) through us, it emerges as the expression of God's

own desire. We pray his prayer.[19]

There is a profound psychological dimension in this—one that, in different ways, underlies the attitudes present in the three other systems we are considering. In different but analogous ways, "God's desire" is, in those systems, the immutable framework of fate: the whirlwind of individual destinies is interlaced in a grand aggregate where vectorial relationships are the rule. Prayer is the process whereby these relationships are disentangled and vectoriality is mastered. One prays for intervention not *from* but rather *into* fate, of which one aims at taking progressively control. Even in Buddhism, where the ideal is in fact to eschew all intervention, a pattern is recognized as a chain where each being conditions the other through "reincarnation," even when (by denying the self-identity of a soul across the various stages) there is no specific continuity of a single carrier. In other words, in all three systems, prayer is the effort to wrest vectoriality from the absolute either by appropriating its patterns (through cultic events like omina and incantations in polytheism and through the progressively more abstract contemplation of philosophy in the pre-Socratics) or by annulling it in one's own awareness (in Buddhism).

The alternative proposed by trinitarian prayer is to confront the absolute in a trans-vectorial mode. Grace is the motion that, starting from beyond all starting points, arrives at a termination point where it does not terminate. The *ad intra* motionless dynamics posits the *ad extra* target, and reaches for it. From beyond vectoriality, grace effects, and therefore affects, vectoriality. And prayer, trinitarian prayer, is the acceptance and the response: fully enmeshed as we are in change, we accept the absolute as origin, and we aim for it as target. And yet, fully cognizant of the beyondness, we see origin and

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[19]The great drama arises when two conflicting prayers clash with each other in claiming a divine answer. In this context, it is worth reading in full Lincoln's second inaugural address, where he says in part, referring to the two parties in the Civil War: "Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes." Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (Washington, DC, 4 March 1865), http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres32.html.

target as devoid of vectorial limitations, as an origin which is not a point of departure, and as a target which is not a point of termination.

Note that *ad extra* refers to the movement from the Trinity to the "outside." But, in fact, the movement is bi-directional. If the Trinity relates trans-vectorially to us, the creatures, it is because what is being allowed is as well a confrontation from the "outside" towards the trinitarian self. Our point of departure is indeed that, a vectorial point. But the target is, in this case, trans-vectorial: we reach a point that is not a point, i.e., the absolute. The danger is to reduce the trans-vectorial target to a vectorial point, to re-introduce the pagan instinct to control vectorially what cannot be so controlled. The calm determination of the Christian psyche in prayer is one of the aspects that most sets it apart from the early pagan apprehensions of the absolute. As it does from the more recent apprehensions, to which we must now turn our attention.

3. The age of paradox: Trinitarian apprehensions in the modern and contemporary world

While the ancient eastern enlightenment (Buddhism) was reacting against the polytheistic stance of Brahmanism, the modern western enlightenment reacted against the configuration that monotheism had achieved through the school's formalization. The Enlightenment was, in this sense, a new proclamation of analytical fragmentation as the ideal intellectual process.[20] It developed into a movement away from the concretion that had been building up over the centuries, a concretion that seemed to want to protect, as if in a hard shell, a truth too fragile to be allowed to live independently of the superimposed intellectual cocoon. To the extent that such concretion had obtained in Christian thought, it did endanger the very life of the truth it aimed to protect: it was too fearful to let the inner dynamics of truth blossom and unfold on its own. The various

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[20]Two interrelated phenomena that originated in the period of the Enlightenment are indicative of the broader cultural milieu within which the development took place. On the one hand scholarly journals began to provide an outlet for the ever greater specialization (fragment oriented) of the various disciplines. On the other hand, and at the same time, the "Encyclopédie" project aimed to bring back the fragments to an overall synthesis that was born out of, and borne by, the fragments themselves.

negative reactions that this elicited, of which the Enlightenment is only one, had the positive effect (from a Christian point of view) of rekindling the sense of an inner dynamics of life within the perception of the absolute; of alerting us that we are not meant to impose our controls over it; of showing us that profound contradictions can be seen as indicators of an even deeper life.

"Do not suffocate the Spirit," Paul had urged (1 Thes 5:19). That the Spirit lived independently of the irrepressible human tendency to keep him in check was in fact as firmly rooted a conviction as ever in the Church. But where the intellectual superstructure seemed to steer away from this awareness, the way was more easily left open for attempts to let air in from the outside, as it were. In describing, however briefly, these different trends I will proceed in a roughly chronological sequence and in two parallel directions, reflected in paired subsections. In the first subsection of each pair, I will attempt to show how there is, inherent in the basic urge, a certain apprehension or premonition of trinitarian reality. In the second subsection I will show, in counterpoint, how an alert Christian sensibility may gain from an open confrontation with the deeper reaches of plain and simple human sensibility. In each pair, then, the second subsection proposes, as it were, a re-targeting of a deeper if hidden urge towards the trinitarian dimension.

First, (3.1.1) idealism proposed a grand re-configuring that presumed to show how, to free the Spirit from the chokehold, one had to intervene with our own, human alternative—as if the Spirit could, in the first place, have indeed been choked, and as if he needed therefore our intellectual scaffolding to come back to life, in the new form humans had shaped. The Christian indebtedness to idealism was (3.1.2) a sharper understanding of the highly dynamic nature of the relationships inherent in the *real* being, hence a heightened sensitivity for the depth of trinitarian life.

As it began to appear (3.2.1) that the grand construction could not even breathe, that it was in a sense stillborn because it choked on its own presumption, despair set in, with a blind urge to read the clang and clamor of the collapse as an echo of the original breath newly sensed as real. The positive side of the urge was the perception that the "ideal" should be so rich of its own life as to be able to constantly refresh itself. The confrontation with this state of mind highlights (3.2.2) the Christian concept of faithfulness: the "ideal" is indeed so personal and so much alive that *he* expects us to trust *his*

unfailing faithfulness—even in the total ignorance of the modalities through which the encounter will manifest itself.

The eventual offshoot of this mode of thought was (3.3.1) the post-modern and deconstructionist trend, which is still with us, and reacts not so much against intellectual constructs (of which it has produced its ample share), but rather against the presumption of possessing an argument once it has been construed. This sheds a strong light (3.3.2) on a fundamental trinitarian sensitivity, opposed to the temptation of an intellectual triumphalism that pretends to possess the truth. In Trinitarian terms, deconstruction is a call to dispossession.

Two significant side effects may be singled out as they pertain to culture in general. First (3.4.1), there developed a whole new approach in art and literature to the apprehension of continuity in nature. Cubism in painting may be taken as emblematic: the dislocation of the natural sequence is a challenge to see deeper connections, held together by a subtle and profoundly intriguing dynamics. Thus we are reminded (3.4.2) of the fundamental trinitarian call to rediscover harmony as the dynamic and unpredictable interaction of what may well appear as disjointed fragments.

The tragic addiction to hallucinogens (3.5.1) hardly seems a place where a hidden sense of trinitarian reality might lurk. But one may make the point that, beyond the immediate sensory gratification, there might be, even in addiction, an attempt to validate a discontinuity in consciousness as the urge to discover a suture with a higher plane of reality. That the effort is doomed to failure (intellectually, and thus apart from all the physically suicidal side-effects) is due to the inherent pretense to possession through automatic, i.e., chemical, mechanisms. The urge is met instead, in a Christian perspective, by the conviction (3.5.2) that mysticism is at the root of the deepest insights and highest reaches.

3.1. Idealism

3.1.1. The staticity of dialectics

The idealist trend, epitomized by G. F. Hegel, seeks to project an *ideal* absolute that is extracted from the depth of the human spirit. The unified whole that emerges is a projection in the sense that it can be seen as if from the outside, from the point of view

of our analysis. An essential component of the grand projection is a sense of dynamics, which finds its expression in the concept of dialectics, a notion that addresses squarely the question of the relationship between multiplicity and unity, between change and the absolute. Change as development or progress is thereby inscribed in the very essence of the absolute: it is so understood that the inner dynamics of the absolute, hence the absolute itself, may be analyzed, broken down, into its component parts. A contradiction in terms, since the absolute transcends composition by definition. If the ontological original sin of polytheism had been the fragmentation of god as being, the ontological original sin of idealism is the fragmentation of god as process. But the starting point is what interests us here. It is the apprehension of how fundamental dynamics is, how change should in some way be rescued, not jettisoned (as it is in Buddhism), as a sort of trinitarian re-dressing of Heraclitus.

The re-composition of multiplicity, the reconciliation of the opposites happens from within the core of multiplicity and opposition. It is a reconfiguration the dynamics of which derives from the intrinsic polarity of the fragments, from the rediscovery of their original unity. The grand reconciliation that is at the core of Hegel's thought[21] is a *reconstitution* of an aboriginal unity. But—this is the paradox—the reconciliation is seen as happening not because the opposites merge of their own volition, but rather from the outside, because they are framed by our ability to view the whole process intellectually. From the vantage point of our analysis and grand synthesis, Hegel dispenses with the need to confront the absolute as being capable of His own initiative. Thus it is that the trinitarian apprehension of Hegel's system, its glorification of the spirit, its inherent desire to integrate Christian thought within the framework of modern sensitivity—all contribute to distancing rather than re-approaching. The grand projection turns us into external observers. Even inter-subjectivity is seen from the outside, as part of a system that is ultimately predictable precisely because systemic. The subject is essentially declined in the third person. Yes, a sense of history is

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[21]See for this the work by Piero Coda, and in particular his major and important book *Il Negativo e la Trinità. Ipotesi su Hegel. Indagine storico-sistematica sulla "Denkform" hegeliana alla luce dell'ermeneutica del cristianesimo: un contributo al dibattito contemporaneo sul Cristo crocifisso come rivelazione del Dio trinitario nella storia* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1987).

central to the effort, but in the end history, too, is framed and seen from without. Thus, what is proposed as an underlying dynamics is in fact a form of entropy that re-aggregates shreds into a grand inert uniformity. It is in this sense that Hegelian dialectics may be viewed as ultimately static.

We may look at prayer as a litmus test in identifying whether or not there is a dynamic confrontation with the absolute, a confrontation that recognizes, at the same time, a real dynamics and agency *within* the absolute. And prayer is missing in Hegel. Where it is mentioned in a contemporary context, it is far from being a meaningful confrontation: "To read the newspaper early in the morning is like saying matins. Man turns his attitude vis-à-vis the world in the direction either of God or of that which is the world. It gives the same certainty to know where one is located" (*A* n.32).[22] It is especially interesting to see how Hegel speaks respectfully of the tradition of prayer as a cultural manifestation of given historical traditions[23]—except, with a characterization so gross as to appear naïve, when it comes to the Catholic tradition. Speaking of this (specifically of the time of Gregory VII) he writes: "Since the clergy becomes the absolute intermediary between men and between Christ and God, thus laymen cannot turn to God directly in prayer, but only through a middle person, through dead and fulfilled persons, the saints, who serve as conciliators" (*VPhG*, 671). Hegel then goes on to speak disparagingly of relics, of Mary, of the sacraments. Here, for instance, is his "understanding" of the Eucharist: "In this present time related to the world of the senses, Christ is this particular thing, the host consecrated by the priest. . . . The point

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[22]Citations are as follows: *A=Aphorismen*; *E=Enzyklopädie*; *G=Der Geist des Christentums*; *VÄ=Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*; *VGPh=Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*; *VPhG=Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*; *VPhR=Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*. See also P. Coda, *Il Negativo e la Trinità*, 133 n. 97, 362 n. 16.

[23]Here are the main references to pages from the Suhrkamp edition: primitive paganism (*E II*, 172; *VPhR I*, 117, 314); China (*VPhR I*, 470); India (*VPhG I*, 204; *VPhG I*, 262, 283; *VPhR I*, 511, 523f, and esp. 531f, about the lack of prayer); Iran (*VÄ I*, 626–30; *VPhG* 318, 321; *VPhR I*, 600, 602); Israel (*G* 126; *VÄ I*, 720); Greece (*VPhR II*, 202f: "we" cannot pray to the ideal forces represented by the gods); New Testament (*G* 64f., 91, 94f., 204); historical Christianity (*VÄ II*, 508) . A theoretical assessment of prayer is found in a discussion about the Romantic painting tradition (*VÄ III*, 69–71).

is that the way in which God brings himself to appear becomes 'a given this,' so that the host, *this thing*, could be prayed to as God" (691, emphasis mine). From all this only the "Germanic world" (!) can save us. For it is through "the old and faithfully preserved sense of interiority of the German people" that the collapse of all this superstition finally comes: so much so that Luther's (German) re-discovery of the spirit is contrasted with the discovery (by the rest of Europe) of the new physical geographies, i.e., the far East and America (730). Hegel has also a brief sardonic reference to catholic "little prayer booklets," which are opposed to Luther's translation of the Bible (736). Well outside the Lutheran triumph of the spirit is, in catholicism, "the freedom of uncultured masses (which) becomes poverty, sadness—where churches are not empty of people praying, nor roads of pilgrims, nor graves of people kneeling" (*A* n.84).

3.1.2. The perception of divine dynamics

Antonio Rosmini's[24] work offers an important example of a Christian response to a given intellectual challenge, one that leads to a profound confrontation and re-interpretation of a radically new trend of thought—in his case, idealism.[25] The bearing of idealism on his doctrine of Trinity is expectedly very significant, and it has been studied in detail.[26] It revolves around the identification of three es-

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[24]A major philosopher (1797–1855), many of his works remained unpublished during his lifetime on account of both his involvement in the order he had founded, and the strong opposition of certain elements in the church, which resulted in some of his writings being placed on the Index. He was beatified on November 18, 2008. His influence on modern thought (Christian and otherwise) does not seem to be as pronounced as it deserves.

[25]S. Kierkegaard (who died the same year as Rosmini, though he was sixteen years younger) developed an (influential) critique of idealism which proposes an altogether different line of thought. Rosmini's approach is from within idealism itself, and in this respect it lends itself better to our present concerns. For an assessment of the complex relationship between Rosmini and Hegel see Michele Dossi, *Profilo filosofico di Antonio Rosmini, ITC-isr Centro per le Scienze Religiose in Trento* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1998), 293–304.

[26]See recently the important two volumes by Michele Bennardo, "Biblioteca di Studi Rosminiani," 30 in *Persona e Trinità. La genesi e le fonti del pensiero antropologico e teologico di Rosmini* (Stresa: Edizioni Rosminiane So-

sential modes of created being—real, ideal and moral. This trinitarian modality is seen as the essential nature of being, and it is for this reason that an overriding trinitarian presence pervades all of reality. For one can see "the vestiges of the most holy Trinity shine in the universe, . . . three primitive and original forms, which cannot be confused with each other, and by which the universe is shaped, i.e., the three modes of created being. These three forms or modes of being are: 1. the real being, 2. the ideal being, 3. the moral being."[27]

The notion of forms and modes seems at first to reinforce the sense of a basic staticity that underlies the classical idealist notion of dialectics that I have just highlighted. But there are two radical differences. The first is that at the basis of Rosmini's trinitarian ontology there is the recognition of how essential is the act of self-giving. Love (which is constitutive of the "moral" form of being) emerges as more than a psychological trait, it is a true ontological dimension, from which there develops a fundamental interpersonal perspective[28] that annuls altogether the danger of staticity. There is an important consequence: interpersonal self-giving as a core aspect of trinitarian reality helps us to see the notion of gratitude in a whole new light. In its sacramental dimension, gratitude emerges as wholly central to Christian life—whereas it (concept and word) was essentially missing in the ancient Near East, including ancient Israel. There, gratitude is subsumed under praise, conceptually and semantically (modern translations being deceptive in this respect). In the Old Testament, this derives from an almost anguished sense of the Absolute's absolute transcendence: what could we possibly give in return for all we have

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dalitas, 2006); "Biblioteca di Studi Rosminiani," 32 in *Uno e trino. Il fondamento dell'antropologia nel pensiero teologico-filosofico di Rosmini* (Stresa: Edizioni Rosminiane Sodalitas, 2007), and even more recently the important volume by Roberto Roffi, *Ontologia, metafisica e teologia in Rosmini. Il problema della fondazione ultima* (Rome: Aracne, 2011), 241–80.

[27]A. Rosmini, *Antropologia soprannaturale*, vol. 1, ed. Umberto Muratore, "Edizione critica delle opere edite ed inedite di Antonio Rosmini," 39 (Stresa: Città Nuova, 1983), 141 (translation mine). The notion of the three forms of being is central to Rosmini's thought and it appears throughout his work.

[28]This aspect is analyzed in depth by Bennardo (cited especially in 2007, n. 17, p. 166–169). Very interesting in this section is also the elaboration of a comparison between Rosmini and later (modern) theologies, especially Barth's and Rahner's. It is this interpersonal dimension that distinguished Rosmini's view of love from Hegel's (especially the early Hegel).

received (as in Ps 116:12)? What the incarnation meant in this re-spect was that we can give the self-giving of God, grafted as we are, sacramentally, onto the Trinity. Hence it is that gratitude emerges as an ontological new dimension of human life: eucharistically, we are ascribed into trinitarian dynamics.

The great stress that Rosmini places on the real being shows how this wholly new perspective becomes even more significant when seen against the backdrop of the sensitivity introduced by Hegel—and this is the second important difference vis-à-vis ideal-ism when we look at it from a Christian (in this case, Rosmini's) point of view. The *interpersonal*[29] and *real* dimension of being entails *agency* (see above, 2.2, 2.5)—to which he refers as subjective activity, energy, strength.[30] This means that within the absolute there is a real independence of action, real in the double sense that it is independent from our perception of it, and that it unfolds within itself apart from its relationship to us. Thus it is that we are in turn the target of that agency, open to unpredictability and asked to assent positively and explicitly. Rosmini's articulation of this aspect anticipates in remark-able ways both Husserl's intentionality and Levinas' alterity.

3.2. "Spleen et idéal"

3.2.1. The bored hubris of predictability

In those marvelous times when a grand Theology
flourished with the highest of zest and energy,
word has it that one among its greatest doctors
—one who had strong-armed the indifferent
shaking them in their deepest blacknesses;

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[29]The lack of an adequate appreciation of the personal reality is identified and discussed in detail by P. Coda as the major failing ("betrayal' or "missed promise") in Hegel's system. See especially *Il Negativo e la Trinità*, 378: "It is correct to say that Hegel wants to interpret the interpersonal relationship in a trinitarian key . . . but what prevents him from going all the way . . . is the lack of a precise vision of divine trinitarianism as the archetype, the founda-tion and the hermeneutic key of human trinitarianism. . . . [In Hegel,] the human subject disappears when it comes to an intersubjective relationship . . . because the subject is not a person" (translation mine).

[30]See Dossi, *Profilo filosofico di Antonio Rosmini*, 283–291 for a clear review of this aspect of Rosmini's theory.

one who had gone beyond toward celestial glories
on strange paths unknown even to himself,
where only pure spirits had, perhaps, arrived –
like unto a man upon the heights where one can only panic
exclaimed, transported by satanic pride:
"Oh Jesus, my little Jesus! How high have I raised you!
Mark well: had I instead attacked you
where I know you vulnerable,
your shame would now match your glory,
and you would be but a ridiculous fetus!"

No sooner did this thought take shape in him than
his reason left him,
his sun-like brilliance was veiled in mourning,
and full-blown chaos rolled down within that brain of his
that had once been alive, full of order and opulence,
where so much intellectual pomp had once shone forth.
Silence and the night came down instead to dwell in him
as if in cellars to which the keys are lost.
Henceforth he wandered like an aimless beast,
roaming the fields without the gift of sight,
unable to tell apart summers from winters,
ugly, useless and dirty like a discarded thing,
only to arouse the children's mocking laughter.

In its entirety, this is my rendering of an early poem of Baudelaire, entitled "The Punishment of Pride." First published in 1850, it was included a few years later (1859) in his *Les Fleurs du mal*,[31] as number 16 of the section entitled "Spleen and Ideal," the English term "spleen" being used as such in the original French, with a meaning ("melancholy") that is obsolete today. The poem is a fitting, if unwitting, epitaph to the great idealist construction. It is also, along with the title of the book and section in which it appeared, an anguished anticipation of all that followed—the full-blown chaos ("*tout le chaos roula dans cette intelligence*"), the cellar to which one has lost the key ("*comme dans un caveau dont la clef est perdue*"), the aimless wandering ("*et, quand il s'en allait sans rien voir, à travers / les champs, sans distinguer les étés des hivers*"). It is interesting in this respect to note how the meaning of the title "*Les fleurs du mal*" is interpreted by Baudelaire himself in the dedication of his work:

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[31]For a beautiful recent rendering of the complete work see Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal: The Complete Text of the Flowers of Evil*, trans. Richard Howard (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982).

"*ces fleurs maladives*"—with an emphasis not on an ambitious and triumphing "blooming of evil" (as was presumably intended by the friend who originally suggested the title to Baudelaire), but rather on the "sickliness" of the undercurrent that saps the efflorescence at the root. Rather than "flowers of evil," the poems are seen by the author as "flowers of malaise."

It is a malaise that betrays the haunting sense of a beyond that is not constructed and, therefore, not static. The philosophical trends that had been shaping what we know as the modern mindset, from rationalism and the enlightenment to idealism, were rushing us headlong towards the presumption of a universal theory of the universe that would freeze all of reality within the hard shell of total predictability. Towards the final triumph of polytheism. This triumph was to be the final discovery that there can be no living subject, no God, behind this grand general theory of the universe.[32] *This* was to be the death of God, and the final efflorescence of the gods of our own making, the highest nodes of the all-encompassing categorization system constructed by human intelligence from the ground up. Baudelaire is a voice that agonizingly speaks to the reality of the deeper urge for life and dynamics in the absolute.

But at the same time, ostensibly, he twists it in the direction of a wholly different reality. He is an emblematic figure that leads eventually into the great age of contradictions, as we may well want to call the post-modern era. Baudelaire's most apparent contradiction is the one between the perfectly polished, and supremely ambitious, form of his poetic style on the one hand and, on the other, the equally supremely bored disillusionment with the substance of his life. The "spleen" is precisely the latter. The theme of boredom recurs regularly in his work,[33] as do the various attempts to overcome it (we will see below, 3.5.1, how this extends to the use of hallucinogens). The recognition of the futility of these attempts is all in the melancholy

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[32]The end of Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* is an eloquent proclamation of this intent.

[33]See, for instance, *Le voyage*, the last in the order of the collection of the *Fleurs du mal* (Number 126, dated to 1859): "How bitter is the knowledge one gains in traveling! / The world—small and monotone, today / like yesterday, tomorrow, and ever—shows us but our own image, / an oasis that's full of horror within a wasteland of boredom ("*une oasis d'horreur dans un desert d'ennui*" ll. 109–112).

tone of the realization. Boredom, "spleen," is, in a way, the counter-point of Nietzsche's anger: both want to deal with the boredom of a wholly predictable universe.

3.2.2. The risk of faithfulness

To take up Baudelaire's gauntlet, and Nietzsche's and that of the countless others who fall in between,[34] we may explore what I consider to be the trinitarian target of their urge—the "*idéal.*"

A vectorial perception of dynamics within the absolute leads, we have seen (especially in section 2.3), to the final stasis, to the nullification of the absolute. But a trans-vectorial, i.e., a trinitarian, perception fosters a vision wherein the ideal is not an idea, but is endowed with all the unpredictability of life—while remaining, by virtue of being absolute, more deeply predictable than any scientific law. We are indebted to the age of paradox and contradictions, to our own postmodern world, for a deeper appreciation of this dimension, which biblical sensibility had developed along the lines of an alterna-tive, and very concrete, theme—faithfulness.[35]

That God is faithful means two things among others. He is limpidly predictable as the creative source of all. But he is at the same time obscurely unpredictable as to the modalities with which his cre-ative interaction takes shape. Herein lies the predictable unpredict-ability of the Christian *amen*: something is certain as to where it comes from, but it is uncertain as to how it comes to be. Thus the deeper urge of the modern world finds an unexpected answer in relating to the Trinity. We cannot speak of the faithfulness of a scientific law, much less of a system of such laws: they are only predictable, beyond doubt. But the dynamic personal absolute we know as the Trin-ity combines predictability and uncertainty. And kills all boredom.

Uncertainty is correlative to risk. There is no risk in laws.

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[34]S. Kierkegaard, of whose apprehensions Baudelaire is an unwitting echo, develops a comprehensive critique of the "grand Theology" in ways that highlight the themes I am taking up here, in particular with regard to the central distinction between choice and possibility on the one hand and neces-sity and objectivity on the other.

[35]See the Winter 2007 issue on Fidelity in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 34.

When obstacles arise in the application of laws, we know we should find further distinctions that more finely dissect the universe under consideration, so that we may go one step further in the progressively greater concatenation of those same laws. The binary awareness (yes or no) gets extended ever further and deeper, without coursing on uncertainty. But there is uncertainty when we confront a person. It is like riding the crest of a wave that never crashes: how steady our course? whereto the onrush? So it is when facing God, when seeking to do his will. Will our balance hold? And where does this lead us? Like Peter on the lake, we find that uncertainty is correlative to trust as much as it is to risk. And just as there is no risk in laws, so they do not demand our trust. This is the great allure of polytheism. The certainty we derive from the impersonal absolute of the laws is not the certainty we derive from trust in the faithfulness of the personal absolute. There we expect, here we trust.

No "spleen" in this. Especially if we go one step further and project the insight onto our Christian apprehension of trinitarian life itself. We have seen how all humans sense a live dynamics within the absolute, and how they sense the "risk" inherent in such dynamics. The polytheistic conclusion, we have also seen, is in accepting strife, a strife that inevitably relativizes the absolute. Does, we may ask, trinitarian dynamics entail some form of risk for the Trinity as well? Non-strife, i.e., love, implies accepting the other. The trinitarian mystery lies in the expectation of one absolute accepting the other—but here we stumble once more against the insidious trap of our vectorial mindset, whereby we posit a numerical otherness in the absolute. If we try, instead, to think of alterity without numerical otherness, we may gain a glimmer of what trinitarian love may mean: total reciprocal acceptance among absolute persons. There is as if an *ad intra* kenosis, where one trinitarian person accepts unconditionally the other, without any limitation to one person's absoluteness in the acceptance of the other's absoluteness. Faithfulness is real, the dynamics is total, and the "risk" is to be seen not vectorially, as though something could happen from one moment to the next, but rather as the very core of divine nature—one that entails absolute alterity outside of any segmental limitations.

But what of human nature? What if a trinitarian person assumes human nature? What if incarnation were to take place? As it did. Finite, limited, segmented, human nature has a potential for resisting love, by choosing fragmentation and limitation in relating to

others. Having assumed human nature, the incarnate Logos is called to be faithful[36] to God's creative will through the total darkness of his human nature, his humanness, even onto death. The cross is seen as exaltation because it is the most tragic kenotic moment: Jesus' human nature recoils ("Let this chalice go away from me," "Remove from me this chalice," "Why have you abandoned me?"—see above, 1.3), but the supreme emptying of self, through a death inflicted, is accepted. The tempter's seeming victory,[37] the death of God, came to naught because even throughout his great passion and death, the frailty of Jesus' human nature did not have the best of him. Love, tested to the extreme, did not yield to strife.

In this connection, it is interesting to point out some unexpected correlations between the temptations of Jesus and the Annunciation to Mary. The angel's announcement could have been understood by her in a triumphalist tone: he does not *ask* Mary for her assent, rather he proclaims, *tout court*, a glorious future, and states that it will be hers, as if presuming an enthusiastic "yes!" But Mary is shown as not rushing headlong to accept the glory. Upon reflection, one can hear an echo of the temptations of Jesus, and Luke's sequence fits nicely the sequence in the Annunciation scene, the temptation being, in either case, to achieve full control of:

- the material world—the prodigious physical change in Mary (Lk 1:31) / the proposed change of stones into bread for self-nourishment (Lk 4:3)
- human society—Mary's son's rule over a kingdom (Lk 1:33) / the promise to Jesus of all the kingdoms of the earth (Lk 4:5—with even a semantic overlap)

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[36]About the nature of Jesus' faith in the Father as seen in the epistle to the Hebrews, see recently T. D. Still, "*Christos as Pistos*: The Faith(fulness) of Jesus in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69 (2007): 746–755. Analogously, Jesus' filial relationship to the Father is truly incarnate, and not metaphorical: it is as a real human being that Jesus lives his sonship—a recurrent theme in Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth*.

[37]See also in the next installment, 4.6, and see already my article "Sacramentality and Culture," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 30 (Winter 2003): 18–20, 42. From the point of view of the great tempter, the possibility did indeed exist that Jesus might have yielded. In other words, the tempter's assault on Jesus was understood as more than an act of vengeance against the Son, certainly more than an anecdotal attack on a holy man (as in Job). It was an explicit and intentional assault on the Trinity.

- God—Mary's overshadowing by the Spirit (Lk 1:35) / the angels protecting Jesus during an impossible fall (Lk 4:9–10—the tempter's use of Scripture is close to the promise by Gabriel to Mary in that it purports to "guarantee" divine intervention through the angels).

Obviously, while the devil in the desert is shown as deliberately attempting to trip Jesus, the angel's announcement can only be seen as a subtle way to bring out the best in Mary. The "temptation" for Mary would be to grasp the announced future with pride, as if it were of her own doing. Instead, she gives two interesting responses. The first is a question that evinces an attitude of plain and simple realism ("how . . . ?"), the second is a statement of availability (*fiat*). From the beginning, Mary did not succumb to even the thought of grasping a triumphalist glorious future, and as a result she did not succumb later to doubt or despair at the non-verification of triumphalist glorious achievements in Jesus' lifetime. To reflect on this psychological aspect of the Annunciation nurtures quite an awed respect for Mary's inner disposition, her faithfulness—and her true glory.

3.3. Deconstruction

3.3.1. The sterility of possession

Don't ask of us the word
that might our shapeless soul
squarely and neatly frame . . .

Thus could one translate the epigram given at the head of this article.[38] Along with so many others, it comes across as an intimation of one of the great paradoxes of our age, the one most combatively expounded by the trend subsumed under the term "deconstruction."[39]

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[38]Eugenio Montale, "Non chiederci la parola," in *Ossi di seppia*, 1925. Winner of the 1975 Nobel prize for literature, Montale gave voice in this poem to a deep mistrust of all self-indulgent construction that aims to encase reality in a simple "formula," as does, he says, a shiny crocus flower that proudly displays its colors in but a dusty field. Rather, he claims, we can only ask of the poet what we in fact are *not*, what we do *not* in fact want.

[39]For an analogous treatment of deconstruction see Schindler, *Heart of the World*, ch. 6.

One reason why the whole intellectual movement built around it is so controversial revolves, in part, around a question of semantics. The epigonic use of the central insight of deconstruction projects an understanding of the term as active: hence "to deconstruct" a construct has become a cliché. Ironically, the result is an affirmation of the very notion to which one thinks one is objecting. For deconstructing an argument has become synonymous with parsing it, i.e., with bringing out and freezing the structure of the construct. Hence the perceived paradoxical nature of the whole effort: the more one deconstructs the more one ends up, in fact, constructing.

The central insight would be better served, it seems to me, by understanding "deconstruction" as a noun of condition rather than of action, or, in fact, by subsuming the concept under a different term. What is really being proposed is "de-possession" rather than deconstruction. Possession aims at freezing the object so it cannot escape, eliminating any possibility of risk. It aims at capturing "the word that squarely and neatly frames," the word that embalms what it describes, like an entomologist who nails a butterfly to a board so as to display for study its beauty, however lifeless. The proclamation of the death of God, I mentioned already (1.4), aims for the supreme construction that achieves (as in Baudelaire's poem) the ultimate stasis of an object to be displayed and thereby controlled. Deconstruction reminds us of Heraclitus (2.2) in stressing the centrality of paradox, or of Nicolas of Cusa's *coincidentia oppositorum*. There is a profound sense that an unexplained dynamics underlies reality, and it is in this that I would like to see the reverberation of the even deeper dynamics of the trinitarian absolute.

3.3.2. "That lone imperative of all true lovers . . ."

Beautiful is the tree with its glossy leaves,
with Pentecost still playful in its branches.
I do not touch it with inquiring hand
nor break off fiery bloom to shout hosanna in my window,
nor wrench it up to root again, gay as pageant in my land.
Let it stand.
You whom I love *I do not touch with even a dreamed possession*
nor is this poem for you; I carry it past
your open door in a basket of secrecy.
I do not point you out as loved, nor speak about you or to you
save, out of hearing, once, *that lone imperative*

> *of all true lovers: be.*
>
> *I leave you here in the innocence of your being,*
> *joyful and <u>unpossessing</u>.*
> *My claiming, out of time, will dearer be.*
> *And innocence, that concentrate of peace,*
> *spreads like the haze of a soft summer noon*
> *and encircles me.*

About a century after Baudelaire's, and a few decades after Montale's, here is a poem by that great unsung Carmelite poet, Jessica Powers, a.k.a. Sister Miriam of the Holy Spirit.[40] Her central insight goes to the heart of the problem, the resolution of the paradox of deconstruction. And she introduces the very term that I suggest should be used to replace "deconstruction": our very act of claiming, she sings in her last stanza, must remain wholly "unpossessing."[41] Uncannily, the first stanza seems to echo Montale's call not to seek a "word / that squarely and neatly frames": she asks us not to "touch . . . with inquiring hand," not to detach flowers or branches to showcase them apart from the life they have when on a tree. Touching leads to possession, if only at times "a dreamed possession," and possessing is the antithesis of love. The "lone imperative" is to "let . . . stand," making sure that not even our words might ensnare the target of our love in a mesh that chokes the "innocence of being." It is to the extent we are "unpossessing" that "innocence, that concentrate of peace," can reach out to us and fully "encircle" us.

     In counterpoint with Baudelaire and Montale, Powers' poem is the best affirmation of the paradox of Christian "deconstruction." It is "de-possession" because we appropriate without appropriation. The yearning of deconstruction craves for the Christian answer: the deepest appropriation is, one might say, "under erasure," i.e., it is realized when we let be "the innocence of being." Most fundamen-

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[40]Regina Siegfried and Robert F. Morneaum, eds. "I Do Not Touch You," in *The Selected Poetry of Jessica Powers* (Washington, DC: I.C.S. Publications, 1999), 119.

[41]The same concept appears in the important work on the Trinity by Bruno Forte, *Trinità come storia. Saggio sul Dio cristiano* (Torino: San Paolo, 1985), translated, rather inadequately, as *The Trinity as History: Saga of the Christian God* (New York: Alba House, 1989), see especially in section 4.1d: "No present moment may be idolized, there can be no rest in possession," we must accept the "permanent dynamics of the provisional" (translation mine).

tally, the Christian answer affirms, in line with the post-modern craving, that the orders of knowing and loving are convertible (to use a turn of phrase dear to David L. Schindler), that we must learn to love in order to learn to know. The affirmation that truth is a person becomes, dramatically, brilliantly clear: it is no metaphor. To speak of the Logos is not just a grandiloquent way of referring to someone particularly skilled in the logos—all the more so as Jesus did not particularly engage in developing logical arguments. We are rather drawn to contemplate a mystery of which we can at best outline the contours, as we will see in some more detail in the next installment (4.1).

What I wish to emphasize at this juncture is the attitude we must take in this confrontation with the mystery, an attitude that deconstruction helps us to develop. We do not own the truth—that is the great lesson. And of the highest realization of this we have a glimpse in what we know about trinitarian life: truth does not even own itself. The strongest expression of this is in Paul's description of the Incarnation as the process through which "Christ Jesus . . . did not consider it a seized possession (*harpagmós*) his being equal to God" (Phil 2:6).[42] Divine status is not something to be grasped, owned, possessed. The trinitarian dimension, we have already seen (3.2.2), entails freedom and faithfulness within the absolute so that even the Logos incarnate, as Paul continues, "emptied (*ekénōsen*) himself" (Phil 2:7). The *kénōsis* does not so much refer to a psychological as to an ontological dimension: it "affects"—though, of course, without changing—the very core of trinitarian life. The emptying is the polar opposite of the seizing. It highlights the dynamics of the absolute by portraying the way in which it affected the Logos once enmeshed in the world of finitude, once incarnate. It is a most dramatic representation of that same attitude that we see emerge out of the deconstructionist craving.

3.4. Discontinuities

3.4.1. The dislocation of the natural sequence

A recurrent aim in the modern aesthetic vision has been the

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[42]I have developed this point in the paper "The Trinity in a Mesopotamian Perspective," see above, note 3 (pages 45–48 of the Italian version).

disruption of classical compositional patterns. Take, for example, the cubism of Picasso, the atonality of Schoenberg, or Joyce's[43] stream of consciousness. What they have in common with each other, and with deconstruction, is the determined effort to question the validity of the natural sequence, and the wish to reconstitute an alternative sequence in the correlation of resulting fragments. It is not a total rejection of coherence. Quite the opposite, the dislocated fragments are reassembled according to different guiding principles, which remain precisely that, shape-giving guides.

The overriding importance of coherence is significant. Let us consider the case of a human figure. In earlier paintings the governing principle was the coherence derived from the image as found in nature: the viewer's expectation was directed towards limits known in advance—a face, a torso, the limbs. In a cubist painting this natural sequence is abrogated: the correlation of the components as known from nature does not guide the expectation, there is rather a declared dislocation that has only vague suggestions of known elements—an eye, the nose, a shoulder. But what is not surrendered is the perceptual foundation of the whole: the viewer is still, inescapably, asked to discover an alternative coherence, a coherence within the dislocation. The "realism" of earlier paintings was not due to a naïve need to mimic reality for the sake of mimicking. It was rather as if a self-declaration of what the limit of expectation should be in viewing the image: the natural sequence. When this is no longer the criterion, it only means that this limit of expectation is transposed to something else, which guides the inspiration of the artist and which the viewer has to discover.

The relevance for our subject is that what may appear at first as the victorious shedding of extrinsic limits actually verifies the persistence of those limits, however different in the specific. They may be self-imposed (a dislocated sequence) but are limits nevertheless (a sequence). And even in a naturalistic painting the limits are not re-

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[43]Here is an apposite quote from the classic study by Stuart Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930): "James Joyce is, in fact, in the great tradition which begins with Homer; like his precursors he subjects his work, for all its wild vitality and seeming disorder, to a rule of discipline as severe as that of the Greek dramatists; indeed, the unities of *Ulysses* go far beyond the classic triad, they are as manifold and yet symmetrical as the daedal network of nerves and bloodstreams which pervade the living organism" (end of Part One, Ch. 2).

ally imposed from the outside (the natural sequence), but ultimately self-imposed (it is that particular sequence that is chosen as a compositional criterion): the artist chooses the analog (the thing in nature to which the painting refers) as the unifying thread for the vision, as the parameter which defines the limit of expectation. In this, I see a perceptual glimpse of the perduring allure of an absolute that is, and is not, static. The artist's urge is always to both pose, and to go beyond, the limits. But the urge itself is, at one and the same time, a limit and a limit setter. It is a limit because it forces the artist to operate in a given mode, the creative mode. And it sets limits because it inescapably redesigns a frame within which a new coherence must be achieved.

3.4.2. The selfsameness of surprise

Just as the (modern) dislocation of the natural sequence does not entail the abandonment of a sense of frame, so the (classical) adherence to the outward frame of nature does not mean that the artist is blind to the impulses that push beyond the frame itself. As an example from the "classical" past we may remember the very explicit acknowledgment of the polarity in the titles chosen by Antonio Vivaldi for two of his cycles, the Opera VIII (which includes the Four Seasons) and the Opera III: the first he called "Il cimento dell'armonia e dell'inventione," i.e., the challenge between harmony and invention, the second "L'estro armonico," i.e., the harmonic fancy. Or, to go back to the Hellenic world, we may remember the mythological personification of the contrast in the complementary figures of Apollo and Dionysus.[44]

With that sense of amazement that often suffuses the writings of the Fathers of the Church, we might wonder whether the Logos became man that he might experience, literally in the flesh, the forever new surprise of an overarching order that is imbued with freedom. The trinitarian dimension resides in the fact that both order and freedom are intrinsic to the personal relationship among the absolutes (again, the impossible plural!). The incarnate Logos lives his

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[44]Here, too, I would like to refer to another classic study, the slender book by E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley–Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951).

filiality in the obscurity of his human nature by accepting the dependency on order and the wonder of freedom, discovering each with a sense of surprise that comes from facing the Father's will. Like a poet whose inner thrust is to shape expression within the confines of pre-existing shapes, thus the filial Logos, thus all humans grafted on him, experience the surprise of discovering each time afresh the Father's will as the dynamic order of an ever new creation (see next installment, 4.3). Order is not in conflict with fluidity, nor dynamics with steadfastness. And surrender is not loss but an ever fresh new conquest.

The disquiet of postmodernity, instead of being savored as an end in itself, becomes then a powerful spring towards the discovery of a harmony that is not static and dead, but alive and dynamic. Part and parcel of this process is the reliance on each other as pointers towards an unknown higher order which is always already known, even if darkly, even if not in its specificity. The unfolding of events at Cana are indicative in this respect. It is Mary who points out the hosts' problem: "They do not have wine" (Jn 2:3). Jesus understands full well the implications, i.e., her expectation that he should intervene, but shrinks from accepting her hint: "Why should this matter to either you or me?" and puts things in the perspective of a higher order as he perceives it: "My hour has not yet come" (Jn 2:4). Mary's perception is different. She does not just act out of pity for the embarrassed hosts. She was, it seems, the primary invitee: "the mother of Jesus was there, and Jesus, *too*, had been invited" (Jn 2:1), so she would have been especially sensitive to the awkwardness of the situation. But her decision to *de facto* implicate Jesus (by telling the servants to follow his orders she anticipates that he will in fact issue such orders) comes in the heels of the more intimidating explanation: "My hour has not yet come." She thinks otherwise, she thinks his hour *has* come and points Jesus in that direction—all the more surprisingly as it is in the presence of *his* disciples (Jn 2:1, 11, 12). It is as if a mirror image of the episode in the Temple when Jesus as a teenager tells his mother: "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Lk 2:49). In different ways, they are both touched by the surprise of discovering the larger picture of the Father's will, each pointing the other in the direction of the expected unexpected.

The personal "hour" of each one of us does not toll automatically, as with a clock. We are to be surprised by it, by each of the hours that slowly toll along the arc of our lives. We are to discover slowly the overarching harmony of which we play so many discon-

nected notes. But it is not a game of hide and seek, it is not a whim-sical way of tricking us for the sake of holding us back. It is, rather, that only through the surprise of a progressively slow adherence to God's creative will can we fully internalize its impact, appropriate it as *our* harmony. That is the secret of the "obedience" that, the letter to the Hebrews tells us (5:8), Jesus slowly learned. It is his human surprise vis-à-vis the dynamics of trinitarian life that we must learn to make ours.

3.5. *The artificial heavens*

3.5.1. *The discontinuity of consciousness*

The disquiet of postmodernity, if savored for its own sake, issues in a self-annihilating downward spiral. It is the drug culture, onto which again Baudelaire opens a revealing window. Already in the poem "The Soul of Wine," published the same year as the "Pun-ishment of Pride,"[45] he anticipates the effects of hallucinogens that he picks up again in the essay "On Wine and Hashish," the first in the collection that he aptly titled "The Artificial Heavens."

The paradox of the drug culture is that it proposes a glorious expansion of consciousness, while effectively achieving a jarring dis-continuity; a fuller control of one's interior spaces, while causing an often irreversible rupture; the landing onto a higher plane of wisdom and life, while inexorably setting the trigger for madness and suicide. Little room, here, for a trinitarian premonition, it would seem at first. But think again. Hallucinogens seem to propose a third alter-native between "spleen" and ideal: they offer a way out of boredom through a dynamics that starts from within ourselves, one that can be securely owned because it is triggered at will through mechanical, chemical means. The proposal then (beyond the more obvious physi-cal gratification which elicits an ever greater addiction) is the mirage of an expansion of the absolute as we, the subjects, become more and more ourselves the absolute, at the exclusion of everything and everybody else. There is as if an ego-centrality in the perception of the absolute, one that is expected to expand progressively: we are the absolute, but we are not absolutely it yet, because we can appropriate

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[45]Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, n. 114, see above, 3.2.1

more and more of its domain in our own selves. It is this dynamics that appears like a faint, and tragic, echo of trinitarian dynamism. It is the age-old lurking temptation of appropriating the absolute, this time with the added illusion of a dynamics that allows for indefinite growth—while spiraling instead downwards towards the greater abyss of a frozen and lonely ego. The artificial heavens turn out to be the most real of hells.

3.5.2. The passionate indifference

Christian mysticism is in itself paradoxical. True to the etymology of the word, it summons us to the secret recesses of our soul, where we find a presence that is as deeply hidden within as it is infinitely summoning from a far beyond. And yet—this presence is by no means ours alone, it is instead shared through a communion that is fully public and all encompassing. This presence is especially not "ours." We do not find it within as our possession. We find it the more we let go of our grasp, the more we open "our" secret within to "his" invading dynamics. The specifically Christian dimension derives from its being wholly centered on such trinitarian dynamics: it entails our being rooted sacramentally (and thus quite physically) in the incarnate Son, and, through this new incarnation of the Son in us, it entails in turn our letting the Spirit lead us in a slow but incessant motion towards the fulfillment of the Father's will.

The dynamics we are called to be open to is that of grace. An incessantly creative movement (4.2), grace is the manifestation of divine agency (3.1):

Veni creator Spiritus	<u>Come</u>, <u>creator</u> Spirit,
mentes tuorum visita	<u>visit</u> the <u>minds</u> of your people,
imple superna gratia	<u>fill</u> with the <u>grace</u> that comes from on high
quae tu creasti pectora	those <u>inner spaces</u> you have <u>created</u>

The expansion of our inner space (the *pectora*, "breasts," of the sequence, analogous to the *cordis intima* of the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*) is a gift we cannot control but to which we bear witness in our own spiritual development. We must be passionate in wanting the expansion, and yet indifferent to how we can trigger, much less control, it. For expansion is, in effect, the result of an invasion: we do not

expand because we aggregate more inner space (chemically through drugs, or psychologically through a meditation of our own); rather we expand because we are made capable of accepting the tearing down of our limits. We accept a trinitarian dynamics that we can never anticipate, much less channel. And yet we accept it with anticipation, we accept to be made ourselves the channels of divine grace (*vas divinae gratiae*, as Mary is addressed in the litanies). This detached attachment is at the core of the paradox of Christian mysticism. In this paradox we share, from however different a perspective, the secular search for the artificial heavens: the discontinuity of consciousness is the place where we find the irruption of the Spirit.   □

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LITURGY AND CULTURE

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also in this issue:

**Giorgio Buccellati on the Trinity and Its
Veiled Perception in a Pagan World**

COMMUNIO

International Catholic Review

INTRODUCTION:

LITURGY AND CULTURE

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In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger writes that "cult," from which our words worship and culture both spring, "goes beyond the action of the liturgy. Ultimately, it embraces the ordering of the whole of human life."[1] Culture does not supersede liturgy, but rather points to the truth of the liturgy as inherently fruitful, spilling over naturally into the life of man, ordering culture precisely through its ordering of time and space. When understood to embrace all aspects of humanity, liturgy is properly seen also as pedagogy.

Liturgy is thus not meant to be a reflection of man back to himself, but rather an education in and through the mysteries and sacraments which take place. Ratzinger notes, "I discover that something is approaching me here that I did not produce myself, that I am entering into something greater than myself, which ultimately derives from divine revelation."[2] The whole of man is at stake in the liturgy, and the entire world is implicated in its rites. "Worship," writes the Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann, is "a reality with cosmic, historical and eschatological dimensions, the expression thus not merely of 'piety,' but of an all-embracing 'world-view.'"[3]

In listening to and participating in the liturgy, one discovers depths of meaning of which one is not immediately aware. The articles in the present issue of *Communio* draw out this meaning by

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[1]Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 20.

[2]Ibid., 165.

[3]Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 123.

exploring different aspects of the culture's rootedness in the liturgy and the liturgy's implications for culture. The purpose is to show how our own conformation to and participation in the liturgy is the deepest and most proper path to forming and renewing culture.

In "The Liturgy: Presence of a New Body, Source of a Fulfilled Time," **José Granados** argues that modernity has lost the symbolic value of the world: nature and history are no longer, as for the ancients, imbued with order and meaning. The liturgy, says Granados, offers a way to recover this lost symbolism through the encounter of human experience with Christ's revelation. By examining the relationship between the sacraments of marriage and the Eucharist, Granados demonstrates how body and time become a fabric wherein the mystery of God and man reveals itself, and life appears as a path for the divine image to shine at the core of human experience.

David W. Fagerberg, in "The Sacraments as Actions of the Mystical Body," explains that while the liturgy and the sacraments often occupy two different academic spheres, their relationship is in fact mutually enlightening and indeed necessary. Their interplay is such that liturgy allows us to understand the sacraments as more than discrete instances in a man's life. Together, sacraments make clear the fundamental theology of the Church's mission: deification. "We join a liturgy already in progress," Fagerberg writes; we are "coming to be connected into God's own *perichoresis*."

In "Apostolicity and the Eucharist," **Oliver Treanor** investigates the implications of John Paul II's connection of the term "apostolic" to the Eucharist. By so doing, he says, the Pope opened a challenging and innovative way of approaching the sacrament that constitutes the Church as Christ's Body. Treanor explores how this approach elucidates the Church's relationship to the Eucharist in terms of the Paschal Mystery as a manifestation of the Trinity, and how it might, consequently, shed fresh light on the nature of that communion which is presupposed by eucharistic sharing, and which underlies the Church's pastoral mission as the universal sacrament of salvation.

Nicholas J. Healy's "The Eucharist as the Form of Christian Life" reflects on the relationship between the eucharistic mystery and the daily life of the faithful. The Church's faith in Christ's "real presence"—including his hidden life of work in Nazareth—is eucharistic. "When he hands over the substance of his life to the Church," Healy writes, "Christ communicates a form or way of life that can include or embrace every aspect of human existence, and

ultimately, the entire material order of creation."

Also in this issue, we present the first of a two-part article by **Giorgio Buccellati**: "Trinity *spermatiké*: The Veiled Perception of a Pagan World (Part I)." Buccellati builds on the assumption that the sense of God is ultimately trinitarian, even within polytheism. It is especially the apprehension of dynamism within the absolute that leads to a sense for what, in Christianity, emerges finally as the trinitarian dimension of God. The fact that this sense is distorted in a number of different directions does not lessen the significance of the spiritual desire that is evinced in a number of traditions ranging from the ancients to the moderns.

Continuing our theme of "Liturgy and Culture," **Paolo Prosperi**, in his article "The Birth of *Sources Chrétiennes* and the Return to the Fathers," recounts the founding of what is often known as *nouvelle théologie*, a theological renewal begun by a group of Jesuits at Fourvière at Lyons in the 1940s, led by, among others, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Jean Daniélou. Prosperi highlights the group's efforts to "return to the sources"—to recover the work of the Fathers of the Church. For the Jesuits at Fourvière, turning to the Fathers meant above all "asserting the unity between dogmatic theology and the living experience of the mystery of Christ and the Church; in brief, . . . the unity between life and thought."

In "'The Christian mystery is the mystery of creation': An Introduction to Jean Daniélou," **Jonah Lynch** exposits and reintroduces us to the work of Daniélou. In his capacity both as translator of the early Fathers and as theologian, Daniélou influenced the Second Vatican Council and its reception thereafter. Lynch pays special attention to Daniélou's first book, *The Presence of God*, wherein "we see the style that will be the hallmark of all Daniélou's literary production: it brings everything in—poetic passages and philological research, typology and the discoveries of archaeology—while leading to a precise and attractive description of the mystery of man and God."

In *Retrieving the Tradition*, we present the first chapter of *The Presence of God*. **Jean Daniélou** explains that through the liturgy, "the universe has become once more a Temple, where we are at home with God in the cool of the evening, where man comes forward, silent and composed, absorbed in his task as in perpetual liturgy, attentive to that Presence which fills him with awe and tenderness."

Also in *Retrieving the Tradition*, we offer **Virgil Michel's** article, "Christian Culture." A Benedictine monk of St. John's Abbey

in Collegeville, Minnesota, Michel profoundly influenced the movement for liturgical renewal in English-speaking countries, founding in 1929 the theological journal *Orate Fratres* to help provide the theological basis and inspiration for this movement. For Michel, the theological ground of the liturgical movement is always first the Body of Christ. He argues that the "Christian is not . . . to turn his back on the entire culture of today. . . . What is needed is to imbue our civilization and culture with a renewed Christian spirit, and thus to give to it the vitality it is seeking." Michel has a keen sense of the liturgy as pedagogy, and sees that only when Christians are educated into and ordered by the spirit of the liturgy will they be able to educate and order the world, and thus become the salt of the earth.

Finally, in *Notes & Comments*, **Adrian J. Walker** reflects on the work of translation in "The Art of the Second Virtue: On the Unity of Freedom and Obedience in Translation." Walker maintains that "translation is an act of double obedience," both to the original piece and to the language into which one is translating. Analogous to how man transforms the earth in order to offer it back to God in the liturgy, a translator must both be interpreter and render the original gift anew. This interpretation-of-the-already-given, however, does not constitute a lack of freedom on either the part of the one who participates in liturgy or the translator, for, as Walker writes, "the in-between he inhabits is one that opens up within the generous fecundity of the original itself." ☐

—The Editors