THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRINITARIAN CONNOTATIONS IN BONAVENTURE'S EPISTEMOLOGY FOR A TRINITARIAN ONTOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Bonaventure's epistemology is partly based on his Trinitarian theology. This paper investigates the Trinitarian connotations in this epistemology and their broader significance. Like the divine Father, any object of human understanding is liberally generating a likeness of itself: the *species*. Apprehending the form of the object through this *species* is an essential feature of human knowledge for Bonaventure. More fundamentally, the human soul itself is structured according to the Augustinian Triad of *memoria*, *intellectus* and *voluntas*, and the transcendentals of being correspond to the human soul's structure: *unum*, *verum* and *bonum*. Both the human being and the transcendentals of being originate ultimately from the Trinitarian life or actuality, which is a self-relation in truth and love: The Father generates a Word and both together spirate the nexus between Father and Son: the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure's notion of Trinitarian actuality as it is imaged in the human and being itself can help deepen Aquinas' metaphysical notion of created *esse* as the actuality of all acts: An enriched notion of Trinitarian actuality necessarily involves, just as Hugo of St. Victor's notion of love, a life of personal self-communication and reception, in the context of which the speech of divine 'suffering' makes sense, and does not involve mutability. Understanding Trinitarian actuality as the life of love exemplary for creation might open up vistas for a mutual fertilization between Thomistic metaphysics and Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology, so as to further the development of a Trinitarian ontology without confusing the distinction between Philosophy and Theology.

Keywords

Bonaventure; Trinitarian ontology; Epistemology; Species; Transcendentals; Actuality

Klaus Hemmerle said in his *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, that a positive mutual relation between philosophy and theology lays the groundwork for answering the question of what a Trinitarian ontology should look like.[1] Hemmerle's esteem for Bonaventure's approach to the relation of theology and philosophy rests on the fact that while Bonaventure acknowledges the different approaches of the two disciplines as positive (faith is not the same as reason, revelation is not the same as thought about the world), he nevertheless considers only an ordered unity of the two as fruitful. While philosophy starts the path of thinking from below, from the world as it presents itself to us, theology starts from above, from the revelation God freely makes of Himself in Christ. Even though theology has the power to integrate every human thought from above, there is a genuine discontinuity between the philosophical approach from below and the theological approach based on revelation from above. This discontinuity, however, is 'the very place where that incalculable excess dawns, which is given from above'.[2] Theology has something to give to philosophy's own subject and truly illuminates reason from above, without destroying it, and both disciplines start from what is given, either from above or from below.

How such an illumination of philosophy by theology is fruitful has been already shown by Hemmerle and others to a great extent.[3] However, it might be worthwhile to look at Bonaventure's epistemology again to parse out how a Trinitarian ontology accounts for both the givenness of the world in our dialogue with it and for the givenness of God to whom the world stands in a relation of analogy.[4] On the one hand, Bonaventure's philosophical epistemology takes reason seriously, as well as its starting point in sense perception, but on the other hand, it is infused with connotations referring to the Trinitarian God through the

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[1]   Klaus Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, Kriterien 40 (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1976), 13–14. On Hemmerle see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodramatik IV. Das Endspiel* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983), 64f.

[2]   Klaus Hemmerle, *Theologie als Nachfolge. Bonaventura – ein Weg für heute* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1975), 59 [my translation].

[3]   See again his *Theologie als Nachfolge*. Of course, the following two thinkers need to be mentioned here as well: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ferdinand Ulrich.

[4]   Hemmerle speaks of a dia-logical ana-logy. See '"Dia-logische Ana-logie" als Weg des Denkens zum göttlichen Gott,' in Klaus Hemmerle, *Gott und das Denken nach Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1968), 323–331.

Son: The Father generates the single most perfect and consubstantial resemblance of Himself in the Son or, better, the Word.[5] Of course, it is impossible to address the whole of Bonaventure's epistemology in these short pages, thus we limit ourselves to some key remarks and interpretations inspired by two writings of Bonaventure.[6]

Firstly, we focus on Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and ask three questions:

1. What is it about the object of knowledge that makes it possible that it is known by a human knower?
2. What is it about the human intellect that it knows anything at all?
3. What is the foundation in the act of being that allows for created beings to be known and know in the first place?

Secondly, moving to Bonaventure's *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, we will ask: Are the Trinitarian connotations in Bonaventure's epistemology an indication that he is a proto-univocalist thinker who tries to submit God and creation to identical principles of thought and being? Or is there an ever greater dissimilarity within all the similarity between God and the world that safeguards both God's transcendence as well as his analogical immanence within created being?

1. The *Obiectum fontanum* Generating the *species*

In the second chapter of *Itinerarium mentis*, before considering the conditions of human knowing on the side of the human intellect, Bonaventure focuses on the object's manifold sensible self-communications, which are always already gushing forth from it, in that the object sends out similarities or expressions of its own substance or

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[5] According to Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, transl. by D.I. Trethowan and F.J. Sheed (Paterson NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 130–132, for Bonaventure the Father's complete self-expression in the consubstantial Word, who is the single perfect resemblance to the Father and, as the expressed and expressive model of all things, the Word is the center of the true metaphysician's perspective. Highlighting exemplarism as the location of the overlap between theology and philosophy, Gilson adds ibid., 144, that 'St Bonaventure makes no specific distinction between our theological knowledge of the Word and our philosophical knowledge of the ideas.'

[6] For a more in-depth account of Bonaventure's philosophical epistemology see Andreas Speer, Triplex veritas. *Wahrheitsverständnis und philosophische Denkform Bonaventuras*, Franziskanische Forschungen 32 (Werl: Dietrich-Coelde Verlag, 1987). See also Jan A. Aertsen's review in *Vivarium*, 29, 2 (1991): 155.

essence. The substance always transcends the particular expressions that emanate from it as the substance is always richer than what is manifested of it in any single instance.[7] In the second chapter of the *Itinerarium mentis*, Bonaventure delivers the first Trinitarian connotation in this regard:

> If, therefore, all things that can be known, generate a likeness of themselves, they manifestly proclaim that in them as in mirrors we can see the eternal generation of the Word, the Image and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father.[8]

Any created thing's generation or expression of semblances of itself is the first cornerstone of human knowledge, and has for Bonaventure its ultimate foundation in the Trinitarian procession of the Son from the Father.[9] The likeness a thing expresses of itself is designated by Bonaventure with the Latin term *species*[10] (meaning outward

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[7] In the same vein, a philosophical conception of truth is developed by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik I. Wahrheit der Welt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1985), 25–78. Ibid., X–XII he mentions that his philosophical notion of truth has one of its ultimate foundations in Bonaventure's Trinitarian doctrine of *expressio*. For Balthasar, one cannot deny that the supernatural implants itself at the very heart of the structures of created being, wafts through them like a fragrance and acts like a leaven in it. Consciously or unconsciously, philosophy and the human intellect cannot but stand under the prefix of faith in this Trinitarian grounding or the lack thereof. For Balthasar's account of Bonaventure's *expressio* doctrine see *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik. Band II: Fächer der Stile, Teil1: Klerikale Stile* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1984), 288–311.

[8] Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* [henceforth quoted as *Itin.*] II,7. We quote from Bonaventure's works in the Quaracchi edition: *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura, 10 vols., Quaracchi 1882–1902.

[9] See also Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 145f.

[10] For the term *species* in Bonaventure see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*. II/1, 298–303. For a history of the term *intelligible species* see Leen Spruit, Species Intelligibilis: *From Perception to Knowledge. Volume One: Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, on Bonaventure: 134–137. See also the detailed analysis of Bonaventure's thinking on *species* in Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 75–110. Karnes makes the point at 89f. that Bonaventure distinguishes with Augustine two sorts of *species*. The first is acquired through the senses and presented by the imagination as phantasms to the intellect's abstractive power (*Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum M. Petri Lombardi* [henceforth quoted as *Sent.*] XXIV.p.I.a.II.q.IV, resp (*Opera omnia* 2:569). Calling this likeness abstracted from phantasms a *species* points to its end: being that in and through which the *intellect* 'sees' the sensible object. The second type of *species* are the 'innate *species*', which 'are

appearance, shape, semblance, form, figure; not to be equated with the English word species!) and described thus:

> The *species*, which is apprehended, is a likeness generated in a medium and then impressed upon the [sense] organ itself. Through this impression, it leads to its source, namely the object to be known.[11]

The *species* or the likeness does not become self-sufficient but always points back to its own origin, the object, from which it was generated, while it also points to the receiver and stands in service of his reception of the object and the receiver's own original response over against the object he receives. The species thus safeguards both the originality of the object as well as the subject that receives it.[12]

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imprinted directly on the memory' (Karnes, *Imagination*, 89) without the intermediary senses. Depending on whether the object of the intellect is accessible to the senses or not, the species is either abstracted from sense experience or the soul knows the object naturally, *per essentiam*, not through a likeness received from the senses. Such a-sensible objects are God, the soul, and what is in the soul. I am here focusing on the first type of *species*, and I emphasize both aspects contained in this type of *species*: the activity of the object in 'bodily' generating the semblance, and the senses' and imagination's ability to receive them and present them to the intellect's consideration. Importantly, however, the fact that Bonaventure uses the same term for both acquired and innate *species*, means that there is a certain hierarchical analogy by degree of likeness to the object between the two sorts of species. This analogy is confirmed on the one hand by the fact that the general definition given further down in *Itin.* II,5 fits both types of *species*, such that the two types are similar to each other. On the other hand, in *Sent.* XVII.p.I.q.IV, resp (*Opera omnia* 1:301) Bonaventure differentiates the acquired *species* from the innate *species* by saying that the acquired *species* is only a likeness of the object, whereas the innate species is a likeness that also is a sort of truth in itself (Ibid.: *similitudo tantum* (acquired *species*) and *similitudo, quod* [*est*] *etiam quaedam veritas in se ipsa* (innate *species*)). Karnes, *Imagination*, 90 notes that Bonaventure ibid. uses the term 'innate *species*' for both types of *species*. What can lead to confusion in this passage is that for the sake of the argument Bonaventure considers the possibility that an acquired *species* could be innate, but he denies that proposition and says that the soul is created naked of such a type of *species*, whereas the *actual* innate *species* is innate in the soul by virtue of an impression of the highest truth from the beginning of its existence. For a most helpful explanation on the intelligible species in Aquinas along the lines of a 'Formal Constituent View' see Therese Scarpelli Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species As Formal Constituents,' *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 31 (2020): 261–309.

11 Bonaventure, *Itin.* II,7. For an account of the theory of vision by *species* and *medium* in the Middle Ages see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision From Al-Kindi To Kepler* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 104–121.

12 See Hemmerle, *Nachfolge*, 77f: The *species* is the center, the knot, the axis, as well as the beginning of the double movement of the appearing object and the knowing subject towards each other. We note that the goodness whence the species proceeds is not at root a naturalistic or deterministic automatism of expression, in an overly

With the help of the analogy of the Trinitarian model of the fontal plenitude and goodness of the Father, who expresses Himself, the complete divine essence and everything completely in the Son, who then expresses that Himself, Bonaventure is able to hold together the object or the 'Ding-an-sich' with its sensory-intellectual outward expression in space and time as well as its reception by human senses and finally reason – a nexus that is negated by Kant's separation of *noumena* and *phenomena*, of objects in themselves and their outward sensory appearances. Kant's negation of this nexus ultimately bespeaks the absence of faith in the self-communicative goodness at the heart of being and reality that is pre-fixed to his philosophy.

The *species*' procession from the object and its self-surrender to or impression upon, as it were, the bodily senses are both in service to and communicate or verbalize the object's essence. Thus, the *species*' own lack of completeness or poverty over against the fullness and richness of the object's complete essence enables the object's self-manifestation to another's sense perception in the medium of space and time. By this very limitedness, however, the *species* encompasses its origin, the transmitting medium as well as the term within the senses or the intellect:

> The *species* has the notion of form, power or operation according to whether it is viewed in relation to the principle from which it flows [form]; or to the medium through which it passes [power]; or to the term on which it acts [operation].[13]

Bonaventure clarifies that an object's self-manifestation through the *species* is properly enacted when there is a harmonious proportionality between its origin, medium and destiny.

What in the sensible *species* can only be an imperfect proportion, finds its complete fulfillment and archetype in the Son's perfect proportion to the Father within the Trinity. This perfect proportion unifies harmoniously the poverty of the Son's not-being the same person as the Father and his consubstantial and equal sharing in the wealth of the divine essence. The Father's generous wellspring-like quality

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exaggerated sense of Platonic goodness as essential but impersonal principle, but stands ultimately at the service of the personal freedom of the mutual encounter between object and subject.

[13] Bonaventure, *Itin.* II,5.

constitutes the supernatural archetype for the created substance's actuality to generate likenesses of itself.[14] The fact that the Father or, analogically, the substance, does not appear and communicate Himself 'directly', as it were, but remains hidden as such, and only expresses Himself and appears as it were in and through an other, the Son, his Word, or the *species*, need not be understood as a defect of self-communication or a lack of directness.

Rather, following the Christian tradition, God is truly the divine Father in that he completely communicates or, for the lack of a better word, surrenders without loss the overabundant richness of his own

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[14] Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species,' 279–289 reads the intelligible *species* in the context of Aquinas's metaphysics of form, where the form communicates ('gives') the actuality of being to potential matter by in-forming it, whereas matter is here related to the receptive side of the intellect. Similarly to form, then, even though the *species* qualifies as an accident of the intellect, the *species* is that by which (*id quo*) the intellect comes into his own actuality through the act of knowing the known. It is ultimately in virtue of this one actuality of being that is communicated by form/*species*, that in the act of the intellect both *actio* and *passio* have their place. See Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.8.a.6.resp: 'The knower and the known, insofar as some one reality is constituted from them, which is the intellect in act, are one principle of this act, which is knowing; and I say [mark the personal emphasis seldom seen in Aquinas!], that from both [knower and known] some one reality is constituted, insofar as what is known is joined to the knower either by [*per*] its essence [angelic knowledge], or by likeness [human knowledge by acquired *species*], Therefore, the knower does not behave as an agent or as passive, unless by accident; because, insofar as for the intelligible to be united to the intellect, some action or passiveness is required. Action, insofar as the agent intellect makes the *species* to be intelligible in act; passivity, insofar as the potential intellect receives the intelligible species. Yet knowing follows upon this passivity or action, just as the effect follows upon the cause. Thus just as the bright body shines when light in act is in it, so the intellect knows all that is intelligible in act in it. [...] Things existing in act can perform actions, insofar as they are in act; so our potential intellect cannot know anything before it is perfected by the intelligible form in act. Because then it knows the thing to which that form belongs; neither can it know itself unless through an intelligible form that exists in it in act. The intellect of the angel, because it has its essence, which is like the act in the genus of intelligibles, present to itself, it can know that which is intelligible in itself, i.e. its essence, not by any likeness [acquired *species*], but by itself.' This could be interpreted in the following way: As a human being, it is due to the actuality of being as formally communicated to me by the other that as I go outside of myself to relate to the other by being informed and actualized by the other's likeness produced *and* received in me, I become more present and intelligible to myself through the intellect that is active and receptive in me: *Conversio ad phantasma* and *reditio ad se ipsum* are united in virtue of the one actuality of being as communicated to me by another. The whole process of knowledge as a union of the knower and the known is only explained via recourse to actuality, which for Aquinas is pure only in God. From Bonaventure's side we can see more explicitly that the actuality of being positively and perfectly includes both action and passivity, because Trinitarian actuality is its exemplar.

essence to be the Son's and lets the Son be the complete expression of the Father.[15] For Bonaventure, in the second Person as the *medium* and the *mediator*, the whole Trinity is expressed and present in such a way that His mediation does not destroy immediacy to the Father but constitutes *true* unity, which includes positive difference and mediation.[16] Even though on the purely created level we do not have complete and perfect mediation in that Trinitarian sense, the positivity of the mediation of the substance by the *species* is nevertheless safeguarded in that the *species* ultimately participates in and imitates Christ's perfect mediatory actuality. In and through the mediating *species*, we thus encounter the substance not only as essentially good and expressive of itself, but also as personally free in giving itself to be seen by another and allowing for a free response by the other in turn. By truly receiving the *species* as that by which the substance communicates itself, we truly receive the substance as mediated to us. By attempting to circumvent the *species* in order to get at the substance directly, we miss the very presence of the substance in that *species* and skip over the very way in which this substance is giving itself to us concretely and freely. In the divine mediation, mediate and immediate are not opposites.[17]

As we can glimpse from this above attempt to answer our first question, epistemology and Trinitarian Theology mutually elucidate each other in Bonaventure.

2. Human Intellect

This mutual elucidation becomes even more explicit and technical when we turn to the human intellect's conditions of knowing. On

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[15] Ferdinand Ulrich has contemplated this Trinitarian relation of Father and Son deeply in *Gabe und Vergebung: Ein Beitrag zur biblischen Ontologie*, Schriften V, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Johannes-Verlag, 2015).

[16] See Wayne Hellmann, Ordo. *Untersuchung eines Grundgedankens in der Theologie Bonaventuras* (München/Paderborn/Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1974), 73: The title 'Son' refers back to the first person of the Father, 'image' refers to his own subsistence in Himself, 'Word' refers to the manifestation and communication to a third Person, the Holy Spirit.

[17] See Hellmann, Ordo, 74f. For such a positive sense of mediation, see also David C. Schindler, 'Mediation: The Distinguishing Mark of Christianity,' *Communio International Catholic Review* 48.1 (Spring 2021): 6-29, at 21: '[I]n mediation, one not only enriches the other, but one allows oneself to be enriched by the other. [...] This deepened generosity is thus a genuinely reciprocal relation. Mediation allows the other to make a contribution, so to speak, to "add something" to the relation.'

the one hand, Bonaventure considers man as a microcosm because, through his five senses, he receives into his soul all the qualities and the order of the material macrocosmos.[18] On the other hand, the structure of the human soul corresponds to the Trinity, as it is the image of the Trinitarian God, conceived in the Augustinian terms of *memoria, intelligentia* and *voluntas, or mens generans, verbum,* and *amor.*[19] Both the correspondence of the intellectual soul with the Trinity and the correspondence of the embodied soul to the material world through the five senses mean that the human being, or rather Christ, the Word incarnate, stands at the center and forms the linchpin or ladder between heaven and earth. The human being's original outward orientation towards the material world establishes the starting point for an inward turn: The human soul is the very term on which an object's outward *species* operates through the senses.[20] In that way, there is an epistemic dynamism that includes a move from sense perception towards intellectual perception, as the sensory *species* operates in service of man's intellectual recognition of an object's essence. Bonaventure considers the sensory dimension of the *species* within the context of its intellectual origin in the substance's essence and its *telos* in the human intellect.

We must note that, for Bonaventure, the intellect itself possesses a sort of immaterial *a priori* knowledge through illumination. Interpreting Bonaventure, this illumination, however, seems to not be isolated, as it were, from sense perception.[21] The illumination 'pushes' the intellect to abstract a notion of the immaterial essence that manifests

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[18] Bonaventure, *Itin.* II,2–3.
[19] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,6.
[20] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,1.
[21] See Karnes, *Imagination*, 90: 'It is, in my view, far from clear that even the few things Bonaventure lists as known without the senses entirely exclude them.' Karnes, ibid. 92 makes the point that Bonaventure 'merges an Aristotelian philosophy of imagination with an Augustinian doctrine of illumination'. I am using the admittedly Kantian terms of *a priori* and *a posteriori* to speak about the relation of knowledge by illumination and knowledge acquired by sense perception in Bonaventure. It seems key to me that the cognition of the first principles, practical or intellectual, is said by Bonaventure in 2 *Sent.* XXXIX.a.I.q.II, resp (*Opera omnia* 2:903) to be innate ('*a priori*', as Kant would say) in us both in virtue of the soul's innate light and in virtue of the fact that this innate light suffices to know these principles. Bonaventure adds, however, that the light suffices for the knowledge only *post receptionem specierum*, and here he means the acquired type of *species* abstracted from sense perception. In other words, the innate light suffices to gain certain knowledge, but only if this light shines on knowledge gained from the senses first.

itself sensibly in the *species*. The intellect's creative activity of abstraction and forming concepts could also be construed as a sort of receptive imitation of the essence's activity of continually generating likenesses of itself: The intellect 'learns', as it were, *aposteriori* from the sensible objects present to it, to generate a likeness in himself of the thing known, but now on the intellectual plane so that the abstracted likeness takes on the form of an interior word. If it is true that '[a]ll knowledge indeed is, in the strict sense of the term, an assimilation'[22] then we could even consider the intellect's epistemic activity of forming concepts or words as a sort of assimilation to or recapitulation of the generous well-spring-like fruitfulness of the intellectual-sensible object, which mirrors, again, the divine fruitfulness in an analogical sense.[23] In other words, the human being discovers who she is by imitating and assimilating into herself the productive and generative relation of the object's essence to its *species,* the results of which she sees already exemplified outside herself in the material realm. In that, the human being is generated or inspired both by the object's generosity and the *species*' concrete verbalization or expression of that object. Thus she learns and speaks her own words by receiving and imitating that ultimately Trinitarian dynamism or actuality of truth and love that is imprinted upon the very realm of material reality from the beginning.

To be more concretely anthropological: of all sensible objects the human child encounters, the parents, especially the mother, are the primary persons the child relates to. By speaking words to the child, the mother communicates her own generous fruitfulness to the child so that the child grows in conscious intellectual conception through imitation of the mother's generosity.[24] In other words, the child does not come up with the activity of speaking and even his own thinking as

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[22] Gilson, The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure, 133.

[23] If intellectual conception is expression, as Gilson says ibid., 133–134, then the intellect's expressive activity must be preceded by an impression, just as the divine Word cannot express the Father's generative activity before the divine essence has been impressed upon Him. Here again we see the intimate connection between the *conversio ad phantasma* and the *reditio ad seipsum*: We learn from the other what we are able to do ourselves by imitating him: We come to ourselves by the mediation of the other.

[24] Hans Urs von Balthasar, Spiritus Creator: *Skizzen zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1967), 13, makes the point that the child awakens to consciousness through the love of the mother: Bonaventure can help us see why this ultimately points to God as the exemplary cause of generative self-expression and reception by imitation.

language independently on his own by interior illumination but begins to act genuinely on its own by first receptively imitating and assimilating the generosity it witnesses through the senses, even though this would never happen without a sort of *a priori* knowledge or illumination at work and active already within the child's intellect.

Regarding the intellect's own interior conditions for knowledge, Bonaventure expressly states that there would be no knowledge at all unless the human being had an *a priori* understanding of the *ens per se*, of being *itself*.[25] However, even though this interior knowledge is a given condition, it is not *evident* to the human being from the beginning but has to be arrived at through the process of *reductio*, which takes its starting point from a reflection upon the previous activity of knowing an object, beginning with sense perception, that has already been performed.

We have seen that for Bonaventure the human soul is interiorly structured in a Trinitarian fashion, and the embodied soul is related to the material world through the senses. However, what unites the human being in these relations to the Trinity upward/inward and to the sensible world downward/outward, as it were, is that as an embodied soul with a Trinitarian structure, it is not only related to the sensory but more profoundly related to the realm of the created being, *ens*, that manifests itself in the sensory world. The *ens* is itself structured in a Trinitarian fashion, which corresponds to the soul's structure.

This correspondence of the object, *ens*, and the soul can be shown in the following way: The first preliminary (*semiplene*) station on the way of Bonaventure's method of *reductio* or analysis[26], which is the tracing back of the realized fact of human knowledge towards its necessary conditions, are the three features or three transcendentals of every *ens*:

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[25] Bonaventure, Itin. III,3.
[26] See Andreas Speer. 'Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy,' *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6, 1 (1997): 40–42; *resolutio* or analysis is the complement of synthesis, *compositio*. For Bonaventure's conception of analysis, see: Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff, 'Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter,' in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung. Vorträge des II. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie, Köln, 31. August – 6. September 1961, Miscellanea mediaevalia* 2, ed. Paul Wilpert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), 71–81; Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 52 (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1996), 162–164.

the *unum*, *verum* and *bonum* (the one, the true and the good).[27] The faculties of the human soul correspond to these three features of *ens*: the 'memory' (*memoria*), a wider concept than memory and perhaps equal to soul or consciousness as such, is the unified representation and retention of all the manifold temporal, ideal and certain realities in one faculty or the soul simply and corresponds to the *unum*.[28] The *memoria* allows the soul to collect (*legere* – collect/read) and hold together a being's manifold *species* and refer them to the same one and single *ens* that expresses itself in diverse *species*. The intellect reads these *species* as true expressions of a whole and combines the true knowledge of terms, propositions and conclusions. Thus the intellect corresponds to the *verum.* [29] The will of the human being is that faculty with which he or she deliberates over, judges, and desires the *bonum* that is this being.[30] In other words, it places this being in the hierarchy and sequence of the whole. This threefold correspondence or connaturality[31] of the soul to the realm of being is the necessary condition for the human intellect to know anything in the first place.[32]

Further following Bonaventure's stages of the pilgrimage of the soul towards God, from the explicit contemplation of the order of the three human faculties together with the three transcendental aspects of *ens per se,* the wise person arrives at a contemplation of the Trinity[33] as manifested already within created being.[34]

3. Created Being (*esse*)

For Bonaventure, the transcendentals of the one, the true and the good gain their concrete shape and depth not merely from their correspondence to the human faculties, but ultimately as expressions of

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[27] Famously, the *resolutio*, when fully performed, leads all the way to God as the ultimately necessary and implied content of human knowledge – Bonaventure's proof for the existence of God.

[28] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,2.

[29] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,3.

[30] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,4

[31] For this term see e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I. 13. 1 ad 3.

[32] For a comparison of the classical account of truth qua being and the postmodern account of the isolated mind opposite being see David C. Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Predicament. Rediscovering the Real in Beauty, Goodness, and Truth*, Veritas 28 (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 64–84.

[33] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,5.

[34] Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,6.

the Trinitarian life of God, who is one, true and good in a transcendent manner and of which the human soul and being as such are images. More specifically, being's (*ens*') transcendental of the *verum* is the foundation for any human knowledge, in that a being can express true manifestations of itself. The *verum*, conversely, has its own foundation within the Son as the true and complete personal expression or self-gift of the Father within the Trinity.[35] The *bonum* seems to refer to the original goodness of the Father in that he expresses or gives Himself to the Son, and the Son's referring back to the Father in reciprocal love as well as recapitulating the very goodness of the Father by spirating the Holy Spirit as their *nexus* together with the Father.

For Thomas Aquinas, truth as a transcendental is not something added unto *ens* as extrinsic to it but is deeply embedded in it by virtue of what Thomas calls the *actus essendi* of the *ens*, the act of being (*esse*), the actuality of all acts.[36] By gathering from Bonaventure a deeply Trinitarian notion of actuality as rooted within God's Trinitarian actuality, that includes the one, true and the good within it, we can elucidate Aquinas' metaphysical notion of the act of being (*esse*), so as to open it up to a Trinitarian ontology and possibly gleam the fertility of a mutual dialogue between the two great scholastic thinkers.[37]

How does Bonaventure describe Trinitarian actuality? For an attempt to answer this question, in the second section of this article

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[35] Cf. Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit* II,1, 292.

[36] See Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 243–289.

[37] It seems that Aquinas himself would have been open to appropriate the transcendentals of *unum*, *verum* et *bonum* to the Trinitarian person of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. See Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 408–415. Hemmerle, *Nachfolge* 114f does not see such an affinity between Thomas and Bonaventure. For him, even though Thomas's concept of *esse* safeguards somehow the dynamic aspects Bonaventure is careful to point out, it is nevertheless slanted towards stability, substantiality and the quality of firmness that *esse* conveys to what is real. He notes that Bonaventure can think better than Thomas about the fact that relation and love within being are the foundation for the constancy of being's substantiality or existence. Love is what is constant first, whence all constancy derives for Hemmerle. However, F. Ulrich, Homo Abyssus. *Das Wagnis der Seinsfrage* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1998), 7–234, has shown, by pointing to Thomas' understanding of *esse* as a *completum et simplex sed non subsistens*, that Thomas has a very dynamic and relational understanding of the *esse* that constitutes the substantiality and firmness of the *ens*. See especially his term 'Subsistenzbewegung': *esse*'s movement towards subsistence. For Ulrich, ibid., 235–524, this movement of *esse* is recapitulated personally by the human being according to the transcendentals of being.

we turn to his *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*.[38] There he first states that the concept of actuality in God presupposes God's immutability, highest simplicity, and eternity.[39] Secondly, divine actuality consists more precisely in 'a full conversion of itself to itself through knowing and loving, whereas intellect includes a word, and love includes a *nexus*'.[40]

In other words, the Trinitarian processions of the Word from the Father and of the *nexus* of Father and Word (Holy Spirit) from within the unity of God's self-relation in truth and love are the ultimate and exemplary form of actuality as such, whence all other actuality, such as the act of being, the life of the human soul, and the life of the material cosmos, is derived and where it should return to as its original meaning. Notably, the generation of the Word and the spiration of the Spirit in the Trinity include a sort of *transcendent* self-reception on the part of the Son vis-à-vis the Father (and of the Spirit vis-à-vis both), so that 'passivity' or 'receptivity' constitute an integral part of divine *actuality*, without of course any damage being done thereby to God's immutability![41]

This complements Aquinas' understanding of God in the following sense: If God is understood by Thomas as *ipsum esse subsistens*, and we interpret God's gift of *esse* to created beings in relation to the Thomistic conception of created *esse* as *esse intensivum*, that contains all the good riches of creation within itself, and on which, according to Cornelio Fabro,[42] Aquinas' metaphysics is built, then it should be intelligible from a Thomistic standpoint that the actuality within the Trinitarian God truly includes every perfection, even a 'transcendent "limitation" in reception' if even that truly is a perfection. In Thomistic

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[38] For a fuller account of Bonaventure's notion of Trinitarian actuality see Klaus Obenauer, Summa Actualitas. Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXIII: Theologie, Vol. 559 (Frankfurt a.M./Berlin/Bern/New York/Paris/Wien: Peter Lang, 1996), 63–107.

[39] Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae de mysterio Ss. Trinitatis* [henceforth quoted as *Myst. Trin.*], VI,2 c.

[40] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,2 c.

[41] This point is made by Balthasar, *Theodramatik IV*, 74f: This allows for a clearer vision of the God–world relationship beyond a simple opposition of God's actuality and the creature's potentiality. For an American reception of this idea see David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World. Center of the Church*. Communio *Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 232f; 240–242: Receptivity as a perfection.

[42] Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Bibliothèque de la revue thomiste (Fribourg: Parole et Silence, 2015), 220; 508.

metaphysics, nowhere else than from and through this actuality of *esse* is the substance's firm receptive *capability* of receiving *esse* in order to be-in-act constituted in the first place. If Trinitarian actuality is to be at its heart personal self-communication, there has to be included in its transcendent receptivity as well.[43] In more traditional terms: A Trinitarian God's actuality includes the communication and givenness of the divine essence from the Father to the Son.[44]

4. Created and Divine *Esse*

The statement that there is a divine sort of reception or passivity immediately begs the question, however: Do divine being and created being simply follow the exact same laws of self-gift and actuality that univocally transcend both God and creatures and govern both realms? If this question is answered in the affirmative, the Trinity would merely be a more perfect instantiation of this meta-transcendent quasi-essential supra-divine law of self-gift and reception. In other words, we can ask: By discovering these all too close similarities between the Trinity and created being, does Bonaventure not inaugurate a univocal ontology of one single genus or logic of being (*ens*) under which God and creation fall?[45]

Perhaps he could be construed to think this way, but in his *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, Bonaventure is very clear: if we

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[43]   For Thomas' concept of actuality as self-communication see Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 245–250. For Aquinas' notion of *esse intensivum* see ibid., 174–187.

[44]   Martin Bieler argues in the present volume, that in this Trinitarian self-communication the divine essence never takes on a subsistence of its own apart from the three divine Persons as it is always already completely given and received in them, not being some fourth reality next to the persons. Inner-Trinitarian communication is thus the exemplary ground even for the non-subsistence of *esse commune* as always already given away to and received by created substances. Here, with the help of F. Ulrich, ontology becomes again transparent to Trinitarian theology.

[45]   For this charge and others see John Milbank, 'The Franciscan Conundrum,' *Communio International Catholic Review* 42.3 (Fall 2015): 488–491; Id., *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*: Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2005, 96f. As Milbank's judgement on Bonaventure hinges on the argument that Bonaventure was a semi-Joachite, we have to point out Bonaventure's Christocentrism along with e.g. Henri de Lubac, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore* (Paris: Cerf, 2014), 23–139, and C. Colt Anderson, *St. Bonaventure's* Collationes in Hexaëmeron *and the Joachite Controversy* (PhD Diss.: Marquette University, 1998), who show the profound criticism Bonaventure made of the Joachite conception of time and history held by some members of his own order.

think we can extrapolate some univocal rules that govern the Trinity by applying our reason to created being, we are mistaken: God is above and outside of every genus of being (*supra et extra omne genus entis*).[46] Every time Bonaventure encounters the fact that any term whatever, for example 'form', is used for both created being as well as for uncreated being in a seemingly univocal manner, he employs the term *duplex* to clarify that in the case of the term 'form' for example, the term possesses a twofold (*duplex*) meaning.[47] Even though he uses the same terms in philosophy as well as theology, Bonaventure is always aware that the same words do not denote identical univocal concepts or realities. For Bonaventure, what differentiates the divinity from creation in the *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity* is the primary and most perfect simplicity of God. Divine simplicity allows Bonaventure to renounce any sort of univocal concepts between God and creation and state firmly that

> The created good and the uncreated good do not share in a common nature, both because the highest good is of a greater simplicity […] and because the highest good exceeds every created good by a disproportional excess.[48]

Instead of univocity, Bonaventure holds firmly to a view of analogy between God and created beings, as we would have expected an orthodox theologian to do after the doctrinal assertions made by the 4th Lateran council in 1215. He writes:

> Therefore, when the term 'good' is predicated of the created and uncreated good, this is not possible unless in virtue of a certain analogy [*per quondam analogiam*], because all created goodness flows from uncreated goodness as if from its first cause. Thus, created good follows after it and thus falls short of the highest simplicity. Highest simplicity however comes as it were first, and in virtue of the fact that it comes first it is most simple.[49]

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[46] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VII,1 ad 7. For this 'constant doctrine' of Bonaventure see George H. Tavard, 'The Coincidence of Opposites: A Recent Interpretation of Bonaventure,' *Theological Studies* 41.3 (1980): 579.

[47] See Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* II,2, ad 1: *duplex est forma.*

[48] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* III,1 ad 4.

[49] Ibid.

Patently, this means that Bonaventure does not conceive of the relation of creation to God by means of a shared form, but in virtue of a certain influence of God upon his creation, like a cause is participated by its effects.[50] Admittedly, this can take on a negative tone when Bonaventure writes that God transcends his creation infinitely due to the ontological 'deficit' on the side of the creature. However, if this ontological lack of created beings is 'circumscribed or abstracted by the intellect, it leads to knowledge of the eternity within the divine *esse*'.[51]

This circumscription or abstraction is to be performed according to the following principle: 'Created things, when they are applied to the creator, should be applied to him according to what they possess of completeness, not according to what they possess of incompleteness.'[52]

Additionally, the lack of simplicity in created beings does not mean a total lack of perfection, rather their limited perfections taken together point us towards God's simple perfection. Bonaventure thus goes on to say that 'among creatures, various and diverse things, such as goodness and wisdom, justice and mercy, correspond to things which in God are the same.'[53]

Note that this combination of variety towards a unified concept of God applies particularly to realities which are seemingly opposites of each other in creation (e.g., justice and mercy). Bonaventure terms these realities *incompossibilia*, things that cannot possibly exist together by nature and be identical. However, Bonaventure describes God's simplicity as the locus of the paradoxical coincidence of these apparent opposites.[54]

Let us briefly note the history of Bonaventure research on the coincidence of opposites in the 20th century. Although it was Cousins, who pointed to the importance of this concept in Bonaventure, serious flaws in his definition of the term 'opposites' had to be highlighted by scholars such as Tavard[55] and Thomas Michael Tomasic.[56] Tavard makes

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[50] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* III,1 ad 11. This is not a new view original to Bonaventure by all means, but can be found wherever the *triplex via* of naming God is applied. Cf. Fran O'Rourke, 'The *triplex via* of Naming God,' *The Review of Metaphysics* 69 (March 2016): 519–554; Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans. by D. L. Schindler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 120–127; 151–157.

[51] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* V,1, c.

[52] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,2 ad 2.

[53] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* V,1 ad 13.

[54] See Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* III,1 c.

[55] Tavard, 'The Coincidence of Opposites,' *Theological Studies* 41.3 (Sept. 1980): 576–584.

[56] See Tomasic's review in: *Speculum* 56.1 (Jan. 1981): 111–114.

the helpful remark that we should not understand this coincidence of opposites christologically as a coincidence of the 'opposites' of the human and the divine nature in Christ, as, also according to Bonaventure, opposites must be in the same genus. The divine and the human do not share a genus, as we have seen, however. Indeed, conceiving of creation and creator as opposites leads in a completely different direction from the analogical approach we have seen Bonaventure take and leads to the more univocal one we have outlined before. We do not agree with Tavard, however, that Bonaventure would completely reject the coincidence of opposites as a suitable model in theology at large.[57]

In fact, historical predecessors to Bonaventure include thinkers like Ps-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and earlier Fathers, as well as some Platonic philosophers. For them, the coincidence of opposites points to the fact that the divine simplicity both transcends and grounds human thought, which relies on the distinction of opposites and the real difference between subject and predicate. For Maximus the Confessor, Jesus Christ's divine being is revealed in his human existence by a certain coincidence of opposites on the level of created being, such that the coincidence of opposites in God is analogically manifested on the level of Christ's created humanity.[58] One example Maximus uses is Christ's walking on water, which constitutes a coincidence of the opposite qualities (*incompossibilia* in Bonaventure's terms) of the instability of water and the stability of solid ground on which one can walk. Already John the Evangelist clearly identifies in the person of Christ the paradoxical coincidence of lordship and servanthood by declaring his humiliating death on the cross to be his simultaneous exaltation.[59]

Obenauer also agrees with Cousins that the concept of the coincidence of opposites is important for Bonaventure's Trinitarian Theology,

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[57] Ibid.: 580, n. 15 and 583. For a more positive reception of Cousins' thesis, with the clarification that we have to see the main basis for what coincidence of opposites means in Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology, see Zachary Hayes' review of Cousins in *The Journal of Religion*, 60.3 (1980): 349–351. See also Cousins' response, where he upholds both Christology and Trinitarian Theology as the grounds for the concept: 'Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites: A Response to Critics,' *Theological Studies*, 42.2 (1981): 277–290.

[58] For this see Jonathan Bieler, *Der Einheitsbegriff als Kohärenzprinzip bei Maximus Confessor. Eine Studie zu Ps-Dionysius-Rezeption, triplex via und analogem Weltbild bei Maximus Confessor*, Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[59] For this see e.g. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 46–50.

but Obenauer more specifically distinguishes what the concept means in Bonaventure. He comes to the conclusion that Bonaventure upholds no *real* difference between the opposites in God who would form their complementary union, as Cousins seems to think. Rather, there is a sort of circumincessive identity of the opposites with each other within God, such that one notion, when taken under close scrutiny, necessarily includes within itself already its opposite, whereas any real difference that remains in God can only be strictly speaking the difference of the persons.[60]

There are many opposite terms Bonaventure applies to divine simplicity. Noteworthy are the terms *esse* and *referri*, substantial being and relational being. In this respect, Hemmerle notes the fundamental coincidence of self-possession and self-gift within the Trinitarian God for Bonaventure.[61] Furthermore, actuality and passivity[62] are mutually inclusive in God, in that we cannot describe his actuality, the Trinitarian processions, without the second and the third person's reception of the divine essence, as we have seen.

More precisely, the term passivity or reception or even suffering, to name the term strangest to our ears in the speech of God, can be correctly applied to the Trinity *only* through removal or negation of any sort of incompleteness or imperfection residing within the creaturely conception of the term passivity. For Bonaventure, there truly *exists* a reception of being within the Trinity; however, it is 'not an acquisition of new being (*esse*), yet it is nevertheless a reception of true and actual and eternal being (*esse*), as there is a true production in God, but no true change'.[65]

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[60] Obenauer, Summa Actualitas, 61f; 76f. See also *Myst. Trin.* III,2 c. Evil is lack of being and perfection and there is no coincidence of good and evil in God, according to Bonaventure's principle that we only apply to God what belongs to completeness and perfection in created being, as we have seen above and will see below.

[61] Hemmerle, *Nachfolge*, 73. Ibid., 75, Hemmerle notes that the logic of productivity in God is a paradoxical logic.

[62] Passivity is of course understood in an eminent sense that excludes all mutability and change. It is true, as Tavard, 'The Coincidence of Opposites': 580 says, that God's oneness is not compatible with any kind of potentiality. However, we ask the question whether reception in God constitutes the perfect archetype for any sort of receptivity and passivity on the created level: The *impressio* of the divine essence upon the Son as the archetypical receptivity within the divine actuality, in which created receptivity and passivity participate.

[65] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,2 ad 1.

Thus, any sort of change has to be removed from the notion of reception in order to apply it to the divine, but there is true generation nonetheless. A difficult thought indeed! Divine passivity or reception is thus to be understood only together with actuality, or what is more, divine reception is the very flipside or inner depth of divine actuality which differ from created activity and receptivity in being free from of all incompleteness.

At the heart of reality, therefore, is a simple, but freely productive God who unites within him opposites that seem mutually exclusive to human reason: substantial being and being in relation, actuality and passivity, unity and multiplicity. For human reason, precisely this paradoxical quality makes God recognizable, but not graspable as the transcendent God, since only he is able to perform seemingly mutually exclusive acts: being merciful as well as just, putting to death as well as bringing to life (1 *Sam* 2:6; *Dtn* 32:39).[64] Bonaventure concludes that 'two opposites can be attributed to God without any sort of mutation on his part'.[65]

For Bonaventure, this coincidence of opposites is ultimately based on the relations and processions of the divine persons in the Trinity as the very actuality of God's being. Hemmerle says that the paradoxical logic of productivity opens up to the logic of love.[66] The Trinitarian life of the divine persons forms the heart of Bonaventure's conception of actuality as a personal relation of God to Himself in knowledge and love, which is then analogically expressed in creation.

What is more, the Trinitarian life of the persons seems to constitute even the exemplar for the actuality of created being (*esse*) itself as gift, by which God creates and by which human beings are related in knowledge and love to other human beings. Thus, the footprint of the Trinity in creation is not merely to be understood according to the 'Augustinian' psychological model of *intra*-personal self-relation but remains at the heart of created *esse*, which is shared by and constitutes

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[64] Cf. Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,1 sed contra 17. Among others, Cardinal De Lubac has pointed to this phenomenon of the paradoxical in the divine: See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri De Lubac. An Overview* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 91–103.

[65] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,1 c: *Deo possunt attribui duo opposita sine ulla sui mutatione.*

[66] See Hemmerle, *Nachfolge*, 82.

the relation between individual beings.[67] Created actuality has already embedded within it knowledge and love, which only become actualized through personal difference.[68] In this view, the Trinitarian life is the foundation for all interpersonal and embodied human life. Bonaventure beautifully points out the Trinitarian foundation of his epistemology when he says:

> Enlightened reason sees that solely the Trinity as Trinity is the fullest reason (ratio) for knowing anything true, whereby it happens that anything true that is known is held in the memory, known more clearly by being held in the memory and being known it pleases and is loved.[69]

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[67] On this see Adrian J. Walker, 'Personal Singularity and The *Communio Personarum*: A Creative Development of Thomas Aquinas' Doctrine of *Esse Commune*,' *Communio International Catholic Review* 31 (Fall 2004): 457–479.

[68] That love necessarily includes the difference of persons is of course famously seen by Richard of St. Victor in his *De Trinitate*.

[69] Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VII, 2 ad 7.