

Abstract

This chapter discusses two models of the Trinity: the so-called social or interpersonal model, and the psychological or intrapersonal model. How we conceive of the indwelling of the Trinity will be determined by the extent to which we espouse one of these models. The chapter argues that the social model, although rather fashionable in current theology, may not be as suitable as the intrapersonal model to account for the indwelling in the soul of the divine Persons and the Son in particular. The intrapersonal model, on the other hand, can account for a genuine indwelling of both the Son and Holy Spirit.

Keywords

models of Trinity. Aquinas. gifts of the Holy Spirit. Ruusbroec. Rahner.

Trinitarian Indwelling

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The theme of the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul is a complex topic, intersecting as it does with two central doctrinal areas. First, there is the theology of the Trinity, and more specifically, how to conceive of the historical missions of the Son and Holy Spirit in the world. These missions need to be interpreted in light of the intra-Trinitarian processions (i.e., the generation of the Word, and the procession of the Holy Spirit), and vice versa. Secondly, the theme of Trinitarian in-dwelling also involves a Christian-anthropological consideration. What are the theological-anthropological presuppositions facilitating the indwelling of the Trinity in the soul? What does it mean to have been made in the image of the Trinity, and how is that relevant in relation to our receptivity toward God's self-bestowal?

To tackle our topic I will discuss two major models of the Trinity, and then consider how each model coheres with the topic of Trinitarian indwelling. Both are inspired by St Augustine's *De Trinitate*, although Augustine developed only one of them in detail, namely the so-called 'psychological' or intra-personal model. Scholars call the other model the social or interpersonal model, and it is usually associated with Richard of Saint Victor. This model has witnessed a genuine revival in the twentieth century, and was enthusiastically adopted by many theologians because its deeply relational and communal dimensions are said to have the potential to nourish egalitarian understandings of Church and society. The distinction between the two models may have a certain heuristic value, which is why I adopt it in this contribution; in reality, however, it is not the case that the Trinitarian doctrine of each theologian fits neatly into one of these models, and the doctrine of some shares characteristics

with both, such as for instance Bonaventure's (Van Nieuwenhove 2012: 215–22). I will begin my discussion with the interpersonal model. As I see it, however, the intrapersonal model may have a distinct advantage when we are dealing with the topic of Trinitarian indwelling in the soul.

THE INTERPERSONAL MODEL

Jürgen Moltmann is one of the twentieth-century theologians who has promoted the social model of the Trinity. This model sees the Trinity as a community of loving Persons. In characteristic vein, he claims that the Trinitarian Persons are 'individual, unique, non-interchangeable subjects of the one, common divine substance, with consciousness and will' (Moltmann 1981: 171). In order to avoid the charge of tri-theism he puts a distinct emphasis on divine perichoresis or mutual in-dwelling of the three divine Persons.

The relationality of the three Persons at the heart of the social model is seen as paradigmatic for human life and society. As he puts it: 'the Trinity corresponds to a community in which people are defined through their relations with one another and in their significance for one another, not in opposition to one another, in terms of power and possession' (Moltmann 1981: 198). These ideas proved highly influential and were immediately adopted by a whole range of theologians, including liberation and feminist theologians (e.g., Elizabeth Johnson, Patricia Wilson-Kastner). In his book *Trinity and Society* Leonardo Boff, for instance, draws out the political and ecclesial implications of the social doctrine of the Trinity as 'the mystery of inclusion,' considering it the basis for 'social and integral liberation.' He describes the communal aspects, as well as the emphasis upon the mutual indwelling or perichoresis of the divine Persons in the following terms:

The Trinitarian communion between the divine Three, the union between them in love and vital interpenetration, can serve as a source of inspiration (.....). It speaks to the oppressed in their quest and struggle for integral liberation. The community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit becomes the prototype of the human community dreamed of by those who wish to improve society and build it in such a way as to make it into the image and likeness of the Trinity.

(Boff 1988: 6–7)

The interpersonal model has become so popular that is now widely regarded as ‘the new orthodoxy’—although some have expressed, rightly in my view, serious reservations about the ‘projectionism’ at the heart of the social model of the Trinity (Kilby 2000). Before we examine some of these concerns, let us examine in some detail the historical origins of this interpersonal model.

At the end of ~~Book VIII, 14 of his~~ *De Trinitate* 8.14 Augustine had suggested, somewhat casually, that love reveals a Trinitarian dimension: ‘love means someone loving and something loved with love. There you are with three, the lover, what is being loved, and love’ (Hill 1991: 255). He returns to it, albeit briefly, in ~~9, Book IX, 2~~, but abandons it soon in favour of the so-called psychological model (which Iwe will discuss in the next section). It was Richard of ~~Saint~~ Victor (d. 1173) who seized upon Augustine’s cursory remarks, and developed them in his own work *De Trinitate*—a work Moltmann explicitly draws upon (Moltmann 1981: 173). According to Richard, love entails an orientation towards the other; it wants to share itself. For love to flourish, it must be reciprocated; for it to be perfect, however, so Richard argues, it must have a triadic structure, for love between two persons is still in danger of remaining somewhat narcissistic. The ecstatic nature of love attains perfection when the love of two lovers finds expression in their one love for a co-beloved: ‘each of the two persons, who is loved supremely and ought to love supremely, must seek

with equal desire a third person mutually loved (*condilectum*) and must possess him freely with equal concord. Therefore, you see how the perfection of charity requires a Trinity of Persons' (*De Trin.* 3.III.11; Taylor-Coolman & Coulter 2010: 257).

Richard's solution to the problem how to distinguish between the three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, given the oneness of the divine nature, is a highly elegant one (*De Trin.* 5.V.16; Taylor-Coolman & Coulter 2010: 309-10): while he safeguards the unity of the divine nature by appealing to the notion that God is love (1 John 4: 8) he distinguishes between the divine Persons in terms of the origin of this love: the Father, as the origin of the Trinity, is the one who freely bestows love unto the others; the Son receives love and passes it on (cf. *Filioque*), with the Father, to the Holy Spirit (who is the ecstatic manifestation of the love of Father and Son); and the Holy Spirit is love received, who does not pass on love to another (fourth) Person. Thus, the Father is love freely bestowed (*amor gratuitus*); the Holy Spirit is love freely received (*amor debitus*); and the Son is a mixture of both (*ex utroque permixtus*). (Of course, this does not imply that the Holy Spirit does not love the other two Persons; but the Holy Spirit loves the other two Persons, and indeed us, with a love that is utterly received.)

While Richard's theology of the Trinity is both original (despite its remote origins in Augustine) and sophisticated, it faces a difficulty, which is of immediate relevance to the topic of this chapter. In order to explain this difficulty we need to recall Karl Rahner's concern that our statements about the immanent Trinity must be founded on the economic Trinity as revealed in the history of salvation (Rahner 1970: 22). In more traditional language: theology of the Trinity must assume that there is an intimate connection between the intra-Trinitarian generation of the Son and procession of the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, and the divine missions of the Word and the Holy Spirit into our world, on the other hand: the latter (historical missions) reveal the former (intra-Trinitarian processions). Now, Richard can

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convincingly show the connection between the intra-Trinitarian spiration of the Holy Spirit, and the historical mission of the Holy Spirit who is sent into the world to dwell amongst believers: as the Holy Spirit is the ecstatic love of Father and Son within the Trinity, he is ‘breathed out’ into the hearts of Christians. To use Richard’s own analogy (*De Trin.* [VI.10](#); [Taylor-Coolman & Coulter 2010](#): 328): as air is necessary for the life of the body, so too the Holy Spirit is necessary for a saintly life. The Holy Spirit is ‘the one who is inspired [breathed into] into the hearts of the saints by the Father and the Son. He is the one who sanctifies men, so they may merit sainthood’ (*De Trin.* [VI.10](#); [Taylor-Coolman & Coulter 2010](#): 329).

Richard’s interpersonal model, however, does not allow us to square all that well the generation of the Son with his coming to dwell in the soul of believers: the connection between the generation of the Word as Love-received-and-given and the invisible mission into the soul remains somewhat unclear. It is no coincidence that, when he discusses the divine names of the Second Person of the Trinity (such as ‘Word’) and how he dwells in our world, Richard has recourse to the intrapersonal model (*De Trin.* [VI.12](#); [Taylor-Coolman & Coulter 2010](#): 330–32). In other words, the intrapersonal model may have a distinct advantage over its rival to make clear how the Son, and not just the Holy Spirit, dwells within the soul of the Christian. Richard himself admits the charge. Commenting on [Romans 5:5](#) ‘The love of God was poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who was given to us’, he writes (*De Trin.* [VI.14](#); [Taylor-Coolman & Coulter 2010](#): 334):

But why, I ask, does the Apostle say *through the Holy Spirit* rather than through the Father or Son? But we know that the Father does not have an originator or giver; hence, he can only have a gratuitous love. But, as we have said previously, the Son has both a gratuitous and owed love. And so, in the divine love we cannot be conformed to the property of the Son or the property of the

Father, because we are not able to have both loves together, or even a gratuitous love alone, toward God. For how, I ask, can a creature love gratuitously his Creator, from who it has all that it has? And so, we are certainly conformed to the property of the Holy Spirit to the same extent that we return an owed love to our Creator.

In short, while Richard's model allows us to account for the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, it is not clear how he can account for the in-dwelling of the Son within the soul, for 'we cannot have both a gratuitous and owed love'.²

There are other concerns about this model, and some scholars have quite rightly questioned the new consensus surrounding it. There is, first, the issue of the accuracy of its reading of historical theology (Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, 2011). The adherents of the social doctrine of the Trinity generally portray its rival model in one-dimensional terms, failing to do justice to the subtlety of its understanding of God (allegedly as 'mono-personal subject'), and often making unsustainable and simplistic contrasts between Western and Eastern-Orthodox portrayals of the Trinity, or between the treatises *De Deo Uno* and *De Deo Trino*. Moreover, fashionable references to 'perichoresis' may not suffice to safeguard the integrity of monotheism within the social model if it characterizes the three Persons as distinct centres of consciousness and will (as Moltmann appears to do). Finally, there is, as Karen Kilby (2000: 441–43) has reminded us in a persuasive contribution, the problem of projectionism, if not of circularity: proponents of the interpersonal model are not simply in danger of attributing 'the individual author's or the larger society's latest ideals of how human beings should live in community' to their notion of God. Rather, the concept of perichoresis is first used to name the indescribable mystery of divine unity; this concept is then filled out 'rather suggestively with notions borrowed from our own experience of

relationships and relatedness.’ This is then, in turn, presented as an exciting resource to shape wider society and its understandings of relationships.

THE INTRAPERSONAL MODEL AND THE HUMAN

PERSON AS IMAGE OF THE TRINITY

As indicated, twentieth-century theologians have subjected the so-called intrapersonal or psychological model to severe criticism. Moltmann, for instance, claims that it fails to be genuinely Trinitarian and remains caught up in a ‘mono-personal’ paradigm. Rahner makes a somewhat different point, and claims it conceives of ‘the inner life of God [as] completely unrelated to us and to our Christian existence’; he alleges it fails to give sufficient weight to the historical and salvific experience of the Son and of the Holy Spirit as the reality of the divine self-communication to us, indulging in ‘almost gnostic speculation about what goes on in the inner life of God’ (Rahner 1997: 135). Later in this contribution we will have the opportunity to examine Rahner’s own proposals. I am of the view, however, that Rahner’s rather sweeping critique is somewhat unjustified, and I will substantiate this claim by examining Thomas Aquinas’s treatment of the indwelling of the divine Persons in the soul.

Following Augustine, Aquinas focuses primarily on the divine processions, namely the generation of the Son as Word, and the procession of the Holy Spirit from Father and Son as Love. The following text captures Aquinas’s ideas quite well. Having explained that in an intellectual nature there is an act of intellect and of will, he goes on to say:

The procession of the Word is by way of an intelligible operation. The operation of the will within ourselves involves also another procession, that of love, whereby the object loved is in the lover; as, by the conception of the word, the object spoken of or understood is in the intelligent agent. Hence, besides the

procession of the Word in God, there exists in him another procession called the procession of love.

(*ST I*, q. 27, a. 3; ~~Fathers of the English Dominican Province~~ 1981: 149)

Augustine had already used this psychological analogy to describe the mystery of the Trinity (*De Trin.* IX.18; Hill 1991: 280–82): as an inner word (*verbum mentis*) is generated from the mind, and the will rejoices in this knowledge, so too the Word is generated from the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds as the bond of Father and Son. Aquinas follows him in this, and, in the process, corrects some basic misunderstandings of Augustine by Peter Lombard (*I Sent.* d. 3.2.6; Silano 2007: 23) and others (e.g.; Bonaventure), who incorrectly assumed that Augustine drew an analogy between the three Persons, and three faculties (mind or *memoria*, intellect, and will). Aquinas quite rightly points out that Augustine did not consider *memoria* a distinct third faculty (*ST I*, q. 93, a. 7 *ad 3*; ~~Fathers of the English Dominican Province~~ 1981: 475).

This important correction by Aquinas can be evaluated in different ways. On the one hand, it leads Aquinas to focus on the two divine processions, rather than on three divine Persons as the locus of our image-character, thereby perhaps fuelling later accusations of promoting a mono-personalist understanding of the mystery of the Trinity. On the other hand, Peter Lombard's erroneous reading of Augustine may result in a somewhat static understanding of what it means to be made in the image of the Trinity (i.e., a static analogy between the divine Persons, and the three faculties), whereas Aquinas's approach (and that of St Augustine before him) is far more dynamic by focusing on the divine processions. More importantly for our purposes, the Augustinian-Thomist approach establishes an intimate connection between the intra-Trinitarian dynamics, and our participation in it through knowing and loving God:

As the uncreated Trinity is distinguished by the procession of the Word from the Speaker, and of Love from both of these (cf. *ST I*, q. 28, a.3); so we may say that in rational creatures wherein we find a procession of the word in the intellect, and a procession of the love in the will, there exists an image of the uncreated Trinity.

(*ST I*, q. 93, a. 6; ~~Fathers of the English Dominican Province~~-1981: 473)

It is here that the significance of the 'psychological' analogy becomes fully clear. Unlike Richard's model (and present-day social Trinitarian thinkers) the psychological model allows for a fruitful connection between the theology of the Trinity and theological anthropology and spirituality. Put in a slightly different manner: there is an intimate link between the intra-divine life and the understanding of the human being as made in the image of God. In the words of D. Juvenal Merriell (2005: 137): 'the indwelling of the Trinity is basically the graced presence of God to the mind's faculties of intellect and will in a way that makes the intellect participate in the divine procession of the Word and the will participate in the divine procession of Love.' Let's examine the indwelling of the Trinity, as Aquinas construes it, in some more detail.

TRINITARIAN INDWELLING ACCORDING TO AQUINAS

Aquinas discusses the topic of the indwelling or inhabitation of the divine Persons in *ST I*, q. 43 (~~Fathers of the English Dominican Province~~-1981: 219ff.)—a question which deals with the mission of Son and Holy Spirit. This question is the final question in his treatise on the Trinity; it forms the climax of his discussion of Trinitarian theology, and provides a fitting turning-point to launch his treatise on creation (*ST I*, q. 44ff.)—for both creation and sanctification must be understood in light of the eternal generation of the Word, or Image (in

whom all things have been made), and the spiration of the Holy Spirit, Love, or Gift (in whom all things have been given), as Aquinas suggests in *ST I*, q. 43, a. 2 (Emery 2006: 33–70).

While there is a visible mission of the Son (iIncarnation) and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3: 16; Acts 2) Aquinas seems more interested in this context in the invisible missions. Given the Trinitarian framework, there is no mission of the Father; only the Son and the Spirit are sent (*ST I*, q. 43, a. 4).

Article 3 of question 43, then, considers the relation between the invisible missions of the divine Persons and sanctifying grace. The text deserves to be quoted at length:

The divine person is fittingly sent in the sense that he exists newly in any one; and he is given as possessed by anyone; and neither of these is otherwise than by sanctifying grace. For God is in all things by his essence, power and presence, according to his one common mode, as the cause existing in the effects which participate in his goodness. Above and beyond this common mode, however, there is one special mode belonging to the rational nature wherein God is said to be present as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover. And since the rational creature by its operation of knowledge and love attains to God himself, according to this special mode God is said not only to exist in the rational creature but also to dwell therein as in his own temple.

(Fathers of the English Dominican Province-1981: 221)

The question alludes to an important and controversial issue in medieval theology. In his first book of *The Sentences* d. 17 Peter Lombard, inspired by Romans 5: 5, had identified the love which makes us love God; with the Holy Spirit himself. Aquinas explicitly rejects this view (*ST II-II*, q. 23, a. 2; Fathers of the English Dominican Province-1981: 1264;) and

Summa contra Gentiles 4.IV, ch. 22, 5), stating that it is only through sanctifying grace that the divine Persons dwell within us, and in no other way. Aquinas is worried that that Peter's position will result in a flawed Christian anthropology: if charity is simply equated with the Holy Spirit, we become mere instruments of the Holy Spirit, in an entirely extraneous manner. As Aquinas interprets Peter Lombard's views, we no longer love but it is, rather, the Holy Spirit in us who loves (Van Nieuwenhove 2012: 153–54). Given these concerns, Aquinas prefers to argue that in receiving created grace we actually receive the Holy Spirit, whom we can enjoy (in the Augustinian sense of *fruitio Dei*). Thus we genuinely possess the Holy Spirit, albeit through the means of created grace.

As the quotation suggests, God dwells in all things through his act of creation; however, he dwells in rational creatures (angels and humans) in a special manner, 'as the object known is in the knower, and the beloved in the lover.' This phrase illustrates how the topic of Trinitarian indwelling in the soul hinges on the connection between theology of the Trinity and the Christian understanding of the human person as made in the image of God: there is a harmonious 'fit' between the generation of the Word and the spiration of the Holy Spirit or Love, on the one hand, and the full attainment of our image-character (what it really means to be fully human, or made in the image of God) in our knowing and loving God, on the other hand. In accordance with his adage that grace perfects nature, Aquinas explains that the indwelling of Son and Holy Spirit perfect the operations of intellect and will, which already constitute an inchoative participation in the intra-Trinitarian processions.

Charity plays a central role in the assimilation of the soul to God. Through the bestowal of charity the soul becomes assimilated to the Holy Spirit. In a beautiful passage from *Summa contra Gentiles* 4.IV, ch. 21, 3 (O'Neil 1975: 122) Aquinas writes: 'since the charity by which we love God in us is by the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit himself must also be in us, so long as charity is in us. And so the Apostle says: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and

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that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16). The Holy Spirit makes us 'lovers of God' (*amatores Dei*), and because 'every beloved is in the lover as such,' Aquinas (appealing to 1 John 4:16) goes on to say that 'by the Holy Spirit not only is God in us, but we also are in God' (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV, ch. 21, §4; O'Neil 1975: 122). Indeed, as we become friends of God through the bestowal of charity, we are allowed to share in the mysteries of God himself—for 'it is the proper mark of friendship that one reveal his secrets to his friend' (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV, ch. 21, §5; O'Neil 1975: 123) and to share what one has (*Summa contra Gentiles* IV, ch. 21, §7). Again, because Aquinas describes the virtue of charity in terms of an intimate friendship between God and the human person, he sees the bestowal of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (*ST* I-II, q. 68, a. 5; *Fathers of the English Dominican Province* 1981: 881–82) as an invitation to share in God's own life. The seven gifts are: for the apprehension of truth: understanding (which perfects the speculative intellect) and counsel (which perfects practical reason); for making proper judgements: knowledge (which perfects practical reason) and wisdom (which perfects speculative reason); while piety, fortitude, and fear perfect the appetitive power (*ST* I-II q. 68, a. 4; *Fathers of the English Dominican Province* 1981: 880–81).

Within the confines of this contribution I cannot examine these gifts in any detail; let us just pause and briefly examine the cognitive gifts. It is instructive to contrast the gift of wisdom (appended in the *Secunda Secundae* to the theological virtue of charity), with the gift of knowledge and understanding (connected more specifically with the virtue of faith). While all seven gifts are from the Holy Spirit, the gifts of knowledge and understanding are, given their specific intellectual character, appropriated to the indwelling of the Son, in accordance with Aquinas's overall 'psychological' approach (*ST* I, q. 43, a. 5 *ad* 1 and 2; *Fathers of the English Dominican Province* 1981: 222). The gift of knowledge (*scientia*) refers to sound judgement as to what is to be believed of the things of faith. The gift of understanding

(*intellectus*) enlightens our mind and assists our intellect in penetrating the things of faith (*ST* II-II, q. 8; [Fathers of the English Dominican Province](#) 1981: 1198ff.). The gift of wisdom (*sapientia*) implies, further, ‘a kind of union’ with the things we believe (*ST* II-II, q. 9, a. 2 *ad* 1; [Fathers of the English Dominican Province](#) 1981: 1205). It is therefore linked with charity—the friendship between God and humans—because the gift of wisdom establishes a kind of connaturality with things divine (*ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 2; [Fathers of the English Dominican Province](#) 1981: 1375). It unites us with God in an intimate manner, and it shapes both our contemplation of God, as well as our active life (*ST* II-II, q. 45, a. 3). (Wisdom, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, implies an intimacy with God which distinguishes it from wisdom as an intellectual virtue we acquire through our own efforts.) In short, given the centrality of charity, through which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are bestowed, an intimate union occurs between God and soul: through the Holy Spirit God dwells in us, and we dwell in God.

We are now in a position to return to some of the criticism levelled earlier. It seems to me that Rahner and other critics fail to see that in Aquinas’s view we come to know and experience the revelation of the triune God by participating, through the theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit, that is, the economy of salvation ([Levering 2004](#): 110–43). In relation to the priority of the discussion of the immanent Trinity, one needs to remember that creation and salvation find, in reality, their origin in, and are an extension of, the intra-divine processions of Son and Holy Spirit (*ST* I, q. 45, a. 6; [Fathers of the English Dominican Province](#) 1981: 237–38). As the immanent processions are the cause of creation and sanctification, a discussion of the former therefore precedes an outline of the latter. Finally, it will have become clear that, for Aquinas, the indwelling of the divine Persons results in a lived encounter that involves a transformation of the whole human person in light of the gift of God’s grace. Indeed, even theological activity itself requires a share of the divine

indwelling (if only because it requires the theological virtue of faith and, ideally, the gifts of understanding and wisdom).

Aquinas offers a high point in scholastic theology and spirituality. Outside of the university-setting other mystical theologians, often writing in the vernacular, also expounded how the divine Persons dwell in us. I will now discuss one of these.

RUUSBROEC AND OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE LIFE OF THE TRINITY THROUGH THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Throughout his works (written in Middle-Dutch) Jan van Ruusbroec (d. 1381), although not an academic theologian, developed a spirituality which was nonetheless deeply theologically informed. In order to expound his ideas, I will proceed in a similar manner as earlier, outlining, first, his theology of the Trinity, and then his Trinitarian anthropology, so as to discuss how the Trinity dwells in us and how we participate in the intra-Trinitarian dynamics.

Ruusbroec's theology of the Trinitarian God, whom he describes in *The Spiritual Espousals* b 1148 (de Baere & Mertens 2014: 197) as 'a flowing, ebbing sea,' must rank as one of the most dynamic ones in the Western tradition. Speaking of 'the sublime fruitful nature of God,' he writes in his first work, *The Realm of Lovers* 1597–1618; (de Baere & Mertens 2014: 117):

 this noble nature, which is the principal cause of all creatures, is fruitful.

 Therefore it cannot rest in the unity of the Fatherhood, because of the stirring of fruitfulness; but it must without cease give birth to the eternal Wisdom, that is, the Son of the Father. (← . . . →) Neither out of the fruitful nature, that is,

Fatherhood, nor out of the Father's giving birth to his Son does Love, that is, the Holy Spirit flow; but out of the fact that the Son was born a Person other than the Father, where the Father beholds him as born, and everything one with him as the life of everything, and the Son, in turn, beholds the Father giving birth and fruitful, and himself, and all things, in the Father—this is seeing and seeing-back in a fruitful nature—from this comes a Love, that is, the Holy Spirit, and it is a bond from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father.

From Bonaventure Ruusbroec adopts the notion that the Father generates the Son out of the fruitfulness of his divine nature (*bonum diffusivum sui*), and from the mutual contemplation of Father and Son, the Holy Spirit proceeds as their bond of Love. This passage further suggests that creation can only be understood in light of the generation of the Son by the Father. This is standard medieval fare in the Bonaventurian tradition. However, Ruusbroec then makes an original move in the sentence that immediately follows this passage:

By this Love, the Persons are embraced and penetrated and are made to flow back into that unity out of which the Father without cease is giving birth. Now, even though they are made to flow back into unity, there is no abiding, on account of nature's fruitfulness. This giving-birth and this flowing-back into unity is the work of the Trinity.

(*Realm of Lovers*, 1619–23; ~~de Baere & Mertens 2014~~ :117)

Ruusbroec, therefore, sees the Holy Spirit as the principle of the return (Latin: *regiratio*; Middle-Dutch: *wederboeghen*) of the divine Persons in their shared unity. It belongs to the nature of Love to receive and return out of sheer gratuity, thereby creating a never-ending dynamic of giving and receiving. The whole economy of salvation, and our response to it in grace, can therefore be interpreted in light of this bestowal and return of the Holy Spirit as Love (Van Nieuwenhove 2003: 136–38).

In short, there are three moments in the life of the Trinity: there is an active out-going moment (i.e., the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit); there is the moment of return (i.e., through the embrace of the Holy Spirit the divine Persons return into the divine unity); and, finally, there is the moment of perichoretic fruition in the shared unity. From here, given the fecundity of the divine nature, the process starts all over again, in a never-ending, pulsating dynamic.

These intra-divine movements are reflected in Ruusbroec's Trinitarian anthropology. Ruusbroec, following Peter Lombard and Bonaventure, identifies three faculties in the soul: mind, intellect, and will. The memory or mind (reflecting the role of the Father) as the ground of the soul, can engage with the outside world through reason and will; it can, however, also repose idly when it turns away from the activity and multiplicity of the external world. Again, our reason (mirroring the Word) is usually occupied with external things, but it too can turn within, and rest in non-activity. The will, finally, permeates the faculties, and inclines them towards their source, mirroring the role of the Holy Spirit as principle of the return of the divine Persons. In this return the faculties rest in enjoyment. The analogy with the life of the Trinity is clear: in both cases there is an out-going, in-going, and a fruitive dimension.

In his first work, *The Realm of Lovers*, Ruusbroec outlines the transformation of our natural Trinitarian orientation through the bestowal of faith, hope, and love, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is these gifts which will transform us, and make us participate in the life of the Trinity through the three 'lives' Ruusbroec distinguishes. First, there is the active life, which is a life of practical self-disciplining of the soul and charitable engagement with the external world, thus mirroring the out-going dimension of the intra-divine life (the processions of Son and Holy Spirit). Secondly, there is the interior life of devotion and desire for God, which reflects the return of the divine Persons into their unity. The contemplative life, thirdly, is a life in which we 'enjoy' or 'rest in' God, again mirroring the fruition of the

divine Persons in their shared unity. This combination of the three lives—the active, inner, and contemplative—constitutes the ‘common life’ in which the Christian is both active and contemplative; this common life mirrors the life of the Trinity in its fullness, in its active and fruitive dimensions.

In *The Realm of Lovers*, Ruusbroec weaves a rich tapestry, involving intricate discussions of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, beatitudes, and angelic choirs to describe how grace moulds us toward participation in the life of the Trinity. Within the confines of this chapter, I can only sketch the role of the gifts in this process.

Loving fear, the first gift he discusses, encourages us to do the will of God, in obedience and self-renunciation. Benevolence, the second gift (Latin: *pietas*) is also associated with the active life; it disposes us to consider all those who are in need or distress, and urges us to engage in works of mercy. Thirdly, the gift of knowledge supports the person in the active life to discern the needs of others, and how to best come to their aid. It further instils humility in us that comes with genuine self-knowledge.

The gift of fortitude adorns us in the interior or God-yearning life. It elevates the mind above all temporal things, assists reason in considering the truth of God, and the will to incline itself towards the goodness of God. The gift of counsel is bestowed on us by the birth of the Son in our mind (an Eckhartian theme), which instils a deeper yearning and restlessness for God.

The gifts of understanding and wisdom adorn a life of contemplation of God (*een God scouwende leven*). How to interpret the nature of the contemplative life is a matter of debate amongst Ruusbroec scholars. According to some, Ruusbroec describes a mystical experience, characterized by passivity and immediacy. In my view, the language of ‘resting in’ and ‘enjoying’ God, which Ruusbroec uses to describe the contemplative life, must be understood in accordance with the distinction Augustine draws (in *De Doctrina Christiana* and *De*

Trinitate) between using things and enjoying God (a distinction Ruusbroec explicitly refers to in *The Spiritual Espousals*, a. 766; [de Baere & Mertens 2014](#): 164). In those texts Augustine had argued that only God should be enjoyed, which means that only God should be our ultimate concern in life. (Treating a created thing as your ultimate concern would constitute a kind of idolatry.) Ruusbroec adopts this notion of fruition of God, and explains it by arguing that we need a theocentric focus (*meyninghe*) in everything we do. We attain this radical theocentricity, in which the enjoyment of God consists, through a disposition of radical self-transcendence ([Van Nieuwenhove 2003](#): 170–74).

As I indicated earlier, the contemplative life does not constitute the pinnacle of the spiritual life for Ruusbroec. This is, rather, a harmonious combination of the active, interior, and contemplative lives, which Ruusbroec calls the *ghemeyne leven*, usually translated as ‘the common life’ but perhaps better translated as the ‘universal’ or ‘catholic’ life. The mature Christian will thus engage in virtuous activity (thereby mirroring the ‘activity’ of the divine Persons in the bosom of the Trinity) and also ‘rest’ in God (just like the divine Persons ‘rest’ in their perichoretic unity). This is how he describes this integration of activity and rest in the common life:

God’s Spirit breathes us out to love and perform virtuous works, and he draws us back into him to rest and enjoy: this is an eternal life, just like in our bodily life we breathe air in and out. ~~(...)~~ to *go in*, in idle enjoyment, and to *go out* with works, and *always remaining united* with God’s Spirit: that is what I mean. Just like we open and close our bodily eyes, so quick that we do not feel it, likewise we die in God and live from God, and constantly remain one with God. Thus we will *go out* into our ordinary life and *go in* with love and cleave to God, and always remain *united* with God in stillness.

(*The Seven Rungs*, 1121–32, my emphases and translation; ~~de Baere & Mertens 2014~~: 622)

Once we realize that the contemplative aspect of enjoyment of God refers to a theocentric focus or intention we can begin to understand how this aspect can be combined with a life of virtue. Fruition of God refers to a radical theocentric focus in all our activities and practices (be they acts of virtue or more devotional acts). As Ruusbroec puts it succinctly: ‘therefore he has a common life, for contemplation and action come just as readily to him and he is perfect in both’ (*The Sparkling Stone*, 948–49; ~~de Baere & Mertens 2014~~: 258).

In summary, through the theological virtues and the bestowal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit there is a mutual indwelling of God and soul. Thus the soul comes to share in the life of the Trinity through its very engagement with the world in charitable activity, ~~while~~ all the while remaining anchored in God (‘resting’ or ‘enjoying’ God), through a radical theocentric focus or intention.

The perceptive reader will have noted that Ruusbroec combines elements of both Trinitarian models in his mystical theology: with the interpersonal model he accepts that there are three faculties in the soul, which mirror the three divine Persons, namely mind, intellect, and will. However, with the intrapersonal model, he focuses on a psychological analogy, identifying three movements (going out, return, and fruition) which mirror the threefold intra-Trinitarian dynamic.

RAHNER ON TRINITARIAN INDWELLING

In what is perhaps his most personal work, *Encounters with Silence*, a prayerful meditation or dialogue with God, Karl Rahner, widely regarded as the most important Catholic theologian of the twentieth century, quotes one source outside of ~~s~~Scripture, namely Ruusbroec. It

concerns a passage in which Ruusbroec describes his ideal of the common life, encouraging us to engage with the world while, at the same time, resting in God. It is little surprise that 'this vital passage' was to appeal to Rahner, and that he reread it throughout his life, for Rahner's own spirituality is one which centres on the ideal of Ignatian contemplation in action, an ideal which is similar to the common life Ruusbroec promoted.

Rahner (1981:149) famously remarked that the future Christian would be a mystic, if she were to exist at all. Mystical experience, however, should not be primarily understood in terms of a passive and immediate union with God (Van Nieuwenhove 2004). Rahner does not deny the possibility of this kind of direct experience of the divine, although he calls it 'an obscure and mysterious matter' which only those who enjoyed it can talk about (Rahner, 1982: 86). Instead, Rahner is more interested in 'the mysticism of everyday life.' He draws attention to the fact that in our acts of knowledge and freedom, when engaging with individual objects of everyday experience (what he calls 'categorical experience') we are always also surrounded by a horizon of boundless mystery, which is actually the condition of possibility of everyday knowing and wanting (the 'transcendental experience'). This is the hidden mystery in the midst of everyday life (Rahner, 1979: 6--31). As he puts it:

This transcendental experience of human transcendence is not the experience of some definite, particular objective thing which is experienced alongside of other objects. It is rather a basic mode of being which is prior to and permeates every objective experience. (---) It is (---) the a priori openness of the subject to being as such, which is present precisely when a person experiences himself as involved in the multiplicity of cares and concerns and fears and hopes of his everyday world.

(Rahner 1997: 34--5)

How then does the Trinitarian God communicate himself to us in this transcendental experience? Rahner puts it as follows:

This self-communication of God has a three-fold aspect. It is the self-communication in which that which is given remains sovereign, incomprehensible, continuing, ever as received, to dwell in its uncontrollable, incomprehensible originality. [This is the self-communication of God as Father.] It is a self-communication in which the God who manifests himself 'is there' as self-uttered truth and as freely, historically disposing sovereignty. [This is the self-communication of God as Son.] It is a self-communication, in which the God who communicates himself causes in the one who receives him the act of loving welcome ~~...~~ [This is the self-communication of God as Holy Spirit.]

(Rahner 1970: 37)

We need to understand this three-fold communication of God in both historical and transcendental terms. In this Rahner is much closer than he himself acknowledges to traditional accounts, such as Aquinas's, who, as we saw earlier, claimed that there are both visible (or historical) and invisible (or sanctifying) missions. Again, in broad agreement with the tradition, Rahner focuses primarily upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when he discusses our transcendental experience of God. I conclude my outline of Rahner's contribution with a short discussion of this topic.

How do we experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us? In *The Spirit in the Church* Rahner attempts to answer this question. After he has reiterated that transcendental experience, when mediated through an actual categorial object, is always divine experience in the midst of everyday life, he makes the point that there are actual life-experiences which open up the possibility of an experience of the Spirit. He gives an extensive and poignant

sample. When we discover that we can forgive somebody, or renounce something truly dear to us, though we receive no recognition for it; when we try to love God, 'although no response of love seems to come from God's silent incomprehensibility'; when we engage in utterly selfless deeds without any prospect of even a mere acknowledgement; or

when the fragmentary experience of love, beauty, and joy is experienced and accepted purely and simply as the promise of love, beauty, and joy, without their being understood in ultimate scepticism as a cheap form of consolation for some final deception; where the bitter, deceptive, and vanishing everyday world is withstood until the accepted end, and accepted out of a force whose ultimate source is still unknown to us but can be tapped by us; (Rahner 1979: 21-22) where one lets oneself go unconditionally and experiences this capitulation as true victory (Rahner 1979: 27) there is God and his liberating grace. There we find what we Christians call the Holy Spirit of God.

(Rahner 1979: 21-22)

The dialectic of incomprehensible mystery and acceptance or surrender operative in these experiences reveals a Trinitarian dimension: in the midst of our confusion, or perhaps even despair over afflictions, we encounter the mystery of the Father, while the Holy Spirit assists us to surrender to this mystery in light of the invitation of his incarnate Son. In the words of William V. Dych (1992: 160): because Rahner 'saw God not just as different from the world but also one with it, he was able to point to all human experience as offering an encounter with God.' As Rahner (1979: 27) himself puts it: the experience of the Spirit does not happen 'as meditation proper, in self-immersive inward communion,' but rather 'in the warp and weft of everyday life, where responsibility, loyalty, love, and so on are practiced absolutely' (Rahner 1979: 27).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this chapter I first recalled the distinction between two models of the Trinity: the so-called social or interpersonal model, and the psychological or intrapersonal model. How we conceive of the indwelling of the Trinity will be determined by the extent to which we espouse one of these models. I have argued that the social model, although rather fashionable in current theology, may not be as suitable as the intrapersonal model to account for the indwelling in the soul of the divine Persons and the Son in particular. The intrapersonal model, on the other hand, can account for a genuine indwelling of both the Son and Holy Spirit. Perhaps, however, we should refrain from committing to just one specific model, and allow for a diversity of approaches to explain how God dwells in us, and we in God. Richard of ~~Saint~~ Victor and Aquinas are paradigmatic exponents of the inter- and intra-personal models respectively. Similarly, while many of today's theologians enthusiastically espouse the social model, especially feminist and liberation theologians, Rahner both adopts and ingeniously reinvents the psychological model, drawing on his transcendental approach, and demonstrates its relevance for people today. Ruusbroec, on the other hand, is harder to place: he borrows elements from both models: in accordance with the medieval interpersonal model, he accepts that there are three faculties, mirroring the three divine Persons. However, he also develops a psychological analogy of some kind, that is, between the movements of the divine Persons (in terms of out-going, in-going, and fruitive rest) and the three faculties (in their out-going, in-going, and restful moments). And perhaps there is a lesson in this: if current Trinitarian theology and spirituality want to do full justice to the rich theme of Trinitarian indwelling (as it should), it may not be best served by dichotomous approaches in its doctrinal models of the Trinity.

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