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# On the Organization Of Life

In the beginning these was only the Father, because he is logically prior to everything else. He exists by virtue of his own being. His nature is To Live, as Aquinas taught, and nothing else is necessary. He uniquely is the reason why there is something rather than nothing, and that fact – that he is the bedrock of existence – is His specific nature. All being and all time are present to Him because they are extensions of Him.

His life expands outward because that is the nature of life: to be dynamic and growing. The first consequence of his life is the Son, who is alive with His life. So the Son is also true life and filled with life. Father and Son share in the divine life, and both are God fully and seamlessly. But He also has His specific nature, which is to be human, which is to say to be born from the Father. That is to say, the Son uniquely "came to be," although not is time. He is not the Father's life, He is the unique expression of the Father's life because He was begotten by the Father. He also is God, and He is life, He is unchanging but He comprehends change and growth by virtue of His human nature. The "human" is the "begotten one."

The Son has fulfilled his commission from the Father, which is to form a cosmos as His companion. It is an essentially human cosmos, a cosmos of everything that He has begotten: a cosmos of stars and laws and crawling things which He the Son has begotten in His image, a cosmos that expresses the being of the Father. Thus He fulfills His nature, which is to make real and tangible the gift of existence.

This cosmos is Other, external to Father and Son; created by the Son in fulfillment of his office to expand the life of God. But it is inseparable from God because

it also exists and is real. This tie is embodied in God also, by virtue of His Holy Spirit, whose specific nature is to be the Revelation of Father and Son to the cosmos. He is uniquely God IN the world and God FOR the world. He is the Revelation of God to His world.

These three specific natures – God the principle of Existence, God the human god, the Begotten god, and God the Revelation to all that exists in consequence of his nature – are deemed the triune God: three persons in one divine nature To Live. It is because He is God in the World – the Revelation of God to His world – that the Son said of Him that He does not reveal what He knows on His own account, but only reveals to the world what He has learned from the Father and the Son. When in the fullness of time the Son came to His world – the work of His hands – it was through His Holy Spirit that he came into the world. The Spirit serves Him by revealing Him to His world. These three are all the persons in God because they complete everything that is needed of God. It was necessary for him to create because He is Life, and therefore it was necessary for Him to Beget the Son, but Father and Son are separate and different in essence: Father *qua* father and Son *qua* son. They are pure spirit, and as Aquinas teaches can be different only by virtue of distinct essential traits. The one who begets and the one who is begotten are essentially different by virtue of that event. God cannot beget Himself because He too is subject to the laws of reason. He too must be parsed into prior and posterior: Father and Son. It is not any sort of limitation of God to be governed by the laws of logic, because it is His glory to make Reason real. I emphasize again however that this logical ordering is not a temporal ordering.

It is not a familiar idea that the three persons of the Trinity are different essentially. They are equally God, and equally Life. There is no essential difference there. But as we know, they are pure spirit, and pure spirits must have essential differences. The Father is God, *qua* God, and Father *qua* Father. The Son is God *qua* God but Son *qua* Begotten, and the Spirit is God *qua* God and Revelation *qua* Holy Spirit. Since the Trinity is a complete cosmos in itself, not needing any other thing to exist, the persons can only be defined by the relationship to each other, within the Trinity.

The Son existed from the beginning, but only because of the Father. The Holy Spirit also existed not in time, but by virtue of the fact that the cosmos too is external to

Father and Son. Since God is the source of all, He must be revealed in all. From the moment then that the cosmos because possible – even before it specific shape was defined but from the moment it because possible – its relationship to God became real, and in that event God was revealed to it.

Creation.

The Son who was begotten fulfills His commission to create a cosmos, and so He is credited as the architect of the world. The world exists by consequence of the Father's being, which is to be the reason there is something and not only nothing, but it is begotten by the Son. He fashioned the world in His own image and likeness. We do not comprehend all that that fact imports because we are only creatures of this world, but we know that we are not only finite things. We are expressions of His nature, to be begotten. We know also that we share in his gifts of mind and will, able to experience what is infinite and timeless. This gift is most specifically the sense in which He fashioned us in His image and likeness. He made us to rule over the world. This gift was not enough for Him however, because he is not only a being of concepts and abstractions. He revels in reality. So he fashioned us also to look like him, with arms and hands and eyes.

The scribes who gave us our earliest scriptures testify to this, for they write that He fashioned us in His image and likeness. Those men reported what they knew, but not what they understood. They did not appreciate the extent of our nature. They did understand the known facts of the history of creation, and foremost among that was that God had visited His world. He visited Adam and Eve and spoke with them in the garden. He visited Abraham on the road to Sodom and Gomorrah. He looks like us! He too was begotten, and therefore he was begotten as Someone. Of course, it is we who look like Him. Our eyes reveal to us truths of our nature that even three millenia later we will not understand, but as the proverb states: "Nothing enters the mind until it has first been recognized by the senses."

Man and Woman

So this is the population of existence from the beginning: three divine persons sharing the nature of God – To Live – but further differentiated essentially as Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit, and the cosmos of creation the follows from them. The nature of every thing is not a simply attribute in isolation. Rather, as Aristotle taught in the Categories, it is a hierarchy of essential traits. For each general trait follow many more specific traits that are also essential to the being. We speak then of God *qua* God, and of Son *qua* Son without confusion.

It is the nature of man, *qua* human, to be begotten also, but our begetting is fundamentally different from His. He was begotten of God before all time, but we were begotten in the world and in time. He comprehends growth and development. Indeed growth and expansion are essential byproducts of the divine nature and are direct consequences of Him. It is because of that nature that we are. But we are creatures of growth and change in a different way. It is our nature to need to grow and change: to validate in our lives the divine call to grow and mature. It is for this that we were begotten: that we would grow up in Him.

Because we were begotten in this world however we have another, worldly nature: we are animal as well as human. Human and animal are joined seamlessly in us, as divine and human are joined in him. We know that while He has these two natures, He is a single person, man and God. So while we have two natures, we are also unified persons, man and animal. For us it is in part a limitation: nothing can arise before the mind until it first comes through the senses. Aristotle, in his treatise called "De Anima" ("Concerning the Soul") explains that we have a faculty that merges what the senses detect in our surroundings and that transmits it to the mind for interpretation and understanding, and to the will for decision and action. This faculty, because it draws from all the senses, he called "Common Sense." It is the meeting ground of the senses. As such, it is capable of functioning like the mind and will themselves, though only for low-level tasks. In place of wisdom and knowledge, it has instinct and habit. It is in the truest sense the repository of our animal nature, because it distills the very highest faculties that the animals are capable of. It serves the mind not only by facilitating many functions that can be performed routinely, but by making available to us the capacity to train ourselves to perform routine tasks without making demands on our mind and will. It does not rule us, because we always retain the ability to intervene and to overrule habitual responses, but it is indicative of our animal nature that we need this common sense to economize on

the demands on our minds and wills. We would simply be incapable of functioning in the world if every little detail of life required extensive thought and reasoning; that is to say, it we could never simply replace them with habit. We think, but we think slowly. We think *in time*, and our thought draws on our resources of intellect and reason. We think slowly; too slowly to survive if we had to think about everything. While we are limited by our finite human nature fashioned in time, so also are we beneficiaries of that highest gift of the animals: common sense.

But our common humanity does not entirely define us either, because we are man and woman as well. If the essence of our humanity is that we are begotten in this world of finite time, what is our essence *qua* man and *qua* woman? The essence of woman is to trust. The essence of man is to be trustworthy. These natures are both radically complementary and radically different. They are not simply alternatives. They are in a way different *kinds* of being.

The trusting nature of woman would seem to be all that is necessary for human beings. In the first and highest of all the commandments, Jesus called us to love and trust him, for it is loving trust that he credits as "faith." No one does his will unless and until he loves and trusts the Lord our God. This is a uniquely feminine commission. No one does His will until he fulfills the call to all women to trust. That is why it is necessary for all men and women to be begotten of woman, of mother. Everyone shares in this feminine call to trust, and learns it from his or her mother. In this, the pairing of Mother and Son – of Jesus and Virgin Mary – foreshadows or life in the world. Even Jesus, in coming to his creatures, ordained that He would also take upon himself the call to complete trust. The nature of God is unequivocally masculine, because God does not have to trust anyone or anything else. Far from it; He has to live out His commitment to be trustworthy. But He ordained that in order to shatter the separation between His nature and our natures, He would learn trust, and learn it from the only source available: His mother. He has a father, and could not have another, competing father in this world, so it was necessary that he have no earthly father. There is nothing that he needs to learn about his masculine nature, because he is the source of it. He needed – we could not say so of our own reason but by reflecting on the way that he did in fact choose to live – to learn trust.

Now He had a very significant thing to say about trust. At the very beginning of the scriptures he said of Adam that it was not good for him to live alone, but that he needed a consort. This signifies that while woman is potentially complete – which is to say "completed" – in Jesus, man is not complete. Man is incomplete unless and until he has someone to trust him. This raises a rather fascinating question: why did Jesus fashion men at all? As God, he could simply fashion women and arrange for them to live in his harem, doing his work and trusting in his Providence. He is the only man that women need, or so one would think. No Pasha could have it better. As men, while we do not personally encourage such a way of life that does away with us, we can certainly appreciate the compelling advantages of it in the abstract. So what are we missing here?

Why did he fashion Man? He fashioned men to be like himself in a unique way: to desire to earn the trust of Him and of other men and women. Women too he fashioned not in the harem, but in the world. He made them to need to trust the men. If there is any dangerous weakness that women, as a group, display it is an excessive eagerness to trust men. The headlines are filled with unhappy endings to stories that started with misplaced trust. So when I say that women "need" to trust men, that is not a practical judgement. It is the conclusion drawn from observing how women actually live, no matter in what sense that life is necessary for them. But is pleased the Lord God, whose being fills the cosmos, that His specific nature – to be Trustworthy – should populate His creation. In the beginning, it was not enough for Him to Exist, it was necessary for Him to grow and to be realized in everything that exists.

In reference to us, mere mortal men and women, the consequence of this divine nature is achieved is its breathtaking logic. He fashioned man and woman: man to become his brother by adoption and woman to become his sister by adoption. It was by the simple act of fashioning men that He provided that we, both men and women, could not only serve him in His city, but could become His brothers and sisters. It is as men that we are uniquely called to brotherhood with him. Jesus described that very graphically in terms of a feast to which we are all called to partake not as servers and lackeys, but as His guests and heirs of the kingdom. Women in particular live in a kind of an ambiguous suspension caught between man the spouse and man the son. As sons work out their calling to be trustworthy they must leave the nest of boyhood and take on the

responsibilities of life. As men they fulfill their destiny, but it remains true that it is as sons that the relationship of man and woman is defined.

The World around us.

The functions of mind are supplemented by the common sense. This forms a partnership within us that adapts up to live in the finite world: the world of sense and experience and physical action, to name just a few of its talents. It is intensely physical and finite. It is no less part of us, and it is our nature to live in this kind of world of "near and far," of "now and then," of past, present, and future.

There is another kind of talent that we have which supplements the will just as the common sense supplements the mind. It is the talent of emotion, which is a trainable, personal reward mechanism. It is "desire," alongside our will. Again, it is by itself present in the animals too and is not foreign to them, but it is different in us because it functions jointly with our will. Not always cooperatively of course and in fact the entire field of drama seems to float in the gaps between them and in their conflicts.

It is not necessary to us to invoke mind or will. The common sense and the font of desires can, like the animals, impel us through our days. We differ from the world not in that we have mind and will, but in that we are able to have mind and will. But He loves us as He constituted us: with mind and common sense, and with will and desire. He is satisfied that we will always be creatures of the world and creatures of past, present, and future. Some of the deepest experiences of our collective life – of our cultural history – represent insights into His desire. Saint Catherine of Siena, patroness saint of Italy, was a ravishing beauty in Renaissance Siena who lived the love of Jesus not only in the abstract, in terms that our worthy priests endeavor to impress on us from the pulpit every Sunday, but personally. He has more than a will to love us, His creations; He desires us. There is nothing about us that is by its nature foreign to him. He loves beauty and the good life. Lest He seem too soft however, it was Him also who voyaged with Columbus, Cortez, and Magellan, joining in their sacrifice to danger and hardship. It is not an easy world though in the present day we can visit every corner of it without ever venturing too far from the nearest hotel. Now as much as ever our adventures are internal to us:

adventures of the intellect. He made us for the beauty of our world and the demands of risk.

He has never left this world that He fashioned for himself. He wants a world that loves life.

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