FAITH AND REASON:
CHARTING THE MEDIEVAL CONCEPT OF THE INFINITE

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Abstract. The infinite, understood as transcendency, stood in the background of most medieval thinking. Embraced in the early Middle Ages by the concept of universal natural symbolism, which organized the reading of the syntax of *natura*, the infinite posed new epistemic problems for medieval thinking after the re-emergence of Aristotle's natural philosophy, with some of its strongly finitist strings, in 12th century Europe. In fact, the collision of scholastic natural philosophy with supernatural theology, included judiciously in the structure of the medieval university, proved highly fruitful from the perspective of the development of knowledge as such. The effective, as regards the preparation of *via moderna*, entanglement of Franciscan Platonism and Aristotelianism in the philosophies of John Duns Scotus and William of Ockham is testimony to it. The present article undertakes the task to offer some insights into the way infinity was accommodated in medieval Christian thinking, especially from the point of view of concept formation in culture, and of the interrelations between different cognitive demands of the human mind.

1. Introduction

I would like to start with some assumptions. First, I take it for granted that the apposition of negative terms to the Almighty God became quite early an accepted practice in Christianity, which caused in turn that the infinite, as an opposite term to something easily convenient to positive delineation, was admitted in the repertoire of God's adverbial description. Thus, it should be stressed, I understand the word infinite here as a member of a more general verbal cluster whose function was to sign the non-cognizability of God as regards the natural poverty of our language. The aim of the statement is to retouch the possibly too open

begriffshistorische stance of the title. Second, drawing on Edward Grant (Grant 2001:230), I presume that this new usage of the infinite, in contrast to the ancient (pre-Neoplatonic, as well as, in some important aspect, Neoplatonic) practices, was restricted in the Middle Ages to the descriptive field of the powers of God, implying that there was introduced a kind of break between natural and super-natural means of cognition. In fact, the break is a corollary of the specific characteristic of Christianity, i.e. of its revelatory core, informing us of the existence of some fundamental truths about the God that are not achievable by our own strength, but only by dint of God's direct interference. The enforced consequence, as regards these assumptions, leads us right to the central issue of the paper: if God is in some of his fundamental aspects entirely incomprehensible, there should arise necessarily a question about his relationship to the knowledge obtainable through natural means, that is, the question, what, if anything at all, can physics (and metaphysics) tell us about God. Or, to put it conversely, what, if anything at all, is our natural knowledge worth. The question turns out to have a grip of even more cardinal character than is evident at first glance, because it poses in fact a problem about the structure of philosophy, as well as about its systematic rapport to the revealed knowledge of God.

An additional layer of the problem opens up when we take notice of the form in which the infinite God is displayed. As we are well aware, the foremost mystery of the Christian One-God is instantiated in his triple personality, constituting a kind of standard for all the puzzles determined to defy human reason. However, it cannot elude us that just as Christian wisdom arrayed itself often in robes of ancient philosophy, so the concept of the triune God found associates in the Greek triple philosophemes (see Beierwaltes 1979:50–164) – in the teeth of the extreme distance that was constantly stressed to exist between the pagan and the Christian. In fact, the triunal mode of the One-God, a significant complement to the Neoplatonic One beyond being, unlocked the way, despite the God's very negativity, to metaphoric discourse, resulting in prolific apophatic elaborations on the God. I would venture an opinion that by the assumption of a form of tripartite personality, the Christian God entered willy-nilly into the tissue of philosophy, however remote and obscure the contact remained. For this reason I feel it obligatory to enlarge my previous statement, and to say that the infinite, as appropriated in the Christian God, caused two fundamental problems to be faced in thinking. First, it raised an implicit question about the relatedness of the infinite God to natural knowledge. Second, it posited a cognitive dilemma as regards the God himself because the God who had performed a revelatory act, and to whom pertained a multipersonal structure, had by these actions acceded as well to the abatement of the harsh apophaticism initially witnessed in him. The two main routes I am going to take in charting the medieval infinite follow the schema propounded here.

2. St. Augustine

In the eighth book of his *Confessions* (8.2.3–8.2.5) Augustine refers to Marius Victorinus as a man who had prefigured and induced his own conversion to Christianity. This biographical linkage of the two African born Roman rhetoricians, separated in their conversions by about 35 years, is of interest here because of the common role they both performed in elucidating and confirming the Western Trinitarian doctrine. True, it has been said that Victorinus' contribution to substantiating the Nicene Trinitarian formulas stood, in fact, outside of the contemporary theological tradition (see NCE, 9, 182). The respective work was accomplished by the Cappadocian Fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus) on the Eastern side and by Augustine among the Westerns (Anatolios 2007:445, Meredith 1995:110). In addition, it has been doubted to what degree, if any at all, was Augustine familiar with the preliminary elaborations on the subject by Victorinus (Hadot 1962:433, see also Hadot 1968:475–478). As our attention is not fastened on any doctrinal history but on the way infinity came to impact on the cognitive system of the age, we can afford to discard the pretension of looking at developmental consistency of the theological conception. In this sense Victorinus' *Adversus Arium* is for us of no lesser importance than the works that stood right at the centre of the Trinitarian conceptual struggles (see Henry 1950).

While Gregory of Nyssa has provided ample evidence of the acceptance of the infinite among the essential qualities of God (Mühlenberg 1966), the testimony of Victorinus' to that fact is much more meager, but points to something very significant in the Latin philosophical culture. Namely, Victorinus' works bear witness to the possibly first occurrence of *existentia* as a philosophically loaded term in the Latin ambience (Adv. Ar. I.30.21ff.), although the word as used by Victorinus assembles different strands of meaning (see Hadot and Guggenberger 1972). Still, in one of its principal senses it denotes the pure indistinct being, as opposed to any essentially delimited substance, and in connection with it Victorinus comes also to speak of that being as infinite (e.g. Adv. Ar. Ia.32.51ff., see in Victorinus 1981:143).[1] The idea of pure or absolute being itself (as unlashed from the *existentia* vehicle) has been traced back to Porphyry (Hadot 1963, Kobusch 1995) and, in the influential Boethian distinction between *quod est* (that which is, i.e. essence) and *esse* (that by which something is, i.e. existence), it was handed over to the Middle Ages (*De hebdomadibus* 28–55, see Boethius 1973: 40–42).[2] Thus there exists in the respective period, and connected to the

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[1] For Pierre Hadot's thorough comments, see Andresen 1967; for further references, see Undusk 2009:321–322.

[2] The distinction from *De hebdomadibus* (known also as *Quomodo substantiae …*, or *How substances are good in virtue of their existence without being substantial goods*) was in the 12th century picked up and transmitted to the high Middle Ages by Gilbert of Poitiers in his influential pair of *quo est* and *quod est* (see Hoffmann 2004, Marenbon 1988:148ff.).

Trinitarian discussions, a row of notions which attest to the formation of the concept that we can call the existential being. Undoubtedly, the concept had a kind of background in ancient philosophy, but I will cling here to the view that the ancients were, due to their philosophic premises, incapable of developing a truly existential notion of being, and that, accordingly, the strict discrimination between essence and existence was to occur in the course of elaborations on the triune God.[3] The position of negative theology, manifested strongly in Gregory of Nyssa, that the only knowledge of the God we may have is about his being there and not about his whatness[4], was underpinned by that kind of consideration. To know the soil from which this understanding emerged, we have to inform ourselves of at least two facts. First, while Plotinus had achieved the new outlook on infinity at the price of shifting the One outside of being, which as if entrusting to him the collocating of the transcendent One with the infinite, the Christians were set, by their nature, to maintain a conjecturable tie between the transcendent and the being. As a result, the One-God was cued, despite his tangentiality with being, as infinite, which means that in Christianity there was provided early, regardless of all the attempts at God's unknowability, an arcane corridor for communicating with the godly infinite. Out of this corridor there was, according to all probability, obtained a conception of the God who actually is but who resides beyond all our predicative means. The second matter to be observed is an array of problems ensuing from the impact that the monotheistic God came to have on the philosophic system which inherited greatly, so to speak, from the polytheistic world with certain speculative monistic tendencies. I will avoid entering the matter here, as it will largely be the topic of the present article, and say simply that the thrust of the problems comes down to the concepts of freedom, of creation, and of will.

In addition to the task of forming a link, however frail, between the transcendent One and being, Victorinus had to modify the Neoplatonic heritage in yet another essential aspect. Namely, he had to subdue the hierarchic nature of the Neoplatonists' ontology and, accordingly, to prove that the attachment of being to the transcendent entity does not demolish the unique and non-multiple character of the One (see Clark 1984). That is, Victorinus had to find means for verifying the substantial sameness of the Trinitarian persons. The hiding of the God in Christianity into veils of negativity was thus caused not so much by some outward position of the God as by the inconceivable combination in his identity of opposite traits: being infinite, in the sense of being essentially indefinable, the God still was able to have triple personal identity; and these personalities in their turn were to be

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[3]   For substantiating the stance here I will expropriate the discussion of the matter by Etienne Gilson (1987) and Charles H. Kahn (1966), see also Undusk 2009:322–323. Of critical import for the emergence of a truly existential view I consider to have been the interruption of continuity, or the cancellation of eternity, as was suggested by the Christian story of creation.

[4]   See for example Gregory's *Contra Eunomium* (Gregory of Nyssa 1954:146–147, 197–198); "… we know no name significant of the Divine Name. We are taught the fact of its existence, while we assert that an appellation of such force as to include the unspeakable and infinite Nature, either does not exist at all, or at any rate is unknown to us" (198). See also Mühlenberg 1966:196.

envisaged as lacking any shades of grading. Augustine, who was designated to fix several points in the Western understanding of faith and reason for the time to come, contributed considerably to this enwrapping of the God in the cloudy mysteries of language. His act of bolstering up the idea of the double procession of the Holy Ghost from Father as well as from Son (*De Trinitate* 15.17.29), which became an element of the Western creed (*filioque*) and induced, as such, the 11th century great schism, partook of Augustine's overall mission to validate the maximal substantial unity of the Trinitarian persons. The almost idiomatic juxta-position of unity in trinity, as highlighted by Augustine, with the Easterners' accentuation of trinity in unity[5], can thus be said to have partly originated in Augustine's rendition of a *persona*: while Victorinus had set the pith of it into a kind of differential dominance (respectively, of *esse*, of *vivere*, or of *intellegere*) in the Godhead, Augustine strongly maintains the complete substantial sameness of the Trinitarian members and sees their personality as ensuing only from their inner-Trinitarian relations (Hadot 1962:427). The apprehension of unity in trinity is accordingly to be conducted foremost in terms of negativity because every proposition aiming at some affirmative distinctness in godly personality must unavoidably fail. This is so much more the case that even the personality based on relativity turns out to be for Augustine only an embarrassingly weak linguistic compensation for the ineffable triunity of the God. The other step taken by Augustine in his linguistic deliberations towards *via negativa* consists in his sharp turn to *intus*, or to *mentis*. That kind of move was made possible by Augustine's purging of the word (*verbum*) from all exterior, sensual elements, including sound (*vox*), which left the way open to the claim that *verbum* has purely intramental character devoid of any anchorage in outwardness (see Gadamer 1999:424). For that reason, the word vocalized adds, in fact, nothing, except transiency, to the word inside the mind where speech is accomplished outside of any human languages. Theo Kobusch has suggested (Kobusch 2006:93) that the total non-involvement of *verbum mentis* in linguistic articulation enabled Augustine to discover the intersubjective character of the word, that is, to reach the word as a mute identity point between speaker and hearer which grounds their mutual perfect understanding and equalizes them as partners in communication. The Augustinian positing of the essence of language into human *mens* or *cor*, where an analogue of *verbum dei* is supposed to take place, instantiates in paradigmatic excellence the historically significant shift in the conception of language.

The peculiarity of Augustine, as compared to Victorinus' ontologically framed presentation of the Trinity, has been considered to be his focusing on the image of the Trinity as represented in the human mind, which means that the ultimate conundrum of the substantial sameness of the triune God leaves for Augustine no other option but to describe it primarily through its reflection in the human psyche (see Hadot 1962:412). In the 15th book of *De Trinitate*, where Augustine performs

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[5] The juxtaposition, deriving from Theodore de Régnon's *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité* (1892), has been *strongly* criticized by Michel René Barnes because of its unreflected standardization (Barnes 1995; see also Barnes 1999).

his most serious attempts to capture the mode of being of the Trinity, he is nevertheless forced to avow in the end that he has said nothing worthy of the ineffable Trinity (15.27.50)[6]. The avowal is of course done not because of God's situatedness, as in Neoplatonism, outside of being, but because of God's essential incomprehensibility. At the same time, infinity which was effected in Victorinus primarily as a pure existential being (i.e. "to be") of the God, has lost for Augustine, because of God's defiance of human speech, much of its ontological foundation. God is infinite, simply because no explanation for his transcendent being can be offered in our mind. Now, as we are well aware, the ascription of being to infinity in Christian tradition was very much assisted by the self-pronouncement of Yahveh made in Exodus 3.14. To the formation from *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*, rendered by Septuagint as "I am who I am" (*egó eimi ho ón*), an important abutment to the argument about God's being is attested already by Philo, who exerted a decisive impact on later Christian exegetes (Runia 1995:4ff.). The announcement of Yahveh, suggesting to us that God's name is to be obtained from his self-referent explication of his personalized being, undoubtedly intrigued the Christian mind, not least because of its exposition of the absolute being in the form of the first person's act of speech. David T. Runia has drawn our attention to the fact that Philo, as well as Augustine actually link their discussions on the God's self-pronouncement in Exodus 3.14 to the next verse of the chapter, where Yahveh offers Moses a less recondite and more graspable extension of his essence, namely, he refers to himself also as "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3.15). The defacement of the predicative structure in 3.14 by the double "be" of God's essential self-definition gives thus in 3.15 the way to the God understood by its relatedness to the outer world. To determine what lesson Augustine may have learned from these statements, we should first bear in mind that the eminently introspective direction Augustine gave his intellectual gaze, and which in fact led him to couch his theory of human *mentis* as a theory on the innermost structure of human I, is perceptibly cognate with the implications of the speech act Yahveh had invoked first in his revelation to Moses on Sinai. The affinity of Augustine with Yahveh's simplified self-explication in the next verse could arguably be detected in the notion of relativity which was elevated by Augustine strongly as a provisional means for explicating the personal aspect of the Holy Trinity whose substance is actually being in its oneness.

The Augustinian signature of infinite God is best read in the change he enacted in the Greek triad *esse–vivere–intellegere* which had been rearranged already by Victorinus for the new Christian purposes. In giving this tripartite conception a new form of *memoria–intelligentia–voluntas*, Augustine probably wished to avoid,

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[6]   Augustine's final acknowledgment of the inappropriateness of words in regard to Trinity sounds thus: "I venture to acknowledge openly that I have said nothing worthy of the ineffability of that highest Trinity, among all these many things that I have already said, but confess rather that its sublime knowledge has been too great for me, and that I am unable to reach to it." (Quot. Augustine 2002:221–222.)

as has been suggested by Pierre Hadot (Hadot 1962:427), the intransitive actions intimated by *esse* and *vivere*, so as to encapsulate the whole mental image of Trinity within the volitional (and actional) field of the intellective me. Not that the former triad has been undone, but it has been applied by Augustine to say what memory, intellect, and will are indifferently, that is, what they are in themselves (and Augustine avers – all three are indistinctively and samely one life, one mind, and one substance), while memory, intellect and will as such, that is, as differing designations are said to describe the mutual relational aspect of the three inside the mind (see Hadot 1962:428, Pintarič 1983:57–61, Schindler 1965:201ff.).[7] In short, the image of godly Trinity in human *mens* emerges as a correlation of three intentional activities related, because of their fundamental insidedness, to the cognitive self-perception of me:

> *For I remember that I have memory, understanding, and will; and I understand that I understand, will, and remember; and I will that I will, remember, and understand. At the same time I remember my whole memory, understanding, and will. For what I do not remember of my memory is not in my memory. But nothing is so much in the memory as the memory itself. Therefore, I remember my whole memory. I likewise know that I understand whatever I understand, and I know that I will whatever I will; but whatever I know, I remember. Therefore, I remember my whole understanding and my whole will.* (De Trinitate 10.11.18; quot. Augustine 2002:58.)

The main string of Augustine's infinite God is but touched by us only when we combine the proposed inner structure of the mind, purported to gain knowledge out of memory and will, or vice versa, with Augustine's contention on the principal impossibility of any straight link between the mind and the godly Trinity. How, we must ask then, can we know anything about the God at all if our mind is refused, even in its form of innermost essential sameness, any access to the Trinity? The appearance of this question beckons us right to the key characteristic of Augustine's theory because the correct answer to it, we can know something about the God because the God has assisted us in it, grounds among other things Augustine's thesis of divine illumination which came to inform medieval Augustinianism for centuries (see Gilson 1961:77–88 et al.; Fischer 2009). The thesis should surely be seen against the background of the concept of revelation coming to its religio-historical flourish in Christian ambience. Taken in its depth structure, the revelatory component of religion detaches the information on the God from the intellectual and imaginational activity of the human and sets it into liaison with the self-manifestatory expression of the God; as a result, the apprehensibility of the God comes to depend on the authority of the divine act

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[7]   See *De Trinitate* 10.11.18 "Since these three, memory, understanding, and will, are, therefore, not three lives but one life, not three minds but one mind, it follows that they are certainly not three substances, but one substance. For when we speak of memory as life, mind, and substance, we speak of it in respect to itself; but when we speak of it simply as memory, we speak of it in relation to something else. …Therefore, these three [memory, understanding, and will] are one in that they are one life, one mind, and one essence. … But they are three in that they are mutually referred to each other." (Quot. Augustine 2002:58.)

which quite possibly entails some unwarranted strategies from the viewpoint of human rationality. The statement of Augustine as illuminationist that the knowledge of immutable truths is not achievable by reason operating by abstraction from sensible reality, but should necessarily involve an amount of intelligible light infused in man by the God[8], must obviously be seen as an extension of the revelatory ingredient of Christianity. In the line of his thought Augustine was forced to determine, beside natural cognition, something produced by faith which can in the present human situation only be hinted at as a charge for understanding (to be accomplished in this or after-life). This fact of faith's acting, on the ground of inner light or religious authority, as a genuine chaperon of reason (*credo ut intelligam*; see e.g. Fischer 2009:42–47), stamped the Augustinian as well as the Christian lastingly successful alliance of philosophy and monotheistic enterprise (see Beierwaltes 1998:8ff.). From the viewpoint of divine infinity, the schema entailed clear-cut ramifications because the infinity, purged of much of its onto-logical meaning and posed before man as a cryptic target and desirable aim of all rational aspirations, came to be disposed in a figurative and allegorical way, and as a part of the gracious-revelatory register of Christian discourse.

The previous talk may have suggested an overall impression that the early medieval philosophy of Augustine shored up the argument of principal gap, although not of contradiction, between (transcendent) theology and philosophy, that is, between knowledge from sensible nature and knowledge induced by the God, but in fact the impression is very incorrect and results from the anachronistic projection of the meaning of "nature". What is from our contemporary perspective perceived as an incorrigible dissension of *ratio* and *fides*, was in Augustine actually enfolded by the extraordinary symbolic capacity accrued to "nature" as a second book of the God, beside the Holy Scripture, that one had to learn to read in the correct way (Gregory 1984:441–443). Traced back to Augustine's *De genesi ad litteram*, the medieval metaphor of the book of nature, or of a garment of the God, sprouted from the socio-historical context that was exceedingly promotive of squaring the historical (or, say, natural) meaning of things with their allegorical extensions to morality and eschatology. The so-called fourfold method of inter-pretation, in fact an apparatus for accommodation of both temporal and tran-scendent dimensions of reality, bears an undeniable witness to this early medieval drive of systematization of diverse layers of meaning (see Lubac 1998–2000; Bohn 1988). While from technical viewpoint nature's ability to habitualize trans-cendency can be explained by the merger of theological, of scientific, and of aesthetic types of inspiration in the exegetical work, then the epistemic sub-structure of the whole schema reveals characteristics that should be inspected

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[8]   See for example *De genesi ad litteram* 12.31.59: "But distinct from these objects [of the intellect] is the Light by which the soul is illumined, in order that it may see and truly understand everything, either in itself or in the light. For the Light is God Himself, whereas the soul is a creature; yet, since it is rational and intellectual, it is made in His image. And when it tries to behold the Light, it trembles in its weakness and finds itself unable to do so. Yet from this source comes all the understanding it is able to attain." (Quot. Augustine 1982, 2:222.)

somewhat more closely. Compared to the concept of *natura* as it started to appear in scholasticism in the second millennium AD, the early medieval concept of nature distinguishes itself by the inclusion of immanent teleology (see Mocek 2010:1706–1706b). Understood as God's creation, nature was supposed to bear its author's signature, and, accordingly, to develop the highest divine aims inherently, without any intrusion, for example, of intellect in some form of morality (because morality was in fact already encompassed in nature). The second point to cope with for the Augustinian nature, which, we must suspect, bore still a strong imprint of the Greek *phýsis*, derived from the fact that the Almighty God had not only invested his best objectives in nature, but had actually created it out of nothing, which implied an original hole, or cancellation in the chain of determinate causes. As we will see, the task of coordinating the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* with the then rediscovered Aristotelian legacy posed itself in the period of scholasticism as a cardinal problem for the medieval "school philosophy" (Grant 1996:117–119); the question of how Augustine coped with the doctrine of creation in his specifically symbolic approach to nature is best answered in combination with a short review of what had become of the principal *causa efficiens* in Christianity in the first place.

Unlike Victorinus, who remains relatively laconic on the issue, Augustine embraces *creatio ex nihilo* as part of his fundamentals of Christianity (Beierwaltes 1980:75–96). The contours of the doctrine which obviously aimed, in its profession of sovereignty of the God, at scoring off with the pagan past, can be detected already in the first century AD in Philo (May 1978:9–22), but its specifically Christian solidification befell in the second half of the next century (May 1978:151ff.). With that point on the "creation from nothing" lodges the peculiar Christian trait, surfacing in the clash with the Gnostic stress on the immaterial consequences of the God's work, of the accommodation of matter in the creation of the God. The doctrine enabled to repudiate the ancient dualism (of matter and God) and to manifest all-inclusiveness of the monotheistic divinity. Thus, despite some similarities between the monotheistic God and, say, the Aristotelian first unmoved mover (*próton kinoún akíneton*), the former sets himself apart by his comprehension of matter in the providential order of things and, accordingly, by the complementary exemption of it (matter) from its ancient role of disastrous progenitor of evil. Because the God creates out of nothing, where nothing purports, according to all probability, the God himself, implying further the identity of the One-God and *nihil* (Beierwaltes 1980:94–95, also Beierwaltes 1994:128), the doctrine of the *creatio ex nihilo* is to be understood as a cosmogonic interpretation of the infinity of the God. The abolition of the conflict of matter and spirit in the divine creative act, expressing as such a belief in the lack of material substrate of evil, had twofold consequences, human as well as divine, both highlighted by the accentual shifts of Augustine's understanding. From the human viewpoint Augustine provides us with good evidence to believe that the introduction of evil into the world results foremost from the defective judgment of man, laying thus bare, in spite of the mysterious inextricability of free

will and divine predestination in Augustine, the volitional and non-conditional background of evil (Gilson 1961:151ff.). Applied to the God, the outdoing of the dichotomization of matter and spirit is revealed to have two main facets. First, it sets the whole existence of the world unto dependence on the free will of the God because it is exactly the God's autonomous will which steps into the breach left by the annulment of material determinacy. Thanks to the God the world came into existence, but it might just as well not have come into it, because there was no necessity for the God to let it happen, except his freedom. Second, it bestows on the world its historicity since the creative act of the God claims to start the temporality of the world as a concomitant of its reliance on the precariousness of will, and, as well, to unfold its story as something plotted against the placable eternity of the ancients. We have already got some idea, as a result of the above statements, of the changes Augustine imposed on the Victorinian triple schema, and we know that a pithy part of it was the inscription of *voluntas* into the mental structure of the world. Not that Victorinus had not elaborated on the concept (see Benz 1932) but its more independent and indeterminate character, coming to relief in Augustine's self-analysis of inner me, marks surely a step forward toward a theory of will that acts on its own, apart from rational constituents (see Dihle 1982:123–149; also Benz 1932:396–402 et al.). For our present purposes this will serves to shed some light on how the cancellation of the determinate causality in Christianity was achieved and how the *origo* of the world came to be related, from the ontological abstractness, to the internal experience of a person.

The aforesaid conclusions lend themselves to some simple rewordings presenting some further valuable inferences. For example, we can construct a statement that the world could not be "created" before infinity had been incorporated into the philosophical-theological vocabulary as a term with a positive, divine odour. Or, we can say that creation (out of nothing) presumes the outside positioning of the creator in the sense of his remaining, at least partly, a supra-essential and incognizable entity. Whatever the intimations of these sentences would be, the minimal presence of the God in all his creation seems to be indicated in them quite clearly right from the beginning. This presence, understood as the "natural" encapsulation of the diversity of meanings (from top to bottom) on the level of created things (nature), inflicted on Christian philosophy a search for the wisdom (*sapientia*) existing from times primordial: if God had created man in his own image, the wisdom should also have abided in him perpetually, and this wisdom should not, because of its essentially figurative nature, be subsumable in full under something like *scientia*.[9] The Christian potential for historical coordination of meaning, seen as a complement of its synchronic systematization in the fourfold taxonomy, was brought to conceptual flourish in the Renaissance *philosophia perennis* when various attempts at syncretization of pagan and Christian teachings were undertaken (Kristeller 1979:131–132; Schmidt-Bigge-

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[9]   See *De Trinitate* 12.14.22 et al.; also Schulthess and Imbach 1996:73–77, Koterski 2009:18–32.

mann 1998:49–63.).[10] No doubt, the sapiential rendition of what we could and should know conduced tellingly to the knowledge's configuration as a texture supple enough to cover all the outer and inner aspects of nature. From a historical viewpoint there is under consideration here the fact of theology's clasping the philosophy, or more precisely, the fact, of settling of religion into rational structures of the mind, as a result of the appropriation performed by "nature" through its indispensable linking of all natural signs to the divine substance. Being set itself, or more rightly, its clandestine relationship to the finite, out of the scope of knowledge, infinity came to be included in nature in a theophanic way, and in the constructions that purported in fact nothing of the divine infinity itself but were nonetheless admitted to speak about it in the shape of analogy. To borrow a term from the later scholastic period, this interrelatedness of being is best described by *analogia entis* which, on the one hand, demarcates the unfathomable depths of being, as set against its possible "univocity", while maintaining, on the other hand, being's principal inner-relatedness, as set against its possible "equivocity": that what we are unable to apprehend, we can still talk about by the aid of allegory because of the essential analogy settled in the things created.

A still more meticulous scrutiny of *creatio ex nihilo* affords some information on the consequences the dogma had implicitly entailed. The reduction of the beginning of all existents back to the act of creation out of nothing implies that there was a moment when nothing was but when something came to be; in other words, it implies the perceptible fact of the coming together of essence and existence. A further implication from there is the feasibility of the extrication of the two from one another: when nothing had existed there still had to be the existence of the God because God is, according to the basic tenet of Christianity, a being (Gilson 1936:350ff.). While Victorinus is considered to hold the reputation of introducing the distinction of *existentia* and *substantia* into the Latin philosophical vocabulary, Augustine's direct contribution to this conceptual history is usually deemed meager, although it is clear that he was of massive assistance in unfolding some basic consequences of the doctrine of creation. One of the succours offered by Augustine to the doctrine derives surely from his introducing of *verbum*, as an equivalent of Greek logos, into Latin philosophic parlance. From the diverse meanings assumed by logos in koine the most eminent was its functioning as the sign for Jesus Christ, for the Son or Word of the God (*lógos toú theoú*) who had become incarnated in human form. As a clear trace of

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[10] The idea of *philosophia perennis* has been encapsulated illuminatingly by Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann (50–51): "A prerequisite for *philosophia perennis* in all its forms is the agreement of monotheistic theology with philosophy; and as monotheism is theology of spirit, *philosophia perennis* must be a spiritual philosophy. *Philosophia perennis* has no concept – and this is one of its essential and, consequently, premodernist and prehistoric suppositions – of independent mythos pertaining to its own religious and cultic logic. … Before the discovery of mythos in its radical naturalness of epical storytelling by Hamann … there had obtained the ontological and historical naturalness of the spirit. Its capability was included in the fact that spirit expressed eternal truths related to no index of time. The truths of spirit had the character of logical and metaphysical legitimacy."

the old Greek heritage in this novel role of logos can be viewed the so-called logos-theology from the first centuries AD, which proposed to explicate, drawing on Neoplatonic models, the job of Christ as God's Word by fashioning him into a kind of secondary divine product of the emanative chain (Young 2006:453–456). Maybe not noticed at first sight, this interpretation in fact reveals, besides Neoplatonic hierarchism, the difficulty of adapting the Greek epistemic ideal of truth – as a kind of static immutable *ousía* conveyed by logos – to the dynamic concealment of the Christian God. Bypassing here the telling comparison by Boman between Greek logos and its Hebraic correspondent (Boman 1960:67–69), let us simply remark that the habituation of logos in Christian context involved the task of managing with two primary meanings of the Greek word. First, logos in Greek, as derivative from *légo* 'to collect; to read', had intended the inner principle, or essence of something which, as already noted, was embraced by the Greeks in its emphatically static attitude; second, logos equalled word or speech (Kittel et al. 1942:71–74; see also Heidegger 1959:104ff.). To reproduce this collocation of meanings in Latin the composite *ratio et verbum* was occasionally applied while the general practice was to focus on the linguistic-articulative side of the of logos (expressed by *sermo*, *verbum*, *locutio*, *vox*, or *sonus*) (see Schindler 1965:115–118). Augustine's insistence on *verbum* instead of, for example, *sermo* which he also used at times, exposes his attachment in logos philosophy to the word as singular entity rather than to something as a syntagmatic construction of language. Secondly and more importantly, the conveying of logos by *verbum* is a mark for setting the facticity of saying over stability of meaning, and that in spite of the extreme interiorization of language that had occurred in Augustine's linguistic program (cf. Kittel 1942:121,127). For Augustine, a saying of a word in the speechless innermost of me becomes a remote reverberation of the creativeness of God's act of saying.

Yet another consequence of *creatio ex nihilo* is its forging into the plain fact of being the *hic et nunc* of worldly creation. The fact that Cod created the world, that things came into existence, can probably not be conceived outside the circumstance that the divine ideas had assumed in creation a form of physical presence witnessed primarily by the respondent acts in our sensory. Now, while the fact of being present, i.e. of being in existence, is proved by the competency of our senses, the higher forms of our understanding make remarkable use of mechanisms where the stipulation of existential presence is overtly discarded: not only must we abstract from the concrete individual presence to understand what the things are (in their essence), but we can also form propositions about things that lack any pretension to existence at all (e.g. about unicorns). The dilemma proposed to us by this truth is the following: if creation means coming into existence in the sense of actual presence, why is it so that our intellectual grasp at worldly things, which should be better and nobler, includes an unavoidable extrication from this actually present? Or to put otherwise, if God is being in its truest sense which, although inconceivable, is made manifest for us in creation as well as in God's sending of his Son, why is this factual manifestation of being

seemingly snapped more by our senses than by our reason? Indebted probably to Boethius, the medieval mind was well aware of the distinction between existential and copulative use of "be", devoting a good bulk of work to its explication (Marenbon 1988:33, 108ff.). In the background of this question we can unerringly perceive looming the other conundrum of the Middle Ages, that of the universals, which was stitched on one side to the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, and adjoined on the other side to the "trouble" about personhoods of the Godhead. The Platonic solution to the ambiguity of "be" entailed a reduction of the existential value of "be" for the benefit of the reality of immaterial ideas. In other words, it propounded to attribute supreme reality to the universals as origin and terminus of any real knowledge. Inasmuch as Christian thinking had a compulsion to retain the oneness of the God, and it surely had to attempt that with all possible means, it had to process in this Platonic vein, because this was the only way to overcome the diversity of individual things. At the same time, it is clear that advancing in that mode was to the detriment of reality of Godly creation, of flesh and of personality as such. Augustine, who had foregrounded the substantial unity of the Godhead and had interpreted personhood on the basis of relativization of the oneness, had been, without doubt, a good Platonist. But probably he would not have become a Christian had he not found, after excursions into Manichaeism and Neoplatonism, means to credit the personal embodiment of the oneness in Jesus Christ – and in supreme historical presence – with a claim to the same substantial identity as attributed to the Godhead. I would dare to say here that the Augustinian way of coming into contact with existentiality, that is, with the being in presence, went by the way of delving into the inner space of personality carried by me: the sense of existentiality was achieved out of the touch of *verbum internum* which, dispensing with all remnants of externality, bestowed a person in her/his "voluntary attempt at remembering the knowledge" (cf. *memoria–intelligentia–voluntas*) a keen sense of personal actuality. Anyhow, that kind of introvertive existentiality implied a rather sweeping effect on the reality of all that we receive by our outward senses and that we have the ability to submit to quantificational categorization. In other words, it ceded physics to metaphysics and to theology with their anchor in the psychology of mind rather than in the ontology of things. In broad perspective, and conditionally, we may say that the approach left a clear trace on early medieval thinking because it was the re-emersion of Aristotle with his physics in the 12th century that inserted a caesura into the Middle Ages, constituted exactly by the break in the assessment of (individual) sensual reality. However, the great contribution of Christianity to philosophy, that is, its firm belief in the attestable bond between personal existence and the infinite One, did not get lost, as we will see, in the course of things, but was remolded in line with the necessities of scholastic philosophy.

3. Pseudo-Dionysius and Johannes Scottus Eriugena

There is a figure in Western negative theology who provides a symbolic sign for the role of pseudepigraphy in the Westerners' deal of negativity. Pseudo-Dionysius, a supposed Syrian author of the turn of 5th and 6th centuries, made his way into Western philosophy by the act of identification with Dionysius the Areopagite, a Christian convert of Paul referenced in the Acts (17:16–34). A second identification, enacted by his first Latin translator Hilduin, the Abbot of St. Denis, consisted in the equalization of Pseudo-Dionysius with Saint-Denis, the patron saint of France; it came to have significant art historical ramifications, because abbot Suger, who in the 12th century was supposed to rebuild the abbey church of St. Denis into the first Gothic cathedral of Europe, drew his inspiration largely from the luminous negative philosophy of Pseudo-Dionysius (Panofsky 1957:125–128, see also Pseudo-Dionysius 1987:11–46). Two historical functions had combined themselves in this person. First, Pseudo-Dionysius exposed his Latin successors, who were brought at different stages into active touch with his ideas, to the vital streak of Greek negativity, which demanded to be accommodated in one way or another. Second, he carried on, not least by his provocative call to interpretation, the Platonic philosophy of light, which was actually in danger of dazzling its devoted respondents. To grasp the point Pseudo-Dionysius made to Augustine in the sense of his later influence on Latin philosophy, it is pertinent to group these two men with an Irishman from the 9th century Carolingian Renaissance, Johannes Scottus Eriugena, who was charged by Charles the Bald with translating anew the Dionysian texts for a Latin audience and whose own *Periphyseon* excels in filling the lacunae – with arguments of supposed Dionysian background – left open by Augustine.

Unlike Augustine, who remains relatively scant in underpinning a strict concept of infinity, Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena make ample use of the word lending to it also a somewhat more palpable designatum (Hadot 1954–55, Lilla 1980, Mooney 2002, McEvoy 1994:170–171). Adjudged against the background of cognitive negativity, we can say that Augustine surely forwarded the discussion on the ineffability of the Godhead, but there remains a distinct gap between his apophaticism and the negativity streaming forth from the more genuine Greek breeding. To be exact, the thesis of inexpressibility of God in Platonic tradition, from where all three had in a sense proceeded, was a corollary of the epoptic quality of Platonic metaphysics (see e.g. Sym. 210a1) which had linked the failure of dialectics (to grasp the ultimate truths) with salvatory endowment of this super knowledge in the form of godly vision. Consequently, the negativity of cognition, or the negativity of saying, came to be compensated by the hope of immediate non-sensory vision facilitated by the godly light which, being invisible itself, as if infused in the mind the truths not reached by it itself. Now, it is clear that in Augustine, that is, in his conception of the human mind, this divine light in man is active not only in producing a kind of equivalents of truths, i.e. of divine ideas, but Augustine affords man on certain mystical conditions also the possibility of seeing

the light, that is, the God itself (Gilson 1961:94–96; Moran 1989:25, 113). Notwithstanding his overt refusal to offer any linguistic chaff for the content of the Trinitarian God, Augustine does not deny the reachability of *visio beatifica* by the path of faith. The case is quite different for Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena: despite the theophanic texture of the world, any immediate contact with divinity appears there to be ruled out (Tugwell 1988:41ff., Mooney 2009:189); the best that can be achieved is either one's awareness of non-knowability of the God, or the eyeless seeing into the depth of darkness of God's light. The preconception of this cautiousness on the side of Pseudo-Dionysius and Eriugena is surely to be looked for in their accentuation of some Neoplatonic traits (see Meyendorff 1994, d'Onofrio 1994) which had initially involved Dionysius in some charges of heresy (Dionysius 1987:13ff.) and which has supposedly left a clear imprint on Dionysious' stance on the God as well (Brons 1976:327). The Augustinian close combination of divine and human elements becomes clearly readable in his, true, somewhat precarious retention of fleshly body, and thus of the material side of humanity, as part of the divine plan of salvation (O'Meara 1992:250 et al.; d'Onofrio 1994:119), which seemed certainly to flout the Neoplatonic immaterialist imagination about the cognitive apogee of humankind. This difference in immediacy afforded to humans in their relation to God is further witnessed in the Augustinian location of divine ideas, conceded by him to be conditionally approachable to man, into the God himself, while Eriugena conceived them as being God's creatures and thus as deposited already on the phenomenological side – on the vestment – of the God.[11] Accordingly, while Augustine holds that God is eminently light which has become manifested, that is, mixed with darkness in the world, Eriugena maintains rather that God is strictly speaking darkness, total incomprehensibility which exposits itself in its worldly apparition in entanglement with light (Carabine 1994:141–152, O'Meara 1992:271). The consequence to be drawn from here is that Augustine still offers us something to be seen, that is, his exposition betrays, in line with his *crede, ut intelligas*, some essentialist fundamentum of the world, whereas the men more under the Greek spell, and following some stratagems of Gregory of Nyssa, seem to disclaim any kind of positive designation, be it in intellectual or visual form, of the divine. However, the bracketing of Eriugena with Pseudo-Dionysius in this point is a bit fallacious because Eriugena is involved not only in stretching Augustine to his own last in some important aspects (see O'Meara 1992, esp. 233–283), but he also interprets in palpable manner some Dionysian assumptions. What I have in view could be easily explained if we once more take notice of the keen sense of actuality foregrounded in Christianity, especially through the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. In fact, we can say the negativity of cognition could be based on the hyper-sense of the thing cognized (that is, on the thing's essence being outside of our possible grasp), or alternatively, it can be derived from the quality of presentness of some-

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[11] See *Periphyseon* II 529b–c, Russell 1973:37–38, Piemonte 1986:107, Gilson 1955:117 ff., Gilson 1960:95, Pépin 2006.

thing because this quality, as mentioned already above, desperately defies being included in any intellectual clinch of the matter. The negativity of Pseudo-Dionysius, couched often by him in terms of divine infinity, has been seen standardized in his notion of hyper-ousia which is supposed to combine the remnants of Neoplatonic "One beyond being", as well as the conception of the One as hyper-essential (but still essential) source of things existing (see Beierwaltes 1987:346, Lilla 1997). Now the linguistic analysis of the texts of Eriugena has created a suggestion that the negativistic finesse, which he had presumably acquired, at least partly, through Pseudo-Dionysius, has still changed its character under Eriugenian deployment and is not exploited clearly for speaking about the God who remains unknowable to us, but also for accentuating the act of existential bestowment inscribed in the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* about which Pseudo-Dionysius had in fact remained silent (see Allard 1982).

Eriugena's philosophical significance is first of all included in the mediation he enacted between the Eastern and Western Christian thought which could be viewed also as his bringing the Carolingian Renaissance, aiming at a new con-solidation of Latin culture, into close metaphysical contact with Byzantium. Gauged by his outlook on the Trinity, the negotiating role of Eriugena starts to emanate visibly. In the background of Augustine's philosophy of essential light-ness had stood his strong equilibration of divine personalities through postulating their substantial sameness, which, first, assisted him in counterbalancing the negative visioning of the God of the Old Testament by the Christ-centred light metaphoric of the New Testament, and second, forced him to state the equal procession of the Holy Ghost from Father as well as from Son, cementing thus the schismatic historical perspective of Christianity. In Pseudo-Dionysius, who seems to be enamoured rather with divine blindness than with light and whose acceptance of Trinity has sometimes considered to be a bit ceremonious, we do not find disquisitions on the relative procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, but the Holy Ghost is supposed to have, as had also the Son, its only source in the Father who retains overall in the Dionysian system a certain exclusive trait of beyondness (*Perí theíon onomáton* 641d; Beierwaltes 1994:217, 228). The conciliatory position of Eriugena between these two, maybe too robust drafts by me of Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius, is revealed by his positing, in line with Eastern patristic thought, the procession of Holy Ghost uniquely from the Father but through (*per*) the intermediary agency of the Son (*Periphyseon* II 609b; Beierwaltes 1994:233). As regards darkness and light, Deirdre Carabine concedes Eriugena to remain on the Dionysian side of the canvas, but recognizes the blind look of the eyeless mind of Dionysius to be replaced in Eriugena with a real not-seeing of the eyes, or with seeing in clouds in which the God is supposed to remain hidden (Carabine 1994:147–149, see also Carabine 1995). In spite of God's incomprehensibility and of sharp immaterialism Eriugena is keen on keeping an "aesthetical" touch with reality which, as it were, preconditions any possible approach to the God and is in fact determined to ground the infinite search for the divine (Mooney 2009:208 et al.). What is at stake here, as compared

to Pseudo-Dionysius, is the reduction of essential mysticism in favour of a rationalized grasp of the negative structure of being: the God shines through in his creation and this theophanic shine in the existential present is not to be divorced, as something redundant or meaningless, from God's essential incognizability, that is, from his being what he is for us. Actually, Eriugena is building up his whole thought on the fundamental dialectical interplay between two kinds of things, "things that are and things that are not" (PP 441a), a division which is intended to embrace, again a bit differently from Pseudo-Dionysius, all the reality, the God as well as his creation (Mooney 2009:46).[12] The rationalization of negativity is thus achieved out of coordinating the God's darkness with the human's destined move on the theophanic surface of the creation, which translates negativity – as mystery – into existential tension between human and the God. In the wake of this we can more easily understand another difference in similarity between Augustine and Eriugena. The Augustinian solution to the problem of universals and individuals, activated necessarily by the Trinitarian God, had been the *verbum interius* as a universal discovered by me through my immersion in the inner depths of my mind. Accompanied by dispensation with anything exterior, the way to the inner word was Augustine's mode of coming to grips with negativity (apophaticism) – and with the keen sense of my existence. In some places Eriugena comes very close to the position of Augustine, for example when he says:

> *Thus, when I say, 'I understand that I am', do I not imply in this single verb, 'understand', three (meanings) which cannot be separated from each other? For I show that I am, and that I can understand that I am, and that I do understand that I am. Do you not see that by the one verb are denoted my ousía and my power, and my act? For I would not understand if I were not, nor would I understand if I lacked the power of understanding, nor does that power remain latent in me, but breaks forth in the operation of understanding.* (PP 490b; quot. Eriugena 1968:145.)

However, Eriugena allots negativity rather evenly throughout the creation, objectifying and organizing thereby the intelligibility of the world: by interpreting *creatio ex nihilo* in an emphasized way as God's creation out of himself, he manages to distribute the infinity of the God among all the existents (Moran 1989:207, 236; also Moran 2006:142), which means that the subjective psychological model of the Trinity of Augustine has in Eriugena given way to the more expanded explanative groundwork of intersubjective reality. Eriugena has untied the perception of existentiality from the cognitive inner specificity of me because all reality is determined, as apparitional and theophanic and as derived from the God himself, to include part of God's essential incomprehensibility. Augustine's hope for the contemplative light, or mystical illumination, had provided him a springboard for his dismissal of the outward world; as Eriugena has integrated senses into his theological phenomenology, and has coupled it with the clear

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[12] The possible historical derivation of Eriugena's germinal opposition from Marius Victorinus has been studied in Piemeonte 1984.

denial of vision of the God, his epistemology has gained a more objective ground together with being dispossessed of too highly set expectations at truth. To make sense of the technical side of Eriugenian theophany, we should be attentive of the divine causality Eriugena embarks on when he starts to speak about the unknowable God: the claim that we do know that God exists, while knowing nothing about his essence, seems in Eriugena often to come into conjunction with the idea that we do know about God's existence by his being the radical cause of being (Beierwaltes 1994:218–241). God manifests himself under the form of causal activity not only in his worldly creation, but the same kind of action of provoking existence is also responsible, according to Eriugena, for the inner-Trinitarian processions (Beierwaltes 1994:240–241). A significant consequence of all this is that Eriugena enacts in his works a specific kind of polysemy that comes to muddle up the difference between universals and individuals (Gersh 1998:128–132); the substances of individuals – as of theophanies – occasionally tend to display in Eriugena the universality which otherwise, as in Augustine, could be known only on the presumption of maximal abstraction from any individual sensibility.[13] The substantial Platonism of Augustine, founding its Trinitarian interpretation on the relational aspect of substance, has been somewhat downplayed in Eriugenian theophany by rejection of any access to substances while affording at the same time a miraculously close and, let us say, aesthetically grounded perception of the God's being present in worldly reality.[14]

Besides the effective interweaving of the Latin Christian mentality with the Greek one, and, I would add, with his own Celtic pedigree, Eriugena yields an articulate formulation for some ideas basically underlying the early medieval thinking. The conception of two parallel books, of scripture and of nature, provided to us by the God for deciphering, has been made explicitly readable in the third book of *Periphyseon* (723d–724a; see also Duclow 1977, Kijewska 2006), but the main import of Eriugena's traduction lies probably in his making, as revealed already by the title of his chef d'œuvre, nature (*natura*, *phýsis*) the universal term embracing all reality – the God as well his earthly creation.[15] The

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[13] For the confusion about Eriugenian 'substance', see Marenbon 1988:66–70, Gersh 1988:131; for Eriugena's specific usage of substance, see Moran 2006:142–144, O'Meara 1992:275ff., Moran 1989:171–172. As an explanation on the part of Eriugena himself for this puzzle one could look at the passage from *Periphyseon* 4, 770c–d: "For every creature is considered under one aspect as it exists in the Word of God in which all things are made, and under another as it exists in itself. … For the understanding of all things in the Wisdom of God is the substance of all things, nay, it is all things. But the knowledge by which the intellectual and rational creature has intelligence of itself as it is in itself stands, as it were, for its second substance, so to speak, by which it has only knowledge that it knows and is and wills, but has no knowledge of what it is. The first substance, constituted in the Wisdom of God, is eternal and immutable, while the second is temporal and variable …" (Quot. Eriugena 1995:71.)

[14] The aesthetical underlay of Eriugena's philosophy and his theory of negatives has got a valuable treatment by Werner Beierwaltes in his "Negati affirmatio: Welt als Metapher. Zur Grundlegung einer mittelalterlichen Ästhetik" (in Beierwaltes 1994, pp. 115–158).

[15] For the historical background of Eriugena's usage, see O'Meara 1981.

explanation of the term has been given immediately in the first section (441a) of the book:

> *As I frequently ponder and, so far as my talents allow, ever more carefully investigate the fact that the first and the fundamental division of all things which either can be grasped by the mind or lie beyond its grasp is into those that are and those that are not, there comes to mind as general term for them all what in Greek is called Phýsis and in Latin Natura.* (Quot. Eriugena 1968:37.)

There has been dissension about the motivation of this announcement from the perspective of Eriugena's book as a whole (O'Meara 1981:127), but let us incline here to the view that the statement consummates pointedly the investment of stark symbolism made into nature by the previous medieval generations. Thus understood, the self-inclusion by nature both of the God and of its creation epitomizes the emission of all the existents from the God, but it does it necessarily *metaphorice*, by way of ingrained analogy, because nature is God inasmuch as God avails himself of apparition. This God's status of infinite transcendence of categories of intellect, while having distributed hints to his essence in his natural creation, is elaborated in Eriugena in tandem with some other symptoms, which convey a message of systematic import. Not only is Eriugena's philosophy of nature intended to be a theology, and his physics purported to frame the meanings which stay behind the *phýsis* in the strict sense of the word, but Eriugena perpetuates in his work as well the collocation of philosophy and *artes* (see Moran 1989:191–211) which had become a highly influential topos in medieval thinking since at least Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*. The Christian interlacement, not to say equalization, of *artes liberales* and philosophy (see Kobusch 1989:634, Reckermann 1976:1367–1372) had its foundation in the divine act of creation: the God, who had made the world, had to be classified, without doubt, not as a theorist dealing with abstract notions, nor as a practic concerned with moral aspects of action, but first of all as a *poietés*, a maker, characterized foremost by his power to bring forth things. The artificial, or say, technical, capacity of the God, founded on his own intrinsic ideas, enforced the concept of arts as hoards of principles available for constructing and analyzing the different sets of natural subsistence; since nature was supposed to include a clue to the prime cause as well as to teleology, and any substance, be it natural or divine, was deemed inaccessible anyhow, the demand for complementing arts with something (like philosophy or theology) had lost much of its foundation. This accession of *artes liberales*, designed in their Greek intention for initialization of the linguistic (*trivium*) and mathematical (*quadrivium*) competence of the human mind, to the position kindred in a way to the modern aesthetic concept of arts, was underpinned by the agnostic current of Eriugena's thought which, however, left succeedingly unrent the cognitive field that came to be divided in modern times by epistemic and aesthetic constituents. It is namely the integrity of epistemic and poetical (artistic, creative) ideals in Eriugena that dissociates him from the Romantics and the German idealists with whom he otherwise reveals a distinct

affinity[16]. Although in both cases arts came to be conjoined to infinity, the infinity in Eriugena belongs substantially to cognition, while in the Romantics the close contact with nature works to produce an infinite sensuous yearning whose translation into the religious register does not proceed unanimously by a rational track. The point to be noticed in connection with early medieval *artes* and with natural symbolism of the age is that the Greek pedagogical foundation of *máthesis* and philological studies (i.e. of quadrivium and trivium), which has been seen as combining ancient Platonic and Isocratean ideals (see Marrou 1969:11–12), became in the period considered strongly skewed towards the latter: in the ambience of volitional freedom of the God, as well as of universal allegorism, the *quadrivium* was deprived of its basis, and the numerical schemes of understanding were re-established on literary or other grounds (Klinkenberg 1976, Grant 2001:84). A good example is music's loss of its location in the *quadrivium* as a result of its detachment from a mathematical footing (and from its kinship with arithmetic and astronomy), while being refounded as a handmaid of rhetoric (Fellerer 1976).

Taking infinity as a new ideational space, produced by the transcendency with which Christianity confronted its believers, we should say that this space came to be phrased in the early Middle Ages with a perceptible diversity of skills. There is an Augustinian way of introverting into one's mind until discovery there of a *verbum cordis* which, being still only a remote reverberation of the God, seems, however, promising for Augustine an immediate contact with the divinity in the form of mystical vision. There is, secondly, an even stronger accentuation of transcendency through discarding any contact, be it intellectual or visual, with the God in Pseudo-Dionysius which, in turn, produces in a Eriugenian commingling of sources (of Augustine and of Pseudo-Dionysius) a new immediacy between the human and God on the level of substantial phenomenology: not only is the substance of the God ungraspable for the human, but the actual substantial infinity of them both, i.e. creator as well as creature, being grounded in God's creating out of himself, verifies the similar incomprehensibility of the two and lets the *phainómena* stand for the substantial part of the knowledge. No doubt, infinity as a word for designating the supernatural or hyper-essential aspect of the God was launched with more alacrity on the Greek-bound side of the theology; Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius as well as Eriugena bear witness to the active engagement with the infinite in their picturing of their God. For the time being, let us ascribe it to the Greeks' so-called stripe of negativity, which supposedly restrained them as well from formulating the kind of equality of divine personalities that was achieved on the Latin side, with a consequential schismatic upshot for the Christian world. The prime aim of the previous discussion has been, however, to show that notwithstanding the differences in framing infinity, the early Middle Ages rely on the overwhelming natural symbolism where God is excluded from human apprehension but where all that is, is speaking about God anyway; true, not

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[16] See e.g. W. Beierwaltes "Die Wiederentdeckung des Eriugena im deutschen Idealismus" (in Beierwaltes 1972, pp. 188–201).

directly but in the shape of parables. As a result of the ineluctable symbolism of creation, the rift between the transcendent and nature seems to a degree effaced – because all that is seen, is seen from the perspective of the transcendent – and nature as a term appears to comprise, as in Eriugena, the God as well as creation.

4. St. Thomas Aquinas

The unrolling of the High Middle Ages, commencing somewhere in the middle of the 11th century, is to be linked to a diverse socio-cultural background but let us pick up here three characteristic aspects of the age. First, the appearance of a new type of natural researcher, the so-called *physicus*, in the first half of the 12th century is greatly representative of the age, although the pristine scientific motivation supposed to stand behind the movement came to succumb to the great systematic drive of high scholasticism (Stiefel 1985:15, 24ff.). Second, the period under consideration testifies to the formation of an absolutely new educational institution in Europe, of *universitas*, with its remarkable system of four faculties where arts counted as an introductory department to the graduate level of the other three – theology, law and medicine (Grant 2004:172). As we shall see, that kind of organization accommodated successfully, and even mutually stimulatingly, the tension between physics and theology, which had resulted from the emergence of the new natural philosophy of the period. Third, the thrust of the High Middle Ages, at least from the viewpoint of infinity, is probably to be situated in the voluminous act of Latinization of Greek and Arabic philosophical texts which had become available through the conquest of some Islamic centres in Europe, retaining the respective heritages. The pivotal accomplishment, in turn, of this process of translating proved to be the achievement of the Aristotelian corpus for the Latin public because it acted as basis for much of the controversies issuing in the High Middle Ages. The controversy interesting us most is, of course, the one derived from the exposure of the Latin reader to Aristotle's strong insistence on the finite physical nature of the world (see Grant 1996, 2001, 2004).

It has been asserted that the process of rationalization and emancipation of nature started actually from the internal resources of Latin own thinking (Grant 2004:161), but whatever the case was, it is clear that the recovery of Aristotle's genius stamped the natural philosophy of the High Middle Ages as much as the resurgence of Plato's works in the Renaissance invigorated the scientific pursuits of the era. To put it simply, Aristotle had admitted infinity as a passive uncountability in terms of the quality of matter to be submissible to infinite division; similarly, he allowed the infinity of time, i.e. the eternity of the world, because it made no claim for actuality, considering time's perpetual state of transmission. On the other hand, the world as such (as space) presented itself for Aristotle necessarily as a finite corporeal continuum, because otherwise he would have been forced to make a concession for infinity *in actu* (see Moore 1990:344–44). A Christian's conception of the matter was quite the inverse: the world had been

started by God and it will come to an end according to his will, and infinity as something advening to God was deemed actual, otherwise it would not have deserved its divine subscription. The additional ramifications of the position concerned God's optionality in creating this or another world, or leaving them unmade altogether. To make sense of how this disparity in the medieval world outlook was embraced, and even further, how it was put to conduce to the advancement of Western science, we have, first, to reckon with the relative independence of secular and religious domains of Western medieval society (Grant 2004:246–248). As a facet of this compartmentalization of power is to be seen, second, the arising medieval city with its diverse corporate organizations of merchants, handicraftsmen, etc., i.e. with its *universitates*[17], which provided the emerging Western university not only with a model of a sovereign societal body but also, in the longer perspective, with its proper name. The ability of the university to entertain a philosophical controversy was already inscribed, let us say it so, in its social fabric. Yet another factor conniving at the segregation of natural philosophy and theology is certainly to be linked to the arising trends of nominalism (or vocalism), represented foremost by Roscelin of Compiègne and Petrus Abelard (see Schulthess and Imbach 1996:101ff.; Stiefel 1985:61; King 2004); paving a way indirectly to the *via moderna* of William of Ockham the nominalism played a strategic role in curbing the compass of symbolism prompted by the previous ages. It is not only about the redirection of attention from the abstract meanings, extending sharply beyond worldly reality, to the mechanism of signification and, accordingly, to the singular concrete items of nature, because the problem of universals had been a consistent part of Christian theological deliberations from times remote; as we shall see, some fundamental distinctions of Ockham and of Duns Scotus, concerning the particularity of being, are to be read against the background of their Trinitarian speculations. Rather, the imposition of natural philosophy needs to be related to the instrumental reshuffle in the division of finite and infinite, eliciting a qualitative change in the substance of infinite cognitive negativity.

Although subsumed under the structure of the medieval university, the collision of Aristotelian natural philosophy with Christian transcendency produced some historically significant clashes, especially in the University of Paris that stood in close association with the Roman Catholic Church. The unbridling of natural thought from theology and its settling on the new footing of independent rationale evoked the divergence of technical (artistic) explanative argument from its symbolic denotative assemblage, which means that the arts, having formerly harboured philosophy and theology in their virtual entirety, attended now only the propædeutic part of the disciplines, or more exactly, the faculty of arts of medieval university comprised *artes liberales*, and (Aristotelian) natural philosophy as their extension (Kobusch 1989:647–648, Grant 1996:43). As students of theology were

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[17] The Latin *universitas* served initially to designate such medieval corporations (Grant 2001:98–100).

supposed to pass training in the arts, as a basis of the three higher faculties, it was quite understandable that the problems and schemas of natural argumentation came to influence the field of theology (intriguingly, the influence in the reverse direction is deemed to have been meagre) (Grant 2004:176–190). To avoid controversy with some Christian assumptions and to secure the independence of the faculties, the masters of arts took in 1272 an oath not to deal with problems of theology; some years later, in 1277, the Bishop of Paris, Stephen Tempier issued the famous condemnation of 219 propositions derived largely from Aristotelian pedigree. The latter document is for us of interest not only because it sets into sharp relief the bone Christians had to pick with Aristotelians, but also because the persons hiding themselves behind "the accused" and "the accuser" of the testimony are very representative of the age. What was condemned by the verdict of the Bishop of Paris can basically be encapsulated in some standard bywords for the world as an uncreated and necessarian finite continuum, that is, it denounced eternity, lack of contingency and of freedom of will, the impossibility of vacuum and of multiple worlds. For example, the condemned propositions included:

> *9. That there was no first man, nor will there be a last; on the contrary, there always was and always will be generation of man from man.*
> *21. That nothing happens by chance, but all things occur from necessity and that all future things that will be will be of necessity, and those that will not be it is impossible for them to be ...*
> *34. That the first cause [that is, God] could not make several worlds.*
> *48. That God cannot be the cause of a new act [or thing], nor can He produce something anew.*
> *91. That the argument of the Philosopher [i.e., Aristotle] demonstrating that the motion of the sky is eternal is not sophistical; and it is amazing that profound men do not see this.*
> *140. That to make an accident exist without a subject is an impossible argument that implies a contradiction.*
> *215. That it can only be known that God is, or that God exists.* (Quot. Grant 2004:182–183, Grant 1996:78, Dumont 1998a:298)

Although the condemnation targeted in the main the Averroists, or extreme Aristotelians, it surely had as its aim also certain doctrines of Christian Aristotelianism as it had been developed in grand scale by Thomas Aquinas, deceased just three years before the release of the denouncement. On the other hand, among the active members of the commission set up by Etienne Tempier for the assessment of Aristotle's doctrines was Henry of Ghent, bynamed *doctor solemnis*, a Flandrian Neoplatonic who was allotted an instrumental role in preparing the high scholastic philosophy of Duns Scotus and of Ockham. As all three last named men had less or more direct connections with the Franciscan Order, drawing, at least formally and initially, on Augustinianism, while Thomism with its Aristotelian tenets came to be the bedrock of Dominican thinking, we have got as well a hint of the friarly background of the collision re-echoed con-secutively in the divergent attitude to infinity (see Davenport 1999:416 et al.).

The way Aquinas came to bond the eternity of the world to the Christian act of creation is indicative of the association he established between natural theology and the supernatural, or revealed truth: pleading for the explication of the doctrines of faith on the ground of rationality, Aquinas conceded some ultimate Christian truths, e.g. that of the Trinity, to be unreachable for the human mind on its own and, accordingly, to be attained only by the aid of divine revelation (*Summa contra gentiles* I.3). Thus Aquinas is ready to admit on faith that the world has been created, but he denies any possibility to demonstrate it by the help of some line of reasoning (SCG II.38; see Gilson 1956:151). I propose to take this clash between rational and revealed argument as standing for the duality of Aquinas' system where the Christian strong emphasis on infinity is maintained but modified so as to damage least the natural reasoning channelled by Aristotelian metaphysical edifice. The repercussions of this kind of segregated negativity are describable from different angles. First it shows the limits that remained to Aquinas in his scientific appropriation of the concept of freedom of the will. As we have already mentioned above, the God's act of *creatio ex nihilo* had posed for Christians a question about the radical contingency of existence. In view of his exceptional concession to *creatio* in terms of faith, Aquinas is set not to allow the exposition of contingency in rational terms, which means that the freedom of will is conceived by him essentially as coterminous with intellect: freedom derives basically from intellectual cognition of necessity set to serve a human being's supreme aim, goodness, while contingency is rather a failure in the established order of things (Gelber 2004:117–123; see also Kretzmann 1997:197–225, Kretzmann 1993:146–149). Thus Aquinas' interpretation of will stays largely under the Aristotelian spell of natural and cognized necessity where contingency is involved as a subdivision of God's providence, or as an incomplete necessity rather than as a grounding force of the will: for Aristotle, as for Aquinas, something is contingent if its contrary can occur at some other time in history, but they both deny the possible involvement of contrary outcomes (or of contrary decisions) in a certain moment of time (as a basis of voluntary action). The problem of counter-factuals, or of the possibility of making a decision non-A at the moment when decision A had been made, did not pose itself for Aquinas in a serious way. Like creation in time, counterfactual reasoning was set by Aquinas aside of the objectives humans can strive for in their intellectual actions. Second, the dismissal of negativity from the focusing position of knowledge about the world has imprinted itself legibly on Aquinas' treatment of illumination. As issued from Augustine, the theory of illumination had implied the inordinate frailty of human intellect for coming to sustainable knowledge on its own; secondly, and more specifically, illumination was intended by Augustine to convey the high expectancy of an immediate visual contact with the God. Aristotelianism, as it was accepted from the 12th century onwards, was to a degree destined to do away with both presuppositions: in mooring cognition in sensible things and in asserting cognition be processing and reaching its target by way of intellectual abstraction, Aquinas eliminated illumination from human cognition in either sense – as a light

coming from a source other than human intellect and as a divine substance allowing for an immediate cognition apart from abstraction (SCG III.51; see Owens 1982:452–454).[18] Accordingly, Aquinas remodelled the theory of infused illuminative light on Aristotle's concept of an agent intellect (*intellectus agens*) that was meant to provide human intellect with intelligible species, required for the completion of the act of knowing, and that was structurally situated in the mind as a complementary of its passive counterpart (*intellectus possibilis*) (Gilson 1956:209, 220). Detaching himself distinctly from Averroists' monopsychistic interpretation, according to which *intellectus agens* is an extra-human capacity common to all men and, as such, disowns any reference to personality of soul and body, Aquinas states the personal responsibility of a Christian by his ascribing the agent intellect to the individual soul that imprints on it its specific cast as well (*Summa theologiae* Ia.79.5; see Aertsen 1993:25, Ebbesen 1998:278–279). Anyhow, the essentially negative core of any attainable knowledge about the world, being also a cause of the analogical segmentation of existence, was not done away with by Aquinas but was simply redisposed in a more elaborative way. It all becomes more evident as we approach the most interesting aspect for us in Aquinas, that is, the way Aquinas came to possess infinity and how he accommodated it into the Aristotelian legacy on nature (Davenport 1999:52–76). One of the key conceptual oppositions of Aristotle had been that of matter and form, or of potentiality and actuality, where the formal principle was conceived as that of conferring perceptible morphological pattern to matter suffering from the perennial lack of determination. Thus the form in Aristotelian interpretation is an immaterial principle that makes things what they are by offering them shape and finitude. This stands in accord with Aristotle's parlance where infinity is bonded to matter and where finitude is that which is supposed to ameliorate matter to the step of cognizable substance. As we know, the view was submitted to cardinal reassessment in Christianity (see Mühlenberg 1966), and Aquinas surely faced the task of attuning the reformed infinity to the rediscovered natural philosophy of Aristotle. For the realization of it he came to one of the most characteristic traits of his thinking: while maintaining that it is the form that offers existence to things in the sense of making them what they are, Aquinas overloaded the Aristotelian distinction of matter and form with that of the more absolute one between the simple act of existence and essence, where the former claimed an independency and primacy over any essential determination (e.g. ST Ia.3.3–4, Gilson 1956:32ff.).[19] In other words, Aquinas argued that if form gives whatness to the

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[18] St. Thomas denies not the possibility of *visio beatifica* but seems to regard it exactly as a *possibility*, and as a natural demand of human intellect that could not, anyhow, be fulfilled by the created intellect itself and that, accordingly, should be considered as a perfection of intellect in terms of theology and supernaturality (Aertsen 1993:33–34, Gilson 1936:260ff.).

[19] A good outline of St. Thomas' real distinction between *esse* (his preferred word for the concept of existence) and *essentia* is given by Aquinas in his early work *De ente et essentia* (see e.g. DEE IV.70ff.; see also Aquinas 1988, containing an introduction and comments by Horst Seidl, esp. pp. XLIX–LIII).

thing, existence in its truest sense is provided by *esse* (the simple act of existence); accordingly, form was to be viewed as a donor of minor existential order, which substantiates as well Aquinas' conception of the God as of the one in whom existence converges entirely with essence, that is, of the God who is a pure act of existence without any further possibility of denomination. What counts in this approach from our point of view is that Aquinas has found in his real distinction of essence and existence a proper and safe way of thematizing divine infinity: in equating the profusion of the act of existence with divine infinity (ST Ia.7.1–4), which, as such, is situated outside of any essential order and human intellect, but which still makes all that is to be, Aquinas repeats again his gesture of discoursing on negativity without any significant danger to rationality – just because the act (*esse*) is supposed to belong to the other, non-discursive array of things (Gilson 1956:44 et al.; Gilson 1987:81–123). To put it succinctly, the God is disposed negatively by Aquinas not because of God's incomprehensible essence but because of God's "essence" being an infinite act. The analogical set-up of being reveals itself in Aquinas' system as a result of the concealed act of existence penetrating all substantial arrangement of the world but eluding, as an element of a different system, capture by intellectual powers.[20]

There abides as well another way of exposing the deductions of Aquinian infinity. The discord between Plato and Aristotle, involved in the different assessment of the individuality of existence, was inherited by Christianity in its task of conciliating the personal existence of the God with his actual consubstantiality. The emergence of Aristotelianism in the 12th century surely marked a step in favour of the accent set by the Peripatetics on the sensual perception of things in their theory of knowledge. Providing a context for some dissensions between Franciscans and Dominicans, the different investment of Plato and Aristotle in the fact of existential particularism was in fact to undergo in scholasticism some interesting mutual fertilization and change (Marrone 2001:569–570). The path of development can best be phrased with the help of some paradoxes. First, although Plato had abstracted from concrete reality and had linked knowledge to separate mental entities, ideas, there had existed in the Platonic tradition an acute epoptic hope, fed by a kind of revelation and illuminism, of coming at some end of a metaphysical ladder to a cognition in the form of an ineluctable visual presence of God. Thus the sense of existentiality, understood as a perception of being present apart from all essential determinations, had been integrated into Platonism at the expense of, say, the rationale of the argument. The second paradox tells us that while Aristotle had insisted in his approach on starting from sensual reality, which is to be taken here as his pro for existentiality, the Aristotelian tradition came to experience a difficulty in providing the same weight for existential argument in a higher cognitive scale – just because of its lesser readiness to indulge in illuminative and non-rational hypotheses basing the immediacy of cognition in

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[20] On the possible connections between Dionysian negativity and St. Thomas' conception of *esse*, see Wéber 1997:391–397.

Platonism. As a consequence, while the progress made by scholastic philosophy can definitely be related to its renouncement of the theory of illumination, the scholastics nevertheless were aware of a demand to find some equivalent in their system for the immediacy promised by Christian Platonism, because, it was quite clear, the perfection pertaining to existentiality on a sensual level should have a correspondent also on a higher cognitive plane. That kind of intellectual matrix of the age started an interesting cooperation between the inherited Augustinianism and the rediscovered Aristotle, producing some clever mutation in the name of sharp genuineness.[21] From the viewpoint of infinity it means that the Aquinian adoption of infinity as a force from aside that lacks any positive (determinable) content, because of its being a simple act of existence, was set to yield to the more essentialist approach – because if there exists an expectancy of new immediacy, after intellectual cognition having being passed through, there should also exist a hope of glancing at infinity not only in its negative non-content but also in some of its informative aspects (see Davenport 1999, e.g. 303–306, 362–364).

In corroborating the existentialist negative key Aquinas set his infinity into, we should not overlook the fact that Aquinas had provided, nevertheless, that we come very close to the perception of *esse* in one of our intellectual operations named *compositio*. Translated as judgment, *compositio* is for Aquinas a correlative and subsequent action of the primary apprehension of simplex indivisible essences: whereas the first operation of intellection results from the impact of objects on our senses and consists, in its principal part, in the elaboration of the received sensual material by agent intellect providing us with concepts, the second operation, or judgment, deals with combining the concepts to form from them propositions with a new quality for apprehension (see Gilson 1956:40–42, Gilson 1955:378, also Eco 1988:198–200). Pitching this conviction in a key of ancient rhetorical vocabulary, we could say that the first slice of a rhetor's toil, that of inventing and finding material (*inventio*), was conceived by Aquinas as succumbing, by its existential import, to the critical work of *iudicium*, that is of combining on the procured essential canvas a speech for particular purposes with a specific judgmental value. The considerations lying behind this kind of conception were derived from the preference Aquinas gave among his Arabian predecessors on being to Averroes' primacy of existence (as compared to Avicenna, who had rather insisted on the concomitant and accidental nature of existence in its relationship to essence): if the real holder of being is the simple act of existence, then all our combined attempts at copulative determination of substances are set to grope, in the end, for *is* (*esse*) as a conveyor of existence, the function having become veiled in *is'* role as copula. For sure, the accession of existence through judgment did not entail for Aquinas such a bold investment in the subjective structure of judging as we can learn from later history (apropos of subject's freedom and will)[22], already because of the relative

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[21] The evoking here of Ockham, who presented himself always as a true Aristotelian but whose achievements rely heavily on a Franciscan foundation, should exemplify the point.

[22] I have in mind here some ideas as they have been developed by Anne Ashley Davenport in her book on Descartes (see Davenport 2006).

reticence Aquinas exhibits in his tackling the limits between natural necessity and freedom of a subject. Anyhow, Aquinas' surpassing Aristotle by his extraction of the act of existence from substantiality, buckled quite definitely together for Aristotle, instances significantly some developments of the age. In the Aristotelian system, it had been matter that provided individuation of forms, that is, individuality of things. Thus, although Aristotle, in opposing Plato's ideas, had harked back in his epistemology to the existential fact of particulars, as origin of cognition, his theory of knowledge was in fact based on the abstraction from particulars to the general, substantial forms of the things. Broadly speaking, the schema was taken over by Aquinas, but with an important proviso, namely, that one of the most final aims of cognition is to lay bare the simple act of existence belonging to the particulars. In the name of reaching existentiality, Aquinas was forced to engage with particularity of being, although he did it in essentially negative terms, as though existentiality, the ground of knowledge, is something that necessarily crumbles in our hands into nothing.

5. John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham

The position of Henry of Ghent, one of the persons supposedly standing behind the condemnation of 1277, is describable as a mélange of an opposition to Aquinas and of an adjustment, to a degree, of Aristotle's natural philosophy to standards of Augustinianism. Together with denouncing Aquinas' Christian existentialism and his reduction of the God to the act of existence, Henry aligned himself rather with the Augustinian and Avicennian world of essences, implying, at least theoretically, that in addition to the witness of God's being existent, we can know something about God in more detail as well (see Dumont 1998a:296, Leff 1958:241–244, Aertsen 1996). Another trait attesting to Henry's Augustinian background is his cushioned retention of the so-called special illumination (deriving from Bona-venture) as a sole warrant for the certitude of human knowledge. Beside this, there is a salty Aristotelian admixture in Henry's Augustinian stock that involved him in a historical trade of opening some new perspectives for the epistemology of the age. Namely, while the emerged Aristotelianism had insisted, in contrast to the natural allegory of the former Middle Ages, on starting from sensory reality, it had nevertheless proven itself, as the case of Aquinas shows, unable to remove the analogous way of speaking about being and God (see Dumont 1998a:298). True, Aquinas had cleared the obstacles of figurative parlance to obtain the natural philosophy of Aristotle in its scientific line of reasoning, but the infinite, a real cause of allegory and figuration, was simply set by him to rim the terrain of natural explanation as something inexplicable and unworthy of concern (because of its lack of independent essential component). Henry's turn to the Platonic view of substances together with the demand of the age to ground faith on reasoning from reality, perceived as existent first by our senses, produced in him a historical wish for the God known not only by analogies but also by some essential and

positive sameness with humankind (Gilson 1955:449, Davenport 1999:151ff., Hödl 1994:562–564). In other words, preparation of the concept of univocity of being, as it came to be announced by his polemical Franciscan follower, John Duns Scotus, had been started implicitly by Henry of Ghent (Dumont 1998a:307 et al.).

While the achievement of early Christianity, as regards infinity, could be considered the reclaiming of infinity from Plotinian non-being and its attaching, however feeble and veiled, to the possibility of an area of cognition, 13th century scholasticism succeeded, as a step further, in professing infinity to have the same and common root with being in its finite articulation. The implication of the development was that the work done by *artistas* on the track of natural investigation stood not unconditionally on the other footing as that practiced in the faculty of theology because if the being, studied supposedly in them both, could be solidified into something common, differing only by its grade of perfection, the necessity of conceiving divinity, at best, through analogies with the human mind would lose its ground. Henry of Ghent had came to the verge of this new conviction as the Aristotelian draught of the age had collided in him with his clinging to illumination, producing Henry's middle way concession to the knowledge of the God in a confused manner: men, being unable to discriminate between subtleties of the two kinds of being, were often duped to the belief of knowing, on natural grounds, the God when in fact they were knowing only its finite duplicate (see Marrone 1988:33, Dumont 1998a:306). The rejection of the theory of illumination by Duns Scotus, while maintaining the Augustinian tenet of the possibility of epistemology of God, had the result that Scotus took initiative in demolishing analogy and in positing the same core for the concepts of both human and godly descent.[23] His way of arguing could be described as an expansion of Augustine's strong stress on substantial sameness of the Trinitarian persons to the intermediate area of God's communication with humans: if the creator were to remain isolated from the cognition of men, we could have no hope of building up any real concept of perfection, or of moving from ideas formed in our mind, e.g. from that of will, to the respective one of God, because of their pertaining to different domains. Accordingly, Scotus concluded, there should exist, first, a way of reaching the knowledge of God out of studying nature considered in its Aristotelian tenor, and second, there should exist a common, univocal concept of being between being's two sides of perfection and imperfection:

> *... I say that it is naturally possible to have not only a concept in which God is known incidentally, as it were – for instance, under the aspect of some attribute – but also one in which He is conceived by Himself and quidditatively. ... Secondly, I say that God is conceived not only in a concept analogous to the concept of a creature, that is, one which is wholly other than that which is predicated of creatures, but even in some concept univocal to Himself and to a creature. ... Univocation in this sense I prove by the following four arguments. The first is this. Every intellect that is certain about one concept, but dubious about others has, in addition to the concepts about which it is in doubt, another*

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[23] For the Scotus' position as compared to Aquinas', see Hall 2007, esp. 1–27.

concept of which it is certain. ... Now, in this life already, a man can be certain in his mind that God is a being and still be in doubt whether He is finite or an infinite being, created or an uncreated being. Consequently, the concept of "being" as affirmed of God is different from the other two concepts but is included in both of them and therefore is univocal. (Ordinatio I, d. 3, pars 1, qq. 1–2, nn. 25–27; quot. Duns Scotus 1987:19–20)

The coupling of finite with infinite under the insignia of univocal being required in its depth some severe changes in the structure of episteme, otherwise the whole project of surpassing the ontological difference would remain senseless: it had asked, first of all, for the possibility of providing some epistemic content for the notions which had been in the system of *analogia entis* simply slipped out of reach. To be concise, the task of supplying perspective for meeting the infinite in *epistéme* focused on the complex of ideas deriving from the rupture Christianity had included in its pictogram of the world. That is, the primary matter to be interrogated was the fact of contingency and existentiality pleaded for by the willful act of creation. It is so no matter of accidence that we witness Scotus, together with univocalizing being, capsizing as well some necessitarian credentials of knowledge.

If the human being is tangential to the divine one, the unmotivatedness of God's decision-making, whose exponent is *creatio ex nihilo*, should have left a readable sign on the fabric of human knowledge. Scotus accomplishes this implicitly suggested implantation of the autonomy of will by unbridling the contingency from the causative burden of past and present it had used to persevere in Aristotle and Aquinas, and by stating the real possibility for opposites at the very moment the will passes its decision. This kind of rendering of the decision, and the interpretation of it, unsubmittable to any natural chain of explanation, because of its being underpinned by that freedom of volition where will substantiates itself, in the very present, without any detectable cause, attests to the sharp inscription of infinity into the underlay of any epistemic attempt at the world: the impossibility of pinning down the vector of will in advance (i.e. in the past) lets the shaft of infinity shine right to the point where some fundamental decisions, because of they concern the higher part of mind, are made (Gelber 2004:123–136, 326). This blazing of a trail for counterfactuals in the theory of will, where Scotus' contribution should be viewed as one among his fellow-scholastics, raises in turn a question about the compatibility of the asserted break in the causative chain with the overall drive of Scotus, and of the age, to propound a natural theory of the world that would include a maximum of the items ascribed formerly to faith. The answer takes us right to some new distinctions shaping the field of cognition. The foremost one of these concerns Scotus' discrimination between two explanative levels of phenomena: on the natural level, the elucidation is drawn from reduction of the explananda to a form of natural necessity, couched in a set of efficient etc. causae, while on the moral level, where free will intervenes as an agent for targeting the supreme aim, goodness, the explanation should willy-nilly become robbed of its natural ingredients to accommodate the greed of

contingency the God had sowed in his creation (Williams 2003:346–347 et al.). Thus the infinity Aquinas had invested in the pure act of existence, with the consequence of its having no real impact on essences, is in Scotus' univocalized system transposed into the area of "practical science" or of morality[24], with an insinuation that infinity should have something to do with our essential knowledge of the world. Another, and congenial, discrimination is picked up by Scotus through his keeping apart intellectual and rational powers: providing the historical distinction between dianoetic and noetic cognition with his personal flavour, Scotus limits intellectual powers to deal with problems of natural causality, while *ratio* has become in his interpretation a denaturalized capacity, a ground for will to strive for the good unavailable to intellect.[25] The deduction to be made here is that beside the fragmentation of early medieval "nature", and its detachment from certain compartments of theology, we witness in Scotus the translocation of some most final causes of action (goodness) from the anatomical tissue of nature to the unbounded space of will.

The complex of ideas around contingency also yields a useful reading from the angle of intuitive and abstractive cognition that Scotus has been granted to have brought into full relief in the context of the Middle Ages. Appearing a bit reluctant on the surface, the opposition swiftly releases its treasures through intuition's German equivalent, *Anschauung*, as the brace of notions was really meant to make a difference between the cognition carried by view of something in its actuality (and in presence) and the graph of it attained through abstracting away from the perception in view. The paradox, already hinted at, is that we can the better get hold of something, the more we lose sight of it, because we know something if we know its why and how, not when we know its being present. However, theres is included an unassailable streak of perfection in the fact of being present, because it is for us, at least as parable, being in actuality. All the more, if God brought the world into existence out of his free will, and not out of its why, then can the why of the thing tell us not the full truth of its being which is included rather in the thing's being existent. The considered inconsistency was carved under the pen of Scotus into the conviction that the intuition delivered to us in sensory way should have its meaning (counterpart) also in intellect, that is, there was launched a discourse on the possibility of intellectual intuition as knowing things in their being-seen in our mind. Sieved through the topical grid of Christian thinking, we see intuition being deposited as a way of grasping the contingency of the world; and the notion of intellectual intuition reveals itself in this context as a demand to

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[24] For Scotus' conception of theology and morality in terms of practical knowledge, see *Ordinatio* I, Prol., q.3, v.345: "Faith is not a speculative *habitus*, nor is believing a speculative act, similarly as vision of God, following faith, is not a speculative vision, but a practice (*fides non est habitus speculativus nec credere est actus speculativus nec visio sequens credere est visio speculativa, sed practica*)." (Duns Scotus 2000:43.)

[25] See *Ordinatio* II, quaestio 25 (in Duns Scotus 2000, pp. 183–199, esp. 197–199); see also Duns Scotus 1987:54, Dumont 1998b:167, Möhle 2003:324–328, Williams 2003:347.

set contingency on a new footing of combined natural philosophy and morality of free will.[26]

Still another aspect of the Scotian trunk makes itself visible if we take a step further in the line envisaged and ask what was at stake, besides finding a firmer ground for contingency, with the intuition soliciting intellection. As contingency is something that reaches us through senses, and senses are something that catch individuals, which in turn, because of their singularity, fail to provide us with knowledge, we can infer that the intellectual intuition was concerned about legislating individuality into the fact pertaining to (a true) cognition and intelligibility. In other words, there was a real quest for predicating that individuality is related somehow to the real essence of a thing (Dumont 1998b:165). A consideration of this kind forces us into the explanation of some historically counteractive data: how should Scotus' leaning to individuality be matched with the tag "realist" that clung to him in philosophy textbooks, or how should it accord with Scotus' Augustinian and Platonic background. Indeed, the moderate realism of Scotus is already holding out its hand to Ockham's "modern way", and the manner in which it does so is illustrative of the complexities of the era. As a Platonist, Scotus had to insist on the real being of essences outside of individuals, and to consider the existence in individuals as an accidence advening to essences rather than something amounting to the authority of essences themselves (Gilson 1987:142 et al.). This is the point he departed, in adopting Avicenna, from the Aquinian-Averroistic line. As a Christian, and Augustinian, Scotus had to expound on the Trinity, maintaining its substantial unity (say, the Christian-Platonic ingredient), while allowing for its unchangeable personalization into three identities (say, the Christian-Aristotelian ingredient). In addition, as a child of the age Scotus had to elaborate on the personalized substance as a substance actual in its ultimacy. The outcome of the Scotian new approach to

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[26] For Scotus' intellectual intuition, see Pasnau 2003:295–300.

Scotus' reasoning in this point draws on Anselm's ontological proof (in *Proslogion*) of God's existence which had been elaborated further by Bonaventure (see Gilson 1955:334–335): if God is something than which nothing greater can be thought (*aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari potest* – and this is in Anselm's view taken for granted even by a fool), the God should undoubtedly exist because if he were only in our thought (understanding), the God in reality would be greater – but that would contradict the assumption. Thus Scotus seems to argue that the God is without any contradiction infinite and the infinite God should exist, that is, he should possibly be seen (intuited), because if he were only in our intellect (abstraction) he would be minor in regard of something else (God intuited): "Again, why is it that the intellect, whose object is being, does not find the notion of something infinite repugnant? Instead of this, the infinite seems to be the most perfect thing we can know. … God is a being conceived without contradiction, who is so great that it would be a contradiction if a greater being could be conceived. … It follows then, that the greatest object conceivable without contradiction can actually exist in reality. … The meaning is that whatever exists in reality is greater than whatever is solely in the intellect. Or, the argument could be retouched in this way. Whatever exists is conceivable to a greater extent [than what does not]; that is to say, it can be known more perfectly, because it is intuitively intelligible or visible. …. Now what can be seen is able to be known more perfectly than what can not be intuited, but known only abstractly. Therefore, the most perfect thing that can be known exists." (*Ordinatio* I, d.2, q.1; quot. Duns Scotus 1987:72–74.)

individuation from his disquisitions on the Trinity encapsulates smartly the pressure of the Christian core paradox on the language on cognition inside the Middle Ages (see e.g. Perler 2003:184). Scotus exposes his position on the Trinity by the auxiliary notion of formal distinction (*distinctio formalis*) which intends to announce the real unity (sameness) of divine substance by offering the personal difference of the Godhead as a deduction on a formal plane that leaves untouched the essence: the divine infinite essence, perfect since including all while being one, retains its infinite sameness in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, although they all three really differ from each other by carrying formally distinct characteristics.[27] The formal distinction unrolls rich enwrapping in Scotus' philosophical oeuvre (see King 2003:23, Ross and Bates 2003:212) but its main target is to establish, upon the univocity of being, the new configuration of universal and individual, where the latter has been divested of its accidental or material minority and has become established as a final link in the process of actualization of the universal. The license for the new argumentation was derived partly from the theory of plurality of substantial forms which untied the Aquinian grip on "one form in one thing" and revealed the essence as something indifferent to the interplay of different formal determinants: from the cognitive viewpoint it meant that one and the same essence was made to obtain under a variety of formal aspects applicable to the thing (Cross 2003:273ff.). Although destined to make the thing, or say essence, actual, all the formal determinants remained, somehow or other, restricted onto the plane of the universal, wherefore Scotus comes to ascribe the completion of actualization in individuals to the circumstance comprised by the term *haecceitas* ('thisness'). Umberto Eco notes that "*haecceitas* is a principle which completes a thing to the point where it is irreducibly concrete. … Particulars, therefore, are superior to essences. In Aquinas, the particular was more perfect than universal form because it had existence. In Duns Scotus, it is more perfect because it is a unique thing which is defined by its uniqueness. For Duns Scotus, something is included in the nature of the individual (*ratio individui*) which is lacking in shared nature (*natura communis*)" (Eco 1988:206).[28] Despite delivering the last imprint to the form, *haecceitas* itself is strictly speaking not a form but the individual difference that offers form its very reality. Whatever the implications of the schema, the message we should read in it here is that the realist Scotus, that is, somebody who should press on the reality of ideas (and who surely does so), links, on the other hand, the fact of reality to the concrete particulars in whom the "sense" of universal is revealed even to a more perfect degree. The "thisness" of Scotus can thus be called a sort of manifestation of the intuition he was set to search for as finalizing (or complementing) the knowledge of universal through its import of existentialization of the abstract. As Scotus is disposed to include his

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[27] See *Ordinatio* I, d. 26 (Duns Scotus 2000:161–181), Wetter 1967.

[28] Relevant here is also Eco's further discussion: "… the theory of *haecceitas* would imply that we do not grasp a *form* by means of a purely intellectual act, but in an intuition; whereas the intellect, which can know particulars only in a confused manner, has to fall back upon universal concepts." (Eco 1988:207.)

explanation on the relation of individuating difference to genus under the general rubric of formal distinction, we can schematize his branched use of the invented *distinctio formalis* as such: implemented, first, to the enigma of Trinity (see Wetter 1967:63), the conception contributed, second, to the canalization of the divine (infinite) being into the world of humans, because it made being (essence) indifferent as to perfection or to imperfection; third, it permitted the statement on individuating difference as leaving intact the real essence of a thing. What matters from our present point of view, is surely the fact that by formal distinction Scotus related the human world to infinity which, if infinite and actual in the intensive sense of the term, could not let anything to be situated beyond itself.

The outward dissent of the nominalism of Ockham with the philosophy of Scotus conceals in its content, as already noted, some smooth lines of development between the two Franciscan friars. Anyhow, the indisputable claim by Ockham to the sole reality of singular things, prompting his brisk dispatch of universals, sets us before a row of questions that, elicited by the context of the previous discussion, should initiate us into the new angle Ockham bends on infinity. First, if reality belongs exclusively to singulars, we cannot avoid asking how Ockham manages to deal with the Trinity, where the substantial unity of the three persons stands as a *conditio sine qua non* of the confession. Second, if singulars, then finitism in its particularized form, and we should wonder what sense could make the idea of the infinite that Christianity had taken great pains to imbue with cognitive value. Last but not least, how can our intellectual chain work at all without the reality of the concept of an abstract?

The change of paradigm in knowledge introduced by Ockham proceeds from his remodelling of the basis of *scientia*: in attaching sole reality to singulars, Ockham had made intellectual intuition, about which Scotus had remained a bit precarious despite his conviction in its actual being, a definite *fundamentum* of knowledge in its most scientific (Aristotelian) sense. The move was enabled by Ockham's ascription of intuition, that is, of the direct grasp of singulars, not only to senses, or to intellect in some remote perspective, but to intellect in its very first and immediate contact with the outward world: the intellect, like the senses, has the capability to intuit the world, through which it is provided with the most reliable (evident) sentences about the existence of things (see Stump 1999:188–189, 192).[29] Ockham's distinction between two different souls, the sensory and intellective soul that both possess in his interpretation their own capability of intuition, was of capital importance for basing the contingency as a compositional

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[29] Taken that intuition provides a human with immediate and non-complex cognition about the presence of something, while abstraction abstracts from the markers of existence and non-existence, Philotheus Boehner explains Ockham's intellectual intuition as something that cannot take place without sensory cognition but which, nevertheless, "relates to the sense-object as immediately as the sensory cognition does" (Ockham 1957:XXIV–XXV). Ockham himself says: "… just as the knowledge of sensible facts that is obtained from experience … begins with the senses, i.e. from a sense-intuition of these sensible facts, so in general the scientific knowledge of these purely intelligible facts of experience begins with an intellective intuition of these intelligible facts." (*Prologue to the Ordinatio*, q.1; quot. Ockham 1957:27.)

part of *scientia*.[30] The fact that intellect can intuit says that the figure of will, which God had etched on his creation, should become somehow legible as well in our scientific reading of the world. On the other hand, the promotion of particularism by Ockham connoted that the abstract strata of language, that is, the universals in their more or lesser comprehensibility, are to be treated as mere signs formed in our mental activity and, accordingly, as missing any equivalent in reality, although they are not empty in the sense of representing certain (non-existent) relations between things (see Goddu 1999:144–147). By, so to say, X-raying the abstractives and by proving their merely semiotic role in the process of cognition, Ockham establishes abstract knowledge as a system of propositions that functions solely in the space of metalinguistic investigation of extramental reality; as the source of all abstraction is supposed by Ockham to be intuition, on which rests also the evidential power of *scientia*, we can conclude that knowledge must, to have a grasp of reality, seize back and slide on the contingency of an individual manifested in the intuition (Schulthess and Imbach 1996:272–273). The situation was but further complicated by Ockham's statement that there can occur as well, by the aid of the God, a *cognitio intuitiva non existentium*, that is, Ockham claimed the possibility of an intuition of something that does not exist – at least not for our senses and intellect in the contemporary context. The inscription of this kind of prospect into cognition caused muddle from, at minimum, two aspects. First it deprived intuition of its clearly testable ground in the form of existential evidence, and second it posed the question how can we know something about the intuitive cognition promised, if, as Ockham states, abstraction proceeds exclusively from intuition, and there can, accordingly, exist neither of them in regard to the intuition waited for (i.e. in regard of *non existentium*). In piloting his mind through the predicament, Ockham comes to make use of the semiotics of abstraction, disclosed by himself, as well as of the univocity of being, proposed by Scotus but rearranged by Ockham from its metaphysical groundwork into the linguistic and logical proof-basis (Gilson 1955:496). In other words, the non-reality of signs discovered by Ockham furnished him also with a potential to use these same signs, sourced in intuition and abstracted in our intellect, to refer to the things hoped to be seen in the future by the aid of God, provided that there exists some kind of univocal link between creation and creator, about which but Ockham seems to be quite sure:

> *For that reason, to abstract from the imperfection in the wisdom of a creature is nothing else than to abstract from an imperfect creature a concept of wisdom which does not refer more to creatures than to what is not a creature, and then the result is attributable to God by way of predication. And what is thus abstracted is said to belong to perfection in so far as it can be predicated of God and can stand for Him. For if such a concept could not be abstracted from a creature, then in this life we could not arrive at a cognition of God's wisdom – e.g. that God is wisdom – through the wisdom of creature any more than, through the cognition of stone, we obtain a cognition that God is a stone.*

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[30] For Ockham's two souls, see *Quodlibeta*, III, q. xiii (Ockham 1957:157–160), Stump 1999:202.

> *Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that the distinction between the wisdom of a*
> *creature and the wisdom of God is as great as the distinction between God and*
> *a stone, and though in neither case do we have things of the same kind,*
> *nevertheless from created wisdom we can get by abstraction a concept common*
> *[to God and creature] ...* (Reportatio, III, q. viii; quot. Ockham 1957:124.)

In maintaining a clear disjunction between man's cognitive powers and God's *potentia absoluta*, Ockham draws a sharp line betwixt the human cognition, processing on the ground of sensed particulars, and the revealed truth, or the truth demanding the assistance of God; the question about the substantial sameness of the Trinity has thus been delegated by Ockham to God himself, whose intervention is strongly requested for clarifying the problem of unity outside of personality.[31] This kind of dissection of the cognitive area into two parts, into the one standing under *potentia absoluta* and into the other covered by *potentia ordinata*, elicits a warrant for natural philosophy to operate in its specific domain of natural causality as instituted by God's ordained power. However, the most pungent implications of Ockham's theory are certainly to be connected to his transference of intuition from the sensibly real world to the realm of *non existentium*, imposing on us some crucial inferences. First, as intuition catches contingency, we must assume that the non-existent intuited in cooperation with God manifests the fact of contingency in an unsurpassably higher degree than anything available to ourselves. Therefore is the engagement of will to be included *a fortiori* in this kind of cognition. Second, the unmediatedness of intuition, its anchorage in the evident, lets us unmistakably recognize in Ockham's intuition of the non-existent the Augustinian commitment to the immediate contact with the divine, which had also propelled the Franciscan positive philosophy of essence (Davenport 1999:363). The hope that we can see the God not only in his persons but also in his infinite essence, backed by the theory of univocity of being, sets up preconditions for the new register of discourse in which signs are used to cue the essence not as something abstract, and as dissociated from particularity of being, but as something seen possibly *de facto*, for the reason of its being an individual in a way not yet apprehended by us. In this sense, we can say, Ockham grounds a hope to the individuality of the infinite. Third, it has been pointed out that by disentangling semiotics from metaphysics Ockham has found a sound manner to divide between "what a sign denotes extramentally and what it mentions (brings to mind) about what it denotes extramentally" (Davenport 1999:361): the emancipation of sign as a sign makes possible to use it for denoting the actual infinite without being requested that the user in fact (in her/his present state) knows what the denoted extramental thing is in its essence. This kind of trespassing on the

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[31] Claiming the ground of cognition to be in particulars and denying thus any reality of relations (which are formed as a result of abstraction), Ockham comes to "solve" the problem of the Trinity by letting natural reason to abide in its own rules and by conceding to the exception inside the Trinity (i.e. to the substantial unity of persons) only in the special cases of faith (the concession being enacted by the force of revelation). That is, Ockham seems to be cherishing no hope of fitting natural reason to the last of faith. (See Freddoso 1999:343–346.).

limits of knowing, while keeping the distinctness of denotation, is enabled by the transition of discoursive activity, in the register under question, from intellect to will, and to its accompaniment love, which start to underpin the process of signification according to their own specific rules.

What we are witnessing here is something similar to what we had seen already in Scotus: in line with the sedimentation of Aristotelian natural philosophy in the new form of *via moderna*, there is developing a fresh moral consciousness, or practical philosophy, which is charged with accommodating some of the most acute infinite elements, embedded in Christian outlook but found inconsonant with the modern tenet of particularized reality (Schulthess and Imbach 1996:260–261).[32] On the one hand, accordingly, there was driven a sharp wedge between natural and supernatural cognitive regimes, paving the way in high scholasticism for a new perspective into empirical reality, perceived in its diversity and natural self-sufficiency, free from earlier allegory and symbolism. On the other hand, we should not forget that the development based itself on the insinuation of a univocal link (being) between creation and creator, making humans to trust to natural investigation without compulsion to lose, in this action, the idea of God. In the background of dissociation of faith and reason had stood their still firmer connectedness through the stated coherence of being, providing a hopeful space to reach from the side of intellect to the things promised in faith.

6. Conclusion

Glancing at the medieval infinite, as it has been optionally invoked in the present article, we should say that the infinite transcendent had triggered in the Middle Ages its comprehension in palpably different yet beneficial ways. Theophany and analogy, as modes of conceiving the infinite, had set in the early Middle Ages a stage for expanded natural symbolism that lodged, under the insignia of *sapientia*, quite happily the aesthetic and epistemic strands of the human mind. Inside this symbolism we should distinguish, as to the negativity of cognition and to the immediacy of intuition afforded by God, between the different accents on the Greek and the Latin sides of the canvas. The break caused in the Middle Ages by the reintroduction of Aristotelian natural philosophy set an amount of the infinite aside of (evidential) scientific knowledge, and let it instead be captured by practical thinking in terms of morality, or by something like the act of existence (Aquinas) missing any determinacy. Anyhow, there was launched in scholasticism, or at least intimated, through the concept of univocity of being as well a direct link between humanity and the God, which bid fair for the natural sciences as they were promised a tangency with God even in their staying within the finite domain of knowledge. Probably the most important outcome of these

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[32] About Ockham's elaboration of Scotus's ideas of free will and of his setting morality in its ultimate terms outside any natural reasoning and natural teleology, see Adams 1999:252 et al., Gelber 2004:324 et al., Panaccio 1998:743–745.

conceptual struggles, for which the question of Trinity provided a luminizing foil, was that the concept of existential presence, as it had been foregrounded by Christian philosophy, was moulded in the hands of Ockham into a strong witness to the particularity of being – as the only real ground our knowledge can rely on.

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