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TRINITY AND DIVINE SUBJECTIVITY: A STUDY IN THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGIES
OF FRANZ ANTON STAUDENMAIER AND ISAAK AUGUST DORNER

Approved by:

Dr. Bruce D. Marshall
Lehman Professor of Christian Doctrine

Dr. William J. Abraham
Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies

Dr. D. Stephen Long
Cary M. Maguire University Professor of Ethics

Dr. Grant Kaplan
Steber Chair, Professor of Theology

TRINITY AND DIVINE SUBJECTIVITY: A STUDY IN THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGIES
OF FRANZ ANTON STAUDENMAIER AND ISAAK AUGUST DORNER

A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate Faculty of

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Andrew James Hamilton

B.A., Sociology, University of North Texas
M.T.S., Southern Methodist University

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Hamilton, Andrew

B.A., Sociology, University of North Texas
M.T.S., Southern Methodist University

Trinity and Divine Subjectivity: A Study in the Trinitarian Theologies of
Franz Anton Staudenmaier and Isaak August Dorner

Advisor: Dr. Bruce D. Marshall

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In the German philosophical tradition that begins with Kant and grows into Romanticism and Idealism, philosophical understandings of personal subjectivity underwent drastic changes. I argue in this dissertation that these new understandings of personal subjectivity exercised an important influence on how the Catholic theologian Franz Anton Staudenmaier and the Lutheran theologian Isaak August Dorner conceived of the personal subjectivity of the divine, particularly on how they rendered the divine as a triune personal subject.

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For Terri, my best friend and the love of my life

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century is often regarded as inaugurating a renewal of trinitarian theology. Although the works of theologians such as of Barth, Moltmann, Pannenberg (on the Protestant side), Balthasar and Rahner (on the Catholic side), and Bulgakov (on the Orthodox side) all embody a centrality of the Trinity, such a claim can nonetheless be questioned through an examination of the works of the Catholic theologian Franz Anton Staudenmaier (1800-1856) and the Lutheran theologian Isaak August Dorner (1809-1884). Although there are differences in the ways in which these two thinkers execute their theological systems, they both share a broad agreement on the importance – indeed, the centrality – of the doctrine of the Trinity for Christian theological reflection.

As I hope to show, for both of these theologians the Trinity gets to the heart of one of the most fundamental questions of theology, for it is that by which we can make sense of divine personal subjectivity. Staudenmaier and Dorner regard the Trinity not simply as a matter of soteriological significance (although, of course, it includes this), but in addition they see it as grounding something even much more basic. For both, the Trinity is the ground by which God can engage that which is other than Himself without divesting Himself of transcendence. To put it in somewhat stark terms, the Trinity is that by which God can be God for that which is not God.

Staudenmaier's and Dorner's renditions of divine subjectivity cannot be understood without grasping some background philosophical considerations. In the German philosophical

tradition that begins with Kant and grows into Romanticism and Idealism, philosophical understandings of personal subjectivity underwent drastic changes. I argue in this dissertation that these new understandings of personal subjectivity exercised an important influence on how Staudenmaier and Dorner conceived of the personal subjectivity of the divine, particularly on how they rendered the divine as a triune personal subject. Therefore, we will examine some of the changes in how personal subjectivity came to be understood during this period.

1. Subjectivity in the German Philosophical Tradition

Broadly speaking, the modern German philosophical tradition moves further and further away from a Cartesian understanding of what constitutes subjectivity – as that which is merely located in the individual rational agent – and moves toward a view of subjectivity seen as constituted by otherness. The novel view of subjectivity inaugurated by the modern German philosophical tradition can be seen by first recalling the Cartesian method of skepticism regarding the external world.

Skepticism regarding the external world can be described as subjectivist in the sense that the subject's belief in the reality of the external world is inferred from the subject's inner representations. Insofar as those inner representations can be doubted, the reality of the external world can be doubted. What cannot be doubted, Descartes shows, is that the subject thinks. It is from this foundation of the subject as thinking that one eventually arrives at the reality of the external world. Thus, in such a system, one begins with a subject and from there deduces that which is other than the subject.

This picture begins to change beginning with Kant and continuing with Fichte and Hegel. Kant departed significantly from his predecessors through his philosophical 'Copernican revolution,' wherein he argued that experience is not simply a matter of a subject passively

receiving data through her senses, but rather an application of *a priori* forms and concepts by the subject to received sensible data.

While Kant surely brought to the fore the active role that the subject plays in her own experience, and while such a construal of personal subjectivity might seem to have pushed the conception of the subject in a *more* Cartesian – and so subjectivist – direction, the exact opposite was the case.¹ As we will see below, in his “Refutation of Idealism,” Kant offered an argument against Cartesian subjectivism (which he referred to as “problematic idealism”), namely, “the theory that declares the existence of objects in space outside us to be...merely doubtful and indemonstrable...”² Although Kant highlighted the active role which the subject takes in the constitution of her experience, he nevertheless also argued that there must be a reality beyond mere representations for the possibility of experience at all.³ Kant’s argument, in short, is that while the Cartesian skeptic infers the reality of the external world from her inner representations (which are subject to doubt), the very sequence of such representations for a numerically-singular subject is possible only if the subject indexes those representations to a persistent reality that is linked via laws of causality and interaction. Such a reality is possible only amongst

¹ Indeed, Frederick Beiser narrates the early history of German Idealism (in which he includes Kant) as precisely *anti-subjectivist*. As he puts it, the development of German Idealism “is not the *culmination* but the *nemesis* of the Cartesian tradition.” See Frederick C. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 2.

² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), B 274 (p. 326) (hereafter abbreviated as *CPR*). The lines of the first edition are indicated by an “A” and the second edition by a “B,” followed by the page number of the Guyer and Wood translation in parenthesis. The Refutation of Idealism appears only in the second edition of the *CPR*.

³ Whether or not Kant’s Refutation of Idealism is actually a *successful* argument is much debated among Kantian scholars. For helpful assessments of the argument, see the following: Dina Emundts, “The Refutation of Idealism and the Distinction between Phenomena and Noumena,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason*, ed. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 168–89; Paul Guyer, *Kant*, 2nd edition (London New York: Routledge, 2014); Paul Guyer, “Kant’s Intentions in the Refutation of Idealism,” *The Philosophical Review* 92, no. 3 (1983): 329–83.

substances which are external to one another (i.e. in space), and thus possible only as external to the subject herself.

1.1 Kant's Analogies of Experience and Refutation of Idealism

Kant's argument against Descartes' "problematic idealism" is located in the second edition of *The Critique of Pure Reason*. Many background assumptions for the Refutation of Idealism are established in the "Analogies of Experience," where Kant establishes what relations are necessary of things given in space and time, so we will begin our examination there.

In the First Analogy, Kant considers what is necessary in order to perceive change. Empirical experience, of course, is constituted by representations. Yet, as we experience *different* representations, our experience can be said to form a sequence of representations. If the experience of representations as a sequence is due to a difference between representations, then the experience of representations as a sequence is precisely an experience of change. However, Kant argues, the very notion of change requires a notion of persistence: "Our apprehension of the manifold of appearance is always successive, and is therefore always changing. We can therefore never determine from this alone whether this manifold, as object of experience, is simultaneous or successive, if something does not ground it which always exists, i.e., something lasting and persisting..."⁴ Put differently, if it is not the same object across change, there are just different objects (and so there actually is no change at all). The explanation for the experience of change, and thus the experience of representations as a sequence, is that there is some sort of persistence across change (which Kant refers to as 'substance'). As Kant puts it, "Persistence is accordingly

⁴ CPR A 182 / B 225 (p. 300).

a necessary condition under which alone appearances, as things or objects, are determinable in a possible experience.”⁵

The Second Analogy considers the order of representations. As occurring in sequences, our representations occur in a particular order. In perceiving the various parts of a house, for example, I might first have a representation of the basement followed by a representation of the roof. Why does my representation of the basement precede my representation of the roof? In this case, there is no rule explaining why this representation preceded that representation (other than my directing my attention here and then there). Thus, logically speaking, in such a case the succession of my representations could have occurred in any order (first the basement then the roof, or first the roof then the basement). There is nothing about my representation of the one part of the house which necessitates that I have a representation of another part, and so there is nothing which necessitates that the sequence of my representations occurs in a certain order. That there is no necessitated order of my representations is due to there being no objective change in the house, but only a change in where I direct my attention.

But consider a case in which there is a change in the empirical object. In perceiving someone kicking a ball, for example, I first have a representation of a ball sitting motionless on the ground, followed by a person’s foot making physical contact with the ball, followed by a representation of the ball in the air.⁶ If a representation in and of itself contains only the content of that particular moment and so, in and of itself, is independent of any successive representations, what makes for the ordering of this series of representations? In other words, why does *this* representation (that of the foot touching the ball) precede *that* representation (that

⁵ *CPR* A 189 / B 232 (pp. 303-04)

⁶ In the Second Analogy, Kant uses the example of a ship sailing downstream.

of the ball in the air)? Why does the representation of the ball in the air *not* precede the representation of the foot touching the ball?

In the case of the ball, we are perceiving something which was not previously the case but subsequently came to be the case: the ball was not previously in the air but subsequently came to be in the air. Unlike in the case of the house, here we are perceiving an occurrence. And in an occurrence, Kant says, the order of representations is determined. This is because, in order to even perceive the occurrence, we must have a representation which is preceded by its lack: “That something happens, i.e., that something or a state comes to be that previously was not, cannot be empirically perceived except where an appearance precedes that does not contain this state in itself; for a reality that would follow on an empty time, thus an arising not preceded by any state of things, can be apprehended just as little as empty time itself.”⁷

That the order of my representations was first that of the motionless ball on the ground, then of a foot touching the ball, and then that of the ball in the air is explained by a causal relation. “Thus, the relation of appearances (as possible perceptions) in accordance with which the existence of that which succeeds (what happens) is determined in time necessarily and in accordance with a rule by something that precedes it, consequently the relation of cause to effect, is the condition of the objective validity of our empirical judgments with regard to the series of perceptions, thus of their empirical truth, and therefore of experience.”⁸ Thus, the possibility of our perception of objective change is expressed in the principle of causality. The principle of causality explains not only why the representations occurred in a sequence, but why they occurred in the sequence that they did.

⁷ *CPR* A 191-92 / B 236-37 (p. 306).

⁸ *Ibid.*, A 202 / B 247 (p. 312).

Finally, the Third Analogy treats simultaneous causal relations. Some substances appear to be causally affected by other substances and yet we are unable to have representations of the two substances simultaneously (e.g., substances which are separated in space to a degree such that one would not be able to simply observe them simultaneously – Kant uses the example of directing one’s attention first to the moon then to the earth, and vice versa). We assume that the states of such substances occur simultaneously (e.g., that the earth and the moon exist simultaneously), but since our representations afford us access to content only in a particular temporal and spatial location, we cannot observe simultaneous states of substances *as simultaneous*: “The synthesis of the imagination in apprehension [can] only present each of these perceptions as one that it present in the subject when the other is not, and conversely, but not that the objects are simultaneous, i.e., that if the one is then the other also is in the same time...”⁹

For example, say I know based on scientific experiments that the gravitational pull of the moon affects the ocean tide. However, the moon and the tide are sufficiently separated in space such that I cannot perceive both simultaneously. Although I know that the moon’s gravitational force affects the tide, when I focus my perception on the tide (rather than on the moon), and perceive the tide of the ocean as causally affected, the causal relation between the moon and the tide is not something which I am able to have representations of. However, I know that the moon is causally affecting the tide. The only way to account for such simultaneous causal relations is to infer a law of interaction or community between them, such that although I cannot perceive them as located within a singular spatial plane (and thus as able to interact), they nonetheless are:

⁹ CPR A 211 / B 257 (p. 317).

“Thus it is necessary for all substances in appearance, insofar as they are simultaneous, to stand in thoroughgoing community of interaction with each other.”¹⁰

As a whole, therefore, our experience, which is constituted by a series of representations (by which we perceive change), presupposes a persistent reality which is linked via laws of causality and interaction. That is, our experience is such that it can only be made coherent by assuming a persistent reality of substance which is governed by relations of causality and interaction in a lawlike regularity.

With this background in place, we can now look at Kant’s Refutation of Idealism proper. The first step in the argument is: “I am conscious of my existence as determined in time.”¹¹ More precisely, I am conscious of my representations as forming a temporal order. This is a premise even the Cartesian skeptic would accept.

The second step of the argument is “All time-determination presupposes something persistent in perception.”¹² In other words, my awareness of my representations as forming a temporal order is possible only if I have something permanent against which their temporality is measured. This brings us to the third step: “This persisting thing, however, cannot be something in me, since my own existence in time can first be determined only through this persisting thing.”¹³ Thus, this permanent framework against which the change of representations is measured obviously cannot itself be a representation. Or better put, since my representations are in me, and since this permanent framework cannot itself be a representation, it cannot be in me.

¹⁰ *CPR* A 213 / B 260 (p. 318).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, B 275 (p. 327).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

Therefore, the fourth step runs: “Thus the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a thing outside me and not through the mere representation of a thing outside me.”¹⁴ Here, the claim is not that this persistent thing is something outside the *empirical* I (e.g., in some object I perceive as other than myself), for in this case it would still be part of a representation. This would not defeat skepticism because, as the skeptics insist, representations are subject to doubt. (This was the burden of the third step.) Doubt regarding the truth of my representations can be overcome only through something which is determined by laws, since laws are relations of necessity.

Something which is persistent and is determined through laws, which is not itself a representation, is possible only amongst substances which are external to one another (i.e. in space), and thus possible only as external to the subject herself (the first Analogy). Such laws are precisely those established in the second and third Analogies (the laws of causality and interaction). If there must be a non-representational reality constituted by space and subject to laws for there to be a succession of representations, then skeptical doubt – to even get off the ground – must presuppose a non-representational reality constituted by space and subject to laws, for skeptical doubt itself presupposes a succession of representations. Thus, the conclusion of the argument: “Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself.”¹⁵

¹⁴ *CPR* B 275 (p. 327).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

1.2 Fichte's Argument for the External World and Other Rational Agents

If Kant sought to establish the subject's capacity for orderly representations upon that which is other than the subject herself, Fichte dug even deeper by seeking to ground the subject's very consciousness in her activity upon that which is other than herself (the 'non-I'). Take, for example, the basic activity of reading a book. As one reads a book, she does not think to herself, "I am reading a book." When she reads a book, her conscious activity is focused on the content of the book itself and not on the activity itself which she is performing.¹⁶ "In acting," Fichte says, "the rational being does not become conscious of its acting; for it itself is its acting and nothing else..."¹⁷

However, if someone interrupts this activity and asks her what she is doing, she replies, "I am reading a book." Her reply to another is an explicit declaration regarding that activity. But if, when engaging in this activity, she was not explicitly conscious that "I am reading a book," how is it that she was able to have an explicit awareness that she was reading a book when asked what she was doing? Although while reading, her explicit awareness was an awareness of *the content of the book* (rather than of herself reading the book), when she moved to an explicit awareness of something different than the content of the book (viz., the explicit awareness *that I was reading a book*, prompted by the question posed to her), she knows that it was she who was reading the book.

¹⁶ I owe this example to Allen Wood. See Allen W. Wood, "The 'I' as Principle of Practical Philosophy," in *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel*, ed. Sally Sedgwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 96.

¹⁷ J.G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, trans. Michael Baur, 1st Edition (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Introduction, I.4 (p. 4). Hereafter this work will be abbreviated as *FNR*.

To know that it was she who was reading the book means that during her act of reading, although she was not the object of her own explicit awareness, nonetheless there was some less explicit awareness of herself as reading. If there could not be such a dual awareness, she could never respond to a question of what activity she was doing, for she would never be able to know that it was she doing it. Thus, no matter what sort of activity she is engaged in (which occupies her explicit awareness), there is always an implicit awareness that it is she who is engaging in this activity.

Self-awareness, then, requires that the agent engage in practical activity, for it is only posterior to activity that the subject has something to be conscious of herself as doing: “The I becomes conscious only of what emerges for it in this acting and through this acting...”¹⁸ Practical activity consists in setting an end and acting to conform the world (the ‘not-I’) to that end. Because the performance of actions is what makes possible the subject’s self-consciousness, and because the performance of actions involves setting an end to which the subject seeks to conform the world, the subject’s self-consciousness is possible insofar as she conforms the external world/the not-I to her ends. Self-consciousness, therefore, is possible for a subject only if she posits a world, or a ‘not-I’, which exists outside of herself upon which she can exercise practical activity: “Since the I can posit itself in self-consciousness only practically, but in general can posit only what is finite, and hence must also posit a limit to its practical activity, it follows that the I must posit a world outside itself.”¹⁹ The not-I is thereby the vehicle by which self-consciousness is actualized.

¹⁸ *FNR*, Introduction, I.4 (p. 5).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, §2, Corollary 1 (p. 24).

Thus far, Fichte has not gone much beyond Kant in positing what is other than the subject as constitutive for the subject as such. Fichte made a radical move beyond Kant, however, by making a transcendental argument not simply for an external world, but also for the existence of other rational beings.²⁰ We have seen that it is in virtue of a not-I that the agent can exercise her subjectivity, that she can be an I. Acting involves acting for ends, and such acting is based on reasons. But how does a being encounter *reasons* in the first place? Or better, how are reasons for any particular act present to the subject precisely *as reasons* (as opposed to natural desires which are the basis for actions of non-rational animals)?

Imagine, for example, a person whose every action had no reasons behind its performance. Each act would appear arbitrary. To observe a series of actions performed by this sort of person would make no sense in the eyes of others. In short, this person would appear to be *irrational* or *non-rational*. It is in acting based upon reasons, then, that our acts have rationality. Reasons, however, do not necessitate. If another offers me a reason for, say, reading this book rather than that book, I am free to refuse. Reasons, therefore, have the unique quality, on one hand, of providing rationality for a subject's acts, while on the other hand not necessitating that the subject perform the act.²¹ As Fichte puts it, "The rational being's activity is by no means to be determined and necessitated by the summons in the way that – under the concept of causality – an effect is determined and necessitated by its cause; rather, the rational being is to determine itself in consequence of the summons."²²

²⁰ For a helpful treatment of Fichte's argument, see Allen W. Wood, "Deduction of the Summons and the Existence of Other Rational Beings," in *Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right: A Critical Guide*, ed. Gabriel Gottlieb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 72–91.

²¹ See Wood, "Deduction...", 82–4.

²² *FNR* §3, V (p. 35).

Insofar as they are rational grounds for acts, reasons presuppose the capacity for understanding them as reasons. That is, the subject is rational only insofar as she acts upon reasons *as reasons*. But reasons – because they do not compel but only invite action – appear outside the subject, in the sense that they summon the subject to perform acts. Therefore, Fichte concludes that if reasons presuppose the capacity of understanding them as reasons (if reasons presuppose the subject’s potential for acting rationally), and if reasons address the subject from outside, then reasons can come to a subject only from a source [1] that exists *outside* the subject herself and [2] is *itself* rational:

The external being that is posited as the cause of the summons must at the very least presuppose the possibility that the subject is capable of understanding and comprehending; otherwise its summons to the subject would have no purpose at all. The purposiveness of the summons is conditional on the understanding and freedom of the being to whom it is addressed. Therefore, the cause of the summons must itself necessarily possess the concept of reason and freedom; thus it must itself be a being capable of having concepts; it must be an intelligence, and – since this is not possible without freedom, as has just been shown – it must also be a free, and thus a rational, being, and must be posited as such.²³

We have seen that, for Fichte, self-consciousness is possible only through practical action. Further, we have seen that practical action is rational only insofar as it is based upon reasons. Finally, we have seen that reasons, because they summon a subject rather than compel her, exist externally to the subject. Thus, Fichte’s argument is that an agent can be a self-conscious rational subject only if there are external sources of rationality present to her by which she can receive reasons for her acts. Thus, an agent can be a self-conscious rational subject only in the presence of other rational subjects, i.e. only in a community. As Fichte therefore puts it, “The human being (like all finite beings in general) becomes a human being only among human beings; and since the human being can be nothing other than a human being and would not exist

²³ *FNR* §3, V (p. 35).

at all if it were not this – it follows that, if there are to be human beings at all, there must be more than one.”²⁴

While Kant argued that what lies beyond the individual subject is constitutive of her unified experience, in Fichte we see that what lies beyond the individual subject has a much more robust role in the constitution of the subject as such. Hegel appropriates much from Fichte regarding the role of others in the constitution of subjectivity.²⁵ However, Hegel departs from Fichte in one significant way, the presence of which we will see in Staudenmaier and Dorner.

1.3 Hegel and Mutual Recognition

Hegel approaches subjectivity not transcendently but phenomenologically.²⁶ In everyday self-consciousness, one has a consciousness of oneself, but also a consciousness of what is not oneself: “For the in-itself is consciousness; but equally it is that for which an other (the in-itself) is; and it is for consciousness that the in-itself of the object, and the being of the object for an other, are one and the same; the ‘I’ is the content of the connection and the connecting itself. Opposed to an other, the ‘I’ is its own self, and at the same time it overarches this other which, for the ‘I’, is equally only the ‘I’ itself.”²⁷

²⁴ *FNR* §3, First Corollary (p. 37).

²⁵ See Allen W. Wood, “Fichtean Themes in Hegel’s Dialectic of Recognition,” in *The Free Development of Each: Studies on Freedom, Right, and Ethics in Classical German Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 214–28.

²⁶ See Stephen Houlgate, “Is Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit an Essay in Transcendental Argument?,” in *The Transcendental Turn*, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 173–94. Much of my understanding of Hegel as presented in these paragraphs is based on Houlgate’s work. See Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel’s “Phenomenology of Spirit”: A Reader’s Guide*, 1st edition (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013).

²⁷ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, Revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §166 (p. 104). Hereafter abbreviated as *PS*.

This introduces a paradox for self-consciousness. Self-consciousness can be what it is only in relation to what is other than itself. Self-consciousness sees this as a contradiction and tries to resolve this contradiction by turning away from otherness back onto itself. It can do this because, although it certainly views its object as real, it nevertheless views it as subordinate to itself, as existing for self-consciousness. Thus, self-consciousness affirms itself by turning away from its object. Self-consciousness, in order to affirm itself, must continually negate other objects.

Since self-consciousness can satisfy itself only through this continual negation of otherness, it comes to realize that otherness has a degree of independence. Self-consciousness must therefore relate to otherness in a new way: otherness can still be negated, but it is something *independent* that can be negated: “Self-consciousness is thus certain of itself only by superseding this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life...”²⁸

Another contradiction then arises. Self-consciousness is satisfied by being what it is, by being conscious of itself alone. Yet such awareness must occur through something which is other and independent. This contradiction can be resolved if the independent other is capable of self-negation: this allows for the negation of otherness (leaving self-consciousness aware of itself alone), yet without self-consciousness having to engage with otherness (which is what precipitates the contradiction).

However, the only thing that is capable of self-negation is another self-consciousness. In negating itself for the sake of the other, the second self-consciousness thereby enables the first self-consciousness to have awareness of itself with minimal engagement with the second. The second self-consciousness is merely a mirror for the first, for the first sees only itself in the

²⁸ *PS* §174 (p. 109).

second. The second self-consciousness recognizes the first, but the first does not recognize the second. Recognition is only one-sided.

In seeing itself in the other, however, the first self-consciousness feels alienated from itself because its identity is located outside of itself. To remedy this, the first self-consciousness recognizes the full independence of the second. By recognizing the full independence and equality of the second, the first self-consciousness receives back its identity within itself. However, in recognizing the full independence and equality of the second, the identity of the first is not located *solely* within itself. Recognition of another as independent and equal is a recognition that both possess a commonality: “A self-consciousness exists for a self-consciousness. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it.”²⁹ Possession of a commonality in turn entails that the rights of one are shared by the other, and thus that the preservation of one’s own rights is dependent upon that one’s upholding the rights of the other.

The upshot of Hegel’s dialectic of recognition is that persons can achieve freedom in its fullest extent only in relations of mutual recognition, i.e. in a community. This much we saw with Fichte. Hegel departs from Fichte, however, in that the other does not *resist* the subject’s I-hood (as is the case for Fichte), but rather the other *expresses* the subject’s I-hood.³⁰ For Hegel, therefore, the subject’s freedom consists in an alignment between herself and what is other than herself. She can recognize herself in what is other than herself because it is not alien to her. For Hegel, therefore, the subject’s freedom consists in the willful alignment of herself with what is other than herself.

²⁹ *PS* §177 (p. 110).

³⁰ I owe this way of putting the matter to Allen Wood (email correspondence).

2. Staudenmaier and Dorner: Embracing Novelty and Tradition

The understanding of subjectivity outlined above, I argue, had an important influence on the construction of the Trinity in the theologies of Staudenmaier and Dorner. Broadly speaking, both present the divine persons of the Trinity in terms of a willful alignment of oneself with one another. (Although we will see that Staudenmaier and Dorner render this willful alignment in different ways.)

The idealist heritage of Staudenmaier and Dorner, however, is complicated. Neither appropriated such idealist frameworks for subjectivity uncritically and unmodified, for such frameworks for subjectivity – when applied to the divine unmodified – would have involved costs which neither Staudenmaier nor Dorner were willing to pay.

For Fichte, as we have seen, subjectivity requires resistance or opposition to the I by the not-I. Thus, in order to be an I, the I must be *limited* by a not-I. Personal subjectivity, in other words, requires constraint by otherness as its condition of possibility. Thus, for Fichte, the only possible personal subjects are those that are finite. Fichte, therefore, saves divine infinitude by denying personhood to God. For Staudenmaier and Dorner, however, divine personhood is a fundamental and so irrevocable feature of Christian religion.

For Hegel, the full subjectivity of the Absolute requires both the infinite milieu and the finite milieu. To put the matter in representational terms (the register of discourse in which Staudenmaier and Dorner operate but which Hegel seeks to transcend), complete divine subjectivity, for Hegel, requires that God create and dwell within the finite.³¹ Staudenmaier and

³¹ As Cyril O'Regan puts the matter, "To be sufficient divine subjectivity, what is required, besides ahistorical or metahistorical divine becoming, is becoming within the milieu of finitude, the divine history of creation, fall, incarnation, redemption, and salvation. . . . The role of finitude in the self-development of the divine is impossible to overestimate. Crucially, the milieu of finitude makes possible the genuine contrariety that cannot be established on the level of the immanent divine." Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 141.

Dorner, by contrast, want to see subjectivity as an immanent characteristic of the divine. Thus, for Staudenmaier and Dorner, the created order cannot contribute to God's subjectivity in any way. As they see it, it is only because God is immanently a personal subject that He can freely create and encounter the finite as its ultimate end.

My claim in this dissertation is therefore that Staudenmaier and Dorner both appropriated this novel notion of subjectivity inaugurated by the German Idealist tradition, but critically appropriated it. Specifically, both theologians took to heart that otherness is constitutive of personal subjectivity, and yet, in the case of the divine, were unwilling to locate this otherness in creation. Although taking seriously the notion that otherness is constitutive of personal subjectivity, in their construal of God Staudenmaier and Dorner depart from Hegel in making the locus of such otherness the immanent divine life itself.

The resource that Staudenmaier and Dorner draw upon in order to render otherness as an immanent feature of the divine does not have its roots in Hegelianism but in *Christianity*: it is the Trinity. (Hegel, of course, had his own construal of the Trinity but, as we will see, Staudenmaier and Dorner depart from him in holding that the Trinity can account for immanent divine subjectivity.) Throughout the mainstream Christian theological tradition, doctrinally established at the councils of Nicaea and Constantinople in the fourth century, God is identified as 'one' with respect to the divine essence, and as 'three' with respect to the divine persons (who are traditionally referred to as 'the Father,' 'the Son,' and 'the Holy Spirit'). Or conversely, each of the divine persons is identified as 'God' in virtue of their sharing one and the same essence, and individually identified as either 'the Father,' or as 'the Son,' or as the 'Holy Spirit' (and so identified as personally distinct from one another) in virtue of a uniquely-possessed property.

Finally, the mainstream Christian theological tradition has asserted that the distinction of the divine persons – and so divine otherness – is not a distinction merely in virtue of divine revelation. Rather, the distinction of the divine persons is characteristic of the divine even apart from divine revelation. *Contra* Sabellianism, the mainstream Christian tradition has insisted that the distinction of persons within the Trinity is an eternal – and therefore immanent – feature of the divine.

Mainstream Christian theological reflection, therefore, has held that there is indeed an ‘otherness’ present within the divine insofar as God is viewed with respect to the category of persons, even though such otherness is not viewed as present within the divine insofar as God is viewed with respect to the category of essence. It is this sense of otherness that Staudenmaier and Dorner utilize in order to apply the insights regarding subjectivity made by their German idealist predecessors .

My interpretation of Staudenmaier and Dorner, therefore, is that they have utilized the resources of the Christian tradition while applying the insights of (what was then) modern philosophical reflection. On one hand, the notion of ontological otherness immanent to the divine (the category of persons), provides the means by which Staudenmaier and Dorner can affirm otherness as constitutive for personal subjectivity, and thereby construe God as a personal subject; on the other hand, because this otherness is nonetheless an eternal feature of the divine, they can construe God as immanently a personal subject, irrespective of any encounter with the created order.

3. Research on Staudenmaier and Dorner

In this dissertation, I have focused on the dogmatic works of Staudenmaier and Dorner.³² My reasoning for this is that these works were written later in their life and so offer their most mature thinking on the subject.

English-language research on Staudenmaier and Dorner is quite limited, particularly that on the former. Further, while previous research has highlighted Staudenmaier's and Dorner's debts to the German idealist tradition, none has given a comprehensive treatment of the issue in terms of divine subjectivity. This dissertation, therefore, offers a treatment of nineteenth-century trinitarian theology from a new angle.

For a brief treatment in English of Staudenmaier on the Trinity, particularly some ways in which he related the Trinity to other theological loci, see Bradford E. Hinze, "Tracing Trinity in Tradition: The Achievement of Franz Anton Staudenmaier," *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für neuere Theologieggeschichte* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 34–57. See also Aidan Nichols, "Catholic Theology of the Trinity in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Matthew Levering and Gilles Emery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 281–93. For a comprehensive treatment of Staudenmaier's doctrine of God (including the Trinity), see Karl Friedrich Reith, *Die Gotteslehre bei Franz Anton Staudenmaier* (Bern: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 1974).

For a general overview of Staudenmaier's theology and background, see the following: Peter Hünemann, "Franz Anton Staudenmaier," in *Katholische Theologen im 19 Jahrhundert*,

³² Franz Anton Staudenmaier, *Die christliche Dogmatik*, 4 vols. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1844–52). All translations of Staudenmaier are my own. For Dorner, all quotations come from the English translation: Isaak August Dorner, *A System of Christian Doctrine*, trans. Alfred Cave and J.S. Banks, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1880), although I have altered the translation in some places. This translation is based on: Isaak August Dorner, *System der christlichen Glaubenslehre* (Germany: W. Hertz, 1879).

ed. Henrich Fries and Georg Schwaiger, vol. 2 (Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1975), 99–128; Peter Hünermann, “Franz Anton Staudenmaier,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 150 (1970): 52–54. For the Hegelian background, see Peter Hünermann, “Die Hegel-Rezeption Franz Anton Staudenmaiers,” in *Kirche und Theologie im 19 Jahrhundert*, ed. Georg Schwaiger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1975).

There are some works on specific theological topics in Staudenmaier other than his doctrine of God. See the following: Peter Hünermann, *Trinitarische Anthropologie Bei Franz Anton Staudenmaier* (Freiburg: Verlag Karl Alber, 1962); William E. McConville, *Theology and Encyclopedia: A Study in the Thought of Franz Anton Staudenmaier* (Vanderbilt University, 1983); Philipp Weindel, *Das Verhältnis von Glauben und Wissen in der Theologie Franz Anton Staudenmaiers: eine Auseinandersetzung katholischer Theologie mit Hegelschem Idealismus* (Mosella-Verlag, 1940).

On the Catholic Tübingen School to which Staudenmaier belonged, see the following: Bernhard Casper, “Der Systemgedanke in der späten Tübinger Schule und in der deutschen Neuscholastik,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1964-1965): 161–79; Bradford E. Hinze, “Roman Catholic Theology: Tübingen,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Nineteenth-Century Theology*, ed. David A. Fergusson (Chichester, U.K.; Malden, Mass: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 187–213; Peter Hünermann, “Der Reflex des deutschen Idealismus in der katholischen Tübinger Schule,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 73 (1965-1966): 48–74; Grant Kaplan, *Answering the Enlightenment: The Catholic Recovery of Historical Revelation* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2006); Grant Kaplan, “Did Schelling Live on in Catholic Theology? An Examination of His Influence on Catholic Tübingen,” *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 80, no. 1–2 (2019): 57–70; Thomas F. O’Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the*

Theologians, 1st edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982); Philipp Weindel, “Fr. H. Jacobis Einwirkung auf die Glaubenswissenschaft der katholischen Tübinger Schule,” in *Aus Theologie und Philosophie: Festschrift für Fritz Tillmann zu seinem 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Theodor Steinbüchel and Theodor Müncker (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1950), 573–96; Bernhard Welte, “Beobachtungen zum Systemgedanken in der Tübinger Katholischen Schule,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 147 (1967): 40–59.

The most comprehensive work in English on Dorner’s theology (including the Trinity) is Jonathan Norgate, *Isaak A. Dorner: The Triune God and the Gospel of Salvation* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2011). See also Christine Axt-Piscalar, *Der Grund des Glaubens: Eine theologiegeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Verhältnis von Glaube und Trinität in der Theologie Isaak August Dorners* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990). Dorner’s trinitarian theology is briefly touched upon in Samuel M. Powell, “Nineteenth-Century Protestant Doctrines of the Trinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Matthew Levering and Gilles Emery (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 267–80. There is a chapter on Dorner’s doctrine of God in Dale M. Schlitt, *German Idealism’s Trinitarian Legacy* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2016).

On Dorner’s doctrine of divine immutability, see Robert F. Brown, “Schelling and Dorner on Divine Immutability,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53, no. 2 (June 1985): 237–49; Robert R. Williams, “I. A. Dorner: The Ethical Immutability of God,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 54, no. 4 (1986): 721–38. For a general treatment of Dorner, see Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 563–573.

Dorner is not identified as belonging to a particular ‘school’ in the way Staudenmaier is. However, he was part of a wider current in nineteenth-century theology, known as ‘mediating

theology' (*Vermittlungstheologie*). The most comprehensive treatment of mediating theology is Knut Ragnar Holte, *Die Vermittlungstheologie. Ihre theologischen Grundbegriffe kritisch untersucht.*, Studia doctrinae Christianae Upsaliensia, 3 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965).

Chapter 1

FRANZ ANTON STAUDENMAIER AND THE CHRISTIAN GOD AS PERSONAL

Introduction

In the wake of idealistic philosophical systems wherein a relation to the finite is a requirement of divine subjectivity (e.g., Hegelianism, as we saw in the introduction), Franz Anton Staudenmaier claims to the contrary that the divine forms a complete world unto itself. According to Staudenmaier, God does not need the finite in order to realize subjectivity, and this is the case precisely in virtue of God being the Trinity: “Because only thereby, that God as triune forms for Himself a complete world can He, without Himself becoming the world, posit a creation outside of Himself, and stand lofty and elevated over this creation as its Lord, leader, ruler, and sanctifier.”³³ “For by being not one, but by being three divine persons,” Staudenmaier insists, “is the divine life a world for itself, a whole and complete world, which stands by itself over the finite world, as it does not require the latter for itself.”³⁴

As a world for itself, the divine need not seek out something other than itself, i.e., some other world (such as the finite order). Indeed, the divine can be described as a world precisely because it is wholly sufficient to sustain its life without any mediation of the nondivine. (Although of course, Staudenmaier insists, the Christian faith proclaims that God *has* in fact

³³ Franz Anton Staudenmaier, *Die christliche Dogmatik*, III (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1844), §5.2 (p. 8). Hereafter all citations to this work will be abbreviated as *CD* followed by volume, section, and page number.

³⁴ *CD* II §93.5 (p. 594).

graciously shared His life – indeed His very person – with the nondivine. But it is precisely because God is wholly sufficient to sustain His own life without the nondivine that His act of interpersonal interaction with the nondivine can be described as gracious.)

What is responsible for the triune life of God being a complete world unto itself is that the divine persons of the Trinity, although distinct from one another, nonetheless form a unity. As Staudenmaier puts it, “The complete world which God is in Himself is just the divine unity as a concrete [unity], i.e. the tripersonality of the one God.”³⁵ It is in virtue of God being Trinity, therefore, that God is a ‘living unity,’ and it is in virtue of being a living unity that God does not need the created order in order to realize His subjectivity. Staudenmaier puts it this way:

Now also, when the unity of the divine essence is seen as a living [unity], according to which the concept of the Godhead moves itself within itself as the divine love, and God is a world within Himself, the Godhead does not need to mix itself with the world out of hunger for life and concreteness, so to speak, to posit and to love itself as a world, thereby at the same time to make itself dependent on the finite, and to grasp this dependence as an essential and necessary element of the divine nature itself, like Hegel who, without embarrassment, can grasp no God who can be known without the world.³⁶

Over the next three chapters, we will explore how Staudenmaier understands God to be able to freely relate to the nondivine only if God is Trinity. We will see that, for Staudenmaier, an agent’s act of freely relating to what is other than itself is an act that can be performed only by a personal subject, and a personal subject requires other personal subjects in order for each to be free. In other words, agents achieve personal subjectivity, and thus their freedom, only within a matrix of personal intersubjectivity (that is, within a relation to at least one other personal agent). And for Staudenmaier, because the Trinity is just such a matrix of personal intersubjectivity, God can freely relate to what is other than Himself.

³⁵ *CD* II §79.2 (p. 472).

³⁶ *Ibid.*, (p. 474).

The next three chapters are arranged as follows. Here, in chapter one, we will examine the notion that, for Staudenmaier, freely relating to what is other than itself is an act that can be performed only by a personal subject, and we will observe how the aspects of divine personality are treated by Staudenmaier. In chapter two, we will explore how the aspects of God's personal subjectivity are manifest in His relating to the nondivine. Finally, in chapter three, we will examine how a personal subject requires other personal subjects in order for each to be free, and demonstrate that such personal intersubjectivity characterizes Staudenmaier's understanding of the triune life of God.

The structure of the current chapter is as follows. First, we will examine how Staudenmaier understands personal subjectivity, or 'personality' (section 1). Having examined the notion of personality, we then examine how Staudenmaier understands the characteristics of a personal subject – particularly those of intelligence and will – to be present in the divine. Section 2, therefore, examines Staudenmaier's treatment of the divine intelligence. Here we will investigate God's theoretical (as opposed to practical) knowledge (2.1), specifically God's self-knowledge (2.1.1) and God's knowledge of the nondivine (2.1.2). We will see that, for Staudenmaier, it is crucial that God be able to distinguish between knowledge regarding Himself and knowledge of the nondivine in order to preserve the free subjectivity of the divine vis-à-vis the created order (2.1.3-5). Section 2.2 then treats God's practical knowledge. Here, we will explore how the divine wisdom orders creatures to God as their end.

Having covered the divine intellect, section 3 examines how Staudenmaier understands the divine will. One of the important topics covered in the treatment of the divine intellect is that God apprehends His proper relation to the nondivine. Our task in section 3, then, is to understand what it is that demands that God will in accordance with His proper relation to the nondivine. We

will see that the divine will can operate only in accordance with the divine essence, which demands that God manifest Himself truthfully to the created order (3.2). This entails that God always acts as God toward the created order, i.e., that God embody His proper relation to the nondivine (the topic of 3.3).

In examining how Staudenmaier understands the divine intellect and the divine will, we will have come to see how he understands God to be absolute personality. Thus, we will have come to see how Staudenmaier understands the conditions that enable free personal interaction of the divine with the nondivine. This, then, will set us up for chapter two where we examine how Staudenmaier understands the elements of personality to manifest themselves in interpersonal encounter with the created order.

1. Personal Subjectivity

The ability for an agent to freely relate to what is other than itself requires the possession of a will that can determine itself freely. For Staudenmaier, the sort of agent that possesses this capacity is a ‘person,’ that is, an individual who possesses the attributes of ‘personality.’

Staudenmaier describes the characteristics of a personal subject as following: “The elements of personality are (a) organic being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*), (b) intelligence, and (c) free will.”³⁷

Staudenmaier speaks of ‘being-for-self’ as indicating a thing’s irreducible individuality, or its irreducibility to another. Thus, being-for-self indicates a thing’s difference from all that is other than it, for only if a thing possesses some level of difference from all else can it never be reduced to that which is other than itself. ‘Intelligence’ indicates the capacity for knowing. The act of knowing, Staudenmaier says, is the process of agreement between mind and being. He

³⁷ CD II §57.2 (p. 288).

says, “If...all intellectual striving goes toward truth and, as we have seen, the truth consists in the accordance of thinking with that which is to be thought, or what is to be known by thinking, then it does not hinder us to denote the process of knowing as that process through which the accordance is worked...”³⁸ Intelligence, then, is the capacity for intellectual agreement between mind and being. In other words, intelligence is the capacity for the mind to accurately render reality. Finally, ‘will’ is “the ability...to determine oneself and others...”³⁹ One can think of will as a capacity for causing agreement between mind and reality, but in the opposite sense of intelligence: it is the capacity to determine reality in accordance with the content of the subject’s intelligence.

Note that these three components are required for the performance of actions. Take, for example, the act of drinking out of a cup. There must be an irreducible agent who performs the act of drinking from the cup (being-for-self). There must be a capacity for the agent to accurately render reality – e.g., to cognize that there are objects before it, to recognize the object before it as a cup (intelligence). There must be a capacity to determine reality in accordance with the content of the subject’s intelligence and intentions – e.g., to physically manipulate the cup by picking it up so as to drink from it (will).

For our purposes, we can describe a subject’s free ‘acts’ or ‘actions’ as (1) its ability to achieve accordance between its intellect and being and – based on such intellectual accordance – (2) its ability to determine being in accordance with its intellect. A personal subject, then, denotes an individual who has the capacity for achieving agreement between its intellect and being and then determining being based on this agreement.

³⁸ *CD* III §100.7 (p. 563).

³⁹ *CD* II §66.1 (p. 346).

Of course, in the performance of a free act, it is not only what is *other* than the subject that is known and determined by the subject. The subject also must be able to accurately render reality about *itself* (exercise of intellect upon itself): to cognize *itself* as a subject, as that which is capable of acting. The subject must be able to determine *itself* in accordance with the content of the subject's intelligence and intentions (exercise of will upon itself): to manipulate *itself* in order to pick up the cup (e.g., to direct its bodily movements, etc.). Personal subjectivity involves not just the capacity to direct its intelligence and will to what is other than itself, but also the capacity to direct its intelligence and will upon itself.

Interestingly, because personal subjectivity involves the capacity to direct its intelligence and will upon itself, personal subjectivity, it seems, involves a duality vis-à-vis the self. The subject cognizes *itself* as a subject and determines *itself* in accordance with the content of its intelligence and intentions. Thus, there are two aspects of the self: (1) the aspect of the self which cognizes and directs itself, and (2) the aspect of the self which is cognized and directed. So, as Staudenmaier puts it, "The spirit thinking itself not only grasps itself, but also, by thinking and grasping itself, posits itself. He, as he is subject, at the same time posits himself as object, as thing, which he strives to know."⁴⁰

To render itself an object of knowledge for itself, however, the subject must also have an acquaintance with what is *other* than itself. We saw that subjectivity involves a duality between the aspect of the self which cognizes and directs itself (a transcendental self), and the aspect of the self which is cognized and directed (an empirical self). If an empirical self is necessary for subjectivity, there must be a place where the empirical self is such that it can express and actualize subjectivity. Or perhaps more precisely, the empirical self must be rendered to the

⁴⁰ CD III §103.3 (p. 593).

transcendental self as potentially determinate, and this is possible only as within relations to things other than itself. Thus, an empirical self can be such only within a nexus of objects.⁴¹ Thus, at a minimum, the conditions for a subject's free act of relating to something other than itself includes knowledge of self and what is other than self, as well as the capacity to determine self and what is other than self. And the capacity for knowledge of self and what is other than self, as well as the capacity to determine self and what is other than self, are just the capacities of an agent who possesses 'personality.'

According to Staudenmaier, "because God appears in general universally as intelligence and as holy good will, He not only takes to himself the attributes of a personal essence, but also – as the highest intelligence and highest most holy will – is the absolute personality."⁴² "The God who exists out of Himself and who creates all being which subsists outside of Him," Staudenmaier claims, "is the personal God."⁴³ Staudenmaier regards God as personal because the characteristics examined above are all predicable of Him: "We call the divine essence a personal essence because being-for-self, intelligence, and free will befit Him, and indeed befit Him in an absolute sense."⁴⁴

On the issue of whether or not God possesses the features of personality, Staudenmaier often contrasts his own position with the towering thinkers of the early nineteenth century. The personality of God, he argues, is often swallowed up in the systems of those thinkers. In

⁴¹ We saw in the introductory chapter than, for Kant, such a nexus must appear spatially to the subject since space renders objects as external to one another. For Fichte, an objectual nexus is so vital for subjectivity that he regards personal subjectivity as possible only through the possession of a body.

⁴² *CD* II §25.9 (pp. 138-39).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, §57 heading (p. 284).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, §57.2 (p. 288).

criticizing Friedrich Schleiermacher, for example, Staudenmaier says, “Taking Spinoza as a starting point, he can grasp the Godhead only as the causal substance. By combining his Spinozism with the tenets of Schellingian nature philosophy, he comes merely only to a Spinozistic-Schellingian identity, in which all real difference – and above all the personal – is annulled” (*aufgehoben ist*).⁴⁵ Likewise in Hegelian philosophy, Staudenmaier maintains, “The subjectivity that [Hegel] maintained is far removed from being personality. Within this [Hegelian] framework, even if it could ever become a matter of the truly subjective and personal, this would only be the subjectivity and personality of man, who immediately enters into the place of divinity.”⁴⁶ For Staudenmaier, it is only insofar that the divine is personal – in possession of being-for-self, intelligence, and will – that it can freely engage with the finite. Below, we will examine how Staudenmaier posits these characteristics of personality in the divine.

2. The Divine Intelligence

In this section, we will explore the divine intelligence. The divine intelligence can be divided into its two basic functions or aspects: theoretical and practical. The former is concerned with God’s knowledge of the truth (e.g., of Himself and of created essences) and the latter is concerned with knowledge of how things are to reach God as their end.

⁴⁵ *CD* II §38.3 (p. 207).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, §39.6 (p. 220).

2.1 God's Theoretical Knowledge

2.1.1 Divine Self-Knowledge

In order to act freely, an agent must possess intellect. More specifically, the agent must be able to make itself an object of its intellect so as to direct itself to perform specific acts. This seems to be the way that Staudenmaier understands the concept of action. In this section, we will explore Staudenmaier's comments regarding the divine as an intellectual agent which, as we will see, affects how God acts.

Staudenmaier follows the mainstream Christian theological tradition in asserting both that God possesses an intellect and that intellect is an essential attribute of the divine: "Thinking in God is not something which merely adheres to Him, accidental so to speak, but His substance is an essentially (*wesentlich*) thinking and knowing substance."⁴⁷ As an essential attribute of the divine, intellect is something which belongs to God by nature; it is not an addition which occurs at some stage subsequent to divine existence or achieved by means of some divine act. Thus, Staudenmaier says, "God thinks and knows according to His nature, which is spirit. His being is therefore a thinking and knowing, and indeed, since His being is itself an eternal being, His thinking and knowing is an eternal thinking and eternal knowing."⁴⁸

That intellect is an essential feature of the divine is important for Staudenmaier in maintaining that the divine is a personal subject apart from the created order. Because intellect is possessed by God essentially, and because creation is not an essential component of the divine, God does not need the created order in order to possess intellect. Staudenmaier notes explicitly that the created order does not act as a cause of intellect in the divine: "If God knows Himself

⁴⁷ CD II §62.1 (p. 303).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

eternally, He has, as an eternal being, an eternal self-consciousness; then any mediation of the divine self-knowledge conditioned by finitude is excluded in [our] representation of God ...”⁴⁹

And again: “Just as little is the idea of God, i.e. the idea which God has of Himself, mediated through finite ideas, so that the first [the idea which God has of Himself] has to be obtained only through the latter.”⁵⁰

The possession of intellect, of course, entails the capacity for knowledge, and so we must explore what sort of knowledge, according to Staudenmaier, is possessed by the divine.

Staudenmaier divides his treatment of the divine intelligence into three categories: [1] divine self-knowledge (*CD* II §63); [2] divine knowledge of extradivine being (§64); [3] divine wisdom (§65).

Of the divine self-knowledge, Staudenmaier says, “We understand by the divine intelligence, as it is directed in an active way to the divine essence itself as its object, the most complete self-knowledge, the deepest and clearest self-grasping of the Godhead; the divine nature is known in its entire scope from and through itself, both in the abyss and in the eternity of its essence.”⁵¹ The divine intellect knows the divine essence in its entirety, both in terms of depth and in terms of range. Thus, there is no degree of opacity in God’s knowledge of Himself.

This self-knowledge, Staudenmaier argues, is not a ‘relative’ knowledge but an ‘absolute’ knowledge. “God knows Himself in an absolute way all the more because it is not one which knows and again another which is known. But there is here an absolute identity of the knowing and the known, indeed an absolute identity of the absolute self-knowing and of that which is

⁴⁹ *CD* II §63.1 (p. 306).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, §64.8 (p. 323), n. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, §63.1 (p. 304).

known absolutely through itself.”⁵² Unlike creatures, where there is a mediated gap between the knowing subject and the object to be known, there is no mediated gap in the divine between knower and known. (This gap between knower and known in human self-knowledge is due to the fact that such knowledge “is mediated by world-knowledge and God-knowledge.”)⁵³

In God, however, “is neither mediation through another nor a development out of itself which becomes subject to time: but in God, self-knowing is a self-knowing which is an eternal and eternally complete in unmediated absolute self-beholding, which excludes any further revelation or any further self-revelation.”⁵⁴ The lack of a mediated gap between knower and known is why Staudenmaier claims that God’s knowledge – unlike creaturely knowledge – is unmediated. This lack of mediation Staudenmaier attributes to divine simplicity, wherein divine being and divine knowing are identical: “The self-knowledge of God can therefore also be taken for the being (*Sein*) of God, since it is in the divine thinking, or the divine being (*Sein*), which as spiritual, is foremost self-thinking [being].”⁵⁵

Unfortunately, Staudenmaier does not elaborate on the lack of mediation between the divine as object of knowledge and the divine as knowing subject in terms of whether such ‘identity’ between the two includes personal distinction between the divine persons and, correlatively, whether the lack of mediation between the knower and the known occurs only at the level of substance but not at the level of person (such that the divine persons’ knowledge of one another is mediated in some way).

⁵² *CD* II §63.1 (p. 305).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, (p. 304).

More important than whether Staudenmaier treats the issue directly, however, is what is at stake in his raising the issue in the first place. What he sees at stake in asserting a lack of mediation between the divine as object of knowledge and the divine as knowing subject is whether God – like creatures – needs something substantially different from Himself in order to possess knowledge about Himself. It is clear that his answer is negative.

2.1.2 Divine Knowledge of the Non-Divine

Of course, God's knowledge is not limited to knowledge of Himself. In line with the orthodox theological tradition, Staudenmaier maintains that God's intellect is not merely perceptive of created being, but that it is causally efficacious vis-à-vis created being: "Everything which has existence is itself only the thought of the Godhead, i.e., the work of divine thinking, with which is one with the divine willing."⁵⁶

Because the divine intellect is a causal factor in bringing the created order into being, God has an intimate knowledge – indeed, the highest possible knowledge – of the created order. Just as God's self-knowledge is unmediated, so also is God's knowledge vis-à-vis the created order an unmediated knowledge. "If above we have called the divine omnipresence the absolute causality of God which extends itself and continually effects itself in the world, then...the divine omniscience must be called the intellectual omnipresence of God in the universe. Indeed, it is this absolutely and unmediatedly, i.e. without any mediation, which is necessary only for finite knowing."⁵⁷ God's knowledge of creation is unmediated precisely because it is His own knowledge which has brought creation into being.

⁵⁶ CD II §64.1 (pp. 310).

⁵⁷ Ibid., (pp. 309-10).

Now that we have examined the sorts of knowledge possessed by the divine intelligence, we will explore how they are related to God as the knowing subject (or perhaps more accurately, how God, as knowing subject, relates these sorts of knowledge to Himself). Although here we have designated these two sorts of knowledge as ‘self-knowledge’ and ‘knowledge of the non-divine,’ we have actually only presupposed that these referents of knowledge are correct. As we will see below, that there actually is a distinction between the divine and the non-divine (and therefore a distinction between divine self-knowledge and divine knowledge of the non-divine) depends upon how God relates Himself to this knowledge.

2.1.3 The Divine Self-Conception

For Staudenmaier, it is crucial that God be able to distinguish between knowledge regarding Himself and knowledge of the nondivine. This is crucial because, as Staudenmaier reasons, if God is unable to distinguish between Himself and the finite order – if God does not know Himself *as God* and the finite *as created* – then divine subjectivity cannot be regarded as free from, and so independent of, the created order.

2.1.4 The Divine Thought of Self and of Otherness as not Identical in the Divine Mind

We have seen that God possesses knowledge of both Himself and creation. Further, we have seen that God possesses knowledge both of Himself and of creation *un-mediatedly*. That both knowledge of Himself as well as of the extradivine are related to the divine intellect unmediatedly yields an important question: If God knows both Himself and creation unmediatedly, is God able to distinguish between Himself and that which is other than Himself?

This issue is important to Staudenmaier since whether or not one ventures into pantheism depends upon the answer to this question. It is one and the same divine mind which both makes

itself an object of knowledge and which can create that which is other than itself. If God were unable to distinguish between the contents of these two sorts of thought, then God would be unable to distinguish between Himself and the nondivine.

Staudenmaier, however, asserts that God is able to distinguish between Himself and that which is other than Himself. He speaks of the ‘divine idea’ – that is, God’s *own* thought (not *our* thought of God) – as referring to two types of subject matter: God and creatures. As he puts it, “The content of the divine idea is, according to the category of aseity, God Himself, according to the category of causality, however, the creature. Therefore, there is posited an absolutely essential distinction between the ideas themselves which, as the distinction is original, also can never be negated nor would it become negated.”⁵⁸ Indeed, in this same section he simply notes, “The idea of God is absolutely distinct from the idea of the world...”⁵⁹

Because there is distinction between God’s thought of Himself and His thought of the extradivine, the content of God’s thoughts is not only about Himself: “The idea as thought of the world is therefore a divine thought, i.e. God thinks this thought. But He thinks it not as the thinking or as the idea of His own essence, but as the thinking and idea of another, as the essence of the world.”⁶⁰ Here we can see that the ‘as’ structure in the previous remark implies that, for Staudenmaier, God explicitly recognizes the difference between His idea of Himself and His idea of the created.

⁵⁸ CD II §64.8 (p. 324), n. 1. Cf. Franz Anton Staudenmaier, *Die Philosophie des Christenthums oder Metaphysik der heiligen Schrift als Lehre von den göttlichen Ideen und ihrer Entwicklung in Natur, Geist und Geschichte*, Erster Band: Lehre von der Idee (Gießen: Ferber, 1840), p. 824. The insistence that God’s thought of the non-divine must itself be eternal is an important point when considering how God can possibly have an idea of something which is not-God. If the thought of otherness cannot enter into the divine thought temporally, and thus must be eternal, then otherness must be eternally present in the divine in some way.

⁵⁹ CD II §64.8 (p. 323).

⁶⁰ Ibid., (p. 325).

Given the distinction between the divine thought of self and the divine thought of the non-divine, if creation is included in the contents of the divine mind, and yet does not form the entirety of contents of the divine mind, then the divine cannot be identified with creation. To put the matter differently, God is not to be identified with the content of His own thought: “It is an infinite perversity to draw the conclusion now all at once that...God is Himself also everything which He thinks, every and all content of the divine thinking is God Himself.”⁶¹

Staudenmaier wants to hold to a traditional idea of God’s simplicity, for this text is immediately preceded by him saying, “Since, according to our Christian conviction, God is a thinking being (*Wesen*), we do not distinguish between a merely existing and a thinking God, but God – who for us is existing – is for us also thinking, and conversely. Insofar as God is a thinking being (*Wesen*), the thinking done by Him is not to be separated: the thought which He thinks is His thought just because He thinks it.”⁶² (CD III p. 49) Staudenmaier does not want to reject divine simplicity by saying that God’s being and God’s thought are separate.

Yet, Staudenmaier’s worry is that since the contents of the divine mind include that of creation, if the contents of the divine mind are identified with the divine being, then creation is identified with God. Thus, Staudenmaier says,

If God directs Himself in His thinking upon Himself in absolute beholding of Himself, so certainly is there an identity between the thinker and the thought; God is the content of His thought. If this is not the case, that is, if God does not turn in upon Himself but rather turns away from Himself, upon the world as His not-I, then that identity of being between the thinker and the thought ceases. It does not follow that when God thinks, that He is Himself everything which He thinks...⁶³

⁶¹ CD III §8.3 (p. 49).

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

Staudenmaier elaborates on the relation between the divine idea of creation and the being of creation in *CD* III, and it would take us too far off track to investigate how he relates that relation to divine simplicity. The main point to take away is that there must be a sharp distinction *for God* between His thought of Himself and His thought of what is not Himself. Indeed, for Staudenmaier, God not merely distinguishes His thought of Himself from His thought of the non-divine but, more positively, thinks of Himself as an ‘I,’ as a subject, and that which is other than Himself as the ‘not-I.’

Staudenmaier says, “The personality of God itself...is constituted by the divine I-ness (*Ichheit*) and the intellectual and ethical abilities which rest in it.”⁶⁴ “If personality consists in I-hood,” Staudenmaier says, “then personality is put on God by Holy Scripture as often as it presents Him as expressing the word ‘I.’ This occurs either such that it is combined with other words, as 2 Mos. [Exod.] 3:14, or such that ‘I’ is posited explicitly: ‘I, I am, I am Jehovah.’ . . . For the expression ‘I am Jehovah’ also says, ‘Jehovah is an I,’ i.e. Jehovah is a personal God.”⁶⁵

Further, Staudenmaier insists that God explicitly distinguishes Himself from creation. “So greatly does God also recognize the creature as that which is thought, willed, and created by Him...The idea of God is absolutely other than the idea of the creature; while beholding Himself in His idea, God knows Himself as an absolute other than that which He has before Himself in the idea of the world.”⁶⁶ Staudenmaier’s language states not only that God perceives the distinction between Himself and the world but, more strongly, God knows Himself as distinct

⁶⁴ *CD* II §57 heading (p. 285).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, §57.4 (p. 290).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, §64.8 (p. 323).

from the world. We see this language of God knowing and willing Himself as independent from all else in other places as well:

God is not only an absolute essence (*Wesen*) which exists from and for Himself, which excludes from itself everything else as alien to it, but as this being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*) God also knows and wills Himself, and thus He remains eternally distinct from creaturely being which, therefore, remains forever the extradivine. As that which exists for Himself (*Fürsichseiende*), or as a personal being-for-self (*Fürsichsein*), God is also the one of whom it can be said neither that the world is an essential and necessary element for Him, nor is He Himself an essential and necessary element of the world, and finally just as little can it be said that He would not be God without the world, which definitions, as is known, are the philosophy of modern pantheism.⁶⁷

God, Staudenmaier insists, understands that-which-is-not God *as* that-which-is-not-God: “While God knows and beholds Himself in eternal self-knowledge, He likewise knows and beholds that which He is not, the extra-divine being, as the divine not-I.”⁶⁸ As he puts it later, “For if God is Himself the idea of the world, then He certainly does not need to behold the world from all eternity as the other which is to be posited through becoming, to behold the world, consequently, as his not-I, but He merely beholds Himself, until finally the thought comes to him as a kind of accident of realizing himself as the world, of presenting himself and manifesting himself as the world.”⁶⁹

For Staudenmaier, then, it is crucial that divine knowledge of self and of the nondivine not be confused in the divine mind. Why is this? If knowledge of self and knowledge of the nondivine are identical in the divine mind, then, “According to this phrase, the world is no other than the executed idea of the Godhead: God, who has only Himself in the idea of the world, has actualized Himself in the world. The contents of the idea have become the contents of the

⁶⁷ *CD* II §57.2 (p. 289).

⁶⁸ *CD* III §7.2 (p. 13).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, §8.1 (p. 47).

world.”⁷⁰ This effectively makes the world identical with the divine: “He who wills and beholds Himself in the idea of the world has posited Himself as the world, so that we are just as much able to say that God is the world as we are required to express that the world is God, God in appearing, God in reality.”⁷¹

One way to look at the matter is that an intellectual agent must be able to individuate itself from other objects so as to direct itself to perform actions. Individuating oneself requires a sort of separation of the self: in a subject who undergoes the act of directing herself, there is an aspect of the self that directs and another aspect of one and the same subject that is directed. To direct oneself, then, requires a positing of oneself – namely, the aspect of oneself that is to be directed. Staudenmaier’s worry is that, if God’s thought of Himself and His thought of the world are identical in the divine mind, then the world is simply the divine itself, only in its posited aspect.

2.1.5 God Knows Himself as ‘God’ and Knows Creation as ‘Creation’

In order for an agent to engage with another, that agent not only must know that he is distinct from that other, but he must also know *about* himself. More precisely, the agent must possess the proper knowledge about himself. In order to communicate Himself truthfully to the non-divine, God must know the truth about Himself and the truth about His relation to a possible created order. In other words, God must know Himself *as God* – as the creator, as the orderer, as the final end of creatures – and the nondivine *as created*.

⁷⁰ CD III §8.3 (p. 50).

⁷¹ Ibid.

According to Staudenmaier, God does not passively find Himself as God, but actively affirms Himself as such. As we will explore in greater depth in the next chapter, God possesses aseity – self-existence – which fundamentally distinguishes Him from all other being. Divine aseity, for Staudenmaier, is constitutive of God’s status as ‘absolute’ vis-à-vis creation.

Thus, God actively affirms His status as ‘absolute’ vis-à-vis the created order: “Insofar as, in God, the aseity of His own being (*Wesen*) becomes object of His knowing and willing, He affirms that [aseity] as absolute, i.e., He acknowledges and wills it as that which it is, as the innermost depth of His own being (*Wesen*).”⁷² Staudenmaier speaks of the divine self-affirmation as under the category of ‘personality,’ which denotes the possession of intellect and will.⁷³ Because divine self-affirmation involves intellect and will, in affirming Himself as absolute, God can be said to be consciously and willingly affirming Himself as absolute. As Staudenmaier puts it, “through this self-affirmation, however, God is what He is, with consciousness and will, through which consciousness and through which will God posits Himself as that which He is according to His being (*Wesen*).”⁷⁴

In consciously affirming Himself as God, God also consciously affirms creation as creation. In affirming creation as creation, as what He eternally knows as not-I, God excludes the possibility that creation can be constitutive of His essence. “The self-affirmation of God is,

⁷² CD II §47.1 (p. 240).

⁷³ Here it should be noted that, *formally speaking*, in CD II Staudenmaier treats divine self-affirmation under the category of ‘divine aseity’ (CD II §§42-53). However, he precedes the previous quotation by saying, “The basic thought which is expressed in these propositions [viz., those of the heading of §47] can only be suggested here, but not achieved. For this requires that we have already treated the attributes of God under the category of personality” (CD II §47.1 [p. 240]). Note that the next quotation comes in Staudenmaier’s treatment of ‘divine personality’ (which begins at CD II §57). Thus, *materially speaking*, divine self-affirmation properly belongs under the category of ‘personality,’ and so involves the divine intellect and will.

⁷⁴ CD II §57.2 (pp. 286-87).

however, not simply an affirmation inwardly, but also a negation outwardly through which God excludes everything which He Himself is not, therefore all other as something which does not belong to Him essentially (*wesentlich*), and therefore foreign to His being (*Sein*) and life.”⁷⁵

Creation, therefore, can never be accorded a status whereby it transcends its status as creation, for this would be for God to negate His status as God. “The divine self-affirmation,” Staudenmaier says, “is the fidelity of God with respect to His own being (*Wesen*).”⁷⁶ The divine affirmation “is therefore the self-affirmation of the Godhead as the absolute substance which exists from, in, and through itself, which as such has its principle in no other, and which does not require another for its existing-in-itself, therefore also, since it does not exist from another, so also excludes all other from itself as improper to it.”⁷⁷

In knowing Himself *as God* and in knowing the nondivine *as created*, God knows Himself as the creator, as the orderer, as the final end of creatures. God thus knows His proper relation to creatures. This is the foundation for the divine intellect with regard to its arranging of the finite in order that it will embody its proper relation to the divine. We will now turn to this particular aspect of the divine intellect.

2.2 God’s Practical Knowledge

2.2.1 Divine Wisdom

Above, we explored the divine intellect in its theoretical aspect. But there is a practical side to the divine knowing as well, in that it is also concerned with ordering extradivine being to

⁷⁵ *CD* II §47.1 (p. 240).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, §47.2 (p. 241).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

its end, namely, to God Himself. This aspect of the divine intellect Staudenmaier refers to as the ‘divine wisdom’: “The divine wisdom relates everywhere to the goal and the destiny of extradivine being; and thus we can take the divine wisdom as the teleological directing, or the side of the divine intelligence with a view to the goal and end of finite things.”⁷⁸ Thus, the divine intellect implements a vision of how creaturely essences ought to be, as well as implementing how creaturely essence can fulfill this vision. “For the eyes of the Godhead,” Staudenmaier says, “the world is, from eternity, not only that which it is according to its essential layout and according to its idea as divine concept, but for the eyes of the Godhead the world is also eternally what it will be according to the determination already contained in the idea.”⁷⁹

Here, the theoretical and the practical aspects of the divine intellect relate. The theoretical aspect, the divine idea, encompasses creaturely essences as they ought to be, and the practical aspect encompasses how creaturely aspects can reach this goal. As Staudenmaier puts it, God “regards the idea of the creature with consideration of its fulfillment, namely as it ought to actualize itself in its inner truth in time, the idea, therefore, as what ought to be, or rather the essence as what ought to be according to its truth, which truth is just the idea.”⁸⁰ Although we can distinguish these two aspects of the divine intellect, they are nonetheless united in God’s intellectual relation to creation: “The divine intelligence is, in its Ur-thinking of the world, also already an ordering of the world with consideration to the general world goal.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ *CD* II §65.1 (p. 328).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, (p. 329).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, (p. 330).

To this point, we have considered how Staudenmaier understands the intellectual relation of the divine to the nondivine. But for Staudenmaier, a merely intellectual relation between the divine and the nondivine is insufficient to account for the existence of the nondivine: “The eternal knowledge of extradivine being, which has merely possible existence, is not itself the sole cause of finite being, but to this cause belongs above all the divine will, which decides in a free way that merely possible being becomes a real being.”⁸² It is the will of God, in cooperation with His intellect, which bring the nondivine into existence. Our next task, therefore, is to examine the divine will.

3. The Divine Will

3.1 Introduction

As we saw above, the divine will is that ability of God to determine Himself and others. But before we investigate the specifics of what God might will, we must step back and consider a much larger issue. We have seen that, for Staudenmaier, God not only can distinguish between Himself and the created order, but that God knows the proper relation between Himself and creatures. And we have seen that, as a result of God’s knowledge of the proper relation between Himself and creatures, God knows how to order them to Himself.

Although an agent may know his proper relation to others, this is not sufficient to guarantee that the agent will act properly towards others. Thus, the question we must pursue is this: what is it that demands that God will in accordance with His proper relation to creatures? Why ought God respect this ‘proper’ relation between Himself and the created order? That the

⁸² *CD* II §64.9 (p. 325). The notion of “possible existence” is Staudenmaier’s way of contrasting finite being with divine being. While divine being exists necessarily, finite being exists only possibly, because its existence is contingent upon God, and in particular upon God’s will.

agent will act properly towards others requires that the agent possess the requisite moral quality. This quality Staudenmaier refers to as the ‘divine truthfulness’ (*die göttliche Wahrhaftigkeit*).

3.2 Divine Manifestation as Truthful

In *CD* II §73, Staudenmaier treats the topic of divine truthfulness. “By truthfulness,” Staudenmaier says, “we understand not only that a being corresponds with its concept, but we understand by it chiefly this, that the spirit corresponds most exactly to the concept or the representation of itself which it has developed and has stirred up in others through self-revelation of its inwardness.”⁸³ Truthfulness, then, is the agreement between a moral being and the way it is manifest to that which is other than itself.

The truthfulness of God, therefore, is “the absolute accordance of His spiritual being and working with His idea which, as the idea known by man, is the result of the self-revelation of God to man. God, as the truthful God, is thus that which He reveals Himself as; and: God, as the truthful God, works and accomplishes that which He has promised to work and accomplish.”⁸⁴ Here, the ‘idea’ is God’s self-manifestation to rational creatures in the act of revelation. Thus, the truthfulness of God is the agreement between the divine essence and its self-manifestation to creatures.

It may seem odd that there is even a question of the agreement between the divine essence and its self-manifestation to creatures. It will be helpful, then, to imagine briefly what would have to be the case if agreement between essence and its self-manifestation was not even a question.

⁸³ *CD* II §73 (pp. 410-11).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, (p. 411).

‘Agreement’ or ‘correspondence’ entails that there are two aspects (in this case the essence and its manifestation) involved in a relation. The notion of manifestation is something beyond mere being, and thus it entails a relation to that being. Yet manifestation cannot occur without that which is being manifest. If, then, the notion of an agreement or correspondence between divine essence and divine manifestation were eliminated, then the relation between the two would disappear. Since, however, manifestation cannot occur without that which is being manifest, a dissolution of the relation entails a dissolution of manifestation. To eliminate the notion of a correspondence between essence and manifestation is thereby to eliminate the possibility that there be a manifestation of the divine to any essence which is not the divine essence.

If there is no relation of correspondence between essence and manifestation a second possibility suggests itself. We saw that the elimination of a correspondence between divine essence and divine manifestation eliminates the notion of manifestation altogether, thus eliminating divine revelation to nondivine essences. A second possibility, then, is that God does not communicate an idea of His essence to the creature, but simply communicates the divine essence itself to the creature. In other words, instead of *manifesting* or *showing* the creature who He is, God actually *makes* the creature who He is – and so what would possess a created essence instead would possess the divine essence. (The paradigm instances of the divine communicating its very essence to another are, of course, the generation of God the Son from God the Father and the spiration of God the Spirit from the Father and the Son). Under this possibility, the creature would no longer be a creature at all.

To eliminate the notion of an agreement between the divine essence and its self-manifestation entails either that the *communication* between God and creature would be

eliminated altogether, or that the *difference* between God and creature would be eliminated altogether. This why, therefore, Staudenmaier speaks of God communicating His ‘idea’ to creatures: it preserves the *difference* between the divine and creaturely (which, as we have seen, Staudenmaier is very concerned with) while still allowing for the divine to *reveal* itself to the creaturely.

Staudenmaier links the truthfulness of God to truth, holiness, and justice as divine attributes: “The truthfulness is therefore an attribute blended from truth and holiness, but also justice, because justice is just the revelation of the inner holiness [of God] which is expressed outwardly.”⁸⁵ “The truthfulness of God,” Staudenmaier says, “is both the appearing (*Sichtbarwerden*) of the inner truth of the divine nature as well as the self-proving (*Sichbewähren*) of the inner truth of the divine nature. While the contrary of the first would make the inner truth of the divine nature a lie, the contrary of the other would make the divine essence appear as unholy.”⁸⁶ What does he mean here?

Staudenmaier seems to be saying that a lack of agreement between the divine essence and its self-manifestation to creatures is a violation of both divine truth and divine holiness. A self-manifestation which was the contrary of truth – the contrary of the inner truth of the divine nature – would result in a lie: God would not be communicating the truth about Himself to others. Second, the divine nature is always holy; it is the highest good there is. A self-manifestation of the divine which is contrary to the divine nature is a self-manifestation which is contrary to such holiness. Thus, a lack of correspondence between the divine essence and its self-manifestation is thus a manifestation of unholiness.

⁸⁵ *CD* II §73 (p. 411).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

3.3 The Relation of the Divine Will to the Divine Essence

Here, we ought to pause and dwell for a moment on the last point made above. As we have seen, God beholds Himself – He possesses self-knowledge. Thus, because God has self-knowledge, God has a concept of Himself. And further, in having a concept of Himself, God knows the truth about Himself. The divine intellect, therefore, is that through which God apprehends the truth about Himself.

What is important here is that the truth which God apprehends about Himself imposes certain constraints upon the divine will. Staudenmaier's construal of God's personal subjectivity, therefore, includes a normative component over the exercise of the will (viz., the divine essence). Indeed, this normative character is brought out in Staudenmaier's description of the divine essence as that of a 'law': "The self-concept of the divine nature according to its entire truth, or the complete truth of the divine nature, is the law (*Gesetz*) of the divine life. The self-concept of God, however, is the idea of God – namely, the idea which God has of Himself, i.e., the idea which God has of His essence."⁸⁷ Indeed, Staudenmaier argues that if God did not will in accordance with His own essence, it would be tantamount to a defect in the divine: "If it is, however, the divine essence which wills, or if the divine essence is a willing essence, then we would posit an imperfection in this essence if we assumed that God does not will as it lies in His essence to will; we would put a contradiction and conflict in the divine life when we would present to ourselves God willing against His nature, against His essence."⁸⁸

Therefore, the divine will does not conflict with the divine essence but, on the contrary, is bound always to obey the normative constraints of the divine essence. If we were to construe the

⁸⁷ *CD* II §66.6 (p. 354).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

divine will as acting out of accord with the divine essence, then “we would cancel (*aufheben*) the concept of eternity in the being (*Wesen*) of God, we would give ourselves over to the view that at one moment God wills according to His nature and the next moment God wills against His nature.”⁸⁹ As Staudenmaier puts it in another place, “The divine will, as a substantial will, is in all its movements eternally only the affirmation of the divine essence, the affirmation of the idea of divinity. Denial [of the divine idea, of the divine essence] would be cancellation (*Aufhebung*) of the divine essence.”⁹⁰ Indeed, no divine attribute whatsoever can be in conflict within the divine: “Since, however, the Godhead (*divinitas*) itself underlies all divine attributes, so also can there be no attribute in God which contradicts the Godhead.”⁹¹

Although pursuing the matter in detail would take us too far afield, it should be registered how Staudenmaier seems to be following Hegel with respect to divine freedom. Within a Hegelian framework, that God is obliged to will in accordance with His essence is not understood so much as a limitation of freedom as it is a limitation upon arbitrariness. Within such a Hegelian framework, true freedom is found not in unconstrained exercise of the will but in seeing oneself at home in otherness. True freedom, therefore, is achieved precisely in constraining one’s will such that what is other no longer appears alien. True divine freedom, then, is achieved in God constraining the exercise of His will such that the divine essence is not alien to it.⁹²

⁸⁹ *CD* II §66.6 (p. 354).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, §66.7 (p. 355-56).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, §66.6 (p. 354).

⁹² Thus, Staudenmaier subtitles his first treatment of the divine will in *CD* II (§66) as “The Unity (*Einheit*) of Freedom and Necessity.” As we will have opportunity to see, the unity of freedom and necessity in God is a central issue for Dorner’s trinitarian theology.

Yet Staudenmaier is not completely Hegelian in terms of how he construes the divine will. Although Staudenmaier stipulates that God must will in accordance with His essence, this does not mean that, because God has willed creation, creation is therefore required by the divine essence. Insofar as God wills something, that something must accord with the divine essence; however, there is nothing other than Himself which God must necessarily will. Thus, it seems that Staudenmaier would affirm that God could have willed otherwise than He has, so long as whatever would have otherwise been willed was still in accordance with the divine essence.

The essence of the divine is to exist, to be what it is. For God to deny the divine essence would be keep it, and so Himself, from existing. In the same way that it is a contradiction for the divine essence not to exist, so also it is a contradiction for God to will contrary to this essence. As the divine will manifests God to the created order, according to Staudenmaier, then, it is the very nature of the divine essence to manifest itself as it truly is.

This final point is important for the nature of God's interpersonal interaction with the created order (and we will have opportunity to explore this in the next chapter). If God always wills in accordance with the divine essence, then God always manifests Himself to the created order *as God*, and nothing else: "Although God relates Himself to the world freely, although He is free in His thinking, willing, and creating of the world, He can always only relate to the world as God, and therefore can neither think, will, nor bring forth the world in a non-divine way (*ungöttlich*). That God acts with freedom lies in His absolutely free essence; that He is unable to act in an ungodly way towards the world lies in His own idea and in His own essence."⁹³ Given, then, that God can act only as God toward the created order, the created order itself thereby reflects the divine: "God, therefore, when He thinks, wills, and creates the world, will think, will,

⁹³ CD III §8.4 (p. 55).

and create it as God. And therefore the world will be a living reflection of the Godhead. Precisely herein, and in nothing else, consists the likeness [of the world to God].”⁹⁴

Conclusion

We have examined Staudenmaier’s understanding of the divine intellect and will in order to understand better how Staudenmaier sees God to be a personal subject. We have observed that, for Staudenmaier, God’s personal subjectivity is such that the divine intellectually grasps itself as well as what is other than itself, grasps how it relates to what is other than itself, and its volition is normed by the content of its understanding. Having established that God possesses the requisite characteristics for free action, our next task is to examine how the personal subjectivity – the ‘personality’ – of the divine is manifest in engaging the nondivine. This is the task of the next chapter.

⁹⁴ *CD* III §8.4 (p. 55).

Chapter 2

STAUDENMAIER ON DIVINE PERSONALITY AND ITS RELATION TO THE NONDIVINE

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined those characteristics which must obtain, according to Staudenmaier, in order for an agent to be a personal subject, and thereby to be the subject of free acts. There we saw that those characteristics of personality are being-for-self, intelligence, and free will. We also saw how Staudenmaier understands those characteristics to apply to the divine: God is an irreducible individual (being-for-self), who possesses the mental capacity to accurately render reality (intelligence), as well as the capacity to determine reality in accordance with the content of the subject's intelligence (will). In virtue of these characteristics, God is a personal subject and therefore has the ability to act freely in relation to the nondivine.

The previous chapter was concerned with how Staudenmaier understands the constitution of a personal subject *per se*, but did not treat how personal subjectivity is manifest in interpersonal encounter. In this chapter, therefore, we will examine how Staudenmaier understands the free, interpersonal interaction of the divine personality with the nondivine. That is, we will examine how the components of the divine personality are featured in God's free interaction with the nondivine.

In section 1, we will examine how the divine being-for-self – the irreducible subjectivity of the divine – factors into God's interaction with the nondivine. After brief explanations

regarding the necessity of difference for interpersonal encounter and the singularity of the divine essence (sections 1.1 and 1.2), we will see how Staudenmaier grounds the divine being-for-self in God's aseity (1.3). Then, in 1.4, we will examine how Staudenmaier utilizes divine aseity to support the necessary existence of the divine (which further establishes the divine being-for-self). Divine aseity, we will see, is responsible for the infinitude of God, which is responsible for God's transcendence over the finite (1.5). Thus, divine transcendence is constitutive of the interpersonal encounter between the divine and the nondivine, as it is the manifestation of the divine being-for-self (1.6).

In section 2, we will examine the divine intelligence vis-à-vis the nondivine. Section 2.2 examines the divine intelligence as the theoretical and creative component of nondivine essences. Section 2.3 explores the divine intellect as practical knowledge or 'divine wisdom,' i.e. the role of the divine intellect in enabling nondivine essences to reach God as their ultimate end.

In section 3 we will examine how the divine will factors into the interpersonal encounter between God and creatures. In 3.2 we will see that the divine necessarily wills the good, and thus that the divine requires the manifestation of this goodness in the created order. In 3.3, we will see how the divine will is thereby manifest in the holiness of creatures.

Our study on Staudenmaier has its focus on interpersonal encounter. Interpersonal interaction, though, requires some sort of presence between the subjects of encounter. Thus, in section 4, we will examine how the aspects of the divine personality – being-for-self, intelligence, and will – are manifest in God's presence to the nondivine. Section 4.1 details the mode of being which by which God is present to the nondivine, namely omnipresence. Section 4.2 examines how the elements of divine personality are exhibited in God's omnipresence to the nondivine.

We conclude the chapter by showing how, for Staudenmaier, the finite is not necessary for the existence of divine personality (section 5). This will set us up for chapter three, where it will be argued that Staudenmaier sees the Trinity as the ground of possibility for God's interpersonal encounter with the nondivine. Thus, the components of the divine personality which are featured in God's interaction with the nondivine – the subject of this chapter – are simply the external expression of the interpersonal components of the divine Trinity.

1. Divine Being-for-Self

1.1 Interpersonal Encounter, Difference, and Being-for-Self

As we saw in the previous chapter, being-for-self indicates a thing's irreducible individuality, or its irreducibility to another. The very notion of an interpersonal encounter entails that there be an irreducible difference between personal subjects, for pure sameness would occlude an interaction with something other than oneself. Thus, the very notion of an interpersonal encounter entails that each subject within the encounter be different from the other, and so possess its own being-for-self. In other words, there must be a numerical difference between personal subjects, for encounter is not possible with only a single subject. (Note that the previous assertion is not to be taken to mean that encounter is impossible where there is a single *essence*, for a numerically singular 'essence' could include multiple subjects, as in the case of the Trinity.)

Insofar as we are speaking of encounter between personal subjects in a generic sense, the being-for-self of each subject is sufficient to establish numerical difference between subjects, and thus is sufficient for the occurrence of an encounter. However, the difference between the divine and nondivine spans more than numerical difference, and this difference we must take account of. According to Staudenmaier, God is, by definition, absolute with respect to all that is

not God. Thus, while there is a numerical difference between the divine and the nondivine, there is an ontological difference as well. An interpersonal encounter between the two will therefore be characterized by this ontological difference as much as by the numerical difference. It is important, then, that we explore this absolute-relative relation that subsists between the divine and the nondivine so as to understand the specifics of their interpersonal encounter.

1.2 The Singularity of the Divine

‘God’ is a designation for ‘the divine essence.’ Here, ‘essence’ is a generic designation and thus ‘divine essence’ designates whatever kind of thing ‘God’ is. Staudenmaier takes up the standard Christian view that God’s essence demands that God can be only one (or more precisely, the divine essence demands that it be numerically singular), and thus that there can be only one God: “When we say that God is only one according to His essence, there is really expressed in this the fact that, in an ontological sense, to the concept of Godhead, θεϊότης (Rom. 1:20), there corresponds only oneness, but not manyness of essence. God is therefore already one according to His essence; manyness of essence is against the concept of Godhead.”⁹⁵ Although it is possible that there be manifold *created* essences, there can be only one *divine* essence.

Because there can be only one divine essence, an engagement with otherness by the divine can only be an engagement with what is *not* the divine essence. That is, because there can be only one divine essence, an engagement with the divine essence by something which is not identical with, or a bearer of, the numerical sameness of this essence cannot itself be a divine essence. There cannot be an encounter between two things identified with the divine essence if those two things are not, according to their essence, numerically singular. (Here, the

⁹⁵ CD II §76.1 (p. 421).

specification of being numerically singular *according to their essence* is important because, in the case of the Trinity, we need to be able to say that there is an encounter between multiple things identified with the divine essence which are *not* numerically singular, but this lack of numerical singularity is in virtue of their personhood and not in virtue of their essence. The divine persons are numerically distinct *as persons* but numerically singular *according to their essence*.)

When the divine essence is compared to other sorts of essences (i.e., essences of a nondivine sort), it is designated by Staudenmaier as ‘absolute.’ ‘Absolute’ designates the status of God, or the divine essence, relative to what is not God and so what is not the divine essence. What sort of relationship obtains between the Absolute (the divine essence) and the non-absolute?

Staudenmaier grounds God’s absoluteness vis-à-vis the non-absolute in God’s aseity. He says, “According to the category of aseity, God is absolute life from and through Himself.”⁹⁶ God does not receive His existence from something other than Himself – He does not receive His existence from a non-divine essence – but derives it from Himself. Aseity, as God’s deriving His being or existence from Himself, ensures that God is dependent upon no other for His existence. Below, we will explore what Staudenmaier sees as the implications of divine aseity and what bearing they have on the interpersonal encounter between God and the created.

1.3 Divine Aseity as Ground of Divine Being-for-Self

According to Staudenmaier, because God has His existence from Himself and not from another, He is the cause of the existence of everything which is other than Himself.

⁹⁶ CD II §42 heading (p. 227).

Staudenmaier says, “For if there is an essence which exists absolutely from – and through – itself, then it is necessary that this essence is at the same time the cause of all other reality.”⁹⁷

And again: “The absolute being (*Sein*) of God from Himself is the reason why a being (*Sein*) of things is possible through God.”⁹⁸

Staudenmaier’s argument seems to be something like the following: Multiple essences exist; as we saw, however, there can be only *one* divine essence. The divine essence has its existence from or through itself. Therefore, those essences which exist and yet are nondivine cannot receive their existence from themselves. This entails, then, that nondivine essences must receive their existence from another, viz. that essence which has its existence from or through itself (God).

The reasoning behind this conviction is that being is not something which spontaneously occurs.⁹⁹ On this point, Staudenmaier contrasts the Christian view that God possesses being eternally with what he refers to as those ‘negative’ systems – in particular that of Hegel’s *Logic* – which “begin either with nothing, or with a being (*Sein*) which as pure being is empty, without content and determination.”¹⁰⁰ Staudenmaier holds that being simply cannot arise out of nothing. Thus, he says, “A being (*Sein*) which is the same as nothing and is nothing, in which nothing can be beheld and nothing can be thought, is absolutely unable either to be a true positing of itself or to posit another out of itself. Therefore a being (*Sein*) which in its primal origin is in itself and

⁹⁷ CD II §42.2 (p. 228).

⁹⁸ Ibid., §54.2 (p. 267).

⁹⁹ This is not to be confused with the standard Christian dogma of creation *ex nihilo*, for here Staudenmaier is not referring to created being, but to being per se (and thus inclusive of the being of the divine).

¹⁰⁰ CD II §42.2 (p. 229). Here, Staudenmaier refers the reader to his book on Hegel, *Darstellung und Kritik des Hegelschen Systems. Aus dem Standpunkte der christlichen Philosophie*. (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1844), pp. 212-246, pp. 432-477 (although he refers to the title as *Darstellung und Kritik des Hegelschen Philosophie*).

intrinsically the negation of being (*Sein*) will never raise itself to actual being (*Sein*).”¹⁰¹ If being does not arise spontaneously out of nothing, then nondivine being, if it does not receive its being from or through itself, must receive it from another (viz., that which possesses being).

For Staudenmaier, it follows from divine aseity, then, that God is completely independent from the nondivine. As he puts it, “What exists from and through itself can, with respect to being (*Sein*), in no way be thought as dependent upon another, and in fact everything outside of Him, if it exists, must be dependent upon Him.”¹⁰² Such independence, Staudenmaier says, “is like that of negative freedom, [and] consists in being conditioned and determined in being (*Sein*) and life by nothing external.”¹⁰³

Given that the divine has its existence from and through itself, the nondivine is characterized by the fact that it receives its existence from outside of itself. As Staudenmaier puts it, “To have life in oneself means having life from and through oneself. By contrast everything which is not the Godhead itself, but is finite, neither has life in itself, nor is it given to it to have life in itself, but life must be given to it in the first place. Finite life therefore, as opposed to the absolute life of the Godhead, is a life which is bestowed, given, or better, a life which is carried by and created through the absolute life.”¹⁰⁴

As indicated above, interpersonal interaction requires difference between personal subjects in order for interaction to occur. Further, as we have seen, being-for-self indicates the irreducibility of some thing to otherness. Interpersonal interaction between the divine and the

¹⁰¹ *CD* II §42.2 (p. 229).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, §45 (p. 238).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, heading (p. 238).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, §42.3 (p. 230).

created therefore requires an irreducible difference between the two, i.e., some aspect which is constitutive of each and yet different for each. It is through divine aseity, then, that there exists an indissoluble difference between the divine and the nondivine: the one gives existence to the other; the one receives its existence from the other. The acts of giving and receiving presuppose distinction. In receiving existence from no other, God is absolute; in receiving existence from another, creation is relative. Thus, it is precisely in possessing aseity that the divine retains its irreducible difference from the one it encounters.

1.4 The Necessary Existence of the Divine

The irreducibility of the divine to the nondivine (and vice versa) is also expressed by Staudenmaier with respect to the necessity of the divine essence. Through divine aseity, the divine essence exists necessarily:

If God is absolutely independent from everything external, whether this be a thing, person, or concept, then the necessity of the divine essence cannot consist in being at all dependent or being subject, but the necessity which is ascribed to it is related to the type and mode of the inner divine being and life. And here we say: what exists from itself in an absolute way cannot be such that it would also be possible for it not to be, but in the concept of absolute being lies also the concept of necessary being; in other words, the absolute exists in such a way that it cannot not be.¹⁰⁵

It is because the divine exists necessarily that it can grant existence to contingent realities.

Staudenmaier says, “The ground of giving the determination to the merely possible being either to be, or not to be, can only lie in that which itself not only exists already, but exists necessarily.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *CD II* §46 (p. 239).

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, §54.1 (p. 264).

The created order, because it does not exist from itself, does not exist necessarily, but only contingently. “If, however, the absolute being of God is that which, as necessary [being], cannot not be, therefore that for which it is possible to be or not to be, but which must be, then conversely it lies in the concept of creaturely being, as the non-absolute, to be only possible [for it to be].”¹⁰⁷ The nondivine is constituted by the fact that it presupposes the divine: “What, however, is not necessary is itself only possible being, consequently it is that which presupposes an external being in order to be able to be.”¹⁰⁸ Here, then, the divine possesses being-for-self in that such being is *necessary*, in opposition to contingent being.

Thus, the irreducibility of the divine and the nondivine to one another is constituted by the sort of modality characteristic of each: the divine exists necessarily while the nondivine exists only contingently. Necessary existence, which follows from aseity, further grounds the divine being-for-self, thereby further grounding the conditions for interpersonal interaction between God and creatures.

1.5 The Infinity of God

Because God’s existence is from or through Himself rather than from another, and because this existence is necessary rather than contingent, the divine is not limited by anything outside itself. Given this lack of limitation, the divine can be regarded as infinite: “While God, as the absolute positing of Himself, neither has originated out of another nor can be contained in

¹⁰⁷ *CD* II §54.1 (p. 262).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 264).

another, and still less can be limited by something existing outside of Him, infinity (*infinitas*) befits Him and in this is His greatness.”¹⁰⁹

The notion of infinity is usually thought of numerically, as a never-ending amount of something. For Staudenmaier, however, the concept of infinity is better understood in terms of quality:

The category of limitation is, like most others, a category which concerns finite things, whose qualities are definable according to this category and are modifiable by the influence of foreign qualities. The concept of infinity is therefore not one which relates merely to quantity, so that the definition of this attribute would be nothing other than having no end, being endless. Rather the concept also relates to quality, and testifies to being determinable and modifiable by no finite thing. Being infinite is therefore not merely having no end, but also absolutely not being like the finite, not subsisting alongside the finite and being determined by the finite.¹¹⁰

Things which are of the same quality subsist alongside each other, thereby limiting each other (“modifiable by the influence of foreign qualities,” as he puts it in the passage above). If the divine is infinite, and so not modifiable by the influence of foreign qualities, then the divine must qualitatively transcend any other sort of quality.

Given the infinitude of the divine, God transcends both space and time, features which are constitutive of the finite. “The infinity (*Unendlichkeit*) of God regarded with a view to space gives the concept of the immeasurability (*immensitas*) of God.”¹¹¹ “The infinity (*Unendlichkeit*) of the divine life with respect to time gives the concept of the eternity of God. Actual eternity is distinct from the so-called eternal time – *aevum* –, which is that time in which the development of the finite spirit occurs for eternity.”¹¹² Given the infinity of God with respect to space and

¹⁰⁹ *CD* II §48 heading (p. 242).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, §48 (p. 242).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, §49 heading (p. 244).

¹¹² *Ibid.*, §50 heading (p. 246).

time, and given that space and time constitute the finite, the interpersonal encounter between the divine and the nondivine is characterized by divine transcendence.

1.6 Divine Being-for-self as Manifest in the Finite: Transcendence

According to Staudenmaier, given the infinitude of God – rooted in divine aseity – the divine thereby transcends created categories. Staudenmaier says, “Through divine aseity God is the super-essential, but as this [is] outside all categories and raised above every finite contrast.”¹¹³ As super-essential, however, this does not mean that the divine has no essence. Rather, the super-essentiality of the divine essence signifies its qualitative difference from creaturely essences: “With this attribute, however, the Godhead is not denied essence, but it is only said that its essence is an essence absolutely separate from the finite and is an essence which infinitely lies above the finite.”¹¹⁴

The manifestation of the divine being-for-self in the finite, therefore, is constituted by divine transcendence over the finite. God, Staudenmaier says, is present to the nondivine “such that He, although existing in space and time, nonetheless in His own right is spaceless and timeless, and is not moved in space and time. He is everywhere, but He is in no place. The divine immanence, therefore, is never without transcendence. As God no doubt fills the world through His omnipresence, so He is also over and above the world; He stands over it, untouched by it.”¹¹⁵

Because God is characterized by His transcendence over space and time – because God transcends the finite – God can never be reduced to the finite. Therefore, this indissoluble

¹¹³ *CD II* §53 heading (p. 257).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §53 (p. 258).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §56.6 (p. 278).

integrity of the divine essence – the divine being-for-self – ensures there will always be difference between the divine and the creaturely, thus ensuring the possibility of encounter between the two. In encounter with God, therefore, God’s being-for-self – God’s irreducible difference from the one whom He encounters – is necessarily manifest, for without the divine being-for-self, there would be no God ‘there’ to encounter.

We will return to the issue of the divine transcendence, for this is an important aspect for Staudenmaier’s assertion (which we treat below, in section 5) that the divine personality is not constituted by God’s interpersonal relation to the nondivine. At the moment, though, we must address an important question. Interpersonal encounter, it seems, requires an interaction between the members of the encounter. Put differently, interpersonal encounter seems to require a form of presence of the two parties to one another (and in section 4, we will examine the way in which the divine is present to the nondivine in their interpersonal encounter.) The transcendence of God over the finite which we have just explored, however, raises a question: if God is transcendent over the finite, how can there possibly be an interpersonal encounter between God and the finite? If God transcends the finite, how could God possibly be present to and in the finite?

This question can be resolved if we keep in mind that God’s transcendence over the finite is, as Staudenmaier puts it above, a qualitative difference from creaturely essences. Creaturely essences are by nature finite – limited to space and time. God’s qualitative difference from finite essences – and so God’s transcendence over the finite – means that God is not limited to space and time. Or better: the divine transcendence means that, unlike finite essences, the divine essence is not situated in the dichotomies of (1) space as opposed to (2) spacelessness, and (1) time as opposed to (2) timelessness.

In other words, the divine transcendence over the finite means that God is not limited by the finite. The finitude of the created order does not preclude God from interacting with it. God's transcendence over the finite, therefore, allows for an interpersonal interaction between the two, but an interaction where the former is not reduced to the limitations of the latter. Having addressed this question, we will now treat the next element of the divine personality, the divine intelligence.

2. Divine Intelligence

2.1 Introduction

We saw in the previous chapter that Staudenmaier divides the divine intelligence into three areas: God's theoretical intelligence regarding Himself, His theoretical intelligence regarding the nondivine, and His practical intelligence regarding the nondivine. Because we are focusing on the encounter between the divine and the nondivine in this chapter, we will concentrate on the latter two.

As we saw above, it is only that essence which exists from and through itself that can give existence to what is other than itself. Thus, it is only God who can create. Anything that exists, of course, has some sort of determinate being. Thus, as an existing thing, a being possesses certain aspects or features that make it whatever kind of thing it is. We saw in the previous chapter that the free acts of a personal subject (for both God and creatures) involve both the intelligence and the will, in that the intelligence is responsible for comprehending the truth of being whereas the will is responsible for determining being in accordance with the intelligence. The work of the intelligence as comprehending the truth of being is constitutive of free acts precisely because a subject must know what it is they are doing in order to freely assent to performing the action under consideration.

Therefore, in order for God to be absolutely free vis-à-vis the nondivine – whether in acts of creating, sustaining, or governing the nondivine to its end – the divine intelligence must have a full comprehension of the nondivine. For God to act freely towards the nondivine, therefore, God must know what sort of essences He is creating, sustaining, and governing towards their end. Insofar as Staudenmaier divides these two areas, the divine intelligence as theoretical concerns the divine knowledge of nondivine essences as such, and the divine intelligence as practical concerns how such essences will reach their various ends.

2.2 Divine Intelligence as Theoretical and Creative

Because the divine essence is that which bestows existence upon the nondivine, because the divine creates the nondivine freely, and because the intelligence is constitutive for free actions, the divine intellect functions creatively: “The creature is what God eternally thinks and knows it to be; nature is as it exists in the divine intelligence; spirit is, what it is in and for the divine thinking; and finally, humanity is what God has before Himself in His knowledge.”¹¹⁶

We saw in the previous chapter that the intelligence works to establish an accordance between being and thought. Given that the divine intelligence comprehends the nondivine, and given that the divine intelligence functions creatively vis-à-vis the nondivine, the accordance between being and thought is absolute for the divine intelligence. As Staudenmaier puts it, “The thought through which God thinks the creature, therefore, not only accords, as we like to say, most accurately with the essence of the creature, but accords absolutely with it, because the divine thought thinks the essence of the things themselves.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *CD* II §64.2 (p. 315).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

God's thought of the world is what Staudenmaier refers to as the divine 'idea' (*Idee*) of the world.¹¹⁸ Because the divine intelligence functions creatively and so is concerned with the *essences* of creatures, in this regard it is not to be taken as a knowledge of creatures insofar as they fall short of the divine idea, but as a knowledge of creatures as instantiations of the divine idea. As Staudenmaier puts it,

[T]he representation God has of the world, insofar as it is both the truth and the idea of the world, is not to be confused with that representation God has of the world insofar as it is afflicted with deficiency and ruin (which is certainly also object of divine knowing). Rather, the world which corresponds to the idea, or the world in truth, is the pure, immaculate world without deficiency, as it is thought by God from eternity as the way it ought to be, and as it was also created in this perfect character in the beginning of time.¹¹⁹

Further, because the divine intellect functions creatively vis-à-vis extradivine being, the truth of extradivine being is not something which comes to God as mediated, but rather is perceived by God immediately. Or to put the matter more forcefully, Staudenmaier notes that the divine thought of the nondivine just is the truth of the nondivine: "The divine thought of the world is the truth of the world. This is all the more the case, since the world is not an object of divine knowledge which is first found by God, as it presents itself as object of our knowing."¹²⁰

2.3 Divine Intellect as Practical/Divine Wisdom

We saw in the previous chapter that there is a practical side to the divine knowing, concerned with ordering nondivine being to its end, namely, to God Himself. Since here we are examining the nature of interpersonal encounter between God and creatures, we can now turn to

¹¹⁸ "The eternal thought God has of an extradivine essence is, however, the idea of this extradivine being" (*CD* II §64.3 [p. 316]).

¹¹⁹ *CD* II §64.3 (p. 317).

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, §64.4 (p. 318).

the issue of how creatures reach God as their end. Or, from the perspective of the divine, we can now inquire into the means that God implements in the created order for creatures to be able to reach Him as their end.

According to Staudenmaier, human beings reach the divine by means of religion: “The general goal of things is...God, or being and life in God Himself. Divine wisdom is therefore that intelligence in God through whose living thinking and acting the being with God of the extradivine is mediated, through which mediation extradivine being enters into the true divine life-order, which is the determination and the goal of general and particular life. For the free spirit, this goal is expressed as religion.”¹²¹ The end of extradivine being is that very same being and life which is in God Himself, and God’s own being and life is mediated to the creature through religion.

According to Staudenmaier, “Religion – as actual and true unity – is the conscious, free, and living communion of man with God.”¹²² The descriptions of the communion of man with God as ‘conscious, free, and living’ are not accidental, for they denote just those properties of a personal subject – ‘conscious’ denotes the intellect, ‘free’ denotes the will, and ‘living’ denotes the unity of intellect and will. Religion, therefore, describes a communion between two personal subjects: it is the means by which the *created* personal subject appropriates the divine idea which has been communicated to her from the *divine* personal subject.

Consciousness is necessary for the mental act of knowing, and the act of knowing is directed at the truth of being. “Religious knowledge, into which divine revelation introduces us,

¹²¹ CD II §65.1 (p. 331).

¹²² CD III §119.7 (p. 758).

is a knowledge in the truth”¹²³ In religious knowledge, the truth which is sought is that truth which enables union with God. The truth sought in religious knowledge, therefore, is that which God imparts to creatures about Himself: “The objective truth is the content of divine revelation, in which the world takes part”¹²⁴

However, the conscious element is not the only element necessary for union with God: Staudenmaier says, “As necessary, however, as communion with God is a conscious communion, its character is not exhausted in the essence of the pure consciousness. Rather, another moment shows itself to be just as important, that of freedom.”¹²⁵ How is free will related to truth? Staudenmaier says this: “Truth in its complete realization is truth as it posits itself in life and appears as life. And precisely in this same completion of its being through life truth also aims at religion, so that religion is itself only real where truth has become life.”¹²⁶

Truth, at its core, is not abstract, but has determinate content: the truth of created being is that it is meant for God, that it be in ethical communion with God. Ethical communion, though, requires exercise of the will. Thus, the exercise of free acts of the will is how the truth becomes a reality or, as Staudenmaier puts it, how the truth is brought to ‘life’: “The ability on the side of man to bring truth to life is freedom, or the free will.”¹²⁷ As he also puts it, “If divine truth (revelation) is a divine principle of human life, then freedom – the ethical principle of the human

¹²³ *CD* III §119.10 (p. 762).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, §119.10 (p. 763).

¹²⁶ *CD* II §119.12 (pp. 764-65).

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, (pp. 765).

spirit – has combined itself with it in order to shape in union with it that life which is the expressed goal of man himself.”¹²⁸

Religion is conscious, free, and living because reaching God as one’s end requires both intellectual knowledge of, and an ethical-volitional assent to, the divine. Religion, then, is the mode of human appropriation of divine wisdom, the appropriation of the divine truth as it pertains to reaching God as one’s end. Thus, it is precisely in the empirical fact that such a thing as religion exists in the created order – in the fact that there is a means to reach the divine – that divine wisdom is manifest in creation.

We recall from the previous chapter that the divine will is constrained by the divine essence to communicate the truth about Himself to the nondivine. Truthful self-communication, therefore, is constitutive of divine interpersonal encounter with the nondivine. Religion, then, is just the other side of that interpersonal encounter: it is the mode of human appropriation of God’s truthful self-communication.

More broadly, the impartation of divine wisdom – as that element of interpersonal encounter which leads another to God Himself – is characteristic of God’s interpersonal encounter. Interpersonal encounter, however, is not something which begins *de novo*. Rather, because a personal agent needs others by which she can actualize her subjectivity, an interpersonal encounter simply manifests those elements by which the personal subject is constituted *as a personal subject*.

The upshot is that God’s interpersonal encounter with the nondivine manifests those elements by which God is constituted *as a personal subject*. And as we will examine in the next chapter, it is within the inner life of the Trinity that God is constituted as a personal subject.

¹²⁸ CD II §119.12 (p. 765).

God's interpersonal encounter with the nondivine is thereby just the manifestation of God's immanent personal subjectivity, i.e. the inner life of the Trinity.

3. Divine Will

3.1 Introduction

Divine intelligence, however, is not enough to bring extradivine being into reality; will also is necessary: "The eternal knowing of the extradivine or merely possible being is of itself not the only cause of finite being, but above all this belongs to the divine will, which decides in a free way that merely possible being shall become actual being."¹²⁹ Indeed, the divine will is necessary for the realization of every aspect of the nondivine: "From the divine willing everything finite has its origin, through the divine willing everything is determined and ordered, and the divine will is the law according to which everything finite is directed"¹³⁰ It is through the divine will, then, that created essences exist as the sorts of things they are and are moved to reach the end which is appropriate to the sorts of things they are.

In short, the divine will works to manifest the divine essence in and to the nondivine. As we saw in the previous chapter, Staudenmaier maintains that there is an irreducible difference between God and the created order. Therefore, Staudenmaier does not intend the self-manifestation of the divine in creation in any pantheistic way, but rather in line with the standard Catholic view that the divine is mediated in the created order. Below, we will examine *why* the divine will acts to manifest the divine essence within the created order (3.2) and then *how* the divine is manifest within the created order (3.3).

¹²⁹ *CD* II §64.9 (p. 325).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, §67.1 (p. 360).

3.2 Divine Willing of the Good: Holiness and Righteousness

The manifestation of the divine in the nondivine characterizes the interpersonal encounter between the two. Before we can explore this further, though, we must ask what it is that motivates the divine will to manifest the divine in the nondivine. Why not, for example, bring a created order into existence that will not manifest the divine?

In the previous chapter, we saw that God beholds His own essence and wills only in accordance with that essence. Indeed, we saw that God would not be ‘God’ unless He acted in accordance with His essence. If the divine will works to manifest the divine in the nondivine, and if the divine will wills only in accordance with the divine essence, then in order to understand why the divine will manifests itself in the divine, we must understand what it is about the divine essence that demands that it be manifest in the nondivine.

As noted in chapter one (section 3.3), Staudenmaier believes that the self-manifestation of the divine in the nondivine is not a requirement of the divine essence in the sense that the divine essence necessitates that God create *so that* the divine essence can manifest itself in the nondivine. Rather, Staudenmaier wants to maintain that the divine act of creation is a free act – and so not necessitated by the divine essence – but that *if* God has created, *then* this created order will exist in accordance with certain laws prescribed by the divine essence (and in that sense will necessarily manifest the divine essence).

The nature of the divine self- manifestation in the finite has its root in the fact that the divine essence is the good. According to revelation, Staudenmaier says, “God is good and holy or is the good and the holy. This appertains to the following passage: ‘There is only one good –

God' (Mt. 19:17). God is, according to this expression, not only the good, but it is included in Him still further that He is in Himself the good alone."¹³¹

Staudenmaier argues further that, by definition, goodness entails that it should be. "The good is that which ought to be, consequently, the ought-being (*Seinsollende*)."¹³² Staudenmaier notes that the notion of 'ought-to-be' entails [1] that it *can* be, for if something ought be done then this implies that it can be done, and [2] that it *must* be. As he puts it, "In the concept of the ought-to-be lies both the concept of the could-be (*Seinkönnens*) through freedom and the concept of the must-be (*Seinmüssens*) through necessity."¹³³ Therefore, God is obligated to will the good (since the good must be willed).

It is not the case, however, that God is merely obligated to realize the good. Rather, God freely wills this good. Indeed, Staudenmaier notes that God *wants* to realize the good: "God wants to realize the idea of the good just as much as He must realize it. Or: the idea which God must realize God also wills eternally to realize."¹³⁴

Thus, in the divine will, freedom and necessity are united. The unity of freedom and necessity in willing the good Staudenmaier refers to as the divine holiness: "The unity of freedom and necessity, or the unity in willing and obligation in God is, however, the divine holiness."¹³⁵ God's external expression of holiness is God's righteousness: "The divine righteousness is the divine holiness which works and appears outwardly. Righteousness can

¹³¹ CD II §70.1 (p. 395).

¹³² Ibid., §70.3 (p. 398).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

therefore be defined as divine holiness in its application. Both are related to one another as disposition and activity: holiness is the disposition, righteousness is the activity.”¹³⁶

The divine, therefore, cannot tolerate unholiness. “Above all it is now clear how God, through His inward essence as an absolute holy essence, is deterred already from either himself positing an action, or allowing an action to be posited with necessity through a finite essence, which is evil and sinful.”¹³⁷ Because God both always freely wills the good and is obligated to will the good, God’s ordering of creation can only be in line with this good: “But also the plan and the order which ought to be developed out of the divine idea can only be a plan of the holy and an order of the good.”¹³⁸

Because it is in willing the good (which, again, is identical with just His own essence) that God possesses holiness and righteousness, and because the divine plan and order vis-à-vis the nondivine can only be in line with this good, God’s acts ad extra (because God’s acts involve His will) must necessarily manifest the divine holiness and righteousness in the created order. Below, we will explore precisely how God’s holiness and righteousness – indeed how God Himself – becomes manifest in and to the nondivine.

3.3 Creaturely Righteousness as Manifesting the Divine Will

As we saw above, righteousness is just the external expression of holiness. Holiness consists in the willingness to realize the idea of the good. Divine righteousness, therefore, consists in God’s willingness to realize the idea of the good externally, i.e. to realize the idea of

¹³⁶ *CD* II §71.1 (p. 401).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, §70.3 (p. 399).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, §70.4 (p. 399).

the good in the created order. Thus, Staudenmaier says, “The righteousness which exists in God becomes, through the divine willing, an imperative for the human will, and consequently the law for human life: it [righteousness] is what ought to be.”¹³⁹

We saw above that God Himself is the good. If divine righteousness is the external manifestation of the willingness to realize the idea of the good (or better, the actual realization of the good), and if the good just is God Himself, then righteousness is the realization of God in creation. But what does it mean for God to be ‘realized’ in creation?

Staudenmaier has emphasized that the created order and the divine are not to be identified with one another. Thus, the realizing of God in the created order is not a conversion of created essences into the divine essence. Rather, God “steers and leads the development of the divine reign as ethical through omnipresent activity.”¹⁴⁰ Because, as we saw above, God can will only the holy and the good, “that which according to the holy plan of the Godhead should come to be through development can itself only be holy and good, holiness at the same time becomes a divine imperative for the human spirit.”¹⁴¹ “Just in this imperative, or through this imperative,” Staudenmaier continues, “the holiness of God becomes the eternal prototype of man”¹⁴²

The divine will is ‘realized’ in creation, therefore, because God himself is the prototype of love for the good – of love for God –which creatures are to copy. In obeying the divine imperative to love the good, which is just to love God, the creature renders to God what is due to Him. Therefore, the divine righteousness is manifest in creation by the creature rendering to God

¹³⁹ *CD II* §71.3 (p. 406).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, §70.4 (p. 400).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

what is due to Him, and the imperative that justice be rendered to God – that creation manifest righteousness – is itself just the manifestation of the divine will in the created order.

That there is an imperative in the created order which demands obedience to the highest good (and thus love for the highest good) – in short, that there is ethical law in the created order – is a manifestation of the personal characteristic of the will, since a law demands obedience of the will. As we will see in chapter three, this notion of rendering what is due to God – namely, righteousness – is a feature of the triune life itself, i.e. of the interpersonal relations between the divine persons.

4. The Presence of the Divine to the Nondivine: Omnipresence

4.1 Introduction

In sections 1.2 through 1.6, we saw that Staudenmaier characterizes the divine with the qualities of singularity, aseity, necessary existence, infinity, and transcendence, and such qualities establish God's being-for-self – and so irreducibility – to the nondivine. These qualities manifest fundamental differences between God and creatures, differences which are necessary for an encounter between the two to occur. Although encounter between things requires some level of difference between them, difference – and only difference – occludes the possibility of encounter as much as pure sameness. An encounter between personal subjects therefore requires something that is shared between the two. That is, an encounter between subjects requires that they be present to one another in some way.

The presence of the divine to the nondivine is a long-standing topic of Christian theological reflection.¹⁴³ Due to the absoluteness of the divine vis-à-vis the nondivine, mainstream theological reflection has spoken of this divine presence to the creaturely as that of omnipresence. Staudenmaier is here no different: “The divine causality, regarded as extending itself in living efficacy in the universe, gives the concept of the omnipresence of God. In it lie the principles of divine revelation and of the government toward their goal of the divine ideas which develop themselves in space and time.”¹⁴⁴

For Staudenmaier, the encounter between the divine and the nondivine through omnipresence has two aspects. The first aspect consists in the divine presence *in* the nondivine. He says, “If God, according to the category of aseity, affirms Himself eternally in His essence which exists from and through Himself, then now, according to the category of causality, He affirms Himself in, for, and through the creature, and this divine self-affirmation is the revelation of God. God affirms Himself, however, by positing Himself in the creature...as that who, as its cause, so also is its goal and end.”¹⁴⁵

However, divine omnipresence not only consists in God’s self-positing in things, “but also [in] His appearing in things; indeed, His working is in particular a working of His appearance. As manifold as natural divine revelation is, just as manifold is this appearing through omnipresence.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, the second aspect of divine encounter through omnipresence

¹⁴³ Here we will simply be considering one aspect of divine presence in the created world, namely that of God’s general presence. To be sure, other modes of divine presence have also been extensively treated in the Christian tradition (e.g., the divine presence in the incarnation and in the Eucharist.)

¹⁴⁴ *CD* II §56 heading (p. 273).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, §56.3 (pp. 274-75).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, (p. 275).

consists in the divine presence *to* the nondivine: God ‘appears’ – reveals Himself – to the nondivine.

4.2 Omnipresence and the Characteristics of Divine Personality

How is omnipresence related to the divine intelligence? Staudenmaier links the two this way: “If above, we have called divine omnipresence the absolute causality of God which continues itself in and continually influences the world, then – in order to use the right scientific expression – we would be obligated to call divine omniscience the intellectual omnipresence of God in the world.”¹⁴⁷ Omniscience, then, is not utterly different from omnipresence. Rather, it is just the divine omnipresence in its intellectual aspect.

Omniscience is the intellectual presence of God with regard to all aspects of the creature: internal, external, and the span of its relations. As Staudenmaier puts it, “the divine intelligence as absolute knowledge of extradivine being is related to the latter in the first place as the world-creature, or as the creature in its entirety. In this relation, however, it is the present beholding of the entire creature both according to its inner essence, as well as its external manifestation, and finally, according to all relationships and all sides of the creature. Therefore, divine knowing is the absolute science of everything – omniscience.”¹⁴⁸

While Staudenmaier makes the connection between the divine intelligence and omnipresence fairly obvious, the relation between being-for-self on the one hand, and will and omnipresence on the other, is not as obvious. Thus, we need to do a bit of exegetical work to show how he sees the relation between these two aspects of personality and omnipresence.

¹⁴⁷ *CD* II §64.1 (p. 309).

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

We have seen that the divine being-for-self is constituted by God's aseity, which ensures the irreducibility of God and creature to one another. Staudenmaier then roots God's causal efficacy with respect to the nondivine in aseity: "In divine aseity, as the absolute power (*Macht*) to be from and through itself, lies, at the same time, the absolute power (*Macht*) to cause merely possible being [actually to be]. This gives the concept of the absolute causality of God which, as a [thing] which fulfills itself in reality through causal power (*Macht*), is the Ur-essence."¹⁴⁹ Because God has the ability to exist from and through Himself, God thereby has the ability to act causally vis-à-vis that reality which does not have to exist.

God's causality *ad extra*, Staudenmaier notes, has two aspects: ability and will. He says, "The concept of absolute causality is therefore such a concept as consists of two elements, that of ability and that of willingness, which already in the concept are not one. For it is one thing to be able to create the world, and another to be willing to create the world."¹⁵⁰ This ability to cause the existence of the nondivine is the divine 'almightiness':

In the concept of causality above, we have found a twofoldness, and have distinguished from one another an ability (*ein Können*) and a willingness (*ein Wollen*). If we now extract the divine ability (*Können*) as an element existing for itself, then the concept [of this ability] is the concept of the divine almightiness. This the absolute power (*Macht*) and strength of the Godhead to posit life outside of itself, in general, to create and to effect everything which it wills.¹⁵¹

Thus, because God's ability to act causally towards the nondivine (His almightiness) is rooted in His aseity, and because His aseity ensures His irreducibility to the nondivine (and vice versa),

¹⁴⁹ CD II §54 heading (pp. 261-2).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., §54.2 (pp. 266).

¹⁵¹ Ibid., §55.1 (p. 269).

God's ability to act causally *ad extra* – His almightiness – is just the presence of the divine being-for-self within the nondivine.

As the passage above indicates (and as we saw in the section on the divine will [3.1]), the actual existence of the nondivine also depends upon the divine will. Thus, God's causal relation to the nondivine involves almightiness and will:

If, however, the divine omnipresence is only the causality of God extended [into the non-divine], then omnipresence is constituted simply as causality which is abidingly continued through the very elements we have detected above as elements of causality. As elements of causality we have discovered absolute ability (*Können*) as almightiness, and the willing of the Godhead which determines and calls forth everything with absolute freedom. Almightyness and will, or absolute ability (*Können*) and absolutely free willingness (*Wollen*) are therefore also the constitutive elements of divine omnipresence.¹⁵²

The characteristics of personality, therefore, each function within God's presence to creation.

The divine omnipresence to the nondivine involves almightiness, will, and omniscience, corresponding to the personal characteristics of being-for-self, will, and intelligence, respectively.

We have seen that all three aspects of God's personal subjectivity are present to the nondivine in the interpersonal encounter between the two: the divine *intelligence* is present to the nondivine in terms of its theoretical aspect (viz., creatively in imagining the various nondivine essences), as well as its practical aspect (viz., in ordering these created essences to their appropriate ends); the divine *being-for-self* is present to the nondivine through the divine ability to bring the nondivine into existence as well as uphold it in existence; the divine *will* is present to the nondivine in that it is only through God's willingness to perform the above acts that these acts actually occur. We saw above that Staudenmaier conceives two aspects of divine

¹⁵² CD II §56.2 (p. 274).

omnipresence: divine presence *in* creation and divine presence *to* creation. The very existence and determination of the finite order thus manifests the presence of the divine in creation.

5. Divine Absoluteness and Divine Personality

We have seen how the elements of the divine personality – being-for-self, intelligence, and will – are manifest in the encounter between the divine and the nondivine. Here we will see how God’s being is related to the divine personality, specifically how the eternity of God’s being has implications for understanding the nature of the divine personality. Understanding how the eternity of God’s being relates to the divine personality will set us up for seeing exactly why the Trinity is necessary for personality as being an immanent feature of the divine.

Since God is constituted by and through Himself, God is thereby not constituted by the created order. As Staudenmaier puts it, “Because God has neither the ground of His being (*Sein*) nor the goal of His life outside of Himself in another, rather His absolute self-affirmation is also the affirmation of His being (*Sein*) as eternally grounded in itself and eternally complete in itself. Thus in Him no movement is thinkable through which He could strive to fulfill Himself in a ground and goal which lay outside of Him.”¹⁵³ And in a text which we have already had opportunity to examine in chapter one, he says, “As the one who for Himself, or as a personal being-for-self, God is also the one of whom it can be said neither that the world is an essential and necessary element of Him, nor is He Himself an essential and necessary element of the world, and finally just as little can it be said that He would not be God without the world, which definitions, as is known, are the philosophy of modern pantheism.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ CD II §52 (p. 255).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., §57.2 (p. 289). See n. 31 of chapter one.

Because God's being is not constituted by the created order, God's personality is also not constituted by the created order. Rather, Staudenmaier insists, God is eternally personal: "there was no moment for Him in which He was not personal."¹⁵⁵ Indeed, Staudenmaier argues that the divine personality is as eternal as the divine being. Thus, he says, "Indeed in God the personal is not added to being (*Sein*) in order to combine with being (*Sein*), but God is, as eternal being (*Sein*), also eternally personal being (*Sein*) and life, so that with the concept of divine being (*Sein*) is already combined within itself the concept of personal life."¹⁵⁶

In fact, Staudenmaier argues, it is only because God is already personal – personal apart from the nondivine – that there can be nondivine persons at all: "Consequently it already lies in the concept of God as the absolutely perfect that He is personal, and not only that He is personal, but also that He is already absolutely personal insofar as He is the causal principle of all other personality which is extradivine. In God, therefore, is the essence (*Wesen*) already beforehand necessarily and eternally a personal essence (*Wesen*). Therefore, personality is no addition, or something nascent which might arise later through an unfolding."¹⁵⁷ Personality, therefore, is an eternal feature of the divine.

Given the fact that personality is an eternal feature of the divine, personality is thereby an immanent feature of the divine. For Staudenmaier, then, the characteristics of intelligence, will, and being-for-self are characteristics which belong to God eternally – i.e., apart from the created order. These personal characteristics – manifest in God's interpersonal interaction with the

¹⁵⁵ *CD II* §57.2 (p. 286).

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, §25.9 (p. 139).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, §57.2 (pp. 287-88).

created order – do not have their genesis in God’s interpersonal interaction with the created order, but are revelations of what is eternally true of God.

Conclusion

We have seen that personality is constituted by otherness, by other personalities. But in the case of the divine, however, we see that personality is an eternal feature of God, and so that personality is not constituted by the otherness of the created order. If personality is constituted by otherness, and yet if the divine personality is not constituted by the otherness of the nondivine, then this raises the question as to how God can be a personal subject without the presence of the otherness of the nondivine.

The only solution to this question is that there must be a presence of otherness that is within the divine itself, a presence of otherness which is eternal and thus an immanent feature of the divine. God’s being-for-self – God’s irreducibility to the created order – blocks the created order from providing the otherness that is constitutive of divine personal subjectivity, and therefore forces the locus of such otherness to be within the divine itself. That the divine personality requires otherness and yet is not constituted by its relation to the nondivine will form the crux of why, for Staudenmaier, the Trinity is necessary for ensuring the presence of otherness necessary for personality. To that issue we now turn.

Chapter 3

THE TRINITY AS THE ACTUALIZATION OF DIVINE SUBJECTIVITY

Introduction

We left the previous chapter faced with a question. On the one hand, subjectivity – comprised of the elements of personality – requires something beyond the individual person for its actualization, i.e. something beyond that individual locus of divine being-for-self, intelligence, and will. As we saw, Staudenmaier sharply distinguishes between God and the created order. Thus, the created order cannot be identified with the locus of divine being-for-self, intelligence, and will. It would seem, then, that the created order would prove a likely candidate for that which could actualize divine subjectivity.

On the other hand, we have seen that Staudenmaier makes much of divine aseity as facilitating divine transcendence. Because God possesses aseity, He not only cannot be identified with the created order, but He also requires nothing from it in order to possess the full perfection of His divinity. Therefore, this rules out the possibility that divine subjectivity could be actualized through the created order, because if the created order cannot be identified with God, then actualization through the created order entails that God does not possess the perfection of His divinity immanently.

The problem before us, therefore, is this: on the one hand, how does Staudenmaier understand the divine subjectivity to be actualized immanently, while on the other hand including the aspect of otherness requisite for such actualization? This chapter offers an answer

to this question. Here, I argue that Staudenmaier solves this problem through the Christian understanding of God as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three irreducibly distinct persons sharing a numerical sameness of essence.

A trinitarian constitution of the divine resolves the dilemma in the following way. Because the Christian doctrine of the Trinity consists in the claim that God is immanently both one divine essence as well as three distinct persons, the presence of personal otherness – necessary for the actualization of personal subjectivity – is a feature of the divine apart from the created order. And it is precisely because the components for such actualization belong to the divine apart from the created order that the personal subjectivity of the divine can be actualized immanently.

In section 1, I make an exegetical case that Staudenmaier actually sees connections between the Trinity, divine transcendence, and personal subjectivity. We will see that Staudenmaier associates the notion of the Trinity with the notion of divine transcendence (1.2), and that he sees the Trinity as the condition by which divine subjectivity is possible (1.3). Thus, the Trinity operates in Staudenmaier's theology as the solution to a problem about how God can be a personal subject, and is thereby the necessary solution to this problem such that the Trinity must be rationally demonstrated if one is to believe that God is a personal subject at all.

The task of section 2 is to examine *how* the Trinity is that by which divine subjectivity is actualized, i.e. what it is about the Trinity which occludes God's engagement with the finite as a means of His own self-development. 2.1 treats Staudenmaier's correlation of the Trinity and divine transcendence with what he refers to as the 'concrete unity' of the divine. In 2.2, I give a brief overview of Hegelian dialectic in order to explicate precisely what 'concreteness' consists in.

Having examined what ‘concreteness’ consists in, the task of section 3 is explore how the notion of ‘concreteness’ ought to be applied in the case of the Trinity. 3.1 explores how Staudenmaier conceives the Trinity as a dialectic, and thus how the concreteness of the divine life is achieved dialectically. 3.2 examines what dialectical movement consists in when the category in question is that of persons. In 3.2.1, I offer an apologetic for once again utilizing Hegel as a guide. 3.2.2 presents Hegel’s dialectic of personal subjectivity, which provides a model by which Staudenmaier’s trinitarian dialectic can be understood. In 3.3, Staudenmaier’s trinitarian dialectic is then interpreted along Hegelian lines. In 3.3.2, it is argued that Staudenmaier’s understanding of the Trinity parallels the Hegelian notion of “mutual recognition,” an important aspect of Hegel’s understanding of personal intersubjectivity. Then, in 3.3.3, it is shown how the interpersonal encounters of the divine persons of the Trinity result in the formation of a community.

Finally, in section 4, we will consider the implications of the actualization of divine personality via the Trinity. There I will demonstrate that Staudenmaier sees the Trinity as that through which divine subjectivity is actualized immanently, and so as that which prevents God from having to actualize His subjectivity by means of the finite. I will also demonstrate that, for Staudenmaier, because the Trinity is the locus of interpersonal encounter by which divine subjectivity is actualized, the Trinity also serves as the model for interpersonal encounter between the divine and the non-divine.

1. Trinity, Transcendence, and Subjectivity

1.1 Introduction

Our thesis is that for Staudenmaier personal otherness is requisite for the actualization of personal subjectivity, and because the presence of personal otherness is an immanent feature of

the divine (resulting in the divine Trinity), the divine Trinity is that in virtue of which divine subjectivity is actualized and actualized immanently. Our first step in showing that Staudenmaier believes this to be the case is to demonstrate that he associates the concepts of divine Trinity, divine transcendence, and divine subjectivity. More precisely, our first step is to demonstrate that he associates the notion of the Trinity with the notion of divine transcendence, and to demonstrate that it is the Trinity with which Staudenmaier associates the actualization of divine subjectivity.

1.2 Trinity and Divine Transcendence

How is it that God is able to transcend the created order? In a few key places in *CD II*, Staudenmaier associates the Trinity with God's transcendence over creation, and particularly God not needing the created order. He speaks of the Trinity as forming a 'world' unto itself, and thus as forming a self-enclosed milieu. He says, "For precisely because there are not one, but three divine persons, is the divine life a world for itself (*eine Welt für sich*), a whole and complete world (*eine ganze und volle Welt*), which precisely in this way stands by itself (*durch sich selber*) over the finite world, as it does not require the latter for itself."¹⁵⁸ Staudenmaier clearly maintains here that, in virtue of God being three divine persons, God does not require the created order for His development or perfection.

A few sentences later, Staudenmaier posits the counterfactual – that if God was not a Trinity of persons, then God would require the finite for His self-development. He puts the matter this way: "If God ceases to live as divine person in the divine person, through the divine person, and for the divine person, to know Himself and to be in the divine person, then the

¹⁵⁸ *CD II* §93.5 (p. 594).

consequence is necessary, namely that God knows Himself in the finite, develops Himself by the finite, loves Himself through the finite and in the finite, and lives in the finite. With the annulment (*Aufhebung*) of the divine tripersonality, pantheism is introduced.”¹⁵⁹

Staudenmaier’s descriptions of a divine person living and knowing Himself “in a divine person, through the divine person, and for the divine person” are, as we will see later, a way of referencing the divine as trinitarian. We will see that Staudenmaier thinks of the Trinity as a ‘concrete unity,’ and this requires what he thinks is a more intimate relation between the persons than sharing one and the same essence, namely a union in which they relate as ethical subjects.

1.3 Trinity and Divine Subjectivity

In section 1.2 above, we saw that Staudenmaier associates the divine Trinity with God’s transcendence over the finite milieu. Further, I have suggested that it is in virtue of a fully-developed subjectivity that God possesses transcendence over the finite (since God would thereby not need the finite to actualize His subjectivity). But how do we know that it is divine *subjectivity* which would be actualized by the finite if God were not Trinity?

Here we must admit that Staudenmaier is not as straightforward as we might hope in correlating divine triunity with the actualization of divine subjectivity, making subjectivity the cause – or explanation – of the Trinity. Indeed, in the hundreds of pages of *Die christliche Dogmatik*, he nowhere puts the link between divine Trinity and subjectivity as baldly as I have. However, his lack of explicitness on the matter need not mean that we reject our thesis out of hand. What his lack of explicitness does mean is that we will have to look for suggestive links between the Trinity and divine subjectivity by which we can build a cumulative case.

¹⁵⁹ CD II §93.5 (p. 594).

Save for one instance (which we will examine momentarily), although Staudenmaier does not explicitly state that divine triunity is a necessary condition of the actualization of divine subjectivity, in several places he associates the Trinity with those personal aspects of intelligence and will. As he puts it in the heading of *CD II §93*, “The trinitarian life of the Godhead consists in the mutual being in-, through-, and for-one-another of the three divine persons, indeed 1. in the immanent movement of knowing, through which Father, Son, and Spirit reciprocally know themselves in the absolute identity of their essence; 2. in the immanent movement of willing, through which they, in eternal accordance with their essence, mutually will themselves.”¹⁶⁰

As the text above demonstrates, Staudenmaier sees the acts of personal subjectivity – knowing and willing – as constitutive of the divine life, and thereby constitutive of the Trinity. The reason that knowing and willing are constitutive of the Trinity is because the divine life is characterized by an ethical unity between the divine persons, and such unity is achieved through the exercise of knowledge and will. As he puts it a bit later, “the three divine persons, since they are bound indissolubly to unity through the one divine essence, present the same unity as a living-personal [unity] by the three persons being mutually in-one-another, through-one-another, and for-one-another, by them mutually sounding themselves through their properties, and forming an absolute spiritual unity in knowledge, will, and love.”¹⁶¹

We see this same association between the trinitarian life and the acts of knowledge and will again at the end of §93. “Through love,” Staudenmaier says, “the divine persons mutually

¹⁶⁰ *CD II §93* heading (p. 590). He continues by saying that the trinitarian life of the Godhead consists in a third element, viz. “in the immanent movement of love, with which they love themselves in one another with absolutely mutual devotion, live by love in and for one another...” I have left this third component out of the quotation above since love is a particular act of willing.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, §93.8 (p. 597).

posit themselves in one another through knowing and willing, through love they pour themselves out into one another, through love they mutually give and receive their being and life, wholly and without reservation. Through love, finally, the trinitarian life forms itself as a united [life], a life in which unity pervades all abilities of knowing and willing, and thereby creates a single life.”¹⁶²

Admittedly, one can argue from the above quotations that although they demonstrate a correlation between divine subjectivity and Trinity, where the divine persons utilize their abilities of intelligence and will, their utilization of such abilities within the triune life does not mean that the triune life is the means by which they are actualized. Indeed, one could argue that the above quotations do not rule out the possibility that divine subjectivity may be actualized independently of the triune life, and the triune life is merely the locus of their expression.

If the above quotations merely correlate divine subjectivity with the Trinity, there is one instance where Staudenmaier suggests an even stronger relationship between the two, indeed a *causal* relationship. He says, “If, therefore, God is certainly a personal God, i.e. if personality certainly belongs to God, then He is necessarily (*notwendig*) a tripersonal [God], because without tripersonality in the life of the Godhead the properly personal elements are not able to occur (*vorkommen*) and are not able to satisfy (*befriedigen*) themselves.”¹⁶³

Here, Staudenmaier indicates that there is a primal element of divine subjectivity – the divine personality – which demands to come to fruition. The personality can come to fruition only if there are multiple loci by which it is instantiated, that is, only if there are multiple divine persons. Here, then, the existence of multiple of divine persons is explained by their being vehicles for the fruition of personality. Given that there is a causal relation between the divine

¹⁶² CD II §93.15 (p. 608).

¹⁶³ Ibid., §93.6 (p. 596).

personality and the Trinity, this suggests that the quotations previous to the one above ought to be read such that intelligence and will are not merely epiphenomenal to the Trinity, but in fact are constitutive of it. As Staudenmaier puts it, “The one divine essence presents itself as concretely personal in a threefold personality, or: the one absolute essence of the Godhead is eternally actual and truly personal only in three divine persons.”¹⁶⁴ We can say, therefore, that for Staudenmaier, that divine subjectivity naturally unfolds itself as Trinity.

Given that Staudenmaier believes divine subjectivity necessarily takes the form of a Trinity of divine persons, our next task is to examine how the Trinity is that by which divine subjectivity is actualized. We have seen that it is in virtue of God being a Trinity of persons that He does not need the created, finite milieu in order to develop or perfect His divinity. We must now figure out what it is about the Trinity which occludes God’s engagement with the finite as a means of His own self-development.

2. The Trinity as Concrete Unity

2.1 The Correlation of Transcendence, Trinity, and Concrete Unity

We have seen that Staudenmaier correlates the Trinity with God’s transcendence, and that such correlation is due to the Trinity being the locus of the actualization of divine subjectivity. This correlation, however, sheds little light on precisely *how* the Trinity actualizes divine subjectivity. In order to get a better understanding on the matter, we must examine a further correlation made by Staudenmaier, namely his correlation of the Trinity and divine transcendence with what he refers to as the ‘concrete unity’ of the divine.

¹⁶⁴ CD II §79 heading (p. 464).

“The unity (*Einheit*) of God,” Staudenmaier notes, “is consequently no abstract, but a concrete, unity, and this concreteness consists not only in each of the divine persons being one with the divine essence, but also and chiefly in the fact that the one essence of God emerges in a threefold personality and is spiritually living.”¹⁶⁵ Here we encounter the terms ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete,’ terms which are not novel with Staudenmaier, although the sense in which he uses them may be (and certainly are not traditional in the history of Christian trinitarian theology). In this passage, we see that although ‘concrete unity’ describes the divine persons ‘being one with the divine essence,’ it chiefly describes the essence of God emerging in a ‘threefold personality.’ And here it is ‘unity’ which bears the description ‘concrete.’

As we can see in the passage above, this concreteness which describes the divine unity is at least in part on account of the ‘threefold personality’ which emerges from the divine essence, viz. the three divine persons. Thus, there is something about the divine being a threefold personality which has a bearing on the divine unity so as to make it ‘concrete.’

Further, we saw above that Staudenmaier describes the Trinity as “a world for itself (*eine Welt für sich*), a whole and complete world (*eine ganze und volle Welt*), which stands by itself (*durch sich selber*) over the finite world, as it does not require the latter for itself.” Staudenmaier further describes this ‘world’ as characterized by ‘concrete unity.’ He says, “This complete world (*vollkommene Welt*) which God is in Himself is just the divine unity (*Einheit*) as a concrete [unity], i.e. the tripersonality of the one God.”¹⁶⁶

If concrete unity is a property immanent to the divine, then “the Godhead does not need to mix itself with the world out of hunger for life and concreteness, so to speak, to posit and to

¹⁶⁵ CD II §79.1 (470-71).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., §79.2 (p. 472).

love itself as a world, thereby at the same time to make itself dependent on the finite, and to grasp this dependence as an essential and necessary element of the divine nature itself, like Hegel, who confesses without embarrassment that he can conceive no God who could be God without the world.”¹⁶⁷

We see from these passages, therefore, that Staudenmaier correlates the divine as a ‘complete world’ with the divine as a ‘concrete’ unity, and that he correlates this ‘concrete’ unity with the divine as ‘the tripersonality of the one God.’ This suggests that the Trinity is characterized by a particular form of unity (viz., ‘concrete’ unity), and it is precisely this sort of unity which engenders divine transcendence. Specifically, because concreteness is immanent to the divine, God does not need to obtain concreteness for Himself by means of the finite order.

2.2 The Nature of Concreteness

The term ‘concrete’ – and its opposite, ‘abstract’ – are not traditional semantic terms in Christian theology of the Trinity. Further, although Staudenmaier describes the divine as a concrete unity in several places, he nowhere defines what ‘concreteness’ is as such. Interestingly, the utilization of this term that is most proximate to Staudenmaier is that of Hegel. This is interesting given Staudenmaier’s fierce criticisms of Hegel.¹⁶⁸ Thus, it might seem that to utilize Hegel hermeneutically for understanding Staudenmaier is wrongheaded from the outset. However, as critical of Hegel as Staudenmaier was, one cannot ignore Staudenmaier’s use of such language.

¹⁶⁷ CD II §79.2 (p. 474).

¹⁶⁸ For an account of Staudenmaier’s reception and criticism of Hegel, see the following: Peter Hünemann, “Die Hegel-Rezeption Franz Anton Staudenmaiers,” in *Kirche Und Theologie im 19 Jahrhundert*, ed. Georg Schwaiger (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Rupprecht, 1975); Lawrence S. Stepelevich, “From Tübingen to Rome: The First Catholic Response to Hegel,” *Heythrop Journal* 32, no. 4 (October 1991): 477–92.

In examining Hegel's utilization of the term 'concrete,' we can speak only in very general terms.¹⁶⁹ This is because for Hegel, the categories of logic develop immanently, and therefore relate to one another in different ways, depending upon the specific category in question. It is difficult, therefore, to say much regarding the criteria for what constitutes a category's abstractness and concreteness without taking into account the specific category in question. Thus, here I can give only basic criteria for abstractness and concreteness.

Generally speaking, the term 'concrete' was utilized by Hegel to describe a particular concept or category insofar as it was viewed in relation to other concepts or categories. (Thus, its opposite, 'abstract,' describes a particular concept or category that is viewed in isolation.) What makes a concept 'concrete,' however, is not a relation to any other concepts whatsoever, but its relation to a concept which is seemingly its opposite. This opposition is then mediated by a subsequent concept, where such mediation shows how the (seemingly) oppositional concepts are in fact intimately related, for each is comprehensible only in the light of its opposite.

On the one hand, this mediation does not dissolve the (seemingly) contradictory concepts, for then there would be nothing to mediate between, and there would be no dialectical progression, but a collapse back into indeterminate, abstract sameness. On the other hand, the mediating concept that emerges from the opposition is a subsequent stage of the dialectic, which provides a fuller, truer picture of Being than its less determinate stages. This is due to its incorporation into a more comprehensive framework of the truths of its preceding concepts, precisely because it is able to resolve the contradictions between its preceding concepts.

¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately, there is not much discussion specifically on the terms 'concrete' and 'abstract' in the secondary literature on German idealism. One exception is the essay by Philip T. Grier, "Abstract and Concrete in Hegel's Logic," in *Essays on Hegel's Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 59–75, and the reply by Errol E. Harris, "A Reply to Philip Grier," pages 77–84 of the same volume.

It should be noted, though, that the movement from the initial concept to its opposite, and then to their mediating concept, does not occur arbitrarily (as if the thinker begins with some concept and then consciously tries to come up with what its opposite would be). Rather, when thought entertains a concept, it simply perceives an instability, and this instability naturally *leads* thought to the subsequent concepts of the initial thought's opposite and their mediation. Thus, the movement from concept to concept is not due to choice, but rather to thought's following its own immanent logic (which is, in the end, the same thing as being following its own immanent logic).

Hegel's dialectical logic, therefore, forms a chain of concepts that develop immanently, where each subsequent concept incorporates the truths of previous concepts into an increasingly comprehensive framework. The logical-dialectical process ends at the concept which incorporates the truths of all previous concepts and which there are no further stages. This final stage is 'absolute' because the framework as a whole is comprehensive, in that it has incorporated the truths of all its preceding concepts and mediated their opposition, and there is no further mediation possible.

We can see a paradigm example of this logical-dialectical opposition and mediation at the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* in his discussion of being, nothing, and becoming. We will briefly examine this dialectical movement so as to get a picture of what this logical-dialectical progression looks like.

The first, most indeterminate thought which one can still think is the thought of 'being.' When we think of 'being' in this indeterminate state, we have nothing at all in mind (e.g., we do not have the thought of being insofar as it exists in a determination like 'plant' or 'dog' or 'red'). Rather, we simply have 'being' in mind.

Yet note that, when we think simply of ‘being’ – and thus have nothing at all in mind – we literally have the thought of ‘nothing’ now in our mind. In thinking the thought of ‘being,’ our thought automatically slips into the thought of ‘nothing.’ However, consider the thought of ‘nothing’: it is just the thought that there is nothing that is determinate before our mental gaze, i.e. that whatever is before our mental gaze is content-less. But note that, when thinking the thought of ‘nothing,’ we are actually now thinking of ‘nothing’ *in terms of being*: that whatever *is* before our mental gaze *is* content-less (thus what is before our mental gaze is ‘being’ that is without content)

Thus, the thought of ‘nothing’ automatically slips into the thought of ‘being.’ In thinking of ‘being,’ then, thought moves from ‘being’ to ‘nothing,’ and then from ‘nothing’ to ‘being.’ Therefore, in thinking of being, thought thinks of the transition from the one to the other. Thus, the indeterminacy of being – in its movement back and forth between itself and nothing, where ‘being’ becomes ‘nothing’ and ‘nothing’ becomes ‘being’ – just is the thought of ‘becoming.’ Being, therefore, has now moved from indeterminate to something more determinate (viz., ‘becoming’).

Recall that, when thinking the thought of ‘nothing,’ we thought of ‘nothing’ *in terms of being*: that whatever *is* before our mental gaze *is* content-less (and so the ‘nothing’ that is before our mental gaze is ‘being’ that is without content). Further, recall that, when thinking the thought ‘being,’ we thought of ‘being’ *in terms of nothing*: in thinking of ‘being,’ we had nothing at all in mind. Thus, when we think of either one of these two thoughts, we can only think of the one in terms of the other: in order to successfully think the thought of ‘being,’ we must think the thought of having *nothing* in mind, and in order to successfully think the thought of ‘nothing,’

we must think the thought of having something in mind that is content-less, and so must think the thought of ‘being.’

The upshot of this is that the successful thinking of either of these thoughts requires mediation by its opposite thought. Ordinary thought (what Hegel refers to as ‘the understanding’) simply regards the difference between ‘being’ and ‘nothing’ as automatic. More precisely, their difference seems to be ‘immediate.’ But we saw that, in fact, the successful thought of the one requires the other to be latent ‘in the background’ so to speak. So, the explicit thought of ‘being’ is mediated to us by the latent presence of the category ‘nothing,’ and the explicit thought of ‘nothing’ is mediated to us by the latent presence of the category ‘being.’ If, then, the thought of one is mediated by the thought of the other, then the determination of one requires mediation by the other. Determination, in Hegel’s view, is just something becoming explicitly what it is implicitly. Therefore, for a thing to become explicitly what it is implicitly requires difference, otherness.

Finally, though, note that the explicit thought of ‘being’ requires the mediation of the latent thought of ‘nothing’ (and vice versa), and so displays *both* difference *and* unity or identity. The thought of one is mediated by a different thought, and so the thought of one is *united* to something (viz. its opposite), yet what it is united to is nonetheless other than it (in this case, its opposite) and so is *different* than it. Thus, what we see here is what Hegel referred to as an ‘identity of identity and difference.’

Having proceeded through this dialectic, each of these categories – being, nothing, and becoming – are now concrete, in that they are viewed in their relations to one another. And the category of becoming mediates between the categories of being and nothing, and in so doing incorporates being and nothing into a more comprehensive framework. Becoming, therefore, is

the truth of being and nothing. Each of these concepts, therefore, become concrete because the thought of each is mediated by the thought of the other two.

If concreteness consists in mediation, and if the Trinity is characterized by ‘concrete’ unity, then the sort of unity which obtains in the Trinity must be a unity that occurs through mediation of distinct aspects of the Trinity. Further, apparently it is this sort of unity – concrete, or mediated, unity – which engenders divine transcendence vis-à-vis the created order. There is, therefore, something about the mediation of distinct aspects of the Trinity which precipitates divine transcendence. Our next task, then, is to investigate how concreteness might apply to the Trinity.

3. The Trinitarian Divine as Forming a Concrete Unity

3.1 The Trinity as Dialectic

Now that we have an understanding of abstractness and concreteness, we are in a better position to explore how the divine, conceived as tripersonal, might form a ‘concrete unity.’ However, it is not yet obvious how the notion of concreteness ought to be applied to the Trinity. We saw that the movement toward concreteness begins with a particular concept or category, proceeds to its seeming opposite, and continues to the mediation of the two. And although we have seen that Staudenmaier utilizes the Hegelian language of ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete,’ we have yet to show that he sees such concreteness as following the logic which we have described above. In other words, we must show that Staudenmaier sees the Trinity as manifesting concreteness via a *movement*, a movement that issues in otherness and then resolves through a movement of mediation. In short, we have to show that Staudenmaier sees the Trinity as manifesting the movement of *dialectic*.

Fortunately, Staudenmaier gives textual evidence that he conceives the Trinity dialectically. He says that “in the trinitarian life of the Godhead there is indeed a living dialectic (*Dialektik*).”¹⁷⁰ He begins the ‘speculative’ part of the doctrine of the Trinity (*CD II §§91-93*) – whose first section is entitled “The Dialectic (*Dialektik*) of the Essential Moments of the Trinitarian Being of the Godhead” – with “the express remark that a dialectic (*Dialektik*) of those determinations which belong essentially to this dogma [viz., the Trinity] is no subjective, but is an absolutely objective dialectic (*objective Dialektik*).”¹⁷¹ (It should be noted, though, that Staudenmaier explicitly contrasts this objective, trinitarian dialectic with “sheer dialectic,” with what “in modern times, in total misjudgment of the divine being (*Wesen*), the being (*Sein*) and acts of God have been determined by philosophy as a mere dialectical process, indeed better, as a process of the logical idea.”)¹⁷²

What, then, is the dialectic that pertains to the Trinity? Staudenmaier says: “In the objective dialectic (*objectiven Dialektik*) of the trinitarian life of God there is a movement which, beginning with the principle passes from oneness (*Einheit*) over to twoness (*Zweiheit*), and the movement itself comes to its rest only in threeness (*Dreiheit*).”¹⁷³ Staudenmaier uses the term ‘movement’ (*Bewegung*) to describe the motion of life in the divine, that is, the movement of the divine essence from the Father, to the Son, and from them both to the Spirit. “[W]ith the Father, who has life in Himself,” Staudenmaier notes, “the entire movement of life (*Lebensbewegung*)

¹⁷⁰ *CD II §92.1* (p. 567).

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, (p. 566).

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, (p. 567).

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, §92.2 (p. 574). Here Staudenmaier gives a footnote reference to Gregory of Nazianzus’ Orations 29.2 and 20.7.

begins.”¹⁷⁴ Again invoking Gregory Nazianzus, he says, “[T]he immanent process of the trinitarian life as it is posited through the equally immanent relations...is at the same time that inner movement (*Bewegung*) through which ‘from the oneness (*Einheit*) of the principle moves to twoness (*Zweiheit*) and goes forth into threeness (*Dreiheit*).’”¹⁷⁵ The dialectical movement that leads to the concrete unity of the divine is therefore just that movement of the divine essence in the procession of the Son from the Father and the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son.

We saw that dialectical movement begins with an initial concept or category and naturally issues in otherness. Thus, that dialectical movement (in this case, the Father’s generation of the Son) yields otherness: “Certainly through personal contrast (*Gegensatz*) consists an otherness (*Anderheit*).”¹⁷⁶ We also saw that this issuance which yields otherness creates an opposition which must be overcome. Just as in the Hegelian dialectic, where the concept of being automatically leads thought to the concept of nothing, and so there is an opposition which must be overcome, so also here we have an opposition between the Father and the Son (created by the Father’s generation of the Son).

Unfortunately, Staudenmaier does not go into much detail regarding the nature of this opposition. (For example, he never indicates that there is a conceptual instability regarding the Father that automatically leads to the thought of the Son.) What seems to drive the trinitarian dialectic is that there is a truth in threeness that is not present in twoness. Of a system of twoness

¹⁷⁴ *CD* II §100 (p. 628).

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, §92.4 (pp. 583-84). The Gregory text which Staudenmaier quotes here comes from *Oration* 29.2. Already noted (n. 15).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, §93.14 (p. 605).

he says, “Because, however, dualism is no true and complete system, the Godhead overcomes twoness and goes over to threeness.”¹⁷⁷ Later, he notes, “Twoness (*Zweiheit*) is not yet complete; it therefore strives for reconciliation in a third, in which it becomes true.”¹⁷⁸ Regarding a system that goes beyond threeness, Staudenmaier says, “First, threeness is the true system... Were it to go beyond threeness, then it would fall into boundlessness (*Maßlose*), into indeterminate manyness, and therefore fall into polytheism.”¹⁷⁹

What Staudenmaier seems to be getting at here is that threeness manifests the truth of otherness. As he puts it, “This otherness consummates itself not in twoness but in threeness.”¹⁸⁰ True otherness does not consist in total otherness, but in otherness which nonetheless contains familiarity (and we will explore this particular point in detail in 3.2.2 below). On the one hand, twoness alone is just bare otherness (where what is other appears as alien), rather than an otherness in which one person can nonetheless see themselves in the other (and so does not appear as alien). On the other hand, anything beyond threeness dissolves the truth of otherness because it simply issues in indeterminacy, and so one is no longer faced with otherness.

If we follow the logic of dialectic, this would indicate that the Holy Spirit is the one in whom the truth of the otherness between the Father and Son becomes manifest. This seems to be precisely how Staudenmaier frames the matter: “For this reason the Spirit is often called the Spirit of the Father and the Son in Holy Scripture. The person of the Spirit is everywhere the confirming person, so-to-speak, the affirming person, the consummating person, the person who

¹⁷⁷ CD II §93.4 (p. 593).

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., §93.14 (p. 605).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., §93.4 (p. 593).

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., §93.14 (p. 605).

concludes or resolves the entire life-organism (*Lebensorganismus*) of the sublime Godhead.”¹⁸¹

The preceding paragraphs have presented enough textual evidence to demonstrate that Staudenmaier conceives the Trinity as a dialectic, and thus that the concreteness of the divine life is achieved dialectically. However, our investigation thus far has yielded only the formal features of the concrete unity of the tripersonal divine life, in that we have simply considered dialectical movement without any specific categories or concepts in mind. Thus, we still do not know exactly how the dialectical movement which emerges from the Father, to the Son, and from them both to the Spirit actually precipitates a concrete unity. In short, we do not know what dialectical movement looks like when the category in question is that of *persons*. To that task we now turn.

3.2 Dialectic of Persons

3.2.1 Introduction: Justification of Utilizing Hegel as a Guide

We have utilized the basic pattern of Hegelian dialectic to guide our reading of Staudenmaier’s trinitarian dialectic. We have seen that, for Staudenmaier, the dialectical movement in the Trinity is a movement from person to person. In order to understand the dialectical movement from person to person in Staudenmaier’s Trinity, we will utilize a Hegelian dialectic that is also concerned with persons. This model comes from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, although it reaches its fullest extent in his *Philosophy of Spirit* (the third part of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) and *Philosophy of Right*.

One concern must be addressed at the outset. Above, our utilization of Hegelian dialectic as a hermeneutical lens for interpreting Staudenmaier was very formal and so very basic. But here we will be utilizing Hegelian dialectic not merely formally, but also materially. The more

¹⁸¹ CD II §93.14 (p. 605). Here Staudenmaier references Richard of St. Victor.

content we appropriate from Hegel for our hermeneutical lens, the greater risk we take in distorting Staudenmaier. This is all the more a possibility given Staudenmaier's trenchant criticisms of Hegel. What, then, justifies our material use of Hegel for interpreting Staudenmaier?

My answer twofold. First, such justification comes through certain parallels that arise between Staudenmaier's language of the divine persons and Hegel's language in the *Phenomenology*, as well as through various thematic parallels. In my view, although Staudenmaier criticized Hegel, such parallels between the two cannot be written off. Indeed, relations between thinkers are complicated, much more often exhibiting a both/and quality of appropriation and rejection rather than an either/or quality.

Second, my material use of Hegel is still quite modest. I am not arguing that Staudenmaier was a Hegelian in any robust sense. Hegelianism was no doubt 'in the air' and notions of intersubjectivity were certainly not confined only to Hegel. Thus, my utilization of Hegel here is more properly viewed as utilizing one example of a model of subjectivity that was common within the larger philosophical climate. With this preliminary behind us, we can now examine Hegel's dialectic of intersubjectivity.

3.2.2 Presentation of Hegel's Dialectic of Intersubjectivity

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel seeks to demonstrate that the identity of thought and being is the truth of consciousness on consciousness' own, immanent terms.¹⁸² Thus, he begins from everyday self-consciousness. In everyday self-consciousness, one has a consciousness of oneself,

¹⁸² Thus, unlike Fichte, Hegel's task in the *Phenomenology* is not a transcendental argument for the possibility of consciousness, but rather an examination of the forms of consciousness itself. See Stephen Houlgate, "Is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* an Essay in Transcendental Argument?," in *The Transcendental Turn*, ed. Sebastian Gardner and Matthew Grist (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 173–94.

but also a consciousness of what is not oneself. Indeed, consciousness of self is possible only in relation to what is other than the self.

This introduces a paradox: self-consciousness can be what it is only in relation to what is other than itself. Self-consciousness sees this as a contradiction and tries to resolve this contradiction by turning away from otherness back onto itself. It can do this because, although it certainly views its object as real, it nevertheless views it as subordinate to itself, as existing for self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, in other words, can be what it is – aware of itself – only in relation to what is other, but it views this other object merely as the *instrument* by which it is what it is, the instrument by which it is aware of itself.

Thus, self-consciousness affirms, or satisfies, itself by turning away from its object (by ‘negating’ it) and thereby becoming aware of itself alone. But such satisfaction can occur only through negating the other. Thus, self-consciousness must continually negate other objects in order to satisfy or affirm itself. Self-consciousness, in other words, can be conscious of itself only through negating what is other than itself.

Since self-consciousness can satisfy itself only through this continual negation of otherness, it comes to realize that otherness has a degree of independence. Self-consciousness must therefore relate to otherness in a new way: otherness can still be negated, but it is something *independent* that can be negated. More precisely, self-consciousness can be conscious of itself through its negation of an other, but through negation of an other which has a degree of independence from it.

This, however, precipitates another contradiction. Self-consciousness is satisfied by being what it is, by being conscious of itself alone. Yet awareness of oneself alone must occur through something which is independent of itself. It can be alone only through another. This

contradiction can be resolved if the independent other is capable of self-negation: this allows for the negation of otherness (leaving self-consciousness aware of itself alone), yet without self-consciousness having to engage with otherness (which is what precipitates the contradiction).

The only thing that is capable of self-negation, however, is another self-consciousness. Thus, the desire of the first self-consciousness can be provided only by another self-consciousness. As Hegel puts it, “Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness.”¹⁸³ In negating itself for the sake of the other, the second self-consciousness thereby enables the first self-consciousness to have awareness of itself with minimal engagement with the second. The second self-consciousness is merely a mirror for the first, for the first sees only itself in the second. The second self-consciousness recognizes the first, but the first does not recognize the second.

In seeing itself in the other, however, the first self-consciousness feels alienated from itself because its identity is located outside of itself. To remedy this, the first self-consciousness reclaims its identity from the second. This leaves the second self-consciousness no longer a mere mirror for the first – the first self-consciousness recognizes the full independence of the second. Self-consciousness is therefore achieved through another self-consciousness, but precisely through recognition of that other as a free and equal self-consciousness. Thus, each self-consciousness is mediated by the other self-consciousness. As Hegel puts it, each self-consciousness

is aware that it at once is, and is not, another consciousness, and equally that this other is for itself only when it supersedes itself as being for itself, and is for itself only in the being-for-self of the other. Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an

¹⁸³ Hegel, *PS* §175 (p. 110). This text is quite similar to a statement that Staudenmaier makes (which we will examine below) wherein he states that a divine person can find its satisfaction only in another divine person. See below, n. 45.

immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another.¹⁸⁴

The dialectical movement above began with sameness, moved to difference, and then this sameness and difference were mediated. At first, the consciousness took what was before it not as independent, but rather as an instrument *for itself*. Subsequently, the consciousness came to see the other as independent, but such independence was viewed as alien to itself. Finally, each consciousness realized that its very self was mediated by otherness, that otherness is constitutive of itself (and this is why it can see itself in the other).

It is in this third phase that a concrete unity emerges, for there comes to be (as Hegel often put the matter) an identity of identity and difference. Mere sameness without any difference whatsoever would be static and indeterminate, and total difference would preclude any unity. In concrete unity, however, difference is mediated by sameness (and vice versa).

3.3 The Trinity as a Dialectic of Concrete Unity

3.3.1 Introduction

Now that we have a model before us of interpersonal dialectical movement, we can examine Staudenmaier's trinitarian dialectic. We have seen already that his trinitarian dialectic begins with mere sameness (the Father), which issues in otherness (the generation of the Son from the Father), and this otherness is subsequently mediated (the spiration of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son). The task now before us is to examine how Staudenmaier's understanding of the triune life of God manifests those features of interpersonal dialectic examined above. This will enable us to consider how the Trinity forms a concrete unity and how such a unity funds divine transcendence over the created order.

¹⁸⁴ Hegel, *PS* §184 (p. 112).

Interpersonal concrete unity, as we have seen, consists in a unity amongst difference. As Hegel put it, there is an identity of identity and non-identity. As such, Staudenmaier's notion of the interpersonal concrete unity of the Trinity is what I call an *ethical unity*: a unity (= identity) between different individuals (= difference) who share one and the same universal (= identity). I refer to this type of unity as "ethical" because it involves the use of what Staudenmaier refers to as the "ethical" attributes of intelligence and will. Through intelligence, the individuals come to possess knowledge of their common universality, and through will the individuals yield their own individualities for the sake of the greater whole.

In Hegel's dialectic, this ethical unity amongst persons occurs through "recognition" by different individuals of their common universality.¹⁸⁵ Admittedly, Staudenmaier does not use the term "recognition" (*Anerkennung*) in his trinitarian dialectic. Nonetheless, he does speak in similar terms (as we will see below), most often using the verb *erkennen* (to know), but occasionally using the verbs *begreifen* (to grasp) and *schauen* (to behold).

3.3.2 *Mutual Recognition*

Concrete unity, as an identity of identity and difference, involves identity in two different senses. One sense of identity, which we have already seen, is what I have called a 'common universality' amongst the individuals. In Staudenmaier's trinitarian dialectic, this sense of identity is the one common essence that is shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The concrete unity of the triune life of God, however, is more than a unity of essence: "The unity (*Einheit*) of God is consequently no abstract, but a concrete, unity, and this

¹⁸⁵ For studies on the notion of 'recognition' in Hegel, see Robert R. Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, revised edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998) and Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992).

concreteness consists *not only in each of the divine persons being one with the divine essence, but also and chiefly in the fact that the one essence of God emerges in a threefold personality and is spiritually living.*”¹⁸⁶ “What mediates the being-in-one-another and the living-in-one-another of the three divine persons, *alongside the unity of substance* is, in addition, love, which posits personally, i.e. for intelligence and will, what is already posited eternally through the eternal nature.”¹⁸⁷

Concrete unity indicates a unity of the trinitarian persons not simply in terms of their sharing of a common essence but, in addition, a unity in terms of personal subjectivity (achieved through the capacities of intelligence and will). We saw in our examination of Hegel’s interpersonal dialectic that the ethical unity of persons is grounded in a mutual recognition between the persons of their common universality. Such recognition, we saw, consists in each person seeing herself ‘in’ the other person, in the sense that she recognizes that the other person is a human *just as she is*. And it is in virtue of seeing herself in the other that she suspends her will as merely her own and yields her will to the greater whole of which they are all a part.

In Staudenmaier’s trinitarian dialectic, we see an interesting parallel with Hegel’s notion of mutual recognition, where Staudenmaier speaks of the divine persons as knowing or discerning the commonality between themselves. Indeed, Staudenmaier speaks of the divine persons discerning themselves *in* the other persons: “The Father knows (*erkennt*) Himself not only in the Son and the Son in the Father, they are not only known (*erkannt*) mutually by one

¹⁸⁶ CD II §79.1 (470-71). Emphasis mine. This is a text which I have already introduced above.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., §93.12 (p. 602). Emphasis mine.

another, but both of them know (*erkennen*) themselves and are known (*erkannt*) in the identity of their essence in a third like person.”¹⁸⁸

Staudenmaier utilizes this language in other places as well:

Knowing (*erkennend*) Himself, each person knows (*erkennt*) Himself in the essence which is one and the same for all the persons; grasping (*begreifend*) Himself each person grasps (*begreift*) Himself in the other: no one knows the Father except the Son, and no one knows the Son except the Father. If the Father turns His vision in upon Himself, and His spiritual essence reflects itself, it replicates itself, so to speak, in this vision. Then this reflection is not itself a mere reflection, but by recognizing (*erkennt*) Himself, He recognizes (*erkennt*) the Son, and by recognizing (*erkennt*) the Son, He recognizes (*erkennt*) Himself. The essence, which He knows as His own, He knows also as the essence of the Son, when he knows the essence of the Son as His own.¹⁸⁹

And again:

In absolute vision the Father, from whom emerges the movement in the trinitarian life, places His essence in the Son, recognizes (*erkennt*) Himself in the Son, and is recognized (*erkannt wird*) by the Son in turn in the identity of essence, and...these two behold (*schauen*) their identical essence in a third person, and are recognized (*erkannt werden*) again by this third person and are ratified through this recognition (*Erkenntniß*), through which the self-knowledge of the Godhead completes itself.¹⁹⁰

As we saw in our examination of Hegelian interpersonal dialectic, mutual recognition between persons results in each opening herself up to the others, where each no longer wills merely for herself, but each directs her will to ends that are mutually beneficial. Or more positively, through a free individual’s mediation that occurs via its relation to other free beings, certain ways of acting become closed-off, yet new ones are opened.

In Staudenmaier’s trinitarian dialectic we see a similar notion, where the will of one becomes the will of another and vice-versa. As Staudenmaier puts it, “Each person wills Himself

¹⁸⁸ CD II §93.14 (p. 605).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., §93.10 (p. 599).

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., §93.6 (p. 595). Note the mediating role of the Holy Spirit here and in note 29 above.

as an independent essence; however, the person wills Himself just as much in the other persons, and finally He is willed by the other persons as He wills Himself in them. Thus there is a mutual willing and being willed, and indeed this willing in the divine persons is a willing from, through, in, and for one another, just as it is with knowing.”¹⁹¹ And again: “The Father wills Himself in the Son and Spirit, and is willed by the Son and Spirit; the Son wills Himself in the Father and the Spirit, and is willed by the Father and the Spirit; the Spirit wills Himself in the Father and the Son, and is willed by the Father and the Son.”¹⁹²

The unity is clear when Staudenmaier says, “The divine persons always will the same thing, and they will it in the same way. In fact, this will is here exactly the same in the intention of being and willing oneself in another.”¹⁹³ As we will see in the next section, these acts of mutual knowing and willing result in the formation of a social structure which is more than the sum of individuals – the acts of mutual knowing and willing result in the formation of a community.

3.3.3 Trinity as Community and the Actualization of Personal Subjectivity

What we saw in Hegel’s interpersonal dialectic is that there is a socially-guiding principle, a principle which transcends the individuals as such. This principle pushes the individuals to abrogate their individualities as such and form a socially cohesive structure which transcends their individualities. In short, the Hegelian interpersonal dialectic results in the formation of community. Each individual is not meant to be an isolated individual but, instead, is

¹⁹¹ CD II §93.11 (p. 601).

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., (pp. 601-02).

meant to be mediated to herself through her relations with other persons, relations constituted by mutual respect. This is precisely why in Hegel's dialectic, for example, self-consciousness can only properly be self-consciousness if it is mediated through its relation with another self-consciousness.

Staudenmaier himself uses language that is reminiscent of this dialectic when speaking of the triune life: "Through this mutuality (*Gegenseitigkeit*) and reciprocity (*Wechselseitigkeit*) [of the divine persons], the rigidity of being-for-self (*Fürsichseins*) as posited in the mere I dissolves itself and personality stands in its place."¹⁹⁴ According to Staudenmaier, therefore, the individuality of each divine person is dialectically transformed into an openness toward the other persons. Here we see that the divine person abrogates His individuality as such so as to form a socially cohesive structure.

The name for this opening of self to others is *love*. Love draws the divine persons out of their rigid individualities and opens them to one another:

If the particular essence of good and love consists in the going out of one person over to another, as well as in the incorporation of the life of the other person into one's own, then the divine person can fully be love only if with it is a second person, and with and beside the second a third person, in which the tripersonal life completes itself as an absolutely perfect life. The multiplicity of persons is demanded by the essence of love itself. As the divine person is able to love completely only its like, and is able to be truly loved again by another like [thing]...so can the divine person only again be love toward a divine person. The perfection, truth, purity, integrity, holiness, and eternity of the divine love demands, therefore, tripersonality, and indeed this eternally.¹⁹⁵

As Staudenmaier puts it elsewhere, "What posits, and therefore mediates, the being and living in-, from-, through-, and for-one-another of the three divine persons, considered inwardly, is

¹⁹⁴ CD II §93.8 (p. 596).

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., §93.12 (p. 603). Here again, Staudenmaier references Richard of St. Victor.

love.”¹⁹⁶ It is through love, Staudenmaier insists, that unity occurs: “Love is itself unity, and it is at the same time the law of unity, namely the law according to which life forms and presents itself as a unity.”¹⁹⁷

Because concrete unity amongst personal subjects is the end by which is mediated by love, and because love is just the exercise of the personal capacities of intelligence and will toward concrete unity, Staudenmaier at times even speaks of love and unity as the teleological explanation for the multiplicity of persons (recall the text we just examined where Staudenmaier says that “[t]he multiplicity of persons is demanded by the essence of love itself.”)

Indeed, love is what drives personal subjects to seek other personal subjects: “The infinite disposition (*Gemüth*) of the divine person can find its satisfaction (*Befriedigung*) only in the equally infinite disposition of the other divine person.”¹⁹⁸ Without a multiplicity of persons in the Trinity, Staudenmaier notes, love would be abstract: “If the divine essence is mono-personal (*Einpersönlich*), then the eternal love of the Godhead can relate only to itself. But the love which relates purely to itself is abstract love, which is likened to self-seeking.”¹⁹⁹ Therefore, the subjectivities of the divine persons are actualized only insofar as they are engaged in relations with one another characterized by love. Because the subjectivities of the divine persons are actualized through mutual relations of love, their subjectivities can be actualized only if the divine is comprised of *multiple* divine persons.

¹⁹⁶ CD II §93.15 (p. 608).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., §93.13 (p. 604).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., §79.2 (p. 472).

We have seen that the subjectivity of an individual divine person is actualized only insofar as the person is engaged in relations of love with the other divine persons. It is because the divine consists of multiple divine persons that the subjectivities of each can be actualized and a community can be formed. We will see below that this has important implications for how God relates to the created order, our final topic of consideration.

4. Implications of the Actualization of Divine Personality

In the previous chapter, we saw that, for Staudenmaier, the divine engages the created order as a personal subject (i.e., a subject who displays the features of being-for-self, intelligence, and will). We have also seen Staudenmaier's insistence that God does not develop His personal subjectivity through or by means of the created order, and thus that the created order does not actualize divine subjectivity. Rather, because the divine consists in a concrete unity of personal subjects – and this as an immanent feature – there are important implications for how God relates to the nondivine.

Indeed, because God is Trinity – and so because divine subjectivity is actualized immanently – God does not need to actualize His own subjectivity through the created order. As Staudenmaier puts it, “Because only thereby, that God as triune forms for Himself a ‘complete’ world (*eine vollkommene Welt*) can He, without Himself becoming the world, posit a creation outside of Himself, and stand lofty and elevated over this creation as its Lord, leader, ruler, and sanctifier.”²⁰⁰

It is precisely because divine subjectivity is actualized immanently – apart from the created order – that God can engage the created order *as* a personal subject. This is because God

²⁰⁰ CD III §5.2 (p. 8).

cannot relate *to* the created order through His intellect and will if the created order is that *through* which His intellect and will are developed. As a result, divine engagement with the created order – particularly with created persons – can be an interpersonal engagement.

We saw above that each divine person recognizes Himself in the other divine persons, and recognizes the other divine persons in Himself. As Staudenmaier puts it, each person ‘posits’ Himself in the other persons:

The Father, in an absolute way, posits (*setzt*) the Son through eternal generation, and with the positing (*Setzung*) of the Son is combined the self-positing (*Selbstsetzung*) of the Father, while He, generating the Son, posits (*setzt*), wills, and loves Himself in the Son. Further, the Son posits (*setzt*) Himself in the Father, as He posits (*setzt*) the Father in Himself, while He recognizes Himself as the Son. The Father and the Son posit (*setzen*) particularly the Spirit, as they posit (*setzen*) themselves in Him and He posits (*setzt*) Himself in them.²⁰¹

Staudenmaier relates this inter-trinitarian phenomena to God’s acts *ad extra*, noting that it is in virtue of the positing of the divine persons within the Trinity that the divine is capable of positing the extradivine. If the divine persons can posit themselves outside of themselves and in each other, Staudenmaier notes, “then we have three eternal, absolute principles which exist from, through, in, and for one another which, since they exist from, in, and through one another, also possess the absolute power (*Macht*), in union with one another, to posit (*setzen*) the world outside of themselves.”²⁰² If the positing of something outside of God is possible only in virtue of interdivine positing, and if interdivine positing is what accounts for fully-developed divine subjectivity, then it is only in virtue of fully-developed divine subjectivity – and so only in virtue of God being Trinity – that there can be a positing of something outside of God.

²⁰¹ CD II §93.15 (p. 607).

²⁰² Ibid.

If the encounter between God and the created order is interpersonal, and if the possibility of God's encounter with creation as interpersonal is dependent upon the immanent interpersonal encounter within the Trinity, then the encounter between God and the created order – as interpersonal – will be a reflection of the trinitarian interpersonal encounter. Thus, Staudenmaier says, “The absolute self-positing (*Selbstsetzung*) in the trinitarian life which exists from and through itself reflects itself in the positing (*Setzung*) of the world as the free creation of the world.”²⁰³

What we see above is that God being triune is the condition for the possibility of God's ability to posit a world other than Himself. We also see, however, that God's actions *ad extra* reflect the characteristics of the inner life of the Trinity. In chapter one, we examined the elements of personal subjectivity, viz., being-for-self, intelligence, and will. In chapter two, we examined an element of interpersonal encounter (that of presence), and how the elements of personal subjectivity and interpersonal encounter obtain in the case of God's interaction with the created order. Finally, here in chapter three, we have seen how the members of the Trinity themselves possess the elements of personality, as well as how the interpersonal encounters amongst them occur. Since the subjects of interpersonal encounter within the Trinity are just the very same divine persons who act *ad extra*, the very same aspects of interpersonal encounter within the Trinity are construed by Staudenmaier as manifest in God's interpersonal encounter with the nondivine.

We see Staudenmaier's insistence on the correspondence between trinitarian interpersonal encounter and the divine-creaturely interpersonal encounter in ways other than just that of the positing mentioned above. In the previous chapter, we saw that the mode of God's

²⁰³ CD II §93.15 (p. 607).

interpersonal presence to the created order is that of omnipresence. Interestingly, Staudenmaier utilizes this same mode of presence as characteristic of the interpersonal encounter within the Trinity: “If the divine persons reciprocally know themselves in one another, know and grasp themselves each undividedly and entirely in the others, and the others equally in themselves, each has opened itself entirely for the others...then this mutual personing, this reciprocal sounding-through-self (*Sichdurchtönen*) and self-permeating (*Sichdurchdringen*), is the omnipresence in the trinitarian life.”²⁰⁴ The omnipresence which characterizes the interpersonal encounter between the trinitarian persons themselves, Staudenmaier continues, simply manifests itself in God’s interpersonal encounter between Himself and creation: “This omnipresence [in the trinitarian life] expands itself by coming into the world, which is the work of the triune God, and which the triune God itself permeates (*durchdringt*), dwells though (*durchwohnt*), and sounds through (*durchtönt*).”²⁰⁵

We saw in the previous chapter as well that the intellectual omnipresence of the divine to the created order is the divine omniscience. Curiously, Staudenmaier will speak of divine omniscience not only as God’s knowledge of the created order, but as characteristic of the trinitarian interpersonal encounter. As Staudenmaier puts it,

As the three divine persons know (*erkennen*) themselves most deeply and completely in and through one another according to their particularities, and with this knowledge combine the equally complete knowledge of that which they think, will, and accomplish concerning the world, this knowledge, which permeates the entire Godhead in its complete scope and deepest ground and in the same way grasps the world through and through, is the divine omniscience. . . . The divine omniscience extends therefore, as we have seen earlier, not only to the world, but just as much and already previously, to the Godhead itself, and this precisely as the triune Godhead.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ CD II §93.15 (p. 606).

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

Again, that the characteristics of the interpersonal encounter between God and creation are described as characteristics of the interpersonal encounter between the divine persons of the Trinity suggests that Staudenmaier regards the two sorts of encounter as merely two species of a shared genus. Or perhaps more neutrally, Staudenmaier regards the Trinity as the model which is exemplified in creation.

Of course, the interpersonal encounter between God and created personal subjects is not an encounter between equals, but between the infinite and finite, between the Absolute and the relative. As such, the creature's relation to God is not a neutral relation because her creation, existence, and destiny are ordered to the divine. The interpersonal encounter between God and creature is such that the former is the *telos* of the latter.

We saw in the previous chapter that the interpersonal encounter between God and creature, insofar as God is the *telos* of the creature, is characterized by God implementing the means by which creatures can reach Him as their *telos*. God imparts wisdom – the truth about Himself as their end and how they may reach Him as their end – which is subjectively appropriated by creatures through religion. Interpersonal encounter with the divine, therefore, is characterized by seeking God as one's ultimate goal, by offering oneself to God so as to exist in, through, and for Him.

Significantly, though, Staudenmaier speaks of the divine as *telos* not only for creatures, but as *telos for the divine itself*. In other words, there is a *telos* which is *within* the divine that is also *for* the divine. God realizes Himself as His own goal. As Staudenmaier puts it:

If wisdom is practical knowing, and consists not only in knowing the goal to which one strives, but also in knowing the means which lead to this goal; and finally, if wisdom is not only this just described knowing, but in addition the actual self-completion of that which is known and aspired to befits it; then in God, knowing is eternally wisdom,

because in God knowing is an eternally consummating and eternally completing knowing, the goal is an eternally fulfilled and eternally achieved goal.²⁰⁷

Wisdom, therefore, does not describe only a presence of the divine in the created milieu, but also describes the immanent life of God.

Wisdom, as we have seen, is that by which a *telos* is appropriated by a personal subject just through those personal characteristics of intellect and will. Further, as we have seen, the Father, Son, and Spirit are each personal subjects. Finally, as the text above shows, wisdom is a characteristic of the immanent life of God. This sets up Staudenmaier for rendering the wisdom of the immanent life of God in a trinitarian register. Thus, referring to that goal of which he spoke in the above text, Staudenmaier continues by saying, “This eternally fulfilled and achieved goal is no other than the trinitarian life of the Godhead itself in its unending unity, in the harmonious being in-, through-, and for-one-another of the three divine persons, which being in-, through-, and for-one-another we can name the absolute wisdom as the achieved in God: it is wisdom as absolute complete life in which the idea of the Godhead is seen as eternally achieved.”²⁰⁸

What Staudenmaier is saying, therefore, is that the interpersonal encounter within the Trinity is characterized by wisdom – wisdom by which the divine persons are led to one another as the *telos* of each. As a personal subject, each divine person seeks and reaches the other divine persons through intellect and will. To be sure, Staudenmaier speaks of the wisdom within the divine as eternally fulfilled and eternally achieved, and so distinguishes wisdom within the

²⁰⁷ CD II §93.15 (p. 607).

²⁰⁸ Ibid., (pp. 607-8).

divine from wisdom within creation. Nonetheless, Staudenmaier is making a radical move by describing the divine persons as *telos* for one another.

It is in this notion of wisdom that we can see again that Staudenmaier regards the interpersonal encounter between the divine and creature as a reflection of the interpersonal encounter between the divine persons. Thus, Staudenmaier says, “This same wisdom [viz., the wisdom by which the divine persons are led to one another as the destination of each] turns outwardly as the wisdom which leads the world to its destination, which destination is God Himself.”²⁰⁹ Interestingly, here Staudenmaier notes that the wisdom “which leads the world to its destination” is just the outwardly-turned wisdom of the inner divine life. The interpersonal encounter between God and creature is therefore an outwardly-turned manifestation of the interpersonal encounter of the divine Trinity.

In Staudenmaier’s theology, therefore, we see that the Trinity is of vital importance. As I hope I have shown over the past three chapters, for Staudenmaier, the Trinity is not simply a more proper way of describing the God of the Christian tradition; more than this, the Trinity *performs a function*, in that it is the means by which divine subjectivity becomes actual and thereby the means by which divine transcendence is preserved. Of course, whether or not the performance of a function is indeed a good thing in understanding the Trinity is debatable, and my take on this matter is given in the concluding chapter.

²⁰⁹ CD II §93.15 (p. 608).

Chapter 4

DORNER'S THEOLOGICAL PROJECT

Introduction

Over the next three chapters I will present Isaak August Dorner's doctrine of God and, in this chapter specifically, its attendant theological methodology. Dorner's doctrine of God culminates in his doctrine of the Trinity, the significance of which, I will demonstrate, lies in how it functions as the ground for so many of his other theological claims. An important theme that runs across the entire presentation is that of God as 'love.' According to Dorner, the Evangelical (i.e. Protestant) experience of Christian faith demands that God must be experienced, above all, as love.

Although such a description of God hardly seems novel (and, in fact, perhaps even saccharine), for Dorner neither is the case. Although God has been described as 'love' since biblical times, it is only since the emergence of Protestantism, and more proximately, only since Schleiermacher, that this designation of God has begun to be taken seriously. Further, Dorner understands 'love' as predicated of God not in a sentimental way, but in a quite robust, philosophically-grounded sense, as a union of freedom and necessity.

Thus the Evangelical experience of faith, as Dorner understands it, demands that God be experienced as love. More specifically, in the Evangelical experience, there is a union of freedom and necessity in the human person: the human person *freely* (hence, the aspect of freedom) wills to offer herself to the *demands* (hence, the aspect of necessity) of the gospel. Such

experience has its archetype in God: “Our aim must be that the Trinity legitimate itself to believing apprehension as the objective foundation (*Fundament*) in God of the Christian personality, and especially of that which is peculiarly evangelical.”²¹⁰ In God Himself, therefore, there must be some union of freedom and necessity if God is to be thought of as love and therefore if the Evangelical experience is to be vindicated:

The proper evangelical union of these opposites [viz., freedom and necessity] must have its eternal necessity in God Himself, nay, must have in Him its eternal archetype (*Urbild*) and its supreme principle. And since the opposites, the union of which is perfected in the Christian personality, are of an ethical kind, it must follow that the fundamental Reformation knowledge of the Christian personality is to be placed theologically securely and objectively in the ethical idea of God, seeing that the necessity of these opposites, like their union, is shown in their absolute verification (*Begründung*), i.e. in God Himself in His ethically thought triune being.²¹¹

That God Himself is love, however, entails certain metaphysical requirements. God cannot be merely a lifeless substance, for example, but rather must possess a robust form of agency, having properties like consciousness and will (which will be accounted for in the following chapter). But beyond the possession of a robust form of agency, to be love, God must be able to view Himself as His own object of love, God must be able to freely will the highest good that He Himself is. And this is just the aspect of freedom and necessity which must characterize God if the Evangelical experience of faith is to be vindicated.

As we will see, in Dorner’s theology, that God is able to freely will the highest good that He Himself is – that God can possess this union of freedom and necessity within Himself – requires the particularly *Christian* understanding of God: that God is the Trinity. The Trinity for Dorner, therefore, operates as the subterranean foundation for his robust theological claims. In

²¹⁰ *SCD I* §31.2 (p. 417).

²¹¹ *Ibid.* Translation altered.

Dorner's theology, without the Trinity, God cannot love Himself, and thus God cannot be the archetype for the Evangelical experience of faith.

In the current chapter, we will explore how Dorner understands his own theological enterprise. In section 1, we will examine three concepts that will be operative in the presentation of Dorner's theology over the next three chapters, namely the 'physical,' 'logical,' and 'ethical' aspects of being. In section 2, we will examine how Dorner understands these concepts to have operated in the history of theology, specifically their arrangement in the theologies of Martin Luther and Friedrich Schleiermacher. Dorner lauds these two Protestant thinkers because he sees them as privileging the ethical aspect of God over the physical and logical aspects. It is in Luther that an ethical conception of God begins to arise (2.1). Although theology begins to languish in subsequent generations of Protestantism (see 2.2), the arrival of German Idealism and Romanticism breathes new life into understanding the primacy of the ethical in God. Dorner lauds Schleiermacher specifically (as we will see in 2.3.1) because his ethical conception of the divine pertains not merely to the doctrine of justification, but is systematically worked out in his doctrine of God. Therefore, some attention will be given to Schleiermacher's doctrine of God (2.3.2).

In section 3, we will examine Schleiermacher as a theological precedent to Dorner. This will help us understand how Dorner conceives of God as love (3.1). We will see, though, that Dorner finds unsatisfactory certain aspects of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God (3.2) and therefore he will seek to amend Schleiermacher on these points (3.3).

In exploring how Dorner understands the theological enterprises of Luther and Schleiermacher as well as his own in relation to them, we will then be in a position to understand Dorner's doctrine of God proper, which is presented in the next two chapters. Although much

terrain will be covered over the next three chapters, the goal is simple: to show how an ethical understanding of God requires that God be Trinity.

1. Aspects of Being: Physical, Logical, and Ethical

As mentioned above, Dorner seeks to arrive at a conception of the Christian God – reached through the Evangelical experience of faith – that is ‘ethical.’ But what, exactly, does he mean by ‘ethical’? The term ‘ethical’ here is to be contrasted with ‘physical’ or ‘logical’ notions of being.²¹² The ‘physical’ aspects of being involve those aspects which are constitutive of it as the type of thing it is, i.e. given its nature. In the case of God, for example, this would include properties like omnipotence. The ‘logical’ aspects of being include those aspects of being which designate an intellectual component. In the case of God, this would designate properties like consciousness, intellect, and knowledge. Finally, the ‘ethical’ aspects of being involve those aspects which regard goodness.

As an agent, my physical aspects consist in the fact that I am a being with a particular nature or particular capacities. If I consisted of merely, say, logical aspects, then I could only think or will, but such thinking or willing could never terminate in actions. Similarly, if I consisted of merely physical aspects, then I would possess certain capacities for acting, but would have no ability to direct such capacities in logical ways.

As we will explore in greater depth in the next two chapters, Dorner believes that for an agent to possess the fullness of ethical subjectivity requires a union of two elements: necessity and freedom. Here I will treat them in that order. First, an agent’s ethical subjectivity requires that there be a good which is present to the agent and to which the agent is to pursue as a good,

²¹² Unfortunately, Dorner nowhere offers any formal definition of these terms. The definitions offered here are based on my own observations on how Dorner utilizes the terms.

something to which the agent has an obligation. As Dorner puts it, “Certainly nothing can be shown to be moral which may not in some way be or become duty; the whole realm of morals must be brought under the aspect of duty; and this is accordingly an essential side of the matter.”²¹³

However, there must be a particular relationship between the good and the agent’s will: “The idea of duty indeed, although it itself represents that which is morally necessary, presupposes freedom, self-determination...”²¹⁴ However, there are certain actions I might perform which may objectively be good (it is good that I breathe), but which I did not deliberately choose to pursue. It would be odd to think of me as ethically good simply in virtue of, say, breathing. Such oddness issues from the fact that, in the act of breathing, my will is not involved at all. We think of a person as ethically good when they have performed willful, or deliberate, actions which we recognize as good. We might describe a person as good if we know that she saved a drowning person, for example. Such an act cannot be performed without the involvement of the person’s will.

Of course, the involvement of the will is a necessary condition of ethical goodness, but it is not sufficient. There are many actions that people perform which involve their will, yet such actions may not be considered good. A person might deliberately murder another, for example, but such an act would not be considered good. Thus, the involvement of the will covers the subjective aspect of the ethically good, but an objective aspect must also be present. The individual who saves a drowning person is deemed good not just because she utilized her will

²¹³ Isaak August Dorner, *System of Christian Ethics*, ed. August Johannes Dorner, trans. Charles Marsh Mead and R. T. Cunningham (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1887), §2.1 (p. 9) (hereafter abbreviated as *SCE*, followed by section number and page number). This is the translation of Isaak August Dorner, *System der christlichen Sittenlehre* (Berlin: Hertz, 1885).

²¹⁴ Ibid.

and deliberately acted to save another, but also because we recognize that helping others to stay alive is objectively good. Thus, the person is thought of as good because she recognized the objective good and pursued this good deliberately.

For me to be an ethically good agent, therefore, I cannot just decide that whichever acts I perform or whichever goods I desire are good simply in virtue of my performing such acts or desiring such goods. Rather, for me to be ethically good means there are objective goods which are not immediately in my possession and which I must pursue in order to be good. (Thus, for example, Dorner describes the subject of Christian ethics as “the morally good, or the absolutely worthy, as existing for the human personal will, and as attaining reality through it, i.e., by means of the self-determination of the will.”)²¹⁵

To put the matter positively, for the agent to be considered ethically good requires that she *freely* will this good; she must desire to make this goodness a part of its own being. (To use the language of some ethical theories, she must endorse the act in question.) If I perform the acts which I ought but did so unaware, or only because I was forced to by another, I cannot be said to be an ethically good agent. As Dorner puts it, “The playing of a child upon whom the consciousness of an ethical rule has not yet dawned, is not yet to be placed under the category of the ethical, although will, self-determination, and consciousness need not be wanting in it...”²¹⁶

Thus, *freedom* is involved in being an ethically good agent.

For the agent to be considered ethically good, then, requires a union of freedom and necessity: on the one hand, there must be a good which is not identified with whatever the agent happens to will, a good which is not up to the agent to decide, and this constitutes the element of

²¹⁵ SCE §2 heading (p. 6).

²¹⁶ Ibid., §2.3 (p. 13).

necessity. On the other hand, this good must be freely chosen and willed by the agent, and this constitutes the element of freedom.

Now that we have defined what the physical, logical, and ethical aspects of being entail, we will examine how they relate. *Conceptually*, there is nothing about these three categories *per se* which entails how they ought to be related to one another. *Religiously*, however, Dorner sees the ordering of these categories as extremely important. Indeed, the way in which these three categories are ordered within God determines whether or not one is speaking of, say, a pagan, Jewish, or Christian understanding of God, and – amongst Christian understandings of God – of a Catholic or Protestant understanding of God.

To be sure, each of these various conceptions of God include all three aspects, physical, logical, and ethical. What distinguishes them, however, is which of these aspects is privileged. To privilege the physical aspects of God would mean, for example, that the components which are natural to God's being would direct what God wills. Thus, for example, it is part of God's nature to have ability or fullness of strength, to have the capability of doing anything. If such physical elements were privileged over, say, the ethical elements, then because God could do anything, God would will to do those things. On the other hand, to privilege the ethical aspect would mean that God's willing is not dominated by the components which are natural to God's being. To privilege the ethical aspect of God, in other words, means that although God possesses the capacity to do anything, God does not act blindly and can choose to direct this capacity.²¹⁷ Having sketched this conceptual map, we will now examine how Dorner utilizes it in his own theological project.

²¹⁷ Thus, for example, God would will something which is against His nature.

2. Physical, Logical, and Ethical Conceptions of God in the History of Theology

According to Dorner, a conception of God which privileges the ethical has not always been operative in the Christian theological tradition. Indeed, in Dorner's reading of the history of theology, it is only in the emergence of Protestantism where such a conception begins to arise. This is not to imply that Dorner believed a Roman Catholic conception of God to include no ability of God to direct His physical aspects by His ethical aspects.²¹⁸ But for Dorner, the Catholic doctrine of God, *generally speaking*, allowed for too much privileging of the physical aspects of God over the ethical.

To make these nuances clear, we will examine Dorner's understanding of these developments in the history of theology. To this end, there are two Protestant theologians in particular which we will examine in order to get a sense of what Dorner is up to, namely Martin Luther and Friedrich Schleiermacher. I have selected these two to look at because Dorner sees them as important turning-points in the history of Christian theology with respect to a primarily ethical understanding of God.

2.1 The Beginning of the Evangelical Principle of Faith: Martin Luther

Of Martin Luther, Dorner says, "The personality of Luther is one of those great historical figures in which whole nations recognize their own type...in which the germ of a new moral and religious perception is as it were embodied."²¹⁹ In the following section, we will explore how

²¹⁸ Dorner often played the ethical and physical aspects of God off against one another. This, as we will see, is due to how he sees the difference between Protestant and Catholic understandings of God. While in the history of theology, the emergence of Protestantism brought about a more robust ethical conception of God (at least insofar as Dorner reads the history of theology), there were not really any analogous events that brought about new logical conceptions of God. Thus the logical aspects of God's being will drop out of the historical treatment here.

²¹⁹ Dorner, Isaak August, *History of Protestant Theology: Particularly in Germany, viewed according to its fundamental movement and in connection with the religious, moral, and intellectual life* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1871), vol. 1, p. 81 (hereafter abbreviated as *HPT*, followed by volume number and page number). This is the translation of Isaak August Dorner, *Geschichte der protestantischen Theologie besonders in Deutschland: nach ihrer principiellen*

Dorner understands this ‘new moral and religious perception’ which becomes distinctive of Protestantism, and which provides for thinking of God in a more ‘ethical’ manner compared to Catholicism. This new conception of the relation between God and the human Dorner refers to as the “Evangelical Principle of Faith” or the “Reformation Principle of Faith” (consisting of a “material” side – viz., justification through faith alone – and of a “formal” side – viz., the sole authority of scripture).

According to Dorner, what is distinctive about Luther is that he “seeks to see in Christ the bringing of the divine and human into perfect union...”²²⁰ For Dorner, the union of the divine and the human in Luther’s Christology is not simply a metaphysical doctrine of Christ’s two natures. What is novel in Luther’s Christology, as Dorner sees it, is that the hypostatic union reveals an inherent *correlation* of God and human beings. Here we quote Dorner at length:

For the unity of the person of Christ, in which God and man are united, [Luther] finds a basis by remoulding the conception regarding God and man according to the standard of the principle of faith. Under the old conception of God, the ‘old wisdom,’ wherein majesty, might, and infinitude passed for the highest and innermost essence of God, it must have appeared unbefitting that God should not only act upon a man, or accept and bear a man, so to speak, as His revelation and figure, but should make humanity His own and impute it to Himself as Himself to it. But, says Luther, God is not content with the glory of being the Creator of all creatures... He seeks also to be known in what He is inwardly. His glory is His love, which seeks the lowly and the poor. ‘This is the new wisdom’ [*Luthers Werke von Walch*, vii 1826-43; x. 1372, 1402]. God’s good pleasure in the incarnation consists in this, that therein He pours out His nature, reveals His heart. . . . Not less, in ‘the old language,’ does creature signify something which is infinitely separated from the highest divinity, so that the two are directly opposed to one another. But in the new language or wisdom humanity signifies something different, unutterably nearly connected with Divinity... The new wisdom accordingly gives first the true conception of man, according to which he in himself, i.e. by nature, is not a complete whole, at least does not correspond to the idea for which God destined him; but it belongs to His idea, and insofar also to the truth of his nature, that he should enjoy participation in God through the communion of God with him. It belongs, however, to the ‘old wisdom’

Bewegung: und im Zusammenhang mit dem religiösen, sittlichen und intellectuellen Leben (München: JG Cotta, 1867).

²²⁰ *HPT*, vol. 1, p. 198.

to represent God and man, according to their relative conceptions, as mutually exclusive.²²¹

What exactly about this is novel? For Dorner, the ‘old conception’ of God took the primary (and thus normative) divine attributes to be those such as God’s majesty, might, and infinitude. (Note the difference between these attributes and the attribute that Dorner will proclaim as “the supreme, the only adequate definition of the essence of God,” that of love.)²²² The ‘old conception’ of God, in other words, emphasized God’s distance from creatures and God’s difference from creatures. In virtue of such difference, God and humanity are ‘directly opposed to one another’ and ‘mutually exclusive.’

But the ‘new wisdom’ of the Reformation emphasized God’s meeting of humanity despite such distance and difference from it. We see this in descriptions of God wherein He ‘seeks the lowly and the poor’ and ‘pours out His nature’ to humanity. We also see that the ‘true conception of man’ is to ‘enjoy participation in God through the communion of God with him.’

We see this same way of characterizing God in the medieval period in another passage from Dorner. God, according to the view of the middle ages,

is the Majestic One, the Unapproachable, the Sinner-consuming, the Holy One and the Just. Christ Himself is, according to the view of the middle ages, the stern Judge; the God-man is, as it were, lost in God. . . . With this majestic God, who is in His essence unknown to mankind, communion is not possible; He is void of love in Himself, else He would not require that love and pity should first be excited in Him from without by the saints; He is in His exalted position only just and holy, but righteousness and goodness come not in God to mutual interpenetration in holy love, and even the grace to which God is moved by Mary has the appearance rather of caprice and partiality.²²³

²²¹ *HPT*, vol. 1, p. 198-99.

²²² *SCD* I §32. 4 (p. 454).

²²³ *HPT*, vol. 1, p. 47.

What makes this such an un-ethical or non-ethical conception of God is that there is no correlation between the divine and the human. This lack of correlation between the two is apparent in such descriptions of God as “the Unapproachable” and “majestic.” Correlation between two entities is possible only if they can draw near one another.

Such a view of God, Dorner believes, is characterized above all by God’s righteousness (thus the descriptions of God as “sinner-consuming,” “Holy One,” and “the Just”). Due to the sinfulness of human beings, a God who is concerned above all with righteousness cannot be correlated with humanity. Because this conception of God is concerned with righteousness, love and pity must be ‘excited in Him from without by the saints.’

We also must draw attention to how Dorner characterizes Christ in this understanding of God. On a Reformation view, Christ brings about for us what he himself is: the union of the divine and the human. Thus, on a Reformation view, Christ is how God has revealed Himself to humanity. The view of God in the Middle-Ages, by contrast, portrays Christ himself as ‘hidden,’ and thus our communion with God is hidden with him. Indeed, on this view, Christ is not the meeting point between God and humanity, but is instead the ‘Judge.’

Here, we can point out two aspects of this characterization which will become thematic. First, Dorner speaks of this God whose essence is ‘unknown’ to mankind. Second, Dorner notes that this God is ‘void’ of love, in strong opposition to the Evangelical understanding of God, and to his own position that the best characterization of the divine essence is love. As we will see in subsequent chapters, one of Dorner’s worries is voluntarism, which is the mark of the divine whose ‘physical’ aspects are primary. If, however, Christ is how God has revealed Himself to humanity, and if Christ is the union of the divine and human, then God has revealed Himself to humanity precisely as the divine seeking union with humanity. Thus, in Christ, God’s essence *is*

known. Further, if God has revealed Himself as seeking union, then God has revealed Himself as love.

Dorner's summary of Luther's doctrine of justification nicely articulates a view of God that Dorner will embrace, where the attribute of love is not bound by the attribute of righteousness:

This therefore is the sum of his doctrine. To the purity of the grace, which undertakes the cause not of the righteous but of sinners, and thus seems to disregard the law, because it is gracious to the unworthy, and gives bountifully to them, not simply in advance, [not] in anticipation of future payment, but freely and for nothing – it is precisely to this prevenient love that it is given to kindle in us also a love which deserves to be called so, because it too loves freely, not for reward, not even for the reward of salvation.²²⁴

The human person fears when he is worried about his own justification. When he fears, he cannot love God, he cannot do good works out of love, but only out of fear. When one performs good works out of fear, one does them because he is supposed to do them in order to get a reward. Thus, it is an external authority which imposes itself on man.

But if God has preveniently justified man, as Luther holds, he no longer has to fear or worry about his own justification. If he is not worried about his justification – because it is already a fact – then he does not do good works in order to receive a reward. And thus his good works are not done not at the command of an external authority, but they are done spontaneously. In other words, the nature of man is such that he will act out of love when he is acting freely; or he will act naturally when he acts freely. Thus, if God grants prevenient justification, God's desire for good works from man will be congruent with man's disposition to do good works when not in fear regarding his salvation.

²²⁴ *HPT*, vol. 1, p. 112.

In this passage we can see the normativity of the ethical attributes of God over the physical and logical, precisely in the words “and thus seems to disregard the law”: if the law had primacy over the ethical, then God could not “disregard” the law.²²⁵ But because, in a Protestant understanding of God, the ethical attributes are primary, the law appears to be disregarded, although in fact it is moved to the background: following the law (i.e. doing good works) does not make one ‘good’ (justified), but being declared ‘good’ (justified) enables one to follow the law (do good works).

Thus, Dorner sees the fruit of the Reformation as making manifest that the divine and the human are not in fact heterogenous but homogenous, that there is a correlation between the two. And this homogeneity of the divine and the human is global in scope: nature is correlated to grace, reason is correlated to faith, the historical is correlated to the ideal. This notion of correlation is precisely what makes a union possible between God and the human being. That this correlation is possible is due to giving primacy to the ethical in God.

2.2 Protestant Thought between Luther and Idealism

In Dorner’s reading of Protestantism’s subsequent history, however, the insights of the initial Reformers entered a sclerosis. According to Dorner, in seventeenth-century Protestantism, “The subjective factor [viz., faith], which – as is expressed by the material principle of the Reformation – essentially belongs to the character of evangelical piety and theology, was abridged, and received but trifling cultivation.”²²⁶ In its stead, the ‘objective’ elements –

²²⁵ Ironically, one might argue against Dorner that this does not so much grant primacy to the ethical attributes of God so much as simply deny the ethical: ethical necessity (viz., the law) is simply abrogated. Dorner thinks he solves this issue by setting the law in a different context: the law is freely willed because one’s righteousness is not dependent upon the observance of the law, but dependent upon God’s declaration.

²²⁶ *HPT*, vol. 2, p. 7.

scripture and Protestant doctrine – came to dominate. The result was that “Faith, formerly so free and vigorous, occupied but a passive position with respect to [scripture and Protestant doctrine], which yet are not God, but things given.”²²⁷

The eighteenth-century brought about a reaction to the era of objectivity which preceded it. This era consists in thinkers such as Leibniz, Wolff, Klopstock, Hamann, Claudius, Lessing, Herder, Kant, Fichte, and Jacobi. In this era of subjectivity, Dorner says, “Antiquated theology went down to its grave, but the Christian faith remained, nay, was even now reviving with fresh vigor, to bring forth in due time a new theology.”²²⁸

Although sharply critical of Christianity, this ‘subjective’ philosophy nevertheless aided it. Dorner notes, “[P]hilosophy, even in its specially critical period, furnished its contribution. Its attitude indeed was, during the above-mentioned period, for the most part alien, nay, antagonistic to Christianity. Its labors nevertheless subserved a higher cause than its own, and formed a regularly advancing process, which was not at all loss, but also profit, because it showed beforehand how intrinsically akin were the factors of the human and the divine, of nature and grace.”²²⁹

How, exactly, did this period of subjectivity show how ‘intrinsically akin’ the divine and the human were to one another? Dorner says,

The whole process was inwardly connected with Protestantism and its intrinsic tendency, especially with the material principle [viz., justification through faith alone]. For as the material principle promises inward assurance and freedom in God, nay, makes these a duty, *so also the fundamental feature in this subjective process is, that whatever would exercise authority over man, or claim his submission, must be homogenous with his nature, feeling, perceptions, and will, and capable of being assimilated thereby, that so it*

²²⁷ HPT, vol. 2, p. 7.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 345.

²²⁹ Ibid., pp. 345-46.

may become his personal possession and his personal assurance. Even the essential affinity between the human and the divine was brought to light by the efforts of that very subjectivity... For the absolutely valuable predicates of knowledge of truth, desire of good, and feeling for the infinite and the divine, being acknowledged not to transcend human nature, but to be elements of the true nature of man, so many lines of communication were thus drawn between the idea of the human and the Divine, in opposition to their traditional separation. Hence the idea of their mutual exclusion and alienation appeared no longer tenable.²³⁰

The accomplishment of subjective philosophy was to globalize what was merely a germ in Luther: the correlation between the divine and the human. It lay in the next important era – that of nineteenth-century German Idealism – to unify the objectivity and the subjectivity.

2.3 Friedrich Schleiermacher

2.3.1 Dorner's Praise for Schleiermacher

Of the nineteenth-century, Dorner says, “A new era of German science in general was inaugurated, first by Schelling and Hegel, and then by Schleiermacher. But it was the latter who laid the foundation for a revival of theology by establishing principles which overcame the twofold partiality of the preceding epoch, viz. the partiality of objectivism, which had prevailed from 1600, and that of subjectivity, which had been dominant since 1750, and by raising to the rank of a ruling idea the persuasion of the intrinsic connection between the objective and the subjective.”²³¹

Dorner has much praise particularly for Schleiermacher in terms of his contributions to theology. Indeed, according to Dorner, Schleiermacher was the fulcrum to a renewal of Protestantism which had languished during the period of subjective philosophy. He says, “His heartfelt piety, nourished in the midst of the Moravian Brotherhood, together with his great

²³⁰ *HPT*, vol. 2, p. 346-47. Emphasis mine.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

talents, and the methodical power of his constructive genius, fitted him to form a point of transition to a revived evangelical theology.”²³²

Schleiermacher’s contribution to theology, which forms an important precedent for Dorner’s theology, is that the ethical aspects are not limited to the doctrine of justification but extend into the doctrine of God itself. Dorner notes this: “The first stage of the new era [viz., German idealism] grasps the absolute with physical, the second with logical, the third with ethical precision. The first result was brought about by Schelling as the founder of natural philosophy, the second by Hegel, the third especially by Schleiermacher.”²³³

2.3.2 Schleiermacher’s Doctrine of God

Because Dorner lauds Schleiermacher’s ‘ethical precision’ in his doctrine of God, and because this is the task Dorner sets for his own doctrine of God, we will take a brief look at Schleiermacher’s understanding of God, as well as some of Dorner’s specific criticisms of it. Such a step is necessary because it will shed light on how Dorner both appropriates and deviates from Schleiermacher. Specifically, we will explore those issues which are most proximate to Schleiermacher’s novel understanding of the divine attributes. This exploration is crucial, for Schleiermacher’s elevation of the ethical attributes – culminating in his identification of God as love – will be followed by Dorner.

Situated in the Romantic tradition, Schleiermacher’s elevation of the ethical aspect of God is bound up with an understanding of human subjectivity which was common among Romantic thinkers. It was a basic conviction of Romantic thought that human subjectivity

²³² *HPT*, vol. 2, p. 374.

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

requires that the human person be conscious of herself as capable of influencing and being influenced by the world. Human subjectivity, therefore, involves the ability to think self-referentially: a subject must be able to treat *herself* as an object of thought in order to be able to act in the world. Thus, self-referential thought involves an agent's ability to distinguish between two aspects of itself, what we might call its 'subjective' and 'objective' aspects. As Schleiermacher puts it, "In self-consciousness there are only two elements: the one expresses the existence of the subject for itself, the other its co-existence with an Other."²³⁴

On the other hand, although a distinction between the 'subjective' and 'objective' aspects of the self is necessary for subjectivity, there also is a need for the two aspects to be united in some way. The human agent cannot direct herself unless she has an awareness that the one who is being directed is in some sense identical with herself as the one directing.

But how does the human agent have an awareness of this identity? She cannot appeal to, say, empirical observation of herself, for such an act already depends upon her directing herself to observe herself, which itself depends upon a prior awareness of this identity. In other words, an appeal to data regarding oneself which comes to the subject empirically through consciousness has already been mediated by an awareness of the identity between the subjective self and the objective self.

One of the fundamental tenets of Romanticism, of which Schleiermacher shared, was that a person's ability to identify her subjective self with her objective self cannot be the result of mediated knowledge, but can only be immediate (non-mediated).

²³⁴ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart, First Paperback Edition (London: T&T Clark, 1999), §4.1 (p. 13) (hereafter abbreviated as *CF*, followed by the section number and page number).

To use a common example, I cannot deduce that the person in the mirror in front of which I stand is *me* simply by appeal to empirical data.²³⁵ There is no way that I can move from observation of this empirical data to the conclusion that its content is identical with the one who is undergoing this conscious experience. My certainty that the person in the mirror is identical with myself is grounded in an immediate way, and thus in a way in which I cannot inspect without thereby mediating this unity.

On the one hand, then, reflexive, or mediated, thinking is necessary in order for the subject to direct herself. On the other hand, the subject must assume a non-reflexive, non-mediated identity between her subjectivity and objectivity. Thus, there is a discrepancy between the two aspects of the self: the non-mediated identity can only be rendered to the human person in a mediated form.

As a result, the unity of the two aspects of the self, and so the very ability to be a subject at all, cannot be grounded in the subject herself.

Schleiermacher notes, however, that the subject possesses an awareness of this fact. This awareness of being grounded in a source which is outside of oneself Schleiermacher refers to as the “feeling of absolute dependence”:

But the self-consciousness which accompanies all our activity, and therefore, since that is never zero, accompanies our whole existence, and negates absolute freedom, is itself precisely a consciousness of absolute dependence; for it is the consciousness that the whole of our spontaneous activity comes from a source outside of us in just the same sense in which anything towards which we should have a feeling of absolute freedom must have proceeded entirely from ourselves.²³⁶

²³⁵ I borrow this example from Andrew Bowie. See Andrew Bowie, *Aesthetics and Subjectivity: From Kant to Nietzsche*, 2nd edition (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 76-7.

²³⁶ *CF* §4.3 (p. 16).

For Schleiermacher, that source which is outside of the subject, that source which the human person is dependent upon for the possibility of her subjectivity, is God: “The whence of our receptive and active existence, as implied in this self-consciousness, is to be designated by the word ‘God,’ and...this is for us the really original signification of that word.”²³⁷ This feeling is ‘absolute’ because the human person exercises no degree of influence upon God vis-a-vis her own subjectivity, for her own subjectivity – and thus the capacity to exercise freedom – presupposes this dependence: “Any possibility of God being in any way given is entirely excluded, because anything that is outwardly given must be given as an object exposed to our counter-influence, however slight this may be.”²³⁸

In Schleiermacher’s theology, this relation of absolute dependence constitutes the human subject’s perception of the divine, and thus how the divine attributes can be understood. Since God is the correlate of the feeling of *absolute* dependence, and since such a feeling does not arise through the human’s interaction with mundane objects (because the human person has a *relative* freedom and a *relative* dependence vis-a-vis mundane objects), the divine causality cannot be like the temporal or spatial causality of such objects. As Schleiermacher puts it, “...it is self-evident that the contrast between the feeling of absolute dependence and the feeling of either partial dependence or partial freedom (both being equally spatial and temporal) includes in itself the implication that the causality which evokes the former feeling cannot be temporal and spatial.”²³⁹ Indeed, for Schleiermacher, the divine causality transcends the temporal and spatial precisely by its being the very condition of the temporal and spatial. Such conditioning of the

²³⁷ *CF* §4.4 (p. 16).

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 18).

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, §53, postscript (p. 211)

temporal is designated by God's 'eternity,' and such conditioning of the spatial is designated by God's 'omnipresence.'²⁴⁰

Although the divine causality is unlike finite causality, Schleiermacher also notes that the divine causality is equal in compass to the finite:

We experience the feeling of absolute dependence as something which can fill a moment both in association with a feeling of partial and conditional dependence and also in association with a partial and conditioned feeling of freedom; for self-consciousness always represents finite being as consisting in this mingling of conditioned dependence and conditioned freedom or of partial spontaneity and partial passivity. But whenever dependence or passivity is posited in a part of finite existence, then spontaneity and causality is posited in another part [of finite existence] to which the former is related, and this condition of mutual relation of differently distributed causality and passivity constitutes the natural order. It necessarily follows that the ground of our feeling of absolute dependence, i.e. the divine causality, extends as widely as the order of nature and the finite causality contained in it; consequently the divine causality is posited as equal in compass to finite causality.²⁴¹

As we have seen, with respect to finite causality, the human person feels relative dependence and relative freedom. Thus, as the feelings of relative dependence and freedom have their ground in the feeling of absolute dependence, and the 'whence' of this feeling of absolute dependence is God, so the causes of the feelings of relative dependence and freedom are those objects of finite causality, which has its ground in the divine causality.

Since the feeling of absolute dependence is the ground of the feelings of relative freedom and dependence, and since the feelings of relative freedom and dependence occur wherever there is finite causality, the divine causality must occur wherever there is finite causality. And as we

²⁴⁰ "By the eternity of God we understand the absolutely timeless causality of God, which conditions not only all that is temporal, but time itself as well" (*CF* §52, heading [p. 203]). "By the omnipresence of God we understand the absolutely spaceless causality of God, which conditions not only all that is spatial, but space itself as well" (*CF* §53, heading [p. 206]).

²⁴¹ *CF* §51.1 (pp. 200-1).

will examine below, Schleiermacher will claim, the divine causality must be ‘equal in compass’ to the finite causality.

The divine causality as equal in compass to finite causality is designated by God’s ‘omnipotence.’²⁴² Omnipotence so understood is expressed in two sub-ideas: first, that finite causality is founded upon divine causality; and second, that the divine causality is completely presented in finite causality.²⁴³ We will examine these two ideas in turn.

The first statement – that finite causality is founded upon divine causality – means that there is no finite causality which is not grounded in the divine causality. He says, “As now everything that we can regard as a separate thing for itself within the totality of finite being must be ‘cause’ as well as effect, there is never anything of any kind which can begin to be an object of the divine causality, though previously – hence somehow independent of God and opposed to Him – in existence. Rather on such a view...the foundation feeling of religion would thereby be destroyed.”²⁴⁴

In other words, if there were some thing within the level of finite causality, which was not originally an object of the divine causality, then this means that it would exert some level of counter-influence upon the divine causality. If it exerted some level of counter-influence upon the divine causality, it would not be absolutely dependent upon the divine causality (for it would be exercising some level of partial freedom towards the divine causality). If anything within the

²⁴² “The divine causality as equivalent in compass to the sum-total of the natural order is expressed in the term the divine omnipotence; this puts the whole of finite being under the divine causality” (*CF* §51.1 [p. 201]).

²⁴³ *CF* §54, heading (p. 211): “In the conception of the divine omnipotence two ideas are contained: first, that the entire system of nature, comprehending all times and places, is founded upon divine causality, which as eternal and omnipresent is in contrast to all finite causality; and second, that the divine causality, as affirmed in our feeling of absolute dependence, is completely presented in the totality of finite being, and consequently everything for which there is a causality in God happens and becomes real.”

²⁴⁴ *CF* §54.1 (p. 212).

level of finite causality exercised some level of partial freedom towards the divine causality (however small), this would destroy the feeling of absolute dependence, for the idea of such a feeling is based on the notion that everything finite exercises no freedom towards the divine causality, and thus is absolutely dependent.

The second statement – that the divine causality is completely presented in finite causality – means that *all* divine causality is expressed in the finite causality. In other words, there is no aspect of God which is not involved in God's causality vis-à-vis the finite. For Schleiermacher, this has an important implication for how we understand God: in God, there can be no distinction between the general and the specific (§54.2), between the actual and the possible (§54.3), between absolute power and ordained power, between absolute will and conditioned will, between freedom and necessity, and between the active and the inactive (§54.4). In other words, the divine causality which is displayed in the created order simply reveals God as He is all the way down.

For Schleiermacher, the divine attributes which were given above denote merely the 'general relationship between God and the world.' Thus, they are generic, derivable from any religious consciousness whatsoever. While the above gives a rendering of the formal components that shape our understanding of the divine attributes, it does not give a rendering of a consciousness associated with a particular religious community.

According to Schleiermacher, what is distinctive about the Christian consciousness is its Christocentricity. For the Christian consciousness, "all other things have existence *only as they are related to the efficacy of redemption* – either as part of the organization in which the reawakened God-consciousness finds expression, or as so much raw material which this

organization is to elaborate.”²⁴⁵ For the Christian consciousness, then, the government of the world is directed towards a particular end, namely redemption. And since redemption entails a redeemer, the Christian consciousness sees the divine government of the world as ‘aimed’ at the appearance of a redeemer: “The Christian faith that all things were created for the Redeemer [Col. 1:16] implies ...that by creation all things (whether as prepared for or as overruled) were disposed with a view to the revelation of God in the flesh, and so as to secure the completest possible impartation thereof to the whole of human nature, and thus to form the Kingdom of God.”²⁴⁶

As we saw above, because there is no dualism between God’s underlying disposition and the form in which the underlying disposition of God is given effect; and because the form in which the underlying disposition of God is given effect is aimed at incarnation and redemption; it follows that there is no dualism between the incarnation of and redemption through Christ, on the one hand, and God’s underlying disposition, on the other hand. Thus, it is only the consciousness *that has been determined by the consciousness of redemption* that can adequately characterize the divine essence. It follows, then, that the characterization of incarnation and redemption is just the characterization of the divine essence itself (and further, that there can be no creation without redemption).

How, then, does Schleiermacher characterize the incarnation and redemption? They are characterized, he maintains, by *love*. “Love,” says Schleiermacher, “...is the impulse to unite self with neighbor and to will to be in neighbor; if then the pivot of the divine government is redemption and the foundation of the Kingdom of God, involving the union of the divine essence

²⁴⁵ *CF* §164.1 (p. 723). Emphasis mine.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

with human nature, this means that the underlying disposition cannot be conceived otherwise than as love.”²⁴⁷ Because love is what is manifest in the incarnation and redemption, and because there is no ‘dualism’ between God’s underlying disposition and the form in which it is given effect to, that love characterizes incarnation and redemption means that one can rightly predicate it of the divine essence: “...we have the sense of divine love directly in the consciousness of redemption, and as this [viz., the consciousness of redemption] is the basis on which all the rest of our God-consciousness is built up, it of course represents to us the essence of God.”²⁴⁸ As will be shown in chapter six, Schleiermacher’s assertion that love is the highest characterization of the divine essence is appropriated wholeheartedly by Dorner.

3.1 Dorner’s Understanding of Love

We can get a sense of why Dorner finds Schleiermacher’s doctrine of God compelling by briefly investigating Dorner’s understanding of the concept of love. Dorner conceives of love as the unity of self-assertion and self-impartation (or, as he sometimes puts it, ‘self-preservation’ and ‘self-communication’).²⁴⁹ ‘Self-impartation’ is the giving of oneself to another. But it must be noted that ‘self-assertion’ here does not mean selfishness. Rather, self-assertion is one’s recognition of oneself as worthy of being loved. Thus, it is the recognition that in giving oneself to another in love, one is not an instrument for that other. It is a recognition that a relation of love requires an acknowledgment of the intrinsic worth of the other party, and thus a recognition that – as one of the two parties – oneself must thereby possess an intrinsic worth. In recognizing that

²⁴⁷ *CF* §165.1 (p. 726).

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, §167.2 (p. 732).

²⁴⁹ See *SCE* §7.3-4. We will return to this topic in chapter 7.

one is not an instrument, then, one recognizes that there are aspects of oneself which is not to be annihilated, for intrinsic worth implies that those aspects have worth and thus ought not to be annihilated. Love, therefore, involves the impartation of oneself to another, but without the annihilation of oneself.

Dorner insists that, to communicate oneself to another as love – to love another – can only occur between persons (hence such communication of God to humanity can occur only through divine incarnation).²⁵⁰ Before the incarnation, what communicated the divine – the medium of divine self-impartation – was the natural world and the Law. Put differently, what is communicated by the natural world and the Law is are things like God’s omnipotence, God’s holiness, etc. Thus, the natural world and the Law communicate merely physical aspects of God. But the natural world and the Law, Dorner insists, are unable to communicate that *love* is a property of the divine.²⁵¹ God, then, can only communicate himself to another *as love* by revealing Himself *personally*, that is, by becoming incarnate.

In identifying the incarnation as the medium by which love is identified as a property of the divine, Schleiermacher has recognized the primacy of God’s ethical aspect: to conceive of God as love apart from the incarnation is to conceive of love without self-impartation, and to conceive of the incarnation apart from love is to conceive of love without self-preservation. This is why Dorner believes that Schleiermacher gives ‘ethical precision’ to his doctrine of God.

²⁵⁰ SCE §37.2 (p. 336).

²⁵¹ Ibid., (p. 335). Cf. SCD II §62.3 (p. 214).

3.2 What Dorner finds unsatisfactory in Schleiermacher

In characterizing the divine essence as love, Schleiermacher has given primacy to God's ethical aspects over against God's physical and logical aspects. Although Dorner will follow Schleiermacher in this, he will nonetheless deviate from him in some important respects. We saw that, for Schleiermacher, there can be no distinction in God between the general and the specific, between the actual and the possible, between absolute power and ordained power, between absolute will and conditioned will, between freedom and necessity, and between the active and the inactive. Dorner will argue, however, that eliminating such distinctions leaves one with an unsatisfactory doctrine of God.

Dorner gives an explicit treatment of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God on this point in his essay on the history of the doctrine of divine immutability.²⁵² Because we have established

²⁵² Isaak August Dorner, "The History of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God," in *Divine Immutability: A Critical Consideration*, trans. Robert R Williams and Claude Welch (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2009), 82-130 (hereafter abbreviated as "History..."). This essay is the second of three which comprise Dorner's work on divine immutability: "Über die richtige Fassung des dogmatischen Begriffs der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes, mit besonderer Beziehung auf das gegenseitige Verhältniss zwischen Gottes übergeschichtlichem und geschichtlichem Leben," *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* I/2 (1856), 361-416; "Die Geschichte der Lehre von der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes bis auf Schleiermacher, nach ihren Hauptzügen historisch-kritisch dargestellt," *ibid.*, II/3 (1857), 440-500.; "Dogmatische Erörterung der Lehre von der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes," *ibid.*, III/4 (1858), 579-660.

Dorner makes some further criticisms of Schleiermacher in this essay, but they are criticisms of Schleiermacher's own self-consistency and therefore are not relevant. The criticisms are in brief: If God is the unity of the world (as Schleiermacher maintains), this entails a contrast: God (as that which unites) in contrast to the world (as that which is united). However, if there is no distinction between cause and effect in God, then there can be no question of a contrast between that which unites and that which is united.

Schleiermacher's insistence on a lack of distinction in God also causes him to posit that creation is a perfectly complete effect of God, since there is no distinction between cause and effect. Dorner points out, however, that according to Schleiermacher, the full communication of God to the world will only be accomplished gradually. This entails that there must be a distinction between God and God's effects, for there is a discrepancy on the side of the effect.

Finally, Schleiermacher has asserted that divine causality must be uniform throughout – that is, that there be no special acts of divine intervention. The incarnation, according to Schleiermacher, is the completion of creation. However, the incarnation occurred at a particular time and place; it has not been a continuous effect. If it were a continuous effect, it would just be connatural with creation, and thus simply be Pelagian.

Dorner's appreciation for Schleiermacher in privileging God's ethical aspects, here we will simply focus on his criticisms of how Schleiermacher executed this task.

Dorner's most devastating criticism of Schleiermacher on this point is that, if we eliminate the distinctions which Schleiermacher wants to eliminate, the result is acosmism (i.e. the only reality is God, and there is no creation). If there is no distinction to be made between God's potentiality and actuality, and if God is beyond time (since there is no *then* and *now* for God), then what is actual (viz., creation) must itself not possess any temporal characteristics. Since there obviously is a temporal world, Schleiermacher must be wrong.

Thus the experience of temporal succession that creatures have would be an illusion:

If one emphasizes the point that all that originates in a timeless way is not merely thought and willed, but effected, that is, has become actual – as one must if there is no distinction between God's will and ability – then there remains nothing else but to regard temporal succession as merely an illusion. This agrees with Schleiermacher's point that God strives after nothing that He does not already possess, because this would again introduce distinctions into God, if not God's blessedness. But this is equivalent to acosmism and represents a flight to an ideal world apart from this world of temporal distinctions...²⁵³

This line of thought can be applied more broadly to any distinctions within the finite. If everything finite is due to God (because there is no finite causality which is not grounded in or independent of the divine causality), and if in finite causality there are distinctions, then such distinctions must be grounded in the divine.

Therefore, if there is no finite causality which is not grounded in or independent of the divine causality, then either there must be some sort of distinction within God (by which the distinctions in creation are grounded) or the distinctions within creation are, in fact, illusory:

If nothing can be thought or willed in isolation from God, everything is what it is in distinction from everything else, by virtue of being thought or willed by God. It would then be the case that all real distinctions in the world...would have no basis in God and so

²⁵³ "History...", p. 125.

would be merely illusions.”²⁵⁴ Thus Dorner says, “Schleiermacher’s doctrine is in this respect unsatisfactory. It offers no basis for thinking of God as the cause of what is empirically and historically actual, and thereby fails to secure the actual from the suspicion of being a mere illusion for religious consciousness.”²⁵⁵

Dorner therefore finishes his essay on the history of divine immutability by rejecting the notion that God must be utterly devoid of distinction. He says, “Consequently Christian faith neither must, nor may, remain content with assertions such as divine simplicity or quiescence, or, what leads to the same result, assertions of an eternal and uniform vital causality that always and everywhere produces the same effects.”²⁵⁶

Dorner’s task is, on the one hand, to construct a doctrine of God in which the ‘ethical’ aspects are primary. This allows him to incorporate into his doctrine of God what he sees as the gain of the Protestant Reformation, namely, a correlation between the divine and the human. On the other hand, his critique of Schleiermacher demonstrates that such a doctrine of God cannot consist solely of those ethical aspects, but must also account for the physical and logical aspects of the divine.

3.3 Dorner’s Amendments of Schleiermacher

The question is, therefore, how Dorner can maintain that God possesses physical, logical, and ethical aspects, and nonetheless privilege some of these aspects over the others. To have certain features of God as primary or normative over others entails some level of activity and passivity amongst those attributes. In Dorner’s case, as we will see, the physical and logical

²⁵⁴ “History....,” pp. 125-26.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 126.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 129.

attributes must be passive with respect to the ethical attributes because the physical and logical attributes are to be governed by the ethical attributes.

Therefore, instead of the divine essence consisting of an undifferentiated unity of the divine attributes, we have in Dorner's doctrine of God an *ordering* of attributes, where the physical and logical attributes serve the ethical attributes as means to end. As Dorner puts it, "The non-ethical distinctions in the nature of God are related to the ethical as means to an end; but the absolute end can lie only in morality, because it alone is of absolute worth. The ethical principle is the ultimate reason for the fact that God eternally wills Himself, or is the ground of Himself, in all His attributes."²⁵⁷ In the next chapter, we will examine Dorner's attempt to construct a doctrine of God precisely along these lines.

²⁵⁷ SCE §6.3 (p. 65).

Chapter 5

DORNER ON THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined various background aspects which were pertinent to Dorner's doctrine of God. In this chapter, we will examine Dorner's actual treatment of the doctrine of God, particularly the divine attributes. A consideration of the divine attributes is important, for they are the ingredients, so to speak, for Dorner's construction of the three trinitarian configurations (physical, logical, and ethical).

In order to avoid confusion, some comments need to be made at the outset. In chapter six, we will see that Dorner speaks in terms of a principle in the divine which demands that the divine actualize itself as an ethical subject. Ethical subjectivity, we will see, demands a trinitarian structure. Thus, in demanding that it actualize itself as an ethical subject, the divine demands that it be a Trinity. Thus, God is Trinity because God is to be an ethical subject. Ontologically, then, this principle of ethical subjectivity *precedes* the divine persons (since they are the means by which it is to be actualized), and the resultant ethical subject *succeeds* the divine persons (insofar as it is their result).

In this chapter, however, we will examine how Dorner arrives at the Trinity by a complex series of inferences based on various arguments. Through these arguments, Dorner constructs a theology wherein God is an ethical subject comprised in terms which are seemingly opposites (viz., that of ethical necessity and that of ethical freedom). The Trinity will allow Dorner to

reconcile these opposites because it will allow both ethical components to be ascribed to God. In this chapter, the divine attributes *epistemically* ground the claim that God is Trinity. As mentioned above, however, the next chapter will show that the Trinity itself is ontologically grounded in divine ethical subjectivity.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Section 1 gives a brief overview of Dorner's procedure in establishing the divine attributes. Here I will describe some of the basic differences between the types of arguments he employs, and discuss how such arguments are for Dorner more of a single, cumulative argument.

Section 2 examines how Dorner establishes divine aseity, the notion that God has His existence from Himself and not from another. Here, we will see how he treats the ontological proof for God's existence (2.2), which establishes that God is necessarily existent, and so as the original possibility of thought, being, volition, and knowledge, possesses the attributes of unity, singularity, simplicity, and infinity. We will then examine his treatment of the cosmological argument (2.3), where Dorner applies the concept of causation to the divine, establishing that God must have His continual actuality, always realizing His inexhaustible potentiality, from Himself. Through the ontological and cosmological arguments, therefore, Dorner establishes that God possesses aseity.

Section 3 examines how Dorner establishes that God possesses intellect. Here, Dorner treats the physico-teleological argument (viz., an appeal to the structure and purposiveness of empirical phenomena as evidence that there is a conscious subject responsible for such design and order) to establish that the divine is in possession of intelligence.

Section 4 examines how Dorner establishes God as an ethical agent. Here, we will look at how he treats the juridical argument (4.2), which establishes that God acts justly towards

Himself. Then we will look at his treatment of the moral argument (4.3) wherein he establishes that God is the absolutely worthy end. Throughout this section, we will see how Dorner establishes that the ethical in God be both a matter of the divine being as well as a matter of the divine will. Therefore, this section in particular is critical for understanding the issue that preoccupies Dorner regarding the Trinity: that both ethical freedom and ethical necessity must be present in God. This will set us up for the next chapter where we will see how Dorner will solve this problem by means of the Trinity.

1. Proofs for God's Existence and the Divine Attributes

As mentioned, the present chapter is concerned with Dorner's doctrine of God, giving particular attention to the divine attributes. The divine attributes themselves are reached through an examination of proofs for God's existence (ontological, cosmological, physico-teleological, juridical, and moral). These proofs can be divided into two types: *a priori* and *a posteriori*, that is, conceptual and empirical, respectively. The *a priori* argument, which consists solely in the ontological argument, begins with the *concept* of a most-perfect being, and from this concept derives that such a being must necessarily exist. For Dorner, because the ontological argument is the only argument that does not appeal to empirical data, it is the only argument that can establish that God exists. *A posteriori* arguments, on the other hand, begin with empirical data, and from such data supplement the concept of God obtained by the ontological argument. Thus, the empirical arguments do not establish God's existence, but instead only enrich the initial definition of God established by the ontological argument.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ This is a departure from the standard procedure wherein the argument presupposes a certain concept of God which serves as the first premise from which God's existence may be inferred. At the conclusion of his treatment of the ontological proof, Dorner refers to the subsequent proofs by saying, "The remaining proofs for the divine existence lend their aid in order to obtain from absolute and infinite Being more intimate definitions of God. So far as these proofs proceed in a mere empirical manner, accept what is given from without, and thence infer God or

From such arguments, Dorner derives various attributes to predicate of the divine. An examination of these divine attributes is important for our understanding of Dorner's trinitarian theology, for each of them will be parsed in a trinitarian configuration: divine aseity is configured as the physical Trinity, divine intellect is configured as the logical Trinity, and the ethical attributes are configured as the ethical Trinity.

2. Establishing Divine Aseity

2.1 Introduction

Our goal in this section will be to examine how Dorner establishes the doctrine of divine aseity. Such an examination is crucial, for aseity is the essential attribute that is the basis of the personal properties of the divine persons as treated in the 'physical Trinity.' In his treatment of the ontological argument, Dorner argues that the idea of God indicates that such a being necessarily exists and that such an idea is necessary for any rational thought at all. In subsequently utilizing the concept of causality (from the cosmological argument) and applying it to the divine, Dorner then makes a case for how God's necessary existence is an existence which is received by no other than Himself.

certain predicates of God, they may indeed be too weak collectively to effect what they would. They cannot of themselves answer for the being of the absolute Essence, but they simply afford us categories or predicates which belong in the first place to the world, without being able to prove the being of God and the existence of those predicates in God" (*SCD* §19.3, observation [ET: v. 1, p. 247]).

The two types of arguments, when considered together, form something analogous to what has been called in 20th century analytic philosophy of religion a "cumulative case argument." Historically, the cumulative case argument has been associated with establishing only God's existence. But to utilize this terminology for Dorner's context, the two types of arguments form a cumulative case not only for God's existence, but for *all* the attributes we can apply to God.

2.2 The Ontological Argument

According to Dorner, the ontological proof shows us that God is the real original possibility of thought, being, volition, knowledge, and is absolute.²⁵⁹ If one thinks about the highest essence – that is, what the highest essence must be like – one must conclude that existence must be included in what it means to be the highest essence. He says, “The highest essence, when thought, is to be thought as unconditioned and independent of anything else, independent also of our subjective thought, but as unconditioned or absolute, self-existing, and consequently as existent.”²⁶⁰ The highest essence, in other words, cannot be conditioned by anything, and so must have its existence from itself and not from another.

Dorner then moves from the notion that, since the highest essence must have its existence from itself, it must exist. Here, he seems to assume the following: (1) things, or in his terminology, ‘essences’ *do* exist, and (2) of those things or ‘essences’ which exist, they have their existence either from themselves or from another. Since the highest essence must have its existence from itself, and since there are essences, this highest essence must exist.

Given that the concept of God necessarily includes that God exists, Dorner concludes that the concept of God is a necessary concept for thought. Dorner says, “Thus the only choice lies between leaving the idea of God unthought, or thinking it, when thought, absolute and self-existing.”²⁶¹ Notice, here, the choice is not between thinking of God as existent or thinking of

²⁵⁹ “In the ontological proof we have found God to be the real original possibility of thought, being, and knowledge, and to be absolute” (*SCD* I §20.4 [p. 256]). In this particular text he does not mention volition, but in other texts he lists it. See section 1.1.3 below.

²⁶⁰ *SCD* I §18.2 (p. 226).

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

God as non-existent, but between thinking of God as existent or not having any thought of God at all, whether as existent or as non-existent.

2.1.1 God as the Original Possibility for Thought

However, one cannot *not* have any thought of God at all, because the idea of the Absolute is itself necessary for human thought. How is the idea of the Absolute necessary for human thought? Dorner begins his account by stating, “It is not optional, but necessary, to think an Absolute, which, in order to be thought, is to be thought as existent. It is necessary [to think an Absolute], that is to say, for him who wishes to think rationally, and whose thought is thought which would become knowledge...”²⁶² The thought of an Absolute is necessary for rational thinking because without it, “there is no longer anything infinite for men, and also an absence of knowledge of the finite as such; for apart from opposition to the infinite, even the finite as such cannot be known. Thus understanding at most might remain, but not reason.”²⁶³ The thought of the Absolute is necessary for human thought, Dorner argues, because it provides a contrast between itself and all that is not it, between the infinite and the finite. Unfortunately, Dorner does not go into any further detail on this point. The assumption seems to be that a contrast is needed for the possibility of human thought, wherein the infinite (the Absolute) functions as a sort of horizon or background by which the finite can be present as foreground to the human.

A second argument for the thought of the Absolute as being necessary for human thought deals with the Absolute as ‘unity.’ Dorner notes that, without the thought of the Absolute,

the point of unity is lost for all plurality of the existent and the possible. A consciousness which has got rid of the thought of absolute Being would become a prey to an endless atomicism and dissolution. The reason must by its nature seek unity, must maintain an

²⁶² *SCD I* §18.2 (p. 226).

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, (p. 227).

ultimate point of unity of the ideal and real for thought and existence; otherwise there would neither be rational thought nor volition. Without this principle of unity, thought falls apart. Even the copula between subject and predicate, this last relic of the ultimate principle of unity, would be consistently dissolved, and with it thought would also be extinguished.²⁶⁴

Thinking is an act whereby distinct things are mentally related to one another (e.g., the thought ‘This blanket is green.’). Distinct things can be related to one another, however, only if there is a bridge that allows for such relation. That a blanket can *be* a certain way (e.g., ‘green’) and that greenness can *be* a certain way (e.g., belonging to a blanket) entails that there is a reality more basic than either blankets or greenness – namely, being itself – which allows for the blanket and greenness to *be* a certain way. Human thought, Dorner supposes, must presuppose the thought of this basic reality in order to make mental relations between things. This basic reality just is the Absolute.

Dorner argues, thirdly, that the thought of the Absolute is necessary for human thought because the Absolute grounds the logic by which thought operates. “Thought is truly human,” Dorner says, “i.e. not visionary or sportive thought, but thought which would become knowledge – by the presupposition of an Absolute as the prototype of thought.”²⁶⁵ Dorner sees human thought as operating under certain norms: “Thought is what it should be only by the laws of thought, which form its regulative element and internal law, which thought has not first produced, but which constitute the immovable foundation, the absolute fortress and a power innate in the thinker.”²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ *SCD I* §18.2 (p. 227).

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, here too Dorner does not give a thorough argument, and so one must guess a bit at what he means. He seems, however, to be saying something like the following. The laws by which thought operates are not arbitrary or subjective, for thought is governed by these laws. Logic is authoritative over how we think, if we are to think rightly. Thus, because these laws are normative over thought, they are not something which thought merely produces. Rather, they are objective and independent of thought. Thus, there is a reality which transcends human thought and is that by which human thought can operate. As Dorner puts it, “Thus the Absolute as the logical power precedes all actual thought, and is not produced by thought; or, the Absolute is the primary logical element, the original possibility of logical thought to be presupposed as existent.”²⁶⁷ Since thought of the Absolute is demanded by thought as such, one must have an idea of a highest essence. And since a highest essence must be the source of its own existence, this highest essence – this Absolute – must exist.

2.1.2 God as the Original Possibility of Being

Not only is the Absolute necessary for thought, but also for the possibility of being at all. The Absolute is “the original possibility of existence, of all realization according to form and matter. If an actual being is to be (and the thinker is already an actual being), its possibility is presupposed, whether that possibility is absolutely within itself or without. In the latter state it cannot remain; it impels toward an existence which has its possibility within itself. But that being which bears its possibility within itself, and which is thereby the possibility of all being, is called the Absolute.”²⁶⁸

²⁶⁷ *SCD I* §18.2 (pp. 227-28).

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 228).

Dorner's argument runs as follows. One who thinks already exists, and thus the one who thinks must presuppose that things actually exist. Given that things do actually exist, anything which actually exists logically presupposes the possibility – the potentiality – of existing. Things which cannot potentially exist could never actually exist, therefore things which do actually exist presuppose a potentiality of existence.

The next step of the argument is less clear, but seems to be something like this: everything which has a potentiality of existence has that potentiality either from themselves or from something other than themselves. At least in this argument, Dorner assumes that there can only be one thing which has its potentiality of existence from itself. That which has its potentiality of existence from itself, and not from another, is 'the Absolute.' Since one who thinks must presuppose the actual existence of things, and since the actual existence of things entails that there be something which has its actual existence from itself (viz., the Absolute), the act of thinking entails the thought of an actually existing Absolute.

2.1.3 God as the Original Possibility of Volition

Of the four claims Dorner makes regarding the Absolute as a necessary presupposition of, the most obscure claim is that the Absolute is necessary for the possibility of volition, for he merely asserts this is the case without actually making an argument. The text in which he is most direct on this matter is still merely suggestive: "But if the existence of the Absolute is to be thought as the original possibility of all being, the world of volition, which has to do with the real, also presupposes the Absolute as its original possibility."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ *SCD I* §18.2 (p. 228).

Because he notes a similarity between the Absolute as the original possibility for volition and as the original possibility of being, this suggests he is thinking something like the following: God is the original possibility of being because one who thinks must presuppose the actual existence of things, and since the actual existence of things entails that there be something which has its actual existence from itself (viz., the Absolute), the act of thinking entails the thought of an actually existing Absolute. Analogously, one who wills must presuppose the actual existence of things (since to will something is to seek to make a change with respect to being), and since the actual existence of things entails that there be something which has its actual existence from itself (viz., the Absolute), the act of willing entails the thought of an actually existing Absolute.

2.1.4 God as the Original Possibility of Knowledge

The thought of the Absolute, fourth, is necessary for there to be knowledge. As Dorner puts it, knowledge “is the unity (not the identity) of thought and being.”²⁷⁰ Knowledge occurs, in other words, when some *object* (and thus some aspect of ‘being’) becomes an object of *thought*. Things cannot be objects of thought (and therefore cannot lead to knowledge), however, if the two are not correspond-able: the object must be cognizable to thought, and thought must have the ability to cognize the object.

A correspondence, of course, entails some level of likeness between the two. In other words, there must be something common between the potential object of knowledge and the potential knower at a level even more fundamental than the one in which knowledge occurs. Thus, there must be a basic unity between thought and being, a unity which accounts for the possibility of their correspondence that leads to knowledge. As Dorner puts it, “Were, then, this

²⁷⁰ *SCD I* §18.2 (p. 228).

unity and harmony of being and thought generally and originally nowhere given (therefore also not once present) in a common primary basis of both, which is the real point of unity for the *cognoscens* and the *cognoscibile*, this harmony of both could not gain a place in us.”²⁷¹

Thus, a basic unity between thought and being entails a reality which transcends both. This reality is the Absolute: “Therefore this absolute harmony must be originally given, and be presupposed, as truth. The ideal and the real must be originally united in themselves somewhere and somehow in order for the union of the two to exist in us, in our knowledge. If we call this unity of thought and being to be presupposed the Absolute, the Absolute is therefore the original possibility of all our knowledge, inasmuch as it is the self-existent unity in which they harmonize, or inasmuch as it is original truth.”²⁷²

Thus far, Dorner acknowledges that we have only a bare concept of God: “But we have certainly not treated strictly in our argument the full idea of that which we call God, but only the Godhead as the absolute Being, which is to be thought as necessary and existent, if thought, being, volition, and knowledge are to be.”²⁷³ The next step will be to consider the entailments of the ontological argument in order to enrich this concept of God.

Four attributes of God immediately follow from what we have established: unity, singularity, simplicity, and infinity.²⁷⁴ The attribute of ‘unity’ – that the Absolute possesses a coherence or agreement with itself – can be arrived at from what we have considered thus far. We have seen that God is the possibility of all actual existence, and so God functions, therefore,

²⁷¹ *SCD* I §18.2 (p. 228).

²⁷² *Ibid.*

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, (pp. 229-30).

²⁷⁴ Here I have translated *Einzigkeit* as “singularity.” The Cave and Banks English translation renders it as “solity.”

as the single cause all of being: “That the absolute being is one follows immediately from the fact that it is the primary real possibility of all everything. By that inference all dualism at the ultimate sources is excluded.”²⁷⁵ Given that God is the single cause of all being, all being – despite its diversity – is held together coherently by this single thing. Thus, God must possess the attribute of ‘unity.’

The attribute of ‘singularity’ – that there can be only one Absolute – is arrived at as follows. Dorner notes that ‘God,’ as the possibility of all actual existence and thus as the ‘unity’ of all actual existence, could simply refer to all that exists. Everything that exists, in other words, could just be ‘God.’ The advantage of this would be that God’s absoluteness would never be threatened: God cannot be made relative to something other than Himself since *everything* is God.

Dorner notes, however, that because God is the possibility of all actual existence, this distinguishes Him from all other things. If God were to create, that which is created would have to have its existence from God, and thus from something other than itself. Since there will always be this difference between God and everything else, even if God creates something other than Himself, that which is created can never threaten God’s absoluteness.

God, therefore, will always have a qualitatively different status than anything else that might exist: “The being of the Godhead as the Absolute is unique of its kind; the world therefore is, in this respect, of a kind absolutely dissimilar [to God]. The world cannot lay claim to His kind of Being, and thus He cannot be limited by the world. The world cannot, therefore, with the being that it has, be any limitation that could contradict His absoluteness, because He is and remains the primary possibility of everything. Generally, His being cannot be coordinated with

²⁷⁵ *SCD I* 19.1 (p. 230).

another's, for He must be the very possibility of that other's existence."²⁷⁶ Therefore, a second attribute follows from God understood as 'absolute Being': there can only be one Absolute, and so God possesses the attribute of 'singularity.'

The last two attributes are much simpler to treat. As we saw above, God is the unity of all being: there is the possibility of thought and knowledge because there is a primordial unity which allows the ideal and the real to be correlated. If God Himself was diverse, there could be no primordial unity by which the ideal and the real could be correlated. Thus, God understood as 'absolute Being' leads to the conclusion that God possesses the attribute of simplicity, that God is not a composition of parts.

The final divine attribute that can be established from the ontological argument is infinity. As we saw above when treating of God's unity and singularity, God cannot be made relative by the existence of another. The finite, therefore, cannot impose a limitation upon God as the absolute Being. For Dorner, this lack of limitation vis-à-vis the finite is denoted by the attribute of infinity.²⁷⁷ Therefore God, as necessarily existent, and so as the original possibility of thought, being, and knowledge, possesses the attributes of unity, singularity, simplicity, and infinity.

2.3 The Cosmological Argument

2.3.1 Introduction

The conception of God established above, because it is derived *a priori*, is the least determinate conception of God that is possible while still being thinkable. Dorner, however,

²⁷⁶ SCD I §19.1 (p. 234).

²⁷⁷ Ibid., §19.2 (p. 237ff).

insists that human thought naturally seeks to move beyond such an indeterminate definition of God to one that is more determinate: “At the idea of the absolute essence, which, though not wholly indeterminate in contents, is yet poor and not particularly definite, thought cannot stop.”²⁷⁸

Dorner, however, is cautious here. On the one hand, he is convinced that thought necessarily moves to a more determinate concept of God than that provided by the cosmological argument. On the other hand, in arriving at a more determinate concept of God, he wants to proceed scientifically, and to do so requires that one proceed upon a principle of rational necessity. He asks, “How then are we to proceed from universal and infinite being to richer definitions, or from pure being to an onward movement, to a progress in knowledge and to definitions indeed, *not introduced from without, but necessarily thought in the being of God*, so that the concept of God may be further defined?”²⁷⁹

The ontological argument, recall, is the only *a priori* argument, and so the only argument that proceeds by rational necessity. Thought demands a more determinate conception of God than that provided by the ontological argument. The challenge, therefore, is to reach a richer definition of God, and to do so scientifically, yet having already exhausted the resources of the one *a priori* argument.

As we will see, Dorner’s solution is quite clever. Although he rejects the cosmological argument in its customary form, he will extract a component from the argument (the category of ‘causality’), argue that this component may be applied validly to the divine, and so apply it to the conception of God already obtained in order to reach a more determinate conception.

²⁷⁸ *SCD I* §20.1 (p. 249).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, §20.2 (p. 250). Emphasis mine.

The cosmological argument, in its classical form, appeals to empirical data and reasons from this to God as first cause. But an appeal to empirical data assumes that there is a world to appeal to in the first place. Further, any reliance on the empirical is an appeal to something which is not the result of reason, i.e. it is an appeal to something which is not driven by logical necessity. As Dorner puts it, the cosmological argument (in its customary form) “presupposes the being of the world as a firm and certain being, in order to derive God as the cause of the world from that presupposition. But the world is not something of itself and by itself, as indeed the conclusion [of the cosmological argument] itself already acknowledges that the cause is found in God of the world which is ‘contingent.’ If the world is contingent, it may possibly not exist.”²⁸⁰

The cosmological argument, in its customary form, uses the category of causation as a bridge that links the contingent and the necessary, establishing the latter by means of the former. Necessity, however, cannot be established by contingency, and so Dorner rejects utilizing the category of causation to establish a link between the contingent (the empirical) and the necessary (the divine). Note, though, that what Dorner rejects is the utilization of the category of causation to establish the necessary from the contingent. However, Dorner sees it as legitimate to apply the category of causation to the divine itself (i.e. as something *within* the realm of necessity, and not *between* the realms of necessity and contingency).²⁸¹ The concept of causation itself does not imply the empirical, and so is applicable to the divine.

²⁸⁰ *SCD I* §20.3 (p. 255).

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, §20.4 (pp. 255-56).

2.3.2 Causation Applied to the Divine

Now that we have seen how Dorner secures the category of ‘causation’ for its application to the divine, we can proceed to the material results that it supplies for the conception of God. In basic terms, Dorner seems to think of causation as the reduction of potentiality into actuality. Since God must be thought of as always actually existing (rather than merely potentially existing),²⁸² God can neither have an excess of potential existence over actual existence (for then something is limiting God²⁸³), nor can God have an excess of actual existence over potential existence (for then there would be a mere succession from one to the other, making God subject to time²⁸⁴). If, then, God is actually and absolutely existing, then the absolute potentiality cannot become extinct in God: the potentiality must be continual because actuality is realized potentiality, and God’s actuality is continual.²⁸⁵

When this notion of a continual potentiality-actuality relation is applied to the notion that God cannot receive existence from something other than Himself, it follows that God must have His continual actuality, always realizing His inexhaustible potentiality, from Himself. In other

²⁸² “But He cannot be thought as merely possibility of Himself, potentially existing, and not existing *actu*, just as little as He can be thought as passing over into *actus*, or into existent reality successively; He is actually and absolutely existent, He is absolutely in Himself realized potentiality (*Potenz*), *actus purissimus*” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 256]).

²⁸³ “And were the real and absolute potency, which He is, not to become actual, something restraining, conditioning, limiting must be assumed, which kept Him in the potential state, which is equally unthinkable whether that something be thought within or without Him” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 256]).

²⁸⁴ “For did He first become actual, He would be subject to time...” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 256]).

²⁸⁵ “But if, now, God is actually and absolutely existing, still the absolute potentiality (or causality), which He was eternally, cannot be extinct in the divine reality, cannot have ceased in the action, in that realization of deity. God must be the perennial and eternal cause of His absolute reality, and not merely the past and contingent cause” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 256]).

words, God must possess aseity.²⁸⁶ Therefore, God is the ground of Himself: He provides Himself with the infinite supply of potentiality to be actualized.²⁸⁷ And given that God is both actuality and the source of this actuality, there is a distinction in God: the originator and that which is originated.²⁸⁸

Here a problem immediately arises. We saw that, as absolute, God cannot have an other; there can be only one absolute. Yet if there is a distinction in God, this would seem to imply that there are, in fact, two absolutes (thereby negating both in their claim to be absolute). To avoid this problem, God as originator and God as originated need to be seen as unified in some way. Dorner unifies these two elements by positing a reciprocal relationship between them. In other words, it is not that the effect is stagnant, but as effect relates itself back to its cause.²⁸⁹ This circular, reciprocal action between God as originator and God is originated Dorner expresses by the term ‘absolute life.’²⁹⁰ (In the next chapter, we will examine Dorner’s explicitly trinitarian

²⁸⁶ “God must be *ab aliquo* [from something]; that the law of causation requires; and, because not *ab alio* [from another], necessarily *a se* [from Himself]. He has aseity” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 256]).

²⁸⁷ “That means that...the center of gravity of absolute being does not lie outside of God, but falls within His own circumference. The infinite series of effect and cause, cause and effect, retrogrades, by the aseity, into itself; in the absolute the *progressus in infinitum* comes to the stand, which is predicated in the relation of cause and effect, and thus assumes these objective definitions into itself. God has not, so to speak, once, in the past, constituted Himself the absolutely and actually existent; He has thus constituted Himself eternally. He is and remains the real ground of His absolute reality. As that basis He is eternally the absolute and real potentiality or causality of Himself, the real possibility of His reality” (SCD I §20.4 [pp. 256-57]).

²⁸⁸ “Therefore both facts are to be supposed to be equally necessary. God is the absolute reality of being, and the absolute originating power of His reality. Thus an eternal distinction is already gained in the absolute essence of God. He is at once originator and that originated. Not merely is He product or factum, but He is also factor, and conversely” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 257]). As we will see in the next chapter, such distinction is crucial in Dorner’s view for a trinitarian configuration of divine aseity.

²⁸⁹ “But if that is so, the deity, as originated and made an effect, is Himself active in turn, He is so originated that He originates again. By this retrogression from the originated to the originating, the relation of causation is not broken through or violated, but continued and perfected in the reciprocal action. God as originated and as originator stands in the relation of reciprocal action. The deity as originated is eternally one with the deity originating, in this way, that the former is referred again to the cause, and is related in a causal and conditioning manner to that cause, just as the effect was immanent in the cause from the beginning” (SCD I §20.4 [p. 257]).

²⁹⁰ “And thus God is not to be simply defined as absolute causality, but there is to be predicated of Him so to speak, a double-sided causality (as absolute reciprocal action), as a circular motion of originating that is at the same time

texts which indicate that this action between God as originator and God as originated is just that of the procession of God the Son from God the Father. We will also see that the reciprocity between the two described above occurs in virtue of the Holy Spirit.)

The ontological argument, supplemented by aspects of the cosmological argument, establishes that there is a highest being – an Absolute – which exists necessarily and has this existence not from another but from itself: God is ‘absolute life.’ In the next chapter, we will see how Dorner configures this conception of the divine in a trinitarian manner, viz. as the ‘physical Trinity.’ Now, however, we will proceed to Dorner’s further elaboration of the divine attributes.

3. Establishing Divine Intellect

3.1 Introduction

Our task in this section will be to examine how Dorner establishes the doctrine of divine intellect. An examination of such a property is vital, for it is the essential attribute that is the basis of the personal properties of the divine persons as treated in the ‘logical Trinity.’ Dorner establishes that God possesses consciousness through his treatment of the physico-teleological argument. To that we now turn.

3.2 The Physico-Teleological Argument

3.2.1 Introduction

What Dorner calls the physico-teleological argument, in its customary form, is an argument that appeals to the structure and purposiveness of empirical phenomena as evidence that there is a conscious subject responsible for such design and order. Such an argument

originated, of being originated that is at the same time activity, to be expressed in the proposition that God is absolute life. For God is absolute life in Himself, not by His being realized once for all, but by eternal self-realization...” (SCD I §20.4 [pp. 257-58]).

assumes that the empirical unambiguously displays harmony and order, and that such harmony and order is a direct expression of the mind that is responsible for it.

As we will see, Dorner modifies the customary form of the physico-teleological argument, asserting that, in fact, the empirical world does not unambiguously display order and purposiveness. What this means is that one cannot thereby move directly from nature to a mind behind that world. Dorner's modification of the customary form of the physico-teleological proof is to assert that it is precisely the imperfection of the natural order which moves us to the thought of a perfect order, this perfect order being the divine.

3.2.2 Application of Measure, Adaptation, Harmony, and Beauty to the idea of God²⁹¹

"The world of nature," Dorner says, "is full of wonderful contrivances, and relations of disconnected things with one another, for the production of certain results, so that a *theologia naturalis* may be projected with a collection of noteworthy instances of the designed and harmonious correlations of natural things."²⁹² However, Dorner notes a problem: "Still, more than one thing is lacking to the cogency of the physico-teleological proof of itself, both as regards content and form."²⁹³

The problem is that, although we sense much order and harmony in the empirical, we also sense disorder and arbitrariness. "Adaptation or harmony is not everywhere represented to us," Dorner says. "[W]ith the means at our disposal the induction is not to be perfectly established. Then in the statement of what is to be regarded as design, arbitrariness easily

²⁹¹ *SCD* I §22 heading (p. 264).

²⁹² *Ibid.*, §22.2 (p. 265).

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

comings. There is much seemingly purposeless working. What from one side appears to be display of design, is neutralized again by other forces; for example, fruit or seed is the purpose of plants; they are destroyed.”²⁹⁴ Nature, Dorner continues, “is rather a cycle of rising and setting. Even man himself, if he regards himself as the end of nature, is devoured in turn by her, who is his mother, and thus forms an instance against the physico-teleological argument built on finite ends.”²⁹⁵

Dorner says: “This constitution of the world does not correspond with the idea of the perfect organism, in which there can be nothing superfluous or casual, too little or too much; this constitution [of the world] is contrary to such an idea.”²⁹⁶ Dorner therefore concludes that, because of the imperfection displayed in the natural world, we cannot arrive at the notion of the natural world as the finite effect of the infinite Absolute: “Consequently, even when the physico-teleological proof is applied, it cannot possibly lead to an absolute intelligence, to design, etc., *via causalitatis*. Finally, an absolute intelligence distinct from the world is not to be thus reached.”²⁹⁷

However, the imperfection manifest in the world does not entirely preclude one from reaching a perfect designer. Dorner presents a clever way of reaching an absolute from the imperfection of the world: “The shortcoming, the imperfection of nature, shows us that we cannot stop at the design and harmony appearing therein as at an absolute thing, and thus an elevation above the world is needed to reach the Absolute and divine, which is free from

²⁹⁴ *SCD* I §22.2 (p. 265-66).

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, (p. 266).

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, (p. 268).

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

contradiction, which nature must acknowledge it is not. But still the world, as the entry upon the physico-teleological proof itself shows, may contain so much, that it urges to the conception of an absolute end, or a perfect harmony and beauty.”²⁹⁸

What does Dorner mean by saying that the world “urges to the conception of an absolute end, or a perfect harmony and beauty”? He seems to mean that the instances of imperfection in nature force reason to think of a *perfect* instantiation of life: “Now the world, upon whose suggestion of course these ideas [of order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony] first come into consciousness, only presents them in an imperfect manner; therefore thought cannot rest content with the world, but only finds repose in the idea of the absolute and perfect design, beauty, and harmony.”²⁹⁹

That thought can be satisfied only with a perfectly ordered living whole means that the idea of such perfection is a necessary idea. Thus, since such an idea is necessary for thought, it must be associated with that we have already seen as necessary for thought, and thus what is necessarily existent. (Thus here, with the physico-teleological proof, Dorner builds upon what has already been established by the ontological and cosmological proofs.) Since there can only be one Absolute, this Absolute *itself* must be the perfect instantiation of life. (As Dorner puts it, God must be the ‘absolutely harmonious life.’³⁰⁰)

Given that God is this perfect instantiation of order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony, the following can be said about God:

The absolute life...is absolutely and essentially full of purpose in the fullness of its potentialities. It is not simply free from contradiction; the divine potencies of life are in

²⁹⁸ *SCD* I §22.3 (p. 268).

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, (p. 269).

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, §22b heading (p. 269).

harmonious equilibrium, the divine life is essentially retrogressive purpose, self-purpose. The divine life, further, is essentially glorious, essentially forms a beautiful, eternal, and harmonious rhythm; and this primary beauty typically presents measure, the eternal order of the world, the perfect organism, and, if there is a world, the principle of all well-measured equiposes, of everything that displays design or use, of everything beautiful and harmonious, in a word, of everything that is physically good in the world. The primary forms of things, and the primary ideas of adaptation and beauty, must be in God.³⁰¹

What we have, then, is an empirical sphere where order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony are *imperfectly* realized, and yet lead to the rationally necessary idea of a *perfect* realization of order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony. The only way to make sense of this imperfect realization is to relate it to a higher sphere, that of ‘spirit’: “So long as we remain in the realm of natural design, or good, or beauty, and know nothing of an absolute purpose, there remains something inadequate to the absolute life of God. Without spirituality the designed and beautiful is necessarily merely finite in value and manifestation.”³⁰²

Dorner thinks that this notion of ‘spirit’ can be obtained by considering teleology further. In the sphere of nature, we see teleology, and yet what is so vexing about teleology in this sphere is that it is not just the means that perish (which we might expect), but also the ends. In other words, *everything* in the sphere of nature – means *and* ends – seems to be transitory. “Now the physico-teleological argument brings ends before us relative to the sphere of the useful, the finitely good, and the beautiful, which are already of worth, but there is at the same time in these valuable objects transience and decay.”³⁰³ Thus one asks: “Wherefore this mutation and change,

³⁰¹ *SCD* I §22b.1 (p. 271).

³⁰² *Ibid.*, §22b.3 (p. 275).

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, §23.2 (p. 279).

however just it is in itself? Why are transience and change the only permanent things in nature?”³⁰⁴

The only way to make sense of this is to posit an absolute end, an end which does not undergo transience. As Dorner puts it, such an end “is only to be found, not in ends merely finite in value and power, not in transitory ends, but in a higher or absolute end, which asserts itself even in this change of the finite, and which, because it is absolutely and essentially worthy, is no longer inadequately related to the absoluteness of the divine”³⁰⁵ “Rational thought only finds a point of rest,” says Dorner, “by a non-arbitrary exaltation above the visible; that with which the exaltation has to do is, therefore, first of all, immaterial and non-transitory being, and so far already Spirit.”³⁰⁶

The sphere of spirit

is the solution of the riddle, which always confronts rational thought in the consideration of natural life itself. Nature remains a contradiction to the reason which is in search of a final cause, unless there is a higher sphere than the natural, unless nature is broken through by the spiritual sphere, and by that means growth as well as decay, the consumption of the finitely purposed as well as the progressive renewal under new forms of what has been consumed, be justified and established. In that way, what was previously an end, although a finite one, enters into a greater coherence, into relation with a higher existence, with which it is incorporated as a medium.³⁰⁷

When we examined the sphere of nature, we were left with what seemed like an irrational sphere. Although we can discern order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony in nature, these categories become questionable in light of the transience and decay that we also see in nature.

³⁰⁴ *SCD I* §23.2 (p. 279).

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, (p. 282).

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, §23.4 (p. 284).

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, §23.3 (p. 283).

But if this sphere is related to an absolute end, then the order of nature becomes rational to us. Relating the sphere of nature to an absolute end restores the categories of order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony. With an absolute end, such categories have a permanent seat: “In this higher something, or in God as Spirit, the principles will be found of all those ideas of which the world forms the mere finite manifestation or type, the principles of measure, design, and order, of beauty and harmony.”³⁰⁸

If this higher, absolute order provides rationality, then this means that this higher order is *itself* rational. Since rationality entails intelligence, the Absolute, therefore, must have the property of intelligence: “These categories [of order, measure, adaptation, beauty, and harmony] already presuppose a divine intelligence, an understanding, in which the eternal truths of logic, mathematics, and aesthetics are present as essential powers, so to speak, pertaining to the divine nature, already defined to be spiritual. Ends, whether finite or absolute, do not exist apart from intelligence; nor does beauty or order.”³⁰⁹ Thus, with the physico-teleological argument, Dorner has established that the Absolute possesses intellect.

4. Establishing God as an Ethical Agent

4.1 Introduction

With the juridical and moral arguments that are to be examined below, Dorner will establish the divine attributes that constitute God as an ‘ethical’ agent, and thus the attributes that concern the ‘ethical Trinity.’ Recall that for God to be ethically good, there must be some good which He freely wills. The juridical and moral arguments demonstrate that God is such in the

³⁰⁸ *SCD* I §23.4 (p. 284).

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, (p. 284-5).

following way. In brief, the juridical argument establishes that God is just, i.e. that the rendering of that which is due is itself a property of God, and the moral argument establishes that God is the highest good, i.e. that God is an end only and not a means to some further end. In other words, the two arguments establish that God is just toward the good, that God Himself is the highest good, and therefore God is just toward Himself. God necessarily ensures that what is due to Himself is rendered to Himself. Since God is just towards Himself, God is thereby ethically good.

4.2 The Juridical Argument: God Acts Justly Towards Himself

In his treatment of the ontological argument, we saw Dorner link necessary ideas of reason to the Absolute. Here, he does the same with the ideas of justice and right. The notions of ‘justice’ and ‘right’ are not based on contingency, but on the inherent quality of that which they preserve. “The idea of right,” says Dorner, “is, in the first place, no mere subjective idea; it is neither a matter of a human mode of view nor a mere work of human liking, agreement, or convention, so that it is purely a matter of human choice to form right.”³¹⁰ Although we may encounter injustice in the world around us, we know it as such precisely because the concepts of justice and right are necessary concepts.

Further, since the Absolute is the seat of the truths of reason, right and justice have their perfect exemplification in the Absolute: “The idea of right, when once it has been conceived upon positive or negative suggestion, cannot be again surrendered by the reason; it is a necessary idea of the reason, which cannot fail of existence in the Absolute, and of absolutely perfect existence therein. But the same absolute justice must also be acknowledged to be a good thing in

³¹⁰ *SCD I* §24.2 (p. 288).

itself, an essentially and absolutely worthy end in itself.”³¹¹ Dorner thus concludes, “But since, now, right and justice are necessary ideas of the reason, and something absolutely worthy is expressed thereby, they are also to be predicated of the divine essence.”³¹²

Thus, because God Himself is the origin of the necessary ideas of reason, the notions of justice and right have their origin in God. Yet it is not that the concepts of justice and right have their origin in the divine and manifest themselves in the finite. Rather, justice and right have their origin in God precisely because God Himself is right and justice – as Dorner puts it above, they are ‘to be predicated of the divine essence.’

What does it mean to say that God Himself is right and justice, that they are to be predicated of the divine essence? ‘Right’ denotes that certain things are due to a subject, that a subject is deserving of things based on its status. ‘Justice’ is simply the protection of such rights; the defense or guard that allows the subject enjoys its rights. For God Himself to be right and justice therefore means that God Himself is just, that God Himself upholds that which is due to a subject.

Here it is tempting to move to the notion that God, as right and justice, simply means that God upholds that which is due to human beings. But Dorner, here, is not discussing the finite; he is discussing the Absolute. Justice and right are predicated of the divine essence, and the divine essence refers to God Himself. Right and justice, therefore, are predicated of God even apart from creation. Indeed, that God could be just only if He is in relation to something other than Himself is flatly rejected by Dorner:

But if in the just action of God there is not revealed an internal and immanent justice, there would not be necessity in this just action: it would simply be arbitrary action,

³¹¹ *SCD I* §24.2 (p. 287).

³¹² *Ibid.*, (p. 289).

because it would not have its roots in the divine essence; and thus, again, the concept of justice would become something subjective, it would be based in our mental representation, which is pressed upon us, although contingently, and thus the idea of objective right would vanish. But right belongs to the eternal truths as well as mathematics and logic, and those truths are maintained by God Himself, indeed they are united with His essence.³¹³

Dorner rejects the idea that God could be just only if there is an other because this would mean that, if there was an other to which God would relate, such relating would be based only on a divine will which would not be beholden to any law at all, even a law which is based in God's very being. God could, potentially, act against His own essence. Dorner concludes, "We must therefore endeavor to apprehend God as just in Himself, or in relation to Himself, and apart from the idea of the world, or apart from the world."³¹⁴

Although Dorner rejects the idea that God would need an other in order to be just, he does recognize that the concept of justice entails a relation between two distinct things. For Dorner, God's immanent justice is therefore possible only with a weak version of divine simplicity. Positively put, immanent justice entails a distinction of some sort within God: "The idea of justice at any rate presupposes a duality, and so, in order to be the original seat of justice, God cannot be thought as abstract simplicity, but only as distinct in Himself. But God is not to be abstractly simple; that point has already become clear to us by the divine self-origination."³¹⁵ The question is: Where in the divine is this distinction relevant, i.e. what is to be distinguished from what when it comes to God's immanent justice?

³¹³ *SCD I* §24.2 (p. 289).

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §24.4 (p. 293).

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, (p. 294). Note, again, how Dorner posits the necessity of a distinction. This will help him parse the attribute in a trinitarian manner in his treatment of the ethical Trinity. We will explore this in the next chapter.

That God is immanently just, and that justice entails a relation, means that God is just with respect to Himself. If God simply allowed His physical attributes free reign – if, for example, God simply asserted His will based on what He was absolutely capable of – then God would not be beholden to any law, any necessity. If, on the other hand, God is beholden to a law, then God must exercise His abilities and acts within the constraints of such a law.

If justice is an immanent attribute of God, and if justice entails a respect for law, then immanent justice in God means that God must respect His own law. A self-constraint out of respect for a law means that one subordinates their abilities and actions to the law, that they see the law as normative over their actions. Thus, if this is the case in God, then this law in God is normative over God's abilities and actions. Thus, although God's abilities and God's law are both included in God – are both aspects of God – nevertheless these two aspects are not to be given equal weight. Rather, if justice is indeed to be predicated of God, then there must be certain aspects of God which are subordinate to other aspects of God. In subordinating certain aspects of Himself to others, God is simply giving those various aspects of Himself their due. "God is just in Himself," says Dorner, "seeing that He thinks and wills every single thing in Himself *according to its value*; that He gives and maintains its right, just, and harmonious position to each of the distinctions in Himself."³¹⁶

Mere ability is simply part of the 'physical' aspect of God, whereas a respect for a law or norm entails something beyond and above God's mere 'physical' aspect, namely the 'spiritual' aspect of God. God's immanent justice, therefore, entails that God not be indifferent to the relation between His 'physical' aspect and His 'spiritual' aspect. As Dorner puts it, "The opinion that everything in God is of identical value, that nothing is superordinate and nothing

³¹⁶ *SCD I* §24.4 (p. 294). Emphasis mine.

subordinate, threatens the distinction between the physical, e.g. the divine power, and the spiritual; or it proceeds as if the distinction between the physical and the spiritual or ethical were merely subjective, and not given in the objective essence of God.”³¹⁷ Thus, the ‘physical’ aspect of God is to be subordinate to, and servant of, God’s ‘spiritual’ aspect: “Everything in God accords with that justice which knows, wills, and preserves everything after its kind, and pre-eminently so His life, His nature, and His fullness of might, as the servants of the spiritual, [as the servants of] the higher worth. There is thus also in God a subordination and a superordination by virtue of His justice, which penetrates the whole divine life, and is unalterable.”³¹⁸ The distinction in God which justice preserves is therefore between the physical and the spiritual.

We have spoken of God’s immanent justice as a relation of God to Himself, and that such justice gives each aspect of God its proper due. Specifically, we saw that Dorner is concerned to show that the spiritual aspect of God is preserved and not subordinated to the physical. Thus, the spiritual aspect of God has an absolute value since it can never be a means for a physical end (lest God’s justice be violated). God, therefore, respects His own divine law. God, as Himself right and justice, means that God upholds that which is due to Himself.

Because right and justice are attributes of the divine, and therefore are the reason why God upholds that which is due to Himself, it is thereby *necessary* that God be just towards Himself. But here it will be important to pause and anticipate where the discussion is going. In the next section, we will see that God is just towards Himself not simply because He is God, but because He is the highest good, the absolutely worthy end. As a result, God is *necessarily* just towards Himself *as the highest good*.

³¹⁷ SCD I §24.4 (p. 294).

³¹⁸ Ibid., (p. 295).

Toward the end of the next section, however, we will see Dorner bring in a consideration which will directly challenge – indeed it will contradict – this line of thought he has been developing. The line of thought he has been developing, as we have seen, is that God is *necessarily* just towards Himself. But he will note that an important aspect of ethical goodness consists in an agent *freely choosing* to will the good. To look ahead, Dorner wants to maintain that both of these (contradictory) aspects of ethical goodness are present in the divine: God is necessarily just towards Himself *and* He freely wills to be just towards Himself.

4.3 The Moral Argument: God as the Absolutely Worthy End

The juridical argument has yielded the conclusion that God upholds that which is due to Himself. Yet this really has only given us a negative characterization of the spiritual. What, then, is that which the divine justice protects? It is in *SCD* §26 where Dorner begins to offer a positive account of the ‘spiritual’ nature of the divine, of what the divine justice protects. He says, “That which is simply full of worth and purpose, and by means of which the just is just, and from which the just has its inviolability, is the holy, which exists for the sake of the intelligence and will, desires and attains in them positive realization, and thus becomes the ethically good”³¹⁹ Thus, this spiritual reality is ‘full of worth and purpose,’ and this is why it is protected by the divine justice.

Dorner characterizes this spiritual reality more robustly as follows:

The ultimate, holy, and positive idea of end, with which thought can and must be satisfied, is positive moral good alone, to which justice occupies the relationship of guardian, as the form which maintains that moral good as its essential contents. Or if we place ourselves at the position of ethical idea, justice is itself the negative side of the ethical, which, by virtue of its positive and unconditional worth and value, excludes and negatives in the just manner already considered (§24) everything inimical. Its obligatory force and strength, as has been shown, right derives, indeed, from the absolute worth of

³¹⁹ *SCD* I §25.2 (p. 305).

the positively good, as of the absolutely highest end, which as such is justly to be absolutely defended by justice. And thus the positively good, or the ethical, is the more deeply-lying ground or basis of all right which is unconditionally obligatory³²⁰

Thus, it is what Dorner calls the ‘positive moral good,’ or ‘the ethical,’ which is the positive characterization of the spiritual.

Dorner confirms that it is ‘the ethical’ which is that which cannot be made into a means by noting how nothing can surpass it:

In that idea [viz., ‘the ethical’], once thought, must the questioning cease as to the why, the *cui bono*, because the answer is that in that idea itself the *bonum* lies, and therefore the ultimate final cause, to transcend which is neither necessary nor possible. To transcend that idea would be to negative it. For if we thought anything to be higher than the ethical, the ethical would only be a means instead of the highest end. The ethical, when thought, is thought as that which is the essentially good, as its own absolutely worthy and positive end. In the idea of that absolute end and worth, thought can find its absolute point of rest.³²¹

We have seen that the divine justice guards the ethical, the absolutely worthy end. But what, precisely, is the relationship between the divine and the ethical, between the divine and this absolutely worthy end? Is the ethical an ideal which the divine justice guards, or is it the divine itself? Dorner argues that it is the latter: “If the ethical idea occupies this unique and necessary position, and if an absolute divine being is to be necessarily thought, the ethical, the thought of which is rationally necessary, cannot originally be outside of the Absolute, otherwise a something absolutely worthy would exist outside of the absolute being.”³²² We have established that the ethical is an absolute end (rather than a relative end). Further, we saw that the ontological argument establishes an absolute being. If the ethical is something other than the

³²⁰ *SCD* I §26.3 (p. 310).

³²¹ *Ibid.*, (pp. 310-11).

³²² *Ibid.*, §26.5 (p. 312).

absolute being, then there are competing absolutes (or, rather, two things competing for the title of ‘absolute’). Thus, the ethical must be identical with the absolute being.

The ethical, in other words, cannot be something which is merely potential in God. It cannot be something whose actuality is contingent upon, for example, the divine will. If this were the case, there would always be the potential that the ethical would not be actual. For Dorner, however, the status of the ethical entails its actuality: “But that the ethical should be thought as merely potential, as a law in or on the absolute being, is inadequate to the idea of the ethical as the absolutely highest idea. Potentiality as such is non-existence; if the ethical is merely potential, it is non-existent.”³²³ Dorner therefore concludes that “there exists in the absolute being and life the reality of the ethical.”³²⁴ The actuality of the ethical in God, therefore, is part of God’s very being.

There is, however, an important consideration regarding the actuality of the ethical as God’s being. Dorner captures this consideration nicely:

But what is naturally or immediately good is not the true realization of the good. If God were only fatalistically and compulsorily determined in His being by the law of the ethical, or were He immediately at one therewith without conscious will, He would merely be a necessitated ethical substance, and not the God who is the prototype of holiness, whose image we ought to be. Indeed, apart from consciousness and volition, there could be no talk of the ethical, because good could not in that case be willed as such.³²⁵

The objection to the ethical as merely identical with God’s being is that it would eliminate God’s will from what it means to be ethically good. One cannot say that an agent is ethically good if her

³²³ *SCD I* §26.5 (p. 313).

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, (p. 315).

will is not involved, i.e. if there can be no sense in which this agent consciously and deliberately pursues ethical goodness.

Does this mean, then, that the ethical in God must be a matter of divine will rather than of divine being? Dorner rejects this option. He says,

If in the ultimate resort we built the ethical upon the divine will, without determining that will by the eternal ethical being God desires to be, such a will, because undetermined by the essence and being of God, would be ethically absolutely undetermined – that is to say, it would be mere caprice and absolute power (*supremum liberum arbitrium*), and would be quite as much of itself a merely physical category as that ethical natural disposition which is immediately and, so to speak, fatalistically determined.³²⁶

If the ethical in God is due solely to the divine will, we have the same problem as before, just in a different form. The ethical identified solely with the divine being *or* solely with the divine will makes God only fatalistically related to the good: in the former case, nothing God *wills* is related to the good, and in the latter case, no aspect of God's nature is related to the good. As Dorner puts it, "To think of God only as an actual and ethical will, and as only ethical substance or ethical being, leads essentially to the same result, and takes us back from the ethical sphere to the physical."³²⁷

Dorner will conclude, then, that the ethical "exists in the deity in both ways, as eternally perfected ethical being, and as living ethical actuality, or will."³²⁸ The ethical, therefore, exists in God *both* as part of God's natural essence *and* as a product of divine volition. How these two aspects of the ethical fit together forms the summit of Dorner's trinitarian thought: the ethical Trinity. It is to this topic that we now turn.

³²⁶ *SCD* I §26.5 (p. 315).

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, (p. 316).

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 317).

Chapter 6

DORNER ON THE TRINITY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined Dorner's treatment of the physical, intellectual, and ethical divine attributes. There we saw that, for Dorner, God must be both naturally good, and yet an agent who freely wills the good. That God must be both, however, presents a problem, for the two at least seem to be mutually exclusive. The problem, in other words, lies in how we can predicate both of one and the same agent. The solution to this problem, Dorner thinks, can only be found in a trinitarian divine subject. In this chapter, therefore, we will explore exactly how Dorner tries to solve this problem (viz., in the 'ethical Trinity'). As the solution to a problem, the Trinity is therefore grounded in the notion that God must possess ethical subjectivity.

The structure of this chapter runs as follows. Section 1 examines Dorner's notion of the physical Trinity, the trinitarian configuration expressed by those physical attributes examined in the previous chapter that established divine aseity. Section 2 examines Dorner's notion of the logical Trinity, the trinitarian configuration expressed by those logical attributes examined in the previous chapter that established divine intellect.

Section 3 examines Dorner's notion of the ethical Trinity, the trinitarian configuration expressed by those ethical attributes examined in the previous chapter that established God as an ethical agent. We saw in the previous chapter that Dorner was particularly concerned to maintain ethical freedom and ethical necessity in the divine. We will see in 3.1 that the maintenance of

both ethical components necessitates a distinction in the divine (which turns out to be the personal distinctions of the Trinity). In 3.2, we will see how Dorner maps the components of ethical subjectivity onto the Trinity. In 3.3, we will examine how the trinitarian persons function as the means by which divine ethical subjectivity is actualized.

Section 4 examines how, in virtue of being a union of freedom and necessity (4.1), God can be love. Section 4.2 then investigates how love is the primary attribute of the divine. Finally, in section 4.3, we will see how, for Dorner, love makes possible the perfect union of divine self-communication and self-preservation vis-à-vis the created order – that is, how divine love enables God to give Himself to the created order without losing Himself in the created order.

1. The Physical Trinity

In our examination of the divine attributes – specifically in our examination of the ontological and cosmological elements – we saw the following: Because God must be thought of as: [1] realized potentiality – that is, as actuality; [2] because such potentiality cannot be exhausted; [3] because the concept of causation entails a ‘from’; and [4] because God cannot be from something outside Himself; it follows that God must have His continual actuality, always realizing His inexhaustible potentiality, from Himself. That is, God possesses aseity. Further, we saw that Dorner unifies this inexhaustible potentiality with this continual actuality by positing a reciprocal relationship between the two, what he called a ‘double-sided causality.’ This circular, reciprocal action between God as originator and God as originated Dorner expresses by the term ‘absolute life.’

In his treatment of the ‘physical Trinity’ (*SCD* I §31B.I), Dorner seeks to demonstrate how divine aseity and its attendant double-sided causality requires a trinitarian structure of the divine. Thus, it is no coincidence that he begins his treatment of the physical Trinity by invoking

his previous discussion of aseity: “That God is not a rigid but a living being, and is life in Himself by the fact that He lives *a se*, has been previously stated. He has and is not merely life in relation to what is distinct from Himself in which He loses Himself, but prior to everything He is so in and relatively to Himself; He does not even need, as we do, something distinct from Himself for His life, a material or a stimulus. By His own means He is the life, because He has aseity in Himself.”³²⁹ We will see that it is because God is ‘absolute life,’ as Dorner puts it, that God must be triune.

Since divine aseity is to be grounded in the triune structure of the divine, before proceeding to the Trinity explicitly considered, Dorner first briefly treats divine self-origination. Dorner notes that “if the divine self-origination is to be thought as real, a distinction, at least a dyad, is thereby supposed in God; God is the producer absolutely, but what is produced is not primarily the world, but is absolutely equivalent to the producer, an absolute effect which is itself efficient in turn.”³³⁰ The notion of a ‘double-sided causality’ which is constitutive of absolute life obviously implies a two-ness.

In appealing to the notion of a ‘distinction’ in God (viz., God the ‘producer’ and the ‘absolute effect’), and in noting that the effect is ‘absolutely equivalent’ to the cause, Dorner has begun to prepare the way for thinking about the causality of absolute life in trinitarian terms. God as ‘producer’ here alludes to the traditional trinitarian doctrine of God the Father generating God the Son, and the ‘absolute effect’ alludes to God the Son Himself. Yet the more explicit invocation of traditional trinitarian doctrine is Dorner’s assertion of the absolute effect being ‘absolutely equivalent to the producer,’ a reference to the Son as *homoousios* with the Father.

³²⁹ *SCD I* §31B.I (p. 420).

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

To return to the issue of aseity for a moment, one of the most conspicuous aspects of his treatment of the physical Trinity is Dorner's construal of what I will call the 'principle of life.' Dorner thinks of the trinitarian life of the divine after the manner of an organism. An organism consists of members and whole, wherein the whole logically precedes the members, and the members act as the vehicles which realize the whole. What we will see is that, in the physical Trinity, there is a principle of life which functions as the 'whole' – in that it drives the members – and the divine persons function as the 'members' insofar as they realize this principle of life. We will see, in other words, that there is a principle which necessitates that God be triune so that this principle can actualize itself.

In speaking about this principle of life as it occurs in organisms on a generic level, Dorner says, "In every living organism there is a reciprocal action without detriment to the distinction of the members; but this is only possible by the fact that life is not comparable to a straight line, upon which it is always producing something new and different, and is also not a mere movement backwards and forwards between two points, but is a circle which returns into itself."³³¹ We noted above that in an organism, on the one hand, the whole logically precedes the members, and on the other hand, the members realize the whole. Thus, in an organism, there is a reciprocity between the whole and the members. For the whole to be realized, the whole must be present in those members which realize it. Thus the whole must be present in the action of going-forth, so that the going-forth is related to the purpose of the whole. The image of a circle in the above passage suggests that the going-forth of life is not unrelated to the whole.

The whole, of course, does not materialize apart from the members. Thus, the materialization of the whole must begin with one member of the organism (viz., God the Father),

³³¹ *SCD I* §31B.I (p. 421).

and it is through this materialization of the whole that the subsequent members of the organism (viz., God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) are produced.

Dorner then applies this organic imagery to the divine. Just as is the case with mundane organisms where the cause and effect are reciprocally related, such that the effect reaches back to its cause, so also must this be the case with the divine: “this second efficient cause cannot in its working continue to produce in a similar manner an endless series, a third which produces a fourth, and so on in an interminable theogonic series; that would be the heathen representation”³³² Thus, he continues, the unity between God as cause and God as effect “is only permanently assured, insofar as the living effect or the life effected eternally finds its way back to the first efficient cause, and serves the end of eternally establishing God Himself as effect. God, as αἰτιατόν, is referred to God as αἴτιον, so that the relation of causation passes over into that of reciprocal action.”³³³

In other words, in the divine, God as effect must refer back to God as cause. Yet the referring back of the effect to the cause is not a feature of the effect *as effect*. There must be something beyond the mere going forth that relates the effect to the cause. How is it that in an organism the cause and the effect are related, such that there is not an endless series? How is it that an organism is not like a line that proceeds infinitely from a point, but rather like ‘a circle which returns into itself,’ where there is a reciprocal relation between parts?

The reciprocal relation, Dorner says, occurs by means of a third member: “the relatively independent and severed members are held together by a principle of unity which keeps the centrifugal force in equilibrium with the centripetal, a principle which is not one of the two

³³² *SCD I* §31B.I (p. 420).

³³³ *Ibid.*

members, nor is it the whole, but which preserves and confirms the members in their distinction, just as it unites them.”³³⁴ Such a principle of unity between God as cause (the Father) and God as effect (the Son) is the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit: “This principle of union in the organism of the absolute Life we call the Holy Spirit, to whom even a physical importance attaches. He constitutes this organism together with the other two, just as He is Himself conditioned simultaneously with its members.”³³⁵

What is interesting here is that Dorner thinks of the act of life-origination in the divine, and thus the generation of one divine person from another, as something which would continually repeat itself were it not for the intervention of some principle which redirects it back (viz., the Holy Spirit). Indeed, Dorner’s words give the sense that this principle of life would be almost aimless were it not for the Holy Spirit: “To abide by a duality of principles would not...attain the end of self-origination, because without a principle which reconducted to unity either the second would produce a third, and the third a fourth, and so on *ad infinitum*, or God would be unable to attain any causality at all, because when starting from Himself He would not reach Himself again, and thus God would merely remain an absolutely simple, self-identical, rigid substance.”³³⁶

As Dorner notes, not only would an absence of the Holy Spirit result in an endless generation of divine persons, but further and paradoxically, an endless generation of divine persons would indicate not divine vitality but divine impotence. Dorner does not expound on this interesting point, but he implies the following. He has already noted that the Holy Spirit is the

³³⁴ *SCD I* §31B.I (p. 421).

³³⁵ *Ibid.*

³³⁶ *Ibid.*

agent of unity vis-à-vis divine self-origination. As such, the Spirit brings about unity-in-difference: unity between different divine persons (the Father and the Son).³³⁷

Divine causality, as we have seen, has both a component of duality (cause and effect) and a component of organicity (there is a whole, a teleological principle, which drives the parts and unites them). The Spirit, by uniting cause and effect – or more precisely, by relating the effect back to the cause – unites the goal of the act of life-origination with its purpose. More precisely, by relating the effect back to the cause, the Holy Spirit makes the act of divine life-origination a teleological act.

More broadly, by uniting cause and effect, cause and effect can no longer be thought of as discreet. The uniting of cause and effect allows for the discreet components to be predicated of one and the same thing. Because aseity involves *self*-generation, the generator and the generated must be predicable of one and the same self. Since cause and effect, *considered merely as such*, are by their nature discreet, there must be a component that relates them in a non-arbitrary manner. This is similar to the idea that, where the motion of one's foot and the movement of a soccer ball are related by the person's intention to kick the ball, because the intention relates the effect (the motion of the ball) back to the cause (the motion of the foot) in a teleological way, allowing one to say that the person *kicked* the ball.) The teleological aspect allows for the Father, the Son, and the Spirit to be components of divine production, and thus allowing for the act of aseity to be predicated to none of them entirely individually, but to all of them collectively. For this reason, a trinitarian structure is needed for divine aseity.

³³⁷ Here, although differences abound, Dorner seems to be in the same orbit as Staudenmaier regarding the importance of a unity-in-difference in the triune life of God, and specifically on the role of the Holy Spirit in bring about this unity,

2. The Logical Trinity

We saw in the previous chapter that if God is to be ethical, He must possess knowledge:

We found earlier that God is not merely absolute thought, but also knowledge. Consequently, we must continue, God is also knowledge not only of things different from Himself, but of Himself primarily. The absolute energy of His knowledge must also penetrate His own depths, and indeed in such a way that He does not merely think His thought, but His being also, and His life, nay, that the whole fulness He has of real forces of life, of beauty, and of harmony, is illuminated by His self-consciousness.³³⁸

Just as Dorner, regarding the physical Trinity, grounded the trinitarian structure of the divine in the notion of divine aseity, it is in Dorner's treatment of the 'logical Trinity' (*SCD I* §31B.II) that he grounds the trinitarian structure of the divine in the notion of divine intelligence. And just as we saw that it is in virtue of being triune that divine aseity is actualized, so we will see here that it is in virtue of being triune that divine intelligence is actualized.

Before we can examine how the Trinity relates to divine self-knowledge, we must first inquire not only into what is required for self-knowledge, but what is required for knowledge *simpliciter*. Dorner notes, "Now to all knowledge there pertains an antithesis of subject and object, of thinker and thought, and only by means of this duality and of their union does knowledge arise. The same thing is true of that knowledge which is self-consciousness. In this case the object is, it is true, no foreign object; but one and the same spirit, that it may become self-conscious, contrasts itself with itself."³³⁹

For knowledge, there must be a subject – the one who does the thinking – and an object – that which is thought. Hence, for knowledge, there must be a distinction (an 'antithesis,' as Dorner puts it) between subject and object. The same is true for self-knowledge, although the

³³⁸ *SCD I* §31B.II (p. 422).

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

object of thought is identical with the one who does the thinking. Yet, for self-knowledge to be a form of *knowledge*, there must be a distinction or ‘antithesis’ between the self as subject of knowledge and the self as object of knowledge. The self must ‘contrast’ itself with itself.

How does the self contrast itself with itself? Because it is *self*-knowledge, and thus one and the same agent making itself an object for itself, Dorner speaks of the agent ‘reduplicating’ itself: “In this objectivation, the spirit reduplicates itself, so to speak, within itself.”³⁴⁰ So, in making itself an object of knowledge for itself, the self doubles itself. This reduplication, as an act of objectification, creates something which is now distinct.

Thus, there is an important difference between knowledge of things other than the self and knowledge of the self. In knowledge of things other than self, there is no reduplication. In self-knowledge, however, the self, “does not primarily project something foreign to itself...but [it] projects [its] own counterpart or image”³⁴¹ In self-knowledge, therefore, that which is projected (the object of thought), although necessarily distinct from the subject, has a certain likeness to the subject, for it just is the subject’s own ‘counterpart’ or ‘image.’

Here, already, we can anticipate Dorner’s trinitarian articulation of divine self-knowledge. Such a view of self-knowledge maps onto traditional trinitarian thought in that there is *reduplication* (which corresponds to the generation of the Son from the Father) and such reduplication occurs *within* the agent itself (which ensures the *homousios* of the divine generator and the generated divine).

As we might guess, self-knowledge requires more than two components. Dorner says:

Human self-consciousness does not really take place because the essence of man...has, amongst the objects of its consciousness and along with what is distinct and foreign,

³⁴⁰ *SCD* I §31B.II (p. 422).

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, (p. 422-23).

apprehended itself, has made an object of itself, a circumstance which can only happen by self-objectivation or by diremption into subject and object. On the contrary, so long as there rises before the consciousness of a man, or his intuition, himself indeed, but only as one amongst other objects, so long he has not himself as yet, but speaks of himself as of a third, in the third person, he is estranged from himself, for he has himself, it is true, as an object amongst others, but does not know that he, the thinker himself, is one with the thought, and conversely.³⁴²

Although the self-conscious agent makes himself an object of thought for himself, he nonetheless grasps that object of thought *as himself*. The self as object of thought, in other words, is understood by the self as subject to be not just another object amongst all the other objects of consciousness.

Dorner's point here is that the dual components above (the self as thinker and the self as object of thought) are not sufficient of themselves for self-consciousness because there is no component by which the self as thinker might recognize itself as one and the same with the self as object of thought. There must be, therefore, a third component – distinct from the other two components – which unites the self as thinker and the self as thought, facilitating self-recognition. Without this distinct, third component, the thinker “has not looked upon the thinker again as returned so to speak from the depths of the thought, and thus has not yet found himself. And thus he is not yet self-conscious spirit, he is not yet I. The spirit of the man is primarily related to itself as a natural object merely.”³⁴³

In self-knowledge, then, there is a component immanent in consciousness which relates the self as thinker to the self as object of thought, facilitating this self-recognition: “But it thus pertains to the essence of spirit as such that it is its own mediator, that it generates itself as actual

³⁴² *SCD I* §31B.II (p. 423).

³⁴³ *Ibid.*

spirit, and that apart from such mediation it is not actual spirit, but remains like a child at the commencement of the natural life”³⁴⁴

Unfortunately, Dorner is vague on what this third component is in the case of human self-consciousness – he offers descriptions of it but never names what it is. Here, he may simply be drawing upon a discovery of Fichte that later became important for German Romanticism, where in human consciousness, we recognize the self of our empirical experience as identical with a transcendental aspect of ourselves, but the recognition of this identity cannot itself be empirical (for to prove it empirically would itself already require an intuition of this identity). Thus, the two aspects of the self must be united, but this unity can only be assumed and never proved.

We have already seen Dorner identify the subjective aspect of divine self-knowledge with God the Father and identify the objective aspect of divine self-knowledge with God the Son. And as we have seen, possession of self-knowledge requires a third component which unites the two. This is no less the case in the divine, and Dorner identifies this third, uniting component in the divine with the Holy Spirit: “Thus the absolute Spirit must also be this self-mediation or ideal self-reproduction, only that He has His effect ever with Him as eternally happening, and is not to be thought as first becoming in time.”³⁴⁵ In noting that the divine must *be* this mediation between itself as thinker and itself as object of thought, Dorner implies the trinitarian tenet that the Holy Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and the Son.

In Dorner’s treatment of the logical Trinity, we see a similarity with his treatment of the physical Trinity. There, we saw that there was a principle which was not itself identifiable with any of the divine persons (viz., that of ‘life’), and which was actualized by means of the divine

³⁴⁴ SCD I §31B.II (p. 424).

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

persons. Here we see a similarity in that, just as in the physical Trinity, ‘life’ was aimless were it not for the third member, so also in the logical Trinity Dorner speaks of the divine consciousness as if it were aimless were it not for the involvement of the third member. In the logical Trinity, therefore, there seems to be a principle which is actualized by the divine persons. He says: “It cannot suffice that God should simply be the Father’s consciousness of the Son, or vice versa, and that in both modes of being God should know the second to Himself merely as a second, and not know Himself in and through the second. In that case there would only be an infinite reflection and re-reflection of the divine essence on opposite sides.”³⁴⁶ Here, Dorner notes that without the mediation of the third member, the consciousness of God would infinitely bounce back and forth, so to speak, between the Father and the Son, without either being able to recognize Himself in the other.

We must pause to note that, with the above comments, Dorner has made a subtle shift in his thoughts about divine self-knowledge. Earlier, Dorner spoke of a single conscious subject (viz., ‘God’), and this subject’s self-knowledge was possible via three components (viz., [1] God as thinker, [2] God as object of thought, and [3] God as mediator between the two. Thus, all three components serve as conditions for the self-knowledge of a single subject. Each component, in other words, is not of itself identical to the single conscious subject.

Dorner’s comments about an infinite reflection and re-reflection, however, imply that the Father and the Son are themselves conscious subjects in their own right, rather than the components by which self-knowledge might occur. Dorner speaks of the Father and the Son as conscious subjects in their own right, but as conscious subjects who could not recognize themselves in the other – the divine essence that is their own as also present in the other –

³⁴⁶ *SCD I* §31B.II (p. 425).

without the mediation of a third. As he puts it, “The spiritual divine essence or the Godhead, which actually exists therein in a twofold manner, would remain unrecognized as the common essence of both.”³⁴⁷

It is by the mediation of the third member, therefore, that the Father recognizes His common essence with the Son, and the Son recognizes His common essence with the Father: “Only by the thinking and determining Godhead, who is in both [the Father and the Son], knowing His own essence in what is different to Himself, in what is thought and determined, is self-consciousness constituted in God. But for that end a third and equally real principle of union is necessary in God, the Holy Spirit, to whom Paul ascribes exclusive dignity in the self-knowledge of God in His depths.”³⁴⁸

Here, again, we see the results of the shift that we flagged above. Before, the possessor of self-knowledge simply saw a copy of himself in the object of knowledge. In other words, the object of knowledge was a reflection of the subject of knowledge, and so the subject recognized himself in the object (or the object *as* himself). Here, however, what is recognized by the subject in the object is not simply himself, but another who shares his essence. The conclusion of the logical Trinity is, therefore, that God is His own primary object of knowledge, and that this self-knowledge must be mediated in some way.

³⁴⁷ *SCD I* §31B.II (p. 425).

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

3. The Ethical Trinity

3.1 The Necessity of Distinction within the Divine

We have now reached the pinnacle of Dorner's trinitarian thought, that of the 'ethical Trinity.' We saw in the previous chapter that for God to be ethically good, He must be *both* aboriginally good – thereby possessing ethical necessity – *and* be one who wills the highest good –thereby possessing ethical freedom. This presents a problem, for it appears contradictory that God would somehow possess ethical goodness in both ways. It is here in his presentation of the 'ethical Trinity' where Dorner resolves this contradiction, where he establishes *how* goodness in God can be both ethically necessary and ethically free – namely, by assigning the former to the person of the Father, assigning the latter to the person of the Son, and assigning the means by which they are united to the person of the Spirit.

Dorner begins by establishing that there is a particular sequence that obtains between ethical freedom and ethical necessity. Of the two, the logically prior component must be ethical necessity, for this ensures that goodness is realized:

For if, with Duns Scotus, we suppose the first thing in God to be absolutely free will, without a necessity which logically precedes, without a conditioning and defining by means of what is ethically necessary or goodness simply, we could never arrive at an ethical realization or ethical freedom. For even if goodness were willed, or if something were willed to be good, but in an arbitrary manner, goodness would not be realized. What is good in itself, what is necessary, what is constituted without arbitrariness, must be willed in no arbitrary, but in a free way; only by such means is the ethical realized.³⁴⁹

Here, Dorner speaks of 'ethical freedom,' that the agent freely choose to will the good. For the good to be freely willed by the agent, the agent must be presented with the good so as to be able to will it as such. Thus, there must be a goodness which exists prior to the agent's act of will (as opposed to, say, the good just being identified as whatever the agent wills). If the agent must

³⁴⁹ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 432). Here we see the Hegelian insistence that the agent feel 'at home' in her ethical duties.

recognize the good *as* such so that she may thereby freely choose it, then, logically, the existence of good (viz., ethical necessity) must precede the recognition and willing of it by the agent (viz., ethical freedom). We must now examine how Dorner understands this sequence to obtain in God.

Since ethical necessity has logical priority over ethical freedom, the good as God's being has logical priority over the good as a product of God's will. We can say, therefore, that God just *is* ethical necessity: "If then we must begin with the ethically necessary," says Dorner, "we must teach first of all that the ethically necessary must have an existence, and that in God Himself, or rather God must Himself be the ethically necessary or holy."³⁵⁰ Again: "that which is morally necessary cannot be superior to God, as a law, power, or fate which is above Him; but, since it is in itself the highest truth, it falls within the circumference of the divine being. The ethically necessary has its eternal being so very largely in God that He is Himself moral law and morally necessary being."³⁵¹ God, therefore, must simply *be* goodness, for if God merely willed goodness, goodness would be superior to Him.

However – and it is here that the contradiction begins to arise – we have seen that the ethically necessary must be freely willed by God, that God not be compelled to choose the good. The contradiction, therefore, is this: on the one hand, God must be identified with the good, for otherwise He would be subordinate to the good; on the other hand, God cannot be necessitated to will the good, for otherwise God would not be able to will the good freely. How, though, can ethical freedom and ethical necessity be predicated of one and the same thing? Just as Dorner asserted that, for divine aseity and divine self-knowledge, the divine substance could not be rigidly simple, so now he asserts the same for the divine as ethical: "Both aspects [viz., necessity

³⁵⁰ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 432).

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, (p. 432-33).

and freedom] are to be supposed in the religious and scientific interest, but both can only be supposed at the same time, if the primary goodness, which is God, has no mere simple form of being, whether as ethically necessary or as free, but a manifoldly diverse being, absolutely correlated, however, and reciprocally conditioning itself.”³⁵² Indeed, as Dorner puts it in the observation of this section, “as a divine triad underlies (*zu Grunde liegt*) the divine aseity and the divine self-consciousness, so would we also seek to apprehend the triad as the basis (*Basis*) for the divine love.”³⁵³ That God is triune, therefore, is the condition of the possibility of the divine as ethical. Or more precisely, the divine must actualize its ethical subjectivity, and to do this it must be triune.

3.2 Identification of the Divine Persons as Components of the Ethical

Having established that, for Dorner, the Trinity makes possible the ethical life of God, we must now inquire further into its trinitarian rendering. Specifically, we must query the relationship between the various ethical components and their relationship to the divine persons.

Given the logical priority of the ethically necessary, a trinitarian configuration of the ethical components correlates this principle to the divine person who has logical priority vis-à-vis the Trinity: God the Father. Dorner says, “This first form of being in God as the ethical one we call with the New Testament, and in accordance with ecclesiastical custom, the principle of fatherhood in God. Through God as Father it is that what is true, necessary, and good in itself has an existence, and that a knowledge of what is true and good in itself is possible.”³⁵⁴

³⁵² *SCD* I §31B.III (p. 432).

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, (p. 426). Translation slightly altered.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, (p. 433).

This second ethical principle, the principle of freedom, is therefore identified with God the Son: “This second principle we call God the Son, the mode of the existence of the spiritual God in the form of freedom, just as frequently in the New Testament and in ecclesiastical phrase the Son is the divine principle of the kingdom of freedom, of historical progress – the principle of movement without self-detriment, but of movement on the ground of a basis already existent, so that arbitrariness may ever be remote.”³⁵⁵

These two ethical components are, of course, reciprocally related: “For, far removed from a principle of freedom which must tear itself away from the first principle and constitute itself as a totality, a whole of itself, what is free in God is referred back to the ethically necessary as the logical first principle, just as the former is willed for the latter.”³⁵⁶ The principles of necessity and freedom, as reciprocally related, entail a reciprocal relationship between God the Father (as the principle of necessity) and God the Son (as the principle of freedom).

In speaking of the principle of necessity, and therefore of God the Father, Dorner says,

If we start from goodness as necessary holy being, which is absolute in dignity and worth, its necessity cannot be blind ἀνάγκη, can by no means be ethically blind fate, but the ethically necessary is also simultaneously that which is true, rational, and luminous in itself. Because it (or God in it) maintains the ethically necessary, it is not mechanical coercion, caprice, or τυραννίς in spite of its own power. It is not adverse to freedom, but the ethically necessary desires its own idea, and much more its apparent opposite, freedom, as the absolute form which is alone adequate or conformable to the ethically necessary. The ethically necessary would have its realization by means of freedom and in it; it is a lover of freedom; and the free thus blossoms out of its apparent opposite.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁵ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 434).

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, (p. 434-35).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, (p. 435).

As the ethically necessary has its realization in freedom, this suggests that the Father has His realization in the Son. And in speaking of the principle of freedom, and therefore of God the Son, Dorner says,

But, secondly, as the ethically necessary rejoices in the free, for the sake of which it desires to be, the free, the principle of freedom in God, also strives to get back to the necessary, and desires to condition itself by the necessary. For in itself the free has, it is true, the power to will what it likes. But if it renounces the ethically necessary, it cannot maintain itself, because it comes into contradiction with what is true and good in itself, which as such is at the same time what is rational and logical, and would thus become sheer caprice. But this free principle, of which we are speaking, is divine, being constituted the second mode of existence of the Godhead, and cannot fall outside of the divine sphere, because in its foundation it coincides with the same divine being, who also presents and is the ethically necessary.³⁵⁸

Since the free cannot renounce the necessary without falling into contradiction, this entails the same about the Son in relation to the Father. As the free desires to unite with the necessary, so the Son desires to unite with the Father.

As we turn to the third member of the divine Trinity, we will see that it is the Holy Spirit by whom necessity and freedom, the Father and the Son, are united. We saw Dorner's assertion in chapter four that the Evangelical principle has its foundation in the divine being itself. In the Evangelical principle, there is a correlation between the divine and the human, in that the human person freely wills the ethical necessity of the divine. The human person comes to see the ethically necessary not as something foreign to herself, but as that in which her humanity reaches its fulfillment. On the divine side, God sees in the human person – in the ethically free – not as something foreign to the divine, but as an expression of Himself. In the human person, the coincidence of the necessary and the free is wrought by the Holy Spirit.

³⁵⁸ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 435-36).

Since the divine is the archetype of the Evangelical principle, just as in the human person freedom and necessity are united by the Holy Spirit, so also is it the case in the divine: “As then the absolute unity of the necessary and the free, by means of which man is raised according to the standpoint of the Reformation above caprice and above the standpoint of mere legality, is only completed by the agency of the Holy Spirit in the inward parts, so also in God this union is only perfected by the agency of the third principle; one and the same principle, namely, the Holy Spirit, originally and archetypically combines in God the ethically necessary and the ethically free, and consummates the same union as a kind of copy in man, the image of God.”³⁵⁹

Thus, the Holy Spirit is that by which the Father, as the ethically necessary, and the Son, as the ethically free, are united to one another. Dorner says: “It is the Holy Spirit who rules in the deep things of God in an ethical manner as well as a cognitive (1 Cor. 2), and by whose agency God as the Son beholds and finds in the essence, or in the depths of the ethically necessary of the Father, the volition of the being of the free, therefore the free, i.e. Himself; and by whose agency, conversely, God the Father in the free finds and beholds the ethically necessary as freely willed contents, that is, finds and beholds Himself.”³⁶⁰

3.3 The Ethical Personality and the Divine Persons

We saw above that, with the physical Trinity, there was a principle which was not identifiable with any of the three members of the Trinity, and it was through or by means of the trinitarian persons that divine aseity was actualized. Similarly, we saw that, with the logical Trinity, there was a principle which was not identifiable with any of the three members of the

³⁵⁹ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 436-37).

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, (p. 437).

Trinity, and it was through or by means of the trinitarian persons that the divine intelligence was actualized. Here, in the ethical Trinity, the same pattern emerges: there is a principle which is not identifiable with any of the three members of the Trinity but which is actualized through or by means of them, what Dorner refers to as the ‘absolute ethical personality.’

Dorner is sometimes discreet in characterizing the relation between the divine persons and this ethical principle which is actualized by their means. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says, “Love is the truth of the Spirit; formally, because it is the absolute unity of the divine intelligence and the divine volition; and as regards contents, because the absolutely worthy, goodness, is brought therein to eternally living realization (*Wirklichkeit*).”³⁶¹ Referring to love as the “truth” of the Holy Spirit has a Hegelian ring to it, in that it suggests that love is the ultimate end to which the Holy Spirit acts as a vehicle for. This interpretation is strengthened by how Dorner elaborates the point, noting that the Holy Spirit is the truth of love because the Holy Spirit that by which goodness is realized. In describing the Holy Spirit as an agent by whom something is realized, it suggests that there is a principle above and beyond the Holy Spirit as such.

However, certain passages are more explicit in describing ethical actualization by means of the divine persons. Dorner says that God

since He is spirit and since it contradicts Him to be merely naturally ethical and holy, does not will to be an ethical being which exists simply and is immovably rigid, but He wills to constitute Himself an ethical being in a living manner; He has therefore in Himself eternally the principle of ethical movement out of Himself or, as opposed to what is ethically necessary, the principle of freedom as the instrument (*Werkzeuges*) for His ethical self-production (*Selbsthervorbringung*) or self-realization (*Selbstverwirklichung*) so as to ensure His absolute ethical personality and His living love...”³⁶²

³⁶¹ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 437).

³⁶² *Ibid.*, (p. 435). Translation altered.

Here, Dorner mentions that it contradicts God to be solely ethical necessity. This suggests that there is a principle in the divine stipulating how the divine be ethically actualized (and thus a principle operating in God above and beyond the actual means by which the divine is ethically actualized). That there is such a principle above and beyond the actual instantiation of ethical freedom in God is further textually supported a few lines down, where Dorner speaks of the principle of freedom as the instrument (*Werkzeuges*) for the ethical self-production or self-realization of the divine. The language of the principle of ethical freedom as an instrument indicates its role as a means by which a higher principle is actualized.

These notions of ethical actualization and means of actualization obviously signal something other than, say, the divine persons as merely instantiating the divine essence. Rather, Dorner uses terminology such as “process” and “result” to characterize the ethical life of the divine: “The ontology or metaphysics of love thus depicted forms the conclusion of the process (*Proceß*) by which God is eternally absolute personality.”³⁶³ Having just finished his treatment proper on the ethical Trinity in §31B, Dorner declares, “In what precedes, the eternal trinitarian process (*Proceß*) has been so considered that the absolute divine personality is the result (*Resultat*) of its three principles or factors. And thus no one of these principles has of itself a claim to the personality, which is rather their result (*Resultat*)...”³⁶⁴

Dorner recognizes the peculiarity of his descriptions on this point and recognizes that they could imply that, because the divine persons actualize the absolute personality, once it is actualized the divine persons would cease existing. He insists this is not the case: “It is requisite

³⁶³ *SCD* I §31B.III (p. 437).

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, §32.1 (p. 448).

to know that these three modes of the divine being do not become extinct in their product, the divine personality, but that they eternally endure...”³⁶⁵

Rather, Dorner sees the relationship between the divine persons and the divine personality as reciprocal. He says that the divine personality

is their [viz., the trinitarian persons’] eternal result; it does not succeed in time the three principles in God, but like them is eternal. And being existent, it will produce them. Indeed, the cooperation of the eternally present personality of God is necessary to the process, which eternally renews its self-production. The divine unity eternally posits Himself in a threefold manner for the purpose of this eternally living self-production. . . . Therefore God is to be thought conscious and personal in the eternal activity of the reproduction of His personality. He is personal in the three hypostases, as He is personal by their means.”³⁶⁶

He also describes their reciprocity this way: “The constitution of the divine life is an organism ever producing itself by means of the trinitarian members, and subsisting by their reciprocal conditioning. Its unity and eternal result is the absolute personality. But on the other hand, this result is eternally present, and therefore also cooperative in the self-production.”³⁶⁷ In these two passages, Dorner seems to be saying that the divine personality is both a result of the trinitarian persons (and so occurs by means of them) and is nonetheless present in them (such that, although it is a result, it is not successive to them). How can this be the case?

There is a reciprocity between the divine personality and the trinitarian persons, wherein the absolute personality is both the result of the individual persons and yet is eternally present within them, because the divine functions after the manner of an organism. As Dorner puts it,

“Just as in every organism we know the single members serve for the production or reproduction of the whole, and that the complementary mode of consideration is no less necessary, according to which the whole, the organism, which enters as a result, precedes

³⁶⁵ *SCD I* §32.1 (p. 448).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, (pp. 449-50).

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, §32.2 (p. 450).

the parts, or according to what is contrived and reproduced by the members, lives within them as the power of the whole and gives each its parts, so is it also here. The ever-present result precedes the eternal process of renewal, co-operates and lives in the function of the single members as the power of the whole which makes those functions possible.”³⁶⁸

The relation between the absolute personality and the trinitarian persons is such that, on the one hand, the whole is present in the parts in that the parts serve to realize the whole, and on the other hand, the parts are in the whole, in that the whole cannot be realized without the parts.

4. God is Love

4.1 Love as the Unity of Freedom and Necessity

As we will see below, Dorner argues that, through this union of freedom and necessity, love can be predicated of God. Love, Dorner says, “is the unity of ethical necessity and freedom, because it wills the ethically necessary as such, that is, with consciousness and absolute desire.”³⁶⁹ According to Dorner, ethical freedom, ethical necessity, and their unity are precisely the means by which love is actualized. And, because each person of the Trinity exemplifies one of these, it is by means of the persons of the Trinity that divine love is actualized.

Love – the freely-willed, conscious union with an other and the proper willing of self that describes the inner life of the Trinity – therefore describes God. As Dorner puts it, “God, who is love through the three trinitarian principles, necessarily loves Himself primarily. The primary love loves the primary goodness, which is God Himself, and thus the factors also by means of

³⁶⁸ *SCD I* §32.2 (p. 450).

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, §31B.III (p. 437).

which God is eternally absolute love; what has been previously described is nothing but the process of the divine self-love, which embraces all divine perfections.”³⁷⁰

We examined above that the union of divine freedom and necessity consists in God freely and willingly being just towards Himself. Because love consists in the unity of ethical freedom and necessity, God’s free and willing justice towards Himself is simply divine self-love. As we will see below, God’s freely-willed justice towards Himself – the divine self-love – means that the ethical aspects of God take primacy over the physical and logical aspects of God.

4.2 Love as the Primary Attribute of God

Having arrived at the ethical conception of God, *SCD* I §32.4 is focused on how everything is put in a new light by the doctrine of divine love. He notes, “From this point we must now glance backwards at the divine attributes, which will appear in a new light and in a new connection. For they will all appear in a close unity, as necessarily verified and guaranteed by the absolutely supreme instance...which God as personal love necessarily and eternally has and wills for the eternal self-production of His own absolute ethical personality.”³⁷¹ Love, therefore, is the supreme divine attribute, that which unifies all other divine attributes. Indeed, Dorner states that love is the *only* satisfactory description of God. As he puts it, “Love is the supreme, the only adequate definition of the essence of God, or definition of God, if it is rightly thought, namely, if it is thought as that unity of the ethically necessary and the free”³⁷²

³⁷⁰ *SCD* I §31B.IV (p. 442-3). Translation altered.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, §32.4 (p. 454).

³⁷² *Ibid.*

In chapter four, we saw how Dorner sought to follow Schleiermacher in privileging the ethical over the physical and logical attributes of God. Here in §32.4 he invokes him approvingly: “The scriptures ascribe the highest dignity to love. They never call God omnipotence, immensity, etc., but they do say θεὸς ἀγάπη. . . . Schleiermacher, otherwise inclined to regard the divine attributes as distinct in our thought only, says for all that of love at the end of his *Glaubenslehre*, ‘God is love.’”³⁷³

Love is the only adequate definition of God, according to Dorner, because it is normative over all other divine attributes. The physical and intellectual attributes, says Dorner, are related to love

as presuppositions or means. As presuppositions they are not so related as if they had the absolutely sufficient ground of their necessity even apart from love and in themselves, or as if, regarded from the highest point of view, they were coordinate with love in God, or as if love were their product. Not life nor power, nor even knowledge, is an absolute end in itself, but only goodness. They therefore exist for love, as means thereto as the absolute end, and only find in love their absolute necessity or verification; they are willed by the eternally effected and yet eternally self-renewing divine love as the means for its eternal self-production, and if a world exists, for the approving of love. They have in love, as their highest *causa finalis*, so also the norm of their working.³⁷⁴

Here we need not give an exhaustive treatment of how all the divine attributes relate to one another in light of the privileging of the ethical. It is helpful, nonetheless, to at least briefly examine some of these relationships, if only to fill-in our understanding of what Dorner is doing. Of the physical attributes, Dorner says that “[i]f [they] are also to be placed in the light of divine love, it is of great importance that they be thought in their working or in their actual being to be

³⁷³ *SCD I* §32.4 (p. 454-5).

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, (p. 457).

dependent upon love, but not that God or the divine activity be allowed to be necessitated by them.”³⁷⁵

Thus, the mere ability that the physical attributes provide can in no way force God to act as beholden to them. God has control over His attributes. Regarding, for example, the physical attribute of infinity, Dorner notes, “There is...no necessity in Him, not even because of His infinity, to be everywhere the same, to will and to work on His side everywhere and always only the same. Rather, if His love so desires, is a system possible of diverse revelations and modes of the divine being in the world, and even the singularity of His efficient being in one revelation, such as Christendom believes to exist in Christ.”³⁷⁶ And of omnipotence, he says, “As far as God’s might or omnipotence is concerned, there is in God no dark, irresistible, or necessary force, and not for a moment a superabundance, urged of itself or independently to realization, so that God, to will an ordered world, must restrain or limit it; God’s infinite fulness of life is illuminated and controlled by the might of His own love.”³⁷⁷ The same can be said for the logical attributes: “Knowledge does not exist in God for its own sake, whilst love is an absolute end in itself. Indeed, knowledge only perfects itself in God by means of love.”³⁷⁸

Having examined how love is the primary divine attribute, we can now examine how this characterizes the relationship between the divine and the creaturely. As we will see below, Dorner understands love to involve a proper relation to another and to oneself. In other words, proper love of self and of others stipulates how one relates to others, since one’s relation to

³⁷⁵ *SCD* I §32.4 (p. 458).

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Translation slightly modified.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, (pp. 458-59).

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 458).

others involves *both* oneself *and* an other. God's relation to the created order must be characterized by a divine love for the created order but, just as much, God's relation to the created order must be characterized by a divine love for the divine.

4.3 Love as Self-Preservation and Self-Communication

"In order rightly to understand the nature of love," says Dorner, "these two elements must be united, and must be viewed as forming together a solid unity of blended opposites, viz. the choice of self, which we may call self-love, and an opening out to others in participation and impartation."³⁷⁹ Because most characterizations of love focus on the latter feature, it is worth explaining why Dorner chooses to mention the former.

As we have seen, love occurs when one wills a particular good. But for Dorner, in a relation between personal subjects, between the self and the other, the other in this relation is not the only objective good. The self is also a good; the self has objective value. Given the objectivity of one's own value, one ought to treat oneself as the objectively valuable thing that it is. To love oneself, therefore, means that a subject wills itself in accordance with its own objective value. Or in negative terms, in a relation with an other that is characterized by love, the self does not violate its own intrinsic worth.

Of course, Dorner is not advocating a love of self to the exclusion of love of others. Rather, Dorner is insisting that proper love unites love of self with love of other, where one is not forfeited for the sake of the other. Love "unites microcosmically in itself what otherwise appears only isolated, or in one-sided preponderance – existence for one's self and existence for

³⁷⁹ SCE §7.3 (p. 73).

others.”³⁸⁰ Rightly-ordered love, then, requires that *both* self *and* other are loved in their proper proportions. This Dorner refers to respectively as ‘self-preservation’ and ‘self-communication.’

The act of treating an other as an end satisfies the first requirement of love, namely, ‘an opening out to others in participation and impartation.’ Thus, trinitarianly rendered, the Son’s free obedience to the Father is just the Son’s ‘opening out’ of Himself to the Father. And so the Son’s free obedience to the Father, ethically rendered, is just God willing His own goodness – willing Himself – as His own end.

In this same act the second requirement of love, namely, ‘the choice of self,’ is also satisfied. Because love requires that the subject treat itself in accordance with its own objective value, and because the end which God wills is just Himself, God treats Himself in accordance with His own objective value. Because the Son is God and the Father is God, the Son’s free obedience to the Father is, ethically rendered, God’s willing Himself as His own end.

Because God is most properly understood as love, self-preservation and self-communication, as aspects of love, are constitutive of God’s relation to an other, viz., the created order. Our final task, therefore, will be to examine how God’s self-communication and self-manifestation is manifest in relation to the created order. In short, we will see how Dorner characterizes the relation between the divine and the created such that God can love the created order and also love Himself, that God can give Himself to the created order without losing Himself to it.

³⁸⁰ SCE §7.3 (p. 73).

4.4 Divine Self-Communication and Self-Preservation vis-à-vis Creation

Although God, as love, will necessarily manifest the components of self-preservation and self-communication, one problem immediately arises. We saw above that, as the ‘absolute personality,’ God is His own primary object of love. An important objection to Dorner is that, if God is His own primary object of love, then God would no longer be able to communicate Himself to that which is not Himself. As His own primary object of love, it seems that is God capable only of self-preservation. “God’s self-preservation would, it is true, be secured,” says Dorner, “but God by His absolute self-love would be enclosed, so to speak, in His own exaltation, and would thus again become a single being instead of the universal principle, His love again lacking perfection, namely, communicability.”³⁸¹

However, this worry is met. Because the Father is goodness, and because the Son freely wills goodness, God, in willing Himself, thereby wills goodness itself. “For since God loves Himself, He loves goodness as such or generally; He is *Amor Amoris*; He loves it therefore, not merely as it is in Himself, in His own personality as distinguished from everything else whether possible or actual, but He rejoices in a life of love as such, i.e. He loves His goodness in itself with a universal love.”³⁸² In willing the good that just is Himself, God wills goodness *as such*, and not goodness only insofar as it is limited to Him. Goodness *as such* is universal, and so it extends to God and anything else insofar as it originates in God:

Goodness in itself as such is not particular, but its desire is to be and dwell everywhere, where there is a possible abode for it, and therefore to be efficient. God as holy love, and therefore self-willing and self-loving, desires Himself also to be communicable transeunt love, and with the volition of His self-preservation (as the universal goodness) there is also supposed the volition of His communicability. Therefore, although He is transcendent by virtue of His relation to Himself in ethical self-preservation, He is

³⁸¹ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 443).

³⁸² *Ibid.*

nevertheless, if there is anything distinct from Himself, able to exist in that distinct thing.³⁸³

Although, therefore, God is His own primary object of love, this fact actually *enables* God to be the universal principle of love for all that is not God.

Since we have established that God can communicate Himself to creation, we will now look at how God does so in love, that is, how God engages creation through the union of self-preservation and self-communication. We saw above that God freely wills the good that He Himself is (the Son's embrace of the Father). Further, we saw that God is the highest good, and thus a good which cannot be violated, a good which is always treated justly. So, in willing the good that He Himself is, even God Himself cannot violate His own goodness. In other words, even God cannot treat Himself unjustly.

The inviolability of the good that is God means that God cannot dilute this good for the sake of something else, i.e. God will not make Himself a means for some other end (e.g., creation). As Dorner puts it,

The love of God is essentially holy; it desires and preserves the ethically necessary or holy, which God is. . . . By virtue of His necessary self-preservation, which is at the same time His holy self-love, there can be in God no activity of love to the detriment of His self-preservation. Justice is eternally secured in the divine love. God can never sacrifice what is holy, what is ethically necessary, for the sake of approving His love, whether by communication or participation or pardon. For the ethically necessary is the basis in the triune God which can never be shaken.³⁸⁴

Thus, creation is no less a locus for divine justice than God Himself:

But finally, if a world exists, its constitution is not indifferent to God as the just God, but there is an internal necessity that He should know that the same righteousness which is in Him – indeed, which is He – is effective in the world. . . . And yet further, God desires, when He wills a world, not merely an involuntary regulation of the world by His just will, as the ultimate law of its being and its order; He also desires, by virtue of His love of

³⁸³ *SCD I* §31B.III (p. 443).

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, §32.4 (p. 456).

justice, that His desire and love of justice should exist in free spirits without Himself a multiplied life and love of justice, which is nothing but the spiritual existence of justice in the world. If, that is to say, there is a world of spiritual being without God, He cannot desire the justice which is in Him, and which is Himself, to exist simply in Himself; for justice cannot be a private property, so to speak; according to its idea, it is constituted a universal good for the reason where it is found. As self-willing justice, therefore, as the energetic will of His own self-preservation, God cannot be indifferent as to whether the world corresponds to this justice or not. There would be no earnest pursuit of justice on God's part if He merely wished to be just Himself, and was indifferent as to the maintenance of the absolute good of justice without Himself.³⁸⁵

Since in creation this good can never be diluted for the sake of something else, there is no toleration of a lesser goodness in creation.

Now that we have examined God's self-preservation in the created order, we can now examine God's self-communication. In beholding the good, God sees its communicable (universal) character, i.e. God sees the good as good even for that which is not God. Dorner states, "The divine self-love comprehends, it is true, everything in God in just self-preservation, but it is an ethical self-love, and this by no means limits God to Himself, by no means keeps Him enclosed by His transcendence, but is perfectly compatible with the tendency to self-communication, to immanence in another."³⁸⁶

Goodness as such is therefore goodness for everything, i.e., universally. God, as the good, then, is also universally good and thereby communicable. Dorner continues, saying, "Goodness in itself as such is not particular, but its desire is to be and dwell everywhere, where there is a possible abode for it, and therefore to be efficient. God as holy love, and therefore self-willing

³⁸⁵ *SCD I* §24.5 (pp. 296-97). Compare: "But, inasmuch as God is the absolute justice, both as the primary law of that justice, even as He is the consciousness which asserts that law, and the absolute realization of that norm, He desires and asserts Himself to be distinct from everything else possible and actual. There is in Him that zeal of self-preservation, which tolerates no loss of Himself, no comingling, no self-defection (no ecstasy of love even) with another. Absolute right or the absolute norm of justice cannot be broken even by God Himself, for He is Himself that inflexible norm of truth, and must deny His essence, if He violated that norm" (*SCD I* §24.4 [p. 295]).

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, §31b.3 (p. 443).

and self-loving, desires Himself also to be communicable transeunt love, and with the volition of His self-preservation (as the universal goodness) there is also supposed the volition of His communicability.”³⁸⁷

Because God understands Himself and wills Himself as that which is both the inviolable good and the universal good, God’s interaction with creation expresses this unity: God communicates to creation this inviolable, yet universal good; that is, God communicates *Himself*. For Dorner, this unity of self-preservation and self-communication helps avoid two unacceptable alternatives to the God-creature relationship: pantheism and deism.

Divine self-preservation avoids pantheism because it prevents God from being identified with creation: “[God’s] transcendence and self-preservation is the necessary postulate of His self-communication and immanence in the world. For only because God has absolute self-possession by means of His perfect self-consciousness and His self-love is He master of Himself, and certain that in His self-communication He will not, as all pantheistic systems think, lose Himself in what is different to Himself.”³⁸⁸

On the other hand, divine self-communication avoids deism because it enables God to interact with creation: “Deism emphasizes by its incommunicable God the divine exaltation, the

³⁸⁷ *SCD I* §31b.3 (p. 443). Compare also: “God cannot be at the same time absolutely good and yet desire existence and goodness exclusively for His own advantage, nay, exclude by His idea the possibility of another’s sharing His being and goodness; that would contradict the non-egoistic and universal essence of goodness” (*SCD I* §27.6 [pp. 342-43]). “Here comes into consideration the fact that God, who is holy love, loves goodness as such, or goodness in itself, and not merely as it is in Him (§31A.3). As holy love He is not merely self-affirming personality, He also loves the sentiment of love in itself or absolutely, is *Amor Amoris*. Thus, not merely is there no reason in Him for wishing to make Himself the only abode of love, but, on the contrary, His love finds its delight in multiplying, aggrandizing the life of love, in forming a kingdom of love” (*SCD II* §33.3 [p. 14]). “By virtue of His self-love He necessarily loves love in general; and, wherever it is found, loves Himself as the original seat of the absolute *amor amoris*. The self-love of God or His righteousness, therefore, since it loves love as such, does not exclude the possibility of God’s creating a good distinct from Himself. On the contrary, God cannot love Himself without also loving Himself as the possibility of something else, provided this can exist as an object of love” (*SCE* §8.3 [pp. 94-5]).

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, (p. 443-44).

divine self-preservation, which stands estranged and cold over against the world; pantheism emphasizes the process of living divine self-communication in the world, but its God loses Himself therein. . . . They are positively transcended by the trinitarian apprehension of the ethical being, that is to say, of love, which desires itself as necessary and as free, that is, which even in self-love wills love, and even in self-communication has and wills itself, and in both is *amor amoris*.”³⁸⁹ Because God is triune, God therefore has perfect self-consciousness and self-love. Because God has perfect self-consciousness and self-love, God has perfect self-possession. And such perfect self-possession allows God to engage in the finite while preserving His transcendence. God’s communicability and transcendence are therefore possible because God is triune.

Dorner supplies various examples of how this unity of self-preservation and self-communication is manifest in the divine-creature relationship. For our purposes, we need not go through them all.³⁹⁰ We need only to look at the greatest example, that of divine incarnation. In the incarnation, argues Dorner, we behold divine self-communication and divine self-preservation, both in unity. Thus, in speaking of the incarnation as an act of God’s self-communication, Dorner says, “Christendom knows in Christ not merely a transitory divine act, which has nothing to do with the internal divine essence, but the highest and permanent divine

³⁸⁹ *SCD* I §31b.4 (p. 447).

³⁹⁰ One particularly interesting example is that of human freedom: “since God must as the ethical God remain like or true to Himself, even in His self-approving, in willing anything ethical outside of Himself He wills a portrayal of His ethical Trinity, of the ethically necessary, of the free, and of their union. . . . He accordingly gives to everything its own (*suum cuique*), and therefore regards the free as free; and thus the regulation for the divine communication is supposed, that it should not impart itself to the creature in a manner injurious to freedom, in a physical process, by force or by magic” (*SCD* I §32.4 [pp. 456-57]). “The design of God’s love in regard to the rational creature, in conformity with its own pure goodness, must be to bestow on the creature itself, and call forth in it, the sentiment of love. It is not therefore an object of love to God’s self-communication, save insofar as He views it as destined to be a subject of love, and thus desires it for its own sake. Thus, in the ethical character of the divine self-communication the comparative independence of the creature is secured; and the divine life remains with distinct from the creature” (*SCD* II §33.5 [pp. 18-19]).

self-revelation, an act which, because it is self-communication, becomes the divine being in the world which could have received this being in no other way”³⁹¹

As fully transparent of the divine essence, we see in the incarnation both God’s self-preservation and self-communication: “And this new idea is given to faith embryonically in Christ who, coming from God and leading to God, on the one hand confirms the distinction between God and the world; whilst, on the other hand, the immanence of God in the world is given in Him as a matter of fact in absolute form.”³⁹² Here, Dorner parses the two-natures doctrine in terms of self-preservation and self-communication. Christ’s divine nature ‘confirms the distinction between God and the world,’ which is God’s self-preservation; Christ’s human nature is ‘the immanence of God in the world,’ which is God’s self-communication.

Christ, as the incarnation of the One who freely offers His obedience to the Father through the Spirit, reveals the Trinity as the unity of freedom and necessity. My hope is that, over the past three chapters, Dorner’s theological genius has become apparent. Genius, however, is no guarantee of truth. Our final task, therefore, is to evaluate Dorner’s understanding of the Trinity, along with Staudenmaier’s.

³⁹¹ *SCD* I §29.4 (p. 378). More verbosely put: “In harmony with His own form of being, belonging to Him as λόγος or the principle of revelation, He wills to possess existence and self-consciousness in man, forming with Him one unity of life, willing even in the world to live His triune life. Since it is God’s will in His eternal love to make an absolute communication of Himself as regards His entire communicable being, in the world-idea or world-counsel He willed not merely the spiritual existence of relative receptiveness for Him, but as revealer or λόγος He wills absolutely such cosmical existence as is endowed with perfect receptiveness for Him and His presence, i.e. He wills the perfect divine image in the form of realization in the world, which again is the Son of His love. In Him as λόγος the Godhead as regards its absolute, intensively spiritual being gains real existence in the world; and the man in whom this is carried out is not merely His dwelling-place or vestment, but Himself the embodied expression of God’s eternal image in time” (*SCD* II §62.1 [p. 207]).

³⁹² *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Staudenmaier and Dorner, as I hope to have shown, utilized the Trinity in very interesting ways. They took one of the most pressing philosophical issues of the nineteenth century – that of subjectivity – and sought to integrate it into two robust visions of the Trinity. As a conclusion, I will offer a brief evaluation of their trinitarian theologies. From this, it will be apparent how novel their understandings of the Trinity were in comparison to those who preceded them.

Because we have covered so much ground, it will be helpful to offer a summary of each thinker's trinitarian thought. For Staudenmaier, God is to be understood as personal subject – an irreducible individual in possession of intelligence and will. Personal subjectivity, however, requires otherness, in that it requires something beyond the individual person as such in order to actualize her subjectivity. Although the created order would offer an otherness to the divine, Staudenmaier wants to maintain that God does not actualize His subjectivity by means of the otherness of the created order. To do so, Staudenmaier reasons, would entail that God was not an individual free from the created order, for the created order would be constitutive of God's subjectivity. Instead, God must possess subjectivity immanently. The otherness which is required to actualize subjectivity, therefore, must be present in the divine immanently.

The trinitarian persons, who are distinct from one another, are that by which otherness is immanently present in the divine. In being other to one another (that is, in being personally distinct from one another), the divine persons mutually actualize the individual personal subjectivities of one another. In actualizing the individual personal subjectivities of one another,

the divine persons actualize divine subjectivity, insofar as divine subjectivity refers to the divine persons considered collectively. Therefore, it is because God is a Trinity of irreducibly distinct persons that divine subjectivity becomes actualized.

For Dorner, God is to be understood as an ethical subject. Fully-realized ethical subjectivity requires of the subject that she will the good, but that she do so freely. To put it in Hegelian terms, fully-realized ethical subjectivity requires that the free subject see herself in the good which makes an ethical demand on her. The ethical subject is therefore a locus wherein ethical freedom and ethical necessity are united. For God to be an ethical subject, or to have fully realized His own ethical subjectivity, therefore requires that God freely will the good which is His own being.

This union of freedom and necessity demands a trinitarian structure (viz., the presence of freedom, the presence of necessity, and the presence of something by which they can united). In the case of the nondivine, the union of freedom and necessity creates no immediate metaphysical paradoxes: the creature is confronted with the ethical necessity of the good, which is ontologically distinct from her, and she freely wills to submit to the demands of the good.

In the case of the divine, however, matters are different. The ethical necessity of the good which makes a demand on the subject is one and the same with the being of the one who is to freely will this good. The good in which ethical necessity consists cannot be other than God, for then there would be a good greater than God Himself. The subject which is to freely will this good cannot be other than God, for then all notion of ethical *subjectivity* in God would be lost. The paradox, therefore, is how both ethical necessity and ethical freedom can coexist in the divine.

Since the union of freedom and necessity forms a trinitarian structure, it is because God is a Trinity of irreducibly distinct persons (each of whom is ascribed one of these ethical components) that ethical subjectivity – the union of freedom and necessity – can be actualized in the divine. And it is because God possesses ethical subjectivity that He can love.

The concerns of Staudenmaier and Dorner were not miles apart, for they both deal with divine subjectivity broadly speaking. For Staudenmaier, the central concern was how the divine could be free vis-à-vis the nondivine while nonetheless remaining a fully-constituted personal subject. For Dorner, however, the central concern was how freedom and necessity could be united in the Godhead. Thus, the differences between the two fall mainly on what each emphasized. Staudenmaier was focused on divine subjectivity *per se*, whereas Dorner was focused on one particular aspect of divine subjectivity, viz., the ethical aspect of subjectivity. Both theologians, I will argue below, shared a particular conception of the Trinity, one that consisted in two levels: the divine persons considered as individuals, and the divine persons understood collectively. The critique that I will make is that, because the divine persons were the means by which subjectivity was actualized in both Staudenmaier and Dorner, there is a discrepancy between these two levels which threatens the coherence of Staudenmaier's and Dorner's renderings of the Trinity.

For Staudenmaier, insofar as the term "God" refers to the collectivity of divine persons, "God" thereby denotes a personal subject, i.e. an agent in whom lie the personal characteristics of being-for-self, intellect, and will. As a personal subject, "God" therefore possesses otherness in and of Himself, i.e. possesses subjecthood immanently. This is why, as we saw, God does not need the otherness of the created order in order to possess subjectivity.

Because of the distinctions of the divine persons of the Trinity, the divine persons provide the immanent otherness that is a feature of the divine. Each person of the Trinity is a personal subject in His own right, in that each person of the Trinity possesses being-for-self, intellect, and will as an individual. It is in their presence to one another that otherness is present to each, and it is in their mutual recognition (to put it in Hegelian terms) that their personal subjectivities are actualized.

The individual members of the Trinity, because each has an actualized subjectivity (through the others), *collectively* form a personal subject. Thus, there are two levels of personal subjectivity in the divine: (1) the level of the individual divine persons, where personal subjectivity is ascribed to each, and (2) the level of the Trinity as a whole, where personal subjectivity is ascribed to the collectivity of the divine persons. It is through the presence of personal subjectivity at the level of the individual divine persons that personal subjectivity is a feature at the level of the Trinity as a whole.

Although personal subjectivity is ascribable at the level of the individual divine persons as well as the level of the Trinity as a whole, there is an important difference. Each individual member of the Trinity is in possession of subjectivity – or is a personal subject – by means of that which is *external* to Him as an individual, viz., by the other two members of the Trinity (since the members of the Trinity are personally distinct from one another). However, the Trinity is in possession of subjectivity by means of that which is *internal* or *immanent* to it, viz., the collectivity of the divine persons. Thus, the individual members of the Trinity need otherness vis-à-vis themselves as individuals in order to be personal subjects, whereas the Trinity as such does not need otherness vis-à-vis itself in order to be a personal subject (and hence does not need the created order in order to be a personal subject).

Therefore, the individual divine persons are the means by which possession of immanent subjectivity is actualized at the level of the Trinity as a whole. Staudenmaier's remarks on this score indicate that the divine persons are in a sense preceded by a principle of subjectivity, a principle which demands that it be actualized, and so demands that the divine essence contract itself into three persons. In other words, Staudenmaier indicates that the divine seeks to actualize itself as a personal subject, and does so in and through the subjectivity of the persons of the Trinity. This suggests that since the principle of subjectivity seeks actualization in and through the members of the Trinity, and so by means of them, it logically precedes them. Further, because subjectivity at the level of the Trinity is actualized by means of the divine persons, as actualized it logically succeeds the divine persons, being their product.

There is a similar rendering of the Trinity in Dorner. For Dorner, insofar as the term "God" refers to the collectivity of the divine persons, "God" thereby denotes an ethical subject, i.e. a subject in whom lies a unity of freedom and necessity. Further, because of the distinctions of the persons of the Trinity, the divine persons are capable of providing the distinct components of ethical subjectivity, viz., freedom, necessity, and the means by which the two are united. More specifically, each divine person, as personally distinct from the other two, is capable of possessing a component of ethical subjectivity which the other two cannot possess: the Father possesses the ethical component of necessity, the Son possesses the ethical component of freedom, and the Holy Spirit is the bond of freedom and necessity.

The individual members of the Trinity, because each possesses a component of ethical subjectivity which is unique to Him, *collectively* form an ethical subject. Thus, as with Staudenmaier, there are two levels to consider in the divine: (1) the level of the individual divine persons, where a fully-formed ethical subjectivity cannot be ascribed to each divine person, but

only one component of ethical subjectivity can be ascribed to each; and (2) the level of the Trinity as a whole, where ethical subjectivity is ascribed to the collectivity of the divine persons. It is through the presence of each ethical component at the level of the individual divine persons that ethical subjectivity is a feature at the level of the Trinity as a whole.

Unlike in Staudenmaier's rendering of the Trinity, where personal subjectivity is ascribable both to each divine person as an individual, as well as to the Trinity as a whole, in Dorner ethical subjectivity is not ascribable at both levels. If an ethical subject is that in whom there lies a unity of freedom and necessity, then neither the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit considered on His own can be referred to as an ethical subject, since each individual member of the Trinity denotes a *component* of ethical subjectivity rather than the whole.

Therefore, the individual divine persons are the means by which possession of ethical subjectivity is actualized at the level of the Trinity as a whole. Again in a way similar to Staudenmaier, Dorner's remarks indicate that the divine persons are in a sense preceded by a principle of subjectivity, a principle which demands that it be actualized, and so demands that the divine essence contract itself into three persons. In other words, Dorner indicates that the divine seeks to actualize itself as an ethical subject, and does so in and through the persons of the Trinity. Since the principle of subjectivity seeks actualization in and through the members of the Trinity, and so by means of them, it logically precedes them. And further, because subjectivity at the level of the Trinity is actualized by means of the divine persons, as actualized it logically succeeds the divine persons, being their product.

In both Staudenmaier and Dorner, therefore, there is a principle which dictates that the divine actualize itself either in terms of personal subjectivity (in the case of Staudenmaier) or in terms of ethical subjectivity (in the case of Dorner). And in both, the divine must actualize itself

as the Trinity. The process of actualization therefore yields three distinct components: [A] the principle of subjectivity which is to be actualized; [B] the divine persons (insofar as they are *individuals*) as the means by which subjectivity comes to be actualized; [C] the resulting subject (personal or ethical) as the *collectivity* of the divine persons.

It stands to reason that, because they are the means of actualization, the divine persons (insofar as they are individuals) must be construed not simply as distinct, but *different* from, [A] the principle of subjectivity which is to be actualized and [C] the resulting subject (personal or ethical) as the collectivity of the divine persons. Unfortunately, neither Staudenmaier nor Dorner make any comments on this specific issue. Certainly they understand this principle of subjectivity as part of God's being in some way, but precisely in *what* way is the issue.

The divine persons, as the one God, share one and the same essence. Put differently, their identification as "God" is dependent upon their being identified with the divine essence. Given their identity with the divine essence, this poses a problem for how the principle of subjectivity is related to the divine. If the divine persons (insofar as they are individuals) are different from both [A] the principle of subjectivity which is to be actualized and [C] the resulting subject understood as the collectivity of the divine persons, then as identical with the divine persons, the divine essence is different from [A] and [C]. That is, the divine essence cannot be identified with this principle of subjectivity.

Since "God" refers either to the divine essence as such, or to the divine persons insofar as they possess the divine essence, and since this principle of subjectivity can be identified with neither the persons nor the essence, this raises the question as to how this principle of subjectivity fits into the divine. If "God" refers to that which can be identified with the divine essence, and this principle of subjectivity cannot, then the principle of subjectivity is alien to the

divine. If “God” includes this principle of subjectivity, then “God,” on this rendering, denotes a composition of two things: a Trinity of persons (who share one and the same essence) and a principle which transcends or in some way precedes them.

One possibility, though, is that we have misinterpreted how these components relate to one another. Perhaps the subjectivity of the divine is to be regarded as identical to the divine essence. This interpretation has the advantage that, since the divine essence denotes what is common amongst the divine persons, it also succeeds in denoting the resulting subject, since this is understood as the collectivity of the divine persons. Further, with this interpretation, it would be the case that the divine essence demands that it actualize its subjectivity, and does so by contracting itself into three persons. In contracting itself into three persons, the principle of subjectivity (as identical with the divine essence on this construal) would seem to be identical with the divine persons.

The problem with this construal, though, is that the divine persons are nonetheless the means by which subjectivity is actualized. This seems to be strongly supported in both Staudenmaier’s and Dorner’s texts. And as means, the divine persons can be identified neither with [A] the principle of subjectivity, itself identical to the divine essence, which is to be actualized, nor [C] the resulting subject (personal or ethical) as the collectivity of the divine persons. But if [A] the principle of subjectivity which is to be actualized cannot be identical with [B] the divine persons (insofar as they are individuals), and yet if, on this construal, [A] is just the divine essence, then the divine essence cannot be identical with the divine persons. And if the divine essence cannot be identical with the members of the Trinity, and if it is in virtue of possessing this essence that the members of the Trinity are God, then the members of the Trinity cannot be identified as God.

It is evident, then, that both of these trinitarian renderings are problematic: the first gives us an identity between the divine persons and the divine essence, but also gives us an element that can be identified with neither; the second leaves us with the divine essence as not identical with the divine persons. The root of the problem seems to lie in the basic assumption that the divine persons are a means of actualization for divine subjectivity. The very notion of a means of actualization requires that those means be transcended by something greater than themselves, by that which they serve to actualize (in this case, collective subjectivity, either personal or ethical). Indeed, one basic tenet of Christian trinitarian doctrine is that there is no “God” above and beyond the divine persons, for the divine persons *are* God.

The trinitarian novelty of Staudenmaier and Dorner, therefore, seems to lie in this notion of the members of the Trinity being a means of actualization for divine subjectivity. And this notion that the members of the Trinity be a means of actualization is itself rooted in the notion that the Trinity provides a certain function. However, when the Trinity provides a function, it thereby becomes subordinated to that service to which it provides (in this case, the realization of divine subjectivity). In other words, by providing a function, the Trinity – and so the divine persons – becomes the means to an end which is greater than itself. But as the Christian faith teaches, it is precisely the divine persons – the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit – who are the ultimate end.

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