

Second, in chapter 5, he shows that the soul is more powerful than natural forms, because it acts in freedom and not merely from necessity.<sup>42</sup> This is because, again, science is of both contraries, and so if it acted immediately out of necessity, it would have to produce both contraries at once in the same matter, which is impossible. There must, then, be another cause that determines which contrary will be produced, and this is choice. Third, in chapter 6, Aristotle shows that the soul is nobler than natural forms because the activities of the soul are true activities, and not merely motions; that is, they are desirable for their own sake. This is principally true of sensation and understanding. This truth about sensation and understanding is already on display in the *De Anima*, beginning with Book 2, chapter 5. Finally, in chapter 8, Aristotle shows that the soul is nobler than natural forms, because the activity of the soul is capable of remaining entirely within the soul, and so the soul, being self-subsistent, is a more perfect agent. The activities of natural forms, by contrast, either involve the reception of action from another, or the going out of action into another, as in hot and cold, wet and dry.

And so, we can conclude that a consideration of the soul, and especially the rational soul, is a necessary method for the metaphysician in approaching the nature of the divine being. In Book 7 of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle is largely doing the work of laying the ground for the implementation of this method.

<sup>42</sup> See Aristotle, *De Anima* 2.5, 417a26–28.

## ST. THOMAS ON THE IMAGE OF THE TRINITY ACCORDING TO NATURE AND GRACE

John J. Goyette

The aim of this paper is to present St. Thomas's teaching on the soul as *imago Dei*, and more specifically on the soul as an image of the Trinity. The scriptural basis for the notion of man as *imago Dei* is found in Genesis 1:26–7:

“Let us make man to our image and likeness.” . . . And God created man to his own image: to the image of God he created him.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas interprets this text to refer to man's rational nature not only as an image of the divine essence, but also as an image of the distinction of the three persons. He asserts that the soul is an image of the Trinity of persons insofar as the interior processions of word and love in the human soul are made to be a likeness of the procession of the eternal Word and the procession of Love (Holy Spirit).<sup>2</sup> That the soul images the Trinity of persons

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<sup>1</sup> Translations of the Bible are from the Douay-Rheims version (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1989), which is translated into English from the Vulgate, the biblical text that St. Thomas Aquinas used.

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theologiae* (henceforth *STh*) I, q. 93, as. 6–7; *Quaestiones Disputatae De Potentia* (henceforth *De Pot.*), q. 9, a. 9; *Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate*

finds some support from the use of the plural pronouns in the biblical text (“Let *us* make man to *our* image”), which suggests that an image of the Trinity of persons, not just the divine nature, is found in man.

Sorting out exactly how the soul is an image of the Trinity, according to St. Thomas, is a complicated matter. Besides the inherent difficulty in understanding the interior processions in the human soul and seeing how these processions manifest procession in God himself, there is an added complexity in the account. St. Thomas talks about two distinct ways in which the soul functions as an image of the Trinity. First, the procession of word and love in the human soul (especially when the soul knows and loves itself) is an analogy for the procession of the divine Word (the Son) and divine Love (the Holy Spirit). St. Thomas calls this the “likeness of the natural image”<sup>3</sup> or the “image of creation”<sup>4</sup> (referencing the Genesis text quoted above). Second, the soul is an image of the Trinity insofar as it is assimilated to, or conformed to, the persons of the Trinity by being objectively united to them by graced acts of knowledge and love. This is called the “image of re-creation.”<sup>5</sup> The scriptural basis for this notion of image is found in the New Testament, notably 2 Cor 3:18:

But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory.<sup>6</sup>

The aim of this paper is to explain and clarify how St. Thomas understands these two ways the soul functions as an

(henceforth *De Ver.*), q. 10, a. 7; *Summa Contra Gentiles* (henceforth *SCG*) IV, c. 26, ns. 6–7.

3 *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9, c.

4 *Ibid.*

5 *Ibid.*

6 The scriptural passage is cited in *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9, c. See also *Super II Cor.* 3, lec. 3, n. 114.

*imago Dei*, and to show how the soul’s objective union with the divine persons is a more perfect image of God, one that builds on the less perfect image—that is, the procession of the word and love in the soul as an analogy for divine procession and the distinction of persons in God. The paper has three parts. In Part I, I will sketch St. Thomas’s basic understanding of what is meant by the soul as an image of God, and of the Trinity specifically. In Part II, I will also discuss a couple of preliminary texts where St. Thomas describes different levels of the soul as an image of the Trinity according to nature and grace: one text from the *De Potentia*, question 9, article 9 and one from *De Veritate*, question 10, article 7. This will enable us to raise a question about the relation between the image according to nature and the image according to grace. Part III will focus on that relation as found in the *Summa theologiae*, drawing upon some of the features of the image that are illuminated by Thomas’s Trinitarian theology.

### *Part I – An Outline of the Imago*

What exactly do we mean by the term “image,” and how is man made “to the image”<sup>7</sup> of God? According to St. Thomas, an image is a certain kind of likeness, but not every likeness is an image. There are two features that especially characterize an

7 The English phrase “to the image” in Gn 1:26 mirrors the Latin “ad imaginem” in the Vulgate, the text used by St. Thomas. He takes the phrase “ad imaginem” as signifying that man is an imperfect image of God because he is made in such a way that he approaches the image, but still retains a certain distance from it; by contrast, the Son of God is the perfect image of the Father (*STh* I, q. 93, a. 1, c., ad 2). St. Augustine also takes the phrase “ad imaginem” to indicate that man is an imperfect image (*De Trinitate* VII, c. 6, n. 12). The imperfection of man as an image of God is less clear in most English translations from the Hebrew Bible which typically render Gn 1:26 as “in the image.” The Greek Septuagint, which has “κατ’ εἰκόνα” (“according to the image”), also suggests the imperfection of man as an image of God.

image: 1) it is a likeness that is copied from the thing of which it is an image, and 2) it is a likeness that “represents the species” of a thing. First, an image is a likeness that is copied from, or derived from, something else and is therefore made to “imitate” the thing of which it is an image.<sup>8</sup> An egg is not said to be an image of another egg.<sup>9</sup> And one man is not said to be an image of another man simply because he looks similar. Of course, a man is sometimes said to be the spitting “image” of his father, but that is because the son is in some sense made to be like his father. It is also worth noting that an image does not need to be equal to the original of which it is a copy.<sup>10</sup> We say that a person’s reflection in a mirror is an “image,” even though it falls short of the original.

The second feature of an image is that it is more than simply a generic likeness: it is a likeness that represents the species of something.<sup>11</sup> Although animals, plants, and non-living substances bear some likeness to God as their creator, they are not said to be images of God, but only “vestiges” of God (his tracks or footprints).<sup>12</sup> As creatures, they manifest the presence of God the creator in a general way, but they do not rise to the level of representing the species. St. Thomas argues that because of man’s rational nature—possessing an intellect and a will—he is able to represent the species.<sup>13</sup> To say that an image represents the species obviously does not mean that the image is of the very same species as the thing it images, but it does mean that an image captures or represents the specific shape or form of something. He gives the example of a coin or statue which can be

said to be an image because it has the same outward shape or form as the original.<sup>14</sup> Of course, man is said to be in the image of God not in an outward and material way—since God is altogether spiritual—but he does bear the image of God because his intellectual nature sufficiently represents or imitates the same form or species as the divine nature—like a coin that bears the image of a king. Since man is distinguished from the beasts by his rational soul, it is within the soul that one finds the image of the Trinity, and St. Thomas says that “God himself put in man a spiritual image of himself.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, St. Thomas says that the image of God is in man according to his mind (*mens*)—a term that includes the powers of intellect and will.<sup>16</sup>

But how is the soul said to be an image of the Trinity? St. Thomas identifies the image of the Trinity with the interior processions of word and love in the soul:

Since the uncreated Trinity is distinguished according to the procession of Word from the Speaker, and of Love

<sup>14</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 2; q. 35, a. 2, ad 3; *SCG* IV, c. 26, n. 7.

<sup>15</sup> *STh* I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 1: “Deus ipse sibi in homine posuit spiritualem imaginem.” The translations of the *Summa Theologiae* are my own, but I have consulted the translation by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 6, where St. Thomas claims that the image of God is found in man only according to the mind (*secundum mentem*). “Mind” is usually used as another name for the power of the intellect, but in this article mind (*mens*) seems to signify the intellectual soul, which contains, and is distinguished by, both intellect and will. This is clear from his claim that that the image of the Trinity is found in a procession of word according to the intellect and a procession of love according to the will. That “mind” and “intellect” are sometimes used to name the intellectual soul—because something can be named from its highest power—is explained in *STh* I, q. 79, a. 1, ad 1. For a discussion of St. Thomas’s use of the word mind (*mens*) in his account of the *imago Dei*, see John O’Callaghan “*Imago Dei*: A Test Case for St. Thomas’s Augustinianism,” in *Aquinas the Augustinian*, ed. by Michael Dauphinais, Barry David, and Matthew Levering (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 100–144.

<sup>8</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 1.

<sup>9</sup> The example of the egg is mentioned by St. Thomas in *STh* I, q. 93, a. 1. It is taken from St. Augustine, as noted in *STh* I, q. 35, a. 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 2 and a. 6.; *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9; *De Ver.*, q. 10, a. 7.

<sup>12</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 6.

<sup>13</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 2 and a. 6.

from both of these, as said above [in the treatment of the Trinity], so in the rational creature, in which is found a procession of the word according to the intellect, and a procession of love according to the will, there may be said to be an image of the uncreated Trinity through a certain representation of the species.<sup>17</sup>

The interior processions of word and love bear a formal likeness to the procession of Word and Love in God—Word being another name for the Son and Love another name for the Holy Spirit. St. Thomas argues, moreover, that the image of the Trinity is found principally in the acts of the soul, and only secondarily in its powers and habits. This is because it is only by actual thinking that a word is produced within the soul, and it is only through the word that proceeds from the intellect that there is a procession of love in the will:

The divine persons are distinguished according to the procession of the Word from the Speaker, and the procession of Love connecting both. But the word in our soul “cannot exist without actual thought,” as Augustine says (*De Trinitate* XIV, c. 7). Therefore, primarily and principally, the image of the Trinity is to be found in the mind according to its acts, insofar as from the knowledge which we have, by thinking we form an interior word; and from this break forth into love.<sup>18</sup>

17 *STh* I, q. 93, a. 6, c.: “cum increata Trinitas distinguatur secundum processionem verbi a dicente, et amoris ab utroque, ut supra habitum est; in creatura rationali, in qua invenitur processio verbi secundum intellectum, et processio amoris secundum voluntatem, potest dici imago Trinitatis increatae per quamdam repraesentationem speciei.”

18 *STh* I, q. 93, a. 7, c.: “Divinae autem personae distinguuntur secundum processionem verbi a dicente, et amoris connectentis utrumque. Verbum autem in anima nostra sine actuali cogitatione esse non potest, ut Augustinus dicit XIV de *Trin.* Et ideo primo et principaliter attenditur imago Trinitatis in mente secundum actus, prout scilicet ex notitia quam habemus, cogitando interius verbum formamus, et ex hoc in amorem prorumpimus.” Emphasis has been added.

So, man is made in the image of the Trinity in his soul, and more specifically in the intellect and will, and principally in the acts of the intellect and will rather than in its habits and powers.

### *Part II – A Preliminary Look at the Levels of the Imago*

St. Thomas’s teaching on the *imago* also includes a clear sense that the *imago* admits of different degrees: nature, grace, and glory (although the image according to grace and the image according to glory are presented together). St. Thomas’s lengthiest treatment of the *imago* is found in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 93.<sup>19</sup> This account is difficult and complex, so I will begin by looking at two simpler texts mentioned earlier, *De Potentia*, q. 9, a. 9 and *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 7.

In the *De Potentia* text, St. Thomas presents the image according to nature and the image according to grace in a simple and straightforward way. The image according to nature is based on a likeness, or similarity, of interior operations: because the rational creature alone can understand and love himself, and consequently produces his own interior word and love, man represents the Trinity by a likeness that rises to the level of an image because it represents the “species” of the Trinity. It represents the form or species of the Trinity in the sense that the formal structure of the interior processions of word and love in the soul is similar to the formal structure of the order of the processions of Word and Love in God. Since every man is capable of knowing and loving himself, and produces his own interior word and love, this likeness of the Trinity is called the “likeness of the natural image.” It is also called the “image of creation,” because it is

19 For a helpful discussion of the *imago* in *STh* I, q. 96, see Michael Dauphinais, “Loving the Lord Your God: The *Imago Dei* in St. Thomas Aquinas,” *The Thomist* 63 (1999): 241–67.

meant to explain the line from Genesis: "Let us make man to our image and likeness."

The image according to grace, as described in this text, does not focus on a likeness of interior operations, but on what he calls a unity of the object. Since the saints understand and love God, there is what St. Thomas calls a "conformity of union," because they know and love the same thing that God knows and loves. This likeness of the Trinity is called the "image of re-creation." As previously noted, the scriptural basis for this notion of image is found in the New Testament, notably 2 Cor 3:18: "But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

A few simple observations. First, St. Thomas sees the basis for asserting two distinct ways that man is made in the image of Trinity as coming from Scripture (one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament). Second, these two images seem to be distinct and unrelated to one another: one account focuses on a similarity of operation and the other on sameness of object. The aim of this paper is to show how these two images are related to one another, and that the image according to grace presupposes and perfects the image according to nature. There is perhaps already some hint of this insofar as the names of these two images (the "image of creation" and the "image of re-creation") suggest some sort of relation between them.

Let us turn briefly to *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 7 where St. Thomas presents a similar account of the two ways in which man is made in the image of God. This article raises the question of whether the image of the Trinity is found in the mind insofar as it knows temporal things, or only insofar as it knows eternal things. This is a question that arises from St. Augustine's treatment of the *imago* in his *De Trinitate*.<sup>20</sup> Thomas approaches this question by asking whether an image of God is found in the soul according

to three different objects of the mind. Is the image of God found in the mind when it knows material things? Is the image of God found in the mind insofar as it knows itself? And is the image of God found in the mind insofar as it knows God? In answering these questions, St. Thomas uses slightly different terminology to refer to the image of nature and grace that we found in *De Potentia*: he calls the image of nature a likeness according to analogy and the image of grace a likeness according to conformation. Apart from terminology, this distinction between the two ways the *imago* is found in the mind is essentially the same as the distinction made in the *De Potentia*. The image according to analogy is based on a similarity between the operations in the human mind and the operations in God. The image according to conformation is based on the unity of object: since the mind becomes assimilated to the object known, when the mind knows and loves God as an object it is conformed to the divine persons.

In answering this question, St. Thomas argues that there is no image of the Trinity found in the mind when it knows material things. But there is an image of the Trinity according to analogy when the mind knows itself and an image according to conformation when it knows God:

In the knowledge by which our mind knows itself, there is a representation of the uncreated Trinity according to analogy insofar as the mind knowing itself in this way brings forth a word of itself, and love proceeds from both of these, just as the Father, speaking Himself, has begotten his Word from eternity, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both. But in that knowledge by which the mind knows God himself, the mind itself is conformed to God, just as every knower, as such, is assimilated to the thing known.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See *De Trinitate* XIV, c. 4, n. 15.

<sup>21</sup> *De Ver.*, q. 10, a. 7, c.: "Sed in cognitione qua mens nostra cognoscit seipsam, est representatio Trinitatis increatae secundum analogiam, in quantum hoc



This text, like the one in the *De Potentia*, seems largely to contrast two distinct ways in which the soul is an image of the Trinity. Are these two images related in some way? If so, how are they related?

In the remainder of the *De Veritate* article, St. Thomas gives some indication of how these two are related by arguing that the image according to conformity is greater than the image according to analogy. Here is what he says:

Now, the likeness which is by conformity [to its object], as sight to color, is greater than that which is by analogy, as sight to the understanding, which is similarly compared to its objects. Consequently, the likeness of the Trinity is more expressive [clearer] in the mind insofar as it knows God, than insofar as it knows itself. Therefore, properly speaking, the image of the Trinity is in the mind primarily and principally insofar as the mind knows God; but it is there in a certain way and secondarily insofar as the mind knows itself, and chiefly when it considers itself as the image of God, and thus its consideration does not stop with itself but proceeds to God.<sup>22</sup>

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modo mens cognoscens seipsam verbum sui gignit, et ex utroque procedit amor. Sicut pater seipsum dicens, verbum suum genuit ab aeterno, et ex utroque spiritus sanctus procedit. Sed in cognitione illa qua mens ipsum Deum cognoscit mens ipsa Deo conformatur, sicut omne cognoscens, inquantum huiusmodi, assimilatur cognito.” The translations from *De Veritate* are my own, but I have consulted the translation by James V. McGlynn (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.: “Maior est autem similitudo quae est per conformitatem, ut visus ad colorem, quam quae est per analogiam, ut visus ad intellectum, qui similiter ad sua obiecta comparatur. Unde expressior similitudo Trinitatis est in mente secundum quod cognoscit Deum, quam secundum quod cognoscit seipsam. Et ideo proprie imago Trinitatis in mente est secundum quod cognoscit Deum primo et principaliter: sed quodam modo et secundario etiam secundum quod cognoscit seipsam et praecipue prout seipsam considerat ut est imago Dei; ut sic eius consideratio non sistat in se, sed procedat usque ad Deum.”

What is interesting to see here is that St. Thomas is not only arguing that the image according to conformity is superior to the image according to analogy, but that the latter is in some way ordered toward the former. The soul’s knowledge and love of itself bears a formal likeness to the Trinitarian processions, but this formal likeness has the character of an image chiefly insofar as it leads one to a knowledge of the Trinity as an object. That is a key insight, one that will feature prominently in the *Summa Theologiae*, where we find St. Thomas’s most developed treatment of the levels of the *imago*. Let us turn to that now, to look more closely at the relation between the image according to analogy and the image according to conformation.

### *Part III – The Image according to Nature and Grace in the Summa Theologiae*

Let us turn first to *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 93, a. 4, where St. Thomas asks whether the image of God is found in all men. This question serves as the occasion to describe the different levels of the *imago*:

Since man is said to be [made] to the image of God by reason of his intellectual nature, he is [made] to the image of God in the highest degree insofar the intellectual nature can imitate God to the highest degree. Now, the intellectual nature imitates God to the highest degree according to this, that God understands and loves Himself. Whence the image of God can be considered in man in three ways. First, insofar as man has a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Secondly, insofar as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image is through the conformity of grace. Thirdly, insofar

as man actually knows and loves God perfectly; and thus is the image according to the likeness of glory. Whence the gloss on Psalm 4:7 (“The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us”) distinguishes a threefold image of “creation,” of “re-creation,” and of “likeness.” The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed.<sup>23</sup>

This is a complicated text. For the moment, I would like to focus on a shift in how St. Thomas describes the image according to nature. As we have seen, the *De Potentia* and *De Veritate* describe the image according to nature as an analogy of proportion: the interior processions of word and love in the human soul knowing and loving itself (as object) is analogous to the processions of Word and Love in God knowing and loving himself (as object). Here in the *Summa Theologiae* he defines the image according to nature as a *natural aptitude* to know and love God as an object, an aptitude that consists in “the very nature of the mind,” which is intrinsically oriented toward God as an object. Consequently, his account of the soul as the image according to nature is now

23 *STh* I, q. 93, a. 4, c.: “cum homo secundum intellectualem naturam ad imaginem Dei esse dicatur, secundum hoc est maxime ad imaginem Dei, secundum quod intellectualis natura Deum maxime imitari potest. Imitatur autem intellectualis natura maxime Deum quantum ad hoc, quod Deus seipsum intelligit et amat. Unde imago Dei tripliciter potest considerari in homine. Uno quidem modo, secundum quod homo habet aptitudinem naturalem ad intelligendum et amandum Deum, et haec aptitudo consistit in ipsa natura mentis, quae est communis omnibus hominibus. Alio modo, secundum quod homo actu vel habitu Deum cognoscit et amat, sed tamen imperfecte, et haec est imago per conformitatem gratiae. Tertio modo, secundum quod homo Deum actu cognoscit et amat perfecte, et sic attenditur imago secundum similitudinem gloriae. Unde super illud Psalmi IV, *signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, domine*, Glossa distinguit triplicem imaginem, scilicet creationis, recreationis et similitudinis. Prima ergo imago invenitur in omnibus hominibus; secunda in iustis tantum; tertia vero solum in beatis.”

explicitly seen as ordered toward the image according to grace as potency to act.

Do we see the same emphasis on the object when St. Thomas applies the notion of the *imago* to the distinction of persons in the Trinity? Yes, we do. To see this, we should turn to q. 93, a. 8, where Thomas asks whether the image of the Trinity is in the soul only by comparison to God as object. In that article St. Thomas reiterates that the divine persons are distinguished from each other according to the procession of the divine Word from the divine Speaker and the procession of divine Love from both. St. Thomas then points out that the divine processions come forth from God insofar as God knows and loves himself as object:

The Word of God is born of God according to the knowledge of himself; and Love proceeds from God insofar as he loves himself.<sup>24</sup>

He gives a reason for prioritizing the object of knowledge and love. “It is manifest,” he says, “that the diversity of objects diversifies the species of word and love.”<sup>25</sup> The interior word conceived from the knowledge of a stone is not the same species as a word conceived of a horse or a man; likewise, the love brought forth from each of these is specifically different. Having pointed out that the object diversifies the procession of word and love, St. Thomas concludes that the image of the Trinity in the soul must have God as its object:

Therefore the Divine image is found in man according to the word conceived from the knowledge of God, and according to the love derived from it. Thus, the image of

24 *STh* I, q. 93, a. 8, c.: “Verbum autem Dei nascitur de Deo secundum notitiam sui ipsius, et amor procedit a Deo secundum quod seipsum amat.”

25 *Ibid.*: “Manifestum est autem quod diversitas obiectorum diversificat speciem verbi et amoris.”

God is found in the soul insofar as the soul turns toward God, or was born to turn toward God.<sup>26</sup>

So, the image of God in the soul has God as its object, or is naturally oriented toward God. This fits with St. Thomas's earlier claim in a. 4, that the natural image of the Trinity consists in a natural aptitude to know and love God—a kind of directional potency toward the image of grace.

But what has become of St. Thomas's initial description of the image according to nature by way of analogy—the soul's knowledge and love of self (and its corresponding procession of word and love)? Has St. Thomas abandoned self-knowledge and self-love as a natural image of the Trinity? We get an answer to this question in the final part of a. 8, where St. Thomas distinguishes between two ways in which the mind can be said to turn toward God:

Now, the mind may turn toward something in two ways: directly and immediately, or indirectly and mediately, as when someone seeing the image of a man in a mirror is said to be turned toward that man. And thus Augustine says in *De Trinitate* XIV, "the mind remembers itself, understands itself, and loves itself. If we perceive this, we perceive a trinity, not yet God, but already the image of God." But this is not because the mind turns toward itself absolutely, but insofar as through this it can further turn toward God.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.: "Attenditur igitur divina imago in homine secundum verbum conceptum de Dei notitia, et amorem exinde derivatum. Et sic imago Dei attenditur in anima secundum quod fertur, vel nata est ferri in Deum."

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: "Fertur autem in aliquid mens dupliciter, uno modo, directe et immediate; alio modo, indirecte et mediate, sicut cum aliquis, videndo imaginem hominis in speculo, dicitur ferri in ipsum hominem. Et ideo Augustinus dicit, in XIV *De Trin.*, quod mens meminit sui, intelligit se, et diligit se, hoc si cernimus, cernimus Trinitatem; nondum quidem Deum, sed iam imaginem

We see, then, that for St. Thomas the soul's knowledge and love of itself is said to be an image of God, but only insofar as it in some way points toward God or makes it possible for the mind to turn to God. St. Thomas is indicating that it belongs to an image as image to point the way to the original of which it is the image. Of course, the example of the reflection in a mirror is a conspicuous case of an image that is recognized immediately as an image. The same is true of the image of the king on a coin, or the image of Hercules in bronze or marble. All images point toward the things they imitate in some way, although in varying degrees. So, the likeness according to analogy found in the very nature of the mind (and its corresponding operations and interior processions) is naturally apt to lead the mind toward a knowledge of the Trinity of persons.

At this point, one might wonder whether we have overstated the case for the natural image. If the procession of word and love in the human soul is an image of the Trinity precisely because it naturally leads the mind to see the procession of Word and Love in God himself, this suggests that the mind can arrive at a knowledge of the Trinity by natural reason alone. But according to St. Thomas, natural reason is unable to demonstrate the distinction of persons in the Trinity—that presupposes faith.<sup>28</sup> St. Thomas anticipates this difficulty. In fact, it is one of the objections that he raises (in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 93, a. 4) against the idea that there is an image of the Trinity in man.<sup>29</sup> Here is the objection:

An image leads to the knowledge of that thing of which it is the image. If, therefore, there is in man the image of God according to the Trinity of persons, since man

Dei. Sed hoc est, non quia fertur mens in seipsam absolute, sed prout per hoc ulterius potest ferri in Deum."

<sup>28</sup> See *STh* I, q. 32, a. 1.

<sup>29</sup> See *STh* I, q. 93, a. 5.



can know himself through natural reason, it follows that by natural knowledge man could know the Trinity of the divine persons, which is false, as shown above.<sup>30</sup>

The reference is to q. 32, a. 1, in St. Thomas's treatise on the Trinity, where he argues that natural reason is incapable of demonstrating the Trinity. In any case, St. Thomas answers the objection in q. 93, a. 5, by granting that the image of God in man would lead to the knowledge of the Trinity *if the image of God in man were perfect*. So, the general principle, that an image, as image, naturally leads to a knowledge of the thing it imitates is sound, but if the image is an imperfect image, it does not lead the mind to the thing it imitates with necessity.<sup>31</sup> As it is, the mind is unable to arrive at a knowledge of the Trinity apart from supernatural faith.

What, then, can it mean to speak of a natural aptitude to know the Trinity, one which can help lead to a knowledge of the Trinity, but only if the mind is elevated by supernatural faith? One way to see the suitability of calling the image according to nature a natural aptitude to know the persons of the Trinity is to see how St. Thomas uses the interior processions within the soul in his treatment of the Trinity. Although the existence of interior processions within God is itself a matter of faith, the interior processions of word and love in the human soul play

an essential role in manifesting the interior processions in God, which gives a greater appreciation of why the image according to nature is described as a natural aptitude to know the persons of the Trinity.

The treatment of the Trinity in the *Summa Theologiae* begins with procession because the divine persons are distinguished by relations of origin, and relations of origin presuppose procession in God.<sup>32</sup> Scripture and the creed use names that signify procession in God,<sup>33</sup> but the point is to attempt to *understand* what faith reveals. But we are faced almost immediately with various ways that procession can be *misunderstood*—notably the Arian and Sabellian heresies. Both of these heresies mistakenly take procession to refer to an outward act, a procession *ad extra*. As a consequence, both deny a distinction of persons *within* God. Since procession necessarily presupposes action, the only remaining alternative is to admit that there is an internal procession, an internal act that remains within the agent. Here is where the soul as an image of the Trinity comes into play, helping us to see the processions in God through a likeness in the rational creature. The interior processions of word and love provide an entry point, indeed, *the* entry point enabling us to see how there can be procession within God, and how the divine persons can be distinguished. So, the image according to nature—the analogy of interior processions in the soul—provides the most apt or suitable likeness by which we can understand the divine processions.

There is another text in *De Potentia* that makes the point even more forcefully. He says there that it is only through the

30 *STh* I, q. 93, a. 5, obj. 3: “imago ducit in cognitionem eius cuius est imago. Si igitur in homine est imago Dei secundum Trinitatem personarum, cum homo per naturalem rationem seipsum cognoscere possit, sequeretur quod per naturalem cognitionem posset homo cognoscere Trinitatem divinarum personarum. Quod est falsum, ut supra ostensum est.”

31 One might wonder whether there is such a thing as a perfect image, one which would necessarily lead the mind to a knowledge of the thing it imitates. St. Thomas does say that the Son of God is the perfect image of the Father (*STh* I, q. 35, a. 2, ad 3; q. 93, a. 1, ad 2) which would suggest that by knowing the Son one would necessarily come to know the Father, and this idea is a recurring theme in the Gospel of John (e.g., Jn 1:18, 8:19, 14:7).

32 See *STh* I, preface to q. 27; q. 28, a. 1, sed contra. See also *Super Ioan.* 15, lec. 5, n. 2063.

33 For examples of scriptural texts signifying procession in God, see Jn 8:42, 15:26.

interior processions of word and love in the human soul that one can discover (or establish) a personal distinction in God:

No other origin can be in God except one that is immaterial, and which is consistent with an intellectual nature, of which sort is the origin of word and love. Whence if the procession of word and love is not enough to introduce [*insinuandam*] a personal distinction, no personal distinction will be possible in God. Whence John both in the beginning of his gospel and in his first canonical letter uses the name “Word” for the Son, nor ought one to speak otherwise about God than as holy scripture speaks.<sup>34</sup>

As this text makes clear, for St. Thomas the procession of word and love is the only way to understand the distinction of persons in God.

Space does not permit a detailed treatment of the interior word in the soul or of the love brought forth from the will. Suffice it to say that St. Thomas relies on the soul’s interior processions of word and love as the only suitable image of divine procession. Indeed, without this image the science of sacred theology has no

34 *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9, ad 7: “Nulla enim alia origo in divinis esse potest nisi immaterialis, et quae sit conveniens intellectuali naturae, qualis est origo Verbi et Amoris; unde si processio Verbi et Amoris non sufficit ad distinctionem personalem insinuandam, nulla poterit esse personalis distinctio in divinis. Unde et Ioannes tam in principio sui Evangelii quam in prima canonica sua, nomine Verbi pro Filio utitur, nec est aliter loquendum de divinis quam sacra Scriptura loquatur.” I have translated *insinuandam* as “introduce” because the Latin word *insinuare*, and the context of St. Thomas’s text, demands a word meaning both “to make known” and “to insert.” In other words, we need an English word that suggests that the procession of word and love is both how we come to know of the personal distinction in God as well how a personal distinction is founded or established—so to speak—in God himself. This fits with the English word “introduce” which can mean to make known (“let me introduce you to...”), but also to insert or establish (“the poison was introduced into the bloodstream by the needle” or “income taxes were first introduced in 1913”).

clear way of moving forward, and the Arian and Sabellian heresies would always be lurking at the door. St. Thomas’s account of the processions in God show how the image according to nature is oriented toward the image according to grace because it is an indispensable aid to understanding the object of our faith—the most holy Trinity. And insofar as supernatural faith relies on this image, we see how the image according to grace presupposes, and builds on, the image according to nature.

Let me conclude with a brief account of the image according to grace. St. Thomas indicates that the image of God according to grace entails actually (and habitually) knowing and loving God—as opposed to the mere aptitude to know and love God, or the ability to turn toward God. In this sense, the knowledge of the Trinity obtained by a simple faith in the creed, and in the science of sacred doctrine acquired by study, is surely included in the image according to grace insofar as faith is a supernatural elevation of man’s nature. Nonetheless, what St. Thomas principally has in mind by the “image of re-creation” is a knowledge and a love of God that presupposes sanctifying grace, namely, the very indwelling of the persons of the Trinity, which he explains in his treatment of the divine missions in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 43.<sup>35</sup> His account of the indwelling focuses on the presence of the divine persons in a manner that is more intimate and more immediate than what is attainable by faith alone (absent sanctifying grace and charity).

The indwelling of the divine persons is a complicated subject that could easily merit a separate paper, so I will limit myself

35 On the relation between the indwelling of the divine persons and the soul as an image of the Trinity, and the role played by the divine missions, see Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 395–404; Emery, *Trinity, Church, and the Human Person* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 66–70. See also Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Prelude: Three Ages of the Eternal Interior Life*, Vol 1 (Rockford, IL: TAN Books, 1989), 97–108.

to a few key points. To see that St. Thomas has the divine indwelling in mind when talking about the image of grace, we need to look at a couple of passages earlier in the *Summa Theologiae*. The first is from the prima pars, q. 8, a. 3 where Thomas outlines the way that God is present in the world:

God is said to be in a thing in two ways: in one way through the mode of an efficient cause; and thus he is in all things created by him; in another way as the object of operation is in the operator, which is proper to the operations of the soul, insofar as the thing known is in the knower, and the thing desired is in the one desiring. In this second way God is especially in the rational creature that knows and loves him actually or habitually. And because the rational creature has this by grace, as will be shown below, in this way he is said to be in the saints by grace.<sup>36</sup>

Notice, here the emphasis on God's presence in the soul as an object, but only in the saints, who know him actually or habitually. This language fits with St. Thomas's description of the image according to grace in q. 93, a. 4. St. Thomas promises to take this up again later in the *Summa Theologiae*. The editors of the standard English edition of the *Summa*<sup>37</sup> insert a reference to q. 12 (which focuses mainly on the beatific vision), but I think what Thomas has in mind is found in q. 43 on the divine missions.

36 *STh* I, q. 8, a. 3, c.: "Deus dicitur esse in re aliqua dupliciter. Uno modo, per modum causae agentis, et sic est in omnibus rebus creatis ab ipso. Alio modo, sicut obiectum operationis est in operante, quod proprium est in operationibus animae, secundum quod cognitum est in cognoscente, et desideratum in desiderante. Hoc igitur secundo modo, Deus specialiter est in rationali creatura, quae cognoscit et diligit illum actu vel habitu. Et quia hoc habet rationalis creatura per gratiam, ut infra patebit, dicitur esse hoc modo in sanctis per gratiam."

37 *Summa Theologica*, translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981).

The key text is q. 43, a. 3, which is on the invisible missions of the divine persons as an effect of sanctifying grace. Here is the text:

There is one common mode by which God is in all things by his essence, power, and presence, as the cause existing in the effects participating in his goodness. Above this common mode, however, there is one special mode that belongs to the rational creature in which God is said to be present as the thing known is in the knower, and the thing loved in the lover. And because, by knowing and loving, the rational creature by his operation attains to God himself, according to this special mode God not only is said to be in the rational creature but also to dwell in him as in his own temple. Thus, therefore, no other effect can be the reason why the divine person is in the rational creature in a new way, except sanctifying grace [*gratia gratum faciens*]. Whence, it is only according to sanctifying grace that the divine person is sent and proceeds temporally.<sup>38</sup>

I think we can clearly recognize that St. Thomas is describing what he will later call the image of God according to grace, which is found in the saints who are united to God as an object, but not an object that is known and loved in the ordinary way. This special mode of the divine presence exceeds the way in which God is an object known by natural theology, or even the way in which

38 *STh* I, q. 43, a. 3, c.: "Est enim unus communis modus quo Deus est in omnibus rebus per essentiam, potentiam et praesentiam, sicut causa in effectibus participantibus bonitatem ipsius. Super istum modum autem communem, est unus specialis, qui convenit creaturae rationali, in qua Deus dicitur esse sicut cognitum in cognoscente et amatum in amante. Et quia, cognoscendo et amando, creatura rationalis sua operatione attingit ad ipsum Deum, secundum istum specialem modum Deus non solum dicitur esse in creatura rationali, sed etiam habitare in ea sicut in templo suo. Sic igitur nullus alius effectus potest esse ratio quod divina persona sit novo modo in rationali creatura, nisi gratia gratum faciens. Unde secundum solam gratiam gratum facientem, mittitur et procedit temporaliter persona divina."

God is known by faith (when we recite the creed), or even in the science of sacred theology acquired by study. This is because it is possible to have dead faith, that is, a faith that is not animated by love (for example, a soul existing in a state of mortal sin). If we have faith without love, the divine persons are not said to dwell in us, and we do not fully participate in, or imitate, the divine life. Indeed, St. Thomas goes on in this article to say that sanctifying grace enables us to freely enjoy the divine persons—which is to say that we participate in the fellowship of the Trinity.

There is one other point that is worth noting about the relation between sanctifying grace and the divine indwelling that will help us to see how the image of God according to grace not only has the divine persons as objects dwelling in the soul, but also entails the soul being conformed or assimilated to the divine persons through the gifts that accompany sanctifying grace, namely, wisdom and charity. Here is how St. Thomas puts it:

The soul is conformed to God by grace. Hence for a divine person to be sent to someone by grace, there must be an assimilation of that person to the divine person who is sent, by some gift of grace. And because the Holy Spirit is Love, the soul is assimilated to the Holy Spirit by the gift of charity: hence the mission of the Holy Ghost is according to the mode of charity. The Son, however, is the Word, not any sort of word, but one who breathes forth Love. Hence Augustine says (*De Trinitate* IX, c. 10): “The Word we intend to introduce [*insinuare*] is knowledge with love.” The Son is not sent, therefore, according to any intellectual perfection, but according to the formation of the intellect by which it breaks forth into the affection of love, as is said Jn 6:45: “Everyone that hath heard from the Father and hath learned, cometh to me,” and in Ps. 38:4: “In my meditation a fire shall flame forth.” Thus, Augustine plainly says (*De Trinitate*

IV, c. 20): “The Son is sent whenever he is known and perceived by anyone.” Now, “perception” signifies a certain experimental knowledge; and this is properly called wisdom [*sapientia*], as it were, a savory knowledge [*sapida scientia*], according to Ecclus. 6:23: “The wisdom of doctrine is according to her name.”<sup>39</sup>

So, we see here that the divine indwelling presupposes an assimilation to the divine processions of Word and Love. It should be noted that this assimilation is not by way of efficient causality, but by way of exemplar causality. While the love shed abroad in our hearts is *appropriated* to the Holy Spirit in the line of efficient causality, it is *proper* to him in the line of exemplar causality.<sup>40</sup> All three persons of the Trinity together function as the efficient cause of charity in the soul, but this operation is appropriated to the Holy Spirit because the gift of charity imitates the procession of divine Love. This is what St. Thomas means by the “conformation of grace” in his discussion of the image of God. This helps manifest that the image according to grace builds on the image according to nature. The objective union, or indwelling, of the divine persons presupposes an analogy of operation.

39 *STh* I, q. 43, a. 5, ad 2: “anima per gratiam conformatur Deo. Unde ad hoc quod aliqua persona divina mittatur ad aliquem per gratiam, oportet quod fiat assimilatio illius ad divinam personam quae mittitur per aliquod gratiae donum. Et quia Spiritus Sanctus est amor, per donum caritatis anima spiritui sancto assimilatur, unde secundum donum caritatis attenditur missio spiritus sancti. Filius autem est verbum, non quaecumque, sed spirans amorem; unde Augustinus dicit, in IX libro de Trin., *verbum quod insinuare intendimus, cum amore notitia est*. Non igitur secundum quamlibet perfectionem intellectus mittitur filius, sed secundum talem instructionem intellectus, qua prorumpat in affectum amoris, ut dicitur Ioan. VI, *omnis qui audivit a patre, et didicit, venit ad me*; et in Psalm., *in meditatione mea exardescet ignis*. Et ideo signanter dicit Augustinus quod *filius mittitur, cum a quoquam cognoscitur atque percipitur*, perceptio enim experimentalem quandam notitiam significat. Et haec proprie dicitur sapientia, quasi sapida scientia, secundum illud Eccli. VI, *sapientia doctrinae secundum nomen eius est*.”

40 See SCG IV, c. 21, n. 2.

Let me conclude. St. Thomas's treatment of the soul as *imago Dei*, and especially as an image of the Trinity, is a complicated subject both exegetically and doctrinally. Exegetically because the various places where St. Thomas discusses the different levels of the *imago* have subtle differences. It is dogmatically complicated because it requires a familiarity with the key points of St. Thomas's Trinitarian theology. While the principal aim of his teaching on the *imago* is to instruct us about the dignity and perfection of man as made in the image of God, a better understanding of the Trinitarian theology that underlies his teaching on the *imago* can give us a greater appreciation of the Trinitarian aspects of the creation and sanctification of man.

*Richard Ferrier*

I forgot my reading glasses, but I'm not going to be reading. This is called a tutor talk. I'm not sure that all the tutors who give them take that as literally as I do, but it's going to be a talk—it's not a lecture. I haven't written a word of it.

The best public speaker I ever heard, and then came to know, in my life was Alan Keyes. If you've ever heard him give an oration, you will know what I mean. I travelled with him, and I did introductions for him. He ran for president in the primaries in 1996 in the Republican Party, and after one of his speeches someone asked him—I guess they had a question period—someone asked him, "How long did it take you to prepare that speech, Mr. Keyes?" and he said, "Oh . . . about forty years." He was not reading it either; he spoke without notes. As did, by the way, Amy Coney Barrett in the hearings for her confirmation; she had a little notepad, and one of the senators asked her to show it so that they could see what kind of preparation she had, and it looked like this [*holding up blank paper*]. She grinned in a very charming way when she did that.

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Richard Ferrier has been a tutor at Thomas Aquinas College (California) since 1978, after receiving his BA at St. John's College (Annapolis) and his MA and PhD in the History of Science from Indiana University. Some of his more recent lectures include: "Socrates in Peoria: Lincoln's Rhetoric and Plato's *Gorgias*," "Born on the Fourth of July," "Viète's Construction of the Regular Heptagon," and "Music in Plato's *Republic*." In 2022, St. Augustine's Press published his monograph, *The Declaration of America: Our Principles in Thought and Action*, reviewed in this issue. This essay is the lightly edited transcription of a "Tutor Talk" that Dr. Ferrier presented to the students at the California campus in September of 2022. Italicized phrases presented in square brackets indicate significant gestures or movements Dr. Ferrier employed in making certain points.