

## 12. The Mystical Theology

### Chapter 1: What Is the Divine Darkness?

1

Oh supersubstantial, superdivine, supergood Trinity, overseer of Christians' divine wisdom, direct us to the superunknown, superbright outermost summit of mystical oracles where in the superlight, the darkness of mystical silence, there lie hidden the simple, unconditioned and unchanged mysteries of theology that outshine in deepest darkness what is most superbrilliant and that, in the wholly intangible and invisible, fill eyeless intellects to overflowing with superbeautiful splendors. These things I pray.

But you, dear Timothy,<sup>1</sup> in your earnest study of mystical sights, leave behind sensations and intellectual activities, all things sensible and intelligible, all non-beings and beings, and be lifted up in an unknowable manner to the unity of what is above all being and knowledge, insofar as that can be reached. For, by an irresistible and purely unconditioned going out<sup>2</sup> from yourself and from all things, you will be lifted up to the supersubstantial ray of divine shadow, setting aside all things and turned loose from all things.

2

But see to it that none of the uninitiated hear these things, by whom I mean those tangled up in beings, who imagine that there is nothing supersubstantially above beings but rather think that by their own knowledge they know Him<sup>3</sup> Who has made darkness His

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1. "Timothy" is of course supposed to be the Timothy to whom Saint Paul wrote two epistles. Pseudo-Dionysius, whoever he really was, is here forging his credentials before our very eyes.

2. going out = ἐκτάσει (*ekstasei*), 'ecstasy.'

3. In this translation I have capitalized pronouns refer-

ring to God, since sometimes the antecedents are confusing. See, for example, Ch. 1, § 3, par. 2 of the translation.

4. Compare Ps. 18:11.

5. The double comparative is in the Greek.

6. I must confess I do not entirely see the point here. Would an *opposition* be a *privation*? Is the idea that a privation somehow involves *both* affirmation and negation?

7. Bartholomew the apostle? See Matt. 10:3.

8. marvelously = ὑπερφύως, 'supernaturally.' But the word has a more common and quite ordinary meaning too: 'excessively,' 'marvelously.'

3

So, at any rate, says blessed Bartholomew,<sup>7</sup> and also that theology is great, and yet the smallest, and the Gospel broad and large, and again concise. It seems to me that he marvelously<sup>8</sup> understands the fact that the good cause of all is both loquacious and taciturn and speechless, as possessing neither speech nor understanding, because it supersubstantially lies above all things and appears truly and without disguise only to those who cross over all things polluted and pure, climb above every ascent of all the holy peaks, leave behind all divine lights and sounds and heavenly words, and enter into the darkness where, as the Scriptures say, He truly is Who is above all.

For blessed Moses himself is not simply commanded to be first purified and, again, to be separated from those not such;<sup>9</sup> after all the purification he also hears many-voiced trumpets, sees many lights flashing forth pure and broadly diffused rays. Then he is separated from the many and, together with the sacred elect, arrives at the peak of divine ascents. But he does not meet God Himself by these means; he does not see Him, for He is unseen, but rather the place where He is.

I think this signifies that the most divine and highest of things seen and understood are certain subordinate reasons<sup>10</sup> of things subject to what surpasses all. Through them is indicated its presence above all thought, standing on the intelligible summits of its most holy places.

Then he<sup>11</sup> abandons the seen things themselves and also those who see (them), and enters into the truly mystical darkness of unknowing. There, belonging entirely to what is above all and to nothing (else), whether himself or another, he shuts out all cognitive apprehensions and emerges in the altogether intangible and invisible. By the inactivity of all knowledge, he is united in his better part with the entirely unknown. And by knowing nothing, he knows superintellectually.

## Chapter 2: How One Must Be United with and Tell of<sup>12</sup> the Cause of All, [Which Is] above All Things.

We pray that we may reach this darkness above light and, through blindness and unknowing, see and know the not seeing or knowing that is itself beyond sight and knowledge—for this is really to see and to know—and supersubstantially to tell of the supersubstantial

9. Not such. That is, not purified.

10. subordinate reasons = ὑποθετικούς . . . λόγους (*hypothetikus logous*), “hypothetical reasons,” in the sense that they are the “hypotheses” or prerequisites for other things, not in the sense that they themselves depend on yet further hypotheses or prerequisites.

11. he = Moses.

12. tell of = ὕμνους ἀνατιθέναι (*hymnous anatithenai*), “to devote hymns to.” Compare Latin *laudo*.

through the separation of all beings, just like those making a life-like statue who, removing all the hindrances that impede the pure view of what is hidden, show forth, by a mere separation, the concealed beauty itself, by itself.

Now I think the separations must be told of in opposite manner to the positive features. For we were positing the one kind [when], beginning with the very first, we went down through the intermediaries to the last. But, performing the ascents from the last to the originals, we separate all things, so that we may unconcealedly know the unknowing concealed under all the knows among all beings, and may see the supersubstantial darkness hidden away under all the light in beings.

## Chapter 3: What Are the Affirmative Theologies<sup>13</sup> and What Are the Negative Ones?

Now we told the most important points of affirmative theology in the *Theological Outlines*:<sup>14</sup> how the divine and good nature is called one, how triple; what Fatherhood and Sonship are in it; what the theology of the Spirit means to show; how, from the immaterial and undivided good, the lights at the heart of goodness were born and remained, not departing from the abiding that is coeternal with their shooting forth, in it and in themselves and in one another; how the supersubstantial Jesus took on substance<sup>15</sup> among the truths of human nature; and all the other things, made known in the Scriptures, that are told in the *Theological Outlines*. In *On the Divine Names*, on the other hand, [we told] how it is called good, how being, how life and wisdom and power, and all the other things in the intelligible theonymy.

In the *Symbolic Theology*,<sup>16</sup> [we told] what metaphors for the divine [are] taken from sensibles: what

13. theologies = θεολογίαι (*theologiai*), “statements about God.”

14. No longer extant, if indeed it ever really existed.

15. took on substance = οὐσίωται, “made to be.”

16. Also no longer extant (if it ever existed).

[are] the divine forms, what the divine shapes and parts and organs, what the divine places and ornaments, what the angers, what the pains and the wraths, what the drunkennesses and hangovers, what the oaths and what the curses, what the sleeps and what the wakings, and whatever other sacred-formed shapes belong to the symbolic sketching of God.

I think you have observed how the last are more extensive than the first. For the *Theological Outlines* and the explication of the divine names had to be briefer than the *Symbolic Theology*. For, to the extent that we raise our heads toward the uphill slope, general views of the intelligibles, just as even now, as we enter into the darkness above intellect, we shall find not brevity but total speechlessness and absence of thought. In the former [treatises], the reasoning was broadened to an extent proportional to the descent. But now, ascending from below to what lies above, it is contracted according to the measure of its ascent. And after the whole ascent it will be wholly speechless<sup>17</sup> and wholly united with the unutterable.

But after all, you say, why do we begin the divine separation with the last things, when we posit the divine positive features [beginning] from the very first ones? Because in positing that which is above every positive feature, we had to posit [beginning] from what is most akin to it, the subordinative affirmation.<sup>18</sup> But in separating what is above all separation, [we had to] separate [beginning] from the things more distant from it. Is it not more life and goodness than air and stone? And [is it not] more non-hungover and non-wrathful than it is not spoken of nor thought?

#### Chapter 4: That the Cause, by Superabundance, of Every Sensible Is None of the Sensibles.

We say, therefore, that the cause of all, being above all things, is neither insubstantial nor lifeless nor unrea-

soning nor mindless, nor is it a body. Neither does it have shape nor form nor quality nor quantity nor mass. Neither is it in a place nor is it seen nor does it have a sensible feel. Neither does it sense nor is it sensed. Neither does it have disorder and trouble, disturbed by material passions. Neither is it powerless, subject to sensible misfortunes. Neither is it in need of light. Neither is it, nor does it have, alteration or corruption or division or privation or flowing away, or anything else among sensibles.

#### Chapter 5: That the Cause, by Superabundance, of Every Intelligible Is None of the Intelligibles.

Ascending once more, we say it is neither soul nor mind. Neither does it have imagination nor opinion nor reasoning nor understanding. Neither is it reasoning nor understanding. Neither is it spoken of nor thought. Neither is it a number nor an arrangement, neither greatness nor smallness, neither equality nor inequality, neither similarity nor dissimilarity. Neither has it stood still nor is it moved. Neither is it at rest nor does it have power nor is it power, or light. Neither does it live nor is it life. Neither is it a substance nor eternity nor time. Neither is there intellectual contact with it. Neither is it knowledge nor truth nor dominion nor wisdom, neither one nor unity, neither divinity nor goodness. Neither is it Spirit, as we know it, nor Sonship nor Fatherhood, nor anything else of the non-beings nor any of the beings. Neither do beings know it as it is, nor does it know beings as they are beings. Neither is there any reasoning about it, nor a name nor knowledge. Neither is it darkness nor light nor error nor truth. Neither in general is there a positing nor a separating of it. Rather, we do positings and separatings for things [that come] after it; it we neither posit nor separate, since the all-perfect and unitary cause of all things is above every positive feature, and the superabundance of what is freed absolutely from all things and beyond all things is above all separation.

17. speechless = ἄφωνος, "soundless."

18. subordinative: See n. 10.

# John Scottus Eriugena, c.800–c.877

John Scottus Eriugena was a rather singular figure within medieval Christian thought. Possessed of an original philosophical gift and able to use the writings of the theologians of the Eastern Church (Gregory of Nazianz, Gregory of Nyssa, Pseudo-Dionysius, and Maximus the Confessor), he formulated a metaphysical system in which he sought to fuse Christian and neoplatonic teachings. His writings appear to have been read in his own time, and he had some influence on later thinkers, but there is a sense in which he was outside the mainstream of medieval Christian thought.

The interpretation of Eriugena's teachings is not an easy task. On the one hand, he cites scripture and the writings of the Greek and Latin Fathers and expresses himself in the language of orthodox Christian thought. On the other, many passages in his work have a pantheistic ring. Probably he was an orthodox Christian expressing himself in language theologically difficult at times, but it can be seen why he is sometimes considered a pantheist in Christian guise. His discussion of how faith and reason are related reflects a certain ambiguity of expression, if not of thought. Using an Augustinian notion, he affirms that belief must precede all understanding; but he interprets many scriptural passages as metaphors needing to be translated into philosophical terms, and he holds that when faith and reason conflict, the teachings of reason must prevail.

"Nature" is the fundamental concept of Eriugena's thought. Identifying nature with being or reality, he defines it as the totality of "those things which are and those which are not." This most general description of nature includes even God, though it does not seem to

follow that Eriugena considered God as a part of nature or that, for him, God and nature are identical.

Distinguishing between creating and created beings and using these terms and their negations in all possible combinations, Eriugena divides nature into four species. There is, first of all, nature which creates, but is not created. Then there is nature which is created and creates. Thereafter comes nature which is created, but does not create and, finally, there is nature which neither creates nor is created. Having made these logical distinctions, Eriugena proceeds to interpret them ontologically.

Nature which creates but is not created is identical with God, who is the uncaused cause who created all things out of nothing. Viewed in this manner God is the transcendent God described in scripture. But, at the same time, God is said to be the essence of all things, their beginning, middle and end, and a being appearing in all things. According to this description, God is immanent.

Though God's essence is unknowable in itself, man can attain a certain measure of knowledge about God. To describe what man can know of God, Eriugena makes use of the threefold theology of the Greek Fathers. According to this doctrine, God is described negatively by denying of Him all things which are, positively by affirming of Him all things which are, and superlatively by saying that attributes applied to Him and creatures exist in a superior manner in Him. The ten Aristotelian categories, Eriugena states (developing an Augustinian point), are inapplicable to God.

From God, who is uncreated but creates, proceeds that nature which is created and creates. Eriugena

identifies this nature with the causes, Ideas, predestinations, or prototypes of earlier thinkers (see page 3). The primordial causes are the exemplary causes of all things, and they were implanted by God, the Father, within the Divine Word, the Son. But since, in God, there is no making in time, Eriugena affirms, in language later criticized by theologians, that the primordial causes are coeternal with God, though, as he adds by way of modification, “not completely coeternal.”

From the primordial causes flows that nature which is created but does not create. This is the world of angels, men, and bodies. To describe the creation of the world, Eriugena uses a variety of metaphors, all analogies for emanation. For example, the world is said to come from God as water from a fountain. Then again, the world is said to be related to God as the radii of a circle to its center. In still another way, Eriugena describes creation as the self-manifestation or revelation of God (theophany). In line with this description, he affirms that God, in making the world, makes Himself. However, in somewhat more orthodox language, creation is said to result from the influence of the Holy Spirit on the primordial causes.

The fourth division of nature (that which neither creates nor is created) refers once again to God. But whereas in the earlier description God was considered as the source of all beings, He is now understood as the final goal to which all things return. Described as “deification,” this return does not bring about the obliteration of all distinctions between God and creatures. Though mutable matter will disappear, neither man nor the world will become identical with God. Once again using theological language, Eriugena describes man’s return as the redemption of fallen man by the Incarnate Logos.

John Scottus Eriugena was born in Ireland c.800 and was educated in a monastery there. Since, in the

ninth century, Greek was still taught in the Irish schools, Eriugena gained a knowledge of that language as part of his education. In the 840s he went to France, where Charles the Bald appointed him head of the palace school. Eriugena became involved in the controversy between Hincmar, the bishop of Rheims, and Gottschalk, a monk, concerning divine predestination. At the request of Hincmar, Eriugena wrote *Concerning Predestination (De praedestinatione)*, but the work did not find favor with either party to the dispute and it soon came under suspicion of heresy. Eriugena’s general position was condemned by councils of Valence (855) and Langres (859). It appears that he died c.877.

Besides composing independent works, Eriugena translated and commented on the writings of the theologians of the Eastern Church. He translated Gregory of Nyssa’s *On the Making of Man*, and works by Pseudo-Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor. His most important work was *On the Division of Nature (De divisione naturae)*, which contains the metaphysical system outlined above.

The following selections are all taken from the first book of *On the Division of Nature*. The first contains Eriugena’s definition of nature and the four species into which it is divided. But, since nature is the totality of those things which are and those which are not, there follows a description of five ways in which things are said to be and not to be.

In the second selection, Eriugena undertakes to clarify a patristic statement affirming that God not only creates but also is created in things. This passage not only provides a glimpse of his doctrine of creation but is an excellent illustration of his dialectical method. The final selection contains his account of the threefold manner in which Divine attributes are to be understood.

## 13. On the Division of Nature

### Book I

MAGISTER. "While considering, and, as diligently as [my] powers allow, inquiring into the first and highest division of all things, which can be perceived by the soul, or which surpass its reach, into those things which are, and those which are not, a general verbal designation of all these occurred to me, which in Greek is called *physis*, in Latin, *natura*. Or does it seem otherwise to you?"

DISCIPLE. No indeed, I agree; for even I, although I am [only] entering on the way of reasoning, find these to be so.

MAGISTER. Therefore nature is the general name, as we have said, of all things which are and which are not.

DISCIPLE. It is indeed; for nothing in the universe can occur to our thoughts which could lack such a designation.

MAGISTER. Since therefore we agree concerning the generality of this designation, I should like you to discourse on the principle [*ratio*] of its division through differentiae into species: or if it pleases you, I shall first attempt the dividing, but it will be your task to judge of the divisions.

DISCIPLE. Begin, I beg you, for I am impatient, wanting to hear from you the true principle [*ratio*] of these things.

1. MAGISTER. It seems to me that the division of nature receives four species through four differentiae: of which the first is into that which creates and is not created; second into that which is created and creates; third into that which is created and does not create; fourth into that which neither creates nor is created. Of these four there are two pairs of opposites; for the third division is opposed to the first, the fourth to the

second; but the fourth is placed with the impossible, whose differentia is not-being-able-to-be. Does such a division seem right to you or not?

DISCIPLE. Right indeed: but I should like you to go over it again so that the opposition of the aforesaid forms may shine forth more clearly.

MAGISTER. You see, unless I am mistaken, the opposition of the third species to the first. For the first creates and is not created; to which that which is created and does not create is opposed *ex contrario*. The second, moreover, to the fourth; inasmuch as the second is both created and creates, which the fourth, which neither creates nor is created, contradicts universally.

DISCIPLE. I see clearly. But the fourth species which has been adjoined by you disturbs me very much. For in no way should I dare to hesitate concerning the other three, since the first is understood, as I judge, in the cause of all those things, which are and which are not; but the second is understood in the primordial causes; the third is understood in those things of which we become aware in generation in times and places. And therefore it is necessary to argue each of them more subtly, as I see.

MAGISTER. You think rightly. But by what order of reasoning the course is to be held, that is, what species of nature should be discussed first, I commit to your judgment.

DISCIPLE. It seems right to me, to say of the first before the others whatever the light of minds has bestowed.

2. MAGISTER. So be it. But first I think that we ought to speak briefly of the highest and principal division of all things, as we have said, into those things which are and those which are not.

DISCIPLE. Rightly and prudently. For I see that reasoning should begin from no other starting point: not only because it is the first differentia of all things, but because it both seems to be and is more obscure than the others.

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MAGISTER. Consequently this primordial discrete [class producing] differentia of all things requires certain modes of interpretation.

3. The first of these modes seems to be that through which reason [*ratio*] induces us to say that all things which are susceptible to corporeal sense or to the perception of intelligence can reasonably be said to be; but those things, which through the excellence of their nature elude not only the material [*hylion*], that is, every sensitive power, but also the intellect and reason [*ratio*], seem rightly not to be. Which latter things are not rightly understood except in God alone, and in matter, and in the reasons [*rationes*] and essences of all things which are constituted by Him. And not without cause; for He who alone truly is, is the essence of all things, as Dionysius the Areopagite says: *The being, he says, of all things is superbeing Divinity*. Gregory the Theologian also with many reasons [*rationes*] confirms that no substance or essence, whether of a visible or invisible creature, can be comprehended as to what it is [*quid sit*] by the intellect or by reason [*ratio*]. For just as God himself in himself as beyond every creature is comprehended by no intellect, so also the *ousia* [essence] considered in the most secret recesses of the creature made by him and existing in him, is incomprehensible. For whatever in any creature is perceived by the corporeal sense or considered by the intellect is nothing else than a certain accident incomprehensible per se of each essence, as has been said. For the essence which is known through quality, quantity, form, matter, or a certain differentia, place or time, is not the what [*quid*], but the that [*quia*]. This therefore is the first and highest mode of the division of the things which are said to be and not to be; because the mode, which seems admissible in a certain way, [namely] the mode consisting in the privations of relations with respect to substances, such as sight and blindness with respect to the eyes, should not be admitted at all, as I judge. For I do not see how that which entirely is not, nor is able to be, nor surpasses the intellect because of the excellence of its existence, can be received into the divisions of things, unless by chance someone might say that absences and privations of things which are, are not entirely nothing, but that they are supported by a certain marvelous natural

power of those things of which they are the privations or absences or oppositions, so that in a certain way they are.

4. Therefore let the second mode of being and of not being be that which is considered in the orders and differentiae of the natures of creatures, which beginning from the most pre-eminent intellectual power placed closest to God descends as far as the extremity of the rational and irrational creature; that is, to speak more plainly, from the most sublime angel down to the extreme part of the rational and irrational soul, namely the nutritive and augmentative life. That general part of the soul which nourishes and augments the body is the lowest. Whence each order including the very last one looking downwards, which is [the order] of bodies, and in which the whole division is terminated, can in a marvelous manner of understanding be said to be and not to be. For affirmation of the inferior is a negation of the superior. And again negation of the inferior is an affirmation of the superior. And in the same way affirmation of the superior is a negation of the inferior. Negation indeed of the superior will be an affirmation of the inferior. The affirmation, certainly, of man, I mean insofar as mortal, is the negation of the angel. Negation indeed of man is an affirmation of the angel: and on the contrary. For if man is a rational animal, mortal and visible, an angel in fact is neither a rational animal, nor mortal, nor visible. Likewise if an angel is an essential intellectual motion regarding God and the causes of things, man in fact is not an essential intellectual motion regarding God and the causes of things. And the same law can be observed in all celestial essences, until the highest order of all things is reached; but the highest order is terminated in a supreme negation upward. For its negation asserts no creature superior to itself. Now there are three orders, which they call *homotageis* [of the same order], of which the first are Cherubim, Seraphim, and Thrones; the second Virtues, Powers, Dominations; the third Principles, Archangels, Angels. But downwards the lowest [order] of bodies only negates or affirms [what is] superior to itself, because it has nothing below itself to either deny or affirm, because it is preceded by all things superior to itself, but it precedes no thing inferior to itself. For this reason

[*ratio*] likewise every order of the rational and intellectual creature is said to be and not to be. For *it is* insofar as it is known by superiors or by itself, and *it is not*, insofar as it does not permit itself to be comprehended by inferiors.

5. The third mode is observed not unfittingly in those things by which the plenitude of this visible world is perfected, and in their preceding causes in the most secret recesses of nature. For whichever of these causes is formed matter is known through generation in times and places, is said to be, by a curious human habit [of speech]. But moreover whatever is contained in the very recesses of nature, and does not appear in formed matter either in place or time or in the other accidents, is said not to be by the same aforesaid habit [of speech]. Examples of this mode appear widely, and most of all in human nature. For since God has constituted all men simultaneously in that first and one man, whom he made to his image, but did not produce them at once in this visible world, rather at certain times and in certain places bringing the nature, which he had founded simultaneously, into visible being [*essentiam*], according to a certain series, as he himself knew it [from the beginning], these who already appear visibly in the world and have appeared are said to be; those who are latent thus far, but nevertheless are to be, are said not to be. There is this difference between the first and third mode. The first mode is generally in all things, which have been made simultaneously and once in causes and effects. The third specially in those things which are partly latent thus far in their causes, and partly apparent in their effects, out of which the fabric of this world is properly woven. To this mode pertains that reason [*ratio*] which considers the power of seeds, whether in animals, or in trees, or in herbs. For the power of seeds, at that time when it is quietly at rest in the secrets of nature, because it does not yet appear, is said not to be; but as soon as it has appeared in the birth and growth of animals or in the flowers or the fruits of trees and herbs, it is said to be.

6. The fourth mode is that mode which says according to the philosophers, [and] not improbably, that those things only truly are, which are comprehended

by the intellect alone; but things which through generation are varied, united, separated by additions or subtractions of matter, also by intervals of places and by motions of time, are truly said not to be, as are all bodies, which can come to be and can be corrupted.

7. The fifth mode is that which reason [*ratio*] observes in human nature alone. Which [human nature], when it has deserted by sinning the dignity of the divine image in which it properly subsists, has deservedly lost its being, and therefore it is said not to be. But when human nature, restored by the grace of the only begotten son of God, is led back to the pristine state of its substance, in which it has been made according to the image of God, it begins to be, and begins to live in him who was made according to the image of God. What the Apostle says seems to pertain to this mode; *And he calls those things that are not, as those that are*; that is, those who have been lost in the first man, and who have fallen to a certain insubstance, God the Father calls through faith in his Son, so that they may be, just as they who have already been born again in Christ. And yet this could be understood also of those persons whom God calls daily from the secret recesses of nature, where they are estimated not to be, that they may appear visibly in form, and in matter, and in other ways, in which hidden things can appear, and whatever a more searching mind [*ratio*] can find beyond these modes. But as I judge, enough has been said concerning these things for the present, unless it seems otherwise to you.

DISCIPLE. Enough indeed, unless what seems to be said by Saint Augustine in his Exameron should disturb me for a short time; that is, that *the angelic nature was made before every creature in dignity, not in time*; and through this also considered the primordial causes of everything except itself, that is, the angelic nature considered the principal exemplars, which the Greeks name *prōtotypa*, first in God, then in itself, then considered the creatures themselves in their effects. . . .

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11. MAGISTER. And so of the aforesaid divisions of Nature the first differentia seen by us is into that which



creates and is not created. Not unreasonably, because such a species of Nature is predicated rightly of God alone, who alone is understood as the *anarchos*, i.e., without a beginning, creating all things, because the principal cause of all things, which have been made from him and through him, alone is, and by this he is also the end of all things which are from him. For all things desire him. Therefore he is the beginning, middle and end: the beginning, because all things which participate [in] essence are from him; but the middle because they subsist and are moved in him and through him; the end, indeed, because they are moved to him seeking the quiet of their motion and the stability of their perfection.

DISCIPLE. I believe most firmly, and, insofar as it is given, I understand that this is predicated rightly only of the divine cause of all things, because it alone creates all things that are from it, and is created from nothing superior as though preceding it. For it itself is the highest and sole cause of all things, which subsist from it and in it.

12. Nevertheless I should like to know what your opinion is concerning this thing. For it disturbs me not a little that most often in the books of the holy Fathers, who attempted to argue about divine nature, I find that it not only creates all things that are, but also is created, inasmuch as they say it makes them and is made, and creates and is created. Therefore if this is so, I do not easily find how our reasoning could stand. For we say that it [divine nature] alone creates, but is created by nothing.

MAGISTER. You are disturbed with cause; for I both wonder much concerning this, and I should have wished to have known through you how these things which seem to be contrary, could fail to be opposed to each other, and how true reason [*ratio*] is to be consulted about this.

DISCIPLE. I pray, begin; for I am awaiting your opinion and your way of reasoning concerning such things, not mine.

MAGISTER. Accordingly, I judge that we should consider first, if it seems appropriate, concerning the name itself, which is most used in sacred Scripture, which is God. For although divine nature is denominated by many names, as it is Goodness, Being, Truth,

and others of this kind, nevertheless Scripture most frequently uses that divine name.

DISCIPLE. That is plainly seen.

MAGISTER. And thus the etymology of this name has been assumed from the Greeks. For it is derived either from the verb *theōrō*, that is, I see; or from the verb *theō*, that is, I run; or what is more probable it is said rightly to be derived from both, because one and the same meaning is present. For when *theos* [God] is deduced from the verb *theōrō*, he is interpreted as seeing. For he himself sees in himself all things which are, while he looks upon nothing outside himself, because there is nothing outside himself. But when from the verb *theō*, *theos* is rightly understood as running. For he himself runs in all things, and rests in no way, but fills all things by running; as it is written: *his speech runs swiftly*. Nevertheless he is moved in no way: inasmuch as restful motion and mobile rest are said most truly of God. For he rests incommutably in himself, never deserting his natural immobility. But he moves himself through all things, that they may be those things that subsist essentially from himself; for all things are made by his motion. And through this it is one and the same meaning in the two interpretations of his name, which is God. For to run through all things is not other to God than to see all things; but just as by seeing, and so also by running all things are made.

DISCIPLE. It has been persuaded sufficiently and probably concerning the etymology of the name. But I do not see sufficiently, whither he may move himself, who is everywhere, without whom nothing can be, and outside of whom nothing is extended; for he is the place and the limit of all things.

MAGISTER. I have said that God is moved not outside himself, but by himself, in himself, to himself. For no other motion ought to be believed [to be] in him, beyond the appetite of his will, by which he wills that all things be made; just as his rest is understood not as if it came to rest after motion, but as the incommutably proposed object of his same will, by which he defines the permanence of all thing in the incommutable stability of their ratios. For rest or motion is not properly said [to be] in him. For these two seem to be opposite to each other: but true reason [*ratio*] prohibits that opposites be thought or understood in him,

particularly since rest is properly the end of motion. But God does not begin to be moved in order to arrive at a certain state. Therefore these names, just as also many similar [names], are referred from the creature to the Creator through a certain divine metaphor. Nor unreasonably, since he is the cause of all things, which are in rest and in motion. For by him they begin to run, that they may be, since he is the principle of all things, and through him they are brought to him by a natural motion, that they may rest eternally and immutably in him, since he is the end and the quiet of all things. For they desire nothing beyond him. For in him they find the beginning and end of their motion. Therefore God is said [to be] running, not because he runs outside of himself, who always stands immutably in himself, who fills all things; but because he makes everything run from things non-existing into things existing.

DISCIPLE. Return to what was proposed [for investigation], for these things do not seem to be said unreasonably.

MAGISTER. Tell me, I beg you, what proposal do you seek? For when we attempt to say something about incidental questions, we most often forget the principal question.

DISCIPLE. Have we not proposed this, that we should investigate in proportion to our powers, by what reason [*ratio*] those who argue concerning the divine nature say that it both creates and is created? For that it creates all things, no one of intelligence assuredly doubts; but in what way it is said to be created has seemed to us not to be passed over perfunctorily.

MAGISTER. In fact so. But, as I judge, from these things which have been said before, not a slight entrance to the solving of this question has been opened. For it was deduced by us that nothing else is to be understood by the motion of the divine nature than the proposal of divine will to the founding of those things that are to be made. Divine nature, which is nothing else than divine will, therefore is said to be made in all things. For being and willing are not distinct in it, but one and the same willing and being [is] in establishing all things which were seen to be made. For example, if one said that the motion of the divine will is brought about for this, that those things that are, might be: therefore it creates all things, which it brings out

of nothing, that they may be in being from non-being; but it is created, because nothing besides itself is essentially; for it is the essence of all things. For just as there is no natural good besides itself, but everything which is said to be good, is good from participation of the one highest good: so everything which is said to exist, does not exist in itself, but exists truly by a participation of the existing nature [divine nature]. And not only as it has been considered in those things that have been said before is the divine nature said to be made, as well as in those who are reformed by faith, hope and charity and the other virtues, the Word of God is born in a marvelous and ineffable way, as the Apostle says speaking of Christ: *Who has been made in us wisdom from God, and justification, and redemption*; but also it is not unfittingly said to have been made, because it, which is invisible per se, appears in all the things that are. For our intellect too, before it arrived at thought and memory, is not unreasonably said to be; for it is invisible per se, and is known by no one except by God and by ourselves. But as soon as it has arrived at thought, and receives a form from certain phantasms, it is said not without cause to be made. For it [intellect], which was unformed before it arrived at memory, is made in memory, receiving certain forms of things, or of words, or of colours and of the other sensibles; then it receives as it were a second forming, when by certain signs of forms, or of words, that is, letters, which are signs of words, and figures, which are signs of forms, it is formed by the mathematical, or the other sensible indices, through which it can be insinuated to the senses of those experiencing [these signs]. By this similitude, although it is remote from the divine nature, nevertheless I judge that it can be persuaded, how it [divine nature], while it creates everything, and cannot be created by anything, is created in a marvelous way, in all things which are from it; so just as the intelligence of the mind, or the design, or counsel, or in whatever way this our innermost and first motion can be spoken of, when, as we have said, it has arrived at thought, and has received certain forms of phantasms, and then has proceeded in the sign of words, or in the indices of sensible motions, is not unfittingly said to be made; for it becomes formed in phantasms, which per se is without every sensible form: thus the divine essence, which subsisting per se

surpasses every intellect, is rightly said to be created in these things, which have been made from it and through it and in it and for it, that it may be known in them whether by the intellect, if they are intellectual only, or if they are sensitive by sense, by those, i.e. who investigate it [divine essence] by right study.<sup>1</sup>

DISCIPLE. Enough has been said about these things, as I judge.

13. . . . DISCIPLE. Already I see the response of the aforesaid Theologian entirely supported by the truth. For the name of the relation, whether in divine or in human nature, cannot be understood in substance or essence, as has been persuaded. Nevertheless I should like to know plainly and briefly through you, whether all the categories, since they are ten in number, can be predicated truly and properly of the one highest essence of divine goodness in three substances, and of the three substances in the same one essence.

MAGISTER. Concerning this difficulty, I do not know who can say briefly and plainly. For either one should be silent once and for all concerning a cause of this kind, and leave it to the simplicity of orthodox faith; for it surpasses every intellect, as it is written: *Who alone has immortality and inhabits inaccessible light*; or if anyone should have begun to argue about it, necessarily he will persuade in the likeness of truth in many ways and by many arguments, using the two principal parts of Theology, namely affirmative [*affirmativa*], which is called *katafatikē* by the Greeks, and negative [*abnegativa*], which is called *apofatikē* [deprivative]. Indeed one, *apofatikē* [the negative], denies that the divine essence or substance is something of those things which are, that is, which can be said or understood; but the other, *katafatikē* [affirmative], predicates of it all things which are, and therefore is said [to be] affirmative, not that it confirms something to be of those things which are, but it would persuade that all things that are from it can be predicated of it. For it can be reasonably signified causally through the things of which it is the cause. For it says that it is truth, goodness, essence, light, justice, sun, star, spirit, water,

lion, city, worm, and other innumerable things. And it not only teaches it [cause] from those things which are according to nature, but from those contrary to nature, when it says it is inebriated and is foolish and is insane. But concerning these things it is not our intention to treat now, for enough has been said concerning such things by holy Dionysius the Areopagite in symbolic Theology. And therefore we should return to that which has been sought by you. For you had sought whether all the categories are properly to be predicated of God or some of them.

DISCIPLE. Assuredly we should return. But first it is to be considered, as I judge, why the aforesaid most holy father and Theologian should have pronounced that the aforesaid names, I mean, essence, goodness, truth, justice, wisdom, and others of that kind, which seem to signify not only divine, but even most divine things, and nothing else than that very divine substance or essence, are to be taken metaphorically, that is, transferred from creature to creator. For we should not think that he said such things without a certain mystic and secret reason [*ratio*].

MAGISTER. You are very watchful; for I see that this also is not to be passed over inconsiderately. And I should like you to respond through answering this question, whether you understand anything as opposed to God or as co-understood with him. I mean by opposed either through privation, or through contrariety, or through relation, or through absence: but by co-understood, that is, understood eternally simultaneously with him, nevertheless not coessential with him.

DISCIPLE. I see clearly what you would like and through this I dare to say neither something opposed to him, nor [something] co-understood to him *heterousion* [diverse essences], that is, that which is of another essence than he is. For opposite things are always opposed to each other through a relation in such a way that they both begin to develop simultaneously and cease to be simultaneously, as long as they are of the same nature, as the simple to the double, subsesquialter to the sesquialter; either through negation, as [for example] it is, it is not; or through natural qualities; through absence, as light and darkness; or according to privation, as death and life; or through a contrary, as sanity and imbecility, speech and silence. But these

1. As the intellect is formed in the phantasms, so God is formed in the creation.

are attributed by right reason [*ratio*] to those things that are accessible to intellect and sense, and through this they are not in God. Certainly those things that differ from each other cannot be eternal. For if they were eternal, they would not differ from each other. For eternity is similar to itself, and is whole through everything; one, simple, and individual, it subsists in itself. And indeed it is the one principle and the one end of all things, differing in nothing from itself.

14. I do not know who would dare to affirm [that] that which is not coessential with him, is by the same reason [*ratio*] coeternal with God. For if this can be thought or found, it necessarily follows that there is not one principle of all things, but two distinct [ones] or many, widely different from each other—which true reason [*ratio*] is accustomed to reject without any hesitation. From one all things properly begin to be, but from two or many nothing [begins to be].

MAGISTER. You determine rightly, as I think. If therefore the aforesaid divine names refer to other names directly opposed to themselves, necessarily also the things that are properly signified by them are understood to possess contrarities opposite to each other, and through this they cannot properly be predicated of God, to whom nothing [is] opposed, or with whom nothing is observed differing coeternally in nature. For of the aforesaid names and of others similar to it, true reason can discover no one for which there cannot be discovered some other name differing from it either in some opposed division or in the same genus with it. And that which we know in names, it is necessary that we should know in those things that are signified by them. But although the divine significations, which are predicated of God in sacred Scripture transferred from the creature to the Creator—if indeed it is rightly said that anything can be predicated of God, which is to be considered in another place—are innumerable and by the smallness of our reasoning can neither be discovered nor simultaneously tied together, nevertheless a few divine designations should be proposed for the sake of example. God then is called essence, but properly he is not essence, to whom nothing is opposed; therefore he is *hyperousios*, that is, superessential. Likewise he is called goodness, but properly he is not goodness; for

evil is opposed to goodness; therefore *hyperagathos* [supergood], more than good, and *hyperagathotēs* [supergoodness], that is, more than goodness. He is said to be Deus, but he is not properly Deus; for blindness is opposed to vision, and not seeing to seeing; therefore *hypertheos* [superseeing], more than seeing, if *theos* is interpreted as he who sees. But if you should turn back to another origin of this name, so that you may understand *theon*, God, to be derived, not from the verb *theōrō*, I see, but from the verb *theō*, that is, I run, the same reasoning [*ratio*] is similarly against you. For not running is opposed to running, as slowness to quickness. Therefore he will be *hypertheos* [superrunning], that is, more than running, as it is written: *his speech runs swiftly*. For we understand this of God the Word, that he runs ineffably through all things that are, that they may be. We are obliged to understand in the same way concerning [the name] truth. For falsity is opposed to truth, and for this reason properly he is not truth; therefore he is *hyperalēthēs*, and *hyperalētheia*, more than true, and more than truth. The same reason [*ratio*] is to be observed in all divine names. For he is not properly called eternity, since temporality is opposed to eternity; therefore he is *hyperaiōnios*, and *hyperaiōnia*, more than eternal, and more than eternity. Of wisdom also the same reason [*ratio*] presents itself and therefore it is not to be judged to be predicated properly of God, since foolish and foolishness oppose wisdom and wise; hence he is rightly and truly said to be *hypersofos* [superwise], that is, more than wise, and *hypersofia* [superwisdom], more than wisdom. Similarly he is more than life, inasmuch as death is opposed to life. In the same way it is to be understood concerning light; for darkness stands against light. Thus far, as I judge, we have said enough concerning these things.

DISCIPLE. By all means it [is] to be allowed that enough has been said. For of those things [granted that] whatever ones are necessary to be brought forth for the sake of matters to be argued in the present affair, [nevertheless] what we have proposed for our discussion does not admit them at the present time. Therefore return, if you will, to the consideration of the tenfold number of categories.

MAGISTER. I admire the sharpness of your purpose, which has seemed very watchful thus far.

DISCIPLE. What evidence, I ask, do you have for saying that?

MAGISTER. Have we not said that the ineffable nature can be properly signified by no word, no name, that is, by any sensible sound, [and] by no thing signified? And you have granted this. For he is called essence, truth, wisdom and other things of this kind not properly but translatively; but he is called superessential, more than truth, more than wisdom, and similar things. But do not even these seem to be almost, as it were, certain proper names, if he is not properly called the essence, but properly superessential? Similarly if he is not named truth or wisdom properly, but is properly called more than truth, and more than wisdom? Therefore he is not without proper names; for these names, although they are not pronounced among Latins with a single accent dominating a single harmony of composition [single word] as is customary, with the exception of the name superessential, nevertheless [these words] are pronounced by the Greeks as a single composite word. For never or scarcely ever will you find that supergood [*superbonum*] or supereternal [*superaeternum*] and other similar words are pronounced as a single word.

DISCIPLE. And I myself greatly wonder whither I was tending, when I had completely omitted this important inquiry. And therefore I request it to be investigated thoroughly by you. For so long as divine substance is properly expressed in whatever way either by simple or composite parts of speech, or by phrases [breaking one word into many in translation], in Greek or Latin, it will not seem to be ineffable. For what can be said in a certain manner is not ineffable.

MAGISTER. Now you are vigilant, I see.

DISCIPLE. Indeed I am vigilant, but I see nothing thus far concerning this interposed question.

MAGISTER. Return therefore to those things that have been concluded between us a little before. For indeed, unless I am mistaken, we have said that there are two most sublime parts of Theology; and accepting this not from ourselves, but from the authority of S. Dionysius the Areopagite, who most plainly, as has been said, asserts that Theology has two parts, that is, *katafatikēn* [affirmative], and *apofatikēn* [deprivative or negative], which Cicero translates as *attraction* [*intentio*] and *repulsion* [*repulsionem*], but we, in or-

der that the force of the words be made more abundantly clear, have chosen to translate [them] by affirmation and negation.

DISCIPLE. I seem to recall these things, as I judge. But what would be useful to these things, which we wish to consider now, I do not yet recognize.

MAGISTER. Do you not see that these two, namely affirmation and negation, are opposed to each other?

DISCIPLE. I see enough, and I judge that nothing can be more contrary.

MAGISTER. Therefore direct [your thoughts] more diligently. For when you will have arrived at a sight of perfect reasoning, you will consider clearly enough that these two, which seem to be contrary to each other, are opposed to each other in no way when they refer to divine nature, but are consistent with each other through all things in all things. And in order that this become more plain we shall use a few examples. For example *katafatikē* [affirmative or positive Theology] says, he is truth; *apofatikē* [negative Theology] contradicts, he is not truth. This seems a certain form of contradiction; but when it is looked into more intently, no controversy is discovered. For [by] those things which it [affirmative Theology] says, saying that it [divine essence] is truth, it [affirmative Theology] does not affirm that divine substance is properly truth, but can be called by such a name through a metaphor from the creature to the Creator; it clothes divine essence with such designations although it is naked and untouched by every proper signification. But those things which it says, saying that it is not truth, rightly and clearly knowing the incomprehensible and ineffable divine nature, does not deny that it is, but that properly it is neither said to be, nor is, truth. For *apofatikē* [negative Theology] is unable to despoil the Divinity of all the significations, with which *katafatikē* [positive Theology] clothes it. For one [positive Theology] says that it is wisdom, thereby clothing it [divine essence]; the other says it is not wisdom, thereby unclothing the same thing. Therefore the one says it can be called this, but does not say it properly is this; the other says he is not this, although he can be called from this.

DISCIPLE. I see these things most plainly, unless I am mistaken, and those things which thus far seemed to me to be opposed to each other are now disclosed

more clearly than light to convene with each other, and to contradict each other in nothing, so long as they are considered concerning God. But how they may attain to the solution of the present question, I do not yet profess to know.

MAGISTER. Therefore attend more watchfully and show forth as much as you can to which part of Theology, whether affirmative or negative, those significations that have been added first—I mean superessential, more than truth, more than wisdom, and others similar—are to be applied.

DISCIPLE. I do not dare sufficiently to decide this by myself. For when I consider that the aforesaid significations are without a negative particle, which is *non*, I become afraid to join them to the negative part of Theology. But if I shall have joined the same [ones] to the affirmative part, I become aware that their meaning does not agree with me. For when it is said that it [divine essence] is superessential, nothing other is given to me to be understood than a negation of essence. For he who says that it is superessential, plainly denies that it is essential. And through this, although the negation does not appear in the pronouncement of the words, nevertheless its meaning is not concealed in secret from those considering well. Then, as I think, I am forced to acknowledge, that those aforesaid significations, which seem to lack a negation, convene more to the negative part of Theology, than to the affirmative, insofar as it is given to understand.

MAGISTER. I see you have responded most cautiously and watchfully, and I approve very much of the way in which you have seen into the meaning of the negative most subtly in the enunciation of the affirmative part. Therefore if it is pleasing, let the solution of this present question be made in this way, that all these things that are predicated of God by the addition of the particles *super* or *more than*, as [for example that] he is superessential, more than truth, more than wisdom and similar things, are most fully comprehended *in se* in the two aforesaid parts of Theology [taken together]; so that they may obtain the form of the affirmative in enunciation, but the power of the abdicative in meaning. And let us conclude with this brief example. He is essence, affirmation; he is not essence, abdication; he is superessential, simultaneously affirmation and abdication. For on the surface it is without negation; in meaning it has negative force. For he who says, He is superessential, does not say what He is, but what He is not; for he says that He is not essence, but more than essence. But what that is which is more than essence, he does not express, asserting that God is not anything of those [things] which are, but is more than those things which are: but what that being may be, he defines in no way.

DISCIPLE. We should not linger any longer on this question, as I think, and now, if it seems proper, let us consider the nature of the categories.