

PLATONIC MYTH AND THE BEGETTING OF THE DIVINE LOGOS IN EGIDIO OF VITERBO, O.E.S.A

Articulation of the dogmas of the Christian faith began in the context of Hellenistic Judaism. John's Gospel's description of Christianity's principal doctrine, that of God the Father's begetting of a divine Son, Jesus, God who was with God "in the beginning" is an elegant expression of the teaching that Jesus is not only the historical *Messiah* of Judaism but is also the preexistent *Logos* and eternally divine. The description is vague, however, from the standpoint of the philosophical tradition of discussions about change and will and necessity, ideas intimately connected with the act of generation or begetting. As Christianity moved deeper into the sphere of Hellenistic culture, Christian thinkers responded to that philosophical tradition to which Christianity was then linked. The philosophical legacy of discussions of change entered early into Christian theological writings. In the third century Origen of Alexandria observed in his treatise *On Prayer* that inanimate things are moved of necessity, that is, as the effect of an external cause, what the later tradition labeled *ex agente*. Animate things may move by their own nature *ex se* in response to external causes, rational beings are also moved by necessity and nature but also by their own will *per se*.¹ Origen is here in a defense of the efficacy of prayer employing distinctions about change in various beings that were first articulated in Plato's *Phaedrus* and which are later expressed in Aristotle and then by the Stoics, namely that change is a kind of motion that entails a cause, but the causes are different for different types of things. And we find in Carneades a discussion of the role of the free will as a cause of motion in human beings. Begetting is an act, a change, a *motus*. But how is one to understand the act of begetting in the eternal God? Is acknowledgement of God's begetting of an offspring an admission of mutability in God? Does God beget willingly? If not, was God then unwilling, or coerced, to beget the Son? But if God does will to act in begetting a divine son, then it may seem that a movement of God's will preceded the act of begetting.

Those questions are rooted in the controversy which brought the desire to gain consensus on the matter of divine generation to the forefront and which affected virtually every aspect of Christian thought and worship. Among all Christians there was a conviction that the Son

¹ *De oratione*, 6.1.

is begotten by the Father willingly, but to supporters of what was to become known as Arianism, the Father's willing generation of the Son implied that the Son did not exist before the Father willed to beget him. Classic stages of the controversy with Arianism produced the orthodox credal description of Christ as *monogenes* of the father *pro panton ton aionon*, as *fos ek fotos*, *theos alethinous ek theou alethinou*, and which confessed Christ as *homoousios* with the Father. Thus he is not, like the rest of creation, a product of the Father's will if the act of will is understood as preceding the act of begetting, or if the Father's will to beget the Son, or for that matter, the Son's will to be begotten, is seen as something added to the divine nature.

The elements of the catholic and orthodox solution are found in Athanasius in his dispute with Arianism. In his Third Oration against the Arians, for example, Athanasius describes the statement that the Son was begotten by the will of God as perilous, because the Arians make the phrase 'by the will of God' equivalent to an admission that 'at some point before which the Son did not exist.' Athanasius laid down the essence of the traditional counterargument, that it is proper to understand that the Son is begotten by the Father's will, but not a preceding will. Then to the related problem, "If not by will, then by necessity," Athanasius asks whether God was God by will or by necessity: "Who is it which imposes this necessity on Him? But if it be extravagant to speak of necessity in the case of God, and therefore it is by nature that he is good, much more is he, and more truly, Father of the Son by nature and not by will."² But while it is inappropriate to say, "of will He came to be," since that suggests "He might not have been," it is proper to say, the Father has good pleasure towards his Son," which indicates an accompanying will instead of a preceding or added will.³

By the early fourth century the Church had reached the enduring consensus of mainstream Christianity. The history of medieval Latin Scholastic, systematic theological discourse rests upon that legacy of questions about the relationship between Father as father and

² "Καὶ τίς ὁ τὴν ἀνάγκην ἐπιβαλὼν αὐτῷ; Εἰ δὲ ἄτοπόν ἐστι λέγειν ἐπὶ Θεοῦ ἀνάγκην, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο φύσει ἀγαθός ἐστιν· εἴη ἂν πολλῷ μᾶλλον καὶ ἀληθέστερον τοῦ Υἱοῦ φύσει καὶ οὐκ ἐκ βουλήσεως Πατὴρ" (*Orationes tres adversus Arianos*, PG 26.456).

³ "Καὶ γὰρ ἕτερόν ἐστι λέγειν, Βουλήσει γέγονεν, ἕτερον δὲ, ὅτι Ἰδιον ὄντα φύσει τὸν Υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἀγαπᾷ καὶ θέλει αὐτόν. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ λέγειν, Ἐκ βουλήσεως γέγονε, πρῶτον μὲν τὸ μὴ εἶναι ποτε τοῦτον σημαίνει· ἔπειτα δὲ, καὶ τὴν ἐπ' ἅμφω ροπήν ἔχει, καθάπερ εἴρηται· ὥστε δύνασθαι τινα νοεῖν, ὅτι ἡδύνατο καὶ μὴ βούλεσθαι τὸν Υἱόν" (ibid. PG 26.464).

Son as son and those efforts to answer in rational terms. Although the patristic testimony succeeded in laying the foundations of the Church's collective dogma, discrepancies real or apparent did exist among individual early Christian writers and sometimes within a single writer. Medieval synthesizers attempted to resolve them systematically. In the twelfth century, Peter Lombard's *Four Books of Sentences* set apparent contradictions in the patristic witness alongside each other and showed how they may be reconciled. His synthesis produced what was to be the principal university textbook in theology for more than six centuries. As early as the sixth distinction of Book One, Peter Lombard took up the question of whether the Father's begetting of the Son is by will, necessity, or nature.⁴ Peter had to include this question because while the established Nicene dogma affirmed Christ as God's only son according to essence and not as a product of the Father's will, many prominent early Christian writers, including Ignatius, Justin, Hippolytus, Clement, and Origen had written, and with proper understanding, about Christ as Son of God according to the will of God.⁵

The history of the articulation of this doctrine continued for centuries, especially since to prepare a commentary on the *Sentences* of the Lombard was the rite of passage to the teaching license in theology during the western Middle Ages and on into the eighteenth century. This study examines Egidio of Viterbo's *Sentences* commentary that was by 1510 virtually in the form in which we have it today.⁶ His

⁴ Peter Lombard, *Magistri Petri Lombardi Parisiensis Episcopi Sententiae in quatuor libris Distinctae*. 3rd ed. 3 vols. *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum* 4-5. Grottaferrata [Rome]. Vol. 1, part 2, 89-91.

⁵ Ignatius of Antioch speaks of Christ as "Son of God according to the will and power of God" (ὁ υἱὸν θεοῦ κατὰ θέλημα καὶ δύναμιν θεοῦ [*Epistolae genuinae* 6.1.1]). Justin Martyr uses a similar phrase, "God and Son according to His will" (κατὰ βουλὴν τὴν ἐκείνου καὶ θεὸν ὄντα, υἱὸν αὐτοῦ [Dial. Tryph. 127.4]). The *Contra Noetum*, attributed to Hippolytus of Rome contains, "You seek concerning the origin of the Logos, whom indeed God the Father willing, begot as he willed (περὶ δὲ Λόγου γένεσιν ζητεῖς, ὅνπερ βουλευθεὶς ὁ Θεὸς Πατὴρ ἐγέννησεν ὡς ἠθέλησεν [*contra heresin Noeti*. 16.4]). Origen writes "This Son surely was begotten of the will of the Father" (Οὗτος δὲ ὁ υἱὸς ἐκ θελήματος τοῦ πατρὸς ἐγενήθη [*Peri arch.* 4. 28, as cited by Justin Martyr *Ep. ad Menam*]).

⁶ On the specific issues leading up to the present question in Egidio see especially Daniel J. Nodds, "Scholasticism and New Philology: Egidio da Viterbo (1469-1532) on Divine Generation," *Traditio* 57 (2002): 317-340. On the *Commentarium ad mentem Platonis* and its author in general see John W. O'Malley, *Egidio of Viterbo on Church and Reform* (Leiden, 1968). For other topics in the *Commentarium* see D. Nodds, "A Hydra in the Gardens of Adonis: Literary Allusion and the Language of Humanism in Egidio of Viterbo (1469-1532)," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 57.2 (2004): 1-24; D. Nodds, "Homeric Allegory in Egidio of Viterbo's Reflections on the Human Soul," *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 65 (1998): 320-32; and

commentary, subtitled "*ad mentem Platonis*," bears witness to the influence of Renaissance humanism and the Platonic and Patristic revival on the standard Scholastic argumentation connected to this question.⁷ Peter Lombard had introduced the question on which we are focusing here, whether the Son is begotten by will, necessity, or nature, by immediately declaring that it is by nature. Peter quoted first from a letter of Orosius that simply states that the divine generation was neither by will nor by necessity, but by nature, "for there is no necessity in God; nor can the will precede [divine] wisdom."⁸ Peter then cites Augustine in Book 15 of *De Trinitate*, who tells the story of one astute man's catholic response to a shrewd attempt to trap him into the Arian position.⁹ When asked whether the Son was son by will or by necessity, the man asked in turn whether God was God by will or by necessity, his point being to show that just as God is God neither willingly nor unwillingly, but naturally, so too is his Logos the Son by nature.¹⁰

Peter did not let the matter rest there but tested the validity of other arguments in the tradition on this question. There is, for example, an argument that 'homogenizes' God's attributes: Since being and willing are one in God, if the Son is son according to essence, he is also son by will. Similarly, then, it might be said that, since in God being is the same as knowing, since God begets the son knowingly, he therefore begets him willingly. But Peter acknowledged that that argument is easy to refute: Just because God's knowledge and will are one and the same, whatever is said about his knowledge is not necessarily also said about his will, and vice versa. God does not will by his will all those things which he knows by his knowledge, since his knowledge knows both good and evil things but his will only wills the good. God has given the human and angelic will the prerogative to reject the divine will. Thus, although God's nature and will are one, yet it is said

D. Nodes, "Humanism in the Commentary *ad mentem Platonis* of Egidio of Viterbo," *Augustiniana* 45 (1995): 285-98. All citations from Egidio's commentary in this article are based on Vat. Lat. 6325. Corrections are based on readings of four other MSS (Rome, Biblioteca Angelica 636; Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale VIII F 8; Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale XIV H 71; Hamburg, Staats-und Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Philol. 308).

⁷ On Egidio's education see Francis X. Martin, "Egidio of Viterbo as Scripture Scholar," in *Egidio da Viterbo, O.S.A. e il suo tempo*, 191-221.

⁸ "De hoc Orosius ad Augustinum ita ait: 'Voluntate genuit Pater Filium, vel necessitate? Nec voluntate nec necessitate, quia necessitas in Deo non est; praeire voluntas sapientiam non potest'" (*Sententiarum Liber I, Dist. 6, Cap. 1.1*).

⁹ See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15.20 CCL 50A, 516.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Cap. 1.2.

that the Father begot the Son by nature, not by will, and that he is God by nature, not by will.

In his resolution Peter returns in true Scholastic method to the earlier objections that neither by necessity nor by will did the Father beget the Son, in order to show how this teaching is to be understood. Clearly there is a sense in which the Father does beget the Son according to his will, just as there is a sense in which he begets him according to his power, and goodness, and wisdom and qualities of this kind. The key to understanding is, as Athanasius had taught, not to understand ἐκ θελήσεως, *ex voluntate* as referring to a will that either precedes or causes the divine generation.¹¹

Many Schoolmen of the Middle Ages in their own *Sentences* commentaries were to follow that line of thought. Egidio of Viterbo's distinctive contribution of framing the discussion *ad mentem Platonis* bears witness to his situation in Italy at the height of the Platonic revival, even having a brief contact with Marsilio Ficino (1433-99), toward the end of Ficino's life. The formal pattern of his project is evident in his treatment of each theological question he treats. For distinction six he begins with a discussion of the problem in the abstract in the manner of the Scholastic method, but before concluding he draws from the Platonic dialogues, classical mythology, and even epic poetry to illustrate the truth of the dogma from the mystical philosophical tradition of *theologia poetica*.

Egidio begins his treatment of this question with a chapter acknowledging that it is possible to speak of divine generation as *ex voluntate* as well as *ex natura*, provided that the descriptive labels are properly understood.¹² His account of how the Father begets the Son *ex voluntate* begins with a variation of the weak argument regarding the equality of aspects of the divine being; but here willing and acting instead of willing and knowing are related: "Plainly God knows whatever he does, inasmuch as he who is without understanding does nothing; wherefore it follows that whatever [God the Father] does, he does by will. Now he begets the Son. It follows that he begets him by will."¹³ But then he gives an indication of his special contribution from

¹¹ "Nec voluntate praecedenti vel accedenti genuit Filium, nec prius volens quam generans genuit Filium" *ibid.*, 1.D6.c.1.4.

¹² Ch. 78 is titled, *Deus Filium gignit voluntate, modo quodam, alio non*. Vat. Lat. 6325, fol. 105r^a.

¹³ "Cognoscit plane Deus quaecumque agit, quippe qui absque intelligentia agit nihil; quare sequitur, ut voluntate agat quicquid agit. Atqui gignit, uti ostendimus, Filium. Sequitur ut eundem voluntate gignat" (78, fol. 105r^b).

the Platonic works. At first he simply cites the *Timaeus* in support of a standard argument in the Scholastic tradition.

Since, as the *Timaeus* bears witness, [God] is good, it is clear that he wills all good things. But since the generation of the Son is the best thing, not only will that seem to be what God wills, but what he most enthusiastically wills. Wherefore it happens that he seems to have begotten the Son by will.¹⁴

This is true despite what the Fathers also teach, "and my Augustine the chief of them," Egidio says, namely that [God] begets the divine offspring not by will, not by necessity, but by nature.¹⁵ Egidio then makes the necessary concession in pointing out the great difference between begetting by nature, which always tends toward one thing, and by will, if by that term we mean by art, which is capable of producing many different products. And here Egidio introduces examples of ancient artists: Phidias, as he was preparing to make a sculpture of Venus out of marble, pondered a thousand forms in his mind in which he could sculpt her. For he could form her nude, covered with a cloak, standing, seated, coming out of the sea from her loins up, or showing herself completely to Mars or Paris. Protogenes depicts snowy mount Ripheos and smouldering Mount Aetna. Apelles was able to paint a cypress tree or a laurel. And the Pythagorean myth of the choice of Hercules between two ways, pleasure and virtue, show what an act of will is. And those who heed this lesson, Egidio concludes, do not grunt like Ulysses's companion Elpenor, who was changed into a pig; "And so will is the cause of those things which can exist in one or another way; but nature [is the cause] of those things which so exist that they cannot be otherwise."¹⁶

So as a first article of his systematic resolution of the problem, Egidio notes the difference between will and nature as related to generation. He does this by using the traditional arguments, but now supplemented from the mythological and poetic traditions. From here it is a matter of affirming the key distinction between *voluntas praecedens* or *efficiens*, and *voluntas accedens*. God surely begets the Son

¹⁴ "Cum praeterea, Timeo teste [Tim. 30a], sit bonus, bona omnia velit perspicuum est, Filii vero generatio optima cum sit, non modo ea esse videbitur, quam Deus velit, sed quam vehementissime velit. Ex quo fit, ut voluntate prolem genuisse videatur" (78, fol. 105r^b).

¹⁵ "Verum sacrarum rerum vestigatores, atque eorum princeps Augustinus meus, non voluntate, non necessitate, sed natura gigni divinam prolem volunt" *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Eorum itaque voluntas est causa, quae alia atque alia ratione se habere possunt; eorum vero natura, quae ita sese habent, ut secus esse non possint" (78, fol. 105v^b).

willingly according to the latter sense but not the former. Thus, to conclude this section of his resolution, Egidio points out how firmly Plato accords with this proper understanding of divine generation: The principle that nature produces offspring of one's own kind and not as the product of a variable will is demonstrated in the *Cratylus*. Here he has in mind *Cratylus* 393b, where Socrates gives examples of each animal and plant producing offspring of its own kind. Socrates says even that he is not speaking about prodigies, but "of the natural offspring of each species after its kind."¹⁷ Similarly, the *Republic*, Egidio says, speaks of the father begetting an offspring as like as possible to himself, and here he has Book VI in mind, which speaks of the sun as "a child of goodness and a counterpart to its father, goodness."¹⁸ Egidio then makes his most assertive statement in defense of Platonic thought as supporting the Church's teaching against Arianism on this question, and in general. It is a tribute to his age that he marshalls such additional argumentation from the philosophical literature in the wake of the centuries of Patristic framing of the orthodox solution and Scholastic theological method reinforcing it, because as he says, his times demand philosophical reasoning:

And so the fathers of our council (*senatus*) can at last see how easily we refute alien [doctrines], also how effectively we confirm our own, if we receive not faithless dogmas but the philosophy of the most kindred [Platonic] Academy: not because there is need of philosophy for faith but because we have arrived at an age that our fastidious times consider to be old wives' tales whatever has not come forth from the halls of philosophy. Therefore we have undertaken this labor, if we have accomplished anything, in order that we might confirm by the authority of this most renowned philosopher and by our own, if the firmest adducing of proofs can be desired in any matter, he who approaches so closely to divine matters, so cherishes them, so goes on foot into the opinion, that no longer it seems that it must be said about Philo, "either Philo platonizes," but "either Plato christianizes or more truly mosaicizes."¹⁹

¹⁷ "οὐ τι λέγω ἐὰν ὥσπερ τέρας γένηται... ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἂν ἡ τοῦ γένους ἐκγονον τὴν φύσιν, τοῦτο λέγω" (Crt. 393b – c).

¹⁸ Cf. R. 508c: "φάναι με λέγειν τὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐκγονον, ὃν τὰγαθὸν ἐγέννησεν ἀνάλογον ἑαυτῷ."

¹⁹ "Atque ita videre tandem possunt nostri senatus patres, quam facile aliena confutemus, quam etiam efficaciter nostra confirmemus, si non impia dogmata, sed cognatissimae Academiae philosophiam recipiamus: non quod philosophia fidei opus sit, nihil enim est fide aut religione constantius, ut ante demonstravimus, sed quoniam eo ventum est aevi, ut delicata saecula aniles putent fabulas, quae de philosophiae penetralibus eruta non sint. Idcirco hunc laborem suscepimus, si quid modo effecimus, ut

Egidio thus concludes that the first two arguments he has presented defend the *voluntas* of the Father as accompanying and assenting to the begetting of the Son, and the last two arguments as destroying the idea of the *voluntas* as initiating and presiding over the work of Father's begetting of the Son.²⁰

To that foundation is connected a second problem, which Egidio takes up in his next chapter: If God is said in any way to beget by will (and it is right to think that he does), then this implies that God does not beget the Son of necessity; but that would suggest that the divine Trinity is a contingency. But to say that God begets the Son by necessity (and the tradition within which Egidio writes holds this) could imply that God is therefore compelled by some greater power to beget. The reconciliation of this question also has a history of argument rooted in the Patristic and Scholastic literature. It is referred to the pursuit of distinctions regarding the meaning of necessity: that which is eternal is necessary in the sense that it must always exist. Thomas Aquinas's own *Sentences* commentary exemplifies the late medieval line of reasoning that Egidio inherited.²¹

Thomas separates the necessary into what is absolute necessity (*necessarium absolute*) and conditional necessity (*necessarium ex conditione*). Then he further divides conditional necessity into the conditional according to the end (*ex conditione finis*) and according to the agent (*ex conditione agentis*). Finally, he divides the conditional according to the end into an end that pertains to the subject's existence (*ad esse*) or to its well being (*ad bene esse*). Among these distinctions of necessity, only absolute necessity pertains to the Father's begetting of the Son. But even here, as Thomas argues, absolute necessity is for creatures that which is either materially or formally necessary for them to be what they are essentially, as it is necessary for man to die, or to be rational; but those absolute necessities depend on an external cause, namely God, man's maker. In God, however, who is simple being, absolute necessity is the divine essence itself. That is to say that God "must be" depends on no external cause.

huius opinatissimi philosophi auctoritate et nostra confirmaremus, si qua firmissima in re confirmatio desiderari potest, qui quidem adeo divinis propius accedit, adeo favet, adeo it pedibus in sententiam, ut iam non de Philone dicendum videatur, "aut Philo platonissat," sed, "aut Plato christissat, aut verius mossisat." (78, fol. 106^b). For the quotation cf. Erasmus, *Adage* 2.7.71.

²⁰ "Duae superiores rationes voluntatem assistentem et comitem defendunt, sequentes explodunt, ut initium et ut geniturae muneri praesidentem" (78, *ibid.*).

²¹ For Thomas' handling of this see *Sancti Thomae de Aquino Scriptum super Sententiis*, lib. I, D. 6, Q. 1, art. 1-3.

Certainly, then, any conditional necessity does not pertain to God. Agent necessity, for example, as to say that a man must run because he is threatened by another man holding a knife, is improper, since such an action is not necessary unless there is someone compelling it. Final necessity *ad esse*, as to say that food is necessary to live, or final necessity *ad bene esse*, as to say that a boat is necessary for navigating the seas, is related to some external impulse. Thomas therefore reasons that divine generation is only properly characterized as an absolute necessity of the first cause.

Egidio of Viterbo's treatment of the proper understanding of necessity in divine generation assumes that traditional line of abstract reasoning.²² True to his project, however, he brings witnesses from the Platonic dialogues, Hellenic myth, and poetry in support of the arguments. One of his favorite observations is that while we learn in the *Cratylus* that those who gave names to things were highly skilled, yet "many things whose nature is different are designated by the same name."²³ This surely holds true for the word 'necessity.' Egidio points out that regarding necessity itself, Horace speaks of dread necessity, 'dira necessitas,' which men fear exceedingly.²⁴ For Egidio, necessity is linked to causality: there are as many necessities as there are causes. And as there are three causes, there are three necessities. First, there is the uncaused cause. Secondly, there are internal causes: material (man must

²² "Quod si voluntate genitam divinam dicimus prolem, cum penes voluntatem sit libertatis arbitrium, ut possit tam volens agere, quam nolens non agere. Quae autem hoc pacto aguntur, nulla necessitate agi solent; quam ob rem Deus non necessitate genuisse credi fortasse poterit. Deinceps a potentiori fortiorique vi compellitur, quicquid ad agendum necessitate compellitur, quem ad modum errantes stellae a primo orbe quotidiana conversione occiduas oras versus rapiuntur, cum ipsae in diversas ferri plagas ament. Obeunt quin etiam animantes vitam, quam mallent immortalem atque perpetuam, quod quidem haud alia contingit ratione, nisi quod maior vis inferiorem superat. At si Deo maius potentiusque nihil umquam est, non est, cur quicquam necessitate agere credatur. Verum enimvero quaecumque aeterna sunt, nulla ratio est, ut umquam non esse possint. Quae autem fieri non potest, ut non sint, nec ut non essent fieri umquam potuit, ea necessaria propria appellatione nuncupantur. At Deus Optimus Maximus, ut ipse aeternus est, et sua omnia quapropter tam ipse, quam sua omnia necessaria sunt. Et quoniam, uti saepissime diximus, prolem genuit, non nisi necessitate illam genuit.

Nam quae ita a Deo profecta sunt, ut etiam non proficisci potuerint, ea omnia posteaquam non erant, ex nihilo facta sunt. Divina soboles, neque umquam non fuit, neque ex nihilo prodiit, neque etiam facta est, quippe quam novimus et fuisse semper et ex paterna substantia non factam fuisse, sed genitam. Quare parentem divinum quemadmodum genuisse, ita necessitate genuisse sentiendum est" (79, fol. 106^b - v^b).

²³ "Quoniam tamen plerumque usu venit, ut eodem nomine multa significantur, quorum quidem diversa ratio sit" (79, fol. 106^v).

²⁴ Horace, *Odes* 3.24.6.

eventually die) and formal (of necessity man partakes of reason). Thirdly, there are external causes: agent and final. Aristotle had said that internal causes are simple whether they are initiated or not, and external causes are not simple but depend on what is received from outside, and they are weak because they may be absent or resisted.

Egidio reverses the order when illustrating the types of causes with examples drawn from poetry and myth so that he can dispense with all but that necessity which pertains to divine generation. He does seem to allude to the example Thomas had given, but only to point out that all cases of external necessity are weak necessities after all, "for one does not have to go on a ship at all or obey pirates, unless indeed the former from a final cause, if we should wish to cross the seas, and the latter from the efficient cause, if we fall into the pirates' hands."²⁵ But then Egidio illustrates external, agent necessity by drawing examples of the need to die from epic figures Patroclus killed by Hector, Hector by Achilles, and Achilles by Paris; and to illustrate external final necessity Egidio notes that there are thousands of Christian martyrs who did not resist the need to die for their faith at the hands of another. In addition, final necessity also elicits from Egidio the example of Eros from the *Symposium*, because love, seeking its end, is in that work called poor and needy (*pauper atque indigus*). Egidio's references to the epic heroes dying in combat and Christian martyrs dying from passive resistance and Eros's neediness, rather than merely dressing the argument with literary allusions, exemplify the abstract concepts of agent and final necessity more vividly and more cogently than the Scholastics' more generic examples.

Egidio then illustrates simple, internal causality under the familiar distinction between formal and material necessity; and so he observes that although an external necessity, say, that urges our death, may spare our lives, the internal one, our essential mortality, does not spare us. Thus, he says, the mythology alludes to these abstract concepts connected to necessity in the names of the three *Parcae*. Egidio knows the derivation of the three mythological Fates or *Moirai* or *Parcae*, derived from 'parcere, 'to spare,' and that the three are euphemistically called 'the sparing ones.' He knew of the presence of the three *Parcae* in the Myth of Er in Book 10 of the *Republic*. He also knew of the allegorization of Necessity surrounded by the three fates in their identities as Atropos, Lachesis, and Clotho from Marsilio

²⁵ "neque piratis parere necesse omnino est, nisi illud quidem ex fine, si maria transmittere velimus, hoc vero ex efficiente, si in eorum manus incidamus" (79, fol. 107r^b).

Ficino.²⁶ But despite the affinity Marsilio Ficino had with the Scholastic tradition, Egidio is the one who applies this mode of interpretation to the technical world of Scholastic theology on this specific question of divine generation within the *Sentences*-commentary genre.²⁷ He firmly declares that this necessity *simpliciter*, namely the internal, stronger kind of material and formal necessity is not sufficient to describe the necessity of God's generation of the Son, since when it comes to finite creatures, that necessity is contingent on the existence of the object it is compelling. That means for creatures, which have a beginning and an end, their necessity to be will have a similar beginning and end. So it is the third type of necessity (in Egidio's reversed ordering for discussion) alone that is attributed to God. For divine necessity is both internal and eternal.

The Father who begets the Son has neither an efficient nor a final cause (externals), nor a limited material nor a formal cause (internals) upon which the begetting depends. God is 'immobile' in that he is moved neither by external nor by changeable internal impulses, and his immobile condition is eternal. Egidio says that that quality is expressed poetically by Homer, and he cites a line from the *Odyssey* in Latin as, "Non enim vertitur mens semper existentium deorum," The mind of the gods who exist eternally is not turned," where is expressed both the immobility of the divine mind and also the eternity of that immobility.²⁸ The text in Homer reads, "the mind of the eternal gods is not easily turned," but it will be seen that Egidio had good reason, both in terms of his application and a subsequent etymology, to alter that verse. For in what follows he makes his most creative

²⁶ See, for example, Marsilio Ficino, *De immortalitate animorum*, book 17, ch. 3: "Necessitas enim anima mundi ideo dicitur, quoniam fatali eius virtute ducitur universum. Inter genua, inquam, id est, per virtutem eius inferiorem volvendis sphaeris accommodatam. Siquidem mente rationeque divinis incumbit, etsi inferior virtus universalis est una, tamen quasi triplex cognominatur. Lachesis, id est sortitia, quia sortes singulas inserit. Clotho, id est, revolutrix, quia involutas a principio sortes unicuique suas certis ordinibus temporibusque evoluit. Atropos, id est inconvertibilis, quia in sortibus evolvendis immutabili ratione procedit. Ad has omnes deas Plato asserit ire animam ad inferiora vergentem, eo videlicet ordine, ut postquam et sortibus in eam Lachesis incidentibus naturaliter elementalem concupiverit vitam, et propositis multiplicibus vitarum exemplis, pro arbitrio certam vitam, eiusque ducem elegerit daemone, tunc Lachesis electionem confirmat. Inde ab eodem daemone ad Clotho, et Atropon necessitatemque ducatur" (*Opera Omnia*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 [Basil, 1576; repr. Turin, 1959, 1962], 422).

²⁷ For Ficino's connection with Scholasticism and the Augustinians, the order to which Egidio himself belonged, see P.O. Kristeller, "The Scholastic Background of Marsilio Ficino," *Traditio* 2 (1944): 272 n. 84.

²⁸ "οὐ γὰρ τ' αἴψα θεῶν τρέπεται νόος αἰὲν ἔόντων" (Od. 3.147).

attempt to support the argument from mythology by associating the names of the three individual Parcae to the three types causes and necessities.

Egidio has said, as mentioned above, that Antiquity surrounded the three causalities, and thus the three kinds of necessity, with a veil of the myth of the three Fates. We now can see what they mean. Thus the Parca Atropos is the uncaused cause and absolute necessity. Egidio says that this name was given to the ancients to that fate that is unchanged, "and it is the one to whom especially this name Atropos both squares and agrees."²⁹ Similarly in the mythology Lachesis, 'the apportioner,' who determines how much time is allotted to each person, is here external necessity, that is, the poetic symbol for the *ex agente* and *ex fine* necessity of the Scholastics:

They made Lachesis the external cause of agent and end, and indeed her necessity does not force anything *simpliciter*, except that it wants to appoint the end or has affected a moving cause; therefore this first Parca, from 'apportioning,' has been allotted the name Lachesis.³⁰

Lastly, internal, that is, material and formal necessity is symbolized by Clotho in the mythology. She is 'the spinner,' who spins the thread of life. For Egidio, her name, derived from spinning, turning, changing, reflects her changeability into every likeness and species. Such is the causality and necessity that acts on matter:

The second necessity of material sustaining a form, which like Egyptian Proteus, is turned into every likeness (*species*) and form, and is called Clotho from spinning, and she has a conjoined form because it clings to a changeable thing. Therefore even now she changes into becoming, now into ending.³¹

Egidio says those names are the best kind of names, for according to the *Cratylus*, the best names signify natures or the functions of natures of things. Egidio thus summarizes the question at hand: The Father begets of eternal necessity; the Son is begotten of eternal neces-

²⁹ "Ipse idem est, cui maxime hoc nomen Atropos et quadrat et convenit" (79, fol. 108^r). This is a play on the language of R. 527a: "τετραγωνίζειν τε καὶ παράτειναι."

³⁰ "Lachesim externam fecerunt agentis ac finis, cuius quidem necessitas non simpliciter quicquam cogit, nisi id sortiri vel finem voluerit vel causam moventem contigerit; ideo Lachesis nomen prima haec Parca a sortiendi sortita est" (79, fol. 108^r).

³¹ "Altera necessitas materiae formam sustinentis, quae veluti Aegyptius Proteus, in omnem speciem formamque convertitur, atque ideo a volvendo Clotho dicta est, cui coniuncta forma quia vertibili haeret rei, idcirco etiam ipsa nunc in ortum nunc in occasum vertitur" (79, fol. 108^r).

sity. There is no Clotho or Lachesis connected with divine necessity; Atropos is the condition of his begetting a son.

This application of the myth of the Parcae, like the other applications of classical poetry and philosophy brought to bear on the sixth Distinction of Book One helps explain in what sense the Son's generation is *ex voluntate*, and in another sense, *ex natura*. The discussion reveals a theologian trained in the Scholastic manner, but one constructively influenced by Renaissance humanism and the Platonic and patristic revivals, for whom myth and poetry, beyond syllogistic reasoning, are vehicles to divine knowledge.

Daniel J. NODES
Ave Maria University
Florida