# The Metaphysics of Primary Plurality
# in Achard of Saint Victor

**Pascal Massie**
**Miami University**

*The conditions for an investigation of Achard of Saint Victor (who died in 1171) have only recently become available. Now the discovery of a very significant turn in the history of twelfth-century thought is open to examination. The author focuses on Achard's claim concerning an ontologically primary plurality. In the very title of Achard's main treatise, De unitate Dei et pluralitate creaturarum, it is the word 'et' that joins together unity and plurality, expressing the core of Achard's ontological insight, whereby a plurality is said to be true if it is grounded in absolute unity. That is to say, this plurality is not derived from unity (as would be assumed in an emanative account of plurality) but rather "coheres" with unity. Unity, likeness, and equality are the three terms that dialectically constitute the primary plurality. In this sense, true plurality is plurality without difference, without alterity and is thus convertible with identity. The essay examines (a) Achard's doctrine of true plurality as multiple unity, (b) its application to the question of the Trinity and (c) its application to the question of the plurality of creatures and the nature of individuation.*

Perusing through anthologies or histories of medieval philosophy, one can notice that the School of Saint Victor is only briefly (if at all) mentioned and that when it is mentioned, mostly Richard and Hughes are named, leaving Achard in complete obscurity.[1] Achard (who died in 1171) has remained an unknown for more than eight centuries. Yet, things are changing. Starting with the pioneering work of Jean Châtillon who first identified the author of the *De unitate Dei et pluralitate creaturarum* in the mid nineteen-sixties, the edition of Achard's *tractatus* by Emmanuel Martineau in 1986, and the publication of Mohammad Ilkhani's *La philosophie de la création chez Achard de Saint-Victor* (1999), we now can read Hugh Feiss' English translation of Achard's work (2001).[2] At last the material conditions for an investigation of Achard's thought have become readily available; with them, the investigation of a significant turn in the history of Western thought is open.

Achard's *On the Unity of God and Plurality of Creatures* is divided into two treatises, the first of which (fifty chapters) is primarily concerned with identifying a "true plurality" which is not substantial and is compatible with true unity. The second treatise (twenty-one chapters)

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[1] For instance, Frederic Copelston's still influential *History of Philosophy* vol. II, pp. 175–182 (New York, Doubleday, 1993 reprint). More specialized works such as *A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy*, Peter Dronke, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P. 1988) acknowledge the importance of the school of Saint Victor but ignore Achard. Even *L'abbaye parisienne de Saint-Victor au Moyen Age* Jean Longère ed. (Paris: Brepols, 1991) mentions Achard only in passing.

[2] Jean Châtillon, *Théologie, spiritualité et métaphysique dans l'œuvre oratoire d'Achard de Saint Victor, Etudes doctrinales précédées d'un essai sur la vie et l'œuvre d'Achard* (Paris: Vrin, 1969). *Magistri Acardi Abbatis S. Victoris Parisiensis, De unitate Dei et pluralitate creaturarum*, ed. Emmanuel Martineau (St. Lambert des Bois: Editions du Franc Dire, 1987). Mohammad Ilkhani, *La philosophie de la création chez Achard de Saint Victor* (Bruxelles: Ousia, 1999). *Achard of Saint Victor, Works*, Translated by Hugh Feiss (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2001).

attempts to derive the plurality of creatures from the plurality of reasons and truths in God. Yet, as Martineau (following Jean Ribaillier) argues,[3] the treatise reveals further articulations. In the very title of Achard's treatise, *De unitate Dei et pluralitate creaturarum*, it is the conjunction '*et*' between unity *and* plurality that reveals the core of Achard's concern. How can unity and plurality, divinity and creatural multiplicity be related when it seems that each term repels the other? Achard's thesis is that absolute oneness allows multiplicity within itself. We can proceed from the unity of God to the plurality of creatures if we can show that divine unity admits a primary plurality. If it is so, the multiplicity of creatures is not just an external outcome of God's creation; rather, diversity and difference has its source within the divine unity, insofar as this unity does not contradict plurality but rather contains it. The opposition between 'unity *and* plurality' cannot be resolved by simply opposing a unity 'There' to a plurality 'Here,' but suggests that the unity 'There' already contains within itself plurality.

The question addressed by the *De unitate* belongs to a long and complex tradition. In large part inherited from Boethius, the inquiry concerning the ontological status of unity and plurality was a chief concern of 12th century thought. Implicitly or explicitly, it was at the heart of debates concerning the status of universals and the principle of individuation. It never was a matter of *purely* logical concerns devoid of ontological and theological weight. In particular, Achard cannot separate the question of unity and plurality from the problem of the Trinity. Yet, nowhere does he attempt to indicate whether his speculation has left the realm of natural reason to enter the level of faith. Achard never reflects on the place of his own thinking within the divisions of the arts. What he taught was probably in his mind (and his students' minds) an indissociable philosophical theology and theological philosophy.[4]

Yet, it is significant that the discussion of the Trinity begins only with chapter 12 of the first treatise and ends with chapter 36. That is to say, the properly theological problem of the Trinity occupies only 1/6th of the whole *De unitate* and occurs only *after* the metaphysical discussion of true plurality. In other words, it is *this* discussion that leads into the inquiry concerning the Trinity and the ontic plurality of creatures and not the other way around. No doubt, the claim of a true plurality compatible with complete unity aims at resolving the doctrine of the Trinity as well as the difficulties raised by the notion of creation *ex nihilo*. Yet, the *De unitate* is neither another *De Trinitate*, nor a treatise on creation.[5] This is not to say that these questions do not drive Achard but that the solution he is suggesting must be sought at the heart of the ontological question of unity and multiplicity.

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[3] Martineau (*op. cit.*) Preface, pp. 52–53. See below, note 14.

[4] It is well known that the question of the difference between philosophy and theology is an enduring concern throughout the Middle Ages and that by the twelfth century a precise demarcation line was still not well established or universally received.

[5] This, in my view, constitutes the main limitation of John Bligh (to my knowledge, one of the first English speaking commentators who mentions and quotes Achard). Bligh argues that Achard is a plausible source of Richard's trinitarian doctrine (on this, I think he is right), but Bligh does not seem to realize the fundamental difference between a typical medieval *De Trinitate* treatise and Achard's metaphysical project. John Bligh, "Richard of St Victor's *De Trinitate*: Augustinian or Abelardian?" *Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 1, AP 60, pp. 118–139.

Like other thinkers of his time, Achard finds himself at the crossroad of two traditions that have made use of each other's concepts: Neoplatonism and Christianity.[6] This confluence occurred long before Achard in the work of Pseudo-Dionysius and its reception by Eriugena. A core tenet of Neoplatonism is that unity (oneness) constitutes the ground and origin of the differentiated many. Plotinus and Proclus (despite their divergent accounts of emanation) conceived the unity of the One under the form of the '*autark*' abiding within itself and originating reality as a whole. As Plotinus puts it, the one is "before the some-thing."[7] As such, it is the absolute beyond. In itself, the One excludes the many and rejects disparity. The One is not even some thing; it remains free, unconfused, alone, in and by itself. The emphasis is on absolute difference and transcendence. This leads to many difficulties: how can a relationless One transmit itself to the subsequent multifarious beings? How can the One abandon its own excellence and fall into relationality, difference, contingency and mortality while still remaining itself? To paraphrase Werner Beierwaltes: the negation of being, form, something, relation, and thought cannot be conceived as mere emptiness but rather signifies the fullness of the One identical with the Good.[8] Christian theology was also involved in a similar quest, albeit from the standpoint of the relationship between unity and Trinity. Tri-unity names as a mystery similar to the Incarnation. As such, the incomprehensibility of tri-unity shall not be made transparent and fully comprehensible. Yet, the attempt to work out a conceptual representation of the mystery was deemed worthwhile so that faith in the Trinity could be made intelligible and communicable, at least up to a point.[9] But the core difficulty is that in the tri-unity both plurality and unity must co-exist. This is one of the questions twelfth-century thinkers were particularly interested in resolving.

In this respect, Achard's aim is to establish the Trinity as true plurality, and this is done through philosophical rather than dogmatic arguments. "Now, it remains to inquire whether, with the help of grace, one can grasp by reason what we hold by faith, and what is to be held without doubting even if no reason can comprehend it to be thus: namely that a personal plurality exists in God" (I, 12 386).[10] To recall briefly the problem: If there is a Trinity, does this mean that there is difference and multiplicity in God? Should one answer yes, does this not contradict the doctrine of the unity of the divine substance? Further, is this plurality accidental or personal? If personal, is it modal (*de modo*)? To understand this question, one must remember that 'mode' (*modus*) indicates a *way*, a *manner* of being. The same being may have different *manners* of being. If the answer is again affirmative (i.e., if one says that personal differences in the tri-unity are a matter of modality), what then is the ontological status of these 'modes'? Should we answer that it is grounded in a difference of *properties*, we would then have to define the sense of a property in God and show how a property can determine a person. If, on the other hand, one claims that there are no distinctions in God, how can we talk of persons? Should the Trinity be

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[6] See Werner Beierwaltes, "Unity and Trinity in East and West" in *John Scottus Eriugena, East and West*, Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten eds. (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1994) pp. 209–231.
[7] Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 3, 12, 52.
[8] Beierwaltes, *op. cit*. p. 212.
[9] Beierwaltes, *op. cit*. p. 209.
[10] Hereafter, references to the *De unitate* are to the treatise, chapter and page in Feiss' translation.

construed as difference from the creatural standpoint? But in such a case, it would not be a *true* plurality. Each horn of the dilemma sends us back into further difficulties, throwing us into an abysmal labyrinth.

Now, Achard not only offers a series of specific answers to these questions but, by distinguishing three kinds of plurality—of persons, of properties, and of eternal reasons[11]—that apply uniquely to the divine substance, he attempts to derive the plurality of created entities from the primary true plurality in God by construing the former as an 'imitation' or 'image' of the latter. Thus, the problem concerns not only the theological doctrine of the Trinity but also the plurality of created entities in relation to the divine plurality. If the difference among creatures cannot come from themselves, there must be in God an immutable prototype or series of archetypes to which this plurality can be referred. The unity and plurality of creatures exist inasmuch as they liken the plurality and unity in God.

How does Achard get there and what are the implications of his unusual thesis? This essay is primarily concerned with establishing the daring originality of a metaphysician whose highly speculative and dialectical skills challenge our perception of the Twelfth-century in general and the School of Saint Victor in particular. More specifically, it is the central claim of Achard's metaphysics concerning an ontological *primary plurality* (with its subsequent application to the Trinitarian debate and the plurality of reasons and causes of creatures) that shall constitute our focus. We shall first clarify what Achard means by 'true plurality' then show how his dialectical solution applies to the Trinity and the plurality of creatures.

## I. True Plurality

How can Achard maintain unity and plurality in God? Shouldn't absolute unity exclude difference? The affirmation of a true plurality in God is an audacious move that did not agree with twelfth-century orthodoxy, when the most common tendency was to insist on the *unity* and *simplicity* of God. If we talk of a plurality in God, do we not risk denying his unity and, by doing so, are we not committed to some form of polytheism? This is certainly not what Achard wishes to assert. He must then construct a sense of plurality that is neither substantial (there are not three gods; there is only one) nor modal (this plurality is not a modal variation of one single being). A 'person' must neither be a separate substance nor a mode of a substance.

Plurality is said in many ways. Among the plurality of pluralities, the Trinity receives preeminence since it constitutes the paradigm and ground of other pluralities (that of eternal reasons and of created entities). In order to demonstrate the originality of Achard's thinking, we shall briefly compare his solution to Augustine and Boethius' which, in the twelfth century, constitute the main sources of theological and philosophical speculation on this issue.

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[11] Eternal reasons are more commonly known as a 'divine idea.' These reasons provide a ground, an archetype for all that exist in this world. But the expression "eternal reasons" already suggests that for Achard (as we will see later in Part III), the oneness of an individual creature does not exclude its being many.

Achard understands plurality as multiple unity (*multiplicata unitas*). Wherever there is plurality a unit is multiplied; hence the magnitude of a plurality depends on how many times the unity is multiplied. "Plurality is nothing else than multiplied unity, or as many unities as are needed to equal the plurality" (I, 1, 379). Yet, this definition accepts different meanings depending on whether it occurs Here (among creatures) or There (in God). True plurality (There) is the repetition of *true* unity; it is the unity *of* plurality. In this sense, true plurality constitutes the unity of the unities that exists There and the model of its image Here. Each plurality must hold a common term that constitutes the unity of the entities that belong to this plurality. 'Humanity,' for instance, designates both the plurality of human beings and the unity of this plurality (the human species). Yet, such a plurality is not *true* because it is not the repetition of a true unity; humanity has only a *relative* unity and plurality. Elizabeth and John are both *equally* human while their accidental attributes admit degrees (one can be older, younger, taller or shorter than the other). Elizabeth and John equally participate in the form of humanity and nothing can make one of them more (or less) than the other with respect to their common essence. Yet, from their participation in a common essence it does not follow that Elizabeth *is* John. Individuation still set them apart.

Now, in order for a plurality to be *true*, it must be grounded in absolute unity. Absolute unity entails unity of substance and attributes. As Achard puts it: "It is impossible that plurality either exist or be spoken of properly unless it is or imitates the very unity of plurality, that is, true plurality" (I, 1, 379). 'Imitation' presupposes a model and the imitation of plurality presupposes a unity that agrees with plurality. Any other plurality that fails to agree with unity is but an image (*imitatur*) or likeness (*similitudo*) of true plurality.

Achard does not proceed from induction from the existence 'down here' of unity and plurality to conclude to the existence 'There' of true unity and plurality,[12] nor does he start with the unity of/in God; rather, his starting point consists in noticing the absence of true unity *and* plurality in creatures. The temporal, finite, and mutable plurality of creatures is far removed from the highest unity which is eternal, immutable, and incorruptible. The abyss between plurality 'Here' and unity 'There' leads Achard to claim that "reason demands that besides this plurality [of creatures], which is far removed from God, there be some superior plurality which coheres immediately (*cohaeret immediate*) to that highest unity and is somehow intermediate between *that* unity and *this* plurality" (I, 2, 380—translation modified).

It is not without hesitation that Achard uses the term "intermediate" (*et* quasi *mediata*). This hesitation does not occur because the term could be misunderstood as a matter of place or dignity (in the sense of a 'between' or of an intermediate rank); nor because Achard wants us to

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[12] *Pace* Combes' suggestion that Achard follows an "empirical method of induction" from creatures to creator. See: André Combes, *Un inédit de Saint Anselm? Le traité "De unitate divinae essentiae et pluralitate creaturarum" d'après Jean de Ripa* (Paris: Vrin, 1944) p. 198. On this I agree with Martineau's remark, *op. cit.* p. 71, note 1. *De unitate* I, 37 contains a further confirmation that even when Achard considers the plurality of creatures he still takes his point of departure from the plurality of the eternal causes, rather than from the consideration of "things that have been made."

understand this mediation in terms of cause and image; but rather because true plurality cannot *derive* from unity in the way a product derives from its producer or an offspring from its progenitors. Rather, such plurality must cohere immediately with unity. We can talk of true plurality as being *quasi* 'intermediate' if we envision it from the standpoint of the creatural plurality as what constitutes its cause. While "*cohaerere*" is used to describe the immediate and direct co-existence of unity and plurality in God, Achard reserves the verb "*inhaerere*" to describe the intermediary function of true plurality that allows the created plurality to mediately and indirectly adhere to divine unity.[13]

There remains to understand why reason *demands* that it be so. After all, it is more common (as Achard himself recalls) to claim that "reason seeks and, according to its capacity, finds God to be and to be one" (I, 12, 387) rather than to posit a first plurality.[14] It could seem that the first argument appeals to the need of filling what would otherwise be a gap between the unity There and the plurality Here. Yet, Achard's caution suggests that a need for mediation occurs only in relation to creatures. As such however, this line of argument remains insufficient to establish a primary plurality. Had God not created, true plurality would still have to cohere with the highest unity.

The second argument (presented in I, 3, 380–1) follows a complex path in an extremely condensed form. The key steps can be reconstructed as such:

(a) All that is created imitates *in some fashion* the likeness (*similitudo*) of the highest unity.
(b) However, this likeness is only relative, for it is partial and imperfect.
(c) The imperfect is said in relation to the perfect in two ways: on the one hand, the imperfect *participates* in the perfect; on the other hand, it does so in a *deficient* way.
(d) Hence, a full and perfect likeness cannot reside in the creatures but in the divinity itself.
(e) But wherever there is likeness there is plurality and plurality cannot be full and total except among equals.
(f) "Consequently There [*ibi*], resides not only unity but also plurality" (I, 3, 381).

Evidently a chief problem resides in Achard's use of *similitudo* (translated by Feiss as "likeness"). In claims (a), (b), and (c) *similitudo* is said to occur between God and his creatures. In this case, *similitudo* constitutes the ground of the *imperfect* unity of created entities since,

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[13] "This plurality [of creatures], because it has something in common with that [divine] plurality, can only *inhere* in the [divine] unity through the mediating plurality" (*idem*).
[14] The expression "first plurality" is Martineau's (*op. cit*. p. 83, note 4). It is to be noted that the quote from chapter 12 occurs in a passage where Achard recalls the plan of his work. It is clear, however, that the announced plan does not coincide with the actual order of the *De unitate* which neither begins with a proof of God's existence nor ends with a demonstration of the Trinity. Martineau suggests that we are dealing here with an archaic chapter.

while Here each creature is one, it is so merely by *imitating* the true unity that exists only There. In claims (d), (e), and (f) *similitudo* applies to God only. As a relational concept between God and its creature, *similitudo* comprises the principle of creatural unity *qua* approximation of true unity; yet, as operating within God, *similitudo* constitutes the principle of true plurality. Furthermore a relation is also posited between these two instances; for the second one (*similitudo* as it applies to God) constitutes an *image* for *similitudo* as it applies to creatures. The difficulty is, at least in part, semantic: there is no doubt that the notion of 'likeness' presupposes plurality, since it posits a relation between at least two terms (A is in the likeness of B; A looks like B). Hence, 'likeness' entails a resemblance that admits of a difference. If A is in the 'likeness' of B, then A is not B; a difference (no matter how small) must remain. As such, 'likeness' is an apt term when we talk of a model and its copy. This sense fits with Achard's account of the way a creature stands in relation to its creator. Yet, this cannot be how Achard uses *similitudo* in the second instance (i.e., in the true plurality occurring within the deity) as this second use is emphatically contrasted with the first one.[15]

How can *similitudo* be said, as in claims (c) and (d), to "necessarily exist above the creature in divinity itself" (I, 3, 380)? It would seem that it should occur *between* the creature and the divinity, rather than *within* the divinity itself. I believe that Achard's suggestion can be defended, at least up to a point, if we notice that his argument does not compare the imperfection of the creature to the perfection of the divinity (a rather banal claim) but rather compares the imperfection of the *likeness* of creatures to the perfect likeness in the divinity. That is to say, the principle: if 'a' is an image, there must be 'b' (true archetype of a), not only applies to the terms creature/divinity, but also proceeds from an ontologically prior relation of *similitudo* between a kind of relation and another kind of relation. More precisely, it occurs between the relation that links creature-and-divinity (= c) to the full and perfect *similitudo* in the divinity (= d). The repetition of unity in God (which is the source of true plurality) causes equals to resemble each other. There are relations of terms as well as relations of relations between plurality There and plurality Here, unity There and unity Here. Just as a work of art is not unlike the artist, creatures must, in some fashion, resemble their creator. But the *relativity* of this likeness demands that an absolute likeness (not a mere resemblance) exists over and above the created world; this likeness cannot itself be another creature nor a feature of a created entity. Should there be a third term between creature and creator it would either be infinite and would be God or there would be two absolutes, which is impossible.

> Since other things are like it by some form of participation in likeness, hence partially and not fully so [*non secundum plenitudinem*], likeness cannot participate in itself but is wholly like <unity> by perfect and full likeness, and so equal to it in all aspects (I, 4, 381).

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[15] One could argue that even in English, this is not altogether impossible (even though it may sound awkward to contemporary speakers). In 18th century usage, the phrase: "to *take a likeness* of something" meant to make a drawing or painting of an object; but "to *catch a likeness* of something" meant to get the essence of something. In the second case, 'likeness' does not mean a representation that refers to and differs from a model; 'likeness' is the thing itself in its essence. I have Lauryn Mayer from Washington and Jefferson College to thank for this remark.

When applied to "things that are truly and totally equal," 'likeness' means that the terms associated cannot contain anything more (and certainly not less) than unity itself. In other words, the plurality that occurs in God expresses His identity. In true plurality (the plurality that is there) there remains a *distinction*, but this distinction is without *difference* (the Father *is* the Son, *is* the Holy Spirit). God is all of these and yet remains one. True plurality must be compatible with unity. To conceive this, one can no longer appeal to the Platonic or Neo-Platonic language of participation or emanation. In participation or emanation, we do not find a plurality of terms that are equal in all points; one term is truer and more original than the other. This, however, is precisely what Achard rules out. At this juncture, it seems that the whole argument depends on a hypostatization of this "likeness itself as one particular thing" (*similitudo ipsa cum sit res aliqua una*).

When, in the context of true plurality, Achard talks of "particular things," he cannot mean it in the sense in which we can say that each shoe of a pair is a particular thing. In the later case, 'each' designates one element of a plurality that, *together*, forms a unity. Rather, we claim that 'A = B' (meaning that there is nothing more or less in each one of these terms), we are authorized to conclude that A *is* B. Yet, the copula is ambiguous. 'A is B' does not always mean that there is but *one* term. It could be that 'A is B' maintains a difference despite what the equality sign suggests. Consider, for instance, the rate of exchange between different currencies: assume that $5 = 3.8 €or 596 ¥. We have identity by virtue of the principle according to which there is no likeness except among many (*similitudo autem nulla, nisi inter plura*); otherwise we would not obtain equality between unity and likeness (A = B) but rather a tautology relating the same to itself (A = A).

The next line of argument appeals to the consideration of beauty and borrows various elements from Augustine.[16] This, however, is not a matter of adding a further warrant in support of the same claim. Something else is at stake; the consideration of beauty allows Achard to add a further determination to the concept of primary plurality and to introduce a crucial new term.

Achard subscribes to a harmonic conception of beauty. We perceive beauty through comparison; but we can compare only when we possess a set of common criteria. The beauty of a plurality results from the agreement (*convenientia*) and conformity (*congruentia*) of its components. In a creature, the beauty of the whole is greater than the beauty of each part. Thus, we encounter the beauty of a unity that is common to many elements, while the unity of a singular thing cannot be more beautiful than the beauty of the unity that is common to many things. Using an *ad majorem* argument, Achard concludes that the beauty of a plurality must also exist in the divinity; if the greatest beauty that can be is to be found in the unity of a plurality in which each member is infinitely beautiful, in God there must be a plural unity that constitutes the beautiful itself. Here (among creatures) the beauty of plural unity exceeds the beauty of the singular terms it unites. To illustrate: the beauty of a floral arrangement exceeds the beauty of

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[16] Achard implicitly refers to the discussion of 'supreme beauty' in Augustine's *De vera religione* and *De Trinitate*.

each particular flower. There (in God), since the being of each entity is infinite, its beauty cannot be less than the beauty of the whole. This divine beauty is the ground of the beauty of creatures.

> Although it is impossible that anything be beautiful without a determined beauty, beauty itself exists, or nothing is beautiful. It cannot be anywhere except in God, by whom each beautiful thing is beautiful and without whom nothing beautiful can exist (I, 6, 382–3).

Whether it occurs Here or There, beauty shines forth as unity of a plurality. But since here it occurs through proportion and ratio, beauty never resides in any single term of a complex; indeed, it is the arrangement of the whole complex that constitutes beauty.

This is not just a repetition of Augustinian themes. Besides unity and likeness, a third term has been introduced, namely: *equality* as the condition of possibility of divine beauty. There, not only are the terms that compose the supreme unity equal to each other (there is no more or less in the Father than there is in the Son or Holy Ghost), but the supreme unity itself (God) is equal to the terms that comprise it (there is no more in God than in any one of the three persons).

To understand this new term, equality, as distinct from unity and likeness, another way (*alia via*) must be pursued. Although on this issue there is some similarity between Achard's arguments and those developed by Saint Anselm in the *Monologion*, Achard suggests a way of investigation which he calls "the nature of equality" (I, 10, 384) and that offers a significant departure from Anselm.[17] Equality establishes a relation between two equals: unity and likeness which remain equal to unity. This third term is presented as: "something that is equal to the highest unity" (*aliquid unitati summae est aequale*). If something is equal to the highest unity, it cannot fail to be equal to equality itself. Equality is equal to unity, and since supreme unity is God, equality is also God. Each of these notions is identical to the others while each preserves its intrinsic nature.

Again, 'Here' and 'There' must be distinguished. Here 'white' (*album*) designates a color, but this particular white is not whiteness (*albendo*). To say that 'the wall is white' is not to say that the wall, *qua* wall, is identical with whiteness; being a wall and being white are not one and the same. There, however, we are dealing with true unity and equality. There is a difference between, on the one hand, a relation of unity and equality and, on the other, a relation of substantial unity. Here, this particular white *participates* in the substance of whiteness, whereas There, the relation between equality and unity is a matter of *substantial identity* (the same substance is equal to itself without participation), even though each term retains a special feature

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[17] Ilkhani stresses the resemblance between Achard and Anselm's *Monologion* (I–IV). One should note, however, that Ilkani (following Combes) suggests that Achard, like Anselm, starts from "the data of reality and experience" (*op. cit*. p. 66), a claim I have rejected in the case of Achard. The novelty of this way is stressed twice in the first sentence of Chapter 10: "These matters may be investigated more fully in a *different* way [*alia investigentur via*] and clarified by *other* reasons [*aliisque instruentur rationibus*] through the very nature of equality" (I, 10, 384).

which is not substantial. "It is not by participating but by being what they [unity and wisdom] themselves are that unity is one and wisdom is wise" (I, 10, 385—translation modified). The decisive phrase is "*existendo ea quae ipsae sunt*." It entails that primary plurality stem from identity. The plurality that exists There does not result from the addition of other beings; it stems from being itself.

One could be tempted to conclude that Achard's distinction between the terms of primordial plurality could be phrased in terms of accident. Yet, this would send us back to the very dilemma Achard wants to avoid. Achard's solution is to argue that *equality* is not identical with unity. "If equality is equal to that unity, it is equal to it *while remaining the substance of equality*" (I, 11, 386). Equality remains what it is because it retains its '*substantia equalitatis*' which is not inferior to the '*substantia unitatis*.' To make sense of this claim, we must consider different instances of equality. First, Achard suggests the (unfeasible) equality between a human being and a rock. What makes it impossible is that one term would have to cease to be what it is in order to become the other and vice versa. Should this occur, we would have a metamorphosis; but a metamorphosis entails the destruction of the prior form and its replacement by *another*.[18]

Next, consider the equality of genus and species: humans are animals; yet, humans are not *identical* with animals; rather humans participate in the substantiality of animality by means of a common genus. As Achard puts it: "humans are *in some way* [*modo*] animals." Lions are animals and humans are animals but it does not follow that lions are humans; the modal difference (the way of being an animal in each case) remains. In this case: "It is only in some way of being that equality can be or be said of several." (I, 11, 386)[19]

By contrast, "it is not by *participating* in equality that equality can be equal to anything, as are other things that are called equal, but by being [*existendo*] as equality itself" (I, 10, 386). In true plurality there is neither substantial change nor division in genus and species. Rather, each term retains its substantial unity. Here Achard draws from Boethius' analysis of difference and similitude (*differentia et idem*) among creatures, although the solution he advocates drives him in a different direction. Difference and similitude exist by virtue of the alterity that exists among things. The nature of things demands alterity. Created entities do not have one common nature. In God, however, alterity is excluded and although there is true plurality, this plurality is not a matter of difference or modality.

## II. Application of the Dialectical Solution to the Question of the Trinity

The admission of plurality in the unique deity is motivated by the theological question concerning the Trinity. How can one God be at the same time three persons? Since Augustine's suggestion that the human soul constitutes an 'image' of the divine Trinity, it was customary for

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[18] "If he were a rock, he would not be what he is, for which reason a human being is in no way a rock" (I, 11, 386; revised). There is a typo in Feiss' translation: "He would not be *not* what it is" (sic).

[19] "Non enim nisi modo aliquo plurium esse potest vel dici aequalitas."

medieval theologians to seek in psychology an analogical illustration.[20] While our soul contains a plurality of faculties, we remain one person. For Achard, the powers of the soul are *parts* in the sense that each one expresses a different function; as such, none of them can represent the soul in its totality; the will and the intellect are parts of the soul, but neither constitutes a person *per se*. But we cannot apply this paradigm to God; for we would not obtain a plurality of persons but a composition of parts and none of them would be a person. The divinity is not composed in the way of parts; in fact it is not *composed* at all. True plurality is a reiteration of true unity. If each term truly constitutes a person *per se*, it is because each (considered individually) is perfect while they all are equal and this equality rests on one substance that is common to all of them. It is by virtue of this unique substance that anything that can be attributed to one person is also true of the others.

For Augustine, the concept of 'person' determines a substance in relation to itself; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost signify relative terms: each one names the same deity inasmuch as it is envisioned *qua* Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As Augustine puts it, we must speak of three persons and not of three gods, because "we need a word that expresses in which way one must think of the Trinity and not remain speechless, when one asks what the three are, since we admit that there are three" (Augustine, *De Trin.*, VII, 6).

A similar difficulty occurs in Boethius and the tension between Boethius' understanding of a person in *Contra Eutychen* and his solution in *De Trinitate* by appeal to the category of relation will later culminate in the divergent solutions proposed by Roscelin of Compiègne and Gilbert of La Porrée.[21] In *Contra Eutychen* Boethius defines a person as an individual rational substance. But this definition occludes the meaning of divine plurality, since it seems to imply that only one particular substance (God) is real while the Trinity of persons is not. If one agrees to define a person as a 'rational substance,' should we not conclude, as Roscelin did by the end of the eleventh century, that the three persons are separate substances, three distinct substances, as would be three angels? In a letter to Abelard, Roscelin argues that "the word 'person' and the word 'substance' must signify the same thing. It is only by a habit of language that we triple the persons without tripling the substance… In God, however, the words 'person,' 'substance,' and

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[20] We must notice, however, that while Augustine argues that once we recognize the presence in our soul of a *certain* Trinity (namely: the mind, its wisdom and its love, where the second proceeds from the first and the third from both the first and second), Augustine concludes that the analogy allows our reason to *acquiesce more readily* in the divine Trinity. Far from constituting a demonstration of the Trinity, Augustine acknowledges that the analogy fails to account for the whole mystery. Most importantly for our purpose, psychology does not explain how a plurality of persons is compatible with substantial unity (See Augustine, *De Trin.* XV, 42–43).

[21] In *Contra Eutychen* (III, 1–5) Boethius demonstrates that 'person' belongs to rational substances alone. "We have found the definition of person: the individual substance of a rational nature." In his *De Trinitate*, the term 'person' is barely mentioned and the trinity is explained in terms of relation (albeit of a peculiar nature, since it cannot be identical to relational terms such as master and slave): "Father and Son are predicates of relation and, as we have said, have no other difference but that of relation, but relation is not predicated with reference to that of which it is predicated as if it were the thing itself and objectively predicated of it, *it will not imply an otherness* [*alteritatem*] of the things of which it is said, but, if it may be said, which aims at interpreting what we could hardly understand, an [otherness] of person." *De Trinitate*, V, l. 33–40 (my emphasis). Boethius, *Tractates*, translation Stewart, Rand and Tester (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press—Loeb Classical Library—1997 reprint) p. 26–28 (translation modified).

'essence' have absolutely the same signification; it is only in language that they differ, in faith there is unity."[22] Each person having its own generation occurs in the realm of substances. Thereby, Roscelin concludes that there is a plurality of *substances* in God. For his part, Gilbert of La Porrée, following Boethius' explicit conclusion in *De Trinitate* (rather than his identification of person and substance in *Contra Eutychen*), attempts to account for the divine plurality by means of the predicament of relation and concludes that this plurality is an 'intellectual notion,' a distinction that is purely rational but does not truly exist.[23]

In reaction to these solutions, Achard sets up his original answer. How could a plurality be *true* if it were only a matter of 'rational distinction' depending on our understanding rather than belonging to the divine being? By attempting to establish the property of each person *without* appealing to the predicament of relation, Achard goes against the position held by most of his contemporaries and predecessors. Since Augustine, theologians had attempted to establish the Trinitarian plurality without involving God's essence. The most common solution was to appeal to the predicament of *relation* attributed in a non-essential sense, for a relation neither increases nor diminishes its subject. We can say of the same person that she is a daughter and a mother, relating the first term to her parents and the second to her child and thereby we do not introduce any multiplication in her being, she remains the *same* woman. The very language of 'Father and Son' already hints at such a solution. Yet, this solution is not satisfying, for the predicament of relation maintains the unity of a substance at the cost of denying a plurality of persons.

For Achard, supreme plurality cannot be a matter of intellectual distinction or relation because a person exists *per se* and whatever exists *per se* cannot have its substance in relation to something else. The first step is to distinguish *deity* and God: "The term deity (*deitas*) denotes only the *nature* and not the personality. The term God denotes not only the nature but the personality in the nature, although it determines no personality specifically" (I, 36, 405). Hence, deity is not *some*one; it is the impersonal name of the divine. By contrast, to talk of God is to name some*one*, even if the identity of this one remains undetermined in this name. Against Boethius and Gilbert, Achard maintains that one cannot be a person simply through relation; one is a person by him/herself. To be someone is not simply to be related to others, no matter how intrinsic this relation can be.

In the deity, substance is one. Since God is the deity, it is through this unique substance that the persons of God are equal and all that can be attributed to one of them can also be attributed to the others. Since the concept of 'person' designates a substance, it is attributed to

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[22] Quoted in François Picavet, Roscelin théologien et philosophe, d'après la légende et d'après l'histoire (Paris, Alcan, 1911) p. 71.

[23] The case of Gilbert of la Porrée is quite complex and this statement reflects the opinion of his opponents rather than Gilbert's own thought. N. M. Haring has demonstrated that Gilbert held the view that the plural expressed by the terms 'three' and 'persons' meant a plurality '*rerum et vocum*,' and not merely '*vocum*,' but what this plurality was for Gilbert remains obscure. See N. M. Haring, "The Case of Gilbert de la Porrée Bishop of Poitier (1142–1154)" *Medieval Studies*, vol. 13, (1951) pp. 1–40 (in particular pp. 23–25).

each person and each can be said to be a person *per se*. Yet, only in a substance in which resemblance is implied can we find a plurality of persons. Thierry of Chartres already insisted on the distinction between 'diversity' and 'difference.' Two things can be diverse without being different. Difference occurs through genus, species, or number. But color and body, for instance, are not *different*, they are *diverse*. Transgressing an Aristotelian tradition that does not tell apart difference and diversity, we can say that accidents are *diverse* but not *different* from the substances in which they occur because they are not separated from them and do not lead to numerical difference.

Achard's endeavor consists in establishing that while a person is a rational substance, it does not follow that *substantial unity* entails *personal* uniqueness. The divine persons are distinct by virtue of their respective properties. The three terms we discovered: unity, what-is-equal-to-unity and equality itself (*unitas*, *quod unitati aequale est*, *aequalitas ipsa*) designate one unique substance; yet, each one retains its specific property. Achard's use of 'property,' when applied to the members of the Trinity, names a difference among terms while each one retains its highest unity; it is, so to speak, a matter of conceiving difference *within* unity. As we saw, a person cannot be sufficiently determined in terms of its relation to something else, but since each person is truly *unique*, Achard must stipulate the origin and cause of each.

Each person is truly one and unity is that in which "there is nothing except unity itself— no distinction, no plurality of any kind. Hence, nothing can be the cause and unity of that unity itself; so it cannot be from another but only from itself" (I, 25, 398). The property of 'being-equal-to-unity' can only come from unity. But, as soon as we posit this term "There some first distinction and primary plurality, namely: duality appears without which what is other than unity would not be" (I, 26, 399, translation modified),[24] we now have the duality of 'unity' and 'what-is-equal-to-unity.' Finally, the defining property of equality (what makes the third term be something *in itself*) is that it proceeds from unity and likeness. Therefore, substance remains one. Unity, what-is-equal-to-unity and equality designate the three persons. Unity is *a se ipsa*, it is by itself and not from another that it is all that it is. Being its own cause, it is a person in itself. 'What-is-equal-to-unity,' however, is not by itself but from unity. Thus for Achard, the difference of persons indicates the "singular propriety" (*proprietas singularis*) that differentiates being for oneself from being from another. There is in God three persons who have a common substance and therefore are one; yet, each one has its personal property by itself: unity (first person), what-is-equal-to-unity (second person) and the equality of the two previous terms (third person). Only these three have a common substance, a fourth person could not be each of these persons and would have to be a separate entity. But why must we stop at three? Achard in chapters 18–20 reverts to a series of arguments borrowed from Boethius' *Institutio arithmetica*. Linear numbers can be divided into odd and even. Since the odd does not allow division, it approximates the nature of unity more closely; while even numbers can be divided by an odd or another even number (4 = 2 x 2 or 4 x 1) the odd can only be divided by a whole number. The

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[24] "Ibi enim jam aliqualibet prima emergit distinctio atque pluralitas prima, id est dualitas, sine qua ipsum ab unitate non esset alterum, nec aliquatenus essent vel dici possent aequalia, nisi essent a se modo quocumque distincta."

difference between these instances is due to unity. Unity prevents division of the odd into two equal parts. Therefore, wherever the highest unity resides, a number is to be established and the odd should be received there for unity is the principle of odd numbers (since they are ordered through unity), whereas even numbers should appear below them and derive from duality and the first number that occurs is 3.

According to Latin theology, the procession of persons in God is not linear; the third person of the Trinity proceeds from the Father *and* the Son. Thus, equality needs unity and what-is-equal-to-unity in order to be, since equality names a relation between *two* terms. Equality is the third term between unity and what-is-equal-to-unity. As Achard puts it: "His [Holy Ghost] personal uniqueness and unique personality is this: that he is the *sole common unity* of the other persons" (I, 36, 406, my emphasis). It is the equality of unity and what is equal to unity that connects these two terms. For equality to exist as *absolute* equality, both terms must be consubstantial (i.e., the same in substance). In the formula 'A = B' we find *three* terms and not simply two, such that 'A' stands for unity, 'B' for what-is-equal-to-unity and '=' itself, the third term, indicates the equality between 'A' and 'B'. The third term (=) has a substantial relation to the Father and the Son and constitutes the supreme unity between the two above-mentioned persons. The specific property of each person establishes the plurality between them while nothing else can further proceed from its own equality.

Despite the substantial unity of the divine persons, there remains a distinction that is grounded on the respective *property* of each one. Unity possesses a property that differs from the property of 'what-is-equal-to-unity'. Without it, one could not understand true plurality. At this junction, Achard uses the term '*differentia*.' But whereas for his predecessors (or even contemporaries such as Thierry of Chartres) difference was understood through the alterity of one thing in relation to another (and ultimately, by appeal to the category of place—*locus*), it is clear that for Achard *differentia* in true plurality is without alterity:

> The cause of this difference in the manner of having personhood will be the cause of them. Is it the substance that is the same for both, or some property that is common, such as the fact that they produce of themselves and, so to speak, from themselves (as will be shown) the equality which they have among them? But what is identical or common to each does not establish difference among them. A *singular property* will be the cause that unity is of itself that person (I, 16, 393).

If two things have the *same* substance their plurality is a matter of '*differentia*' *without alterity*. Because they are persons, each one is living, sensing, and rational. The equality between the persons establishes true plurality. Unity is of itself and must be the starting point. Should unity proceed from another, then either this other would be unity and only unity would exist, or there would be a duality and the existence of a second term would derive from the first true unity. In order to obtain a plurality, the one must be while the converse is not true. Thus, the property of 'being-equal-to-unity' proceeds from unity; it emanates from its very substance (*proflueret substantia*). This procession constitutes the first distinction and therefore the first plurality. If it

were not so, it would be from nothing (*de nullo*), but then it would be a creature and not a divine person. Hence, it is necessary that what-is-equal-to-unity proceeds from the substance of unity; it cannot have another substance. Let us notice that the language of procession and generation (which is common since the Church Fathers) is rephrased by Achard in terms of unity between engendering and engendered (Father and Son, unity and what-is-equal-to-unity) and is strictly understood within the problematic of equality; thereby Achard shuns a Neoplatonic interpretation of the Trinity as a process of emanation.

### III. Plurality of Creatures and Individuation

Achard presents an original synthesis of Augustinian and Boethian ontologies. Deriving *substantia* from *subsistere*, a substance was, for Augustine, a complex reality that is determined by the fact that it *receives* attributes. Thus, God cannot be a *substance* since he is a simple being; his attributes are none other than himself and the proper ontological term for God is essence.[25] Achard agrees that *essentia* is *esse simplex* while *substantia* indicates the mode of a being's subsistence. However, these terms are not interchangeable. 'Essence,' according to Achard, designates the ground in which the form must be joined in order for something to exist. *Substantia* designates concrete existence: substance is the essence's mode of subsisting. While Augustine considered it improper to talk of God as a 'substance' and limited this term to created entities, Achard admits *substantia* in a created and an uncreated sense. By virtue of the simplicity of the divine nature, there is no distinction of essence, form, and substance in God. In things, *essentia* is unique, as such, it constitutes the principle of their unity whereas the forms constitute their particular being. By distinguishing between a thing as an *individual substance* and the form as what makes the thing be what it is, Achard reiterates a claim Boethius made centuries before.

Just as Achard applies his speculative method to the question of the Trinity, he also intends to use it in order to account for the plurality of creatures. While the object of investigation is quite different, the method remains the same:

> The way [*modus*] detailed above has shown 'the invisible [being] of God,' not from the entities that have been made but *from that invisible and unique nature itself*, without taking made entities into account. As for this way which also resides in the entities that have been made, it also addresses the *entities that have not been made*, by considering their reasons and origins. For, it considers them not in the being they have by themselves, but *There*, where they subsist more truly, that is, in their eternal causes (I, 37, 407 translation revised, my emphasis).

While alterity is excluded from divine plurality, true unity is excluded from creatural plurality. How then can we relate supreme unity to the plurality of creatures? To establish a link between

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[25] "To subsist is properly said of these realities that are subjects of the attributes that affect a subject; for instance color or form for a body. The body subsists (*subsistit*), hence it is a substance (*substantia*)… It is therefore these mobile realities deprived of simplicity that are called substances." Augustine, *De Trin*. VII, 9.

both orders, Achard introduces an intermediary term: "reason requires that besides this plurality <of created entities> which is far removed from God, there be some superior plurality which coheres [*cohaereat*] immediately to that highest unity and is, so to speak, intermediate between that unity and this plurality" (I, 2, 380). This intermediate term "should be understood with reference to cause and image," that is to say: it is "from unity and is that by which that plurality exists in common by likeness, that is has something in common to both: with plurality because it is plurality and with unity because it is uncreated, immutable, and so forth" (*idem*). This intermediate term is called *Eternal reasons*.[26] The plurality of creatures can inhere in the plurality of eternal reasons through what it has in common with it; thereby, it also inheres in supreme unity. The plurality of creatures is a copy of divine true plurality; in this sense, although in a deficient way, it too is a repetition of unity. Divine unity creates numbers and, through numbers, creatures. Achard's very condensed argument (in II, 3, 436–441) runs as follows: (a) things that exist Here are said to eternally exist There on account of their forms and reasons; (b) in order for two things to be distinct, whether in species (e.g., a man and an ass), in individuality (John and Elizabeth), or in parts, their reasons must be distinct; but, (c) the formal reason of anything whatsoever is its truth (*ratio formalis rei cuiuslibet, ipsius sit veritas*) and if there were only one identical form for all things, their truth would be without distinction. Therefore, there are reasons and forms not only for specific difference but also individual difference and differences in parts.

One substance is divine, uncreated, eternal, immutable, cause of itself and possessing an intellectual mode of existence; the other kind is created, dependent, and temporal. Each of these substances is a being in itself. The second, however, participates in both modes of existence. As understood by God, it is atemporal and immutable; as existing in this world it is mutable and variable: "these truths, because they are, and are said to be true both Here and There because of the same truth, can therefore be said to be the same truth numerically both Here and There, and in both cases essentially, even though they are not of the same substance Here and There" (II, 10, 456). True propositions are eternal and immutable, and even though their objects come to pass in this world, *qua* true variability is not in their nature. What is true once is true forever.

The second type of plurality we find in God is the plurality of eternal reasons (*pluralitas rationum*). These reasons are the reasons of things and they exist in the Word. In order to tell one thing from another Here, their exemplary forms must be distinct There. In other words, these reasons are the causes and ideas of creatures and since they belong to the divine substance, they are uncreated. In one respect, there is, of course, only one reason (the wisdom in the Word). But from another standpoint, since there is Here a multiplicity of things, there are multiple reasons of things There, for each is created according to its own eternal reason. The plurality of reasons, however, is quite different from true plurality for these reasons are not divine persons *per se*. We saw earlier that contrary to the true plurality in God, creatural plurality rests on the alterity that

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[26] *Eternal reasons* must be distinguished from *eternal forms*. An eternal form constitutes a first creature and as such it subsists in God; it is, so to speak, a paradigm, a blueprint of creatures. Yet, a form does not account for the existence of *plurality*; this is a matter of eternal reason.

occurs through substantial and accidental difference. The problem is then to understand (a) how this multiplicity relates to the divine plurality and (b) how it contributes to the individuation of any created being.

Essence is simple being (*esse simplex*) that constitutes the ground on the basis of which a thing is what it is. Inasmuch as it is the constitutive part of something, the essence is a simple nature in which a form inheres or upon which it rests. As Achard puts it: "in our usage, 'forms' sometimes name all that exists in things apart from their simple and, if I may say, unformed essences" (I, 43, 412). For instance, a horse possesses a simple being (= its essence); it receives the form 'horse' (rather than mule or donkey). *This* horse, however, is distinct from *that* horse by virtue of further forms that do not modify their common essence. The essential form is responsible for the intelligibility of the entity: we understand what is before us when we recognize its simple nature; we understand when we identify the form. It is the connection or linking of essence and form that properly constitutes a substance. "The essences in which the forms reside are present There [in God] in the same way. There they are understood not only in their active formation, but also in their natural simplicity, by which they are distinguished from all forms by the very privation of all forms" (I, 43, 413). We must stress Achard's insistence on this *active* formation in the sense of a divine action that combines a "formed" form with an informed essence (the simple act of being something). Yet, this leads to a difficulty: since the active formation entails the realization of an actuality in time,[27] how can we say that these things are in God when all things in God are intellectual?

Achard claims that essences are understood by God both in their simple nature and in the forms they subsequently receive. Since by itself, essence is the privation of all subsequent forms, it does not constitute the individuality or particularity of a thing but simply its ground. Forms, however, inasmuch as they rest upon an essence, constitute the *particularity* of a substance. Martineau argues that this active formation designates the creation *ad extra*, rather than the *ad intra* operation of eternal formation, so long as we understand the former "in a purely ideal way."[28] It seems, however, that from the standpoint in which this section is written (Achard is still talking about *ibi* and not *hic*) the *ad intra/ad extra* distinction need not be posited since it is formally and numerically exactly the same essence that is to be found here and there. The king who lives in Paris cannot be other than the form and essence of the king in God's intellect. Referring to Seneca (Epistola 58, 20–21), Achard distinguishes between *idea* (the form of things in the mind and understanding of the artificer) and *eidos* (the form that resides in the act and matter of the work) (II, 13, 459). The difference between the two rests in their "substance and mode of subsisting" but not in their being a form (*idem*, 461). If it were not so, the same entity would have two distinct essences, which is impossible. Coming into being pertains to form as well as to matter but the form is the agent of the numerical plurality of things and of the individuation of each one while matter only constitutes the receptacle of these forms. No doubt,

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[27] Achard himself insists on this: "*There* are the things eternally understood, and *Here* are the things temporally made; or There are the things disposed and Here are the things composed" (I, 43, 412).

[28] Martineau, *op. cit*. p. 115, note 6. In the subsequent note however, Martineau acknowledges that the further use of "*substantia*" in chapter 43 does not mean that Achard is moving back from the consideration of *ibi* to that of *hic*.

matter modifies a substance's mode of subsisting, but it does so without duplicating it. For this reason, it is fitting to see Achard as moving away from earlier types of medieval Neoplatonism to a position that is more akin to the ancient middle Platonists. If there were no formal, essential, and substantial distinction in God, it would be impossible for us to distinguish things Here. Thus, in God, essences must be distinct "in and according to the forms" [*in formis et secundum formas*] (I, 44, 413), while what comes to be is "an image of truth in a created mind, or a likeness of truth in a spirit, or a shade of truth in a body here" (II, 14, 462–3).

Achard's notion of "forms of things" does not simply refer to the specific difference between a man and an ass; but as Achard puts it, "There, not only substantial but accidental forms are distinct, not only generic but specific; there are such even in accidents" (I, 45, 413). Thus for each thing corresponds a whole series of exemplary forms which includes not only its essence, form, and substance, but also each of its constitutive parts, motions and changes. An individual creature is one not *despite* multiplicity but rather because of it; it is one because it is this *unique* collection of forms that determines its ontological properties as they unfold in time. While it is fitting to claim that there is but one supreme cause of all things (namely: the "reason of God or God himself"), we must also acknowledge, when considering a particular monad, that "under or in this general cause are contained an infinite number of special causes, which all depend from this one in some way and are referred to this one" (II, 18, 470). This thesis is argued for by the fact that each individual retains a certain stability that maintains itself throughout change. While the eternal reason is one, indivisible, and unchangeable, it is distinguished "through an infinite number of formal reasons of things which happen or can happen because of it" (*idem*, 471). The addition of potentiality (what *can happen* to an individual substance) entails that each individual has an infinite number of causes in God rather than the finite number of causes corresponding to what the individual will actually do or undergo. These forms do not surpass the entity but all inhere in the thing itself. The individuation of an entity depends not only on the forms that it possesses *now*, had in the past, or will acquire in the future, but also on those that belong to its potentiality. In this sense, individuation is not determination. This cannot be explained by an appeal to matter as principle of individuation. For each created entity there corresponds in God the unity of the plurality of its forms. Two individual substances are differentiated by the unity of the series of their forms. The *forma prima*, which exists in the divine Word and is consubstantial with God, constitutes the formal reason; the totality of the intellectual forms constitutes the *forma secunda*, which, being created, is eternally understood by God and has an intellectual mode of subsistence. The *forma tertia* constitutes the deployment of these forms in time.

This triad of essence, form, and substance is ultimately related to the three persons in God: essence corresponds to the Father, *esse simplex*, and therefore to the property of unity. Form is related to the Son and the individual substance, inasmuch as it is a conjoining of essence and form, corresponds to the Holy Ghost, which ordinates the temporal world. Thereby, the autonomy of nature cannot be dissociated from divine plurality that accounts for the plurality of the created world. Achard's metaphysics of primary plurality constitutes the foundation for both the theological question of the Trinity and the manifestation of plurality in nature.