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Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and the Invitation to Full Freedom

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Abstract

Mozart's operatic masterpiece *Don Giovanni* raises pivotal questions about freedom and society: should freedom be without constraints? Is absolute freedom possible? In certain key ways these concerns of Mozart's culture resonate with issues that preoccupy us today. Composed in 1787, during the final years of the liberal regime introduced by the Habsburg emperor Joseph II, the opera reflects the shadow side of his "enlightened" reforms. The serial seducer Don Giovanni represents a liberty that has degenerated into libertinism. The freedom that Don Giovanni wants to retain at all costs is merely freedom as the absence of physical constraint. In the contemporary world many people aspire to a similarly riven freedom: they reject the dictates of external authority, and docilely submit to the promptings of instinctual drives. Christianity invites human beings to reach beyond themselves in love. Marriage exemplifies the self-giving of permanent commitment, and contrasts starkly with Don Giovanni's egoistic consumption and hasty disposal of women. Although the lyrics and plot of Mozart's opera never evoke the Trinity, the musical perfection of his work dances on the threshold of Revelation, and opens its hearers up to the liberating mystery of the freedom of Trinitarian love.

Keywords

Mozart, opera, freedom, marriage, Trinity.

Introduction

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart may have been born over 250 years ago, but his music is so magical and fresh that it sounds like it was composed only yesterday. Christian thinkers have been glowing in their praise of him. In his pseudonymous work *Either-Or* the great Lutheran philosopher Søren Kierkegaard announced that with *Don Giovanni* Mozart had definitively entered the ranks of the immortals; to mark the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth, the Swiss Reformed

theologian Karl Barth gave a special lecture in 1956 on the stupendous freedom of the Austrian composer. Roman Catholic thinkers have also eulogized him: Hans Urs von Balthasar knew all Mozart's works by heart and occasionally thrilled his students in Basle by sitting at the piano and playing *Don Giovanni* from memory; Dietrich von Hildebrand praised Mozart's marvelous ability to reconcile apparent opposites, the effortless grace of his art, and the genius of love that permeated his music; Hans Küng has written an enthusiastic theological study called *Mozart: Traces of Transcendence*; Pope Benedict XVI, himself an accomplished pianist whose favorite composer is Mozart, has spoken of the marvelous depth of his luminous music that is courageous enough to contain the tragedy of existence.

But it is not only Mozart's music that is perennially fresh; many of the issues that surface in his operas are also abidingly relevant. Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* tunes into a surprisingly contemporary problem: freedom without control. In the process of telling the archetypal Don Juan story, the opera raises pivotal questions about individual freedom in society. What happens when liberty becomes libertinism? Is absolute freedom feasible? Should freedom include constraints? Is the rejection of married love a path to freedom? These issues are raised within the framework of a musical masterpiece that soars above the limits of its lyrics. The libretto for *Don Giovanni* was written by Lorenzo Da Ponte, an Italian librettist who was undoubtedly gifted, but whose linguistic talents paled in comparison with the musical genius of Mozart. The lyrics of *Don Giovanni* do not offer satisfying answers to the questions raised by its enthralling plot.

However, the joyous expanse and unabashed freedom of the music suggest that a fulfilling answer can be found, and that true liberty is possible. It goes without saying that the medium of music of itself cannot articulate this harmonious vision of freedom, since it is without words. Thus towards the end of this article I will allow myself the poetical license to articulate a conception of freedom that finds its harmony in the community of the Trinity. It is too much to claim that Mozart is suggesting this specific conception in his music; but what can be asserted is that the unified and coherent freedom his music incarnates is not hostile to a Trinitarian-inspired vision of freedom; in fact, it is fundamentally open to it.

A society like our own

It is not surprising that the opera confronts difficult issues related to freedom since they were also major questions in Mozart's culture. Mozart composed *Don Giovanni* in 1787, during the final years of the reign of Joseph II, the eighteenth-century Habsburg emperor who occupied the throne from 1765 to 1790. For the first 15 years of

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his reign, Joseph had been kept in check by the watchful eye of his mother Maria Theresa. Although Joseph was co-regent, it was Maria Theresa who always had the last word in important decisions. Once this strong-willed matriarch died in 1780, her ambitious son assumed total control of this vast and sprawling empire for the next decade. The Habsburg Empire had its headquarters in Austria, but included Hungary and parts of many contemporary European countries such as Germany, Italy, Belgium, Serbia, Croatia, Romania, Poland, and the Ukraine.

Although the Habsburg Empire was also known as the Holy Roman Empire, the French philosopher Voltaire (1694-1778) famously declared that it was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire. Voltaire, regarded by many of his contemporaries as the epitome of Enlightenment thought, saw himself as a champion of freedom, which he held to be hampered by religious faith. Joseph II admired Voltaire's thought, and was intent on making the vision of the Enlightenment a reality in his empire. The Enlightenment promoted a questionable version of freedom, one which equated liberty with liberation from tradition and alienation from authority. Enlightenment thinkers saw superstition even in places where it was not present. Their repudiation of anything beyond the reach of reason made them suspicious of the church. Indeed they often identified the authority of church and state as a hindrance to freedom and an obstacle to personal development. Joseph II was not against religion *per se*, but he was committed to bringing it and everything else under the rule of reason. On the one hand this led to enlightened policies, such as a significantly improved situation for the Jewish community, freedom of worship for various Christian denominations, and the ending of the form of virtual slavery known as serfdom. On the other hand it led to hasty and ill-considered reforms of whatever did not harmonize with Joseph's model of rationality. For instance, Joseph centralized power in Vienna, consequently undermining the power of local authorities; he suppressed contemplative monasteries because they were of no "practical" value; he imposed German as the official language of the empire. Among his other ambitious and radical reforms in the 1780s were the removal of the death penalty, the relaxation of censorship laws, and the transformation of marriage into a civil contract.

By the time *Don Giovanni* premiered in October of 1787 in Prague, the darker side effects of this new liberalism were already giving cause for alarm. Certain social observers noted with concern that sexual license was rife in Europe. Mozart's opera, centered on a sexually promiscuous and charmingly manipulative nobleman, gave artistic expression to this rising sense of anxiety. The Italian librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, who penned the lyrics of *Don Giovanni*, had an abundance of amorous adventures in his own life upon which he

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could draw. And as if that were not enough to give spice to the opera, Da Ponte could also borrow from somebody with even more erotic liaisons than himself: his close friend, the notorious Giacomo Casanova.

A Curious Opera

There is something decidedly unexpected at the heart of this brilliant opera of Mozart. Although it is a story of revenge, the avengers are not the heroes. In fact their appeal fades in comparison with the bright and devilish charm of the protagonist Don Giovanni, after whom the opera is named. He is not a hero in the conventional sense of the word. Instead he is a shameless cad who is surprisingly cast as the alluring protagonist. The spotlight is always on this reckless aristocrat, even when he himself is offstage. Everyone and everything revolve around him.

This opera in two acts is a *dramma giocosa*, and as this Italian expression suggests, it is composed of both "*dramma*" - serious and even tragic aspects, as well as the "*giocosa*" - light-hearted and comic elements. The opening overture already conveys both facets. It starts in the key of D minor, weighed down by a sense of foreboding, before giving way to the cheerier key of D major, and tripping merrily along to the sound of a light and vivacious melody.

As Act I and the action of the opera begins, Leporello, the manservant of Don Giovanni, is standing outside the house of the Commendatore, keeping watch on behalf of his master, the nobleman Don Giovanni. Meanwhile the masked Don Giovanni is inside, attempting to seduce the Commendatore's daughter, Donna Anna. Her cries awaken her father, and the Commendatore challenges Don Giovanni to a duel, but is mortally wounded by a thrust of Don Giovanni's sword. Don Giovanni, in the company of Leporello, manages to escape without being recognized. Donna Anna's fiancé Don Ottavio arrives after Don Giovanni's departure and vows to find and punish the culprit.

Don Giovanni immediately moves on to a new adventure when he catches the scent of a veiled woman. To his horror, it turns out to be Donna Elvira, a previous conquest of his. He flees, and leaves Leporello to explain things. Leporello puts Donna Elvira's betrayal "in context", explaining that she is neither the first nor the last woman to be seduced by Don Giovanni. Leporello proceeds to sing the famous "Catalogue Aria", in which he reveals to Donna Elvira the exhaustive list of his master's amorous conquests. The women come from all corners of Europe: 640 women in Italy, 231 in Germany, 100 in France, only 91 in Turkey, but with spectacular success in his native Spain, where an astounding 1,003 women have succumbed

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to his charms. The grand European total comes to 2,065. This arbitrary and enormous number makes fun of the mathematical and quantitative approach to reality favored by Enlightenment thought. Don Giovanni has uncritically bought into this reductive vision. He treats these women as objects to be used, as trophies to be ticked off. The catalogue displays no interest in their unique identities or distinctive life histories. Leporello explains that for his master these women are interchangeable: Don Giovanni is equally content to prey on poor as well as rich, old as well as young, amply-endowed as well as wafer thin, though he does add that Don Giovanni harbors a special preference for corrupting *la giovin principante*, "the young beginner". Leporello's proud and witty boasts on his master's behalf almost hide the fact that Don Giovanni's sexual exploits have trampled all over the dignity and freedom of these women.

Barely has Donna Elvira vowed to have her revenge on the man that dumped her than this man is once again entangling himself in a new amorous adventure: Don Giovanni sets about seducing a poor girl called Zerlina who is about to get married to her fiancé Masetto. As the Don is on the point of having his way with Zerlina, Donna Elvira arrives and escorts the naïve girl away to safety. Later, Donna Elvira, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio join forces. They arrive masked at a lavish party thrown by Don Giovanni. Before entering his castle they make a prayer, asking both protection from heaven and vengeance for the murder of Donna Anna's father. A dance soon begins, one of the most intricate and complicated dances ever created for opera, since Mozart uses three different orchestras simultaneously, two of which are on-stage, each playing at a different tempo, and the third in the pit. Somehow everything harmonizes. Don Giovanni once again charms Zerlina, dancing with her to his own rhythm while the other party guests follow a different time-signature. But Don Giovanni cannot dictate the tempo forever; Zerlina's screams alert the other guests and when Don Giovanni chases her, Donna Elvira, Donna Anna and Don Ottavio remove their masks and confront him. Don Giovanni just manages to escape.

Act II begins and Don Giovanni exchanges clothes with his manservant Leporello. Disguised as Leporello, Don Giovanni serenades Elvira's maid. Masetto and some friends come by. They are searching for Don Giovanni. They mistake Don Giovanni for Leporello, and Masetto's friends continue their search, while the Don persuades Masetto to stay behind. Once Massetto's friends are gone, Don Giovanni attacks and wounds him before fleeing. Zerlina arrives and console's her injured fiancé. Meanwhile Leporello, dressed as his master, has fooled Elvira into thinking he is her old flame. Leporello is enjoying playing the part of his master and seducing Elvira until Anna, Ottavio, Massetto and Zerlina arrive. Taking him for the Don, they are set on exacting vengeance. Leporello removes his

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disguise. But even this revelation of his true identity does not placate them. Leporello decides that it is best to escape as quickly as possible.

Leporello and the Don meet together in a cemetery and laugh about how they have escaped unscathed from their adventures. But their premature celebrations are interrupted by an eerie voice. It emanates from the statue at the grave of the man murdered by the Don at the beginning of the opera: Anna's father, the Commendatore. The voice predicts the imminent demise of the Don. The confident seducer laughs it all off in a derisory way and nonchalantly orders Leporello to invite the statue to dinner that evening. The statue duly arrives for the meal. Mozart is effectively making the statue do something that should not happen according to Enlightenment thinkers – he has the statue come to life. A block of stone is meant to be simply a lifeless thing, a blind and purposeless object of nature. By having an animated statue order the Don to acknowledge his misdeeds and apologize for them, before dragging him to hellfire in the face of his stubborn refusal to repent, Mozart is reproaching the narrow rationality of his age. Many of the intelligentsia of his time had scoffed at the supernatural world; some had rejected it. Mozart ensures that the world they have dismissed makes a decisive and highly tangible entrance into the shrunken spiritual horizon they inhabit. Mozart is also challenging his cultured contemporaries to enlarge their imaginative vision, as Hamlet once did in a different context: "there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy".

Low level of freedom

Don Giovanni discards every rule and law for the sake of pleasure. The kind of freedom he claims for himself is a minimal expression of liberty: it is freedom as the absence of physical constraint. This is the kind of freedom in which the world of nature shares: rivers flow, plants grow, birds fly and fish swim when there is nothing to impede them. Don Giovanni seeks the freedom to follow his impulses without restriction. In his case, it is not so much natural restraints such as inertia or disability that threaten to block him; instead he has to face down the limits imposed by society.

However, while struggling relentlessly to sustain this basic level of freedom, Don Giovanni totally neglects the kind of freedom that characterizes human beings: the liberty to act without being constrained by appetites and passions. This serial seducer puts all his energy into acquiring a truncated type of freedom, but does not give a thought to becoming humanly free. Although he craves liberty in its most rudimentary form and furthermore thinks he is free, Don Giovanni's

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behavior is utterly compulsive: he cannot stop seducing, he is addicted to lust. He is constantly in search of stimulation and novelty; he has hardly conquered one woman before he abandons her to seek another. He mistakenly identifies freedom as the power to devote his life to an endless string of conquests, whereas in fact it amounts to being enslaved by his drives and impulses. This paradoxical combination of alertness to external constraints and blindness to internal servitude typifies the impaired freedom that many individuals today aspire to. Although they abhor the interference of outside authority in their lives, they do not fret at finding themselves under the tyrannical rule of their own passions.

Don Giovanni is a man who embodies the destructive side of the bold social experiment initiated by Joseph II in eighteenth-century Austria and beyond. His story shows what happens to someone who refuses to submit himself to any of society's rules or norms. And this quest for untrammeled physical freedom is what makes Don Giovanni particularly modern, rather than his runaway desire for women, which has always been a feature of lustful men.

Most right-thinking people would roundly condemn Don Giovanni, though some men might privately envy him for his "success" with women. But are current conceptions of freedom really so different from Don Giovanni's in practice? Today there is an endless and agitated pursuit of more and greater conquests, most commonly in the forms of wealth, power and sex. This pursuit does not have the higher goal of moral improvement or better citizenship. It is depressingly similar to Don Giovanni's endless merry-go-round, where he is effectively running blindly ahead in order to stand permanently in the fleeting moment and find a foothold in the vanishing present. Freedom has to have a greater goal than humanity, and a more solid foundation than any particular human being can provide.

Fuller Freedom

Perfect freedom is something that does not depend on anything else. Each human being is dependent in different ways on the web of relationships constituted by history and society, as well as on the idiosyncrasies of physiology and personality. Don Giovanni, who never sings a single reflective aria in the whole course of Mozart's opera, does not pause to reflect on his dependence. Nevertheless the evidence of his dependence is inescapable, even at a basic physiological level. Every time he looks at a woman, he relies on light to help him see her, and a whole interlocking set of functions in the eye to refract and focus the image before transforming it into electrical impulses, carrying it to the brain, from which he receives instant identification. When he sings his songs of seduction, his voice-box,

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lungs, lips, palate, tongue and other organs sustain him, and he uses a language created and shaped by others over the course of centuries. But much more fundamentally, Don Giovanni is at the mercy of a raw and untamed force of nature that possesses him and expresses itself through his compulsive licentiousness. Although at a superficial level he looks like an Enlightenment hero who has confidently and even brazenly cast off the shackles of morality and religion, he is in fact subservient to an irrational drive that urges him not only to seduce women but also to engineer his own destruction.

There is a liberating dependence that Don Giovanni never arrives at: the anchoring of his own liberty in divine freedom. He is certainly brought face to face with the supernatural in the apocalyptic finale that consigns him to hellfire. But he himself has long since dismissed faith with astonishing ease. No admonishment from beyond the grave, however solemn or foreboding, will make him change his ways.

The truth that ushers in our freedom is the realization that there is more to each of us than we suspect: as persons, we exist beyond ourselves. We can never be circumscribed within the immanent horizons of culture and society. We are not commodities or things. However limiting the culture we inhabit, it can never definitively stifle the infinite desires that surge and rise within us. We are excessive creatures, elastically exceeding the web of finite contexts. This is because we are founded upon a freedom that is full and expansive and perfect. We find our origin – and goal – in God.

Our inherent dignity as children of God is an integral part of who we are. And so deep down we never really want to become perfect consumers. Precisely because as human beings we are created in God's image and likeness, we cannot be satisfied with anything less than God, and sooner rather than later we see the limits and faults of commodities which can no more satisfy our spiritual hunger than salt can quench our physical thirst. The dim awareness in our souls of the surpassing beauty of God quickly takes the veneer of attractiveness off so many lesser goods. There is some vestige of this knowledge present in Don Giovanni, since he tires so immediately of the erotic victories he desired so intensely a moment before. The trace of God inside of us is an invitation to reach beyond an egocentric existence.

But it is not enough to substitute duty for pleasure. We don't reach beyond ourselves in order to follow impersonal laws. Saint Paul stresses that Jesus frees us from the law. Fulfillment is not to be found in religious legalism. Unfortunately an austere and world-denying morality is often inescapably associated with Christianity. Christian morality has been so frequently presented as an onerous burden that it is no wonder the lightness and delight of Don Giovanni's lifestyle look infinitely more enthralling. And it is because lust is such a clever counterfeit of love that it seems to promise such

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vast freedom. Lust continually blinds Don Giovanni with its misleading promise of a liberty that knows no bounds. G.K. Chesterton once observed that "every man who knocks on the door of a brothel is looking for God". The man who knocks on the door of a brothel is trying to fill a yawning gap in his life. He is seeking more than casual sex – he is searching for something special and transcendent, for a life-changing experience. He is looking in the wrong place for a love greater than he can imagine. He violates himself and someone else in the process and ends up thirstier than ever.

Privatized Freedom

Contemporary Western culture not only diverts personal attention to a merely physical liberty; it also narrows the human focus to an intensely privatized freedom. Whereas the Bible speaks of the liberation of humanity, freedom today threatens to shrink to dimensions even smaller than the family unit. The family traditionally functioned as a privileged apprenticeship in freedom. One of the unheralded contributions of family life has been to rein in destructive instincts, to channel them in a healthy direction, to say "no" when necessary to children. This constructive support is vanishing, as family structures weaken and disintegrate, and as parents refrain from robustly engaging with their children. It is all too tempting to give immense physical freedom, all the while neglecting to form children in the human freedom that liberates them from being ruled by their instinctual life.

Not only has freedom become privatized, but society is often seen as simply the facilitator of subjective freedom rather than the context for a larger and more communal freedom. As in the case of Don Giovanni, society is often valued only in the measure that it guarantees the individualistic quest for happiness. In this opera which appeared just two years before the French Revolution, Don Giovanni is the caricature of the kind of aristocrat who gives absolutely nothing to society but consumes and conquers whatever he can for himself. People who pursue a purely private freedom would have been called idiots by the ancient Greeks. They coined the word *idiotes* to denote a private citizen, the kind of person who displayed no interest at all in public affairs or community concerns. Such "idiotic" citizens may have been highly intelligent and gone on to amass enormous wealth, but in social terms they were utter failures and contributed nothing to society. Today, such idiocy is regularly celebrated as the highest form of social heroism. Narrowly subjective freedom now threatens to become the model and archetype of all freedom. Some people do not aspire to anything more than the freedom to do what they *want* with their own lives. The true freedom of citizens and Christians, the freedom to do what they *ought* with their lives, is a question that often does not surface.

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The Freedom of Love

Christianity invites Christians to reach beyond themselves to persons who are personhood in its perfection: the Trinitarian God of love. The authenticity of this love for God is measured by love of one's neighbor. In his *Letter to the Galatians*, Paul comments that the whole law finds its deepest realization in neighborly love (Galatians 5: 14). In an early scene of *Don Giovanni*, the wayward aristocrat arrives at a feast in which a couple are about to seal their mutual love in a definitive way. These two ordinary country-folk, Masetto and Zerlina, are celebrating in anticipation of their wedding. Don Giovanni attempts to seduce the bride-to-be by ordering Leporello to occupy the groom while he pretends to Zerlina that he wants to take her as his wife. His singing is especially seductive. Added to the promise to make her a wealthy noblewoman, it is a package the innocent and naïve girl finds practically impossible to resist. The powerful presence of Don Giovanni threatens to eclipse any thought of her groom Masetto: she sings *vorrei e non vorrei* ("I would like to and I would not"). Donna Elvira arrives in the nick of time to rescue the girl from his clutches.

By trying to seduce Zerlina, Don Giovanni is indirectly launching an attack on the institution of marriage, on this faithful glue that binds society together and gives it stability. Moreover, the meeting between Don Giovanni and Zerlina illustrates two models of relationship that are at odds in Western culture today: a "no strings attached" encounter versus a "no matter what" commitment. Don Giovanni is an exaggerated version of the first, and the Christian understanding of marriage as sacrament or covenant is the complete realization of the second. It is a matter of egoism versus love. Egoism brings slavery, while love is the highest expression of freedom. Don Giovanni, who imagines he is choosing to do what he wants, is in fact only doing what his sexual drives dictate. He believes he is free, yet emotionally he is utterly dependent on the women he seduces for satisfaction. In the name of freedom, he delivers himself into servitude.

The myth of Don Giovanni has not died: many still spontaneously think that freedom is to be found in pursuing a merely personal agenda. If a wife no longer looks so attractive ten years down the road, some men are only too keen to make the contract void. But those who start with the vision of marriage as a "no strings attached" relationship, or even a contract of limited liability, will never arrive at the Christian vision of marriage as a sacrament and covenant. They will simply opt out of relationships that are no longer fulfilling, and turn back on themselves.

Freedom is found, not by turning away from others, but by turning down the immaturity of narcissism. Freedom can only be built on truth, and it cannot be discovered apart from relationships. This escape from the imprisonment of isolation in the supportive company

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of others is given graphic expression in one of the most powerful and enduring stories from the Bible: the Exodus of the ancient Israelites from the slavery of Egypt toward the freedom of the Promised Land (Exodus 15). Although the story never uses the word "freedom", it brings freedom to life in a marvelous and vivid manner.

In the Book of Exodus, Moses speaks the following words to Pharaoh in God's name: "Let my people go, that they may worship me" (Exodus 10: 3). In other words, freedom is for the sake of service. And God's path of liberation leads to Mount Sinai, where he gives the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel. Liberation begins with the escape from Egypt, but it finds its culmination in the perennial wisdom the Israelites receive at Sinai, because there they discover how to *live* their freedom. In the New Testament this law is presented as an interior dynamism and a force that attracts, a law written "not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts" (2 Corinthians 3: 3).

The Trinitarian Model

It is only through unlimited self-giving that freedom becomes unconditioned. Absolute freedom is the freedom to love absolutely. The supreme model of this love and freedom is the communion of love at the heart of the Trinity. It is a communion that does not abolish the individuality of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Each remains distinct despite complete self-surrender to the others.

In certain ways married life mirrors this ecstatic love of the Trinity. Ideally in the family, the complete love between man and woman is expressed in an intimacy that bridges distance and separation. And from the depths of this intimacy, through a moment when there is no longer any space between the two, a third person materializes. This third person is no stranger, but the fruit of their love. Yet while resembling them both, the child is unique and different, living proof that true love is creative and that their mutual love reaches beyond them.

In the infinitely loving communion of the Trinity, the Father gives himself fully to the Son. The Son receives all that he is from the Father, and returns everything. And from this mutual surrender a third person, the Spirit emerges. The Spirit is the fruit of the blissful love between Father and Son, the perfect expression of their mutual self-giving, yet also an equal person.

This is not to deny that the union in the Trinity is different in decisive respects from married love. The union in the Trinity is exclusively spiritual. And because God is beyond time, there is no period of "pregnancy" before the arrival of the Spirit. Father, Son and Spirit have always been and will always be. In the eternal "now" of the life of the Trinity, the Father is continually giving himself to the Son; the

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Son is constantly receiving himself and giving all he is to the Father, and the Spirit is ceaselessly surging forth as the perfect expression of their mutual and self-surrendering love.

The freedom of the Trinity offers a model of communion. Reaching beyond the self in such a manner as to build community while cherishing individuality, human beings are already on the path toward this infinite horizon of freedom. It is a horizon evoked by the effervescent music of Mozart. In the prologue to *Truth is Symphonic*, Hans Urs von Balthasar highlights Mozart's uncanny ability to convey the essence of each individual instrument while integrating all of them into a unified sound. But Mozart does more than simply respect the individuality of each musical instrument; he also reveres the reality of the world. While never denying that there is darkness as well as light in human existence, he weaves both into a winning tapestry of hope. Out of the often cacophonous sounds of human existence he composes a jubilant symphony of freedom and delight. In the words about Mozart from Karl Barth's keynote address at the 1956 Salzburg Mozart Festival:

> Whoever correctly hears him, may, as the human being he really is, feel himself understood and called to freedom: as the clever Basilio, the affectionate Cherubino, as Don Giovanni, the hero, or as the coward Leporello, as the gentle Pamina or the raging Queen of the Night, as the all-forgiving Countess, the terribly jealous Electra, the wise Sarastro and the foolish Papageno, all of whom lie hidden in us.

The chains that shackle Don Giovanni are so pleasurable that he mistakes the limited life they offer for freedom. Yet instead of the risk of relationship he prefers the predictability of possessiveness; instead of openness to others he wants to dominate them. Mozart's music in *Don Giovanni* offers a counterpoint to the hero's own enslavement. It invites us to a profounder level of listening and resonates at a depth to which the Don himself is blind. It also brings together all of the discordant elements of the plot into a liberating embrace, a seamless whole, a flow of fluency and freedom. It invites us beyond the threshold of divisiveness into freedom. It promises that this freedom is possible. It pledges that this other world can be our world as well. It tells us that self-giving can be a delight, that joy is to be found in affirming love. It transfigures the loneliness of egoism into the community of giving. It whispers of the Trinity.

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