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Abstract

Fifty years ago, in 1976, the theologian and philosopher Klaus Hemmerle published a work – the *Theses for a Trinitarian Ontology* – that represents a genuine watershed in the history of philosophy and theology. This work brought into focus that new way of thinking, Trinitarian ontology, which proposes a radical understanding of being in the light of Christian revelation, contributing not only to building a bridge between philosophy and theology, but above all to reconfiguring the relationship between theology and the other fields of knowledge within an inter- and transdisciplinary perspective. Today, Trinitarian ontology is increasingly spreading and establishing itself as a fundamental point of reference in philosophical and theological studies, both in Italy and abroad. The principal aim of this course is to offer, for the first time, a historical and theoretical overview of Trinitarian ontology, thanks to the contribution of some of the leading philosophers and theologians working internationally in this field.

In order to pursue this aim, the course will follow two complementary paths: on the one hand, it will present the principal figures, texts, and decisive moments in the development of Trinitarian ontology throughout the history of thought; on the other hand, it will examine the method, the questions, and the perspectives proper to this proposal of thought. To this end, the course will follow the historical-theoretical trajectory outlined in the “Manifesto” of Trinitarian Ontology, published as the first volume of the series *Dynamic Dictionary of Trinitarian Ontology*.

Organizers: Raul Buffo, Piero Coda, Massimo Donà, Vito Limone

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Module 1: *The Trinity as Thought*

Lecturer: PIERO CODA – Secretary General of the International Theological Commission and former Full Professor of Trinitarian Ontology at the Sophia University Institute in Loppiano (email: piero.coda@sophiauniversity.org)

Abstract: If it is true – and urgent, in light of the epochal challenges confronting us – that today it has become necessary to “rethink” thought itself (E. Morin), where are the resources to be found from which we may responsibly draw in order to undertake this task? Is there an “inheritance”, still largely unexplored, that has nevertheless been handed down to us and that we may creatively develop? In 1976, in his *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, K. Hemmerle traced out a path of inquiry that, over the last fifty years, has encouraged philosophy and theology to embark upon a demanding yet promising journey, within a broad and in many respects unprecedented dialogue. In what direction? And according to what method? In a word, what does it mean to “rethink thought” within the new horizon opened by the encounter between the “Logos made flesh” and the logos through which the intelligence of being is sought and expressed?

Module 2: *Trinity, Relation and Negation*

Lecturer: MASSIMO DONÀ – Full Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan (email: dona.massimo@unisr.it)

Abstract: This module aims to investigate the complex bond linking the concept of “relation” – thematised from Plato to Hegel – with the distinctive character of specifically intra-Trinitarian relations, which seem to constitute an extraordinary opportunity to redefine at its roots the unsurpassability that characterises “relation” as such. Above all, the module seeks to rethink the Platonic concept of “otherness”, which in fact underlies every form of “relation” and is therefore intrinsically connected with the difference instituted by relation itself.

Module 3: *Augustine and the inventio of Trinitarian Ontology*

Lecturer: PIERO CODA – Secretary General of the International Theological Commission and former Full Professor of Trinitarian Ontology at the Sophia University Institute in Loppiano (email: piero.coda@sophiauniversity.org)

Abstract: The work of Augustine of Hippo holds decisive importance in the history of thought, for he was the first to undertake the daring task of traversing – in rigorous dialogue with the philosophy of the Greek tradition – the unprecedented paths opened by the event of Jesus Christ. Indeed, if – as he recounts in the *Confessiones* – it was “the books of the Platonists” that, after long wandering, opened for him access to the mystery of God, it was immediately thereafter the encounter with Jesus Christ that disclosed its deeper intelligibility. In carrying out

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this task – whose fundamental stage is represented by the De Trinitate – Augustine achieves a strategic discovery: namely, that from the very “depths of Revelation” intelligence is called to give birth to a vision of being wholly illuminated by the Trinity, thereby outlining a new cultural paradigm of decisive historical significance (De civitate Dei).

Module 4: De-coincidence as a Resource for Christianity

Lecturer: FRANÇOIS JULLIEN – Chair of Alterity at the Collège d’études mondiales, Fondation Maison des sciences de l’homme, Paris (email: fjullien.decoincidences@gmail.com)

Abstract: If we begin by saying: “God is ...”, what else could we say except that God “is de-coincidence”? Otherwise, we risk reducing God to “being”, to dogma, and to ideology. Yet, by affirming that God cannot “be” anything other than de-coincidence, we may at the same time hear anew, within the Gospel of John, the unheard-of novelty of the Good News, which de-coincides the living from mere vitality and brings forth the innermost dimension of the subject. If the world must be de-coincided in order truly to live, it is precisely within this de-coincidence that “spirit” unfolds. It is also a way of purifying “God” from those re-coincidences that have led to the present indifference toward Him – worse even than His proclaimed “death”. De-coincidence is a practical concept that breaks through consolidated barriers – including those surrounding “God”.

Module 5: Phenomenology, Theology and Revelation

Lecturer: JEAN-LUC MARION – Former Professor at Université Sorbonne-Paris IV and the University of Chicago, member of the Académie française since 2008, and recipient of the Ratzinger Prize in 2008 (email: jean-luc.marion@ens.psl.eu; jean-luc.marion@ens.fr)

Abstract: This lecture aims to develop a phenomenological inquiry into revelation beyond the traditional delimitation between philosophy and theology, taking givenness as its guiding category. Revelation will be approached not as mere unveiling, but as a dis-closure that comes from elsewhere, thereby requiring a revision of the classical metaphysical categories. Within this perspective, the concepts of God, being, time, history, and subjectivity are reconsidered on the basis of their own phenomenality. The manifestation of the divine will thus be understood according to a logic that exceeds the ontological horizon and opens its Trinitarian intelligibility. Finally, the human being will be determined in the form of testimony, as a response to the precedence of givenness.

Module 6: Rethinking the Relationship between the Created and the Uncreated in the Light of Christ’s Ascension

Lecturer: PIERANGELO SEQUERI – Full Professor of Fundamental Theology and Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Northern Italy, Milan (email: sequerip@ftis.it)

Abstract: Christ’s Ascension may be understood as a decisive event in which the human is definitively welcomed into the Trinitarian intimacy of God. This dwelling, unique in the Son, opens

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a horizon of divine hospitality that involves creation in its original and final relationship with God. From this emerges a rethinking of the relationship between the created and the uncreated, in which creation is understood as an expression of the generative dynamism of Trinitarian agape.

Module 7: The Council of Nicaea (325): a Turning Point in the History of Trinitarian Ontology

Lecturer: VITO LIMONE – Associate Professor of History of Christianity at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, Milan (email: limone.vito@unisr.it)

Abstract: The Council of Nicaea in 325 represents a decisive turning point in the history of the genesis and development of Trinitarian ontology in Late Antiquity, insofar as it constitutes the first occasion in the history of the early Church in which an official understanding of God as Trinity was articulated, especially concerning the relationship between the Father and the Son, interpreted as a relation of generation and consubstantiality. This module pursues two principal aims: on the one hand, to offer a reconstruction of the context and debates surrounding the Council of Nicaea, with particular attention to its historical, theological, exegetical, and philosophical dimensions, and in light of the most recent scholarship stimulated by the celebration of the seventeenth centenary of this event; on the other hand, to highlight the elements of continuity and discontinuity between the patristic theology developed in connection with the Council of Nicaea and the theological reflection of the preceding centuries.

Module 8: Patristic Trinitarian Ontology in the Fourth Century

Lecturer: ILARIA VIGORELLI – Full Professor of Systematic Theology at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (email: vigorelli@pusc.it)

Abstract: The fourth century represents a decisive moment for Trinitarian ontology, both because it offered the occasion to clarify its foundation within New Testament exegesis and because of the intellectual struggle required to confront the ontological novelty introduced by the liturgy and the forms of Christian life. The module will therefore examine the formulation of the Nicene Creed (325) and the specific contributions of Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers, before turning to the hermeneutical tensions linked to the ontology of intra-divine relations up to the formulations of the Cappadocian Fathers. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa made it possible to reconsider under a new perspective the aporia of the one and the many through their understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, thus enabling the formulation of the Creed of the Council of Constantinople (381), in which what may still today be regarded as the canon of Trinitarian ontology was achieved: being and relation are no longer articulated on the basis of dual oppositions (or negation), but according to the dynamism of the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son

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Module 9: Reception and Innovation of Trinitarian Ontology between the Sixth and Eighth Centuries: from Maximus the Confessor to John Damascene

Lecturer: GIULIO MASPERO – Full Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome (email: maspero@pusc.it)

Abstract: Following the invention of the fourth century and the great innovation of relation developed by the Cappadocians, the subsequent centuries witnessed a further development of the reinterpretation of the world and of history in the light of the Trinity disclosed by Revelation. This reinterpretation gradually acquired a systematic dimension: in the transition from Maximus the Confessor to Anastasius of Sinai and John Damascene, a new synthesis between philosophy and theology took shape, one that still has much to say regarding the transition from modernity to postmodernity. Maximus rereads the Aristotelian heritage within a new theological architecture centred upon a Christological reinterpretation of the cosmos and history, thanks to which both Anastasius and John Damascene would be able to present creation in the light of the Trinity. This development would also prepare the emergence of medieval theology, laying the foundations both for the Summae and for the University itself.

Module 10: The Trinitarian Ontology of Thomas Aquinas

Lecturer: JOHN MILBANK – Emeritus Professor at the University of Nottingham (email: john.milbank@nottingham.ac.uk)

Abstract: Recent Neo-Thomist interpretations of Thomas Aquinas by T. J. White and others once again seek to divide, within Aquinas, the One God of reason from the Trinitarian God of Revelation. Yet, although on the theoretical level Aquinas may have compromised too greatly with the Boethian unity of reason and revelation, on the practical level he scarcely adhered to its protocols. In fact, he allows for numerous rational allusions to the Trinity and offers a Trinitarian revision of metaphysics in terms of progressive degrees of the interiority of emanation. It is highly significant that this metaphysics occupies a central place in the Compendium, precisely where he summarises the whole of his theology.

Module 11: Ontology of Creation: A Franciscan Perspective

Lecturer: TOMMASO BERTOLASI – Lecturer at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy, Florence (email: tommaso.bertolasi@gmail.com)

Abstract: In 1259, Bonaventure of Bagnoregio withdrew to Mount La Verna. Meditating upon the events through which Francis of Assisi, in that very place a few years earlier, received the seal

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of the stigmata of the Crucified, the Franciscan Master composed one of the most important works of scholastic literature: the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. A singular distillation of philosophy and theology, this short work outlines the contours of a phenomenological ontology of creation as a path toward the Good and Being.

Module 12: The Trinitarian Ontology of Nicholas of Cusa (1401–1464)

Lecturer: PETER CASARELLA – Professor of Systematic Theology at the Duke Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, N.C. (email: pcasarella@div.duke.edu)

Abstract: Both Rudolf Haubst (*Das Bild*, 1952) and Felix Resch (*Triunitas*, 2014) have shown that the speculative thought of the German cardinal is grounded in a representation of the image of the Triune God within reality itself. This theme appears in the early sermons, in *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440), in the *Idiota de Mente* (1450), and in the *Cribratio Alkorani* (1460). Its roots may be traced back to Ramon Llull and to new interpretations emerging from the School of Chartres. Particular attention will be devoted to the parallels between Hemmerle's theses and the definition, found in *De Li Non Aliud* (1460), of the divine cipher as: *non aliud est non aliud quam non aliud*.

Module 13: The Name of God YHWH as an Introduction to the Biblical Understanding of the Trinity

Lecturer: KURT APPEL – Full Professor of Fundamental Theology and Director of the research centre "Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society" at the University of Vienna (email: kurt.appel@univie.ac.at)

Abstract: The Trinitarian profession of faith distinguishes Christianity from the other great Abrahamic monotheisms. This module will be divided into two parts. In the first part, it seeks to demonstrate that the Trinity can be understood beginning from the biblical name of God and can also be rendered intelligible to Muslims and Jews. Nevertheless, a specifically Christian feature remains the fact that the name of God, YHWH, is linked to the person of Jesus, and more particularly to his death and resurrection. In the second part, the module will attempt to show the profound depth of the Trinitarian interpretation of God within German Idealism, especially in the thought of G. W. F. Hegel.

Module 14: The Trinitarian Ontology of the Authors of the Silver Age of Russian Thought

Lecturer: LUBOMIR ŽÁČ – Professor of Dogmatic Theology at Palacký University Olomouc, Sts Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Theology (email: lubomir.zak@upol.cz)

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Abstract: This his lecture is devoted to the Trinitarian ontology developed by some of the principal authors of the Silver Age of Russian thought – Vladimir Solovyov, Pavel A. Florensky, Sergei Bulgakov, and Lev Karsavin – and seeks to demonstrate both its underlying unity and its speculative significance. In these thinkers, Trinitarian doctrine is not understood as a purely theological domain separated from philosophy, but rather as a fundamental ontological principle capable of determining the understanding of being as such. Proceeding from a perspective of Christian panentheism common to these authors, Trinitarian ontology concerns not only the question of the Absolute One – namely, the unity of the Triune God – but also the ontological structure of creation. Being is conceived as intrinsically relational: every entity is constituted by relations and, as such, is structurally connected to other beings. At the same time, the absolute unitrinitarian Principle does not remain external to the world but, through the creative act, is inwardly present to every creature, determining its ontological form without abolishing its otherness. The lecture will show how this relational ontology makes it possible to overcome both individualistic substantialism and monistic conceptions, offering an original synthesis of unity and multiplicity, transcendence and immanence, God and world. In this way, the Trinitarian ontology of the authors of the Silver Age emerges as a theoretical proposal of great relevance for the renewal of contemporary Christian ontology.

Module 15: The Liturgical Consummation of Metaphysics

Lecturer: CATHERINA PICKSTOCK – Norris-Hulse Professor, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge (email: cjp15@cam.ac.uk)

Abstract: Truth is neither mere consistency nor simple representation. The false may well appear internally coherent, while consistency itself remains merely isolated formality. Representation, moreover, is ultimately unprovable, and the contingency of what passes away is “true” only in a trivial sense. Truth, rather, is the disclosure of being as meaningful significance: it is manifestation. As such, truth is experienced, enacted, and poetically augmented no less than witnessed. Liturgy involves all three dimensions. Theory itself culminates in this liturgical manifestation of truth, which must be enacted through gesture, word, procession, and song. In liturgy, we encounter the divine and the theurgic descent of wisdom, and thus of truth itself. We intuit the paternal source in our echo of the filial imaging accomplished by the Son, while our hearts become inwardly attuned to the liturgical radiance through the indwelling of the Spirit. As we participate in the transformation of reality, we finally begin to perceive reality as it always already was.

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Module 16: The Trinitarian Repetition of Ontology

Lecturer: ANDREA BELLANTONE – Full Professor of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the Institut Catholique de Toulouse (email: andrea.bellantone@ict-toulouse.fr)

Abstract: If Trinitarian ontology is not to remain an abstract hypothesis, then it must be grounded in a repetition of the question of being (Heidegger) beginning from the Trinity itself. This repetition – following a phenomenological method – must be capable of recovering Trinitarian traces within the very structure of our personal and communal existence. Following this project, we shall attempt to identify three moments of being within the experience of our own being-person: givenness, singularity, and superabundance. In their reciprocal convertibility and irreducible relationality, these three aspects of being likely constitute evidence that being itself is an image of the Trinity. The path we propose will not unfold in the abstract, but will instead follow two guiding phenomena: the work of art and love. In both cases, we shall attempt to reinterpret the very structure of experience beginning from the triad of givenness, singularity, and superabundance.

Module 17: The Indwelling of the Spirit

Lecturer: MICHAEL SEEWALD – Professor of Dogmatic Theology and History of Dogma at the University of Münster (email: mseewald@uni-muenster.de)

Abstract: A fundamental axiom of Trinitarian theology states: Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa. Whenever God acts within the history of salvation, it is always the Trinity as a whole – rather than a single person within the Trinity – that acts. Karl Rahner already pointed out that this principle encounters its limits with regard to the Incarnation. Only the Son became man, not the Father nor the Spirit. Might the indwelling of the Holy Spirit likewise be understood as an economic property that no other divine person can appropriate?

Module 18: Phenomenological Reduction and Theological Reduction

Lecturer: DANIEL LÓPEZ – Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Universidad Católica de Córdoba (email: jdlopez.sj@gmail.com)

Abstract: Contemporary phenomenology has taken up the great challenge of our time concerning a “new thinking”, with both philosophical and theological implications in what have been called the “theological turn of phenomenology” and the “phenomenological turn of theology”. Within this context, the present module will address, on the one hand, the formal

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relevance of the phenomenological method which, rooted in the lifeworld, opens itself to the mystery of God – a movement made explicit in the transition from “phenomenological reduction” to “theological reduction”. On the other hand, the module will examine the rich thematic contributions that phenomenology offers to theology when confronting questions of alterity, relation, and gift.

Module 19: Transdisciplinarity and Trinitarian Ontology

Lecturer: RAUL BUFFO – Researcher at the Institut Catholique de Toulouse (email: raulbuffo@gmail.com)

Abstract: The emergence, over recent decades, of the thought of complexity has called into question the paradigm of simplification and its disciplinary organisation of knowledge into increasingly restrictive domains. The epistemology of complexity challenges such reductionism by proposing the method of transdisciplinarity: an integration and interaction of forms of knowledge directed toward an understanding of reality that is no longer linear and predictive, but articulated and complex. Within this framework, the relationship between philosophy and theology is reconsidered. The module will investigate the role of this relation in grounding a transdisciplinary epistemology, beginning from the perspective of a Trinitarian ontology.

Module 20: Trinitarian Ontology and Political Theology

Lecturer: CARMELO MEAZZA – Full Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Sassari (email: cmeazza@uniss.it)

Abstract: This module intends to develop the following themes: 1) the legacy of Klaus Hemmerle and the trajectory of Italian theology in the teaching of Piero Coda; 2) ontology and phenomenology within the theoretical prism of Trinitarian ontology. The guiding thesis will be the following: phenomenology cannot be radical in its fundamental intuitions without an ontology, while ontology becomes merely a deficient metaphysics without phenomenology. 3) The general notion of political theology. Schmitt and modern political theology. A guiding thesis here will be the following: modern political theology cultivates and elaborates its dispositifs of sovereignty on the basis of a presupposed ontology of non-subsistence. In this sense, it will be possible to show that the Kantian transcendental, for example, governs the phenomenon through the same apparatus by which sovereign statehood governs citizenship in modernity. The module will argue that an ontology of non-subsistence is incompatible with medieval political theology, at least up to late Scholasticism.

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