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THEME

Trinitarian Ontology

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INTRODUCTION

In its pursuit of wisdom, theology deals with the mysteries of God and all things in relation to God. But if God Himself is triune and relational, and if all created things are originally and ultimately shaped by their relation to the relational God, theology will never advance its own pursuit of wisdom without addressing the ontology and logic of relations. Does this mean that the deepest mystery of God the Trinity must be elucidated, sublated, or even wiped away by philosophical reason at the highest level of its dialectical performance? Or is it rather the case that the theological pursuit of wisdom transforms the supposedly purely dialectical into the analogical, and ultimately reveals all created things and persons, including their fundamental relation to God, as intrinsically full of mystery, just as the Triune God of the Christian revelation in time and history?

This is the crossroad where the pursuit of worldly wisdom and the wisdom of the cross radically diverge (1 *Cor* 1:17–25). It is also the crossroad where the open question of ‘Trinitarian ontology’ emerges most acutely and vividly.

For the Church Fathers and their medieval heirs, the transformation of philosophical categories was a crucial task. Without using the modern term ‘Trinitarian ontology’, Augustine contrasted the theological pursuit of wisdom with the purely dialectical knowledge of the relational divine potency that gives birth to itself in order to be: ‘*quae se ipsam gignat ut sit?*’ (*De Trinitate* I, I, 1–2) According to Augustine, this intrinsically contradictory relational notion of the Absolute corresponds neither to the creature nor to the Triune Creator. Therefore, in *De Trinitate* V.–VII., he proposed a profound Trinitarian revision

of the Aristotelian metaphysical categories, especially the category of relation. Only after this theological revision of ontology and logic was it suddenly possible to formulate a phenomenology of inner life as a starting point for understanding the proper meaning of the *analogia Trinitatis* in relation to the fundamental acts of the human soul.

For many reasons, especially the discursive separation of philosophy and theology, the transformative dimension of the Trinitarian mystery has been largely forgotten in modern times. In contrast to this modern ‘Trinitätsvergessenheit’, a new revisionary endeavour called ‘Trinitarian ontology’ emerged from within the scholarly interactions between French Spiritualism, Russian Sophiology, German Idealism, phenomenology, personalism, and neo-Thomism during the 20th century. It has become associated with a prophetic letter by Klaus Hemmerle to Hans Urs von Balthasar known as *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976). Like Augustine in *De Trinitate*, Hemmerle pointed out the need for a profound theological revision of metaphysical categories and replenished this revision by proceeding *modo interiore* on the phenomenological way of love, *via caritatis*. The recent theological, metaphysical, or phenomenological engagement with Hemmerle’s work in Germany, Italy, and elsewhere has stimulated broader academic interest, culminating at the New Trinitarian Ontologies Conference at the University of Cambridge (13–15 September 2019) and subsequent events.

We have been witnessing the same interest for ‘Trinitarian ontology’ among the Czech and Slovak scholars. Following the legacy of the great Bohemian and Moravian philosopher and theologian, Jan Amos Komenský, or Comenius (1592–1670), this endeavour has also substantially influenced the leading 20th-century Czech philosophers and theologians (Karel Floss, Pavel Floss, Zdeněk Neubauer, Karel Říha, Ctirad Václav Pospíšil). And recently, a major three-year project ‘Trinitarian Ontology of the Human Person’ was launched at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Charles University. On 18 November 2021, members of this project’s research team organised the first Czech and Slovak Trinitarian Ontology Conference in Prague.

In what follows, we publish a selection of contributions from the 2019 New Trinitarian Ontologies Conference at the University of Cambridge (Jonathan Bieler, Martin Bieler, Christophe Chalamet), the 2020 New Trinitarian Ontologies Symposium at the University of Cambridge (Stephan Tilch), and the 2021 Trinitarian Ontology Conference

at the Catholic Theological Faculty of the Charles University (Pavel Frývaldský, Eduard Fiedler, Martin Danišek, Petr Macek, Peter Volek). The selected contributions represent different approaches to the open question of ‘Trinitarian ontology’, including the Thomistic and Bonaventurian metaphysical and theological ressourcement (Jonathan Bieler, Martin Bieler), personalistic metaphysics and phenomenology of love (Eduard Fiedler), Christian dialogical personalism (Pavel Frývaldský), interdisciplinary dialogue of theology with psychoanalysis (Martin Danišek), triadic transcendental ontology (Stephan Tilch), theological critique of metaphysics (Christophe Chalamet), Thomistic social ontology (Petr Macek), and communitarian spirituality (Peter Volek). Despite the different approaches to the topic, all contributions affirm the transformative meaning of the Trinitarian mystery in theology and philosophy.

In addition to the authors, the thematic issue of *AUC Theologica* 2/2021 on ‘Trinitarian ontology’ was shaped by many people of good will, without whose selfless help the issue would not have been completed. First, we wish to warmly thank John Milbank and Ryan Haecker for recommending the contributions from the 2019 New Trinitarian Ontologies Conference and the 2020 New Trinitarian Ontologies Symposium at the University of Cambridge. We also thank Tom V. Gourlay, John Betz, Adrian Walker, Maria Benedetta Curi, Josef Schreier, and Jiří Baroš for all the important suggestions, remarks, and assistance during the preparation of this issue. Finally, we would like to thank Barbora Šmejdová, Executive Editor of *AUC Theologica*, for reading and correcting the final manuscript. After all, the theological pursuit of wisdom, ultimately leading towards a contemplative understanding of God the Trinity and the Trinitarian dimension of all things in relation to God, is not possible without the relational communion, in which the reality of Trinitarian self-giving shines through the exchange of created signs and gifts.

Eduard Fiedler

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THEME

Trinitarian Ontology

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRINITARIAN CONNOTATIONS IN BONAVENTURE'S EPISTEMOLOGY FOR A TRINITARIAN ONTOLOGY

JONATHAN BIELER

ABSTRACT

Bonaventure's epistemology is partly based on his Trinitarian theology. This paper investigates the Trinitarian connotations in this epistemology and their broader significance. Like the divine Father, any object of human understanding is liberally generating a likeness of itself: the *species*. Apprehending the form of the object through this *species* is an essential feature of human knowledge for Bonaventure. More fundamentally, the human soul itself is structured according to the Augustinian Triad of *memoria*, *intellectus* and *voluntas*, and the transcendentals of being correspond to the human soul's structure: *unum*, *verum* and *bonum*. Both the human being and the transcendentals of being originate ultimately from the Trinitarian life or actuality, which is a self-relation in truth and love: The Father generates a Word and both together spirate the nexus between Father and Son: the Holy Spirit. Bonaventure's notion of Trinitarian actuality as it is imaged in the human and being itself can help deepen Aquinas' metaphysical notion of created *esse* as the actuality of all acts: An enriched notion of Trinitarian actuality necessarily involves, just as Hugo of St. Victor's notion of love, a life of personal self-communication and reception, in the context of which the speech of divine 'suffering' makes sense, and does not involve mutability. Understanding Trinitarian actuality as the life of love exemplary for creation might open up vistas for a mutual fertilization between Thomistic metaphysics and Bonaventure's Trinitarian theology, so as to further the development of a Trinitarian ontology without confusing the distinction between Philosophy and Theology.

Keywords

Bonaventure; Trinitarian ontology; Epistemology; Species; Transcendentals; Actuality

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Klaus Hemmerle said in his *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, that a positive mutual relation between philosophy and theology lays the groundwork for answering the question of what a Trinitarian ontology should look like.¹ Hemmerle's esteem for Bonaventure's approach to the relation of theology and philosophy rests on the fact that while Bonaventure acknowledges the different approaches of the two disciplines as positive (faith is not the same as reason, revelation is not the same as thought about the world), he nevertheless considers only an ordered unity of the two as fruitful. While philosophy starts the path of thinking from below, from the world as it presents itself to us, theology starts from above, from the revelation God freely makes of Himself in Christ. Even though theology has the power to integrate every human thought from above, there is a genuine discontinuity between the philosophical approach from below and the theological approach based on revelation from above. This discontinuity, however, is 'the very place where that incalculable excess dawns, which is given from above'.² Theology has something to give to philosophy's own subject and truly illuminates reason from above, without destroying it, and both disciplines start from what is given, either from above or from below.

How such an illumination of philosophy by theology is fruitful has been already shown by Hemmerle and others to a great extent.³ However, it might be worthwhile to look at Bonaventure's epistemology again to parse out how a Trinitarian ontology accounts for both the givenness of the world in our dialogue with it and for the givenness of God to whom the world stands in a relation of analogy.⁴ On the one hand, Bonaventure's philosophical epistemology takes reason seriously, as well as its starting point in sense perception, but on the other hand, it is infused with connotations referring to the Trinitarian God through the

¹ Klaus Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, Kriterien 40 (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1976), 13–14. On Hemmerle see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodramatik IV. Das Endspiel* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983), 64f.

² Klaus Hemmerle, *Theologie als Nachfolge. Bonaventura – ein Weg für heute* (Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 1975), 59 [my translation].

³ See again his *Theologie als Nachfolge*. Of course, the following two thinkers need to be mentioned here as well: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ferdinand Ulrich.

⁴ Hemmerle speaks of a dia-logical ana-logy. See "'Dia-logische Ana-logie" als Weg des Denkens zum göttlichen Gott,' in Klaus Hemmerle, *Gott und das Denken nach Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1968), 323–331.

Son: The Father generates the single most perfect and consubstantial resemblance of Himself in the Son or, better, the Word.⁵ Of course, it is impossible to address the whole of Bonaventure's epistemology in these short pages, thus we limit ourselves to some key remarks and interpretations inspired by two writings of Bonaventure.⁶

Firstly, we focus on Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* and ask three questions:

1. What is it about the object of knowledge that makes it possible that it is known by a human knower?
2. What is it about the human intellect that it knows anything at all?
3. What is the foundation in the act of being that allows for created beings to be known and know in the first place?

Secondly, moving to Bonaventure's *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, we will ask: Are the Trinitarian connotations in Bonaventure's epistemology an indication that he is a proto-univocalist thinker who tries to submit God and creation to identical principles of thought and being? Or is there an ever greater dissimilarity within all the similarity between God and the world that safeguards both God's transcendence as well as his analogical immanence within created being?

1. The *Obiectum fontanum* Generating the *species*

In the second chapter of *Itinerarium mentis*, before considering the conditions of human knowing on the side of the human intellect, Bonaventure focuses on the object's manifold sensible self-communications, which are always already gushing forth from it, in that the object sends out similarities or expressions of its own substance or

⁵ According to Etienne Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, transl. by D.I. Trethowan and F.J. Sheed (Paterson NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1965), 130–132, for Bonaventure the Father's complete self-expression in the consubstantial Word, who is the single perfect resemblance to the Father and, as the expressed and expressive model of all things, the Word is the center of the true metaphysician's perspective. Highlighting exemplarism as the location of the overlap between theology and philosophy, Gilson adds *ibid.*, 144, that 'St Bonaventure makes no specific distinction between our theological knowledge of the Word and our philosophical knowledge of the ideas.'

⁶ For a more in-depth account of Bonaventure's philosophical epistemology see Andreas Speer, *Triplex veritas. Wahrheitsverständnis und philosophische Denkform Bonaventuras*, *Franziskanische Forschungen* 32 (Werl: Dietrich-Coelde Verlag, 1987). See also Jan A. Aertsen's review in *Vivarium*, 29, 2 (1991): 155.

essence. The substance always transcends the particular expressions that emanate from it as the substance is always richer than what is manifested of it in any single instance.⁷ In the second chapter of the *Itinerarium mentis*, Bonaventure delivers the first Trinitarian connotation in this regard:

If, therefore, all things that can be known, generate a likeness of themselves, they manifestly proclaim that in them as in mirrors we can see the eternal generation of the Word, the Image and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father.⁸

Any created thing's generation or expression of semblances of itself is the first cornerstone of human knowledge, and has for Bonaventure its ultimate foundation in the Trinitarian procession of the Son from the Father.⁹ The likeness a thing expresses of itself is designated by Bonaventure with the Latin term *species*¹⁰ (meaning outward

⁷ In the same vein, a philosophical conception of truth is developed by Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik I. Wahrheit der Welt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1985), 25–78. *Ibid.*, X–XII he mentions that his philosophical notion of truth has one of its ultimate foundations in Bonaventure's Trinitarian doctrine of *expressio*. For Balthasar, one cannot deny that the supernatural implants itself at the very heart of the structures of created being, wafts through them like a fragrance and acts like a leaven in it. Consciously or unconsciously, philosophy and the human intellect cannot but stand under the prefix of faith in this Trinitarian grounding or the lack thereof. For Balthasar's account of Bonaventure's *expressio* doctrine see *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik. Band II: Fächer der Stile, Teil 1: Klerikale Stile* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1984), 288–311.

⁸ Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* [henceforth quoted as *Itin.*] II,7. We quote from Bonaventure's works in the Quaracchi edition: *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, edita studio et cura PP. Collegii a S. Bonaventura, 10 vols., Quaracchi 1882–1902.

⁹ See also Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 145f.

¹⁰ For the term *species* in Bonaventure see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit*. II/1, 298–303. For a history of the term *intelligible species* see Leen Spruit, *Species Intelligibilis: From Perception to Knowledge. Volume One: Classical Roots and Medieval Discussions*, Leiden: Brill, 1994, on Bonaventure: 134–137. See also the detailed analysis of Bonaventure's thinking on *species* in Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation, and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 75–110. Karnes makes the point at 89f. that Bonaventure distinguishes with Augustine two sorts of *species*. The first is acquired through the senses and presented by the imagination as phantasms to the intellect's abstractive power (*Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum M. Petri Lombardi* [henceforth quoted as *Sent.*] XXIV.p.I.a.II.q.IV, resp (*Opera omnia* 2:569). Calling this likeness abstracted from phantasms a *species* points to its end: being that in and through which the intellect 'sees' the sensible object. The second type of *species* are the 'innate *species*', which 'are

appearance, shape, semblance, form, figure; not to be equated with the English word *species*!) and described thus:

The *species*, which is apprehended, is a likeness generated in a medium and then impressed upon the [sense] organ itself. Through this impression, it leads to its source, namely the object to be known.¹¹

The *species* or the likeness does not become self-sufficient but always points back to its own origin, the object, from which it was generated, while it also points to the receiver and stands in service of his reception of the object and the receiver's own original response over against the object he receives. The *species* thus safeguards both the originality of the object as well as the subject that receives it.¹²

imprinted directly on the memory' (Karnes, *Imagination*, 89) without the intermediary senses. Depending on whether the object of the intellect is accessible to the senses or not, the *species* is either abstracted from sense experience or the soul knows the object naturally, *per essentiam*, not through a likeness received from the senses. Such a-sensible objects are God, the soul, and what is in the soul. I am here focusing on the first type of *species*, and I emphasize both aspects contained in this type of *species*: the activity of the object in 'bodily' generating the semblance, and the senses' and imagination's ability to receive them and present them to the intellect's consideration. Importantly, however, the fact that Bonaventure uses the same term for both acquired and innate *species*, means that there is a certain hierarchical analogy by degree of likeness to the object between the two sorts of *species*. This analogy is confirmed on the one hand by the fact that the general definition given further down in *Itin.* II,5 fits both types of *species*, such that the two types are similar to each other. On the other hand, in *Sent.* XVII.p.I.q.IV, resp (*Opera omnia* 1:301) Bonaventure differentiates the acquired *species* from the innate *species* by saying that the acquired *species* is only a likeness of the object, whereas the innate *species* is a likeness that also is a sort of truth in itself (Ibid.: *similitudo tantum* (acquired *species*) and *similitudo, quod [est] etiam quaedam veritas in se ipsa* (innate *species*)). Karnes, *Imagination*, 90 notes that Bonaventure *ibid.* uses the term 'innate *species*' for both types of *species*. What can lead to confusion in this passage is that for the sake of the argument Bonaventure considers the possibility that an acquired *species* could be innate, but he denies that proposition and says the soul is created naked of such a type of *species*, whereas the *actual* innate *species* is innate in the soul by virtue of an impression of the highest truth from the beginning of its existence. For a most helpful explanation on the intelligible *species* in Aquinas along the lines of a 'Formal Constituent View' see Therese Scarpelli Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species As Formal Constituents,' *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione Filosofica Medievale* 51 (2020): 261–309.

¹¹ Bonaventure, *Itin.* II,7. For an account of the theory of vision by *species* and *medium* in the Middle Ages see David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision From Al-Kindi To Kepler* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 104–121.

¹² See Hemmerle, *Nachfolge*, 77f: The *species* is the center, the knot, the axis, as well as the beginning of the double movement of the appearing object and the knowing subject towards each other. We note that the goodness whence the *species* proceeds is not at root a naturalistic or deterministic automatism of expression, in an overly

With the help of the analogy of the Trinitarian model of the fontal plenitude and goodness of the Father, who expresses Himself, the complete divine essence and everything completely in the Son, who then expresses that Himself, Bonaventure is able to hold together the object or the ‘Ding-an-sich’ with its sensory-intellectual outward expression in space and time as well as its reception by human senses and finally reason – a nexus that is negated by Kant’s separation of *noumena* and *phenomena*, of objects in themselves and their outward sensory appearances. Kant’s negation of this nexus ultimately bespeaks the absence of faith in the self-communicative goodness at the heart of being and reality that is pre-fixed to his philosophy.

The *species*’ procession from the object and its self-surrender to or impression upon, as it were, the bodily senses are both in service to and communicate or verbalize the object’s essence. Thus, the *species*’ own lack of completeness or poverty over against the fullness and richness of the object’s complete essence enables the object’s self-manifestation to another’s sense perception in the medium of space and time. By this very limitedness, however, the *species* encompasses its origin, the transmitting medium as well as the term within the senses or the intellect:

The *species* has the notion of form, power or operation according to whether it is viewed in relation to the principle from which it flows [form]; or to the medium through which it passes [power]; or to the term on which it acts [operation].¹⁵

Bonaventure clarifies that an object’s self-manifestation through the *species* is properly enacted when there is a harmonious proportionality between its origin, medium and destiny.

What in the sensible *species* can only be an imperfect proportion, finds its complete fulfillment and archetype in the Son’s perfect proportion to the Father within the Trinity. This perfect proportion unifies harmoniously the poverty of the Son’s not-being the same person as the Father and his consubstantial and equal sharing in the wealth of the divine essence. The Father’s generous wellspring-like quality

exaggerated sense of Platonic goodness as essential but impersonal principle, but stands ultimately at the service of the personal freedom of the mutual encounter between object and subject.

¹⁵ Bonaventure, *Itin.* II,5.

constitutes the supernatural archetype for the created substance's actuality to generate likenesses of itself.¹⁴ The fact that the Father or, analogically, the substance, does not appear and communicate Himself 'directly', as it were, but remains hidden as such, and only expresses Himself and appears as it were in and through an other, the Son, his Word, or the *species*, need not be understood as a defect of self-communication or a lack of directness.

Rather, following the Christian tradition, God is truly the divine Father in that he completely communicates or, for the lack of a better word, surrenders without loss the overabundant richness of his own

¹⁴ Cory, 'Aquinas's Intelligible Species,' 279–289 reads the intelligible *species* in the context of Aquinas's metaphysics of form, where the form communicates ('gives') the actuality of being to potential matter by in-forming it, whereas matter is here related to the receptive side of the intellect. Similarly to form, then, even though the *species* qualifies as an accident of the intellect, the *species* is that by which (*id quo*) the intellect comes into his own actuality through the act of knowing the known. It is ultimately in virtue of this one actuality of being that is communicated by form/*species*, that in the act of the intellect both *actio* and *passio* have their place. See Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q.8.a.6.resp: "The knower and the known, insofar as some one reality is constituted from them, which is the intellect in act, are one principle of this act, which is knowing; and I say [mark the personal emphasis seldom seen in Aquinas!], that from both [knower and known] some one reality is constituted, insofar as what is known is joined to the knower either by [*per*] its essence [angelic knowledge], or by likeness [human knowledge by acquired *species*]. Therefore, the knower does not behave as an agent or as passive, unless by accident; because, insofar as for the intelligible to be united to the intellect, some action or passiveness is required. Action, insofar as the agent intellect makes the *species* to be intelligible in act; passivity, insofar as the potential intellect receives the intelligible species. Yet knowing follows upon this passivity or action, just as the effect follows upon the cause. Thus just as the bright body shines when light in act is in it, so the intellect knows all that is intelligible in act in it. [...] Things existing in act can perform actions, insofar as they are in act; so our potential intellect cannot know anything before it is perfected by the intelligible form in act. Because then it knows the thing to which that form belongs; neither can it know itself unless through an intelligible form that exists in it in act. The intellect of the angel, because it has its essence, which is like the act in the genus of intelligibles, present to itself, it can know that which is intelligible in itself, i.e. its essence, not by any likeness [acquired *species*], but by itself. This could be interpreted in the following way: As a human being, it is due to the actuality of being as formally communicated to me by the other that as I go outside of myself to relate to the other by being informed and actualized by the other's likeness produced *and* received in me, I become more present and intelligible to myself through the intellect that is active and receptive in me: *Conversio ad phantasma* and *reditio ad se ipsum* are united in virtue of the one actuality of being as communicated to me by another. The whole process of knowledge as a union of the knower and the known is only explained via recourse to actuality, which for Aquinas is pure only in God. From Bonaventure's side we can see more explicitly that the actuality of being positively and perfectly includes both action and passivity, because Trinitarian actuality is its exemplar.

essence to be the Son's and lets the Son be the complete expression of the Father.¹⁵ For Bonaventure, in the second Person as the *medium* and the *mediator*, the whole Trinity is expressed and present in such a way that His mediation does not destroy immediacy to the Father but constitutes *true* unity, which includes positive difference and mediation.¹⁶ Even though on the purely created level we do not have complete and perfect mediation in that Trinitarian sense, the positivity of the mediation of the substance by the *species* is nevertheless safeguarded in that the *species* ultimately participates in and imitates Christ's perfect mediatory actuality. In and through the mediating *species*, we thus encounter the substance not only as essentially good and expressive of itself, but also as personally free in giving itself to be seen by another and allowing for a free response by the other in turn. By truly receiving the *species* as that by which the substance communicates itself, we truly receive the substance as mediated to us. By attempting to circumvent the *species* in order to get at the substance directly, we miss the very presence of the substance in that *species* and skip over the very way in which this substance is giving itself to us concretely and freely. In the divine mediation, mediate and immediate are not opposites.¹⁷

As we can glimpse from this above attempt to answer our first question, epistemology and Trinitarian Theology mutually elucidate each other in Bonaventure.

2. Human Intellect

This mutual elucidation becomes even more explicit and technical when we turn to the human intellect's conditions of knowing. On

¹⁵ Ferdinand Ulrich has contemplated this Trinitarian relation of Father and Son deeply in *Gabe und Vergebung: Ein Beitrag zur biblischen Ontologie*, Schriften V, 2nd ed. (Freiburg: Johannes-Verlag, 2015).

¹⁶ See Wayne Hellmann, Ordo. *Untersuchung eines Grundgedankens in der Theologie Bonaventuras* (München/Paderborn/Wien: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1974), 73: The title 'Son' refers back to the first person of the Father, 'image' refers to his own subsistence in Himself, 'Word' refers to the manifestation and communication to a third Person, the Holy Spirit.

¹⁷ See Hellmann, Ordo, 74f. For such a positive sense of mediation, see also David C. Schindler, 'Mediation: The Distinguishing Mark of Christianity,' *Communio International Catholic Review* 48.1 (Spring 2021): 6-29, at 21: '[I]n mediation, one not only enriches the other, but one allows oneself to be enriched by the other. [...] This deepened generosity is thus a genuinely reciprocal relation. Mediation allows the other to make a contribution, so to speak, to "add something" to the relation.'

the one hand, Bonaventure considers man as a microcosm because, through his five senses, he receives into his soul all the qualities and the order of the material macrocosmos.¹⁸ On the other hand, the structure of the human soul corresponds to the Trinity, as it is the image of the Trinitarian God, conceived in the Augustinian terms of *memoria*, *intelligentia* and *voluntas*, or *mens generans*, *verbum*, and *amor*.¹⁹ Both the correspondence of the intellectual soul with the Trinity and the correspondence of the embodied soul to the material world through the five senses mean that the human being, or rather Christ, the Word incarnate, stands at the center and forms the linchpin or ladder between heaven and earth. The human being's original outward orientation towards the material world establishes the starting point for an inward turn: The human soul is the very term on which an object's outward *species* operates through the senses.²⁰ In that way, there is an epistemic dynamism that includes a move from sense perception towards intellectual perception, as the sensory *species* operates in service of man's intellectual recognition of an object's essence. Bonaventure considers the sensory dimension of the *species* within the context of its intellectual origin in the substance's essence and its *telos* in the human intellect.

We must note that, for Bonaventure, the intellect itself possesses a sort of immaterial *a priori* knowledge through illumination. Interpreting Bonaventure, this illumination, however, seems to not be isolated, as it were, from sense perception.²¹ The illumination 'pushes' the intellect to abstract a notion of the immaterial essence that manifests

¹⁸ Bonaventure, *Itin.* II,2-3.

¹⁹ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,6.

²⁰ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,1.

²¹ See Karnes, *Imagination*, 90: 'It is, in my view, far from clear that even the few things Bonaventure lists as known without the senses entirely exclude them.' Karnes, *ibid.* 92 makes the point that Bonaventure 'merges an Aristotelian philosophy of imagination with an Augustinian doctrine of illumination'. I am using the admittedly Kantian terms of *a priori* and *a posteriori* to speak about the relation of knowledge by illumination and knowledge acquired by sense perception in Bonaventure. It seems key to me that the cognition of the first principles, practical or intellectual, is said by Bonaventure in 2 *Sent.* XXXIX.a.I.q.II, resp (*Opera omnia* 2:905) to be innate ('*a priori*', as Kant would say) in us both in virtue of the soul's innate light and in virtue of the fact that this innate light suffices to know these principles. Bonaventure adds, however, that the light suffices for the knowledge only *post receptionem specierum*, and here he means the acquired type of *species* abstracted from sense perception. In other words, the innate light suffices to gain certain knowledge, but only if this light shines on knowledge gained from the senses first.

itself sensibly in the *species*. The intellect's creative activity of abstraction and forming concepts could also be construed as a sort of receptive imitation of the essence's activity of continually generating likenesses of itself: The intellect 'learns', as it were, *aposteriori* from the sensible objects present to it, to generate a likeness in himself of the thing known, but now on the intellectual plane so that the abstracted likeness takes on the form of an interior word. If it is true that '[a]ll knowledge indeed is, in the strict sense of the term, an assimilation'²² then we could even consider the intellect's epistemic activity of forming concepts or words as a sort of assimilation to or recapitulation of the generous well-spring-like fruitfulness of the intellectual-sensible object, which mirrors, again, the divine fruitfulness in an analogical sense.²³ In other words, the human being discovers who she is by imitating and assimilating into herself the productive and generative relation of the object's essence to its *species*, the results of which she sees already exemplified outside herself in the material realm. In that, the human being is generated or inspired both by the object's generosity and the *species*' concrete verbalization or expression of that object. Thus she learns and speaks her own words by receiving and imitating that ultimately Trinitarian dynamism or actuality of truth and love that is imprinted upon the very realm of material reality from the beginning.

To be more concretely anthropological: of all sensible objects the human child encounters, the parents, especially the mother, are the primary persons the child relates to. By speaking words to the child, the mother communicates her own generous fruitfulness to the child so that the child grows in conscious intellectual conception through imitation of the mother's generosity.²⁴ In other words, the child does not come up with the activity of speaking and even his own thinking as

²² Gilson, *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, 133.

²³ If intellectual conception is expression, as Gilson says *ibid.*, 133–134, then the intellect's expressive activity must be preceded by an impression, just as the divine Word cannot express the Father's generative activity before the divine essence has been impressed upon Him. Here again we see the intimate connection between the *conversio ad phantasma* and the *reditio ad seipsum*: We learn from the other what we are able to do ourselves by imitating him: We come to ourselves by the mediation of the other.

²⁴ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spiritus Creator: Skizzen zur Theologie* III (Einsiedeln: Johannes-Verlag, 1967), 13, makes the point that the child awakens to consciousness through the love of the mother: Bonaventure can help us see why this ultimately points to God as the exemplary cause of generative self-expression and reception by imitation.

language independently on his own by interior illumination but begins to act genuinely on its own by first receptively imitating and assimilating the generosity it witnesses through the senses, even though this would never happen without a sort of *a priori* knowledge or illumination at work and active already within the child's intellect.

Regarding the intellect's own interior conditions for knowledge, Bonaventure expressly states that there would be no knowledge at all unless the human being had an *a priori* understanding of the *ens per se*, of being *itself*.²⁵ However, even though this interior knowledge is a given condition, it is not *evident* to the human being from the beginning but has to be arrived at through the process of *reductio*, which takes its starting point from a reflection upon the previous activity of knowing an object, beginning with sense perception, that has already been performed.

We have seen that for Bonaventure the human soul is interiorly structured in a Trinitarian fashion, and the embodied soul is related to the material world through the senses. However, what unites the human being in these relations to the Trinity upward/inward and to the sensible world downward/outward, as it were, is that as an embodied soul with a Trinitarian structure, it is not only related to the sensory but more profoundly related to the realm of the created being, *ens*, that manifests itself in the sensory world. The *ens* is itself structured in a Trinitarian fashion, which corresponds to the soul's structure.

This correspondence of the object, *ens*, and the soul can be shown in the following way: The first preliminary (*sempiene*) station on the way of Bonaventure's method of *reductio* or analysis²⁶, which is the tracing back of the realized fact of human knowledge towards its necessary conditions, are the three features or three transcendentals of every *ens*:

²⁵ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,3.

²⁶ See Andreas Speer. 'Bonaventure and the Question of a Medieval Philosophy,' *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 6, 1 (1997): 40–42; *resolutio* or analysis is the complement of synthesis, *compositio*. For Bonaventure's conception of analysis, see: Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff, 'Die Methoden der Metaphysik im Mittelalter,' in *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter. Ihr Ursprung und ihre Bedeutung. Vorträge des II. Internationalen Kongresses für mittelalterliche Philosophie, Köln, 31. August – 6. September 1961, Miscellanea mediaevalia* 2, ed. Paul Wilpert (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1963), 71–81; Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals. The Case of Thomas Aquinas*, Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 52 (Leiden/New York/Köln: Brill, 1996), 162–164.

the *unum*, *verum* and *bonum* (the one, the true and the good).²⁷ The faculties of the human soul correspond to these three features of *ens*: the ‘memory’ (*memoria*), a wider concept than memory and perhaps equal to soul or consciousness as such, is the unified representation and retention of all the manifold temporal, ideal and certain realities in one faculty or the soul simply and corresponds to the *unum*.²⁸ The *memoria* allows the soul to collect (*legere* – collect/read) and hold together a being’s manifold *species* and refer them to the same one and single *ens* that expresses itself in diverse *species*. The intellect reads these *species* as true expressions of a whole and combines the true knowledge of terms, propositions and conclusions. Thus the intellect corresponds to the *verum*.²⁹ The will of the human being is that faculty with which he or she deliberates over, judges, and desires the *bonum* that is this being.³⁰ In other words, it places this being in the hierarchy and sequence of the whole. This threefold correspondence or connaturality³¹ of the soul to the realm of being is the necessary condition for the human intellect to know anything in the first place.³²

Further following Bonaventure’s stages of the pilgrimage of the soul towards God, from the explicit contemplation of the order of the three human faculties together with the three transcendental aspects of *ens per se*, the wise person arrives at a contemplation of the Trinity³³ as manifested already within created being.³⁴

3. Created Being (*esse*)

For Bonaventure, the transcendentals of the one, the true and the good gain their concrete shape and depth not merely from their correspondence to the human faculties, but ultimately as expressions of

²⁷ Famously, the *resolutio*, when fully performed, leads all the way to God as the ultimately necessary and implied content of human knowledge – Bonaventure’s proof for the existence of God.

²⁸ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,2.

²⁹ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,3.

³⁰ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,4

³¹ For this term see e.g. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I. 13. 1 ad 3.

³² For a comparison of the classical account of truth qua being and the postmodern account of the isolated mind opposite being see David C. Schindler, *Love and the Post-modern Predicament. Rediscovering the Real in Beauty, Goodness, and Truth*, Veritas 28 (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2018), 64–84.

³³ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,5.

³⁴ Bonaventure, *Itin.* III,6.

the Trinitarian life of God, who is one, true and good in a transcendent manner and of which the human soul and being as such are images. More specifically, being's (*ens*'s) transcendental of the *verum* is the foundation for any human knowledge, in that a being can express true manifestations of itself. The *verum*, conversely, has its own foundation within the Son as the true and complete personal expression or self-gift of the Father within the Trinity.⁵⁵ The *bonum* seems to refer to the original goodness of the Father in that he expresses or gives Himself to the Son, and the Son's referring back to the Father in reciprocal love as well as recapitulating the very goodness of the Father by spirating the Holy Spirit as their *nexus* together with the Father.

For Thomas Aquinas, truth as a transcendental is not something added unto *ens* as extrinsic to it but is deeply embedded in it by virtue of what Thomas calls the *actus essendi* of the *ens*, the act of being (*esse*), the actuality of all acts.⁵⁶ By gathering from Bonaventure a deeply Trinitarian notion of actuality as rooted within God's Trinitarian actuality, that includes the one, true and the good within it, we can elucidate Aquinas' metaphysical notion of the act of being (*esse*), so as to open it up to a Trinitarian ontology and possibly gleam the fertility of a mutual dialogue between the two great scholastic thinkers.⁵⁷

How does Bonaventure describe Trinitarian actuality? For an attempt to answer this question, in the second section of this article

⁵⁵ Cf. Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit* II,1, 292.

⁵⁶ See Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 245–289.

⁵⁷ It seems that Aquinas himself would have been open to appropriate the transcendentals of *unum*, *verum* et *bonum* to the Trinitarian person of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. See Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy*, 408–415. Hemmerle, *Nachfolge* 114f does not see such an affinity between Thomas and Bonaventure. For him, even though Thomas's concept of *esse* safeguards somehow the dynamic aspects Bonaventure is careful to point out, it is nevertheless slanted towards stability, substantiality and the quality of firmness that *esse* conveys to what is real. He notes that Bonaventure can think better than Thomas about the fact that relation and love within being are the foundation for the constancy of being's substantiality or existence. Love is what is constant first, whence all constancy derives for Hemmerle. However, F. Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus. Das Wagnis der Seinsfrage* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1998), 7–234, has shown, by pointing to Thomas' understanding of *esse* as a *completum et simplex sed non subsistens*, that Thomas has a very dynamic and relational understanding of the *esse* that constitutes the substantiality and firmness of the *ens*. See especially his term 'Subsistenzbewegung': *esse*'s movement towards subsistence. For Ulrich, *ibid.*, 235–524, this movement of *esse* is recapitulated personally by the human being according to the transcendentals of being.

we turn to his *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*.⁵⁸ There he first states that the concept of actuality in God presupposes God's immutability, highest simplicity, and eternity.⁵⁹ Secondly, divine actuality consists more precisely in 'a full conversion of itself to itself through knowing and loving, whereas intellect includes a word, and love includes a *nexus*'.⁴⁰

In other words, the Trinitarian processions of the Word from the Father and of the *nexus* of Father and Word (Holy Spirit) from within the unity of God's self-relation in truth and love are the ultimate and exemplary form of actuality as such, whence all other actuality, such as the act of being, the life of the human soul, and the life of the material cosmos, is derived and where it should return to as its original meaning. Notably, the generation of the Word and the spiration of the Spirit in the Trinity include a sort of *transcendent* self-reception on the part of the Son vis-à-vis the Father (and of the Spirit vis-à-vis both), so that 'passivity' or 'receptivity' constitute an integral part of divine *actuality*, without of course any damage being done thereby to God's immutability!⁴¹

This complements Aquinas' understanding of God in the following sense: If God is understood by Thomas as *ipsum esse subsistens*, and we interpret God's gift of *esse* to created beings in relation to the Thomistic conception of created *esse* as *esse intensivum*, that contains all the good riches of creation within itself, and on which, according to Cornelio Fabro,⁴² Aquinas' metaphysics is built, then it should be intelligible from a Thomistic standpoint that the actuality within the Trinitarian God truly includes every perfection, even a 'transcendent "limitation" in reception' if even that truly is a perfection. In Thomistic

⁵⁸ For a fuller account of Bonaventure's notion of Trinitarian actuality see Klaus Obenauer, *Summa Actualitas*. Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXIII: Theologie, Vol. 559 (Frankfurt a.M./Berlin/Bern/New York/Paris/Wien: Peter Lang, 1996), 65–107.

⁵⁹ Bonaventure, *Quaestiones disputatae de mysterio Ss. Trinitatis* [henceforth quoted as *Myst. Trin.*], VI,2 c.

⁴⁰ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,2 c.

⁴¹ This point is made by Balthasar, *Theodramatik IV*, 74f: This allows for a clearer vision of the God-world relationship beyond a simple opposition of God's actuality and the creature's potentiality. For an American reception of this idea see David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World. Center of the Church*. *Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 232f; 240–242: Receptivity as a perfection.

⁴² Cornelio Fabro, *Participation et Causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Bibliothèque de la revue thomiste (Fribourg: Parole et Silence, 2015), 220; 508.

metaphysics, nowhere else than from and through this actuality of *esse* is the substance's firm receptive *capability* of receiving *esse* in order to be-in-act constituted in the first place. If Trinitarian actuality is to be at its heart personal self-communication, there has to be included in its transcendent receptivity as well.⁴⁵ In more traditional terms: A Trinitarian God's actuality includes the communication and givenness of the divine essence from the Father to the Son.⁴⁴

4. Created and Divine *Esse*

The statement that there is a divine sort of reception or passivity immediately begs the question, however: Do divine being and created being simply follow the exact same laws of self-gift and actuality that univocally transcend both God and creatures and govern both realms? If this question is answered in the affirmative, the Trinity would merely be a more perfect instantiation of this meta-transcendent quasi-essential supra-divine law of self-gift and reception. In other words, we can ask: By discovering these all too close similarities between the Trinity and created being, does Bonaventure not inaugurate a univocal ontology of one single genus or logic of being (*ens*) under which God and creation fall?⁴⁵

Perhaps he could be construed to think this way, but in his *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity*, Bonaventure is very clear: if we

⁴⁵ For Thomas' concept of actuality as self-communication see Fran O'Rourke, *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 245–250. For Aquinas' notion of *esse intensivum* see *ibid.*, 174–187.

⁴⁴ Martin Bieler argues in the present volume, that in this Trinitarian self-communication the divine essence never takes on a subsistence of its own apart from the three divine Persons as it is always already completely given and received in them, not being some fourth reality next to the persons. Inner-Trinitarian communication is thus the exemplary ground even for the non-subsistence of *esse commune* as always already given away to and received by created substances. Here, with the help of F. Ulrich, ontology becomes again transparent to Trinitarian theology.

⁴⁵ For this charge and others see John Milbank, 'The Franciscan Conundrum,' *Communio International Catholic Review* 42.3 (Fall 2015): 488–491; *Id.*, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate Concerning the Supernatural*: Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2005, 96f. As Milbank's judgement on Bonaventure hinges on the argument that Bonaventure was a semi-Joachite, we have to point out Bonaventure's Christocentrism along with e.g. Henri de Lubac, *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore* (Paris: Cerf, 2014), 23–139, and C. Colt Anderson, *St. Bonaventure's Collationes in Hexaëmeron and the Joachite Controversy* (PhD Diss.: Marquette University, 1998), who show the profound criticism Bonaventure made of the Joachite conception of time and history held by some members of his own order.

think we can extrapolate some univocal rules that govern the Trinity by applying our reason to created being, we are mistaken: God is above and outside of every genus of being (*supra et extra omne genus entis*).⁴⁶ Every time Bonaventure encounters the fact that any term whatever, for example ‘form’, is used for both created being as well as for uncreated being in a seemingly univocal manner, he employs the term *duplex* to clarify that in the case of the term ‘form’ for example, the term possesses a twofold (*duplex*) meaning.⁴⁷ Even though he uses the same terms in philosophy as well as theology, Bonaventure is always aware that the same words do not denote identical univocal concepts or realities. For Bonaventure, what differentiates the divinity from creation in the *Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity* is the primary and most perfect simplicity of God. Divine simplicity allows Bonaventure to renounce any sort of univocal concepts between God and creation and state firmly that

The created good and the uncreated good do not share in a common nature, both because the highest good is of a greater simplicity [...] and because the highest good exceeds every created good by a disproportional excess.⁴⁸

Instead of univocity, Bonaventure holds firmly to a view of analogy between God and created beings, as we would have expected an orthodox theologian to do after the doctrinal assertions made by the 4th Lateran council in 1215. He writes:

Therefore, when the term ‘good’ is predicated of the created and uncreated good, this is not possible unless in virtue of a certain analogy [*per quondam analogiam*], because all created goodness flows from uncreated goodness as if from its first cause. Thus, created good follows after it and thus falls short of the highest simplicity. Highest simplicity however comes as it were first, and in virtue of the fact that it comes first it is most simple.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VII,1 ad 7. For this ‘constant doctrine’ of Bonaventure see George H. Tavard, ‘The Coincidence of Opposites: A Recent Interpretation of Bonaventure,’ *Theological Studies* 41.3 (1980): 579.

⁴⁷ See Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* II,2, ad 1: *duplex est forma*.

⁴⁸ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* III,1 ad 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Patently, this means that Bonaventure does not conceive of the relation of creation to God by means of a shared form, but in virtue of a certain influence of God upon his creation, like a cause is participated by its effects.⁵⁰ Admittedly, this can take on a negative tone when Bonaventure writes that God transcends his creation infinitely due to the ontological ‘deficit’ on the side of the creature. However, if this ontological lack of created beings is ‘circumscribed or abstracted by the intellect, it leads to knowledge of the eternity within the divine *esse*’.⁵¹

This circumscription or abstraction is to be performed according to the following principle: ‘Created things, when they are applied to the creator, should be applied to him according to what they possess of completeness, not according to what they possess of incompleteness.’⁵²

Additionally, the lack of simplicity in created beings does not mean a total lack of perfection, rather their limited perfections taken together point us towards God’s simple perfection. Bonaventure thus goes on to say that ‘among creatures, various and diverse things, such as goodness and wisdom, justice and mercy, correspond to things which in God are the same.’⁵³

Note that this combination of variety towards a unified concept of God applies particularly to realities which are seemingly opposites of each other in creation (e.g., justice and mercy). Bonaventure terms these realities *incompossibilia*, things that cannot possibly exist together by nature and be identical. However, Bonaventure describes God’s simplicity as the locus of the paradoxical coincidence of these apparent opposites.⁵⁴

Let us briefly note the history of Bonaventure research on the coincidence of opposites in the 20th century. Although it was Cousins, who pointed to the importance of this concept in Bonaventure, serious flaws in his definition of the term ‘opposites’ had to be highlighted by scholars such as Tavad⁵⁵ and Thomas Michael Tomasic.⁵⁶ Tavad makes

⁵⁰ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* III,1 ad 11. This is not a new view original to Bonaventure by all means, but can be found wherever the *triplex via* of naming God is applied. Cf. Fran O’Rourke, ‘The *triplex via* of Naming God,’ *The Review of Metaphysics* 69 (March 2016): 519–554; Henri de Lubac, *The Discovery of God*, trans. by D. L. Schindler (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 120–127; 151–157.

⁵¹ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* V,1, c.

⁵² Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,2 ad 2.

⁵³ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* V,1 ad 13.

⁵⁴ See Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* III,1 c.

⁵⁵ Tavad, ‘The Coincidence of Opposites,’ *Theological Studies* 41.5 (Sept. 1980): 576–584.

⁵⁶ See Tomasic’s review in: *Speculum* 56.1 (Jan. 1981): 111–114.

the helpful remark that we should not understand this coincidence of opposites christologically as a coincidence of the ‘opposites’ of the human and the divine nature in Christ, as, also according to Bonaventure, opposites must be in the same genus. The divine and the human do not share a genus, as we have seen, however. Indeed, conceiving of creation and creator as opposites leads in a completely different direction from the analogical approach we have seen Bonaventure take and leads to the more univocal one we have outlined before. We do not agree with Tavard, however, that Bonaventure would completely reject the coincidence of opposites as a suitable model in theology at large.⁵⁷

In fact, historical predecessors to Bonaventure include thinkers like Ps-Dionysius, Maximus the Confessor, and earlier Fathers, as well as some Platonic philosophers. For them, the coincidence of opposites points to the fact that the divine simplicity both transcends and grounds human thought, which relies on the distinction of opposites and the real difference between subject and predicate. For Maximus the Confessor, Jesus Christ’s divine being is revealed in his human existence by a certain coincidence of opposites on the level of created being, such that the coincidence of opposites in God is analogically manifested on the level of Christ’s created humanity.⁵⁸ One example Maximus uses is Christ’s walking on water, which constitutes a coincidence of the opposite qualities (*incompossibilia* in Bonaventure’s terms) of the instability of water and the stability of solid ground on which one can walk. Already John the Evangelist clearly identifies in the person of Christ the paradoxical coincidence of lordship and servanthood by declaring his humiliating death on the cross to be his simultaneous exaltation.⁵⁹

Obenauer also agrees with Cousins that the concept of the coincidence of opposites is important for Bonaventure’s Trinitarian Theology,

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 580, n. 15 and 583. For a more positive reception of Cousins’ thesis, with the clarification that we have to see the main basis for what coincidence of opposites means in Bonaventure’s Trinitarian theology, see Zachary Hayes’ review of Cousins in *The Journal of Religion*, 60.3 (1980): 349–351. See also Cousins’ response, where he upholds both Christology and Trinitarian Theology as the grounds for the concept: ‘Bonaventure and the Coincidence of Opposites: A Response to Critics,’ *Theological Studies*, 42.2 (1981): 277–290.

⁵⁸ For this see Jonathan Bieler, *Der Einheitsbegriff als Kohärenzprinzip bei Maximus Confessor: Eine Studie zu Ps-Dionysius-Rezeption, triplex via und analogem Weltbild bei Maximus Confessor*, *Vigiliae Christianae*, Supplements 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

⁵⁹ For this see e.g. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 46–50.

but Obenauer more specifically distinguishes what the concept means in Bonaventure. He comes to the conclusion that Bonaventure upholds no *real* difference between the opposites in God who would form their complementary union, as Cousins seems to think. Rather, there is a sort of circumincessive identity of the opposites with each other within God, such that one notion, when taken under close scrutiny, necessarily includes within itself already its opposite, whereas any real difference that remains in God can only be strictly speaking the difference of the persons.⁶⁰

There are many opposite terms Bonaventure applies to divine simplicity. Noteworthy are the terms *esse* and *referrī*, substantial being and relational being. In this respect, Hemmerle notes the fundamental coincidence of self-possession and self-gift within the Trinitarian God for Bonaventure.⁶¹ Furthermore, actuality and passivity⁶² are mutually inclusive in God, in that we cannot describe his actuality, the Trinitarian processions, without the second and the third person's reception of the divine essence, as we have seen.

More precisely, the term passivity or reception or even suffering, to name the term strangest to our ears in the speech of God, can be correctly applied to the Trinity *only* through removal or negation of any sort of incompleteness or imperfection residing within the creaturely conception of the term passivity. For Bonaventure, there truly *exists* a reception of being within the Trinity; however, it is 'not an acquisition of new being (*esse*), yet it is nevertheless a reception of true and actual and eternal being (*esse*), as there is a true production in God, but no true change'.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Obenauer, *Summa Actualitas*, 61f; 76f. See also *Myst. Trin.* III,2 c. Evil is lack of being and perfection and there is no coincidence of good and evil in God, according to Bonaventure's principle that we only apply to God what belongs to completeness and perfection in created being, as we have seen above and will see below.

⁶¹ Hemmerle, *Nachfolge*, 75. *Ibid.*, 75, Hemmerle notes that the logic of productivity in God is a paradoxical logic.

⁶² Passivity is of course understood in an eminent sense that excludes all mutability and change. It is true, as Tavad, 'The Coincidence of Opposites': 580 says, that God's oneness is not compatible with any kind of potentiality. However, we ask the question whether reception in God constitutes the perfect archetype for any sort of receptivity and passivity on the created level: The *impressio* of the divine essence upon the Son as the archetypal receptivity within the divine actuality, in which created receptivity and passivity participate.

⁶⁵ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,2 ad 1.

Thus, any sort of change has to be removed from the notion of reception in order to apply it to the divine, but there is true generation nonetheless. A difficult thought indeed! Divine passivity or reception is thus to be understood only together with actuality, or what is more, divine reception is the very flipside or inner depth of divine actuality which differ from created activity and receptivity in being free from of all incompleteness.

At the heart of reality, therefore, is a simple, but freely productive God who unites within him opposites that seem mutually exclusive to human reason: substantial being and being in relation, actuality and passivity, unity and multiplicity. For human reason, precisely this paradoxical quality makes God recognizable, but not graspable as the transcendent God, since only he is able to perform seemingly mutually exclusive acts: being merciful as well as just, putting to death as well as bringing to life (1 *Sam* 2:6; *Dtn* 32:39).⁶⁴ Bonaventure concludes that ‘two opposites can be attributed to God without any sort of mutation on his part’.⁶⁵

For Bonaventure, this coincidence of opposites is ultimately based on the relations and processions of the divine persons in the Trinity as the very actuality of God’s being. Hemmerle says that the paradoxical logic of productivity opens up to the logic of love.⁶⁶ The Trinitarian life of the divine persons forms the heart of Bonaventure’s conception of actuality as a personal relation of God to Himself in knowledge and love, which is then analogically expressed in creation.

What is more, the Trinitarian life of the persons seems to constitute even the exemplar for the actuality of created being (*esse*) itself as gift, by which God creates and by which human beings are related in knowledge and love to other human beings. Thus, the footprint of the Trinity in creation is not merely to be understood according to the ‘Augustinian’ psychological model of *intra*-personal self-relation but remains at the heart of created *esse*, which is shared by and constitutes

⁶⁴ Cf. Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,1 sed contra 17. Among others, Cardinal De Lubac has pointed to this phenomenon of the paradoxical in the divine: See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri De Lubac. An Overview* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 91–103.

⁶⁵ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VI,1 c: *Deo possunt attribui duo opposita sine ulla sui mutatione.*

⁶⁶ See Hemmerle, *Nachfolge*, 82.

the relation between individual beings.⁶⁷ Created actuality has already embedded within it knowledge and love, which only become actualized through personal difference.⁶⁸ In this view, the Trinitarian life is the foundation for all interpersonal and embodied human life. Bonaventure beautifully points out the Trinitarian foundation of his epistemology when he says:

Enlightened reason sees that solely the Trinity as Trinity is the fullest reason (ratio) for knowing anything true, whereby it happens that anything true that is known is held in the memory, known more clearly by being held in the memory and being known it pleases and is loved.⁶⁹

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⁶⁷ On this see Adrian J. Walker, 'Personal Singularity and The *Communio Personarum*: A Creative Development of Thomas Aquinas' Doctrine of *Esse Commune*,' *Communio International Catholic Review* 31 (Fall 2004): 457-479.

⁶⁸ That love necessarily includes the difference of persons is of course famously seen by Richard of St. Victor in his *De Trinitate*.

⁶⁹ Bonaventure, *Myst. Trin.* VII, 2 ad 7.

THE GIFT OF LIFE: THE NON-SUBSISTENCE OF THOMIST *ESSE COMMUNE* IN ITS TRINITARIAN CONTEXT

MARTIN BIELER

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates in what way the Christian Trinity is the ‘*causa et ratio*’ of creation, as Thomas Aquinas states it in the prologue of his *Commentary to the Sentences of Peter Lombard*. Of particular importance for this project is a better understanding of the Thomist *esse commune* as a *completum et simplex, sed non subsistens* (De Potentia 1.1 c). In dialogue with the Neoplatonic tradition is shown how Aquinas absorbs all Neoplatonic intermediary principles into the *esse commune* and opens up the understanding of creation as a structured act of love: Creation is the giving of being (*esse*), by which the Creator makes himself present to his creatures, in order to grant them their subsistence. It is shown how the non-subsisting *esse commune* is an analogue to the divine essence which only subsists in the divine persons, starting with the Father. This explains the thoroughly personal character of metaphysics.

Keywords

Trinity; Father; Being; Creation; Gift; Subsistence

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1. Preliminaries

In his important work *Der Andere*, Michael Theunissen recounts contemporary philosophy’s troubled attempts to reconcile the dialogical approach developed by the likes of Martin Buber, on the one hand, and the sort of subject-centred approach we find in the work of Edmund Husserl, on the other.¹ In Buber’s account, the I-Thou relation

¹ Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere* (Berlin–New York: Walter de Gruyter, ²1981).

that so occupies his attention seemingly excludes the ‘Es’ (it), which, at least in his view, stands for an impersonal and non-relational ontology.² Husserl, for his part, seems to represent this latter kind of thinking. So, too, it appears, does Thomist metaphysics, which Buber felt to have a profoundly alienating character.³ But, as Franz Rosenzweig rightly reminded Buber, behind the Buberian ‘Es’ (it) there stands the third *person*: ‘Er’ (He), the Creator. Buber’s division between a supposedly personal second- and first-person perspective, on the one hand, and the putatively *impersonal* perspective of the third-person, on the other, proves deeply problematic.⁴ Yes, the ‘I-Thou’ relationship expresses closeness between persons, but this closeness is shallow without the respectful personal distance of the ‘He’, who stands for the most immediate intimacy, the presence of the Creator in us, a presence constituting us as free persons capable of a genuine attachment to other persons. Without the presence of the ‘He’, we lack the depth and dignity of freedom, apart from which we cannot rise to the level of a genuine ‘Thou’ even on Buberian terms.

Rightly understood, personal closeness and personal distance are not opposed but mutually presupposing! Consider the triune God: The intra-trinitarian *principium quod* (the trinitarian persons) and the intra-trinitarian *principium quo* (the one substance), which jointly characterise the Creator in himself, *are both thoroughly personal*.⁵ Looked at from this height, the whole of metaphysics reveals itself to be a meditation on intimacy, so much so that we could even replace the

² Martin Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, ⁵1984), 7–136.

³ Martin Buber, *Das Problem des Menschen* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, ⁵1982), 27–28.

⁴ Bernhard Casper, ‘Franz Rosenzweigs Kritik an Bubers “Ich und Du,”’ in: Jochanan Bloch–Haim Gordon (eds.), *Martin Buber. Bilanz seines Denkens* (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder Verlag, 1983), 159–179. For an earlier treatment of the difference between ‘Es’ and ‘Er’ (personal God), see Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System der Weltalter*. Edited and introduced by Siegbert Peetz (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, ²1998), 192.

⁵ Elmar Salmann, ‘Wer ist Gott? Zur Frage nach dem Verhältnis von Person und Natur in der Trinitätslehre,’ *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 35 (1984): 245–261; Hans Jorissen, ‘Zur Struktur des Traktates ‘De Deo’ in der Summa theologiae des Thomas von Aquin,’ in *Im Gespräch mit dem dreieinen Gott. Elemente einer trinitarischen Theologie. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Wilhelm Breuning*, eds. Michael Böhnke–Hanspeter Heinz (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1985), 231–257; Martin Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe. Ein schöpfungstheologischer Entwurf* (Freiburg–Basle–Vienna: Herder Verlag, 1991), 204–208.

term ‘metaphysics’ with that of ‘meta-anthropology’.⁶ Only in this context, set by the unity of the personal and ontological aspects of reality, does the Thomist *esse commune* become intelligible. How this connection undergirds and illumines Aquinas’s metaphysics is the subject of the present paper.

Thomas Aquinas was not only a prolific theologian but also a highly original metaphysician, even though he never worked out a synthetic, stand-alone treatment of his metaphysics.⁷ His metaphysical insights are scattered throughout his whole work, and the reader has to connect the dots for him- or herself. One who did so particularly well was the German philosopher Ferdinand Ulrich, who rightly located the core of Aquinas’s metaphysics in the vision of *esse commune* as a *completum et simplex, sed non subsistens* (*De Potentia* 1.1 c).⁸ In his opus magnum *Homo Abyssus*, Ulrich developed this foundation into what could be called a new trinitarian ontology *ad mentem divi Thomae*.⁹ One of Ulrich’s key insights is that *esse commune*, both in its completeness and simplicity and in its non-subsistence, is a likeness of God’s goodness (*similitudo divinae bonitatis*: *De Veritate* 22.2 ad 2), an effective sign that, already as Creator, God bestows participation in his life by the communication of being (*esse*). As Ulrich interprets it, then, the Thomist doctrine of *esse commune* is nothing less than a means for showing that and how the entire creation is a gift on the part of the Creator.

As Leo Elders has rightly observed, Aquinas rarely writes in the first person singular. He does so in *De Potentia* 7.2 ad 9, however, where, as he himself seems to understand quite clearly, he is presenting something new in philosophy¹⁰: ‘It is thus apparent’, Aquinas writes in this

⁶ Martin Bieler, ‘Meta-anthropology and Christology: On the Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ *Communio International Catholic Review* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 129–146.

⁷ See Fernand van Steenberghen, *Die Philosophie im 13. Jahrhundert* (Munich–Paderborn–Vienna: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1977), 326 ff. In the following, Aquinas is cited according to the Marietti edition (Turin), unless otherwise indicated. His *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* is cited according to the *Index Thomisticus*, ed. by Roberto Busa, vol. 1 (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1980).

⁸ See Martin Bieler, ‘*Analogia Entis* as an Expression of Love According to Ferdinand Ulrich,’ in *The Analogy of Being. Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, ed. Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 314–337.

⁹ Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus. The Drama of the Question of Being*, translated by D.C. Schindler (Baltimore, MD: Humanum Academic Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Leo J. Elders, *Die Metaphysik des Thomas von Aquin in historischer Perspektive, I. Teil* (Salzburg–Munich: Verlag Anton Pustet, 1985), 160. For an earlier treatment along the

text, ‘that what I call *esse* is the actuality of all acts, and so the perfection of all perfections’. With *De Potentia*, Aquinas has reached a turning point in his understanding of *esse*.¹¹

How, then, does Aquinas approach *esse commune* in *De Potentia*? In one crucial passage, he states that, if something is common to different things, there must be a singular cause to explain its presence in them. But being (*esse*) is a perfection all things have in common, even as it differentiates them from one other at the same time. Consequently, it must be attributed to them by a single cause since, as Plato shows, unity precedes multiplicity.¹² The upshot is that there must be a First Being that is its own *esse*: ‘*Est autem ponere aliquod ens quod est ipsum suum esse*.’¹³

All other things, for their part, are from this one Being. Although the Creator’s essence does not enter formally into that of his creatures, the being (*esse*) that is at the heart of their existence cannot be understood except as ‘deduced’ from the divine being.¹⁴ By the same token, creatures are not their being but only *have* being (*esse*) *per modum participationis*.¹⁵ It is this participation that grounds a certain analogy between God and his creatures.¹⁶

Furthermore, of all the divine effects, being (*esse*) is the most common effect and the most intimate. It is the effect that can be caused only by God,¹⁷ the effect in which all other created causes communicate.¹⁸ *Esse*, as the *primus effectus* before which nothing else is created,¹⁹ is caused by a constant influx from God, who conserves created beings in the same act in which he creates them.²⁰ *Esse*, then, does not subsist but ‘hangs into’ beings,²¹ an expression indicating the constant

same lines, see Johannes B. Lotz, *Der Mensch im Sein. Versuche zur Geschichte und Sache der Philosophie* (Freiburg–Basle–Vienna: Herder Verlag, 1967), 59.

¹¹ Fernando Inciarte, *Forma Formarum. Strukturmomente der thomistischen Seinslehre im Rückgriff auf Aristoteles* (Freiburg–Munich: Karl Alber, 1970), 126 ff.

¹² Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia* 3.5 c.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia* 5.5 ad 1. For more on the relationship between God’s essence and our individual essence, see Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 246–248.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia* 3.4 ad 9. See also 7.7 c.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.7 c.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.2 c.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.4 c. See also *Super librum De causis expositio* (Saffrey) 4 (26 ff.). Werner Beierwaltes, *Catena Aurea* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 2017), 175–204.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.14 ad 10; 5.1 c; 5.1 ad 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.2 ad 7.

flow of being from *esse subsistens* into all created things. Aquinas often describes this inflowing *esse* using the metaphor of light, which is not the sun, but comes from the sun, depends on the sun, and illumines every creature²²: Non-subsisting *esse commune* is *not* simply God, but it depends on God and, like him, reaches every creature.²³

In all this, three points are particularly important. First, *esse commune* is something complete, simple, perfect, and intimate: the act of all acts.²⁴ It embraces the whole creation. Only non-being is excluded from *esse commune*.²⁵ Second, *esse commune* does not subsist, even though it ‘hangs into’ beings. Third, it follows that God is not *esse commune* but the source of *esse commune*. So much for Aquinas’s view of *esse commune* in *De Potentia*.

This account of *esse* clearly places Aquinas in critical continuity with the tradition of Platonism, from Plato to Plotinus and his followers. Plato speaks of the Good beyond *ousia* (*epekeina tes ousias*),²⁶ which he identifies with the One as the supreme principle.²⁷ Plotinus was therefore right to understand himself as a follower of Plato in his quest for the One beyond all things.²⁸ The difficulty facing Plotinus, however, was to explain how the One can emanate into finite beings. His resolution of the problem was to posit intermediate principles – think of the Plotinian *Nous* – as mediators between the one Source and the many beings.²⁹ Aquinas, for his part, worked out his account of *esse commune* by transforming this Platonic henology and resolving its aporias. We can observe this transformation in action in his *Expositio super*

²² Martin Bieler, ‘The Theological Importance of a Philosophy of Being,’ in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, eds. Paul J. Griffiths and Reinhard Hüter (New York–London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 316.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia* 7.2 ad 4.

²⁴ Cornelio Fabro has called this aspect the ‘intensity’ of *esse*. See his *Participation et causalité selon saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Louvain–Paris: Publications Universitaires de Louvain/ Éditions Béatrice-Nauwelaerts, 1961), 220. See *ibid.*, 222–223 on the significance of understanding *esse* as act.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia* 7.2 ad 9.

²⁶ Plato, *Politeia* 509 B 9.

²⁷ Plato, *Parmenides* 137 C–142 A. See Jens Halfwassen, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen. Untersuchungen zu Platon und Plotin* (Munich–Leipzig: K.G. Saur, ²2006), 20–21.

²⁸ See the illuminating account offered by Halfwassen, *Der Aufstieg zum Einen*, 9–52.

²⁹ See Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus im Christentum* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998), 172–179. These intermediate principles *indicate* the problem rather than solving it: Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, ²2011), 39.

Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus, which dates from about the same period as *De Potentia*, if not somewhat earlier.⁵⁰

In his commentary on the Dionysian *De Divinis Nominibus*, then, Aquinas emphasises that God the Creator remains separate from his creatures. His essence does not formally enter into composition with finite beings.⁵¹ At the same time, God is the place, foundation, and connection of creatures.⁵² Everything is contained in him.⁵³ He is the universal principle of the being and duration of things.⁵⁴ The question, then, is how these two aspects – that of separateness and that of intimate presence – can cohere in simultaneity.

Unlike Plato and Plotinus, Aquinas regards ‘being’ as prior to the *unum* and, indeed, to everything else. The highest name for God on his view is therefore being itself (*ipsum esse*): ‘*Si alia causa nominetur a suo effectu, oportet quod principalius nominetur Deus per ipsum esse a primo effectu per quem omnia fecit; huiusmodi autem est ens; ergo principalius nominatur Deus per ipsum esse.*’⁵⁵ This decisively important statement, which emancipates God from the straitjacket of the natural one-many pairing still assumed by Plotinus, makes possible the identification of *esse subsistens* with absolute freedom – which, in its turn, can be identified with the freedom of the biblical God (Ex 3) revealed in Christ as Trinity and, therefore, as absolute love.⁵⁶ This decisive Thomist breakthrough enables us to bring into clear focus the nature

⁵⁰ According to James A. Weisheipl, the *Expositio super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus* was written in Rome in 1265–1267: *Friar Thomas d’Aquino. His Life, Thoughts and Works* (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 174–175, 197, 382. *De Potentia* was also written in Rome between 1265–1266: *Ibid.*, 198–212, 363. Jean-Pierre Torrell conjectures that the *Expositio super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus* was written in Orvieto around 1261–1265: *Initiation à saint Thomas d’Aquin. Sa personne et son oeuvre* (Fribourg, CH: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1995), 185–189, 505. For the composition of the *De potentia*, Torrell argues for the same dating as Weisheipl: *Ibid.*, 234–238, 489. In addition, Torrell emphasizes that Aquinas had already known *De Divinis Nominibus* for some time: *Ibid.*, 186.

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In De Divinis Nominibus* 1.2 (52); 1.1 (28).

⁵² ‘*Ipsa Deus est et locus et fundamentum et vinculum connectens omnia.*’ *Ibid.*, 10.1 (851).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.22 (575).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.1 (847).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.1 (635). See Fran O’Rourke’s remarks on the difference here between Dionysius, for whom the Good is beyond being, and Aquinas: *Pseudo-Dionysius and the Metaphysics of Aquinas* (Leiden–New York–Cologne: E.J. Brill, 1992), 56.

⁵⁶ See also Walter M. Neidl, *THEARCHIA. Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Gott bei Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita und Thomas von Aquin (dargestellt anhand der Texte von PERI THEION ONOMATON und des dazu verfassten Kommentars des Aquinaten)* (Regensburg: Verlag Josef Habel, 1976), 91–92.

of creation as a free donation of *esse*, and so to explain the simultaneous separateness and togetherness of God and the creature.³⁷ As Hans Urs von Balthasar has rightly observed, *esse commune* clearly differentiates God from his creation while at the same time showing his intimate presence in it.³⁸ Paradoxically, it is precisely *esse subsistens* that finally safeguards the true meaning of *bonitas* in creation and beyond!

Nevertheless, it was Dionysius who prepared the discovery of being as God's primary name:

Moreover, by attributing the mediation of all created perfection to the unique though created perfection of εἶναι, Dionysius reaches a unique view of the immanent and intensive richness of being. With the intuition of being as the primary participation and first creature comes a radical transformation in the relation of beings to God. Through *esse*, God is immediately active throughout each and every being at its most radical and interior origin. It remains for Aquinas to remove the distance between these two principles of perfection – finite and infinite – and proclaim the identity of the divine Good with the absolute fullness of Being itself.³⁹

By emphasising *esse* as the first effect of God's creation, Dionysius re-absorbs into God himself the various elements severally distributed among the Neoplatonic mediating principles: God now acts directly on the beings by creating them.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Dionysius reduces the plurality of the mediating principles to the one *esse commune* by which God causes everything.⁴¹ The result is a 'simplification' echoing the free creative activity of God.⁴² This double reduction lays the groundwork for Aquinas to transform the Platonic tradition in light of the biblical idea of creation as the communication of being. This Dionysian background also explains the sense in which Aquinas calls *esse commune* a *completum et simplex*:⁴³ The point is that *esse* contains the whole aspectual wealth of Neoplatonic mediations between the one

³⁷ On the unity of *esse* and freedom, see Marie-Joseph Le Guillou, *Das Mysterium des Vaters. Apostolischer Glaube und moderne Gnosis* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1974).

³⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit* III,1, 354–366.

³⁹ O'Rourke, l.c., 117–118. See also *ibid.*, 124–125 with reference to the *Liber de Causis*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *In De Divinis Nominibus* 5.1 (639).

⁴² 'Secunda est quod omnia in esse continet et conservat secundum simplicem sui infinitam unitatem.' *Ibid.*, 5.3 (670).

⁴³ Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia* 1.1 c. See also *In De Divinis Nominibus* 8.1 (751)!

and the many (*completum*), while gathering them into a simplicity rooted in the unity of divine action.⁴⁴

Being however, is not merely the sum of all perfections and forms, but is their total simplicity and plenitude. All other qualities which the earlier Platonists would have established as independent, individual forms in themselves, Dionysius united in the simplicity of the single and universal form of Being.⁴⁵

This is not to say, of course, that Aquinas jettisons the Dionysian vision of the *bonum* as the highest reality. On the contrary, his understanding of God as *esse subsistens*, which is in fact a trinitarian reality – a truth metaphysics cannot say on its own – enables him to infuse the Dionysian *bonum* (which is of course also of trinitarian origin) with absolute loving *freedom*. By giving the *bonum* this, its proper foundation, Thomas also confirms and enhances its radicality *as the good it is*.⁴⁶ (Let's not forget that he understands *esse creatum* as the *similitudo divinae bonitatis* [*De Veritate* 22.2 ad 2]!) Without pitting Aquinas and Dionysius against each other or denying their proximity, we can therefore say that Thomas goes further than his predecessor by laying bare the 'basis' of God's goodness in a way that is both metaphysically more stringent and theologically more clarifying.⁴⁷ Note that the stringency of Aquinas's metaphysics appears not only in his understanding of God but also in his anthropology, which he develops in light of his understanding of creation as the communication of being.⁴⁸

We have now arrived at the point where we can pose the two questions we intend to treat in the following section. These are crucial questions concerning nothing less than the nature of God's relationship to his creation.

⁴⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *In De Divinis Nominibus* 2.6.

⁴⁵ O'Rourke, l.c., 178.

⁴⁶ For Aquinas, freedom is rooted in the *ens* as an *esse habens* (cf. *In Metaphys* XII.1 [2419]), and not merely in an isolated capacity of the soul. This has been ably demonstrated by Dorothee Welp in her *Willensfreiheit bei Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1979), 175 ff. For an account of how Aquinas construes this as a reflection of the *esse subsistens*, see e.g. Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London–New York: Routledge, 2005), 35–187.

⁴⁷ '*Nam error circa creaturas redundat in falsam de Deo sententiam*.' Thomas Aquinas, *ScG* II,3 (869).

⁴⁸ Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus*, 223–487.

The first question is this: Granted that Aquinas has reduced the Platonic complexity of mediating principles to being, and hence to freedom, why does he still operate in the seemingly Platonic framework of *esse commune* as a mediation between Creator and creature? If we take seriously Thomas' own insight that God creates from nothing in the plenitude of freedom, should we not exclude *any sort* of medium between the Creator and his creatures?⁴⁹ Indeed, does not the 'non-*subsistence*' Aquinas ascribes to *esse commune* imply an inadequate appreciation of the radical 'nothingness' that, by all rights, we should speak of when it comes to an *esse commune* that, after all, is produced *ex nihilo*?

The second question: Even supposing Aquinas can convince us of the need to speak of *esse commune* as a *completum et simplex, sed non subsistens*, what is the ontological status of this *esse commune*? What is it supposed to 'be' if it does not subsist? How can Aquinas connect *esse commune* to an *unum-verum-bonum-pulchrum*, as Balthasar argues he does?⁵⁰ Let us now approach this two-fold question in light of the Trinity.

2. Trinity

In a well-known passage from the *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas states that the knowledge of the Trinity is necessary for the right understanding of the creation and salvation of human beings.⁵¹ Because God as Trinity has life to the fullest in himself, he does not need creation; he is in no need of improvement, especially by anything external to himself. Creation, then, is a free gift of God's love, not only with respect to the world's production and conservation in *esse*, but also – beyond this – with respect to God's assumption of responsibility for his handiwork through the salvific gift of the Son and Spirit. Aquinas' appeal to the Trinity does more, however, than merely safeguard God's freedom and, with it, his concrete goodness toward creation. For, as Aquinas writes in the prologue to his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the Trinity, far from merely being an external framework for creation, harbours within itself the very *causa et ratio* of creation itself. If, for

⁴⁹ '*Non potest autem aliquid esse medium inter creatum et increatum.*' Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate* 8.17 c.

⁵⁰ Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit* III,1, 337.

⁵¹ Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I, 32.1 ad 3.

Aquinas, the trinitarian processions are like a river (the *processus personarum* as a *fluvium*), then creation resembles the temporal outflow of this eternal flow – which, for its part, is the cause and essential pattern (*ratio*) of that very temporal outflowing.⁵²

The Trinity, then, not only illumines the presuppositions and possibility of creation but also sheds explanatory light on the creative act itself, even as it enables us to see how the innermost form of creatures is shaped to the pattern of trinitarian life. The Trinity thus opens up the metaphysical meaning of creation in an astonishingly concrete way. What is at stake is much more than a quest for – sometimes far-fetched – *vestigia trinitatis* supposed capable of revealing the created traces of the Trinity from which to derive a trinitarian ontology.⁵³ What is at stake is rather the Trinity's connection with the inmost essence of things – a connection that alone brings into clear focus the nature and ontological status of *esse completum et simplex, sed non subsistens*.

At this point, we encounter the oft-repeated objection that the doctrine of the Trinity is incapable of providing an adequate interpretation of the story of Jesus.⁵⁴ Are the Christology and Trinitarian theology of the early councils not a distortion of the biblical data, a subtle replacement of Hebrew thinking with Greek thought? Do they not represent an undue Hellenisation of the faith? And is this tendency not the ultimate reason for the Church's failure to eliminate the Platonic resonances still echoing in the Thomist notion of an *esse creatum completum*?

⁵² When speaking of a 'temporal outflow' – as Aquinas does in the prologue of his *Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard* – one must keep in mind that creation is not a *motus*: *ScG* II.17; *STh* I,45.1 ad 2.

⁵³ See Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VI.10.12 (CChr.SL 50, 242–243); Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I,1 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag Zurich, 1975), 352–367. For a sophisticated philosophical attempt to exploit triadic structures for a trinitarian ontology, see Heinrich Beck, *Der Akt-Charakter des Seins. Eine spekulative Weiterführung der Seinslehre Thomas v. Aquins aus einer Anregung durch das dialektische Prinzip Hegels* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2001).

⁵⁴ See e.g. Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1920), 128: 'Der Satz: der Logos ist unter uns erschienen, hatte eine berausende Wirkung; aber der Enthusiasmus und der Aufschwung der Seele, den er hervorrief, führten nicht sicher zu dem Gott, den Jesus Christus verkündigt hat.' On the same page, Harnack speaks of the 'akute Hellenisierung' of the Christian religion. What Harnack ignores here is the Jewish wisdom tradition, which serves as an intellectual background for the messianic idea and is connected to the notion of the *logos* in the Gospel of John. See on this point Martin Hengel–Anna Maria Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 81–131.

The view underlying these questions runs aground on a basic problem: The New Testament itself is, as Martin Hengel has shown in several works,⁵⁵ already ‘Hellenised’. Nor is there anything objectionable about such ‘Hellenisation’, inasmuch as by its very nature God’s revelation in history always takes up and transforms human thinking, whether ‘Semitic’ or ‘Greek’.⁵⁶

The main fact Harnack, Bultmann, and others tended to ignore was this: On the basis of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection, the New Testament ascribed to him prerogatives and attributes of Yahweh while (in a very specific sense) remaining within the horizon of the Old Testament. Yahweh’s authority was in no way diminished. Rather, Jesus was placed in the realm of Yahweh, the realm of the divine dignity and power – not, however, as a demi-god (which would have destroyed Jewish monotheism), but as God himself (Jn 20:28).⁵⁷ We therefore have good grounds for placing the beginning of trinitarian reflection in the New Testament itself, without, of course, denying the latter’s (propitious rather than baneful) Hellenistic context.⁵⁸ By the same token, refusal to engage in trinitarian theology in the footsteps of the early Church is tantamount to a betrayal of the New Testament witness.

In order to develop a trinitarian theology, the New Testament itself already makes use of Hellenistic thought, even while subjecting it to the control of the inherited Old Testament monotheism. This effort very quickly evolves into something radically new.⁵⁹ What we see, then, is a total transformation, a groundbreaking intellectual revolution so novel that it continues to unfold today. The ‘Platonism’ in Christianity

⁵⁵ Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus. Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr.* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], ²1973); id., *Studien zur Christologie. Kleine Schriften IV* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

⁵⁶ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘Gott redet als Mensch,’ in *Verbum Caro. Skizzen zur Theologie I* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1960), 73–99.

⁵⁷ Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ. Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge, U.K., 2003); Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel. God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI–Cambridge, U.K., 2008). We find the same idea already in Theodor Zahn, *Die Anbetung Jesu im Zeitalter der Apostel* (Leipzig: A. Deichert’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf., ⁵1910), 14: ‘Ihrer religiösen Bedeutung nach unverkürzt und unverändert ist die alttestamentliche Anbetung Jahveh’s übergegangen in die Anbetung Jesu...’

⁵⁸ Hans-Joachim Eckstein, *Kyrios Jesus. Perspektiven einer christologischen Theologie* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, ²2011), 3–35.

⁵⁹ See Hurtado on Justin Martyr, who marks an early watershed in this development: L.c., 646.

was a profoundly transformed one,⁶⁰ as our account of the trajectory from Plato through Dionysius to Aquinas in the previous section already suggests.

What was new in Christian trinitarianism was the *topos* of God's absolute self-giving, first in himself and then in relation to his creatures as well. This truth, which is already essential for the New Testament, was further explored and unfolded by the early Church. Augustine, for example, speaks of the Father's generation of the co-equal Son as the highest form of power.⁶¹ And, for Augustine, this exercise of paternal power is fundamentally a perfect *giving*: The Father gives to the Son the same life he (the Father) has and is himself.⁶² The theme of giving is emphasised even more vigorously in an earlier generation by Hilary of Poitiers, who writes in his *De Trinitate* that the Father gives to the Son his (the Father's) own being and generates him from his (the Father's) own form.⁶³

Whereas Augustine sought to explore the mystery of the Trinity on the analogy of the created mind (*mens-amor-notitia* and *memoria-intelligentia-voluntas*),⁶⁴ Richard of Saint-Victor took his primary trinitarian bearings from the social laws of human nature.⁶⁵ Both approaches to the Trinity have their limits. Just as Augustine has difficulty doing justice to the trinitarian relationships as love, Richard has difficulty securing trinitarian unity, despite his role in preparing the further development of trinitarian theology by Bonaventure.⁶⁶

More than anyone else, it is Bonaventure who attains a higher synthesis of the two theologies by approaching the Trinity from the

⁶⁰ Endre v. Ivánka, *Plato Christianus. Übernahme und Umgestaltung des Platonismus durch die Väter* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1964).

⁶¹ Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 38.4 (CChr.SL 36, 340).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 54.7 (462).

⁶³ Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate* IX.54 (SC 462, 128): 'Major itaque Pater Filio est. Et plane maior, cui tantum donat esse, quantus ipse est; cui innascibilitatis esse imaginem sacramento nativitatis inperit; quem ex se in formam suam generat.' Because the Son receives the Father's own *esse*, he is *not* less than the Father: 'Major itaque Pater est, dum Pater est. Sed Filius, dum Filius est, minor non est.' *Ibid.*, IX.56 (132).

⁶⁴ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, IX.4.7 (299–300); X.10.13 (327).

⁶⁵ Richard de Saint-Victor, *De Trinitate. Texte critique avec introduction, notes et tables, publié par Jean Ribaillier* (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. VRIN, 1958).

⁶⁶ 'Die 'primitas' des Vaters als 'fontalis plenitudo' – ein Gedanke, der in Bonaventuras Trinitätsspekulation eine entscheidende Rolle spielt – ist im Kern hier von Richard vorgebildet.' Heinz Wipfler, *Die Trinitätsspekulation des Petrus von Poitiers und die Trinitätsspekulation des Richard von St. Viktor. Ein Vergleich* (Münster: Aschendorfsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1965), 109. Wipfler refers here to Richard's understanding of the connection between *relatio* and *origo*.

unifying perspective of the self-communication of the Eternal Father.⁶⁷ For Bonaventure, the relational and essential aspects of the Trinity are personally united in the innascible Father: ‘God is first not only in the sense that His nature is prior to all created natures, but the concept of primacy must be drawn into the very life of God where it finds its absolute roots in the person of the Father, who is source and origin of all, within and without the Godhead.’⁶⁸ Unlike Aquinas, who prioritises the *ratio* of *relatio* in order to honor the rule that *actus sunt suppositorum* (*STh* I,39,5 ad 1), Bonaventure emphasises that *relatio* and *generatio/spiratio* form an inseparable ontological unity: There is no *relatio* with respect to the Son, for example, that is not already both a *generare* and a *generari*.⁶⁹ Even though Bonaventure seems to do greater justice to divine giving than even Aquinas on this score, Aquinas, too, provides a remarkably fruitful account of God’s donativity, both in himself and in his outflow towards creation.⁷⁰ In the end, then, both giants agree: If we are looking for the cause and essential pattern of creation, we will find it exactly where the Aquinas of the *Sentence* commentary says it lies, namely, in the logic of love unfolded in the trinitarian giving and receiving between the divine persons.⁷¹

What is given and received in the trinitarian processions is the one essence of God, which – according to Bonaventure – can be one in more than one person.⁷² The essence of God does not subsist as a separate reality, but only in the three trinitarian persons. The divine essence

⁶⁷ ‘*Secus autem est in Filio, qui est verbum Patris et splendor perfectissimus, per omnia Patri aequalis, accipiens a Patre totum, quod Pater habet intra se*’ Bonaventure, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Mysterio Trinitatis* IV.2 ad 5+6. It was Bonaventure who first spoke of the Father as the ‘*origo originans originantem*.’ See *Hexaemeron* XI.6.

⁶⁸ Zachary Hayes, *Saint Bonaventure’s Disputed Questions on the Mystery of the Trinity* (St. Bonaventure, New York: The Franciscan Institute of St. Bonaventure University, 1979), 100–101.

⁶⁹ Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 160–165, 174–209.

⁷⁰ For Bonaventure, see the fine synthesis of Zachary Hayes, l.c., 15–105; Martin Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 166–209 and Klaus Obenauer, *Summa Actualitas. Zum Verhältnis von Einheit und Verschiedenheit in der Dreieinigkeitslehre des heiligen Bonaventura* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1996). For Aquinas, see now: Louis-Marie Rineau, «*Celui qui donne*». *Le don d’après saint Thomas d’Aquin* (Paris: Éditions Parole et Silence, 2018). I am not convinced by Emmanuel Durand’s attempt to show the superiority of Aquinas’s solution to the Bonaventurian model: *Le Père Alpha et Oméga de la vie trinitaire* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2008), 159–274.

⁷¹ This unity of giving and receiving would be the starting-point for a reconsideration of the ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in God of which creaturely masculinity and femininity, respectively, are the analogues.

⁷² Bonaventure, 1 *Sent* d 9. q 1.

belongs first of all to the Father. It is thus in his person where we must search for the origin of the difference between *principium quod* (person) and *principium quo* (essence). This difference, which stems from the Father himself, is the guarantee of his communicability.⁷³

It might seem as though the personal aspect of God were represented by the persons as relations, whereas the more objective aspect of God, displayed in his power, etc., were represented by the one substance. But in God, everything is personal; in God, there is nothing that is not entirely an aspect of his personal life. Even his substance, too, is fully personal. The one divine substance is first of all the life of the Father himself (Jn 5:26). If, then, there is a difference between the person of the Father (*ut quod*) and the one divine substance (*ut quo*), it is because, in generating the Son, the Father so to speak ‘enacts’ the difference between himself as *ut quod* and as *ut quo* in the very gesture of giving his whole life to the Son. For, in so doing, the Father brings about a double distinction: on the one hand, a separation (that entailed in the logic of *giving!*) between himself and the Son; on the other hand, a difference between himself (the Father) as a relation with a fixed position in the *ordo processionis* and himself as the sustaining power (the one substance) of this same fixed position. This difference is not a self-estrangement of the Father. It is his absolute *self-affirmation*: By separating himself (*ut quod*) from himself (*ut quo*), he lets himself be in self-hiddenness and so *affirms the mystery of his own loving freedom*.⁷⁴ (More on the meaning of this trinitarian ‘separation’ below.) The Father, then, exists in a positive self-differentiation, one that allows him to give himself – and receive himself as well – even as this self-differentiation never exists or occurs separately from the Father’s relationship to the Son and to the Spirit.⁷⁵

In his freedom, the Father is open towards the Son and the Spirit, without whom he does not want to be because he is the Father in

⁷³ Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 204–209.

⁷⁴ It is in this context, and in this sense, that we can follow Augustine in assigning – with all due caution – *memoria*, the ability to remember (which is connected with the phenomenon of forgetting) analogously to the Eternal Father: *De Trinitate* XV.23,43 (CChr.SL 50A, 520). For *memoria* in Augustine, see Johann Kreuzer, *Pulchritudo. Vom Erkennen Gottes bei Augustin* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1995), 16–104 and Anton Maxsein, *Philosophia cordis. Das Wesen der Personalität bei Augustinus* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1966), 177–193.

⁷⁵ For a discussion of the divine vitality implied in all this, see Joachim Ringleben, *Der lebendige Gott. Gotteslehre als Arbeit am Begriff* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018).

eternal decidedness. His person is thus connected to the other two from its inmost core, out of which he opens to the unknown-known that is their free love. By the same logic, the Father determines himself – in this specific manner and sense – as ‘unknown’ to himself: In *generatio* and *spiratio*, the Father *grants* himself to be *the absolute loving freedom awaiting the answer of the Son and the Spirit*. The hiddenness of the Father to himself, which this ‘dependence’ on the other two trinitarian persons implies, is not, however, an identity confusion. On the contrary, the hiddenness at stake here is – to speak with Eberhard Jüngel – a *precise* hiddenness,⁷⁶ precise because it is the luminous abyss of love itself! To see and respect this abyss as an expression of freedom is the presupposition of all true intimacy, even with oneself. The abyss of loving freedom is the depth of being, which is why the seemingly anonymous substance can be the expression and reality of intimate love.⁷⁷ Here we see how closely our experience of substance in its depth resembles our experience of the Spirit as the ‘unknown beyond the Word’.⁷⁸

The Father’s simultaneous affirmation of the hiddenness of the three trinitarian persons is the total coincidence of his genuine self-love with his love for the Son and the Spirit. *Thanks to this coincidence, the one substance is the completely affirmed life of the Father himself, which, in the very act of being affirmed, is also given to the Son and the Spirit who accept it in return*. If one wanted to use a metaphor, one could say that the one substance is like the house in which the Father dwells – in the sense of the *habitare secum* – and into which he invites the Son and the Spirit, the former as companion and the latter as atmosphere, in order to celebrate with them the feast of the trinitarian life in this encompassing space of intimacy. The *telos* of this invitation is for the trinitarian persons to *indwell one other*, because what belongs to the Father *also belongs to the Son and to the Spirit* (Lk 15:11–32). From this perspective, talk of creation as the communication of *esse* represents

⁷⁶ Eberhard Jüngel, *Entsprechungen: Gott–Wahrheit–Mensch. Theologische Erörterungen* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1980), 259 ff.

⁷⁷ See Ferdinand Ulrich’s beautiful meditation on the mother who delights in the tower built by her child as his personal self-expression. In ‘it,’ the tower, appears ‘he’: *Gabe und Vergebung. Ein Beitrag zur biblischen Ontologie. Schriften V*, ed. Stefan Oster (Freiburg i.Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 2006), 354–370.

⁷⁸ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spiritus Creator. Skizzen zur Theologie III* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1967), 95–105.

another way of saying what Christ says in the Gospel: ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions’ (Jn 14:2).⁷⁹

When, therefore, the Father generates the Son, he gives the Son the whole divine essence; the Father gives himself (the Father) *totally* to the Begotten.⁸⁰ By virtue of this perfect giving, the Son is equal to the Father, so much so that, according to Aquinas, one and the same generative act is both the *generare* and the *generari*.⁸¹ Thomas also clarifies that the Son’s receiving from the Father leaves him in no way inferior to his Begetter.⁸² On the contrary, the Father’s giving in the *generatio* is so perfect that, in the very first upsurge of his donative act, the *receiver of the gift, the Son*, is already wholly present to accompany it from its inmost ground. This, in fact, is why *one and the same act of generatio can be both a generare and a generari without any confusion between generans and generatum*. (A similar logic holds with respect to the *spiratio*).

What is not communicated in the trinitarian life are the positions of the relations themselves; these cannot be communicated because they are the presupposition of the intra-divine giving and receiving. According to Richard of Saint-Victor, the trinitarian persons each prefer to retain their own respective positions (*proprietas*) in the *ordo processionis*, inasmuch as these positions enable them to love their fellow divine persons as themselves.⁸³

This inseparable unity of incommunicability and self-gift explains why the Trinitarian persons find themselves rather than losing themselves in giving away *all* they have.⁸⁴ It also explains how the subsistent

⁷⁹ Mirjam Ellinger, “‘Habitare secum – Wohnen in sich selbst.’ Kontemplation bei Papst Gregor im zweiten Buch der Dialoge,” *Erbe und Auftrag* 78 (2002): 452–471. See also the reflections of Ulrich in *Gabe und Vergebung*, 624 ff.

⁸⁰ ‘*Relinquitur ergo quod Dei Filius sit genitus de substantia Patris. Aliter tamen quam filius hominis. Pars enim substantiae hominis generantis transit in substantiam geniti. Sed divina natura impartibilis est. Unde necesse est quod Pater, generando Filium, non partem naturae in ipsum transfunderit, sed totam naturam ei communicaverit, remanente distinctione solum secundum originem, ut ex dictis patet.*’ Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I,41,3 c.

⁸¹ ‘*Una enim et eadem operatione Pater generat et Filius nascitur; sed haec operatio est in Patre et in Filio secundum aliam et aliam relationem.*’ Thomas Aquinas, 1 *Sent* 20.1.1 ad 1.

⁸² ‘*Ex eo autem quod Pater Filio dare dicitur in Scripturis, ex quo sequitur ipsum recipere, non potest ostendi aliqua indigentia esse in ipso.*’ Thomas Aquinas, *ScG* IV.8 (3431).

⁸³ Richard of Saint-Victor, *De Trinitate*, V.24.

⁸⁴ ‘*Si autem concedimus unde post tot premissas rationes ambigere non possumus, si, inquam, concedimus unam aliquam personam in vera divinitate esse tante benevolentie*

relationality of the persons avoids bringing the divine life to an end. If the communication of the divine essence by the trinitarian persons is complete but does not come to a halt, it is because the fullness of the Godhead *remains* with each *proprietas*.⁸⁵ Otherwise, the *proprietas* would collapse as such. Richard's insight into the incommunicable *proprietas* of the trinitarian persons – *in favour of communication* – aligns him with Bonaventure's emphasis on the *innascibilitas* of the Father, which Bonaventure always sees in connection with the Father's *generatio* of the Son.⁸⁶ The *innascibilitas* of the Father, when looked at in *this* light, is simply the irreplaceable opening position of the Father in the *ordo processionis*.

Insofar as the Father always generates the Son,⁸⁷ the divine life is superabundant in its very completeness. But this superabundance comes to light especially in the second procession: the *spiratio* of the Spirit by the Father and the Son. At a certain point, Bonaventure asks whether the Father has already given everything in begetting the Son. Yes, he answers, but *not in every way possible*.⁸⁸ The *generatio* brings Father and Son into a kind of 'dialogue' in which they relate to each other ever anew.⁸⁹ The expression of this dialogue is the Holy Spirit, who is at one and the same time the crowning completion of the trinitarian processions and the definitive, irrevocable opening of the divine life in itself.⁹⁰ *Generatio* in its fullest sense means this: The Father relates himself in the generative act to the answering Son, while the Son responds by turning back towards the Father in the very reception of the divine substance. From this turning of each towards the other,

ut nihil divitiarum, nihil deliciarum habere velit quod nolit communicare. Ibid., III.14.

⁸⁵ It is thus very misleading to treat Balthasar's view of trinitarian giving under the rubric of 'Le don comme perte' as Louis-Marie Rineau does in his book '*Celui qui donne*' (153–178). This is not an adequate summary of Balthasar's view. Consider just this one sentence of Balthasar: 'Indem der Vater sich ohne Vorbehalt ausspricht und hingibt, verliert er sich nicht, geht nicht unter in der Gabe, sowenig er andererseits etwas von sich oder für sich zurückbehält.' *Theodramatik* III, 303. Fortunately, Rineau's book also contains many valuable insights not vitiated by his treatment of Balthasar.

⁸⁶ '*Innascibilitas in Patre dicit fontalem plenitudinem. Fontalis autem plenitudo consistit in producendo.*' Bonaventure, 1 *Sent* d 27. p 1, a unic. q 2 ad 3.

⁸⁷ Bonaventure, 1 *Sent* d 9, a unic. q 3.

⁸⁸ '*Ad illud ergo quod obicitur, quod Pater dat Filio totum quod potest, dicendum quod verum est, sed non dat omni modo quo potest.*' Bonaventure, 1 *Sent* d 2, a unic. q 4 ad 1.

⁸⁹ Karl Barth uses the term 'Gespräch': *KD* II,1, 454; II,2, 839.

⁹⁰ Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 190–197.

which (as Richard of Saint-Victor shows) is at the same time an opening of both in their mutual relatedness towards the *other* ‘other’ so as to share their joy with him, springs the Spirit.⁹¹ Evidently, then, *generatio* and *spiratio* are closely interconnected: The former is not complete without the latter.⁹² This shows that the trinitarian self-communication comes ‘full circle’ to complete affirmation in complete openness and *vice versa*.⁹³ To think the highest of God (*sentire altissime*) is to think him as this absolute communication,⁹⁴ which, as Richard puts it, is like a wave of love.⁹⁵ Thomas adds his voice to the choir in describing trinitarian life as a river. Before we can look at the rivulet flowing out from that source (creation), however, we must reflect even more deeply on the logic of love shown in the trinitarian processions themselves.

It is clear, as Bonaventure remarks, that the *generatio* brings about a real distinction – a distinction that is not merely intellectual, but a *distinctio in supposito*.⁹⁶ Augustine had already highlighted the reality of this distinction in stressing the *ad aliquid* in God: ‘*Sicut pater ad filium et filius ad patrem...*’⁹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, too, affirms this real otherness in his *Expositio super Secundam Decretalem* (1195): ‘*Dicimus enim quod licet sit alius Pater, et alius Filius et alius Spiritus sanctus, non tamen sunt aliud, quia non est alietas in essentia, et sit alietas in personis.*’ This means that there is something like a ‘limitation’ in God that (like created limits) orders and distinguishes but (unlike created limits) does not finitise. We could also speak of a positive, but real ‘holding back’, since, in the *generatio*, Father and Son encounter each other in the seriousness of a real distinction and a consequent real mutual otherness. In this context, it makes sense to speak with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Ferdinand Ulrich of a positive *separation between giver and gift in the performance of the giving*.⁹⁸ Yet this is only one side of the coin. By giving the Son his own paternal essence, the Father makes

⁹¹ Richard of Saint-Victor, *De Trinitate* III,11–25. See also Augustine, *De Trinitate* XV.17,29 (CChr.SL 50A, 504): ‘*Sic ergo eum genuit ut etiam de illo donum commune procederet et spiritus sanctus esset amborum.*’

⁹² Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 187–197; Durand, *Le Père Alpha et Oméga de la vie trinitaire*, 254 ff.

⁹³ Thomas Aquinas, *De Potentia* 9.9 c.

⁹⁴ Bonaventure, *Breviloquium* I.2.

⁹⁵ Richard of Saint-Victor, *De Trinitate* V.25.

⁹⁶ Bonaventure, 1 *Sent* d 9, a unic. q 2.

⁹⁷ Augustine, *De Trinitate* V.5,6 (CChr.SL 50, 210).

⁹⁸ Balthasar, *Theodramatik* III, 297–305; Ferdinand Ulrich, *Leben in der Einheit von Leben und Tod* (Freiburg i.Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1999), 71–72.

himself so intimately present in the Son as to rule out any negative separation or estrangement between them.⁹⁹ Both sides of the coin – the positive separation and the presence – need each other!

It is precisely by separating between himself as giver and himself as gift that the Father opens up to the Son from his innermost core as Father.¹⁰⁰ The separation we are dealing with here is one that establishes their coinherence. The abiding positive difference between Father and Son is what constitutes the seriousness of their *openness* for each other. It is, in fact, by *remaining* the *genitor* that the Father attests that he has *already given everything to the Son* and so opened *himself* up to the Son – *as* the eternal source for the Son, while the Son, in consequence of this openness, is an eternal source himself, endowed with the full power and ability to respond to the Father ‘on the same level’.

Paradoxical as it may seem, then, the Father’s *giveness is what makes it impossible for him to leave the position of genitor for the Son*. For his part, the Son never ceases receiving because what the Father has given him is *not a dead essence, but an actualitas*, the *actualitas of the never-ending life of the Father himself* (Jn 5:26). Each one’s ‘staying in position’, then, is (as already noted) a non-finitising ‘limitation’ to his proper ‘place’. Far from imprisoning the divine persons in themselves, however, this limitation represents an *extension*, a superabundance of love, which never stops being gracious, not only in giving but also in receiving in return. In communicating his essence, the Father not only gives the Son his (the Father’s) ‘past’, but also opens to him his (the Father’s) ‘future’, inasmuch as he gives himself *as the source that will never be exhausted*. This mystery helps explain how each divine person’s preferential love of his own *proprietas* is not a higher egoism but a holding back ordered to the accessibility of this *proprietas as such* to the others. If the Father loves his position in the trinitarian processions more for himself, this is a pure responsibility for the others, sheer goodness rooted in unstinting fontal liberality. Here, my readiness – so to speak – is readiness for the other *by myself*; the *ad alium* lies in the abyss of the fontal *per se*.

⁹⁹ Ulrich, *Leben in der Einheit von Leben und Tod*, 70–71.

¹⁰⁰ For the following, see Martin Bieler, ‘Das ernste Spiel der Liebe. Zur Trinitätstheologie H.U. von Balthasars,’ *Theodramatik und Theatralität. Ein Dialog mit dem Theaterverständnis von Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Volker Kapp, Helmuth Kiesel and Klaus Lubbers (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2000), 48–56.

Does God 'lose' anything in giving himself away? The New Testament's exhortations to lose our life (Matt 10:39), to be the grain of wheat that falls into the earth (Jn 12:24), etc., should make us wary of too quickly answering this question in the negative. For in a sense, God *does* 'lose' something in giving himself away *ad intra*; if he did not, he would merely be playing games and would lack any genuine otherness in himself.

Inasmuch as God holds nothing back, he 'loses' himself, even *to the point of nothingness*.¹⁰¹ It is important to add, however, that this nothingness remains interior to infinite being as an implication of the self-communication *ad intra* of *esse subsistens*. The Father's 'nothingness' is his *not* being the Son or Spirit – which non-being is the same as his being the sheer fontal plenitude for both.

Looked at in this light, God's 'loss' is not a destructive elimination of self but an unfolding of fecundity in the absolute affirmation of otherness. By the same token, it is a way of gaining everything anew in the act of giving everything away. For, having given everything away, the Father 'contracts' to his own *proprietas*, yet in that very 'contraction', he *possesses himself in a completely new way*. Not only does he now indwell himself as the *fontalis plenitudo*, but he also extends simultaneously *in complete openness* to everything else in the Son and in the Spirit. This *is* the substantial self-affirmation of the Father. He who loses his life for Christ's sake will participate in this self-affirmation, which is stronger than death because it is love itself.

And what is contained in this infinity? The essence of the three persons. As already mentioned, this essence does not subsist as a fourth hypostasis. It subsists only as Father, Son and Spirit. And yet, it is also what they have in common. It is one in more than one. No wonder Master Eckhart was fascinated by what he called the 'silent desert', in which no difference ever was.¹⁰² We may speak here of the first anticipation of the way in which non-subsistent *esse commune*, in its simplicity, is somehow 'in-between' the trinitarian God as the eternal source of being, on the one hand, and finite subsisting freedom, on the other hand – albeit in such a way as to remain rooted in *esse subsistens* and

¹⁰¹ On this understanding of nothingness, see Heinrich Seuse, *Deutsche mystische Schriften* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1986), 356–357.

¹⁰² Meister Eckhart, *Predigten* (Largier), vol. 1 (Frankfurt a.M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1993) 509.

to ‘hang into’ created substances.¹⁰⁵ It is to this created *esse commune* we now turn.

3. Trinity, Creation, and *Esse Commune*

If the foregoing is right, *esse commune* reveals itself as a similitude of the divine goodness in a new and deeper sense. In particular, it mirrors and communicates the inner power of *esse subsistens* to be one in more than one hypostasis without forming a separate fourth hypostasis of its own. We see this mirroring and communication in the fact that *esse commune* is not a stationary bridge connecting two foreign shores, but rather a flow in which the Creator most intimately and directly approaches his creatures while upholding them in love.

Seen in light of the Trinity, then, *esse commune* appears most clearly as what is: the fluid path of the Creator’s self-communication to finite creatures, that by which all finite things are connected with one other, just as (for the same reason) it is that by which each participates in the uniqueness of the Creator. Aquinas draws a subtle distinction in his *In De Divinis Nominibus*. *Esse commune*, he says there, is *not* God, but it is *not simply not* God: It is *a kind of participation in God*, and it depends on God.¹⁰⁴ It must be a kind of participation in God because otherwise God would not give *himself* in creation, yet it cannot simply be God because God does not directly ‘transplant’ his essence into created beings.¹⁰⁵ Balthasar offers a helpful gloss on Aquinas when he describes *esse commune* as God’s being in the condition of being given to finite creatures,¹⁰⁶ while Gustav Siewerth speaks in this context of an ‘exemplary identity’ and of the ‘finitization of being’ (*esse*).¹⁰⁷ (This makes it clear, by the way, that God’s creating the world ‘out of nothing’ means that he relies on nothing outside of himself in order to produce

¹⁰⁵ Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus*, 17–21.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *In De Divinis Nominibus* 5.2 (660): ‘*Et hoc est quod dicit quod ipsum esse commune est ipsius Dei, tamquam ab ipso dependens, et non ipse Deus est esse, id est ipsius esse communis, tamquam ab ipso dependens... sed magis ipsum esse creatum est quaedam participatio Dei et similitudo Ipsius.*’

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 2,3 (158).

¹⁰⁶ ‘Die strömende Fülle des Seins Gottes im Zustand ihres Gegebenseins an die endlichen Empfänger.’ Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit* III,1, 961.

¹⁰⁷ Gustav Siewerth, *Der Thomismus als Identitätssystem*. *Gesammelte Werke Bd. II* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1979), 31–32, 132 f.

creatures in being. Or, to put it positively: all preconditions for creating the world lie in God himself.¹⁰⁸)

The non-subsistence of *esse commune* is an expression of the fact that it is totally given into the many creatures, which (and who) by their multitude attest to the richness (*infinitas*) and graciousness of the divine goodness:¹⁰⁹ The *esse subsistens* gives *non-subsistent esse commune* to creatures in order to let them *subsist*. Nothing is kept back in *esse commune*; it is pure givenness. This is why it *does not subsist* itself. With respect to subsistence, one must say that only God and creatures subsist. Similarly, the divine substance does not subsist as a fourth hypostasis, but only in the three trinitarian persons, and this for an analogous reason, namely: that it is totally given – to these three persons. This is true even for the first person, who affirms, and in a certain sense ‘receives’, himself as *esse subsistens in the form proper to his fatherhood* by generating the Son and co-spirating the Spirit.¹¹⁰

Non-subsisting *esse commune* is the influx of a powerful sustaining presence, which establishes the many creatures in their genuine otherness to the Creator – precisely on account of his presence in them. At first blush, *esse commune* looks more like an event. Because, however, it bears the presence of the Creator in itself, it is also a *fixum et quietum in ente*, as Aquinas nicely puts it in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*.¹¹¹ Aquinas also emphasises that being caused does not belong to the *ratio* of *ens* as such.¹¹² There is something absolute in every creature because *esse* is not participated in parts but according to its outflow from God. This means that it is participated in wholeness – within the limits set by the creaturely essence of its many participators.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ ‘Aber ebenso gewiss darf das ‘Nichts-woraus’ die Welt ward, nur in der unendlichen Freiheit selbst gesucht werden: in den durch die göttliche Allmacht und tiefer in den durch das trinitarische Seinlassen der hypostatischen Akte sich öffnenden Räumen des Erschaffbaren.’ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodramatik* II.1, 241. See also Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz*, 94: ‘Das “Nichts,” aus dem Gott schafft, ist im Grunde er selbst.’ Jens Halfwassen, *Plotin und der Neuplatonismus* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2004), 170: ‘Wenn Gott alle Dinge einschliesslich der Materie aus dem Nichts erschafft, so ist dieses Nichts *Er selbst...*’

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *ScG* II.59–45; *De Potentia* 3.16; *STh* I.47.1.

¹¹⁰ Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 175–209. See especially *ibid.* pages 204–209 on the difference between the divine *principium quod* (person) and the divine *principium quo* (essence).

¹¹¹ Thomas Aquinas, *ScG* I.20 (179).

¹¹² Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I.44.1 ad 1.

¹¹³ Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I.75.5 ad 1.

We see at work here the same law of separation and presence we observe in every true act of giving and communication, whether it be the generation of the Son by the Father or the production of the creature by God. The power to posit a difference while uniting the different with oneself is in its deepest core the pure power to give (and receive). The highest form of this power is the eternal processions of the Trinity. Indeed, they define and constitute this power. Bonaventure is therefore right when he says: ‘*Omnis creatura clamat generationem aeternam*.’¹¹⁴ The absoluteness thus constituted in the creature also highlights the scope of the Evangelist’s statement that the incarnate Son ‘came *into his own*’ (*eis ta idia elthen*) (Jn 1:11).¹¹⁵

Esse commune is a gift given by the Creator through which creatures are simultaneously connected to and differentiated from him. Just as the divine essence is common to all three trinitarian persons, *esse commune* connects us to all other beings. At the same time, it is by *esse commune*, adapted to the limits of our being (*ens*), that the Creator becomes present in each creature, thus constituting it in its absolute uniqueness. Indeed, essential limitation plays a decisive role in opening the *superabundance of esse* to us as the ground of our own unique identity – in analogy to the Son, who receives the essence of the Father by way of a differentiating generation. The very thing that makes us finite (our essence) is also the means of our total affirmation by the Creator. As Aquinas, citing Basil, writes in the *Summa Theologiae*, the eternal Son and creatures have receiving in common.¹¹⁶ Hence the fittingness of the world’s creation *in the Son*.¹¹⁷

The upshot of all this is that created being is not a neutral object but a true gift infused with the *loving* presence of the Creator who sustains us. This gift is not recognisable to us as such unless it is illumined by the donative freedom of the Creator.¹¹⁸ And it is hard, if not impossible, to stabilise our recognition of the created character of finite beings unless we understand how the Creator is able to give being, namely,

¹¹⁴ Bonaventure, *Hexaemeron* 11.13.

¹¹⁵ This is true independently of whether one interprets ‘*idia*’ as the cosmos or the Jewish homeland of Jesus.

¹¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I,33,3 ad 2. Whereas the Son receives an *esse acceptum*, we receive an *esse receptum* – within the essential limits of our finite being: *STh* I,29,2 ad 3.

¹¹⁷ Wolfgang Beinert, *Christus und der Kosmos. Perspektiven zu einer Theologie der Schöpfung* (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder Verlag, 1974).

¹¹⁸ Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit* III,1, 366.

as the *trinitarian* God he is.¹¹⁹ As Ulrich has shown with great acuity, our understanding of the nature and possibility of creation ultimately depends on our recognition of the eternal Father and his capacity to remain himself in distinguishing within himself between giver and gift.¹²⁰

In conclusion, one may say that *esse commune* enables God to be present to his creatures with a striking directness impossible on the Neoplatonic model with its intermediate hypostases.¹²¹ The Platonic intermediaries are lifted (*aufgehoben*) via *esse commune* into the direct communication of God to finite beings as a structured act of God's love. Platonism is thus transformed to the point that such hypostatic intermediaries are replaced by the laws of a personal relationship between giver, gift and receiver. *Esse commune*, then, is not a neutral joint connecting Creator and creature. The 'in-between' of *esse commune* is not a mediator we could somehow control from above (that would be onto-theology), but a living communication lying within the hand of God himself: The miracle of God's presence in his creatures stems from the power of the eternal Father, who is able to give his own substance in such a way that it is one in more than one within the deity itself. What happens between the Creator and the creature in the communication of being is an analogue of what happens between Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the *ordo processionis*: God is able to give precisely *himself* to his creatures, and what might appear to be a diminution of this giving on account of the 'finitization' of *esse* in the act of creation is merely the presupposition for God's opening his *inner* trinitarian life to *free* creatures in Christ through the Spirit. *De facto*, this alone is worthy of God's goodness: God is able and willing to give himself *absolutely*, even to *finite* creatures.¹²² Non-subsistent *esse commune*, by which the

¹¹⁹ Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus*, 261. On the aberrations in the understanding of *esse non subsistens*, see Martin Bieler, 'Ferdinand Ulrich's "Metaphysics as Reenactment"' *Communio: International Catholic Review* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2019): 41–72.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 56–60.

¹²¹ For this directness, see also Marine de la Tour, *Gabe im Anfang. Grundzüge des metaphysischen Denkens von Ferdinand Ulrich* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2016), 111–119.

¹²² This is the answer to Spinoza's worries about the existence of limited substances: 'Ferner, wenn sie also durch ihre Ursache begrenzt ist [sc. the limited substance. MB], muss das so sein, weil die Ursache entweder nicht mehr hat geben können oder nicht mehr hat geben wollen?' Baruch de Spinoza, *Kurzer Traktat über Gott, den Menschen und dessen Glück* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2014), 19.

finite free creatures whom God loves are enabled to be in freedom, is indeed the *similitudo divinae bonitatis*!¹²⁵

It is both necessary and possible to look at *esse commune* from ‘below’ through philosophical inquiry.¹²⁴ But when we look at it from ‘above’, from the perspective of creation as an act of the trinitarian God, we come to grasp the logic of *esse commune* in a way transcending philosophical inquiry alone. Beyond all mere philosophical inquiry, the absolute trinitarian freedom must enlighten us in Christ through the Spirit about the origin of our world and of the free creatures in it. Such a trinitarian ontology is unparalleled in its power to unlock a deeper understanding of human beings in their world.^{125*}

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¹²⁵ This might explain why the ‘world order’ appears in the Old Testament as a beautiful woman who speaks to mankind (Prov. 8). See Gerhard von Rad, *Weisheit in Israel* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), 189–228.

¹²⁴ For more on *esse commune* from a philosophical perspective, see Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff’s still useful *Ens et unum convertuntur. Stellung und Gehalt des Grundsatzes in der Philosophie des hl. Thomas von Aquin* (Münster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1953).

¹²⁵ For an attempt to show that this is not an unfounded claim, see Martin Bieler, ‘Attachment Theory and Aquinas’s Metaphysics of Creation,’ *Analecta Hermeneutica* 3 (2011): 1–25.

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KLAUS HEMMERLE ON THE TRINITARIAN ONTOLOGY OF THE HUMAN PERSON*

EDUARD FIEDLER

ABSTRACT

The 20th-century quest for a Trinitarian ontology was associated with a critical reconsideration of the modern philosophy of the subject. However, this reconsideration did not reject the question of subjectivity itself. It rather rejected any narrowed ontological assumptions that would identify the very ground of subjectivity with a univocal eidetic structure of being. In its most advanced forms, the modern and postmodern philosophy of the subject proved to be radically structuralist, relational, or even differentialist. While many attempts at Trinitarian ontology have faced this challenge either by adapting Christian dialogical personalism or reviving older metaphysical traditions and notions, e.g., the analogy, the participation, and the concept of the subsisting person, Klaus Hemmerle emphasised in his *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976) above all the ontological primacy of the relational self-giving (*Sich-Geben*), explicated phenomenologically. Every subsisting being, including the human person, gains its concrete contour only from within this relational process. But does this relational reappearance of the human person mean its self-alienated completion, or rather its complete alienation? How can this relational account of the human person be related to older metaphysical, theological, and personalistic traditions? Does Hemmerle avoid the dangerous dissolution of the human person as a mere processual moment of the whole community and the world?

Keywords

Klaus Hemmerle; Trinitarian ontology; Trinitarian metaphysics; Trinity; Human person; Substance; Structure; Subject; Relation; Love; Community; Communio; Relational ontology; Christian personalism.

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1. Trinitarian Ontology and the Question of the Human Person

From its beginning, the 20th-century quest for a Trinitarian ontology¹ was widely associated with a critical reconsideration of the modern philosophy of the subject as developed in various forms by Descartes (*cogito*), Kant (*Ich denke*), Hegel (*Geist*), Husserl (*das reine Ich*), or Heidegger (*Dasein*). However, this theological critique did not reject the question of subjectivity or being-in-the-world itself. It rather rejected its situating within narrowed ontological constellations dominated either by the idealistic and transcendental hypostatizing of being as an eidetic structure a priori, outside the theological real difference between Triune God and his creation, or by the identification of the subject-centred, self-intentionally structured horizon of the phenomenological reduction with the sole *terminus ad quem* of Being's historical self-disclosure.

In its most advanced forms, this modern and postmodern philosophy of the subject proved to be radically structuralist, relational, deconstructivist, or even differentialist.² While Fink still acknowledged the importance of grasping the fullness of presence in the midst of an ontologically understood play,³ according to Derrida, the identifiable presence, this *terminus ad quem* of Being's self-revelation, is always already a metaphysical end of the play. Derrida states that there are 'two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of freeplay'. The one (1) seeks to understand the metaphysical and onto-theological truth behind the relational structure, freeplay, and fluctuating order of signs. Such a metaphysical interpretation turns towards the securing and grounding origin and speech which brings the play to its end. The

¹ For a brief summary, see Roland Kany, 'Trinitarische Ontologie und Logik,' in *Augustins Trinitätsdenken: Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu De Trinitate*, by Roland Kany, 1st ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 272–78; Jean-Yves Lacoste, 'Being, Relation, and Communion,' in *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, ed. Jean-Yves Lacoste (New York: Routledge, 2005); Lubomír Žák, 'Verso una ontologia trinitaria,' in *Abitando la Trinità. Per un rinnovamento dell'ontologia*, ed. Piero Coda and Lubomír Žák (Roma: Città Nuova, 1998), 5–25; Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff, 'Ontologie, Trinitarische,' in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie (Bd. 6)* (Basel – Darmstadt: Schwabe Verlag, 1984).

² Cf. Vernon W. Cisney, *Deleuze and Derrida: Difference and the Power of the Negative* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2018).

³ 'In contrast with the [...] futurism of our life, play is characterized by calm, timeless 'presence' and autonomous, self-sufficient meaning...' Eugene Fink, 'The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play,' *Yale French Studies* 41 (1968): 21.

second interpretation (2), instead, ‘affirms freeplay and tries to pass beyond man and humanism’,⁴ and thereby ignites the course of the metaphysically unsecured ‘freeplay’ through the constant sacrifice of the substantiality of the human person on the altar of the absolute *différance*.

Although there certainly were influential personalistic attempts at Trinitarian ontology which opposed the modern and postmodern philosophy of the subject but otherwise shared its anti-metaphysical, anti-Platonic, or anti-Hellenistic tendency,⁵ most 20th century approaches to Trinitarian ontology have faced this challenge by genealogically pointing to its forgotten metaphysical and neglected theological assumptions and, at the same time, by systematically reviving older metaphysical traditions which intellectually articulated and practically enacted the situation of man in the hierarchical order of being through the notion and the praxis of the analogy, the participation, and the concept of the subsisting person. The contemporary of Heidegger, Jesuit priest, philosopher, and theologian Erich Przywara devoted his central works to the problem of the analogical predication of being, *analogia entis*. In double contrast to Hegel and Heidegger,⁶ Przywara’s creatural metaphysics articulated the situation of the limited and analogous creatural participation in the gift of being above the contradictory dialectic of nothingness and under the absolute fullness of identity in the Trine God. Although always stressing the moment of *maior dissimilitudo* and warning against any revivals of Joachimite Trinitarianism,⁷ he also clearly saw that every creatural metaphysics depends on the

⁴ Jacques Derrida, ‘Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,’ in *The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 264–65.

⁵ Cf. Ioannis Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three, and the Many: God, Creation, and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Recently, the anti-platonic tendency in Gunton was discussed by King-Ho Leung, ‘Ontology and Anti-Platonism: Reconsidering Colin Gunton’s Trinitarian Theology,’ *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 62, no. 4 (December 2020): 419–40, <https://doi.org/10.1515/nzsth-2020-0022>. The postmetaphysical approach to Trinitarian ontology was also recommended by Christoph Theobald, ‘Gott ist Beziehung: Zu einigen neueren Annäherungen an das Geheimnis der Trinität,’ *Concilium* 37 (2001): 34–45.

⁶ See John R. Betz, ‘The Analogia Entis in Erich Przywara and Ferdinand Ulrich: Toward a More Catholic Metaphysics,’ *Communio: International Catholic Review* 46, no. 1 (2019): 113–14.

⁷ See Erich Przywara, ‘The Scope of Analogy as a Fundamental Catholic Form (1940),’ in *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, by Erich

ever greater self-reduction (...) into the ‘depths of God,’ but thereby into the inner-personal life of God – into, that is, the Trinitarian. Theological metaphysics is here properly enjoined to undertake a renewal of Augustine – though in the medium of the ‘holy sobriety’ of Thomas Aquinas (...).⁸

Already in the years before the beginning of World War II, the German Catholic philosopher Theodor Haecker dared to proleptically formulate the programme of *analogia entis* becoming *analogia Trinitatis*:

The task of the next decades and centuries will be to explore and to articulate that man, as the image of the Triune God, can most beautifully, truly, and blissfully be known according to *analogia Trinitatis*, and together with man and through man also the whole creation which is through and through a similitude of God.⁹

Haecker’s turn to the ‘urgent task’ of *analogia Trinitatis* was motivated above all by his ‘anthropological synthesis of Thomist realism and Kierkegaardian personalism’.¹⁰ He attempted to formulate a ‘hierarchical’ justification of the human person using the Augustinian and Thomistic conceptual instruments while preserving the difference between the absolute existence of the Triune God and the relative existence of man.¹¹ Later, Haecker’s turn to the ‘urgent task’ of *analogia Trinitatis* was followed by authors who, for the first time, explicitly called their philosophical and theological endeavour ‘Trinitarian ontology’ (Clemens Kaliba)¹² or ‘Trinitarian metaphysics’ (Hans-Edu-

Przywara, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Company, 2014), 356–60.

⁸ Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, trans. John R. Betz and David Bentley Hart (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Company, 2014), 182.

⁹ Theodor Haecker, ‘Schöpfer und Schöpfung,’ in *Was ist der Mensch? Der Christ und die Geschichte. Schöpfer und Schöpfung*, by Theodor Haecker, Gesammelte Werke 4 (München: Kösel, 1965), 431. The translation from German text is my own.

¹⁰ Helena M. Tomko, ‘Beyond Reception: Understanding Theodor Haecker’s Kierkegaardian Authorship in the Third Reich,’ *International Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 80, no. 4–5 (2019): 341, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21692527.2018.1451357>.

¹¹ Cf. Florian Mayr, *Theodor Haecker: Eine Einführung in sein Werk* (Paderborn – München: Schöningh, 1994), 12. Przywara took a very sceptical view of Haecker’s *analogia Trinitatis* precisely because he believed that Haecker relativised this difference hierarchically (thereby neglecting the moment of *maior dissimilitudo*). Cf. Przywara, ‘The Scope of Analogy as a Fundamental Catholic Form (1940),’ 349.

¹² Clemens Kaliba, *Die Welt als Gleichnis Des dreieinigen Gottes: Entwurf zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1952), 9.

ard Hengstenberg).¹⁵ All of these authors reacted to early discussions concerning the relation between modern transcendental, idealistic, or phenomenological philosophy of the subject and theology by embedding the subjective noetic activity and its ontological grounding into the Trinitarian order of being and thought, ‘rhythmised’ by *analogia entis*.

More in the manner of the ‘holy sobriety’ of Thomas Aquinas, mentioned earlier by Przywara, Christian philosophers and theologians like Gustav Siewerth, Ferdinand Ulrich, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Heinrich Beck developed a robust account of being as actuality of love or *similitudo divinae bonitatis*¹⁴ focusing on the relation between Thomistic real difference and personal receptivity of the gracious gift of being.¹⁵ According to Ulrich, the task of man is to avoid the seductions of univocally possessing being as something juxtaposed to the Triune God and participate at the realisation of the ‘pure mediation’ of being, which as ‘nothing’ reveals ‘God’s loving presence.’¹⁶ Reconstructively inventing the Trinitarian ontology of Thomas Aquinas, Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff also argued for the gratuity of the personal being.¹⁷ W. Norris Clarke emphasised the ontological primacy of the substance-in-relation and interpreted this account of being as a triadic or a Trinitarian ontology.¹⁸ The Trinitarian ontology of John Milbank also has Thomistic connotations.¹⁹ In the context of patristic theology, we find the same emphasis on substance-in-relation in the recent publications of Giulio Maspero.²⁰

¹⁵ Hans-Eduard Hengstenberg, *Das Band zwischen Gott und Schöpfung: Entwurf einer Analogia Trinitatis* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1991), 5.

¹⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, 22, 2, ad 2.

¹⁵ Cf. Gisbert Greshake, *Der dreieine Gott: Eine trinitarische Theologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1997), 244–45.

¹⁶ Ferdinand Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus: The Drama of the Question of Being*, trans. David C. Schindler (Washington, DC: Humanum Academic Press, 2018), 22–23.

¹⁷ See Ludger Oeing-Hanhoff, ‘Trinitarische Ontologie und Metaphysik der Person,’ in *Metaphysik und Freiheit: ausgewählte Abhandlungen*, ed. Theo Kobusch and Walter Jaeschke (München: Erichewel Verlag, 1988), 143–49.

¹⁸ See W. Norris Clarke, ‘To Be Is to Be Substance-in-Relation,’ in *Explorations in Metaphysics: Being-God-Person* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 118–19.

¹⁹ See John Milbank, ‘Manifestation and Procedure: Trinitarian Metaphysics after Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas,’ in *Tomismo creativo: lecture contemporanee del Doctor communis*, ed. Marco Salvio, Quaderni / Sacra doctrina 1 (Bologna: ESD, 2015), 41–117.

²⁰ See, for example, Giulio Maspero, ‘Life as Relatio: Classical Metaphysics and Trinitarian Ontology,’ *Theological Research. The Journal of Systematic Theology* 2, no. 1 (2014): 19, <https://doi.org/10.15633/thr.677>.

As it seems, philosophical and theological notions like *analogia entis* and *analogia Trinitatis*, creatural participation in the common act of being, non-subsistence of *esse commune* revealing the kenotic character of Trinitarian love, receptivity of receiving the gift of being, and constitutive interpersonal relationality helped to specify and concretise in various forms of the 20th century Trinitarian ontologies their overall critical attitude towards narrowed ontological assumptions of the modern and postmodern philosophy of the subject.

However, as an example of probably the most well-known account of Trinitarian ontology in the 20th century shows, the situation is not so simple. Although also adapting all the mentioned systematic notions and sharing the critical attitude towards the subject-centred philosophy, Klaus Hemmerle (1929–1994), Catholic theologian and philosopher, later Bishop of Aachen,²¹ also engaged with some of the most advanced forms of the modern philosophy of the subject which proved to be radically structuralist and relational. In his *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976),²² he emphasised the primacy of relational self-giving (*Sich-Geben*), explicated phenomenologically.²³ Recalling with Paul the Apostle that ‘love alone remains’, he argued that what becomes central is

the displacement of the centre of gravity from the self to the other, movement (no longer understood in an Aristotelian fashion) and *relatio* (like-wise no longer understood as a category or even as the accident weakest in Being) (...). Only one thing remains: active participation in that movement which *agape* itself is. This movement is the rhythm of Being; it is the rhythm of giving that gives itself.²⁴

²¹ For a biographical account of Hemmerle’s life, see Wilfried Hagemann, *Verliebt in Gottes Wort: Leben, Denken und Wirken von Klaus Hemmerle, Bischof von Aachen* (Würzburg: Echter, 2008).

²² Klaus Hemmerle, *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, trans. Stephen Churchyard (New York: Angelico Press, 2020).

²³ A brief introduction to Hemmerle’s *Theses* can also be found by Klaus Kienzler, *Bewegung in die Theologie bringen: Theologie in Erinnerung an Klaus Hemmerle* (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2017), 2–21; Michael Böhnke, *Einheit in Mehrsprüchtigkeit: Eine kritische Analyse des trinitarischen Ansatzes im Werk von Klaus Hemmerle*, Bonner Dogmatische Studien, Bd. 35 (Würzburg: Echter, 2000), 55–63; Karel Řiha, ‘K trinitární ontologii,’ *Studia Theologica* 5, no. 3 (2003): 9–15.

²⁴ Hemmerle, *Theses* (Trans. Churchyard), 35.

From within this process, the human person gains himself radically anew as an origin, a pole of plural origination (*Mehrrsprünglichkeit*).²⁵

In addition to all the older traditions mentioned, by explicating the phenomenon of self-giving in this radically relational manner, Hemmerle draws significantly from the work of the Freiburg philosopher Heinrich Rombach. In his structural ontology (*Strukturontologie*), Rombach identifies persons with structural moments embedded into the whole dynamism of the structure's self-organisation and self-creation.²⁶ Similarly, in his *Theses*, Hemmerle defines persons as poles crystallising from within relational being-together. But does this relational reappearance of the human person mean its self-alienated completion, or rather its complete structural and functional alienation? How can this radically relational account of the human person be related to other forms of 20th century Trinitarian ontology and older metaphysical traditions? Does Hemmerle avoid the existentialist, structuralist, or even differentialist dissolution of the human person as a mere moment of some phenomenologically fundamental (*Grundphänomen*), but ever-changing immanent processes?

After these introductory notes on the relation between various forms of 20th century Trinitarian ontology and modern and postmodern philosophy of the subject, I will briefly describe the traditional Christian metaphysical account of the human person and subjectivity. On the background of this exposition, I will formulate the specific character of Hemmerle's phenomenological approach towards the Trinitarian ontology of the human person. Based on the analysis of his phenomenological rereading of the traditional personalistic metaphysics in his *Person and Community* (1993), the most disturbing questions concerning his radically relational account of the human person will be addressed. Their clarification could prove important not only in view of the different ways of interpreting Hemmerle's Trinitarian ontology but above all in view of the ever-deepening modern and postmodern tendency of the structural functionalisation of all reality, personal reality included.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 38–41. As for the concept of *Mehrrsprünglichkeit*, cf. Böhnke, *Einheit in Mehrrsprünglichkeit*, 72–79.

²⁶ Heinrich Rombach, *Strukturontologie: Eine Phänomenologie der Freiheit*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Alber Verlag, 1988), 28.

2. Being the Person: Christian Metaphysics of the Inner Man and Phenomenology

Without a doubt, the question of the human or divine person, of a personal being, is one of the fundamental questions of Christian philosophy and theology. Adapting the thinking of the Platonic Academy and the Stoa, Christian philosophers have been concerned with the peculiar reality of the human person from the very beginning. This interest was fundamentally motivated by the encounter with the theological mystery of the person of Christ and the mystery of the Trinity. Christological and Trinitarian discussions of the Patristic era had a decisive influence not only on the development of the theological concept of person but also on its legal and anthropological or philosophical variant.²⁷

According to the German historian of Christian philosophy Theo Kobusch, it was initially Origen²⁸ who pursued the revision of the older ancient Greek essentialist determination of the human person and converted the one-sided logic of this determination: neither nature nor essence should determine personal freedom (προαίρεσις), but personal freedom, participating in the Good, should determine the nature, the essence.²⁹ This Origenian tradition was then developed further by the Greek Church Fathers (such as Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom). Augustine deepened it by stressing the problematics of the inner man (*homo interior*),³⁰ especially in the Trinitarian context.³¹ Theo Kobusch interprets this patristic development as the epochal discovery of free subjectivity within a metaphysics of the inner man. According to Kobusch, the modern philosophy of the subject was most importantly influenced precisely by this Christian tradition.³² Despite its substance-ontological formulation, this tradition also includes Boethius's formula of being a person: *'Persona est naturae*

²⁷ Cf. Piero Coda, *From the Trinity: The Coming of God in Revelation and Theology*, ed. William Neu (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 461–62.

²⁸ Cf. Origen of Alexandria, *Homiliae in Lucam*, 11.

²⁹ See Theo Kobusch, *Selbstwerdung und Personalität: Spätantike Philosophie und ihr Einfluss auf die Moderne* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 211–16.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 84.

³¹ Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, X.

³² Kobusch, *Selbstwerdung und Personalität*, 95–97; Theo Kobusch, *Christliche Philosophie: Die Entdeckung der Subjektivität* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2006), 71.

rationalis individua substantia.⁵³ Here, too, a clear distinction can be made between the essential principle of nature and the principle of free, albeit still substantially expressed, individuality.

As it omits some fundamental questions concerning the inner and the outer relationality of personal beings, this subject-oriented theological genealogy of modern philosophy is not unproblematic. It argues that regardless of whether in the context of medieval substance ontology (as in Boethius or Thomas Aquinas) or in the context of the mystical metaphysics of the inner man (as in Origen or Gregory of Nyssa), the premodern Christian prioritisation of the subjective personal life and freedom transformed into the modern philosophy of the subject. Although there indeed are good arguments for stating the systematic connection between premodern and modern philosophical accounts of the inner life of the spirit or mind, as in the case of Augustine's and Hegel's phenomenology of subjectivity,⁵⁴ it is also necessary to point out the substantial difference between them associated with the ambivalence of the ontological grounding of the inner relationality of the acts of being, thinking, and willing. This relationality stems either from the gracious character of the gift of being as 'love', contemplated through intellectual participation in the analogical and Christological reduction into the Triune God, or it is based on the inner potentiality of the self-reflexive actualisation of the supposedly a priori eidetic structure of being as, initially, 'nothing'. While Erwin Schadel genealogically proved the latter to be the result of the modern *Trinitätsvergessenheit*,⁵⁵ the former option was, at least preliminarily, restored and revived by authors associated with the 20th-century quest for a Trinitarian ontology.

Now, the phenomenological account of the transcendental subjectivity or existentialist *Dasein* and its postmodern structuralist or differentialist variants are bound to this modern subject-centred philosophy. In the self-intentionally structured horizon of phenomenological reduction, relations could only be thematised and grasped as the eidetic

⁵³ Boethius, *Contra Eutychem et Nestorium*, c. 3.

⁵⁴ Cf. Vittorio Hösle, 'From Augustine's to Hegel's Theory of Trinity,' *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 62, no. 4 (2020): 441–65, <https://doi.org/10.1515/nzsth-2020-0023>.

⁵⁵ See Erwin Schadel, 'Introduction,' in *Bibliotheca Trinitariorum: Internationale Bibliographie trinitarischer Literatur (I. Band: Autorenverzeichnis)*, ed. Erwin Schadel (München – New York – London – Paris: K. G. Saur, 1984), XXIII–XXXVI.

mediation of the subject-centred self-intentionality. Hence, Heidegger's analysis of a 'being-together' (*Mitsein*) resulted in its supposedly unauthentic and derivative character (*das Man*).⁵⁶ Of course, stressing the role of language and thankful thinking in the phenomenological horizon determined by Being's historical self-disclosure as *Ereignis* enables an ontological shift or conversion towards a phenomenology of the structural intersubjectivity, concerned with fundamental multi-polar phenomena like play, life, or speech.⁵⁷ But since these fundamental phenomenological ontologies have no access to the metaphysical grammar of the substance, relation, and their analogical predication, the relationality implied in analysed fundamental phenomena has no real (and symbolical), but only functional (and virtual) meaning. The reality of the constitutive personal relations, at the same time internalising the outside through receptive dwelling in the personal substance and externalising the inside through communicative excess of the innermost gift of being, can hardly be expressed when the persons have no substantial, but only structural meaning. Does this argument imply that the promising but radically relational Trinitarian ontology of Klaus Hemmerle, significantly influenced by phenomenological fundamental ontologies, is losing its theological and philosophical appeal when confronted with the problem of personal being and with its conceptualisation in the traditions of Christian substantial metaphysics, the metaphysics of the inner man, or Christian dialogical personalism?

3. Hemmerle's Primacy of Love and his Phenomenological Approach to Personalistic Metaphysics

Although there are many ways to read Hemmerle's concisely formulated *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976), the two most prominent approaches dominating in today's scholarship can be distinguished. First, *Theses* can be interpreted retrospectively as the important result of Hemmerle's academic years in Freiburg and Hemmerle's prolific phenomenological engagement with problems implied in

⁵⁶ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 19th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2006), §§26–27, 117–50.

⁵⁷ Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, ed. Petra Jaeger, Gesamtausgabe 79 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1994), 97–114.

the idealistic or phenomenological philosophy of religion.⁵⁸ Above all, Hemmerle struggled to find a way how to express being of the Holy (*das Heilige*) by thinking the Holy in a way that the Holy remains holy, and the thinking remains thinking.⁵⁹ In this context, Trinitarian revelation, contemplated in Hemmerle's *Theses* in its specific and unique character, rearranges the relation between the subject, addressed by and established through God's self-giving, and being, mediating the same self-giving of the Triune God. This ontological rearrangement reveals that the meaning and intelligible structure of both the subjectivity and being is the relational self-giving, understood actively, verbally, and processually. 'A thing, a subject, or a being can only be understood, and can only be fulfilled, in its action (...). Nothing "is" outside of its action (...).'⁴⁰ Whereas the retrospective interpretation of Hemmerle's *Theses* would tend to read this 'action' as a purely relational onto-dynamism, the second most prominent interpretation of this work would suggest that, systematically, this ontological 'action' means an *actus essendi* mediating by its non-subsistence the actuality of being. In this line of thought, the continuity with Balthasarian theology and metaphysics would be sustained.⁴¹ As Hemmerle's *Theses* are based on a birthday letter addressed to Hans Urs von Balthasar⁴² and Hemmerle not only explicitly recalls the Balthasarian inspiration of these⁴³ but also situates the necessity of 'a new, a Trinitarian ontology'⁴⁴ into the wider horizon of the whole Christian metaphysical tradition,⁴⁵ this 'hermeneutics of continuity' would certainly be appropriate.

⁵⁸ Cf. Kienzler, *Bewegung in die Theologie bringen*, 150–50. Kienzler's work represents the most advanced form of this phenomenologically oriented interpretation of Hemmerle's Trinitarian ontology.

⁵⁹ Klaus Hemmerle, 'Das Heilige und das Denken: Zur philosophischen Phänomenologie des Heiligen,' in *Auf den göttlichen Gott zudenken: Schriften zur Religionsphilosophie und Fundamentaltheologie*, ed. Heinz-Jürgen Görtz, Klaus Kienzler, and Richard Lorenz, 1st ed., *Ausgewählte Schriften 1* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1996), 113.

⁴⁰ Hemmerle, *Theses (Trans. Churchyard)*, 38.

⁴¹ Cf. Coda, *From the Trinity*, 491. Hemmerle is similarly interpreted by Bernhard Körner. Cf. Bernhard Körner, 'Theology Constituted by Communication in Multiple Causality: Klaus Hemmerle's Trinitarian Ontology and Relational Theology,' in *Theology and Conversation: Towards a Relational Theology*, ed. Jacques Haers and Peter de Mey (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 255–68.

⁴² Hemmerle, *Theses (Trans. Churchyard)*, 7–8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 33 and 49–50.

Indeed, Hemmerle cannot be read as a plainly antimetaphysical author. Although he repeatedly pointed out the limits of the premodern substantial metaphysics, he also criticised the antimetaphysical tendency in modern theology⁴⁶ and rejected the seductive but shallow possibility of forming ‘shifting alliances with late modern and post-modern models of thought.’⁴⁷ Both the substantial metaphysics and the modern philosophy of self-consciousness were for him ‘too puny in design to be able to do full justice to the preliminary Trinitarian gift of the Christian understanding of being.’⁴⁸ Therefore, his critique of the improper accidentalisation of relations in classical metaphysics, radically expressed in the key §18 of his *Theses* and appropriately accompanied by a critique of the absolutised self-intentionality, does not pave a way towards a purely relational or structural ontology but rather indicates the same theological interest and motivation that led Augustine to revise Aristotelian categories in order to articulate the unique logic of Trinitarian life in books V–VII of his *De Trinitate*. Consequently, as much as Augustine or Bonaventure following him, Hemmerle replenished this reconsideration of metaphysical categories by proceeding *modo interiore*⁴⁹ on the phenomenological way of love, *via caritatis*.⁵⁰ The restitution of the substantial and enduring unities, under the primacy of love, follows this path: they are themselves as much as they give and as they receive themselves; they are there because of the communication and ‘transubstantiation.’⁵¹

This shift towards the accentuation of the relational unity in its actuality has been confirmed by Hemmerle’s later works. After Hemmerle became the bishop of Aachen in 1975, he was no longer able to work out his approach to Trinitarian ontology more systematically, but at various occasions, he delivered an argumentation which supports the

⁴⁶ See Klaus Hemmerle, ‘Wandlungen des Gottesbildes seit dem II. Vatikanum,’ in *Auf den göttlichen Gott zudenken: Schriften zur Religionsphilosophie und Fundamentaltheologie*, ed. Heinz-Jürgen Görtz, Klaus Kienzler, and Richard Lorenz, 1st ed., Ausgewählte Schriften 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1996), 448.

⁴⁷ Hemmerle, *Theses* (Trans. Churchyard), 22.

⁴⁸ Klaus Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie: deutsch und englisch*, ed. Wilfried Hagemann, trans. Thomas J. Norris (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 2020), 105. In the new translation of Hemmerle’s *Theses* (Trans. Churchyard), from which I usually quote, this important paragraph is not translated correctly. Therefore, I quote from a slightly older English translation here.

⁴⁹ Cf. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, VIII, 1, 1.

⁵⁰ Hemmerle, *Theses* (Trans. Churchyard), 50.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

reading of his *Theses*, which is more attentive to traditional personalistic metaphysics. In particular, Hemmerle heavily draws on the personalistic substantial metaphysics in his late text *Person and Community* (*Person und Gemeinschaft*, 1995),⁵² where he shows how this traditional approach to the question of the human person can be enriched from within by its careful phenomenological reconsideration.

In *Person and Community*, Hemmerle opens his personalistic argument, consisting of seven related steps, by phenomenological identification of the meaning of community (*Gemeinschaft*) as relational being-together, founded upon the freedom and intersubjective mutuality in the existential and historical context (1). Such a social ontology implies that ‘whoever speaks about community is in fact also speaking about person’.⁵³ This community-focused starting point of Hemmerle is undoubtedly related not only to his Trinitarian ontology but also to his service to the Church as an existential, historical, and sacramental community. Nevertheless, Hemmerle paradoxically notes, the theological and philosophical tradition associated with the Church does not mediate the comprehensive and developed speculative account of the relational being-together as it is in the case of the subsisting person.⁵⁴ Therefore, although it is clear that ‘whoever speaks about community is in fact also speaking about person’, it certainly is not clear whether ‘whoever speaks about person is also speaking about community’. In other words, does the notion of the person imply the relational being-together?

To clarify this question, Hemmerle proceeds with the analyses of the theological genealogy of Christian personalism by stressing the decisive influence of Christological and Trinitarian discussions of the Patristic era (2). In this regard, the main reason for the development of the concept of the person lies ‘in the responsible willingness to understand that whole communion of God with man, in which God is fully involved as God and in which we as people are completely integrated by him and in him’.⁵⁵ Although the original theological motivation and

⁵² Klaus Hemmerle, ‘Person und Gemeinschaft – Eine philosophische und theologische Erwägung,’ in *Die Alternative des Evangeliums: Beiträge zu gesellschaftlichen Fragen*, ed. Michael Albus, Peter Blättler, and Wolfgang Schneider, 1st ed., *Ausgewählte Schriften* 3 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1995), 299–314. Translations from German text are my own.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 301.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 303.

discourse behind the concept of the person implies its intrinsic relational dimension, this concept itself was eventually brought to light by means of the philosophical category of the substance (3). Quoting the classical formula of Boethius,⁵⁶ Hemmerle points out that the concept of the person starts from self-being, subsisting, standing-in-oneself. Medieval speculation deepened this intellectual grasp of the subsisting person by identifying the innermost core of the person with the *incommunicabilis substantia*.⁵⁷ This does not mean that the person should be unable to communicate, to share itself. Rather it communicates itself precisely by communicating its essence in difference to itself and by communicating itself in difference to the other. Thus, the subsisting person cannot be exhausted by any communication or *assumed* by the other, and at the same time, it overflows with communication. Therefore, as Thomas Aquinas puts it, '*excluditur a persona ratio assumptibilis*'.⁵⁸ Bonaventurian radicalisation of this problematics confirms the pattern just described: precisely as the subsisting self-being, as *privatio communitatis*, the person opens itself to the relational fullness, the overflow of the unity.⁵⁹ Paradoxically, '*privatio illa in persona magis est positio quam privatio*'.⁶⁰

After identifying this inner depth of the subsisting person, Hemmerle makes the preliminary conclusion that self-being or subsisting as a person, which is '*perfectissimum in tota natura*',⁶¹ is not just one way of being alongside other ways of being (4). In the person, in the *individua substantia naturae rationalis*, there is the existential relation to being as being.

Because the person cannot be assumed and taken over by the other, but stands in itself, the person stands in relation to everything, everything stands in it; because its relation to everything is based on its relation to being, it is related to itself and thus vis-a-vis to everything. In this condition, however, a rapprochement between person and community begins.⁶²

⁵⁶ Ibid., 303–4.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 304. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, 1 *Sent* 30.

⁵⁸ Hemmerle, 'Person und Gemeinschaft,' 305. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I. 29. 1 ad 2.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bonaventure, *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, XI, 8.

⁶⁰ Hemmerle, 'Person und Gemeinschaft,' 305. Cf. Bonaventure, 1 *Sent* 25. 2. 1.

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I. 29. 3.

⁶² Hemmerle, 'Person und Gemeinschaft,' 307.

Above all, this ontological rapprochement is possible thanks to the transcendental character of being as *bonum* and *verum* (5). The individual personal being enacts the universality of being, and this universality of being, informed by the convertibility of transcendentals, implies the interpersonal conversation and cooperation in being as *verum* and *bonum*. This interpersonal community presents a mutual and common ground through which all relate to the whole, to being, and to persons (6). These remain unique and distinct, *incommunicabilis*. But as they are concerned with the same ‘thing’, with being, and as language mediates the relationship between person and being, ‘words can become common words’, ‘word-character is inscribed in the personal being as a possibility of mutual exchange between persons about being and in being.’⁶⁵ Therefore, not despite, but precisely because the person subsists in radical intimacy of incommunicability, whoever speaks about person is indeed also speaking about interpersonal community.

Now, not only is it the case that the subsisting person cannot be exhausted by any communication or *assumed* by the other, but also it cannot give itself being. The unique incommunicability of the person and its inner word-character express above all a direct and asymmetric relation of the created subsisting person to the very giver of its being, who is also the giver of being (7). In the seventh and last step of his reflection, Hemmerle points out that the ground of the personal being lies in the ontological call of God. The person is called to be in order to be able to answer the call. This answer has to be always already related to the whole of creation. As the creator of the person is also the creator of the whole and of the others, the person is supposed to fulfil its responsibility. The persons ‘inevitably stand before God’s face and before one another and with one another. The characters of the I, that of the You, and that of the We are inextricably linked in the being of the person. And they are linked in its relation to God and in its relation to everything that is.’⁶⁴

This relational culmination of Hemmerle’s argument in *Person and Community* already resembles his Trinitarian ontology. Although from the starting point of a substantial account of the person, Hemmerle identified the relational being-together implied in the radicalised notion of the *incommunicabilis substantia*. However, this constitutive

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 310.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 313.

being-together does not make the self-being of the person, accentuated by the metaphysics of the inner man, or the subsisting being of the person, brought to the light by the classical metaphysics, redundant or secondary. Rather it confirms that the reality of the constitutive personal relations, based on the communicative excess of the innermost gift of being, can hardly be expressed when persons have no substantial, but only structural, functional, or differential meaning. Although the *incommunicabilis substantia* receives its proper sense from within the relational communication, it does not dissolve by communicating its own essence, as it communicates its own essence to the other only in self-giving difference to itself and the other. According to Hemmerle's Trinitarian ontology, the ultimate reality of this self-giving differentiation is God's Triune love.

Conclusion: Anticipated Integration of Personalistic Metaphysics and Phenomenology in Trinitarian Ontology

The ultimate reality of God's Triune love motivated authors associated with the 20th century quest for a Trinitarian ontology in their attempts to critically engage with the modern and postmodern philosophy of the subject by embedding the subject's noetic activity and its ontological grounding into the Trinitarian order of being and thought, structured by the principles of *analogia entis* and *analogia Trinitatis*. On the one hand, in his *Theses*, Klaus Hemmerle acknowledged the importance of such reconstructive revisions. On the other hand, he proposed to go beyond this metaphysical reconstruction by means of the phenomenology of love and radically relational ontology. 'What is new in the new ontology is its approach to a depth which cannot be disclosed from below: to the threefold mystery of God (...). The mystery of this mystery is love, self-giving. From out of love, all Being, all thinking, everything that happens is disclosed in its own structure.'⁶⁵ In the light of this phenomenological disclosure, the human person seems to be a mere moment of relational processes. Does Hemmerle avoid such a structuralist or differentialist dissolution, or does he, for example like Derrida, prefer the antimetaphysical way that 'affirms freeplay and tries to pass beyond man and humanism'?

⁶⁵ Hemmerle, *Theses (Trans. Churchyard)*, 50.

Although there are arguments that prove the significant influence of fundamental phenomenological ontologies, above all, Rombach's *Strukturontologie* on Hemmerle's Trinitarian ontology, there can also be no doubt that Hemmerle does not share the overall antimetaphysical tendency of his philosophical contemporaries. When he adapts methods of phenomenology, he proceeds in a context that has clearly metaphysical contour. This could be said of the reappearance of the subsisting persons from within the self-giving and constitutional relationality in his *Theses*, but more clearly this is obvious from Hemmerle's personalistic argumentation in his later treatise *Person and Community*. Here, Hemmerle discloses the constitutive relationality of the human person from within its traditional metaphysical account as *individua substantia naturae rationalis*, or even *incommunicabilis substantia*. According to Hemmerle, not despite, but precisely because the person subsists in the radical intimacy of its incommunicability, whoever speaks about person is indeed also speaking about interpersonal community. Therefore, Hemmerle's original contribution to the 'urgent task' of *analogia Trinitatis* can be characterised as an anticipated integration of personalistic metaphysics, which realistically situates the subjectivity into the analogical hierarchy of being, and phenomenology of love in Trinitarian ontology.

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IL DIO DIALOGICO E LA PERSONA UMANA. LA DIMENSIONE TRINITARIA DELL'ANTROPOLOGIA DI ROMANO GUARDINI*

PAVEL FRÝVALDSKÝ

ABSTRACT

Dialogic God and the Human Person: The Trinitarian Dimension of Romano Guardini's Anthropology

Theological anthropology occupies an important place in the extensive work of Romano Guardini (1885–1968). The thinking of the German thinker can be included in the current of dialogical personalism of the 20th century, which brought many stimuli for deepening the view of human existence. Guardini creatively develops this inspiration and, at the same time, continues the classical theological tradition represented especially by the work of St. Augustine and Bonaventure. The article attempts to show that, in Guardini's thinking, the relational conception of the human person is closely connected with Trinitarian theology. Only in the light of faith in the Triune God does the dialogical essence of human existence become clearer.

Keywords

Romano Guardini; Trinity; Human person; Dialogical personalism

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La teologia contemporanea riscopre il mistero della Trinità come il principio ermeneutico della conoscenza della realtà intera. Questo approccio nella teologia considera la fede cristiana nel Dio unitrino come la prospettiva fondamentale di tutte le asserzioni teologiche sul mondo e sull'uomo.

* L'articolo è il risultato del progetto Primus Hum21: L'ontologia trinitaria della persona umana.

Questo centro trinitario è sottolineato anche dal *Catechismo della Chiesa cattolica* quando afferma: “Il mistero della Santissima Trinità è il mistero centrale della fede e della vita cristiana. È il mistero di Dio in sé stesso. È quindi la sorgente di tutti gli altri misteri della fede, è la luce che li illumina”.¹ L'impostazione della teologia su questo fondamento della fede non è ancora compiuta, nonostante ciò, si possono notare diversi nuovi tentativi della riflessione trinitaria nelle questioni cristologiche, ecclesiologiche, escatologiche e antropologiche.

L'approccio trinitario alla realtà nella teologia non è totalmente nuovo, può legarsi al grande filone del pensiero patristico e medievale e nello stesso tempo può entrare nel dialogo con il pensiero moderno e cercare di rispondere alle sfide del nostro tempo. In questo contesto possiamo menzionare il progetto di “un'ontologia trinitaria”, cioè interpretare “la realtà in cui siamo, viviamo, c'incontriamo” alla luce che “scaturisce dal Dio rivelato da e in Gesù di Nazareth, che la fede della Chiesa ha cercato di dire con un neologismo: *Trinità*”.² Questa ontologia trinitaria vuole rinnovare il contatto tra la filosofia e la teologia, quindi trovare il nuovo dialogo tra le questioni della ragione e la parola della fede.

Uno dei grandi pensatori del ventesimo secolo su questa scia teologico-filosofica è Romano Guardini (1885–1968). Quest'autore tedesco di origine italiana concepisce il programma della sua grande opera come una *christliche Weltanschauung*, cioè come il modo di guardare e capire il mondo alla luce della Rivelazione cristiana. In questa ottica Guardini cerca di rispondere alle domande riguardanti l'esistenza umana. Le questioni antropologiche sembrano molto urgenti nel pensiero del Ventesimo secolo caratterizzato dall'esperienza delle guerre mondiali e dei totalitarismi moderni.

Come tutta la sua opera anche l'antropologia di Guardini è complessa e impostata con diversi approcci teologici e filosofici. Nel suo pensiero Guardini combina la metafisica classica con i nuovi approcci della filosofia fenomenologica e del personalismo dialogico. È interessante notare soprattutto il legame tra la tradizione agostiniana-bonaventuriana e la filosofia dialogica sviluppata nel Ventesimo secolo.³ In questo

¹ *Catechismo della Chiesa cattolica*, n. 234.

² Piero Coda, “L'ontologia trinitaria: Che cos'è”, *Sophia* 4, 2 (2012): 160.

³ Silvano Zucal, “L'antropologia sapienziale di Romano Guardini alla scuola di San Bonaventura”, *DSer* 59 (2011), 58: “Nell'ambito complessivo della filosofia dialogica del Novecento, egli [Guardini] costruisce un originale percorso che, da un lato, lo

modo il personalismo dialogico di Guardini riceve un aspetto particolare rispetto agli altri pensatori dialogici di scuola ebraica (Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig) ma anche di quella cristiana rappresentata soprattutto da Ferdinand Ebner. Così commenta Silvano Zucal: “Nel contesto biblico i dialogici si muoveranno per configurare il profilo dell’identità personale me nessuno di loro, neppure Ebner, riuscirà ad assegnare a tale profilo un’autentica fondazione trinitaria, come invece avverrà in Romano Guardini.”⁴ Zucal conferma così quello che dice Hans Urs von Balthasar sui personalisti dialogici: “Una traccia della reale immagine trinitaria [della persona] viene alla luce solo in Guardini.”⁵

Nonostante questa affermazione, non troviamo una ricerca profonda sulla teologia trinitaria in Guardini e anche i diversi studi sull’antropologia guardiniana non pongono attenzione a questa prospettiva trinitaria.⁶ Il nostro lavoro vuole mettere in risalto questa dimensione mostrando come il personalismo dialogico-relazionale di Guardini è legato alla sua riflessione trinitaria fondata sulla teologia del Verbo che si trova in Sant’Agostino e Bonaventura.⁷

1. La teologia trinitaria del Verbo in Sant’Agostino e Bonaventura

Un fondamento importante della teologia di Guardini è il pensiero di San Bonaventura. Da giovane teologo si occupò molto della teologia bonaventuriana: la sua tesi di dottorato, discussa all’Università di

avvicina ai grandi dialogici di scuola ebraica come Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy e Franz Rosenzweig, dall’altro lo vede situato in singolare tangenza con i dialogici cristiani come Ferdinand Ebner, Emmanuel Mounier e Gabriel Marcel, infine lo riconnette alla grande tradizione agostiniana-bonaventuriana”.

⁴ Silvano Zucal, *Lineamenti di pensiero dialogico* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2004), 166.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 166. Cit da: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Homo creatus est* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1991), 107.

⁶ Per esempio, nel lavoro più complesso sulla antropologia guardiniana la prospettiva trinitaria non è studiata: Gunda Brüske, *Anruf der Freiheit. Antropologie bei Romano Guardini* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998). Sul pensiero trinitario di Guardini: Silvano Zucal, “Ontologia trinitaria come ontologia dialogico-relazionale in Romano Guardini”, in Piero Coda, Alessandro Clemenzia, Julie Tremblay (edd.), *Un pensiero per abitare la frontiera: sulle tracce dell’ontologia trinitaria di Klaus Hemmerle* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2016), 167–181.

⁷ Su questo argomento soprattutto il mio lavoro: Pavel Frývaldský, *Cristo come Centro e Mediatore. La lettura della cristologia di Romano Guardini alla luce della teologia di san Bonaventura* (Riga: Edizioni di sant’Antonio, 2018), soprattutto 47–135. Il presente lavoro vuole sviluppare questa mia ricerca riguardante la cristologia di Guardini.

Friburgo, ha come titolo *La dottrina della Redenzione in san Bonaventura* (1914) e la tesi d'abilitazione presentata all'Università di Bonn ha come tema i *Principi fondamentali della teologia di Bonaventura* (1922). Bonaventura, insieme con S. Agostino⁸ e Dante, rappresentano il "Medioevo vivo" e accompagneranno Guardini per tutta la vita.⁹ Questi autori sono importanti per la sua riflessione trinitaria focalizzata sul mistero del Verbo nella Trinità. Già in uno dei primi articoli Guardini cerca di dimostrare il significato della dottrina trinitaria per la vita della comunità (1922). L'autore nota la mancanza dell'esperienza spirituale della Trinità nella vita dei cristiani e della riflessione profonda nella teologia e aggiunge un'osservazione: "Non è stato sempre così. Nel Medioevo, ad esempio, il dogma della Santissima Trinità deve aver avuto un significato del tutto particolare per la vita cristiana".¹⁰ Guardini, quindi, scorge nella teologia medievale una fonte d'ispirazione in relazione alle riflessioni sul mistero della Trinità e sul suo significato per la vita umana.

1.1 Agostino: la Parola nelle parole

Sant' Agostino ha esercitato con la sua opera un grande influsso sulla tradizione occidentale. Secondo Guardini questo grande autore ha trasferito e trasformato il pensiero platonico nell'*intellectus fidei* e creato un'originale interpretazione del Logos giovanneo. Le idee nel pensiero di Agostino non sono realtà assoluta come in Platone ma norme della realtà creata presenti nella mente di Dio e unite nel Logos che è la "Parola-Idea viva di Dio" (*die lebendige Wort-Idee Gottes*). Così il Logos è l'eterno "luogo di ogni essere finito".¹¹ Il Verbo pronunciato eternamente nella vita intradivina dal Padre è un fondamento e un archetipo di tutta la realtà che è pensata da Dio ed esiste come sua parola pronunciata nell'atto della creazione:

Conoscendo Dio se stesso – e non con l'impotenza del pensiero finito, il cui contenuto rimane sempre chiuso nella sfera del pensato, ma con

⁸ Guardini, "Bonaventura filosofo del basso Medioevo", in *Bonaventura* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013), 688: "Agostino è pensatore in pari misura medievale e antico".

⁹ Cf. Hana-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, *Romano Guardini – La vita e l'opera* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1988), 97.

¹⁰ Guardini, "Il significato del dogma del Dio trinitario per la vita etica della comunità", in *Scritti politici* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1988), 90.

¹¹ Guardini, *La conversione di sant'Agostino* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2002), 74.

l'onnipotenza dell'assoluto pensare creatore, che genera realtà; non con l'isolamento di un pensiero soltanto "intero" che rimane sempre muto, ma nell'integrità di un pensiero di un pensare concreto che muta l'interiorità nella visibile forma della Parola – accadendo questo in lui, Dio è parlante e parlato [*Gott Sprechender und Gesprochener*] [...] Ma poiché Egli è Colui che è e il Signore, per il fatto stesso di esprimere la propria sovrabbondanza, rivelandola, con il Verbo eterno, il solo contenuto del Suo parlare, cioè la santa Verità, dà un senso a ogni forma visibile finita: di questa quel suo parlare stabilisce la verità e il valore. Le idee, perciò, debbono considerarsi modi di esprimersi di Dio.¹²

In questo brano Guardini assume la dottrina agostiniana sul Verbo interno di Dio, il quale diventa nella creazione il Verbo esterno, espresso nella realtà creata e pienamente rivelato nel Verbo incarnato, in Cristo. Da questa Parola eterna del Padre tutte le cose ricevono la propria verità ontologica. Guardini apprezza questa dottrina agostiniana delle "parole nella Parola" come interpretazione del dato biblico su Dio che crea il mondo tramite la sua parola. Questa Parola è rivelata nel Vangelo di Giovanni come il Logos divino che è diventato l'uomo storico: Gesù di Nazaret.

La teologia agostiniana legge il mistero del mondo alla luce della vita trinitaria di Dio, cioè alla luce del suo movimento di eterno parlare. In questa prospettiva il mondo creato, come le parole esterne, esiste perché in Dio è la Parola interna. La Verità eternamente pronunciata da Dio Padre non è nessun'idea astratta ma la persona concreta e viva del Figlio unita con il Padre nell'amore dello Spirito. Tutta la realtà creata porta la somiglianza con questa Verità eterna e perciò tutte le cose conducono la mente umana al principio divino.¹⁵

Questo moto dalla realtà creata al Creatore non è solo "intellettuale", ma "esistenziale", assume tutta la persona umana che è orientata a Dio: "L'esistenza dell'uomo ha la forma di 'verso-Dio' e 'da-Dio'

¹² Ibid., 74–75.

¹⁵ Ibid., 79–80: "Qui funziona un costante moto: moto del creare e della comunicazione del significato; moto del compimento del significato nella vita spirituale e del ritorno a Dio; dalla semplicissima ricchezza di Dio nell'idea, che Egli pensa; dall'idea nel creato, che essa informa; dal creato nell'idea, nella quale esso ritrova il suo proprio senso: ma l'idea è nel Logos, e il Logos è Dio. E cioè questo moto è un moto dell'atto: Dio pensa e, pensando, pone l'idea; egli crea e, creando, realizza la cosa che vi si modella. L'uomo cerca pensando e ricercando il senso giunge, per mezzo della cosa, all'idea; per l'idea a Dio e, appunto così, a sé stesso".

[*Form des Auf-Gott-hin und Von-Gott-her*] [...]. L'uomo può, infine, essere compreso soltanto movendo da Dio, esistendo e compiendosi soltanto per opera di Dio. *Confessio* è dunque, conforme al vero significato, l'aspirazione dell'anima a giungere dinanzi a Dio per trovare là la pienezza essenziale e la realizzazione".¹⁴

1.2 Bonaventura: la Parola da e verso il Padre

La teologia agostiniana del Verbo è stata sviluppata nel pensiero di Bonaventura studiato da Guardini. Il teologo medievale continua a riflettere il parlare di Dio in due modalità: a sé stessi e agli altri. Secondo il *Commento alle Sentenze*¹⁵ l'uomo parla intimamente a se stesso quando conosce se stesso concependo la parola che esprime il proprio essere. Tra il conoscente e la parola concepita vi è una somiglianza. Parlare agli altri significa esprimere esteriormente che cosa si è concepito nell'intimo. Come in noi così in Dio vi è un duplice modo di parlare: il parlare interiore in sé stesso e il parlare esteriore agli altri. Al primo caso corrisponde la parola nata, ossia il Verbo eterno; il secondo modo di parlare significa il verbo creato, il verbo temporale.

L'uomo tramite una parola conosce sé stesso e tramite l'altra le cose esterne. Dio conosce sé stesso e tutto il resto con il medesimo sguardo e conoscendo sé stesso si riconosce come il principio dell'altro. Poiché il Padre “concepisce o genera un solo Verbo che è somiglianza imitativa del Padre e somiglianza esemplare delle cose” (*concepit sive generat unum Verbum, quod est similitudo Patris imitativa et similitudo rerum exemplativa*), il Verbo è consimile al Padre che lo genera e in rapporto alla creatura rappresenta l'esemplarità dell'essere.¹⁶ Il Padre nel Verbo dice sé stesso e ogni altra cosa possibile, perciò nel Verbo vi è l'esemplare eterno, il modello di ogni cosa creata.

Da questa riflessione trinitaria della generazione eterna del Verbo dal Padre nasce l'esemplarismo bonaventuriano.¹⁷ Il Verbo è l'Archetipo universale, perché secondo lui è tutta la realtà creata (*Verbum ars aeterna*). La seconda persona divina che “sta nel mezzo” (*medium*) tra il Padre e lo Spirito, ha il ruolo attivo di essere il Mediatore nella

¹⁴ Ibid., 19–20.

¹⁵ Cf. il commentario a In I Sent., d. 27, pars II, a. unicus, q. 1 et 2: Guardini *Principi fondamentali della teologia di san Bonaventura. L'illuminazione della mente, la gerarchia degli esseri, il flusso della vita*, in *Bonaventura* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013), 432–435.

¹⁶ In I Sent., d. 27, pars II, a. unicus, q. 2, conclusio.

¹⁷ Guardini, *Principi fondamentali*, 431–432.

creazione dell'universo. Siccome il Verbo rappresenta il mezzo e il modello della creazione, la verità delle cose può essere conosciuta solo alla luce dello stesso Verbo (*Verbum lux mentis*).

La centralità trinitaria della seconda persona divina non è presente soltanto nella creazione, ossia nella “produzione” delle cose dal Padre, ma anche nella storia della salvezza, cioè nel ritorno della creazione a Dio. Si tratta del movimento circolare secondo lo schema: “exitus” – “reditus”: il mondo proviene dal Padre per mezzo del Verbo increato (*Verbum increatum*) e al Padre ritorna tramite il Verbo incarnato (*Verbum incarnatum*) nell'azione redentrice della *reductio* dell'uomo al Dio creatore. Il *Verbum incarnatum* è il *medium reducens*, “nel quale diviene visibile l'eterno e l'invisibile e per questa via ci conduce al Padre”.¹⁸ Il concetto bonaventuriano di *reductio* esprime il ritorno dell'uomo e di tutta la creatura al Padre tramite l'azione salvifica del Cristo Mediatore.¹⁹ L'uomo partecipa a questa opera redentrice del Verbo incarnato nella forza dello Spirito Santo che fa inabitare Cristo nei cuori dei cristiani (*Verbum inspiratum*). In questo modo il cristiano è incamminato verso lo scopo e la meta della sua vita: alla comunione piena con Dio Padre.²⁰

La teologia trinitaria di Bonaventura rappresenta un'ispirazione importante per il pensiero di Guardini. Il dottore serafico crea un'ontologia trinitaria, “la quale, anche se ambientata in Cristo, è orientata da e verso il Padre. La cristo-logica dell'ontologia trinitaria porta al mistero del Padre, fonte di ogni essere”.²¹ Come nella vita intradivina la Parola procede dal Padre e ritorna al Padre nell'unità dello Spirito, così anche la creazione e tutta la storia descrive il circolo intelligibile, cioè la struttura dinamica dell'essere: da e verso il Padre.²² Il Media-

¹⁸ Ibid. 595 (cf. In Hexaëm, I, 17: “Verbum ergo exprimit Patrem et res, quae per ipsum factae sunt, et principaliter ducit nos ad Patri congregantis unitatem”).

¹⁹ Nella visione di Bonaventura è Cristo colui che ha ricondotto gli uomini al Padre. L'espressione “*Cristo reducit ad Patrem*” è significativa, dice che “il Verbo che ci creò si unisce a noi per ricondurci all'origine, ossia al Padre”: R. Guardini, *La dottrina della Redenzione in san Bonaventura. Un contributo storico-sistemico alla dottrina della Redenzione*, in *Bonaventura* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013), 299.

²⁰ Cf. ibid., 250, 285.

²¹ Robert J. Woźniak, “L'essere dal Padre. Un abbozzo di ontologia trinitaria in san Bonaventura” in Piero Coda, Alessandro Clemenza, Julie Tremblay (edd.), *Un pensiero per abitare la frontiera: sulle tracce dell'ontologia trinitaria di Klaus Hemmerle* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2016), 113.

²² Guardini riflette sul tema bonaventuriano del “circolo intelligibile” nella parte del suo lavoro bonaventuriano che tratta dei gradi degli esseri: Guardini, *Principi fondamentali*, 504–531, 593–608.

tore di questo movimento circolare è Cristo che opera nello Spirito la comunione tra Dio e l'umanità.

2. Il dialogo eterno: l'interpretazione dialogico-relazionale della vita trinitaria di Dio

Nell'opera di Guardini troviamo la riflessione sulla vita della Trinità e, in modo particolare, sul mistero del Verbo per mezzo del quale Dio crea il mondo. Dio parla tramite il suo Figlio nella creazione e nella storia della salvezza. Questa verità della fede apre la possibilità di pensare la vita trinitaria di Dio come dialogo eterno e come la conoscenza interna di Dio.

Guardini, nella sua interpretazione dialogico-relazionale, rifiuta l'idea di Trinità concepita come processo di autoconoscenza divina nella storia. Secondo l'autore tedesco la dottrina biblica sulla creazione dal nulla vuol dire che il mondo non procede da alcuna necessità interiore a Dio, ma che è un'opera della volontà divina assolutamente libera.²⁵ È possibile questo se Dio è pensato come monade, come unità in blocco? In questo caso Dio come una sola persona "sarebbe costretto a rimanere in un isolamento, oppure dovrebbe produrre un mondo per avere comunione con esso".²⁴ La creazione significherebbe l'autorealizzazione divina nel processo vitale e il mondo non sarebbe una realtà distinta da Dio.²⁵ Guardini nota che i sistemi panteistici della filosofia antica, come quello di Plotino, sono in sostanza simili ai concetti che descrivono il rapporto tra Dio e il mondo nell'idealismo tedesco. Però dal panteismo all'ateismo il passo è breve: il mondo che non conosce l'alterità di un Dio libero è chiuso in sé stesso e intende se stesso come realtà infinita ed eterna. Per questo motivo quando la filosofia occidentale ha abbandonato la fede nel Dio trinitario, è cominciato il processo dello sviluppo logico dal monoteismo stretto fino alle estreme conseguenze del panteismo, e dal panteismo all'ateismo.²⁶

²⁵ Cf. per es. Guardini, *Mondo e persona. Saggio di antropologia cristiana*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2002), 15.

²⁴ Guardini, "Il Dio vivente", in *Filosofia della religione. Religione e Rivelazione* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2010), 441.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 440.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 441-442.

Guardini commenta le prime parole del Prologo di san Giovanni: “In principio era il Verbo e il Verbo era presso Dio, e il Verbo era Dio. In tal modo era in principio presso Dio” (*Gv* 1, 1). Dio non è un muto che perciò ha bisogno del mondo per poter parlare. In “Dio vi è eterno dialogo”²⁷, perché in Lui è il Verbo, la Parola²⁸. La parola umana quando è pronunciata svanisce via, la Parola divina, invece, è eterna e “sostanziale e reale come Dio stesso”²⁹. La Parola è “presso Dio”, e Guardini traduce come “rivolta a Dio” (“*das Wort war auf Gott hingewendet*”). La Parola di Dio non si allontana, ma rimane in una comunione d’amore³⁰. In questo senso si rivela a chi Dio parla:

La Parola di Dio, sulla via verso colui che l’accolga, in certo modo prende consistenza in sé stessa e diviene orecchio che percepisce. È Parola che non vada all’altro, ma che è pervenuta in sé stessa. Formandosi dalla pienezza di quanto è pronunciato, diviene essa stessa il “Tu”³¹.

Il Verbo pronunciato dal Padre è nello stesso tempo il “Tu” del Padre, la persona a cui il Padre si rivolge. Il teologo tedesco così esprime il dialogo in Dio: “Questo significa che in Lui vi è il Parlato [*das Gesprochene*] e il Parlante [*der Sprechende*], il Dio che parla e il Dio parlato [*der sprechende und der gesprochene Gott*]”³². Il “Dio parlato” non è solo Parola espressa, neanche solo “l’orecchio” che ascolta, ma “proviene nel proprio esser percepita e compresa e ritorna a volgersi verso Colui che l’ha pronunciata”³³. La Parola che proviene da Dio ritorna a Dio in un movimento di dialogo reciproco: “il Verbo [*Wort*] accoglie se stesso,

²⁷ Guardini, *Tre interpretazioni scritturistiche* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1985), 10; “Il Dio vivente”, 439; *Mondo e persona*, 169.

²⁸ Guardini nota che la Parola è nata dal misterioso silenzio in Dio: *Virtù. Temi e prospettive della vita morale*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1972), 206. Sul rapporto tra il silenzio e la parola in Dio: Silvano Zucal, *Romano Guardini: filosofo del silenzio* (Roma: Edizioni Borla, 1992), 54–56, 77–85.

²⁹ Guardini, *Tre interpretazioni*, 10.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³² Guardini, “Il Dio vivente”, 439. Cf. anche *L’uomo. Fondamenti di una antropologia cristiana* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2009), 272; *Mondo e persona*, 169; *Il messaggio di San Giovanni. Meditazioni sui testi dell’addio e della prima lettera* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1972), 84.

³³ Guardini, *Tre interpretazioni*, 13.

diviene “risposta” [*Ant-Wort*], Parola ritornante [*Gegenwort*], e così nasce il dialogo eterno”.⁵⁴

Il Verbo “è rivolto a Dio”, si tratta del rapporto espresso nelle parole “rimanere” e “ritornare”⁵⁵ nell’amore del Padre. La profondità di quest’amore è lo Spirito che rende possibile l’unicità e l’intimità perfetta tra “Io” e “Tu” parlante in Dio.⁵⁶ Lo Spirito è profondità della conoscenza reciproca che si svolge in Dio e rappresenta l’intimità della comunione in Dio e “garantisce” che il Verbo pronunciato non è un “altro Dio”, non è nessuna emanazione divina:

Nello *Pneuma* il Parlante pronuncia la Parola per mezzo della quale ogni verità è pronunciata. Essa diviene aperta, essenziale, esistente. Per mezzo dell’intimità [*Innigkeit*] dello Spirito, tuttavia, la Parola pronunciata non se ne va (fuori dal Padre) per essere Dio di propria iniziativa – che sarebbe un mito – ma si volge indietro, “al cuore del Padre”, “rimane” presso di Lui, nell’amore.⁵⁷

Guardini sottolinea che la conoscenza in Dio è personale e perciò ha una forma dialogica, però non si tratta del dialogo con il creato – che renderebbe possibile l’autoconoscenza divina – ma del dialogo intra-trinitario tra il Dio parlante e il Dio parlato nell’amore dello Spirito. Dio esprime la sua verità piena nella sua Parola, in questa forma la “verità si apre” (*im Wort wird Wahrheit offen*), diviene “comunicabile e oggetto di dialogo”.⁵⁸ Senza il suo Verbo il Padre resterebbe “ignoto” proprio nella sua sfera intra-divina, ma in realtà Dio eternamente pronuncia sé stesso “nell’apertura della Parola [*die Offenheit des Wortes*], nella Luce santa del senso e si trova nella Verità”.⁵⁹

Il Verbo è l’eterna manifestazione del mistero del Padre, e solo nell’amore che è “lo Spirito il mistero può realmente farsi aperto [*offen*

⁵⁴ Guardini, *Die Existenz des Christen* (Ferdinand Schöningh: München – Paderborn – Wien 1976), 55 (traduzione nostra).

⁵⁵ Guardini, *Tre interpretazioni*, 13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁵⁷ Guardini, “Il Dio vivente”, 440.

⁵⁸ Cf. Guardini, “Il Dio vivente”, 450. *Das Christusbild der paulinischen und johanneischen Schriften* (Mainz – Paderborn: Matthias-Grünewald – Ferdinand Schöningh, 21987), 166: “Der Logos ist das Ausgesprochensein des Vaters, der ohne Ihn eben unausgesprochen, un-offen, nicht in der Wahrheit wäre. Nicht im Widerspruch zur Wahrheit, das wäre Lüge; aber in der Verhülltheit; im Noch-nicht-Eingetreten der Wahrheit, welche das Offenstehen des Sinnes in Idee und Wort bedeutet.”

⁵⁹ Guardini, *Das Christusbild*, 165: “Erst durch den Logos, welcher die lebendige Idee Gottes ist, tritt “der allmächtiger Vater”, der Gott der Wirklichkeit und der Macht, “ausgesprochen” in die Offenheit des Wortes, in die Heiligkeit des Sinn-Lichtes und steht in der Wahrheit”.

werden]; solo in esso il mistero aperto [*das offene Geheimnis*] può essere custodito”.⁴⁰ Il Verbo proviene dal Padre e ritorna a Lui come la sua Verità eterna, e lo Spirito fa sì che il Verbo rimanga nell’unità intima con il Padre.⁴¹ Guardini concepisce lo Spirito come l’interiorità di Dio (*Innerlichkeit Gottes*): “Nello Spirito Santo Dio è Padre. Nello Spirito Santo Egli è Figlio. Forse si può dire addirittura: nello Spirito Santo Dio è Dio. Lui è consapevole di se stesso, unanime con se stesso, beato di se stesso”.⁴²

Possiamo concludere: Guardini riflette sul mistero della Trinità immanente di Dio descrivendola come un dialogo eterno. Sulla scia agostino-bonaventuriana concepisce la seconda persona divina come la Parola in cui è eternamente espressa e manifestata la Verità del Padre. Senza questa Parola, Dio sarebbe “muto”, cioè “ignoto” per sé stesso e avrebbe bisogno del mondo per conoscere se stesso. Guardini rifiuta questa idea. La Parola pronunciata dal Padre non è “qualcosa”, ma la seconda persona che ritorna al Padre come l’eterna Risposta (*Antwort*). Questo movimento reciproco e circolare “da” e “verso” il Padre svolge la Parola nello Spirito. Ciò non vuol dire che la Parola è pronunciata dallo Spirito, ma che lo Spirito è spirato “simultaneamente” con la processione del Verbo dal Padre (*Wort*) e con il ritorno della Parola al Parlante (*Antwort*). Lo Spirito, perciò, nella teologia guardiniana rappresenta la profondità e l’intimità (*Innigkeit*) del dialogo d’amore tra il Padre e il Figlio.

3. La creazione dialogica

Nell’interpretazione del *Prologo* giovanneo Guardini passa dal “parlare interno” in Dio al “parlare esterno” che costituisce l’opera della creazione: “tutto si è costituito per mezzo di lui e senza di lui nulla si è costituito” (*Gv* 1, 3). Dio crea parlando, questo mistero lo esprime anche il libro della *Genesi* testimoniando che “in principio Dio creò il cielo e la terra” con il potere della sua parola. Giovanni nell’opera divina scopre un mistero più profondo:

⁴⁰ Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 440.

⁴¹ Guardini, “Il Dio vivente”, 430–431.

⁴² Guardini, *Accettare se stessi* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 20115), 29.

Poiché dietro la parola del creare divino, rivolta all'esterno, sta quella interna della vita divina. Quella è una libera irradiazione di questa; libera, giacché l'azione creatrice scaturisce da Dio non con necessità, ma come atto sovrano di se stesso; ma un'irradiazione libera, perché nel Logos, l'eterna manifestazione [*Offenwerdung*] della divina pienezza di senso, si fanno manifeste [*offen werden*] anche tutte le possibilità del creare divino. Dio crea mediante la sua Parola eterna, il Padre mediante il Figlio – anche qui aggiungiamo: nella potenza dello Spirito Santo.⁴⁵

Siccome il Padre esprime la sua verità nel suo Verbo, si apre la possibilità della creazione in quanto libera azione di Dio che irradia, “traduce” (e non “emana”) il suo mistero all'esterno. Il dialogo divino si prolunga nella creazione, dal Verbo pronunciato nasce il mondo, e perciò “nella Parola ogni cosa è creata e ogni cosa trova la sua residenza eterna”.⁴⁴ Tutte le cose non sono scaturite solo dal “senso muto” (idealismo irrealistico), neanche solo dalla “forza” (realismo confuso), neanche solo dall’“azione” (attivismo cieco): “ogni volta si perde l'autentico, che non è né azione, né forza, né senso bensì ciò che persiste: la Parola”.⁴⁵ Guardini rifiuta l'interpretazione “faustiana” del primo versetto del Vangelo di Giovanni mettendo in risalto che all'inizio non vi è alcuna realtà muta, impersonale, ma un Dio libero che crea il mondo “personalmente” nel Figlio.⁴⁶

Dio creando il mondo nel suo Verbo stabilisce tra la realtà creata e se stesso un rapporto di distinzione e di somiglianza. La verità delle cose consiste in questa somiglianza con il Verbo, perciò tutte le cose portano il “*carattere di parola*” (*der Wortcharakter der Dinge*).⁴⁷ Ogni essere per la sua somiglianza con il Verbo è una parola pronunciata da Dio, e allo stesso tempo una parola che parla di Dio.⁴⁸ L'autore tede-

⁴⁵ Guardini, *Tre interpretazioni*, 15.

⁴⁴ Guardini, *L'uomo*, 272.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

⁴⁶ Il passo in Faust a cui Guardini fa riferimento: “Sta scritto: “In principio era la parola” / Già qui m'impunto. Chi mi aiuta a proseguire? / No, porre così in alto la parola / non posso. Devo tradurre in altro modo, / se mi darà lo spirito la giusta ispirazione. / Sta scritto: In principio era il pensiero. / [...] È il pensiero che foggia e crea ogni cosa? / Dovrebbe essere: In principio era la forza! / Eppure mentre sto scrivendo questo, / già qualcosa mi avverte che non me ne accontento. / Lo spirito mi aiuta! Di colpo vedo chiaro / e scrivo con fiducia: In principio era l'azione” (J. W. Goethe, *Faust*, vv. 1224–1237).

⁴⁷ Cf. Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 171.

⁴⁸ Guardini, *L'uomo*, 274.

sco, come prima di lui Bonaventura, scorge in ogni creatura la parola divina, perché tutto il creato parla di Dio.⁴⁹ Le cose ricevono dal Verbo il carattere dialogico:

Le sue realtà formate [dal discorso] sono parole, attraverso le quali il Dio che crea esprime all'estremo nella finitezza la sua pienezza di senso; in cammino per cercare colui che le comprenda e attraverso di esse entri con Colui che parla nella relazione dell'“io-tu”, propria della creatura verso il Creatore, lodando, ringraziando, obbedendo.⁵⁰

Se la realtà creata non è muta ma parla, allora emerge la questione del destinatario di tale discorso divino. La parola creata deve essere ascoltata e ritornare a Dio in forma di risposta. Sebbene tutta la realtà porti la somiglianza con il Verbo, in modo particolare è l'uomo l'immagine di Dio in quanto essere essenzialmente dialogico. L'uomo è creato nella Parola, “esiste nella forma dell'essere chiamato [*das Angerufen-sein*]”.⁵¹ Dio entra in relazione personale con l'uomo già nell'atto della creazione: “Le cose sorgono dal comando di Dio; la persona dalla sua chiamata [*Anruf*]. Ma questo significa che Dio chiama la creazione ad essere il proprio “tu” – più esattamente, che Egli destina se stesso ad essere “tu” per l'uomo”.⁵² L'uomo porta la somiglianza con la seconda persona divina e perciò diventa “tu” del Padre ed è capace di riscoprire la Parola del Padre e di dare la sua risposta umana.

In questa prospettiva il mondo creato non è solo intelligibile per l'uomo, bensì è destinato ad essere anche la “mediazione” del dialogo tra Dio e la persona umana:

È questo il rapporto essenziale “io-tu”; quello che non può cadere. In esso è implicato anche il mondo. Abbiamo detto che il mondo ha esso stesso carattere di parola: qui stanno i punti di riferimento del dialogo. Il mondo è parlato da Dio in direzione dell'uomo. Tutte le cose sono parole di Dio rivolte a quella creatura che è destinata dall'essenza a trovarsi nel rapporto

⁴⁹ Cf. In Eccl., VI, 16; In Hex. XVIII, 25: “Omnes enim creaturae effantur Deum”.

⁵⁰ Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 171. Guardini cita il Salmo 18 (19): “I cieli narrano la gloria di Dio, / e l'opera delle sue mani annunzia il firmamento. // Il giorno al giorno ne dà giubilando il messaggio / e la notte alla notte ne trasmette notizia. // Non è linguaggio e non sono parole / di cui non si oda il suono. // Per tutta la terra rapida corre la loro voce e ai confini della terra ciò che dicono”.

⁵¹ Guardini, *L'uomo*, 276.

⁵² Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 174.

del ‘tu’ con Dio. L’uomo è designato ad essere l’ascoltatore della parola che è il mondo. Dev’essere anche colui che risponde. Mediante lui tutte le cose devono ritornare a Dio in forma di risposta.⁵⁵

In questi pensieri di Guardini possiamo scoprire l’idea bonaventuriana del “circolo intelligibile”. Il circolo dialogico intra-trinitario tra il Padre e il suo Verbo nello Spirito si esprime nella creazione che “da Dio proviene e a Lui ritorna”.⁵⁴ È l’uomo che realizza il ritorno delle cose a Dio: il mondo in quanto creatura e il mondo della attività umana “vengono da Dio come dal loro archetipo (*das Urbild*) e dalla loro causa creante. Il compito dell’uomo è d’andare a Dio e di condurre a Lui il mondo delle cose”.⁵⁵ Guardini concepisce l’uomo come l’“ascoltatore della parola” espressa nel mondo dal Creatore. L’uomo porta la somiglianza con la Parola, perciò viene chiamato a scoprire la sua esistenza nel mondo come il dono da Dio per restituire questo dono in forma di risposta.⁵⁶

Guardini afferma l’uomo come un essere parlante e conferma quello che dicono gli autori della filosofia dialogica: il linguaggio non è solo un mezzo col quale si comunicano risultati, ma tutta la vita si attualizza nel parlare. Il linguaggio è un ambiente del senso, entro il quale il singolo è nato e dal quale viene formato. La parola viene dall’altro, è sempre dono dall’altro, così il parlare in senso pieno “spinge alla realizzazione del rapporto Io-Tu”. In questo rapporto si realizza la vita dell’uomo, perciò “la persona esiste in questo mondo linguistico di forme dotate di una propria semantica, per cui il parlare non è mai prodotto, semmai un presupposto della vita umana”.⁵⁷ Questa scoperta del personalismo dialogico in Guardini è ancorata sul livello ontologico, cioè sulla dottrina teologica della creazione nella Parola divina:

⁵⁵ Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 175.

⁵⁴ Guardini, *Der Anfang aller Dinge. Meditationen über Genesis Kapitel 1–3*, in *Der Anfang aller Dinge. Weisheit der Psalmen* (Mainz – Paderborn: Matthias-Grünewald – Ferdinand Schönningh 21987), 25: “Was ist, ist geschaffen von Gott. Alles kommt von Ihm und zu Ihm geht alles zurück.”

⁵⁵ Guardini, *La visione cattolica del mondo*, (Brescia: Morcelliana, 22005), 25.

⁵⁶ Guardini, *L’uomo*, 276: Sin dal suo primissimo inizio l’uomo – e con lui il mondo intero – esiste come interlocutore di Dio. Egli esiste a partire dalla chiamata di Dio. Per l’uomo, essere dotato di spirito, tale chiamata [Ruf] diviene appello [Anruf]; ciò costituisce l’uomo come persona. Essere persona significa (infatti) essere capace di rispondere all’appello del Dio creatore, restituirgli la parola che ha creato tramite la parola che prega”

⁵⁷ Zucal, *Lineamenti*, 86.

Che il mondo sussista nella forma di ciò che è parlato, e il fondamento del fatto che in esso in assoluto si possa parlare. La possibilità che si parli non sta solo nella circostanza che l'uomo possieda il dono del discorso, le cose poi costituiscano forme oggettive dotate di senso, che possono manifestarsi nella parola - sta anche nel fatto che il mondo stesso ha carattere di parola, scaturisce dalla Parola e sussiste in quanto parlato. Se ciò non fosse, il parlare umano non sarebbe accolto dall'esistenza, da ciò che esiste. Le parole in essa andrebbero errando come fantasmi.⁵⁸

Ora possiamo scoprire la dimensione di una ontologia trinitaria nella concezione dialogico-relazionale dell'uomo: la persona vive e realizza se stessa parlando con gli altri perché porta in sé la somiglianza con la Parola divina. Le parole umane però non sono pure invenzioni ma portano il significato corrispondente alla realtà, perché tutte le cose hanno il carattere ontologico dalla parola, in cui Dio pronuncia il suo messaggio all'uomo.

Se si assume nel suo insieme la concezione guardiniana del Verbo nella creazione, si può notare l'ispirazione forte della grande tradizione agostiniana-bonaventuriana legata al pensiero moderno. Da questa sintesi nasce una visione del Verbo considerato da un lato come la manifestazione del Padre e la verità ontologica delle cose, dall'altro come un appello (*der Anruf*) di Dio rivolto all'uomo per creare la comunione nello Spirito dell'amore.⁵⁹

4. La persona umana nella Trinità

Alla luce della teologia trinitaria del Cristo-Parola rivolta all'uomo possiamo interpretare l'antropologia di Guardini. L'uomo è chiamato a partecipare alla vita trinitaria di Dio già nell'atto della creazione. L'essere umano sorge dalla chiamata personale del Creatore. L'autore

⁵⁸ Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 172.

⁵⁹ Una bella sintesi rappresenta questo passo da Guardini, *Das Bild von Jesus dem Christus im Neuen Testament* (Freiburg i Br.: Herder, 31961), 83: "Die Vorstellung des Logos meint einmal den Inbegriff der Ideen; die Einheit der Urbilder aller möglichen Dinge; daher Wahrheit, Ordnung, Weisheit, Wert, Sinn in absoluter Fülle. Zugleich aber auch - den Logos heißt "Wort" - dass dieser Inbegriff auf die Rede bezogen; dass der Sinn ein offener, gesprochener ist; dass er also wiederum in die Offenheit des Redens und Hörens und der darin wurzelnden Geistgemeinschaft übergehen kann, ja dass er selbst alles Sprechen und Vernehmen schöpferisch ermöglicht. So ist er es, der den Raum des Geistes, die Möglichkeit und Ordnung geistigen Lebens und die Beziehung der Geister untereinander begründet."

tedesco per interpretare la relazionalità dell'uomo sceglie il termine "der Anruf", cioè la categoria decisiva della sua antropologia.⁶⁰ L'uomo come persona esiste dall'atto libero di Dio che lo chiama all'essere: "L'uomo, persona spirituale, sorge per la chiamata di Dio, [*Gottes Anruf*] come chi risponde a Dio come Tu, ed esiste in ragione della chiamata a questo Tu [*Er existiert im Angerufensein*]."⁶¹

Dobbiamo intepretare questa chiamata creatrice di Dio come l'azione del Verbo, tramite il quale Dio crea l'uomo come essere personale e aperto per la sua vocazione. Guardini per esprimere l'essenza dell'essere umano usa le categorie che abbiamo scoperto nelle sue interpretazioni della teologia agostiniana e bonaventuriana: "*Von-Gott-her*" e "*Auf-Gott-hin*", ciò significa che l'uomo è concepito come "l'essere-in-rapporto-a Dio"⁶². La vita dell'uomo proviene da Dio ed è indirizzata a Lui (*das Leben von Gott her und auf Gott hin*).⁶³ Il "movimento" dell'esistenza umana ("da-Dio" e "verso-Dio") rappresenta la determinazione fondamentale della persona umana:

Dio ha posto l'uomo in una relazione con sé, senza la quale quest'ultimo non può essere né può venire compreso. L'uomo ha un senso; questo però sta sopra di lui, in Dio. Non si può comprendere l'uomo come figura chiusa che consista e viva in se stesso, bensì egli esiste nella forma d'una relazione: a partire da Dio, in vista di Dio [*von Gott her, auf Gott hin*]. Questa relazione non è soltanto qualcosa che s'aggiunga secondariamente alla sua essenza, come se questa potesse essere anche prescindendovi, bensì l'essenza ha in tale relazione il suo fondamento.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Cf. Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 175–175. Sulla categoria dell'"Anruf": Brüske, *Anruf der Freiheit*, 207–248. "Mit der Kategorie des Anrufs beantwortet Guardini die Frage, worin die um sich selbst wissende freie und darin einmalige Person ihren Ursprung hat. [...] Hier wurzelt das *Einvernehmen* des Geschöpfes mit seiner Schöpfer, von dem Guardini immer wieder spricht" (Ibid., 220, 222).

⁶¹ Guardini, *Die Existenz des Christen*, 115–116.

⁶² Cf. Guardini, *L'uomo*, 292–298, 312–324. Sulla categoria "*das Auf-hin zu Gott*": Brüske, *Anruf der Freiheit*, 128–129, 240–242.

⁶³ Guardini, *L'uomo*, 267: "Dal Vecchio Testamento emerge con chiarezza che ciò non è inteso in senso panteistico ma in senso religioso: l'uomo vive a partire da Dio, e solo questo suo vivere a partire da Dio lo rende uomo e al tempo stesso fonda la sua somiglianza con Dio. Tale vivere è più della mera vita biologica dell'essere umano, è vita che proviene da Dio ed è indirizzata a Dio [*Es ist Leben von Gott her und auf Gott hin*]."

⁶⁴ Guardini, *Accettare se stessi*, 44. Cf. anche *Die Existenz des Christen*, 337: "Die Grundbestimmung für die Weise, wie der Mensch besteht, die Kategorie seiner Existenz, ist die "Von-her" und des "Auf-hin". Er besteht nicht in sich selbst, sich aus sich entfaltend und sich auf sich oder auf ein anderes Geschöpf beziehend, sondern auf

Secondo Guardini il rapporto tra l'“io” di Dio e il “tu” umano costituisce l'essenza dell'uomo e la sua capacità di entrare in relazione personale con altri uomini.⁶⁵ La chiamata divina rappresenta il fondamento ontologico della personalità umana, perciò i rapporti umani attualizzano, ma non costituiscono, la persona dell'uomo. A partire dal suo concetto della “chiamata” Guardini rifiuta sia l'*individualismo* che definisce la persona come autonoma e le relazioni come secondarie, sia il *personalismo attualistico*, secondo cui la persona sussiste e consiste solo nel rapporto “io-tu”: “In verità la persona non è solo *dynamis*, ma anche essere; non solo atto, ma anche forma. Essa non sorge nell'incontro, ma si attua solo in esso”.⁶⁶ Nell'incontro e nella comunicazione si attualizza la personalità umana che è presente in modo latente nell'essere umano dal suo inizio biologico. L'unicità e l'irrepetibilità di ogni persona umana sorge dalla chiamata originale di Dio che si rivolge a ogni uomo e lo chiama con il nome proprio. La molteplicità di questa chiamata divina è riassunta in un'unica Parola che rivela il suo volto in Cristo.

La risposta adeguata da parte dell'uomo a questo appello di Dio consiste nel ricevere la vita come un dono da Dio e nel restituirlo nell'atto del rendere grazie. Tuttavia, il dramma della storia umana comincia con il rifiuto di questo appello e nella rottura del rapporto fondamentale dell'uomo con Dio. Il peccato ha comportato l'inversione dell'esistenza umana (*das Auf-hin zu Gott*) nella direzione opposta. La redenzione, perciò, significa il rinnovamento di questa relazione e della comunione con Dio. Questa salvezza è realizzata dalla persona di Cristo: “In Lui è piena e perfetta realtà di ciò che questa deviazione ha rovinato; l'esistenza da Dio è orientata verso Dio; l'essere vivo nel Pneuma di Dio [*In Ihm ist die Fülle dessen, was diese Verwirrung zerstört hat: das Existieren aus Gott her und auf Gott hin; das Lebendigsein im Pneuma Gottes*].⁶⁷ Cristo obbediente al Padre vive perfettamente l'esistenza “da-Dio” e “verso-Dio”, quindi in Lui in modo pieno ed esemplare si esprime quel movimento fondamentale dell'esistenza umana che è stato distrutto dal peccato. Cristo stesso può vivere questa esistenza

Gott hin und, zuvor, von Gott her. Dieses “Von-her” und “Auf-hin” gehört in seine Wesensbestimmung hinein.”

⁶⁵ Guardini, *Accettare se stessi*, 45.

⁶⁶ Cf. Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 85.

⁶⁷ Guardini, *Die menschliche Wirklichkeit. Beiträge zu einer Psychologie Jesu* (Mainz – Paderborn: Matthias-Grünewald – Ferdinand Schöningh, 31991), 135.

perché lui è il Verbo incarnato che nella vita trinitaria è “rivolto a Dio” (*das Wort auf Gott hingewendet*).⁶⁸

L'uomo redento può partecipare alla relazione di Gesù con il Padre e così nella comunione con il Dio trinitario può trovare la sua autentica personalità:

Il “Tu” vero e proprio e definitivo è il Padre. Colui che dice propriamente al Padre “tu” è il Figlio. Divenire cristiano significa entrare nel modo d'essere di Cristo. Il rinato dice “tu” al Padre in quanto riceve partecipazione al dire “tu” di Cristo. In un senso ultimo e definitivo non dice “tu” a Cristo. Non si presenta di fronte a Lui, ma va con Lui, “va dietro di Lui”. Entra in Lui e attua insieme con Lui l'incontro. Insieme con Lui dice “tu” al Padre. In tal modo realizza la parola del Signore, secondo la quale Egli chiama se stesso “la via, la verità e la vita” (*Gv* 14, 6). Ma è lo Spirito a portare l'uomo nell'intimità della relazione personale. Lo inserisce in Cristo e lo chiama così all'autenticità del suo essere-io. Lo pone di fronte al Padre e così gli dà facoltà di pronunciare il “tu” autentico. Di qui viene l'ultima parola sull'essere persona del cristiano, e tutto quanto precede riceve la determinazione definitiva.⁶⁹

Questo passo di Guardini esprime la mediazione di Cristo per la comunione con il Padre nella forza dello Spirito Santo. Come Cristo ha realizzato la pienezza della sua umanità nella relazione con il Padre, così ogni cristiano può trovare e vivere l'autenticità del suo essere personale nella sequela di Cristo.

Conclusione

Il pensiero di Romano Guardini rappresenta un tentativo di interpretare la concezione dialogica e relazionale dell'uomo alla luce della teologia trinitaria. La filosofia dialogica del Ventesimo secolo scopre che l'esistenza umana si realizza in modo dinamico nella comunicazione tra “io” e “tu”. Guardini è uno dei primi pensatori che in questo dinamismo relazionale della persona umana scorge il riflesso del mistero trinitario. Anche se la sua opera non rappresenta una riflessione sistematica e dettagliata dell'antropologia trinitaria, possiamo trovare un

⁶⁸ Guardini, *Tre interpretazioni*, 11.

⁶⁹ Guardini, *Mondo e persona*, 193.

pensiero ispiratore e originario e nello stesso tempo classico, legato alla tradizione prevalentemente agostiniana e bonaventuriana.

L'uomo è un essere dialogico perché Dio è dialogico nella sua vita interna. La personalità umana è costituita dalla chiamata divina che precede e fonda la comunicazione interpersonale. Per una giusta interpretazione di questo pensiero di Guardini è importante sottolineare che la chiamata di Dio si svolge nella Parola divina. In ogni essere umano è espresso il mistero del Verbo dal Padre preveniente e a Lui ritornante. Per questo motivo il senso della vita umana non consiste nell'autonomia assoluta ma nella capacità di rispondere all'appello di Dio che chiama l'uomo a una comunione di Amore. Il compito dell'uomo è scoprire la Parola di Dio rivelata in Cristo ed espressa in tutta la realtà creata che porta il "carattere di parola". La risposta cristiana alla chiamata divina è la fede, con cui il cristiano partecipa alla relazione di Cristo con il Padre. Questa partecipazione è operata dallo Spirito Santo che porta l'uomo all'intimità d'amore tra il Padre e il Figlio.

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“LA PERSONA UMANA-RELAZIONALE”: POSSIBILE DIALOGO TRA LA TRIADE DI JACQUES LACAN E L’ONTOLOGIA TRINITARIA*

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ABSTRACT

The present study deals with the term desire (desiderio, Wunsch) in Jacques Lacan’s psychoanalytic approach and aims to find common intersections with Klaus Hemmerle’s vision of Trinitarian ontology. For modern psychology, desire as a constitutive element of the human person is a criterion that distinguishes the human person from the animal. Extinguishing desire in the human person brings many problems in society. If a person wants to fulfill desire that has a relational character with material things, he or she becomes frustrated. Both Jacques Lacan and Klaus Hemmerle have developed the issue of the desire of the human person in their approaches and thus offer certain solutions to the problem of the extinction of desire in the human person.

Keywords

Desire; Relatedness; Other; Jacques Lacan; Human person; Trinitarian ontology

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1. Il dialogo interdisciplinare

Lo sviluppo della scienza e della tecnica, avvenuto soprattutto nel ventesimo secolo, porta con sé l’effetto negativo della cosiddetta *frammentazione dei sistemi*.¹ I risultati delle ricerche scientifiche sono suddivisi in numerosi dipartimenti e diventa sempre più difficile cogliere e percepire l’intero con tutti i suoi collegamenti e la sua coerenza. Nel

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¹ Cf. Marco Ivan Rupnik, ‘Il coraggio del dialogo critico con le culture di oggi,’ in *Novità della soglia. Aperture della nuova evangelizzazione* (Roma: Lipa, 1995), 103.

discorso scientifico di oggi osserviamo una certa frammentazione del sapere. L'ambizione dell'antropologia teologica dopo il Concilio Vaticano II è affrontare questa dinamica della frammentazione e portare una prospettiva olistica della persona umana. "La riflessione critica sull'uomo si pone in modo evidente a partire da prospettive diverse (culturale, filosofica, teologica ed altre) e consegue risultati altrettanto diversi, che possono entrare in dialogo fecondo, nonostante la storia del pensiero e l'esperienza contemporanea dicano spesso il contrario."² Un colloquio interdisciplinare, infatti, serve come la protezione contro il riduzionismo dell'opinione e lascia lo spazio per poterla arricchire con degli sguardi nuovi.³ Nell'ambito dell'antropologia teologica è presente una svolta psicologica. Vorremo inserire il nostro articolo nel discorso odierno che si occupa della relazione tra la psicoanalisi e la teologia. Nel passato la relazione tra ambedue scienze è stata turbolenta.⁴

Il fondatore della psicoanalisi *Sigmund Freud* ha trattato il ruolo della religione nelle varie opere. Nel *Totem e tabù* e anche in *Comportamenti ossessivi e pratiche religiose* accennava che la religione come la neurosi collettiva non trova corrispondenza con l'esperienza scientifica. Secondo lui la religione rappresenta soltanto un'eredità degli antenati. Essi non potevano spiegare scientificamente le cose della vita. L'idea di Dio Padre che ascolta le preghiere, che è misericordioso, aiuta soltanto ad affrontare le difficoltà della vita umana. Nella sua visione le religioni devono finire e inevitabilmente saranno sostituite dalla scienza. La psicoanalisi nella prima fase della sua esistenza ha voluto auto-definirsi come la scienza che aiuta a purificare la *psiche* dalle illusioni religiose. Esse sono definitivamente superate. Il problema consiste nel fatto che gli psicologi di tale epoca vogliono costruire la psicoanalisi come scienza empirica. In quest'ottica hanno ridotto la fede soprattutto ad un movimento puramente psichico. Il dialogo reciproco tra la psicologia e la teologia praticamente così non esisteva. La psicologia voleva essere percepita come una scienza moderna, ispirata dal razionalismo e liberalismo. La debolezza della teologia in tale epoca era quella di una chiusura e di un atteggiamento soltanto difensivo.

L'animosità tra gli psicologi e i teologi degli anni precedenti viene ripensata, e con la persona di papa *Pio XII* osserviamo l'inizio

² Giovanni Ancona, *Antropologia teologica* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2014), 5.

³ Cf. Aaron Langfeld – Magnud Lerch, *Theologische Anthropologie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2018), 10.

⁴ Cf. Giacomo Dacquino, *Dove incontri l'anima* (Milano: Mondadori, 2011), 79.

dell'apertura reciproca fra la psicologia e la teologia. Durante il *Quinto Congresso Internazionale di Psicoterapia e di Psicologia clinica* (1955) papa *Pio XII* ha tenuto il suo discorso ai partecipanti avanzando quattro osservazioni importanti.⁵

Nel primo punto fa riferimento all'*uomo come unità e totalità psichica*. Il papa ha voluto ribadire e parlare di nuovo dell'integrità dell'uomo, nel quale tutte le parti hanno la loro finalità. Nel suo discorso scopriamo nuovamente il termine *anima*, che era sottovalutato da parte della psicologia: “Ma voi dovete, proprio voi psicologi e terapeuti, tenere conto di questo fatto: l'esistenza di ciascuna facoltà o funzione psichica trova la sua giustificazione nel fine del tutto. Il costitutivo principale dell'uomo è l'anima, forma sostanziale della sua natura.”⁶ Secondo il papa, il rischio di alcune tendenze in psicologia consiste nel fatto che esse vogliono dare rilievo ai fattori o alle forze secondarie e cedere così il governo ad una potenza secondaria. Il papa, in seguito ripete che la volontà libera dell'essere umano sta al di sopra degli istinti e che l'uomo non può rinunciare al suo compito di governare se stesso. A questo punto il papa tocca anche una questione antropologica importante sulle origini della legge psichica. Egli fa parte dei teologi che ragionano sulle leggi psichiche come l'intenzione del Creatore: “Ma non così il Creatore ha modellato l'uomo. Il peccato originale non gli toglie la possibilità e l'obbligo di governarsi da sé per mezzo dell'anima. Non si può pretendere che i turbamenti psichici e le malattie che ostacolano il funzionamento normale dello psichismo siano il dato abituale.”⁷

Nel secondo punto fa riferimento all'*uomo come unità strutturata*. Il pontefice critica una tendenza per cui il concetto astratto dell'uomo (*l'uomo essenziale*) – che include in sé anche i concetti morali, etici – veniva allontanato sempre più dall'uomo concreto (*l'uomo esistenziale*): “Leggi ontologiche e metafisiche della natura umana di cui prima noi parlavamo. Queste l'hanno formata, e queste perciò devono governarla e giudicarla. La ragione è che l'uomo (esistenziale) si identifica nella sua intima struttura con l'uomo (essenziale).”⁸ Secondo il pontefice, la legge morale ha la sua importanza nell'incontro con l'uomo reale. La psicologia non cristiana rifiuta questo concetto, perché l'autorità che sta dietro questa legge è l'autorità di Dio.

⁵ Cf. AAS 45 (1955), 278–288.

⁶ Ibid., 279.

⁷ Cf. AAS 45 (1955), 280.

⁸ AAS 45 (1955), 280–281.

Per il nostro articolo è importante notare l'opinione del papa sulla psicoanalisi, poiché: "Ciò che abbiamo detto ora sull'iniziazione considerata per fini terapeutici, vale anche per certe forme della psicoanalisi. Esse non dovrebbero essere considerate come il solo mezzo per attenuare o guarire i turbamenti psichici. Il principio riaffermato che i turbamenti sessuali dell'incoscienza, come tutte le altre inibizioni di identica origine, non possono essere soppressi se non rievocandoli alla coscienza, non vale se si generalizza senza discernimento."⁹ In tale epoca, dopo il rifiuto dei concetti religiosi e con un'apertura verso la scienza empirica, la psicoanalisi aveva un'esclusività durante il processo della guarigione dei disturbi psichici. Pio XII ripete che nella cura sufficiente si devono usare varie strategie e procedimenti. La psicoanalisi rappresenta proprio una di queste.

Nell'ultimo punto il papa ribadisce *L'uomo come unità trascendente che tende verso Dio*. Parliamo dei fondamenti metafisici della persona umana. Il pontefice non ha paura di parlare della rivelazione cristiana che indica lo scopo finale dell'essere umano, cioè Dio.

Difficilmente possiamo elaborare un discorso teologico integrale sulla persona umana che escluda la parte psicologica, anzi l'antropologia teologica con approccio olistico invita i teologi a coinvolgere lo sguardo psicologico nella visione dell'uomo: "Il modello antropologico di cui oggi c'è sommamente bisogno, al di là del crollo del totalitarismo ideologico e della rinuncia nichilista, è quello di un'antropologia aperta verso la trascendenza. Occorre non soltanto offrire un orizzonte di senso ultimo, capace di motivare l'impegno etico, ma anche scrutare nella persona umana i dinamismi che la rendono interrogativa e accogliente nei confronti di questo Mistero santo."¹⁰

Karl Rahner nella sua opera *Hörer des Wortes* sviluppa i lineamenti della svolta antropologica nella teologia. Secondo lui l'uomo è un essere spirituale che accoglie l'auto-comunicazione di Dio: "L'uomo è essere spirituale, cioè vive la sua vita in una continua tensione verso l'Assoluto, in una apertura a Dio."¹¹ Tale apertura della persona umana e la sua tensione a realizzarsi sono una piattaforma nella quale possiamo trovare un'integrazione tra la psicologia e la teologia.

⁹ Ibid., 282.

¹⁰ Bruno Forte, *Fede e psicologia* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2014), 28.

¹¹ Karl Rahner, *Hörer des Wortes* (München Kösel-Verlag), 1963, 86.

Per il nostro articolo sarà importante soprattutto la parola chiave della psicoanalisi cioè il concetto di *desiderio*. Esso rappresenta una struttura fondamentale della persona umana. Le neuroscienze desumono che la distinzione fra la persona umana e animale consiste nella presenza della coscienza riflessiva. Infatti, il cervello umano, più sviluppato di quello animale, rende possibile la nascita del pensiero e pertanto l'uomo si rende conto di chi è e dove va. La psicologia recente evidenzia anche un altro criterio che distingue un uomo da un animale: si tratta del concetto di desiderio.¹² Esso non è un concetto univoco. Varie scuole psicoanalitiche hanno sviluppato diverse interpretazioni del desiderio. In questa sede ci occuperemo in particolare del concetto di desiderio di Jacques Lacan e la sua possibile connessione con la visione dell'ontologia trinitaria.

2. Bisogno e desiderio-orientamenti generali

La società di oggi vive una certa forma di chiusura. *Massimo Recalcati* dice: “Ho chiamato questa nuova malattia: estinzione, eclissi, spegnimento, tramonto del desiderio. L'occidente capitalista, che ha liberato l'uomo dalle catene della miseria trasformandolo in un *homo felix*, ha prodotto una nuova forma di schiavitù, [...] l'uomo senza desideri e perennemente insoddisfatto.”¹³ Per capire bene tale tendenza dobbiamo in breve spiegare la distinzione fondamentale tra il concetto del bisogno e di desiderio. Questi termini, se talvolta intercambiabili, per la chiarezza del nostro articolo, vanno chiariti nella distinzione che li correla tra loro, dato che non sono sinonimi.

Il termine *bisogno* proviene etimologicamente dalla parola di origine germanica *bisoniu(m)*, *sunnia* che significa cura.¹⁴ I dizionari psicologici indicano la definizione fondamentale del bisogno in questo modo: “Una mancanza di qualcosa che è richiesto per la sopravvivenza.”¹⁵ A livello dei bisogni siamo uguali agli animali per quanto riguarda la sua base fisiologica, perché sono di carattere corporale.

¹² Cf. Vittorio Luigi Castellazzi, *Il desiderio* (Roma: Edizioni Magi), 21.

¹³ Massimo Recalcati, *Ritratti del desiderio* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2012), 12.

¹⁴ Manlio Cortelazzo – Paolo Zolli, *Il nuovo etimologico* (a cura di) (Bologna: Zanichelli, 2008), 222.

¹⁵ Andrew Colman, *Oxford Dictionary of Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 600.

I *bisogni* esprimono una necessità primaria del corpo umano per salvare la propria vita. La caratteristica principale del *bisogno* è che è orientato verso l'oggetto: "Il bisogno rimanda a esigenze bio-fisiologiche elementari (di cibo, di acqua, di aria)."¹⁶ Il bisogno nasce col tempo, poi si soddisfa e scompare. Notiamo questa temporalità del *bisogno*, perché lascia emergere già una distinzione tra *bisogno* e *desiderio*. Vittorio Castellazzi sottolinea che il *bisogno* è orientato al possesso e si interessa di un orizzonte finito e definito.¹⁷

Parlando dei *bisogni* occorre evidenziare perché nella società contemporanea è presente l'estinzione del *desiderio*. Il *desiderio* non si orienta al possesso, ma è di carattere relazionale. Noi viviamo nell'epoca del consumismo quando il *desiderio* che è relazionale (ad A/altro) e non orientato al possesso vuole essere soddisfatto da oggetti materiali come se fosse il *bisogno*. Qui troviamo una contraddizione in sé, perché il *desiderio* non può essere ridotto al *bisogno*: "E tuttavia, benché il desiderio sia irriducibile al possesso, è innegabile che ciò contrasti con la sua più profonda e più nascosta natura, al cui centro campeggia la pretesa narcisistica all'appagamento immediato e compiuto. La contraddizione del desiderio deriva dal fatto che l'ansia di possesso, alla quale è così difficile rinunciare, gli preclude ogni accesso all'estraneità dell'altro, ma l'esclusione dell'altro conduce alla distruzione dello stesso desiderio."¹⁸

Si sottolinea che il *bisogno* si orienta ad un oggetto concreto, mentre il *desiderio* si orienta alla relazione. Il *bisogno* proviene da radici corporali, il *desiderio*, invece, è di carattere psichico. "È vero che l'uno si distingue dall'altro. La differenza sussiste e va presa sul serio, intanto, perché nel bisogno l'impulso è dato dalla necessità, mentre nel desiderio vale la libertà della scelta."¹⁹

Il carattere relazionale del desiderio rimane per il nostro discorso essenziale, perché crea la base del dialogo tra il concetto della teoria lacaniana e la visione dell'ontologia trinitaria.

¹⁶ Cf. Vittorio Luigi Castellazzi, *Il desiderio* (Roma: Edizioni Magi), 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁸ Fabio Ciaramelli, *La distruzione del desiderio* (Bari: Dedalo, 2000), 55.

¹⁹ Roberto Mancini, *Godimento e verità*, in Claudio Ciancio, *Metafisica del desiderio* (Milano: V&P, 2003), 11.

3. Jacques Lacan e la sua triade

Jacques Marie Émile Lacan, nacque il 23 aprile 1901 a Parigi dove ha vissuto la maggior parte della sua vita. Egli viene considerato il “Freud francese” per la natura controversa del suo personaggio e per i suoi pensieri innovativi. Studiò nella facoltà di medicina a Parigi, specializzandosi in psichiatria. La sua prassi medicinale ebbe luogo nell’ospedale di St. Anne dove teneva anche i suoi famosi seminari. Nell’ambito filosofico era allievo di A. Kojève. Oltre alla filosofia hegeliana conosceva anche i grandi pensatori come *Lévi-Strauss*, *Martin Heidegger*, *Baruch Spinoza* ecc., e fu membro della *Société psychanalytique de Paris*. Egli va oltre la visione freudiana, dando anche dei suoi suggerimenti per un’analisi più articolata: “Quanto a noi, aggiungeremmo volentieri: la retorica, la dialettica nel senso tecnico assunto dal termine nei Topici di Aristotele, la grammatica e, quale suprema punta di un’estetica del linguaggio, la poetica, che includerebbe la tecnica, lasciata in ombra, del motto di spirito.”²⁰ Mentre per gli autori anglofoni e americani obiettivo di analisi era soprattutto l’Ego, Per Lacan lo era il linguaggio: il linguaggio parla tramite la persona umana e non il contrario, ovvero che la persona umana parla tramite il linguaggio. Il linguaggio si identifica con l’inconscio. I suoi pensieri hanno l’influsso nella teoria letteraria, nella filosofia del linguaggio e anche nella scienza cinematografica. Gli eventi lacaniani più conosciuti nel mondo svolti nella clinica di St. Anne in forma di seminari vennero tenuti regolarmente negli anni 1953–1980 sempre il mercoledì. Le persone che frequentavano i seminari sottolineavano soprattutto il suo linguaggio spesso incomprensibile.

Per quanto riguarda la religione dobbiamo notare che *Lacan* fu cresciuto in un ambiente fortemente religioso. Sua madre era credente e suo fratello Marc Lacan è diventato monaco benedettino. *Jacques Lacan* si proclamava invece ateo. La strada del suo ateismo ha le radici nelle opere di *Freud*. Morì a Parigi il 9 settembre 1981. Egli rappresenta una figura chiave della psicoanalisi postmoderna.

²⁰ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 288.

3.1 La triade lacaniana

Per esprimere la caratteristica fondamentale del desiderio, secondo Lacan, dobbiamo entrare in breve nella teoria lacaniana che gira intorno alle tre assi della realtà. Parliamo dell'asse dell'*immaginario*, del *simbolico* e del *reale*. Essi rappresentano tre registri della realtà. Per caratterizzare i loro collegamenti Lacan usava un esempio del nodo borromeo indicato anche nel suo Seminario XXIII nella parte *Lo spirito dei nodi*.²¹ Il nodo borromeo esprime che questi tre registri della realtà rimangono indipendenti però contemporaneamente sono collegati.

3.1.1 L'asse dell'immaginario

La prima asse della realtà è collegata con la teoria dello *Stadio dello specchio*. La opinione spiega che il bambino per il suo sviluppo come soggetto ha bisogno di una relazione con un'*imago*. Lacan mostra che questo è anche scientificamente approvato e prende un esempio molto interessante dall'ambito della biologia rifacendosi concretamente all'etologia degli animali. Un piccione femmina ha bisogno per una maturazione della sua gonade la vista di un individuo dello stesso genere (indipendentemente dal sesso). Se non è presente un individuo vivo dello stesso genere, basta portare uno specchio e l'immagine che è riflessa dallo specchio compie la stessa funzione tale che la gonade può giungere a maturazione.²² Per spiegare meglio la differenza che esiste tra un animale e la persona umana, per quanto riguarda lo *stadio dello specchio* continua Lacan: "Forse tra voi c'è chi ricorda l'aspetto di comportamento da cui partiamo, illuminato da un fatto di psicologia comparata: il piccolo d'uomo, ad un'età in cui per un breve periodo, ma per un periodo comunque, è superato nell'intelligenza strumentale dallo scimpanzé, già riconosce però nello specchio la propria immagine come tale."²³ Il desiderio presente a questo primo livello immaginario viene chiamato desiderio invidioso. Per spiegare bene questa caratteristica usiamo un esempio dalla vita del bambino. Quando il bimbo passa attraverso le strade con la sua mamma e vede l'altro bambino che mangia il gelato, in lui nasce una invidia: "Il desiderio infantile si manifesta strutturalmente come desiderio dell'oggetto

²¹ Jacques Lacan, *Il seminario XXIII, Il Sinthomo* (Roma Casa Editrice Astrolabio, 2006), 9–57.

²² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 95.

²³ *Ibid.*, 93.

dall'altro bambino.”²⁴ La qualità dell'oggetto posseduto in questo caso non conta niente. Importante per Lacan è la nozione che l'oggetto posseduto è l'oggetto del desiderio dell'Altro. Questo è un punto nevralgico nella visione lacaniana, perché il desiderio della persona umana è definito come desiderio dell'Altro: “Ciò che desidera l'uomo è che l'altro lo desideri: vuole essere ciò che manca all'altro, essere causa del desiderio dell'altro.”²⁵ Questa tendenza di essere oggetto del desiderio dell'altro si esprime nella realtà, per esempio, durante i giochi fra i bambini. Se un bambino gioca con un oggetto, anche un altro bambino vuole giocare con lo stesso oggetto (giocattolo). Quando il primo bambino perde l'interesse per questo oggetto, anche l'altro bambino perde l'interesse, perché il giocattolo preferito non è più l'oggetto del desiderio dell'altro. *Massimo Recalcati* vede in questa struttura del desiderio infantile il nucleo del comportamento umano non soltanto infantile ma anche nella vita adulta. Se tale desiderio non è ben istruito può degenerare in malattia: “Una verità antropologica: è la passione del desiderio dell'altro che anima gli oggetti rendendoli vivi e desiderabili. Tutto il mondo infantile ruota attorno a questa dimensione dell'oggetto immaginario del desiderio. “È mio!” “È mio!” “È mio!” risuona come un mantra.”²⁶ Il problema è quanto questo comportamento infantile (immaginario) prevale nella struttura del desiderio. Il desiderio invidioso sceglie l'oggetto che è ideale. “Invidia chi ha più di me e chi è più di me; ma simile a me, non troppo lontano da me; invidia chi è l'incarnazione esteriorizzata dal mio ideale.”²⁷ Nella vita della persona umana che è invidiosa questa caratteristica rappresenta un problema serio, perché la vita rimane fermata nello stadio dello specchio che mai porta una soddisfazione piena. La persona umana sempre e di nuovo invidia gli oggetti di qualcuno che è ideale. Questo tipo di desiderare diventa una malattia.

3.1.2 *L'asse dell' simbolico*

L'idea dell'ordine *simbolico* non è l'invenzione di *Lacan*. Egli si fu ispirato da *F. de Saussure*. Egli desume che il *significante* quando si capisce isolato, non ha collegamento intero con il *significato*. Il

²⁴ Massimo Recalcati, *Ritratti del desiderio* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2012), 35.

²⁵ Umberto Galimberti, *Desiderio in ID*, *Nuovo dizionario di psicologia* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2018), 359.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

significante deve essere inserito in un sistema dei *significanti*. Qui, quando entra nella relazione con altri significanti prende una vera significazione. Il livello simbolico rappresenta una somma dei significanti. Questa idea di base di *Saussure* fu sviluppata nell'ambito delle scienze sociali e soprattutto da *C. Lévi-Strauss*. Egli ha preso questa concezione strutturalista e la applica ai fenomeni culturali. Secondo lui la cultura si capisce come un insieme di sistemi simbolici come per esempio: il linguaggio, modello matrimoniale, la religione ecc. Lacan trova nel livello simbolico la vera fonte dell'umanità: "L'uomo parla dunque, ma è perché il simbolo lo ha fatto uomo."²⁸ In questa asse è importante la figura del Padre simbolico. "Il volto del padre è un volto diverso dal volto roso dall'invidia del bambino escluso dal godimento del seno materno. La serietà del padre è il simbolo della Legge e, insieme, di una tenerezza profonda."²⁹ Per *Lacan* la figura del padre non è identica con la persona del padre biologico ma rappresenta una figura simbolica che rappresenta la Legge: "Lacan, col termine Padre simbolico o Nome-del-padre, considera un'istanza che non è riducibile alle vicende del padre reale o immaginario e che promulga la legge."³⁰ Nel linguaggio lacaniano il Padre simbolico viene chiamato come Altro con maiuscola. Siccome *Lacan* considerava l'inconscio strutturato come linguaggio, il Padre sempre introduce la potenza simbolica della parola. Altro è per Lacan luogo dove si costituisce il soggetto. Il soggetto che tramite il linguaggio parla con Altro che ascolta. In questo punto il nostro argomento del desiderio riprende le nuove sfumature. Il desiderio non si orienta più a un oggetto desiderato dall'Altro, come abbiamo visto nell'asse immaginario. *Lacan* si ispira di *Hegel* e la sua considerazione del desiderio. Per egli era importante di far riconoscere il proprio desiderio. Nel livello simbolico il desiderio significa di essere riconosciuto dall'Altro. Questo è una tesi cruciale lacaniana che spiega la caratteristica del desiderio nella persona umana. In questo punto troviamo anche vari collegamenti con la religione e con la preghiera. *Massimo Recalcati* per spiegare questo livello all'inizio usa l'esempio della preghiera cristiana Padre nostro. Secondo lui la preghiera fa la distinzione tra l'uomo e animale. L'inizio della preghiera di Padre

²⁸ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 276.

²⁹ Massimo Recalcati, *Ritratti del desiderio* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2012), 40-41.

³⁰ Jean Laplanche - Jean Bertrand Pontalis, *Simbolico*, in ID., *Enciclopedia della psicoanalisi* (Roma-Bari Editori Laterza, 2010), 590.

Nostro comincia con una invocazione che invita la presenza dell’Altro. Questo è significativo perché il desiderio di avere l’Altro presente scoglie una orientazione narcisistica la quale conosciamo dallo stadio dello specchio. Il desiderio esprime di essere riconosciuti e desiderati dall’Altro come soggetti. “In questo senso il Padre è la figura che incarna il desiderio come desiderio dell’Altro perché la parola del Padre che dona la possibilità di essere riconosciuti come figli, cioè come esseri umani. “Tu sei mio figlio!” è un atto di adozione simbolica che iscrive la vita come umana.”⁵¹ Qui troviamo il carattere relazionale del desiderio. Io sono il tuo Padre e tu sei mio figlio. La persona umana trova in questo punto una certezza che la propria vita non è la causa di una combinazione ceca della natura, bensì è voluta dal Padre e sempre cambia la struttura del mondo. Questa struttura del desiderio porta con sé anche le conseguenze antropologiche che sono apprezzate anche da gesuita e medico *Denis Vasse*. Egli interpretava le opere di Freud e di Lacan. Anche per lui ugualmente come per *Recalcati* sta nel nucleo della teoria lacaniana il fatto che la persona umana è nel primo tempo il figlio. Tramite il dono della vita e della parola la persona umana sperimenta la sua propria originalità. Non è più una cifra, ma essere concerto. Essere che è voluto e che dispone della propria libertà. La preghiera in questa struttura del livello simbolico esprime anche il fatto che desideriamo l’Altro non come oggetto ma come soggetto. Nel livello simbolico il desiderio significa che siamo desiderati dall’Altro. Il desiderio non è più orientato all’oggetto voluto. Non è più moderato da una possessione né dalla gelosia. La persona desidera che diventa il desiderio dell’Altro. Non come oggetto ma come soggetto. Nell’evento della parola è presente la domanda di riconoscimento che è rivolta all’Altro. La soddisfazione del desiderio viene quando il soggetto riceve una parola (una risposta).

3.1.3 *L’asse del reale*

All’inizio si deve sottolineare che il termine *reale* non è identico con il termine realtà. “La realtà è un quadro con le caratteristiche della costanza e della stabilità che assicura il soggetto nella sua presenza sulla “scena del mondo.”⁵² Semplicemente dire il reale è quello che non

⁵¹ Massimo Recalcati, *Ritratti del desiderio* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2012), 43.

⁵² Massimo Recalcati, *Jacques Lacan. Desiderio, godimento e soggettivazione* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2012), 272.

fa parte del livello simbolico. Il reale è il dominio del tutto che sussiste oltre il livello simbolico. “Ciò che non è nato al simbolico, appare nel reale.”⁵⁵ Il reale non ha la possibilità di esprimersi a livello simbolico. Si tratta di qualcosa che non si può definire perché è fuori dal livello simbolico. Rimane per noi ora il compito assai difficile di caratterizzare almeno un po’ questo asse del reale. Anche *Lacan* parlava di questo terzo assi poco. Per egli il livello del reale rimane misterioso, evasivo e radicalmente indeterminativo. *Lacan* non sa definire se si tratta di una realtà esterna o interna e se questa realtà sia intelligibile. Il reale è una dimensione che è fuori dal livello simbolico, sfuggendo così dalla spiegazione analitica. Il linguaggio si può analizzare ma il reale no. Il reale possiamo soltanto prevederlo. Il reale si può caratterizzare nel modo zoppicante come il ritorno di qualcosa, di qualcosa di orribile. All’inizio del suo insegnamento *Lacan* non si occupava tanto di questo livello ma in seguito da a questo livello il suo ruolo importante. Questo vale anche per la psicoanalisi del paziente. Per capire il bene del concetto lacaniano del reale possiamo prendere spunto dall’ambito della cinematografia. Il livello reale è diventato importante anche nella teoria cinematografica. Nel film il reale può offrire allo spettatore qualcosa di orribile. E ciò può non trovarsi esplicitamente nell’immagine cinematografica ma si percepisce tra le righe, cioè dietro la scenata. Questo reale aiuta a perdere qualsiasi collegamento con la struttura simbolica (quella che controlla) e lo spettatore rimane affascinato, impaurito ma non sa dire perché. I teoretici della cinematografia dicono che proprio questo desidera lo spettatore. Fuggire dal livello simbolico che lo imprigiona. Il reale si percepisce nel film sempre soltanto in modo indiretto. Il reale così si può percepire in due modi: Il reale è il mondo che esisteva prima della sua iscrizione a livello simbolico, oppure – secondo quanto dice un grande ricercatore di *Lacan*, *Slavoj Žižek* – il reale è quel resto che rimane dopo il processo di iscrizione simbolica. *Žižek* lo chiama anche il resto invisibile. L’esistenza di questo resto significa che a livello simbolico esiste un luogo vuoto. Il livello simbolico ha tolto qualcosa dallo stato primordiale della “cosa”. La persona umana è attratta dall’asse del reale perché vuole ritornare al godimento primordiale. Il reale non si può rappresentare a livello simbolico oppure immaginario. Unica rappresentazione del reale possibile è il vuoto.

⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1966), 388.

Lacan in questa formulazione si ispira a *Freud* e al suo concetto di sublimazione, per cui la persona umana è attratta sempre verso l'impossibile cioè verso il vuoto. L'essere parlante senza la dimensione del reale non si sente completo. Qualcosa manca nella struttura del soggetto. Si tratta di una situazione strana per la persona umana. Da una parte il soggetto vuole avere una relazione col reale, perché sente questa attrazione verso il reale, però dall'altra parte è invitato a creare la relazione con il vuoto. Lacan ragionava su questa dinamica e scrive che sono tre modi possibili del collegamento tra il soggetto e il vuoto. Si tratta dell'arte, della religione e della scienza: “Vi indico sin d'ora tre diversi modi in cui l'arte, la religione e il discorso della scienza si trovano ad avere a che fare con questo.”⁵⁴

Per quando riguarda l'arte Lacan scrisse: “Ogni arte si caratterizza per una certa modalità di organizzazione attorno al vuoto.”⁵⁵ L'arte era apprezzata anche da Freud. Egli diceva che lo scrittore può scoprire intuitivamente alcune leggi psichiche prima dell'analista. Persino per *Freud* l'opera dell'arte può esprimere qualcosa della psichica dell'autore. Lacan anche apprezzava l'arte. Nella sua opera si trovano tante citazioni che fanno riferimento alla letteratura ecc.

Il secondo modo con il quale si può ruotare intorno al vuoto è la *religione*. Nella visione freudiana è chiara l'idea. La religione si percepisce come una nevrosi che vuole evitare questo vuoto. Malgrado Lacan si proclamasse ateo, egli nota: “La religione consiste in tutte le modalità di evitare il vuoto. Lo possiamo dire forzando la nota dell'analisi freudiana, a partire dal fatto che Freud mette in rilievo i tratti ossessivi del comportamento religioso. Tuttavia, benché tutta la fase cerimoniale di quel che costituisce il corpo dei comportamenti religiosi rientri in effetti in questo quadro, non possiamo essere pienamente soddisfatti di questa formula, e una parola come «rispettare» il vuoto va forse oltre. A ogni modo, il vuoto resta al centro, ed è proprio per questo che si tratta di sublimazione.”⁵⁶

Il terzo modo di sublimazione è rappresentato dalla scienza: “Quanto al terzo termine, ossia al discorso della scienza, poiché nella nostra tradizione trae origine dal discorso della saggezza, dal discorso della

⁵⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Le seminaire, Livre VII, L'éthique de la psychanalyse* (Paris Seuil, 1986), 155.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

filosofia.”⁵⁷ Secondo Lacan i limiti della fisica costituiscono qualcosa di enigmatico riguardo alla Cosa che anche attrae e vuole essere indagato dalla scienza.

In fine possiamo constatare che tutti questi tre modi, l’arte, la religione e la scienza, sono una “rappresentazione” del vuoto anche se il reale è irrepresentabile.

Al desiderio nell’asse del reale è collegata la sensazione dell’angoscia. Per *Lacan* l’angoscia si riferisce al reale. Si tratta di un elemento traumatico che si trova fuori dal livello simbolico. Qualcosa nella figura dell’Altro non fa parte del livello simbolico. Qualcosa sfugge da questa dialettica simbolica. Qualcosa di enigmatico che fa il riferimento al reale. In questo caso il paradigma del desiderio cambia. Dapprima, la domanda verso l’A/altro portava il soggetto ad un dialogo in cui riconoscere la propria identità. Si tratta di una cosa del tutto positiva. Ora l’incontro con l’A/altro porta con sé un’angoscia terribile. L’angoscia si tocca nell’essenza umana. Non si tratta di una semplice paura provocata dalla presenza di un oggetto esterno spaventoso. Un’esperienza tale di angoscia per esempio è osservabile nella vita dei mistici.

Arriviamo al punto cruciale del nostro discorso, perché il desiderio vive più che in una dimensione mistica. Non si tratta soltanto di una fede, perché la mistica ad un certo punto oltrepassa la fede. Per noi è importante vedere il punto dove la via della mistica riconosce la propria nullità. Si tratta di un passaggio duro e faticoso che non è gradito a tutti. Il desiderio in questa impostazione interroga l’essere. Il possesso è lontano dall’essere. È soltanto la struttura. La persona umana che è orientata verso il possesso, verso l’avere non è in grado di desiderare l’essere. Il brano biblico che indica di lasciare gli oggetti materiali per seguire Gesù implica questo passo: “Chi ha due tuniche, ne dia una a chi non ne ha; e chi ha da mangiare, faccia altrettanto.”⁵⁸ La vita della santità può essere caratterizzata anche come uno spogliarsi da tutto ciò che è l’*avere* per avvicinarsi all’*essere*. Si tratta di un cammino faticoso e lungo. Questa via non è mai compiuta perché è un percorso che porta alla questione dell’essere. Secondo *Lacan* l’essere è quello di cui non si sa dire “che cos’è.” Ci troviamo sull’asse del reale. Qualcosa di irraggiungibile, qualcosa di inesprimibile. Qui non c’è neanche la possibilità di creare una domanda come invece si può fare

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lc 3,11

a livello simbolico. Il compito di chi vuole arrivare al livello del reale è di liberarsi di tutto ciò che è oggetto dell’immaginario e oltrepassare la sua mancanza dell’essere.

Concludendo il nostro breve discorso intorno alle tre assi lacaniane occorre ribadire che la persona umana secondo lo psicanalista francese è strutturata come essere relazionale: un primo polo della relazione è la persona umana, mentre il secondo è nominato come “A/altro”. La teoria della *triade* rappresenta i tre livelli (assi) della relazione tra la persona umana ed altro: *il simbolico, l’immaginario e il reale*. Per la vita concreta, ma anche per quella psichica e per lo sviluppo del *desiderio*, la persona umana deve entrare in relazione con l’ambiente in cui vive, ma anche secondo *Lacan* in dialogo con Altro. “L’uomo sperimenta in ogni sua dimensione la stretta relazione sussistente con ciò che lo circonda. Infatti, non solo fisicamente, ma anche psichicamente, intellettivamente, spiritualmente queste manifestazioni, attua e potenzia le sue doti in una dinamica relazionale.”³⁹ Senza una relazione, senza una domanda rivolta all’Altro non si configura una vera identità del soggetto.

4. Il dialogo possibile tra Jacques Lacan e l’ontologia trinitaria

4.1 Jacques Lacan

Nel parlare della teoria lacaniana troviamo un accesso possibile all’ontologia trinitaria, proprio attraverso l’esplorazione della relazionalità della persona umana. La vera identità del soggetto si costruisce nella relazione con l’A/altro. Il desiderio deve essere orientato verso l’asse del reale. *Lacan* apprezza sempre la figura del Padre, perché è essenziale per costruire un’identità da figli: “Per Lacan il Padre deve essere il principio fondativo della famiglia e del corpo sociale. Il padre rappresenta il polo opposto e complementare a quello materno; è colui che separa i figli dalla madre, inducendoli ad uscire dal loro stato iniziale di dipendenza per assumere un atteggiamento più attivo e autonomo verso se stessi e la propria vita.”⁴⁰ *Lacan* parlava di un processo che si può chiamare *Evaporazione del Nome del Padre*.⁴¹ Nella società

³⁹ Maurizio Zani, *Sul desiderante: essere di desiderio e desiderio d’essere*, in: *Quaderni teologici* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2018), 18.

⁴⁰ Giuseppe Ferrari, *Padri a distanza* (Roma, Franco angeli, 2013), 155.

⁴¹ Questo fenomeno è trattato spesso nella opera lacaniana ma soprattutto nel *Seminario VII*.

di oggi manca la figura del Padre come portatore della legge. Dio rappresenta l'Altro con il quale la persona umana entra nel dialogo reciproco. Nella prospettiva trinitaria possiamo sottolineare che Il Dio-Amore si rivela tramite la persona di Gesù Cristo e offre all'uomo la possibilità di creare una relazione profonda fondata sull'amore. Quando il vettore del desiderio rimane orientato soltanto al livello immaginario, oppure simbolico, non si crea la vera identità del soggetto. *Adrian Attard* con altre parole descrive cosa succede quando la persona umana e il suo desiderio non è orientato verso il reale: "Il rifiuto della prospettiva metafisica ha finito per dare il sopravvento ai punti di vista particolari dell'esistenza umana, incasellando vari modelli di umanesimo a una sola dimensione, come l'homo economicus, l'homo faber, l'homo sociologicus, l'homo dialogicus, l'homo volens."⁴² La teoria lacaniana ribadisce la relazionalità del desiderio. L'impatto psicologico del discorso apre una strada possibile per dialogare con l'ontologia trinitaria intorno alla struttura relazionale della persona umana. "Il desiderio come desiderio dell'Altro mostra che il desiderio umano ha una struttura relazionale. Esso proviene dall'Altro e si dirige verso l'Altro. Non esiste desiderio senza l'Altro."⁴³

4.2 La visione dell'ontologia trinitaria

Per trovare la base comune tra la teoria lacaniana e la proposta dell'ontologia trinitaria dobbiamo entrare nel discorso odierno che riguarda società. Essa viene valutata non soltanto psicologicamente ma anche dalla parte dei teologi. Le loro osservazioni hanno punti in comune con lo sguardo psicologico. Come abbiamo già notato, *Massimo Recalcati* parla di un'estinzione del desiderio nella società di oggi. Il teologo *Lubomír Žák* sottolinea: "Oggi, come forse mai in precedenza, la fallacia del pensiero, la caducità dell'essere, la problematicità del soggetto, l'assenza di Dio, i pericoli che minacciano la libertà e il senso sono diventati pane quotidiano."⁴⁴ La soluzione di tutta questa problematicità secondo *Žák* consiste nel fatto che la nuova società sarà fondata sul modello trinitario.

⁴² Adrian Attard, *Cristologia e antropologia: nodo fondamentale per l'antropologia teologica*, in *Teresianum* 68 (2017/2) 266.

⁴³ Massimo Recalcati, *Ritratti del desiderio* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2012), 40-41.

⁴⁴ Lubomír Žák, *Verso un'ontologia trinitaria*, in: *Nuova umanità* XIX (1997/1)109, 2.

Come abbiamo anche qui già colto, *Jacques Lacan* valuta la religione come la modalità di evitare il vuoto del reale. Qualcosa dalla figura dell'Altro sparisce dal dominio del livello simbolico. La persona umana è fortemente attratta dall'Altro. *Klaus Hemmerle* scrisse in riferimento alla religione questa affermazione: “La religione – ciò vale anche per quella cristiana – si distingue da altre proposte di attribuzione di senso e da altre risposte ultime per un sostanziale spostamento del baricentro: l'uomo vive la propria vita e comprende il proprio mondo non più a partire da se stesso, ma a partire da un Altro che si sottrae. L'asse intorno a cui ruota la vita non sono più le problematiche o le capacità umane bensì la comparsa di questo Altro la sua irruzione, la sua chiamata, la sua epifania, il suo messaggio, la sua Rivelazione di sé. La sconvolgente predominanza dell'Altro non resta tuttavia qualcosa di esteriore, ma rivela l'Altro come Colui dal quale io stesso e il mio mondo dipendiamo intimamente, e che dunque ci riguarda direttamente.”⁴⁵

La teoria lacaniana ragiona anche sulla relazionalità dell'essere umano con altre persone. Occorre ribadire che si tratta di una certa ricostruzione di politica che intende le relazioni come relazioni tra le persone nella società.

Il desiderio lacaniano si esprime esternamente anche come amore. L'amore che riempie una mancanza dell'essere: “E si rivolge alla mancanza dell'Altro – la domanda d'amore è sempre domanda sulla mancanza: “Ti sono mancato?” – perché non si appaga di oggetti, di pezzi, di dettagli del corpo, ma solo di segni, di lettere, di parole d'amore, le quali possono fare la loro apparizione solo sullo sfondo di una mancanza dell'Altro. Per questa ragione *Lacan* ha definito l'amore come saper donare all'Altro quello che non si ha.”⁴⁶ Nella impostazione lacaniana il desiderio amoroso è sempre orientato ad un nome concreto della persona. L'amore non ha il carattere universale bensì concreto. Parliamo non più del desiderio amoroso astratto, con il vettore rivolto a termini universali, ma del desiderio che è rivolto ad un nome concreto di una persona umana. *Recalcati* indica l'esempio deò buon pastore che: “Conosce e sa nominare tutte una per una tutte le sue pecore.”⁴⁷

Analizzando la visione trinitaria troviamo così anche una relazionalità della persona umana che si esprime secondo due dimensioni: l'una

⁴⁵ Klaus Hemmerle, *Tesi di ontologia trinitaria* (Roma: Città nuova, 1996), 40.

⁴⁶ Massimo Recalcati, *Ritratti del desiderio* (Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2012), 140.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

è orientata verso la Trinità e l'altra ha il carattere interpersonale. *Ignazio Sanna* nota: "La Trinità è l'origine e la patria, l'inizio e la meta di ogni esistenza umana. Se solo il cristiano, infatti, è battezzato nel nome del Padre, del Figlio, dello Spirito santo, ogni uomo è creato da Dio Uno e Trino. Per cui, la Trinità sta all'origine di ogni vita umana e non solo di quella cristiana. Il rapporto di reciprocità e di relazionalità che fonda l'essere personale all'interno della Trinità si estende allora anche all'interno della vita umana in quanto umana. Cioè significa che la dimensione comunitaria è una dimensione fondamentale, antecedente a quella cristiana."⁴⁸ Concepire la visione antropologica della persona umana sulla base della visione trinitaria apre la strada per risolvere il problema della crisi di società. Il collegamento tra la relazione con Dio e con gli altri esseri umani è evidente anche nella dottrina della Chiesa. La *Gaudium est spes* sottolinea: "La sacra Scrittura, da parte sua, insegna che l'amor di Dio non può essere disgiunto dall'amor del prossimo [...] Anzi, il Signore Gesù, quando prega il Padre perché tutti siano una cosa sola, come io e tu siamo una cosa sola (Gv17,21), aprendoci prospettive inaccessibili alla ragione umana, ci ha suggerito una certa similitudine tra l'unione delle Persone divine e l'unione dei figli di Dio nella verità e nell'amore."⁴⁹

Conclusione

Il concetto del desiderio assume un significato molto importante nel discorso odierno sulla persona umana. Nell'ambito della psicologia questo termine fu sviluppato soprattutto da Sigmund Freud. Il grande psichiatra e psicoanalista *Jacques Lacan* con le riflessioni di *Spinoza* sostiene che: "Il desiderio è l'essenza dell'uomo."⁵⁰ Il desiderio per *Lacan* consiste nel fatto che noi desideriamo che qualcun altro ci desideri. Noi desideriamo, qualcosa che non si può raggiungere fino in fondo in questa dimensione spazio-temporale, noi desideriamo un irraggiungibile, noi desideriamo un infinito. La nostra apertura verso l'infinito è proprio il desiderio. Possiamo constatare che il termine desiderio per *Lacan* è connesso con un processo dinamico e inesauribile. Il desiderio secondo *Lacan* è un'energia che ci spinge, che ci sollecita,

⁴⁸ Ignazio Sanna, *L'antropologia cristiana tra modernità e postmodernità* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2012), 449.

⁴⁹ *Gaudium et spes*, 24.

⁵⁰ Jacques Lacan, *Il seminario*. Libro XI, (Torino: Einaudi, 2003), 279–280.

e che supera gli ostacoli della vita. Il desiderio secondo *Lacan* è soprattutto relazionale, si esprime verso il reale ma anche verso altri esseri umani, in modo che, tramite le relazioni reciproche, si costruisce la vera identità del soggetto.

L'impostazione della visione trinitaria della persona umana analizza ambedue i modi della relazionalità. Una relazione è orientata verso la Trinità e l'altra verso le persone umane. Esse collaborano reciprocamente e costruiscono il modo di vivere nella società. *Piero Coda* commenta: “Si tratta infatti, nel secondo caso, della testimonianza di un'esperienza dell'autocomunicazione di Dio Trinità che viene vissuta a corpo, nella logica di quella che è stata definita la «trinitizzazione» dei rapporti sociali: a significare la partecipazione, in Gesù, alla vita trinitaria non solo come singoli, ma, appunto, come corpo, nelle reciproche relazioni vissute nell'amore. Queste due forme di esperienza antropologica in chiave trinitaria, in verità, non sono alternative: si presuppongono, piuttosto, l'un l'altra.”⁵¹

Ambedue le visioni, sia quella lacaniana sia quella dell'ontologia trinitaria possono risolvere il problema della mancanza del desiderio nella vita della persona umana, quella mancanza che crea una forma d'infelicità e d'insoddisfazione. Lavorare sul campo del desiderio e la sua relazionalità sarebbe una strada per la cura dell'uomo odierno e la base sulla quale può essere ricostruita la società di oggi.

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⁵¹ Piero Coda, *Trinità e antropologia*, in: *Ricerche sui fondamenti e la correlazione dei saperi* (2015-1), 8.

TOPICS OF THE TRINITY: ABSOLUTENESS,
OTHERNESS, AND CONTINGENCY
WOLFGANG CRAMER'S 'ABSOLUTE REFLECTION'
AS A PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATION
OF THE TRINITY

STEPHAN TILCH

ABSTRACT

The Trinity is usually regarded as an exclusively theological topic. If, however, the postulated unity of the dogmatic tracts 'De Deo uno' and 'De Deo trino' is taken seriously, there must be at least a philosophical perspective on the Trinity. This article wants to present the little-known philosophy of the Absolute of Wolfgang Cramer as a possible approach to this problem. It first presents some aspects of Cramer's analysis of the concept of the Absolute. It then argues that, within Cramer's philosophy, the Trinitarian structure of the Absolute is deeply linked to the possibility of contingency. In the last step, it is argued that the meaning of the concept of the Absolute ultimately demands a new methodology without the presupposition of this very concept. Thus it is shown how a Trinitarian approach helps to take the Absoluteness of the Absolute more seriously. The article closes with some remarks on the status of Cramer's claims.

Keywords

Ontology; Trinity; Absolute; Contingency; Metaphysics; Speculative philosophy; Wolfgang Cramer; Klaus Hemmerle

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In his *Remarks on the Dogmatic Tract 'De Trinitate'*, Karl Rahner postulated the unity of the dogmatic tracts 'De Deo uno' and 'De Deo trino'. The doctrine of God should no longer be separated into a philosophical part on the 'one God only' on the one hand and 'the triune God' on the other, which would seem like an obscure proprium of Christian faith.¹ The background of Rahner's claim is surely Neo-Scho-

¹ Original title: Karl Rahner, 'Bemerkungen zum Traktat "De Trinitate"', in *Sämtliche Werke* 22/1b (Freiburg i.B.: Herder, 2013), 512–568.

lasticism, the mainstream theology of his time, which according to Rahner's judgement, not only treated the topics of God's unity and Trinity separately but also neglected to build bridges between these topics. But building such bridges cannot be a purely self-contained theological discourse. The topic of 'God the One' belongs also to natural theology; according to the definition of Vatican I, God can be known via his creation and by reason alone.² Thus, the task of connecting the two tracts bears a tremendous task for philosophy. If Rahner is correct, and if we do not want to abandon philosophical theology, the Trinity must be made a topic of philosophy as well as theology.

It is not surprising that the renewal of Trinitarian thought after Rahner's diagnosis from 1960 was mainly a renewal of Trinitarian *theology*. Even the more philosophically oriented approaches, like Klaus Hemmerle's *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*,³ are mainly theologically driven, philosophising under the guidance of divine revelation. What Hemmerle understands under 'Trinitarian ontology' is a phenomenology of divine love as witnessed in Scripture.⁴ There is nothing wrong with this approach – it just seems incomplete as it is not able to trace the Trinity in creation through reason alone.

In this paper, I will argue for the philosophical significance of the Trinity with the help of a still little known contemporary of Rahner, Wolfgang Cramer (1901–1974). Cramer is one of the few philosophers of the 20th century who attempted to form a speculative philosophy of the Absolute.⁵ With some aspects of Cramer's theory of the Absolute, which was interpreted as Trinitarian by many including himself,⁶

² Cf. DH 3004.

³ A new translation of this fascinating and clairvoyant essay was recently published. Cf. Klaus Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, englisch-deutsche Ausgabe (Würzburg: Echter, 2020).

⁴ Cf. Hemmerle, *Thesen*, 17–19.

⁵ The main topics of Cramer's philosophy are subjectivity and the Absolute. The material on the latter can be found mainly in Wolfgang Cramer, 'Aufgaben und Methoden einer Kategorienlehre,' *Kant-Studien* 52 (1960/61): 351–368, doi: 10.1515/kant.1961.52.1-4.351; Wolfgang Cramer, *Gottesbeweise und ihre Kritik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2010); Wolfgang Cramer, 'Das Absolute,' in *Handbuch philosophischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Hermann Krings et al. (München: Kösel, 1973); Wolfgang Cramer, 'Das Ich und das Gute. Eine Grundlegung der Philosophie,' *Neue Hefte für Philosophie* 27/28 (1988): 1–49; Wolfgang Cramer, *Die Absolute Reflexion. Schriften aus dem Nachlass* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2012); Wolfgang Cramer, *Das Absolute und das Kontingente* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2019).

⁶ Cf. Falk Wagner, 'Theo-logie. Die Theorie des Absoluten und der christliche Gottesgedanke,' in *Rationale Metaphysik* 2, eds. H. Radermacher, P. Reisinger and

I want to show how the topic of difference in the Absolute is in particular connected with the question of true otherness or the contingency of finite beings on the one hand and the absoluteness of God⁷ on the other. My main thesis is that the existence of contingent beings as well as the absoluteness of the Absolute can only be thought adequately if the Absolute is thought as Trinitarian.

There is an important limitation of such a purely philosophical approach. The doctrine of the Trinity is a complex of various ecclesiastical definitions. The Trinity, by definition, is a theological concept. Thus, the identification of a philosophical theory with the Trinity can only be stated by theology. What I will present here is Cramer's concept of the Absolute, which displays an internal structure. Whether or not this structure resembles the Trinity will be discussed at the end of the essay.

1. Wolfgang Cramer's Conceptual Philosophy of the Absolute

First, let us clarify some of the central concepts. What I call 'conceptual philosophy of the Absolute' is the part of Cramer's philosophy wherein he presupposes and explicates the meaning of the word 'absolute'. It will be shown how this philosophy in the end turns against its own methodology: the semantics of the 'Absolute' contradicts such presuppositions. Still, it is reasonable to start this way to gain more clarity on the task of philosophical theology.

'Absolute', from Latin *absolutus* – 'detached', etymologically means 'independent'. In this sense, one could say 'A is absolute to B' if and only if A is ontologically independent from B. '(Ontological) independence' here means: even if B is not or not anymore, A could still be. Something we call '*the* Absolute' should not only be independent from some entities but from all. We define:

J. Stolzenberg (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990). Cramer clearly interpreted his philosophy in the same way as can be seen in: Cramer, *Absolute Reflexion*, 303.

⁷ A remark on the terms 'the Absolute' and 'God': Cramer uses primarily the term 'the Absolute', sometimes the Latin *Deus*. It is clear from some sources that he was personally convinced that his 'Absolute' is identical to the Christian God. Still, 'the Absolute' or *Deus* (coming from Spinoza) marks the God of philosophers, the term 'God' belongs to religion. As I am coming from theology and proposing Cramer's theory as a philosophical approach to the Trinity, I implicitly acknowledge Cramer's 'Absolute' as a philosophical concept which comes close to the God of faith. Thus I usually stick to the term 'the Absolute' but will not be as strict as Cramer in his writings.

Def. 1: The Absolute is that which is ontologically independent from everything else.

Now it can be shown that there can be just one Absolute.⁸ Let there be two candidates for the Absolute, A and B. If there are these two entities, there must be a common ground, an order, which enables them to exist in relation to each other. Such a correlating order is, for example, spacetime in the case of physical entities,⁹ although A and B are most likely not physical.¹⁰ Then, this order O necessarily determines both entities A and B. It follows that neither one of them is the Absolute, as they are both determined by something foreign. For without the order O, A and B could not exist. Alternatively, the order O is identical to either A or B or is a necessary ‘moment’ of one of them. In this case, that one is the Absolute, whereas the other depends on the first thus is not the Absolute. In both cases, we do not have two Absolutes.

In this argument, the expressions ‘moment’ and ‘the other’ appeared. Both deserve some clarification. A moment of an entity E is something which necessarily determines E or which is necessarily a part of E. In the case of the Absolute, this could mean that the Absolute necessarily differentiates itself into moments. Then it would be impossible that there is the Absolute but not its moments.

‘The other’ or ‘something other’ (*Anderes*) is used by Cramer in a technical manner, defined as such:

Def. 2: *Anderes*, the ‘other’ than the Absolute, means something which is neither the Absolute nor a moment of it.

It is not sure whether there actually is something like this: the world could be the result of a necessary evolution of the Absolute, thus a moment or an aggregate of moments. This view is Cramer’s main opponent when it comes to the question of the relation between the

⁸ The following argument is a slightly altered argument from Cramer. The original version is shown below. Cf. Cramer, *Das Absolute und das Kontingente*, 18–19.

⁹ The example shows that Cramer does not think of a hierarchy of physical entities, in which some depend on other more basic entities (bottom-up constitution, e.g. atoms and molecules). Rather he thinks of meta-principles, which are presupposed for every instance of a given phenomenon (like spacetime for every physical entity).

¹⁰ There are a couple of reasons why the Absolute cannot be a singular physical entity. Singular physical entities do not generate their own determining order (spacetime), which is a condition of the Absolute as shown below. This does not mean that the world as a whole could not be the Absolute. This proof would need further argumentation.

One and the Many, which he calls Spinozism.¹¹ According to this view, the becoming, changing, and vanishing of the manifold is in fact just a change of modes of the One. Hence, there is nothing truly ‘other’ than the Absolute.

However, if we presuppose the existence of something other – as we usually do – then we can learn something about the ‘other’ as well as about the Absolute. The argument is similarly structured as the above argument for the singularity of the Absolute.¹² Let there be the Absolute A and a being x, which is not A and not a moment of A. Then there must be an order O, which makes it possible that x exists and exists in relation to A. This order O necessarily determines both A and x. As A is dependent on nothing else according to Def. 1, O must be A or a moment of A. Thus, the Absolute must have the character of an order *for* contingent beings. Since everything that is stands under this order, everything is determined by the Absolute. If we now take into account that the Absolute A is in principle independent (*absolutus* – ‘detachable’) from x according to Def. 1, we see that x must have the possibility to end. For the isolation from A, from its constitutive order, is disastrous for x. A being other than the Absolute is in principle finite, non-necessary, or contingent.¹³

We are now in a position to state the following corollaries:

Cor. 1: The Absolute is that which is dependent on nothing else and that on which everything else is dependent.

Cor. 2: If the manifold of beings is not a necessary moment of the Absolute, then the Absolute must be an order for the things other than itself.

Cor. 3: A being other than the Absolute is in principle determined by the Absolute and thus finite or contingent.

These corollaries highlight two aspects. On the one hand, it is not enough for philosophical theology to speak about God alone. The Absolute and the relation between the Absolute and the contingent, these two topics are deeply linked to each other. Cor. 1 says that there must be

¹¹ The question whether this is an accurate description of Spinoza’s position is not the main question here. For Cramer’s representation of this position cf. Cramer, *Das Absolute und das Kontingente*, 19–22; Wolfgang Cramer, *Spinozas Philosophie des Absoluten* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1966).

¹² The following argument is taken from Cramer, *Das Absolute und das Kontingente*, 18–19.

¹³ Cf. Cramer, ‘Das Absolute’, 1–2.

a relation of dependence and independence from the one to the other. How can we explain that? In which way is the contingent dependent from the Absolute but still different to it? On the other hand, this implicates a certain way of thinking about God – God as on open order. The emphasis here lies on the fact that the Absolute is the ultimate order of Being itself. There is always the danger in the philosophy of religion to think about God in a certain presupposed frame, for example, in a certain ontology.¹⁴ This might be useful as a bottom-up approach towards the Absolute, but in the end, it should become clear that the Absolute is the source of everything, even of this particular ontology.¹⁵ Treating the Absolute only in a presupposed frame makes it at best a (somehow exalted) entity within this frame but still subjugated to the frame.

My main claim is that both of these aspects – the clarification of the Absolute’s relation to the contingent as well as the treatment of the Absolute as an absolute order – are connected with the Trinity. Reflecting on these requirements will lead us to a trinitarian-structured concept of the Absolute.

2. The Trinity and Otherness

In this section, I want to show how the Trinitarian structure in God is linked to him as the origin of contingent beings, that is: linked to true otherness to him. This will be done in two steps. First, it will be shown that difference is primordial rather than secondary. Second, I indicate what this primordial difference is and why it resembles the Trinity.

To show the primordial position of difference, it might be useful to start with the opposite: pure unity.¹⁶ Let us suppose there is an X with no difference in itself. In particular, X does not have any qualities as every quality would bring differences to other qualities with it and, fundamentally, the difference between quality and the qualified. Yet,

¹⁴ An example would be the application of the ‘possible world semantics’ on God. Sentences like ‘In all possible worlds God exists’ subject the Absolute under a certain frame (or all thinkable frames), which is foreign to itself.

¹⁵ Thus Cramer’s goal was to develop a theory of categories out of the concept of the Absolute. Cf. Cramer, ‘Aufgaben und Methoden’.

¹⁶ The following argument is a key step in Cramer’s theory and can be found in slightly different forms in many of his works. The representation here relies on Cramer, *Gottesbeweise*, 85–88. Cf. also Jürgen Stolzenberg, ‘Die Bestimmtheit-selbst. Zu Wolfgang Cramers erster Konzeption des Absoluten in “Die Monade”’, in *Rationale Metaphysik* 2, eds. H. Radermacher, P. Reisinger and J. Stolzenberg (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 194–195.

we mean *something* when we say ‘X is’, although we cannot name positively what we mean. The sentence ‘X is’ (note that it already differentiates ‘X’ and ‘being’) signifies a state S_1 which is *different* to the state S_2 that ‘a, b, and c exist’. Thus, X refers to a frame, an order of possible other states. At the same time, this relation is negated, as X is defined as pure unity, without any relation to anything else. That is obviously nonsense, to which the presupposition of pure unity leads: Pure unity is the exclusion of any difference and any positive quality, yet it is not understandable except as this very negation of difference. It is constituted by this negation; there can be no positive definition of it without this reference. If the idea of pure unity is constituted by difference, by the negation of something other than X, then difference is a primordial phenomenon. Difference must be.

This argument of Cramer is directed against all cosmologies which start with the One, or pure unity. The problem is not that pure unity is beyond our rational capabilities. The problem is that it is an inconsistent concept, a contradiction in itself. Even more: It is infertile. Out of pure unity, nothing could evolve. A first motion from unity to difference seems to Cramer an unthinkable thought, a mere narration, not philosophy.¹⁷ Indeed, it is difficult to see how a first motion without the quality of the ‘power to move’ should be possible. From where does the One get this power? What initiates its first move? These are all open questions which, on the basis of pure unity, can hardly be answered. It seems that already the first principle of Being must encapsulate difference.

Still, this argument does not provide any evidence for a *particular* primordial difference in the Absolute. To narrow down the type of structure, one might consider again what was said in Cor. 2: the Absolute must be an order *for* contingent beings (if there is any). Contingency was defined as non-necessity: If the Absolute exists, it exists, whether or not a contingent being is. Contingent beings are therefore not the product of a necessary evolution of the Absolute, but rather they are *created*.¹⁸ Contingency presupposes freedom and the moment of possibility in the Absolute. The Absolute is *able* to create, but not forced.

Therefore, the Absolute must decide to create contingent beings, which implies that it has knowledge of its power to do so. The Absolute

¹⁷ Cf. Cramer, *Absolute Reflexion*, 224–225.

¹⁸ ‘Creation’ here means: grounded by the Absolute in a non-necessary act.

must know itself as an order of possible beings. Thus, the Absolute must be self-relational.

At this point, Cramer refers to his theory of subjectivity which in some parts is also applicable to the Absolute. An important result of Cramer's theory, which Dieter Henrich later traced back to Fichte in his famous article on 'Fichte's original insight'¹⁹, is that self-consciousness cannot be understood as intentionality of the I on itself. Rather, the I generates (Cramer says 'zeugt'/'sires') a concept, a representation of itself, on which it directs its intention. If we apply this result on the Absolute, we gain the most basic structure the Absolute must have: (i) the Absolute as generating its representation, (ii) the generated Absolute and (iii) their relation of generating (*zeugen*) and reconnecting (*rückbeziehen*). The Absolute needs its image to know itself as open for otherness.

'Otherness' here means, as was defined in Def. 2, that finite beings are truly separate from the Absolute, rather than moments of an evolving Absolute. It is not identical with the acknowledgment of finite freedom of creatures by God, but it is its necessary precondition. In this section, it was shown that this kind of otherness presupposes a structure of self-knowing via its image in the Absolute. A comparison with the doctrine of the Trinity will be left open here, as Cramer roots the philosophical significance of this structure at an even more basic level.

3. The Absolute Thought as Absolute

In the following section, I will argue that the Absolute can only be thought as truly absolute (in the sense of independent) if it is thought as Trinitarian. The term 'the Absolute' was defined above: The Absolute is that which is dependent on nothing other than itself. 'Dependency' was understood ontologically: If A cannot be without B, A is ontologically dependent on B. However, I will argue that the ontological independence of the Absolute requires epistemological independence as well. We must see that the concept of the Absolute is not our creation and not dependent on our thinking.

¹⁹ This article was published first in the *Festschrift* for Wolfgang Cramer: Dieter Henrich, 'Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht,' in *Subjektivität und Metaphysik. Festschrift für Wolfgang Cramer*, ed. Dieter Henrich et al. (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1966).

As a contrast, one could consider the cosmological proof for the existence of God. In its most reduced form, the proof says: ‘If there exists anything, then the unconditional or necessary being exists as well.’²⁰

The proof identifies the necessary being with God. Two entities occur in the proof: at least one finite being (as a premise) and the necessary being (as a conclusion). We can identify two relations between them. Ontologically seen, the necessary being is thought to be the cause of the finite being. Whereas epistemologically seen, the finite being is the epistemological basis for us, how we came to know the necessary being. The ontological and epistemological relations are opposite to each other. This forms an aporia as the entity we aim for is supposed to be ‘necessary’ – necessary in itself. However, all we can achieve with the cosmological argument is a necessity under conditions.

One might object that this is simply due to our approach to divine reality. There is an order of how we get to know things (*ratio cognoscendi*) and an order of how things really are (*ratio essendi*). Cramer would probably agree; his philosophy starts with subjectivity, as the Ego seems to him a natural starting point of reflection. Yet, this does not make the Ego the origin of Being. On the contrary, he tries to show how the I is insufficient in itself, relying on outer ontological conditions. The order of human thought is indeed not necessarily identical to the order of things.²¹ The problem here is different: the proof does not achieve what it wants to achieve. It aims to show that there is a being, necessary in itself, but it is just capable of showing a necessity under conditions. If one argues under premises, full necessity will never be achieved.

If we apply this to the Absolute, the truly independent, we see that its concept requires thinking without premises as well. Clearly, the previous section did not meet this requirement as it presupposed finite beings, just as the cosmological proof. Maybe this requirement is impossible to meet – a chance to remember the truth of apophatic theology, which should be present in any attempts to speak positively about God. Cramer tries to meet the requirement by starting with nothing – the

²⁰ Cf. Cramer, *Gottesbeweise*, 15.

²¹ As Cramer sees the question for the conditions of possibility as *the* philosophical question par excellence, one could argue that it is just the opposite: Philosophical thinking is thinking backwards, into the conditions of something. Cf. Cramer, *Das Absolute und das Kontingente*, 57–64; Cramer, *Absolute Reflexion*, 101–108.

thought that there could be nothing. Nothing, pure voidness, is without any difference in itself; it is simply nothing. This leads us to the argument which was presented above, where the idea of pure unity was discussed. Nothing shares with pure unity the exclusion of qualities and differences, a thought, which led to the first absolute truth: there must be difference. This is the start of what Cramer called ‘the absolute reflection’, a line of thought which not only leads to the Absolute but is supposed to be without premises, thus absolute in itself. Only such a line of thought could make sure that the concept of the Absolute is *found* by us rather than created. From a philosophical point of view that is maybe the most interesting point in the ontological proof for the existence of God, in whose tradition Cramer stands: that we can discover something in the realm of thinking which transcends thinking.

But there is a second requirement belonging to the notion of absoluteness. The thought of the Absolute proves to be independent from us only if it qualifies itself as absolute. That the Absolute is indeed absolute was presupposed in the first section. The ‘absolute reflection’, Cramer’s line of thought leading to the Absolute, results in a certain concept of something which is the necessary condition of everything. That this ‘something’ is indeed ‘absolute to everything’ is a qualification. Who qualifies this ‘something’ as ‘absolute’ or ‘the Absolute’? If the Absolute is independent from us, it is surely not our thinking that qualifies the Absolute as ‘absolute’.²² The qualification of the Absolute as absolute must be done originally by itself. Thus, the Absolute must generate its own concept, which we try to imitate with our finite reason – only then does the Absolute not rely on our reasoning.²³ Of course, that in itself is a thought. Yet, if the Absolute was shown to be a precondition of everything, even our thinking, this is no longer an objection. If we hit a bottom of explanation with the discovery of the Absolute and see how it brings forth its own concept, we can also see how we as finite beings can think the Absolute’s concept without bringing it into dependency – it is possible by imitating the Absolute’s thoughts.

Therefore, the absoluteness of the Absolute leads us to the same result as the investigation of otherness: to generate its own concept,

²² Cf. Cramer, *Gottesbeweise*, 91; Cramer, *Absolute Reflexion*, 213.

²³ It can be seen here, why the approach from the ‘conceptual philosophy’ of Cramer leads beyond itself, too. The presupposition of the concept of absoluteness is a pre-supposition which has to be overcome as well. The Absolute must be thought in such a way, that we can see, how the quality of absoluteness comes from itself.

the Absolute must know itself, thus must be thought of as bringing forth a perfect image of itself. Hence, Cramer's Absolute is *essentially* (in its essence) 'Grounding'. The first moment of the Absolute is the ungrounded Ground, the second the grounded Ground, the third the act of grounding and reconnecting (*rückbeziehen*) as their relation.

It seems obvious that this structure resembles a Trinitarian structure. A key is the characterisation of the second moment of the Absolute. Not only does Cramer explicitly call it 'the *logos*'²⁴, especially the language of 'the perfect image' gives a clear hint. A perfect image is identical to the original; the difference is only marked by their relation. It is nothing in itself but just pure representation, as Anselm of Canterbury states.²⁵ The difference between the 'original' and the 'image' or between the 'grounding Ground' and the 'grounded Ground' is only marked by their relation, just as the persons of the Trinity are different only in respect to one another. A closer look at Cramer's later speculative philosophy would reveal the exact role of God's image, the *logos*, in the process of emanation and creation, which could be interpreted as a philosophical reformulation of the *logos*' mediation in creation (*per quem omnia facta sunt*).

An open and notoriously difficult question is the question of the status of the Holy Spirit. From a theological point of view, one might object that the Spirit is again determined as purely relational, thus seeming to have no right on its own – a typical problem of Western Trinitarian theologies along the line of St. Augustine.²⁶ Yet, at least it seems not implausible why the relation between the first two moments in the Absolute is counted as a third: the first two are relationally determined as well. The criticism seems to presuppose a difference between autonomous substances and their accidental relations, a difference which is not yet developed. In Cramer's theory, where the Absolute is 'Being as Grounding' (which is a relational determination and marks the Absolute at the very beginning as an outset), this difference will be developed later, but it only applies to singular beings. The Absolute in itself is a unity with three inner moments, and none of them could be

²⁴ Cf. Cramer, *Absolute Reflexion*, 226.

²⁵ 'Verbum namque hoc ipsum quod uerbum est aut imago, ad alterum est, quia non nisi alicuius uerbum est aut imago.' Anselm of Canterbury, *Monologion*, 38.

²⁶ Cf. Peter C. Phan, 'Systematic issues in trinitarian theology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Trinity*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Cambridge: University Press, 2011), 13–29, doi: 10.1017/CCOL9780521877398.002.

without the other. Only because the Father is the grounding Ground, he necessarily implies the Son as the grounded Ground and the Spirit as Grounding.

These few remarks on the structure of the Absolute in Cramer's theory should at least motivate why it is a promising philosophical model for the Trinity. Whether it is fully compatible with orthodox theology of the three hypostases and their one ousia is an open question and a task for further scholarly efforts.

Conclusion

A few remarks on the epistemological status of the presented arguments shall conclude this essay. Cramer saw the question of the conditions of possibility as the main question of philosophy. This makes him a transcendental thinker. His argumentations stay in the realm of the *a priori* to reach the bottom of explanation. This bottom must be the Absolute, which was shown to be an order for everything else. This methodology brings with it a tight restriction. Everything is treated not in the fullness of its own being but insofar as it is a condition for the phenomenon on the level above. This means that Cramer never states that his philosophy is a complete theory of the Absolute. Rather, he simply wants to investigate the minimal conditions of everything, that which is necessary in itself.

Evidence for this can be seen even in the small selection of Cramer's thought which was presented here. His thoughts on the Absolute and contingent beings were motivated by the question: what must be given so that it is possible that there are finite beings, something other than the Absolute? If we use the term 'creation' for a non-necessary grounding of finite beings by the Absolute, then we could say: Cramer tries to prove the *possibility* of creation, the moment of freedom in the Absolute. The actuality of creation can never be proved *a priori*, but can only be seen by our own existence.²⁷ There are more places in Cra-

²⁷ It would be interesting to compare this character of Cramer's philosophy to the relation of negative and positive philosophy in Schelling. Broadly speaking, it is clear that there are many similarities between Cramer and the late Fichte and Schelling, which was observed by himself as by commentators.

mer's writing where he clearly sees the limits of his method and points towards other, *a posteriori* sources, even towards faith.²⁸

Still, what he has developed is not a small achievement. From what I called 'conceptual philosophy of the Absolute', we could learn that the Absolute must be thought of as an order for everything else. This triggers the question of otherness: how could it be possible that there is something truly other than the Absolute? I argued, as did Cramer, that this presupposes self-relation and self-knowledge in the Absolute, which is a hint for a Trinitarian structure. Lastly, I tried to show that even the Absolute's absoluteness cannot be considered without such a structure. If we take into account our act of thinking, we see that we cannot be the first to generate a concept of the Absolute. An Absolute which is truly independent must bring forth its own concept. Thus, Cramer's speculative philosophy shows that the 'distinctively Christian' Trinitarian theology is not an obscure speciality of Christian faith but rather a key for a consistent theory of the Absolute. Cramer's theory helps fulfil Rahner's claim for a connection between 'De Deo uno' and 'De Deo trino', yet building the bridge not from the side of theology as has been done by many beforehand, but rather from philosophy's shore.

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²⁸ Another example would be the phenomenon of love, which he is not able to explain, other than moral law, from the transcendental structure of consciousness. Thus the source of love is laid (which means here: postulated) in God. Cf. Cramer, 'Das Ich,' 47.

THE RETURN OF METAPHYSICS: IS THIS THE WAY FORWARD?

CHRISTOPHE CHALAMET

ABSTRACT

The history of the relationship between Christian theology and metaphysics is a complex one. The present contribution argues that Christian theology and metaphysics do not have the same subject matter. Christian theology is concerned with the gospel, with God's word, and therefore also with certain aspects that pertain to ontology (God's being or essence, as manifested in God's act), whereas metaphysics pursues an inquiry into the question of 'being' as such, at times independently from a concern for being-in-act. Certainly, theologians can learn much from such inquiry, especially with regard to terminological precision, and therefore a dialogue may be beneficial, but theologians should not let their subject matter be replaced with the theme(s) of metaphysics.

Keywords

Metaphysics; Ontology; Theology; Being; Essence

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'From knowing God's Way we come to know God's essential divinity – and not the other way around.'¹

1. Metaphysics and Ontology

Christian theologians should be weary of metaphysics, but they should engage in ontology. Even if they may not be searching for 'new ontologies' (what might be 'new' about them, one wonders?), they are

¹ Kornelis H. Miskotte, *Biblical ABCs*, Collin Cornell and Eleonora Hof ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic/Lexington Books, 2021), 80.

certainly called to *think always anew* about the *kind(s)* of ‘ontologies’ that matter to Christian theology: first and foremost the being or reality of God in relation to the being or reality of the world, of human beings, and of creation as a whole. This, in a nutshell, is my position on the question of metaphysics and ontology in relation to Christian theology, and of course the real work only begins as I unpack further these opening statements.

Metaphysics is a notoriously fuzzy word, with a long and rich history, including a recent history characterised by several attempts at overcoming it. Trying to reach a provisional definition makes sense.² By metaphysics, I understand reflection about being *qua* being, being ‘as such’, as well as about the ground of ‘being’.³ And so metaphysics is one way of thinking and talking about ‘being’, and about ‘what is’, *as such*. As Jean Grondin has suggested, metaphysics aims to think about ‘being and its reasons’ (‘l’être et ses raisons’).⁴ I would venture that metaphysics is one region within the larger field known as ontology since ontology is not merely concerned with what being is ‘as such’ but rather with many different versions and instances of ‘being’, including being-in-act or being-as-manifestation, or the truth or beauty of ‘being’, for instance.⁵

² One very useful resource here is: Jean-Marc Narbonne and Luc Langlois ed., *La métaphysique: Son histoire, sa critique, ses enjeux* (Québec-Paris: Presses de l’Université Laval-Vrin, 1999). See also: Philippe Capelle-Dumont et al. ed., *Métaphysique et christianisme* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2015).

³ As John Milbank puts it, in metaphysics ‘the highest being, or first cause, is identified as a perfect instance of what is fundamentally knowable, namely a ‘being’, while beings themselves are accounted for through the causal efficiency of the highest being [...]’ John Milbank, ‘Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics,’ *New Blackfriars* 76, n°895 (July-August 1995): 329 (325–45). Metaphysics posits a ‘continuous ontological scale that combines the world and its first principle in a single order.’ Giulio Maspero, ‘Life as Relation: Classical Metaphysics and Trinitarian Ontology,’ *Theological Research* 2/1 (2014): 36 (31–52). Or, to put it differently, and more broadly, metaphysics is the project of a knowledge of the first and universal principles of all beings: ‘le projet d’une connaissance des principes premiers et universels de tous les êtres.’ Fabienne Baghdassarian, ‘Introduction’ to Aristotele, *Métaphysique: Livre Lambda* (Paris: Vrin, 2019), 29.

⁴ Jean Grondin, *Du sens des choses: L’idée de la métaphysique* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2013), 32.

⁵ Somewhat similarly, David Bentley Hart distinguishes between ‘purely *metaphysical* questions regarding the relation between the Absolute and the dependent, and [...] the still more fundamental *ontological* questions regarding the difference between divine and human being or the difference between God as God and each of us as *this* particular being [...]’ David Bentley Hart, *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 102.

Christian theology, properly understood, as practised by some of its most significant thinkers, and as distinct from philosophical theology (which of course has an utterly different stance on the question of metaphysics!), should not be interested in ‘being as such’, but instead in God, creation, and human beings as creatures. Being ‘as such’, being *qua* being is a philosophical theme, a philosophical abstraction with which Christian theology does not need to directly concern itself, unless one engages in the kind of philosophical theology which certainly is worth pursuing in its own right and which, undeniably, enjoys its own legitimacy and validity.

We should not imagine too quickly that when practitioners of metaphysics talk about ‘Being’ with a capital ‘B’, they are talking about God as confessed by Christians.⁶ In some striking passages, Aristotle may have conceived of God as ‘life’, but this did not lead the philosopher to think of God as desiring anything or even as relating to anything, as Giulio Maspero has pointed out.⁷ As I see it, Protestant theology in modernity, following in this regard the 16th-century Protestant reformers, was right to criticise metaphysical discourses. It correctly wished instead to base theology on the interpretation of the specific message of the Scriptures, taking into account the rich tradition of biblical interpretation as well as using the resources of humanist culture, which included philosophical resources, to be sure. These philosophical resources, however, were studied and taken into consideration in a critical manner so as to let them enrich, but not dictate, the process and the results of scriptural interpretation.

In the footsteps of Albrecht Ritschl, but also taking the lead on the question of the relation between theology and metaphysics in the 1870s, Wilhelm Herrmann argued that

[...] the unmoved mover precisely lacks what is characteristic of the religious concept of God. The same is true of the relation of the human being toward the highest reality as Aristotle presents it: the specific aspects of religion are absent. [...] this divinity is for the human being no more object of love than the air it breathes and the land it cultivates. The human being’s

⁶ ‘The Aristotelian first mover and the world belonged to a single metaphysical order that philosophical thought could explore. On the contrary, one can only know the ontology of God through that which has been revealed. [...] This ontology finds its foundation above, not below’ G. Maspero, ‘Life as Relation,’ 46–47.

⁷ G. Maspero, ‘Life as Relation,’ 35.

relation to this divinity cannot be qualified as religious, for the human being is not related to it through any bond of reciprocal interest.⁸

One should think and talk about God ‘within the limits of religion’ alone, according to Wilhelm Herrmann.⁹ Religion calls for a specific way of talking and thinking about God: one grounded in a particular relation to God or a particular ‘interest’ in *who* God is *for us*, and not merely in *what* divinity might be like in itself or as such. Certain Reformatory accents are present behind Herrmann’s reluctance to engage in metaphysical discourses. We may recall Calvin’s distinction between *who* (*qualis est*) God is and *what kind* of divine object God might be (*quid est*). ‘What is God? People who pose this question are merely toying with idle speculations. It is more important for us to know of what sort God is and what is consistent with God’s nature.’¹⁰ We may also remember the strictures of Martin Luther with regard to metaphysical thinking, for instance on the theme of ‘sin’.¹¹

Calling for a return to Scripture is, of course, insufficient. That philosophical elements never were absent from the Reformers’ interpretation of Scripture, or from ours today, is clear, and we should not be

⁸ Wilhelm Herrmann, *Die Religion im Verhältniss zum Welterkennen und zur Sittlichkeit: Eine Grundlegung der systematischen Theologie* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1879), 126 (my translation); see also 102. See also Wilhelm Herrmann, ‘Die Metaphysik in der Theologie,’ *Schriften zur Grundlegung der Theologie*, vol. 1, ed. Peter Fischer-Appelt (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1966), 4. According to Albrecht Ritschl, to say that God is absolute, *causa sui* and *finis sui* is to say nothing about *who* God is, it is ‘a purely formal concept without content,’ an object that is ‘deprived of all specific qualities.’ A. Ritschl, ‘Theology and Metaphysics: Towards Rapprochement and Defense,’ (1881), in *Three Essays*, Albrecht Ritschl, trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 166. An absolute God is ‘a metaphysical idol.’ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁹ See Brian A. Gerrish, ‘Theology Within the Limits of Piety Alone: Schleiermacher and Calvin’s Doctrine of God,’ in *Reformatio Perennis: Essays on Calvin and the Reformation in Honor of Ford Lewis Battles*, ed. Brian A. Gerrish and Robert Benedetto (Eugene: Pickwick, 1981), 67–87; reprinted in Brian A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (London: T&T Clark, 1982), 196–207.

¹⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I.2.2, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 41 (rev.). ‘Itaque frigidis tantum speculationibus ludunt quibus in hac quaestione insistere propositum est, quid sit Deus; quum intersit nostra potius, qualis sit, et quid eius naturae conveniat scire.’ *Institutio christianae religionis 1559*, ed. Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, *Joannis Calvini opera selecta*, vol. 3 (München: Chr. Kaiser, 3rd ed. 1967), 35.

¹¹ See for instance Luther’s commentary on Psalm 51, in *Luther’s Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1955), vol. 12, see e.g. 339–41, on Psalm 51:4; *Weimar Ausgabe* 40.II,369,19–23 – 370,34–35.

oblivious to that fact. Moreover, the fact that Scripture itself points us in the direction of ontological (some would go further and say: metaphysical) claims is equally true.

But reaching some clarity on the intention of theology, on what theology's aim might be, is crucial, and on this point, I am convinced that its aim cannot be to establish a metaphysic or to 'revise' metaphysics – although, depending on the 'revision' which is proposed, one's hesitations might be alleviated to a considerable extent, since our more important 'battle' does not lie on the preliminary questions concerning the possibility of metaphysics in Christian theology but on the very claims that we make in relation to the heart of the matter (but of course, the two are related, and the preliminary questions should be treated in light of the heart of the matter, as Karl Barth suggested¹²).

The aim of Christian theology is to reflect on what the Christian faith is 'all about', namely: God's revelatory act toward Israel and the world, through God's Word, that is – as Christians further explicate – through God's Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. The crucial term 'act' is significant in this statement: 'God's revelatory *act*' is what Christian theology focuses on centrally. This is not to say that 'being' is suddenly dismissed, as some may then be tempted to suggest! God's revelatory act tells us something crucial about who God *is* and how God *is* – not about 'being as such', it seems to me, but about the being *of God*, about the being *of the world* and all the creaturely realities that make this world what it is. Commenting on the fourth gospel, Thomas Aquinas wrote:

The root and fount of the knowledge of God is the Word of God, namely Christ: 'The Word of God on high is the fount of wisdom (Sir. 1:5):' But human wisdom consists in the knowledge of God. This knowledge is derived to human beings from the Word, because insofar as they participate [in] the Word of God, they know God. Hence he says: The world has not known you in this way, 'but I,' the fount of wisdom, your Word, 'have known you,' by the eternal knowledge of comprehension. [...] From

¹² 'To be truly imperious, the necessity of dogmatic prolegomena, i.e., of an explicit account of the particular way to be taken in dogmatics, must be an inner necessity grounded in the matter itself' Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics I/1* (1932), trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London–New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 51. 'In the prolegomena to dogmatics, [...] we ask concerning the Word of God as the criterion of dogmatics.' *Ibid.*, 43.

this knowledge of the Word, which is the fount and root, are derived, like streams and branches, all the knowledge of the faithful.¹³

The ‘root and fount’ of knowledge, in Christian theology, is inseparably linked to the encounter between the Word and creation. Karl Barth was in full agreement with this stance. He had no reservations with theological language about ‘essence’, including God’s ‘essence’ or the divine ‘essence’, but he was not ready to disconnect this kind of talk from God’s act: ‘What makes God who God is, the divine individuality and specificity, the *essentia* or ‘essence’ (*Wesen*) of God – we shall encounter him either at the place where God acts (*handelt*) toward us as Lord and Saviour or not at all!’¹⁴

To ask ‘who’ God is, and from there also ‘what’ God’s being is like, not as such but in relation to God’s act, is quite obviously an ontological question, and a legitimate one. But is it then also a metaphysical

¹³ *In Ioan.* c. 17, lect. 6 (n° 2267–8). Quoted in Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of St Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: University Press, 2017), 76 (rev.). Or see Aquinas’ *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 1, a. 7 (ad 1): ‘Although we cannot know in what consists the essence of God, nevertheless in this science we make use of His effects, either of nature or of grace, in place of a definition, in regard to whatever is treated of in this science concerning God [...]’: See also Origen’s opening words in his Preface to *On First Principles*: ‘All who believe and are assured that *grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*, and who know Christ to be the truth, according to his saying, *I am the truth*, derive the knowledge which leads human beings to live a good and blessed life from no other source than from the very words and teaching of Christ.’ Origen, *On First Principles: A Reader’s Edition*, trans. John Behr (Oxford: University Press, 2017), 5. ‘[...] God gets titles from the actions God is believed to perform for our lives.’ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, book 2, §149, in *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. Lenka Karfiková, Scot Douglass and Johannes Zachhuber with Vít Hušek and Ladislav Chvátal (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007), 91. The same is true of Cyril of Alexandria: ‘What is at stake in their works [i.e. Cyril’s and Irenaeus’s words; CC] is primarily soteriological, and their aim is to prove that the entire divine economy tends toward the filial adoption of human beings. [...] Cyril’s reflexion thus always has as its starting-point the revelation of God in God’s economy, and what is at stake is the union of the human being to the Trinity, spiritually through the presence in the human of the Holy Spirit, and bodily through the participation in the mystical eulogy (eucharist), that is in the body of Christ.’ Marie-Odile Boulnois, *Le paradoxe trinitaire chez Cyrille d’Alexandrie. Herméneutique, analyses philosophiques et argumentation théologique* (Paris: Institut d’études augustiniennes, 1994), 598 (my translation). Karl Barth put it in this way: ‘Nicht das Sein als solches hat die Ewigkeit, aber die Ewigkeit als solche hat das Sein in sich.’ *Kirchliche Dogmatik II/1* (Zollikon-Zurich: EVZ, 1940), 687.

¹⁴ *Church Dogmatics II/1*, trans. T. H. L. Parker, W.B. Johnston, Harold Knight and J. L. M. Haire, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (London-New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 261 (rev.) (for the original version see *Kirchliche Dogmatik II/1*:293).

question? An answer to this question depends, of course, on the definition of ‘metaphysics’.¹⁵ I have (very briefly) suggested one above.

Can there be a ‘Christian metaphysics’? Can there be a sort of metaphysics which is not ‘utterly uninformed by revelation’?¹⁶ Some will certainly answer affirmatively and plan to embark on this path. Certainly, some philosophical theologians will be among them, and, once again, the legitimacy of doing this is not in question. To me, however, ‘Christian metaphysics’ is an attempt at mixing oil with water, and we better leave ‘metaphysics’ to the ancient, medieval, and modern philosophical project of thinking about God as ‘first cause’, as ‘prime mover’ and ‘ultimate principle’ of reality as a whole, etc. As the French Roman-Catholic theologian Claude Geffré suggested, Christianity is the ‘religion of the gospel’, and Christian theology as a whole should aim to remain, quite centrally and decisively, a theology of the gospel.¹⁷ Some will argue that, in order for Christian theology to be a theology of the gospel, a metaphysic is required. John Betz has recently argued that, ‘without metaphysics (whether it be affirmed implicitly or explicitly, whether it comes into play as a prolegomonon or as a postlegomonon) faith is rendered absurd – a believing in fairytales [...]’.¹⁸

For reasons I have tried to articulate above (reasons that would certainly deserve much more elaborate treatments), I beg to differ. Some of the most significant Christian theologians in the modern era as well as in the premodern era have been able to articulate widely influential and sound teachings without recourse to metaphysics, and indeed at times leaving metaphysics aside. That being said, it seems crucial to me not to simply posit the final contradistinction between Christian

¹⁵ Here I disagree with Giulio Maspero’s claims: ‘The encounter with God urges one to wonder *what* this being *is* that speaks and acts in history. And this is a metaphysical question, as is the question *what* Jesus *is*.’ Giulio Maspero, ‘Life as Relation,’ 36.

¹⁶ For this expression, see David Bentley Hart, *The Hidden and the Manifest: Essays in Theology and Metaphysics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 180. Hart is correct, it seems to me, to suggest that ‘the development of Christian thought led inevitably to the dissolution of the idea of ‘being’ as a metaphysical ‘object’ within the economy of beings’ (ibid., 138, note 1). This at least is true of the most significant Christian thinkers. Similarly, albeit less radically, Giulio Maspero sees the articulation of trinitarian doctrine ‘as the slow and laborious self-development of this new ontology, no longer merely a metaphysical theory.’ Giulio Maspero, ‘Life as Relation,’ 37. But of course ‘the idea of “being” as a metaphysical “object”’ never disappeared from the picture, even among the theologians.

¹⁷ Claude Geffré, *Le christianisme comme religion de l’Évangile* (Paris: Cerf, 2012).

¹⁸ John R. Betz, ‘After Heidegger and Marion: The Task of Christian Metaphysics Today,’ *Modern Theology* 34/4 (2018): 568 (565–597).

theology and metaphysics but to leave open the possibility of a critical dialogue between them. The point is not merely to part ways and bid farewell but to keep dialoguing and raising critical questions across the disciplines and various approaches. It is important that the disciplines keep bothering each other rather than let the other in peace.¹⁹

2. The Indispensible ‘Caesura’

What is the ‘problem’, then, with metaphysics? It has been accused, and it is still being accused, of many things, of course. I find it intriguing that even contemporary thinkers who appear to promote metaphysics admit that one of its problems may be its tendency to consider reality and its ultimate origin ‘as a seamless ontological continuum’, as David Bentley Hart put it.²⁰ Here, it is the marginalising of the ‘infinite qualitative difference’ between the Creator and the creatures which is identified as the key flaw in metaphysical thought. To mitigate this problem, according to Hart, we need to turn to the ‘analogy of being’, properly construed, namely as the very opposite of any domesticating of God through a doctrine of being common to both the Creator and the creatures. The doctrine of the analogy of being, here, implies a ‘disruption’, it ‘introduces an unclosable ontological caesura’ in the place of ‘a seamless ontological continuum’. For, Hart adds, ‘there is no simple, uninterrupted ontological continuum as such between God and creation [...]’.²¹ This notion of an uninterrupted continuum between the creature and the Creator is indeed the reason for a good amount of distrust versus metaphysics in the first place, and not just among Protestants, but especially among them. Whether the analogy of being is the solution to this problem remains to be seen – certainly it may

¹⁹ See Eberhard Jüngel’s nuanced as well as firm stance in *Gott als Geheimnis des Welt. Zur Begründung der Theologie des Gekreuzigten im Streit zwischen Theismus und Atheismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 6th ed. 1992), 62–63 and 145; *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute Between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (London-New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 49 and 110.

²⁰ ‘The analogia entis [...] introduces an unclosable ontological caesura into what mere metaphysics treats (quite unconsciously) as a seamless ontological continuum. And this is the interval of being that lets us *be* as the creatures we are [...]. This disruption – this infinite qualitative distinction between God and creatures – is one that, within the *ordo cognoscendi*, we must call ‘analogy’ [...]: D. B. Hart, *The Hidden and the Manifest*, 103.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

appear promising if one understands this point of theological teaching in close connection with the well-known saying from the Fourth Lateran council on the ‘greater dissemblance’ (*maior dissimilitudo*) between the Creator and the creature (1215).²²

3. Theological Ontology Rather than Metaphysics

Thinking theologically about ‘being’ – not being ‘as such’, but *God’s* being and the being of *creation* – remains an indispensable task for Christian theology today. This should go without saying. But how should we proceed as we attempt to fulfil this task? Everything begins, it seems to me (and I am not alone in stating this), with God’s *act* in history. Without God’s act in history, we could not utter any genuine – but also necessarily inadequate – theological word about God’s being or the being of the world.²³ And God’s act bears a name, in Christian theology: Jesus of Nazareth, God’s word uttered in the power of the Spirit, God as ‘Immanuel’. That God is ‘with’ God’s people, that God does not wish to be without God’s people, is arguably one of the key assertions in both the Old and the New Testament, a statement found in some of its most decisive texts (see Exod. 3:12; 6:6–7; see of course the gospel according to Matthew, which, significantly, is framed as a whole by the word ‘Emmanuel’, in Matt. 1:23 and 28:20).²⁴

As soon as we touch on these central features of the biblical narrative, we find ourselves in very different waters, it seems to me, than the usual metaphysical waters. We find ourselves doing theology, right

²² ‘[...] between the Creator and the creature so great a likeness cannot be noted without the necessity of nothing a greater dissimilarity between them.’ Denzinger, §806; *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 231–32. See, however, Eberhard Jüngel’s penetrating critique, on behalf of a primarily (but not exclusively) kataphatic understanding of theology, of the Lateran IV version of the analogy of being, in *God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism*, trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 282–95.

²³ John Zizioulas puts it this way: ‘For Israel, truth in general, and faith in God more specifically, are not a matter of theory for they do not come from observation (*theoria*) of the cosmos. Truth comes through history, and from God’s interaction with the people of Israel and thus through their experience and history.’ John D. Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (London–New York: T&T Clark, 2008) 42–43.

²⁴ The fourth gospel then goes further and points to a being ‘in’ or ‘among’ the other, rather than simply ‘with’; see John 14:20 or 17:21; see 17:12 for ‘with/among them’/ μετ’ αὐτῶν.

from the start – which of course does not forbid letting ourselves being questioned by philosophy as well by metaphysics. Here freedom and love, love and freedom are recognised as belonging ‘to the foundation of being itself’,²⁵ or rather, as I would suggest putting it so as to be less general or abstract, as expressing the very heart of who *God* is.

To sustain itself, still today, Christian theology needs to let itself be nourished ‘in green pastures’ and refreshed ‘beside still waters’ (Psalm 23:2), the pastures and waters of the Scriptures that beg for our attention and our interpretation: *there* is its food, its sustenance, its starting point, not just as a closed (or, better, open) book, not as an immediate, ‘graspable’ divine word, but as a witness to God’s act and God’s being (or vice-versa; God’s act and God’s being, I would argue, are co-original, without priority of one over the other, even logically speaking). God, as confessed by Christians and by Jews, is the One who bends down to the world because God hears the cry coming from God’s people (Exod. 2:23–25). This ‘bending down’, this ‘hearing’, is what many rightly miss in traditional metaphysics, since metaphysics quite often focuses on causality and on going up the causal ladder, step after step, in order to attain a first cause (see already Plato’s *Symposium*, 211b–c) that is immutable and thus incapable of such ‘bending down’. Instead of a metaphysics of a ‘first’, ‘unmoved cause’, instead of abstract debates that turn on substance metaphysics, we need a theological ontology orientated and shaped right from the start (this entire discussion has much to do with *where* we begin as theologians) by the triune God’s life-giving and liberating act and by the human quest for the One true source of life and meaning. I wish to end by sketching the possible contours of such a theological ontology.

4. What Kind of Trinitarian Theological Ontology?

The idea that Christian theology is inherently trinitarian, that it does not merely become trinitarian toward the end or at the very end of the presentation of its content, but that it is trinitarian right from the start, is still being debated – and that is not a bad sign, for we need to ask ourselves what it means to begin straightaway with a trinitarian outlook, and how we may (or may not) do this.

²⁵ G. Maspero, ‘Life as Relation,’ 42.

Here are some of the contours of the kind of trinitarian theological ontology which I think may be promising today:

a) We cannot retreat to a ‘pre-covenantal’ God, that is, to ‘a God’ who does not commit to being God ‘for’ God’s people, and who intends that God’s people will respond in a corresponding manner. This, of course, is another reason why thinking in abstract ways about ‘being as such’ may not deserve a place within Christian theology proper (even as, to repeat, it may still be of interest, and with complete legitimacy, in the context of various kinds of philosophical theologies).

b) A responsible Christian trinitarian ontology centres on the sending of the Son by God the Father, in the power of the Spirit, without severing God’s act *ad extra* from God’s own life, but also without simply collapsing or confusing the two. Consequently, the person of the Logos cannot be considered independently from the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth – even as they cannot be conflated (the Logos was not eternally ‘enfleshed’, even as we may claim that the Logos was eternally meant to assume human flesh). This is another radical revision, to say the least, of traditional notions of God or of divinity. God’s own Word and Spirit are addressed, sent out, beyond God’s own life, thereby creating and recreating everything that is not God. The Old and the New Testament render witness to this ecstatic movement, from God outward. This ecstatic movement has something to do, not just with God’s act but with who God is.

c) God’s own life is a life of plenitude, from all eternity. In that regard, God does not ‘need’ the world or any special partnership with anybody. Such statements are puzzling to some, and one can understand why, but these claims remain important, not simply to preserve God’s freedom ‘from’ the world, but precisely to express as best we can God’s freedom ‘for’ the world. God’s relation to the world is a relation characterised by grace, and so, quite inescapably, by freedom – certainly not by any necessity that might work as a compelling force acting upon God. The legitimate puzzlement may be related to the conviction that God’s freedom has nothing to do with arbitrariness, as if God could just as well have decided *not* to create the world, or as if God had many different options, so that, after some deliberations, God opted for this option rather than all the other possibilities. Although the word ‘necessity’ may be too strong here, Christian theology needs to show how creation befits the very being of God as love that constantly flows or circulates within God’s own life as well as without.

d) How do we know that God's love flows within God's own life? Is this not pure speculation (as Rudolf Bultmann and others would have argued²⁶)? No! Significant gospel narratives – and not simply in the fourth gospel – point in this direction: 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased' (Matt. 3:17; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν ᾧ εὐδόκησα; see also Mark 1:11 where, very interestingly, the Father directly addresses Jesus his Son: σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἐν σοὶ εὐδόκησα). In passages such as this one, it is as if a bit (and probably *more* than a bit) of the veil is being lifted before us: something *decisive* concerning God's own life, concerning the relation between the Father and the Son, is disclosed to us. It is in such passages that our (always tentative and provisional) thinking about and indeed our faith in God, i.e. in God's triune life as a life of shared love, finds always anew its horizon. But it would be a grave mistake, it seems to me, to focus on these passages to the detriment of God's involvement in our history in order to redeem, i.e. to liberate, enslaved human beings and creatures. There is more than a grain of truth in Kornelis Miskotte's claim: 'The Bible shows no great interest in substances, properties, characteristics, principles. Instead, it attends to what has happened; is happening. It matters that something happens. [...] God's being can be found nowhere else than in what God does.'²⁷ And yet Miskotte goes too far, for indeed the Bible shows an abiding interest in the 'characteristics' and 'properties' of the God of Israel, who also manifests Godself as the Father of Jesus Christ.

Christian theology must do better than bifurcate into speculations concerning God's immanent, triune life, on the one hand, and God's intent of liberation for God's people and God's creation, on the other. We need to find or create bridges between theologians, correlating God's liberating action for and in the world with God's own life in Godself. And we need to make it clear that the centre of gravity of Christian theology does not lie in God's own life as such, but precisely in the *sharing*, by God, of God's own life with God's people and with creation: the heart of it all lies in God's freeing and life-giving act in history. The story of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, alongside many other texts from

²⁶ See for instance Rudolf Bultmann, 'The Question of Natural Revelation,' in Rudolf Bultmann, *Essays Philosophical and Theological* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 90–118.

²⁷ Kornelis H. Miskotte, *Biblical ABCs: The Basics of Christian Resistance*, trans. Eleonora Hof and Collin Cornell (Minneapolis: Fortress Academic/Lexington Books, 2021), 94.

the Scriptures, may help us begin to understand this and find ways to articulate what needs to remain closely correlated in Christian theology. In sum, Christian theology should not lose sight of its proper theme. If ontological aspects undeniably are part of this theme, metaphysical questions concerning ‘being as such’ are best left to the philosophers who wish or who are called to pursue such questions.

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**‘THE GOLDEN THREAD OF FREEDOM’:
IMPULSES FOR CONSIDERATIONS ON THE
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TRINITARIAN
ONTOLOGY AND SOCIAL REALITY IN THE WORK
OF D. C. SCHINDLER***

P E T R M A C E K

ABSTRACT

The article presents the founding elements of the social and political thought of American philosopher and theologian David C. Schindler. The main aim of the article is to examine possible relations between Schindler’s work and the philosophical concept of ‘Trinitarian ontology’. It focuses on Schindler’s approach towards liberalism and analyses his critique of the modern conception of freedom. It suggests that the main pillars of his idea of the social order might be found in the notion of reality as the symbolical order, the conception of human beings as fundamentally relational, and the renewal of the traditional notion of freedom as rootedness in goodness. It concludes with the suggestion that the proper understanding of social reality requires certain ‘social ontology’, the metaphysical interpretation of social life as a part of a broad cosmological order which symbolically manifest the beauty of the source of being. And it is the social ontology based on the notion of freedom and relationality which analogically reflects the main principles of Trinitarian ontology.

Keywords

Trinitarian ontology; Social order; Symbolical order; Freedom; Relationality; David C. Schindler

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Is there any connection between the reality of Trinity and the world of our own culture and society? With this daring question, we would like to open a series of reflections on the impulses that might be derived from the philosophical discussion about the Trinitarian Ontology for deepening our understanding of the social sphere of human life. The following article examines inspirations for our task that can be found in the work of American philosopher and theologian David C. Schindler.¹ Although he does not address the problem of the Trinitarian ontology directly, Schindler represents the most prominent voice in the current philosophical debate advocating for a metaphysical anchoring of discussion concerning social and political problems.² The analysis of his work should thus serve the purpose of marking out the path from social to metaphysical thinking and, through it, to open a way to the possibility of embedding social reality within the Trinitarian ontology itself.

The main aim of the article is, therefore, to present the basic elements of Schindler's political and social thought. In the first two introductory parts, we will briefly mention necessary context: We will address the problem of the relationship between theology and social thinking, noting that we should not assume a simplistic correlation between the mystery of the Trinitarian revelation and the possibility to build a 'Christian social order'. We will continue with the exposition of Schindler's analysis of liberalism, which should provide us with an understanding of the *hic et nunc* of the contemporary social and political situation. Three fundamental elements of the 'social ontology' will be discussed in the main part of the article: we will focus on Schindler's concepts of the symbolical order, human person in relations, and freedom.

Many theologians have noted that it is a deep reflection on the mystery of the Trinity, on which a rich Christian vision of culture and society is grounded.³ As Klaus Hemmerle states in his founding and

¹ David C. Schindler currently serves as professor of metaphysics and anthropology at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Catholic University of America.

² Cf. Jiří Baroš, 'Katolické výhrady vůči liberálnímu chápání svobody a sociálního řádu,' *Studia Theologica* 23, no. 2 (2021): 94–99, doi: 10.5507/sth.2020.062.

³ For instance renowned Czech theologian C. V. Pospíšil points out to the close relationship between modern democracy and Trinitarian theology: 'It is not surprising, that there is an unprecedented flourishing of Trinitarian theology in the last three decades

programmatic treatise *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*: ‘A new ontology impels us towards a new society. [...] Only the Trinitarian model makes it possible to understand every individual as, in his own fashion, the origin of society and at the same time, to understand society as more than the sum of individuals; to see that society has a single, common life and that this is nevertheless the life of each individual.’⁴ A Trinitarian ontology, therefore, has direct implications not only on anthropology, as the project ‘Trinitarian Ontology of the Human Person’ strives to show, but likewise on sociology. It is our hope that the exploration into David C. Schindler’s work will help us to see the necessity of ontological rooting of social reality more clearly.

1. Social Reality in Theology

In briefest possible terms, we will sketch some of the tensions that are comprised in the theological interpretation of social reality to show how paradoxical, at times absurd, human effort to apply principles of the Christian faith in the shaping of our world might be. The difficulty of fallen nature renders in vain all our efforts to build a just social order. At least, according to Hans Urs von Balthasar, this experience represents one of the foundational elements of Western civilisation. The danger of pride and the temptation of self-sufficiency are warnings of any simplistic shortcuts in the creation of ‘Christian social order’. It is only through the identity of Cross and the triumph of grace ‘through utter darkness’ that such an aim might be reached.⁵

However, despite necessary prudence and concerns about the instrumentalisation of Christianity, there still remains an awareness that ‘in its original unity – of which Adam is the symbol – the human race is made in the image of the divine Trinity’.⁶ The social reality

in connection with a development of modern democracy and with a broadening of a deep awareness of a global sense of belonging? Ctírad V. Pospíšil, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi, Náčrt trinitární teologie* (Praha: Krystal OP, Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 81, see also 61–87.

⁴ Klaus Hemmerle, *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (New York: Angelico Press, 2020), 60–65.

⁵ Cf. Stratford Caldecott, ‘The Social Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ *Catholic Social Science Review* 5 (2000): 184–185, doi: 10.5840/cssr2000519. On the Christian identity as the identity of Cross see also Henri de Lubac, *L’Eglise dans la crise actuelle* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1969), 29.

⁶ International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, 2004, par. 43.

shared by human persons is not a state of total alienation but rather a space in which human history and salvation history meet and enable them to rise from natural and historical order to the participation in the fullness of being. On this journey, they realise the peculiar character of their social and cultural existence that at the same time covers and reveals the ontological depth of human fate. They realise the importance of the shared social life and, at the same time, the fact that ‘a perfect communion’ and ‘unity of the human family is yet to be realized eschatologically.’⁷

When we contemplate the social dimension of human life, we come to understand that it is not a purely neutral and autonomous zone of human activity,⁸ but rather it represents an agonising striving for a symbolical expression of human personal being created in the image of Triune God. ‘The Christian revelation of the unity of the human race presupposes a *metaphysical interpretation of the “humanum” in which relationality is an essential element*.’⁹ Metaphysical reflection of the relationality of human beings represents an indispensable part of our thinking about social order.¹⁰ Social reality, therefore, cannot be separated from ontological interpretation, and the latter constitutes an essential element for the understanding of the former. Bearing in mind these initial observations, we can start to examine the thought of David C. Schindler.

⁷ *Communion and Stewardship*, par. 43.

⁸ Cf. a critique of liberalism and a concept of religious freedom in the work of J. C. Murray by David L. Schindler in *Communio* review: David L. Schindler, ‘Religious freedom, truth and American liberalism: Another look at John Courtney Murray,’ *Communio: International Catholic Review* 21 (Winter 1994): 696–741; see also Jiří Baroš, ‘John Courtney Murray a Dignitatis Humanae,’ *Mezinárodní katolická revue Communio* 21, no. 3 (2017): 100–111.

⁹ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, encyclical letter, 2009, 55; cited in: Piero Coda, *From the Trinity: the Coming of God in Revelation and Theology* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 482; see also Joseph Ratzinger *Einführung in das Christentum*, in Czech translation: *Úvod do křesťanství, výklad apoštolského vyznání víry* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 127.

¹⁰ Cf. p. 11 of this article: ‘To be is to be *substance-in-relation*.’ William Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2008), in Czech translation: *Osoba a bytí* (Praha: Krystal OP, Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 20–26.

2. Our Liberal Presence

All considerations on the order of social reality are necessarily placed in the concrete historical and cultural context. Our social life always unfolds *hic et nunc*, in a given time and place. More distinctively than in other fields of philosophical and theological inquiry, discussions about cultural, social, and political problems are marked by the overall atmosphere of the epoch and its ‘signs of times’. It seems, therefore, suitable to open up our treatise on the social thinking of David C. Schindler with his remarks about the current *status quo* of Western civilisation.

But even in his commentaries on liberalism, which represents the predominant political ideology of the West and its analysis is thus indispensable for understanding our contemporary situation, Schindler does not limit himself to an examination of superficial phenomena but instead asks about its inner metaphysical and theological core. This approach seems to be particularly fitting in our attempt to tackle the problem of social reality from the metaphysical perspective of the Trinitarian ontology.

Schindler points to the fact that liberalism came into existence within the Christian tradition of European culture.¹¹ This tradition constitutes the necessary precondition for the emergence of a new political philosophy of modern times, and the relationship between classical Christian thinking, which absorbed into itself ancient tradition of Greek metaphysics, and liberal political worldview seems to be fundamental for understanding the present political moment. Following the reasoning of French political philosopher Pierre Manent,¹² Schindler conceptualises liberalism not as a logical consequence of an older tradition, or even as its completion, but rather as a radical break up and reinterpretation of all substantial principles of classical metaphysical philosophy. The basic question that arises in front of us is ‘whether this rejection actually served to bring out the deepest truths of the Gospel regarding individual freedom and dignity [...], or whether this rejection

¹¹ In this regard compare with Pospíšil, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi*, 80.

¹² Cf. Pierre Manent, *An Intellectual History of Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), xvii. However, we should not overlook substantial differences between position of Manent and Schindler. Unlike Manent, Schindler pays considerable attention to the metaphysical dimension of liberalism.

of the Church is a repudiation of Christianity simply, a repudiation one might go on either to celebrate or to lament'.¹⁵ Schindler argues vehemently in favour of the second alternative.

Schindler perceives liberalism as a thorough reinterpretation of every dimension of human existence. This fracture in the previous tradition emerged in the direct reaction to the universal ontological and historical claims of Christian revelation on human nature and human culture. Schindler's main argument against liberalism stems from the fact that it represents a clear departure from the perception of reality as it is embodied in Christian synthesis of the Jewish particular order of history and the Greek universal order of being. According to Schindler, in the work of its founding fathers Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, liberalism replaced the traditional Christian concept of human nature with an abstract notion of the human being isolated from any concrete and actual hierarchically ordered web of interpersonal relations. The society founded on 'social contract' has substituted the 'concretely real' of the actual world with what is 'essentially unreal', which thereafter serves as a basic horizon that penetrates the overall 'construction of reality'. It constitutes 'the originating principle [...] "coloring" all the things that follow from it'.¹⁴

Liberalism, therefore, cannot be perceived only as a practical solution to the practical problems of early modern society. Liberalism is rather a theoretical horizon for a practical policy; its core lies in a metaphysical or theological conviction that God is not a pure act, as it is defined in classical metaphysics, but a pure potency – *potentia absoluta*.¹⁵ God has become only a possibility and his actual reality is arbitrary. In this situation, 'reality of God [...] becomes essentially arbitrary [...] The actuality of human power suddenly acquires a certain supremacy at the very same time it is rendered anchorless, without an internal order'.¹⁶

The result of such a situation is a dissolution of the whole order of reality, the renunciation of the ontological foundation of the world. In

¹⁵ David C. Schindler, *The Politics of the Real, The Church between Liberalism and Integralism* (Steubenville: New Polity Press, 2021), 6–7.

¹⁴ Schindler, *The Politics of the Real*, 22.

¹⁵ Schindler further developed the idea of liberalism as 'a horizon of understanding' in the following article: David C. Schindler, 'Liberalism, Religious Freedom and the Common Good: The Totalitarian Logic of Self-Limitation,' *Communio: International Catholic Review* 40 (Summer-Fall 2013): 577–615.

¹⁶ Schindler, *The Politics of the Real*, 30.

the classical Greek interpretation of being, lower realities of being are always interpreted in the light of the higher. When the highest principle and highest reality is conceptualised as a pure potency, this order is reversed and ‘God gets reconceived as a function of religion, religion as a function of human culture, culture as social construct, society as psychology, psychology as neuro-biology, neuro-biology as configurations of physical events, physical events as “accidental collocations of atoms”, and so forth.’¹⁷

These considerations point to the necessity of proper metaphysical foundations of social and political order. In the next part of the paper, we would like to propose several metaphysical principles, which we found crucial for the establishment of such an order. We also hope that they might serve as an initial inspiration for a reflection on the question of social reality in the light of a Trinitarian ontology. We will proceed from Schindler’s seminal work *Freedom from Reality: The Diabolical Character of Modern Liberty* which constitutes one of the most important contemporary contributions to the discussion on the metaphysical foundations of social and political order.¹⁸

3. Symbolical Order

The following section is focused on the direct impulses and inspirations for our topic that can be derived from Schindler’s discussion on classical and modern conceptions of liberty. It aims to address three points concerning the symbolical order of reality, relationality of human persons, and freedom itself. Although the main theme of Schindler’s book is obviously the problem of freedom, it seems to be more appropriate to start our searching for possible links between Trinitarian ontology and social theory with another key concept of his thinking. A concept which promises to offer fruitful insight into the mutual relation between the transcendent reality of Trinity and the immanent reality of a social order.

An analogy is usually taken as a methodological tool or a path which might be used if we strive to elevate our rationality to the heights of

¹⁷ Schindler, *The Politics of the Real*, 32.

¹⁸ David C. Schindler, *Freedom from Reality: The Diabolical Character of Modern Liberty* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017).

metaphysical principles.¹⁹ However, in *Freedom from Reality*, Schindler uses another category for describing the intimate connection between the metaphysical or ontological order and the living cultural or social reality. One of the principal ideas which might be found in the book is the concept of *symbol* and *symbolical order* (of reality). It seems that, along with analogy, the symbolical should be considered as one of the founding principles of the Trinitarian ontology of human person and, derivatively, as a basis for our reflections on a social order.

Schindler applies *symbolical* as a juxtaposition to *diabolical*, which serves his main argument about the diabolical nature of modern liberty. Nevertheless, our concern here is not to discuss the inner nature of modern freedom itself. Thus, we will not address the etymological and philosophical differences between these two. Rather, we will focus on the nature of the *symbolical order* as such. ‘We take the form of the symbol to be a description of the nature of things generally.’²⁰ Symbolical, therefore, serves as a basic metaphysical principle. In developing his concept of symbolical order, Schindler proceeds from the work of French and German philosophers Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Specifically, he uses Ricoeur’s concept of ‘double-intentionality’,²¹ an idea that, in a symbol, unlike in allegory, a second, deeper meaning of a sign is inseparable from a first, literal meaning. Symbol unifies both levels and, in the original, etymological sense of the word, ‘*makes present* a meaning that cannot be simply translated into other terms, that is, replaced by a concept or a set of concepts’.²²

The richness of symbolical metaphysical thinking cannot be limited only to the technical, external connection between two sides, or two levels of a symbol. Typical of Schindler’s metaphysical thinking, he points out the ‘boundless wealth of significance’, generosity, and abundance, which springs from a concrete indwelling of the source of the meaning in its outer expression. The actuality of the donative and generous character of a symbol is profoundly expressed in a ritual of friendship. It is not a mere coincidence that all key components presented in Schindler’s book, the idea of symbolical order, the good,

¹⁹ Cf. David C. Schindler, *Catholicity of Reason* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 81–84; see also the classic work by Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics – Original Structure and Universal Rhythm* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

²⁰ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 155.

²¹ Cf. Vít Hušek, *Symbol ve filosofii Paula Ricoeura* (Svitavy: Trinitas, 2004), 35.

²² Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 155.

freedom, and friendship, are intrinsically connected and form deep unity of being itself. The symbolical expression of friendship in ancient *tessera hospitalis*, which gave an origin to the term symbol itself, does not found the relationship between friends but, on the other hand, grows up from the preceding actuality of this relationship. Schindler here reverses original direction of Ricoeur’s epistemological/phenomenological interpretation of symbol and emphasises the ontological basis of symbolic language. It is precisely the generosity of the source that is embodied in the symbolical expression.

This idea of the ontological rootedness of symbolical language brings us to the vision of a whole symbolical order as such. In his discussion of classical metaphysics, especially of Plato and Aristotle,²⁵ Schindler comes to an idea of symbolical unity as the aptest description of cosmos and thus the whole reality. Citing from Plato’s *Timaeus*, he defines the symbolical conception of cosmos in the following way: ‘an ordered whole that has its foundation in a transcendent cause, understood as most perfect and so as most essentially generous.’²⁴ The symbolical nature of social and cultural phenomena is linked together in one unified whole. In this regard, Schindler’s symbolical interpretation of culture might resemble the approach of symbolical anthropology, which views the immanent order of culture precisely as a dense network of symbols. In the words of American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, culture is ‘a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.’²⁵ The decisive moment in which Schindler takes a different direction than Ricoeur with phenomenological analysis or Geertz and symbolical anthropology lies in the participation of symbolical order in transcendent meaning, above all in goodness. And it is this moment which opens the idea of cosmos as a symbolical order to Trinitarian ontology.

Symbolical order, which the cosmos is, is not an order extrinsically constructed by human beings but an order which springs from the participation of men in goodness. In our opinion, it is the poetic quality of Schindler’s language which largely contributes to his successful exposition of this issue. Description of reality as symbolical order

²⁵ See the Part III Retrieving the Origin as the Essence of Freedom of Schindler’s *Freedom from Reality*.

²⁴ Plato *Timaeus* 29e, cited in Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 155.

²⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

requires symbolical deepness of the language. And Schindler masters it. In this perspective, we might say that the symbolical order is not an extrinsic ‘joining with the transcendent good’, but rather ‘a joining together of realities *in* the good; the transcendent becomes present in the differentiation of the unity and a unification of the diverse.’²⁶ The concept of participation emerges here as an essential dimension of the symbolical order.²⁷

Schindler develops this idea of participation in his analysis of Plato’s idea of freedom.²⁸ In this context, the image of the ‘Golden Chain’ of love appears, which binds together all degrees of reality, ‘from the most purely intelligible to the most purely sensible’ in a chain of ontological dependence.²⁹ As Schindler explains later in the book, this golden chain or thread, through which every man participates in the ontological deepness of reality, is the *intrinsic* and *active* foundation of human freedom and the precondition for fruitfulness originally associated with it.³⁰

Although Schindler does not address in detail the role of Christianity in shaping of the symbolical order, from several remarks dispersed through *Freedom from Reality*, it is obvious that it is in Christian revelation, where the idea of symbolical order reaches its fullest expression.³¹ In the light of revelation, we can see a transcendent first principle, ‘the radical generosity that is the source of *all* things,’ entering into history. The foundation of a meaningful cosmos itself thus became a part of human history. Symbolical order, therefore, cannot be observed only as ahistorical, immutable cosmological order but must always include recognition of historicity in a concrete tradition.³²

²⁶ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 197.

²⁷ Cf. David C. Schindler, ‘What’s the Difference? On the Metaphysics of Participation in a Christian Context,’ *Nova et Vetera* 5, no. 3 (2007) (a version of this essay has been published on-line in *The Saint Anselm Journal*: https://www.anselm.edu/sites/default/files/Documents/Institute%20of%20SA%20Studies/4.5.3.2g_31Schindler.pdf).

²⁸ For a discussion on participation by Plato, see: Schindler, ‘What’s the Difference?,’ 4–8 (online version)

²⁹ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 298.

³⁰ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 309.

³¹ The role of Christian revelation in bringing about the fullness of the symbolical order and freedom should be addressed in the second part of the intended trilogy of which ‘Freedom from Reality’ is the first part.

³² Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 270–271.

Our considerations about possible connections between the Trinitarian ontology and social order will consequently take the idea of symbolical order of reality as its starting point. It is in the symbolical order where we can see human persons participating in goodness, ‘sharing in a larger, ordered whole, a sharing that naturally tends to objectify itself in public realities, and thus to join people together, to join man and nature, God and the world.’⁵⁵

4. Human Person in Relations

The second point for our considerations concerning the relationship between Trinitarian ontology and social reality might be found in Schindler’s reflections on human relationality. The mystery of human life in relation represents one of the pivotal themes in the philosophy and theology through the 20th century and into the beginning of the new millennium. Begun by the now-classical treatment of the theme in Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*, the question of relation and relativity makes a recurrent topic of modern thought. As it is clear from other papers presented in this issue, this question is also a crucial one for the anthropological consequences of Trinitarian ontology.⁵⁴

Now, let us briefly describe how this point is addressed in the work of D. C. Schindler.⁵⁵ In his interpretation of the classical notion of freedom, relation to the other forms an intrinsic part of liberty. It is also the recognition of otherness that is an essential requirement for the ontological affirmation of the priority of good, which enables human freedom.⁵⁶ But quite interestingly, Schindler posits his arguments about the relationality of human persons in the framework of another, seemingly different, question of equality. How are the principles of freedom, good, and otherness related to equality, and what this might tell us about human relationality?

⁵⁵ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 156.

⁵⁴ In the expression of Joseph Ratzinger: ‘The human person is the event of being of relativity.’ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Retrieving the Tradition, Concerning the notion of person in theology,’ *Communio International Catholic Review* 17 (Fall, 1990): 439–454.

⁵⁵ Apart from our discussion on *Freedom from Reality* see also: David C. Schindler, ‘Enriching the Good: Toward the Development of a Relational Anthropology,’ *Communio International Catholic Review* 37 (Winter 2010): 643–659. For Schindler’s philosophical anthropology see further: David C. Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Precipitant: Rediscovering the Real in Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2018).

⁵⁶ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 3–4.

The discussion of equality is a part of chapter 2 of *Freedom from Reality*, which is focused on the interpretation of the political thought contained in John Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. Here, Schindler examines the political consequences of the metaphysical priority of potency over actuality in Locke's reasoning. Equality is, in Locke's interpretation, one of the basic descriptions of the state of nature. The equality of nature fundamentally means an abstraction from all differentiations brought about by the actuality of the relations of things in the real world ordered in the hierarchy of sub-ordinations and super-ordinations. The substitution of the world of actual ordered relations by the supposed abstract equal state of nature consequently implies 'a radical nonrelational understanding of human beings'.³⁷

For Schindler, the relational conception of human nature stands in stark opposition to Locke's own mechanical vision of the universe. In Locke's cosmos, humans are merely 'unrelated and undifferentiated units lying next to each other all at the same level'.³⁸ To protect the reality of human lives and their actual value, it is necessary to protect the above mentioned symbolical order of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity. The relationality of human beings thus presupposes an idea of hierarchy, which is the hierarchy of goods that encompasses the differentiation of actual relation and connects them into an analogical unity.

Hence, we can observe the emergence of two contrasting visions of humanity. On the one hand, Lockean quantitative and mechanical idea of human nature tends to the spatial understanding of equality. Equality primarily means my *potency* to develop the space of my own freedom, which is not endangered by the intrusion of others. In this sense, human relationships are seen as an encroachment upon or threat to my freedom. They have the form of hostility, which limits my potency. Therefore, political and social order tends to 'fence off' individual human beings from one another. In other words, individual human persons come to live in a constant competition with one another, which is not far from the state of a constant civil war.³⁹

On the other hand, we find the society of men linked together by the 'golden chain of freedom', which binds them in one *polis* and, at the

³⁷ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 85.

³⁸ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 85.

³⁹ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 86–87.

same time, embeds them in the symbolical order of the good. Schindler emphasises the essentially communal characteristic of human liberty, most particularly in his exposition of Plato’s and Aristotle’s conception of freedom. In the conclusion of his interpretation of Plato on this point, this fact is emphasised in the following words: ‘[...] the deepest meaning of freedom in Plato is fruitful attachment to all others in the good, a being bound by the liberating golden thread of reason and common law.’⁴⁰ This vision of social and political life primarily in relation to what is absolute is significant for our efforts to find a path from a Trinitarian ontology to social reality. The praise of God lies at the heart of our shared political life, in Plato’s words ‘the only serious thing is praise of God.’⁴¹

Accordingly, the idea of the indispensable orientation of humans towards a shared life in political society is conveyed in Aristotle’s political philosophy. Mutual relations in a polis are, moreover, conditioned by the actuality of the common good, which precedes all interactions of citizens and enables their freedom and relationality. In this sense, a polis, basically a community joint in life, precedes its individual members, not as a compromise of their individual freedom, as it might be considered in a modern conception of freedom, but as ‘its precondition, or indeed its very essence.’⁴²

The specific character of human relationality has been demonstrated above. We have shown that relations form a substantial part of human nature, one of the defining principles of the human being. In this view, metaphysical relationality contrasts with the modern anthropological vision, rooted in Locke’s conception of freedom, of men formally independent and equal and, therefore, isolated and in competition with each other. If we dare to deepen our reflections on this theme, we might even conclude that human relationality symbolically expresses the relationality of being as such.⁴³ And it is in the contemplation of the metaphysical meaning of relationality where one of the main concerns of Trinitarian ontology lies.⁴⁴ In the words of W. Norris-Clarke, the self-communicative relationality of beings rises from the fact that

⁴⁰ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 322.

⁴¹ Plato, *Laws* 805c, cited in Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 317.

⁴² Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 357.

⁴³ ‘To be is to be substance-in-relation.’ Norris Clarke, *Osoba a bytí*, 20–26.

⁴⁴ Hemmerle, *Theses*, 36–38.

‘they are all diverse modes of participation in the infinite goodness of the one Source, whose very being is identically self-communicative Love.’⁴⁵ Theologically, this idea finds its most proper expression in the mystery of the Trinity. Nevertheless, revelation and philosophy do not contradict here each other but together point to the innermost depths of being.⁴⁶

At the end of our reflection of human relationality, we can therefore see the source of the Good, Love, and self-communication that lies in the heart of human life in relations and which is undeniably Trinitarian.⁴⁷ Thanks to David C. Schindler, we can also realise the social and political dimension of this mystery and the close connection between human relationality and the metaphysical source of social life.

5. Freedom

Freedom is, by its very nature, one of the fundamental characteristics of human nature. As was observed by Piero Coda, freedom is the unique expression of human dignity, and in an analogical sense of *maior dissimilitudo in similitudine*, liberty points to the Triune God as its archetype and principle. In a certain sense, ‘the Trinity is Freedom’.⁴⁸ Freedom should therefore play a prominent role in our considerations on Trinitarian ontology. As Coda reminds us, freedom is an essential manifestation of being and, in the light of Trinitarian revelation, is identified with *agape*, with love. This ultimate unity between freedom and love is perceived most importantly in the act of giving: ‘being the being of love, it is the very act by which each one of the divine Persons [...] is himself in the giving to the others who in turn return him to himself.’⁴⁹ The essence of freedom is, therefore, to be found in the realm of love and relations. These reflections open up a direct path to Schindler’s deliberation about freedom.

⁴⁵ William Norris Clarke, ‘Person, Being and St. Thomas,’ *Communio International Catholic Review* 19 (Winter 1992): 606.

⁴⁶ Norris Clarke, *Osoba a bytí*, 19.

⁴⁷ František Burda, *Za hranice kultur* (Brno: CDK, 2016): 153–157; see also Jan Hojda, ‘Diakonia jako účast člověka na věčném sdílení trojiční lásky: Teologicko antropologická východiska diakonie na pozadí encykliky *Deus caritas est*,’ *Studia Theologica* 18, no. 3 (2016): 142–143.

⁴⁸ Coda, *From the Trinity*; 501–502.

⁴⁹ Coda, *From the Trinity*, 503.

If a true notion of freedom is necessary for a proper understanding of being, it is also indispensable for a proper understanding of society. An authentic grasp of freedom is what distinguishes the symbolical and diabolical order of social and political life; it is what orients the polis towards the good or towards its bitter division. We will therefore conclude our considerations with the sketch of Schindler’s conception of freedom.

Freedom is abundance.⁵⁰ Schindler strives to reconstruct an appropriate notion of freedom from the very roots of European culture and to put it in contrast with the modern idea of liberty. As we have noted several times, it is not our aim in this paper to present Schindler’s critique of modern freedom as such, but it might be useful to briefly summarise its main traits to highlight the differences between both ancient and modern conception of freedom. Schindler describes the basic shape of modern liberty through comparison and synthesis of the concept of freedom in the writings of Locke, Spinoza, and Kant. He summarises common tendencies in their understandings of freedom in several points: For modern philosophers, freedom is a kind of active power that is incompatible with human heteronomy. It reduces political order to the preservation of the individual’s natural rights through the regulation of external behaviour. It is also characterised by a rejection of any a priori specific religious claim and by the tendency to collapse into the objectivity of some form of determinism, whether it be natural, logical, psychological, metaphysical, or political.⁵¹ He concludes that modern liberty is ‘a view of freedom as spontaneous and unconditioned causality, or as active power that produces effects as a result of self-originating energy *rather than* receiving determination from outside of itself.’⁵²

The ancient tradition of liberty is strikingly different. Schindler searches for the foundations of this tradition not only in the work of the great Greek philosophers, but he reaches as far as to the beginning of Indo-European languages and culture.⁵³ Both Greek *eleutheria*

⁵⁰ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*; 290, 315–316.

⁵¹ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*; 133.

⁵² Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*; 147.

⁵³ Greek word ἐλευθερία derives from the Indo-European root *leudh-, from which comes the old Slavic and Germanic word for ‘people’ (*Leute*, etc.). Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*; 287.

(ἐλευθερία) and Latin *liber* have etymological connotations that deeply differ from a modern idea of autonomy and independence. They emphasise the flourishing of both the individual and the community enabled by the common source of maturation. Freedom is akin to the unimpeded growth of a seed which reaches its fullness and thus points to ‘fruitful inner abundance’, ‘perfection’, or ‘completion’.⁵⁴ The connection between freedom and the idea of the good is here obvious.

We can find an echo of these linguistic reflections in Plato and Aristotle. Plato found freedom in belonging with others to the good. Again, we can see here opposition to any individualised notion of freedom. What is most my own, what defines me, and what enables me to fully develop myself is not a mere potentiality, a clearly demarcated free space, but the universal good, which is in turn ‘ownmost’ for everyone.⁵⁵ Such a conception of liberty is not and should not be perceived as an obstacle to human self-determination. As Schindler reminds us, Plato confirms that the soul moves itself. But it is the good and the beautiful that is a cause of its self-motion. Therefore, freedom is not an external category attached to human existence, but the intrinsic and active participation in the good, which is both the source and the goal of the life of the soul. I can be free because the good is productive and effective in me. What is given does not limit me but constantly opens new horizons of experience: ‘[...] one who is in love with beauty for its own sake [...] constantly surprises; his actions spring from within, with all of the “newness” we associate with birth.’⁵⁶

Schindler considers both Plato and Aristotle as parts of one tradition, which genuinely grows from the roots of European culture and which recognise the original sense of fruitfulness and abundance in their concept of freedom. Even philosophically, Aristotle should be perceived as a member of Platonic tradition.⁵⁷ In this regard, they develop the concept of freedom in a similar direction. According to Schindler, Plato ‘emphasizes the absoluteness of the good’, while Aristotle ‘underscores its *appearance* to each of us as the principle of our action’. Whereas Plato focuses on ‘the ruling power of the good’, Aristotle ‘highlights the

⁵⁴ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 290–291.

⁵⁵ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 297.

⁵⁶ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 313.

⁵⁷ For the comparison of Platonism and Aristotelianism see Endre von Ivánka, *Plato christianus* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2003), 62–63.

way we mover ourselves.’⁵⁸ Nevertheless, all these distinctions form one complex classical tradition of freedom. Aristotle’s concept of freedom finds its expression in the virtue of liberality. What is essential for our exploration of the importance of liberty in social order in the light of Trinitarian ontology is an emphasis on freedom as a simultaneity of receiving and giving with respect for the primacy of the actuality of the good. In Schindler’s interpretation, Aristotle’s liberality does not mean acquisition or cumulation of one’s own property, as it appeared to be in the case of Locke’s concept of freedom, but it is rather a communication or a passing on of what one discovered and gained in his life. Liberality culminates in the activity of contemplation, which itself is the freest action that receives the reality of this world in wonder and does not instrumentalise it for man’s own purposes but rather affirms the intrinsic goodness of being. This is yet another expression or echo of the original sense of freedom as ‘the superabundant goodness that generates something truly other.’⁵⁹

Conclusion

The difference between the modern and the classical concept of liberty is once again clear. But what should be our primary reaction to learning about the deep flaws of the modern notion of freedom? Does it represent a new call for yet another nostalgic and reactionary conservative revolution? The main aim of Schindler’s discussion of freedom is to renew our sense of a given reality that transcends our action. In other words, the recognition of the primacy of actuality over potency is a chief factor in the renewal of the classical tradition of the metaphysical notion of freedom, which cannot be simply confused with any notion of nostalgia or plain conservatism. Rather it aims to the rediscovery of the real source of our freedom, which animates and liberates all human actions. We should again realise that the problem of liberty is not in the first place a problem of external structures, which we should emancipate ourselves from, but rather a mystery of the inner source of the abundance of goodness. Therefore, the recovery of freedom cannot be grounded in a revolutionary transformation

⁵⁸ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 324.

⁵⁹ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 350–352.

of cultural and social institutions but primarily in the painful search for the metaphysical roots of the symbolical order of reality. It is our quest for beauty, goodness, and truth in grateful affirmation of what is given, which might bring about the true meaning of freedom. In the words of David C. Schindler, ‘the essential response to the diabolical is not execution but exorcism, which [...] means a reorienting of the given reality to what is good and true.’⁶⁰

In this regard, it would be aimless to make a plain juxtaposition of old and modern philosophy or old and modern culture and then try to interpret them through either conservative or liberal perspective as progress or decline of our civilisation. As Schindler puts it, ‘to affirm the goodness of modernity, in an ontological sense, requires a recovery of its roots in tradition’.⁶¹ The reality of modernity should be placed in the context of the tradition that gave birth to it and which, despite explicit detachment of modern philosophy, still inspires the goodness present in it. To put it another way, ‘saving modernity requires us to interpret modernity against itself’.⁶² It is also important to note that it is not only Greek tradition of Plato and Aristotle that represents the ancient tradition of liberty. On the contrary, there is ‘an insufficient sense of genuine novelty of human action’ in Greek philosophy, and ultimately ‘Plato and Aristotle failed to understand and appreciate that man as such is free’.⁶³ It is only with the advent of Christianity, and specifically in the resolution of the Trinitarian and Christological controversies of the ancient Church, that a full understanding of freedom could be developed. The proper position of freedom in the social and political order thus cannot be founded only in the revival of the tradition of Greek political philosophy but ultimately consists in the Trinitarian ontology.

⁶⁰ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 282; as Schindler mentions in another part of the book: ‘[...] the response to possession is not *execution* but *exorcism*, which is not a rejection but a reorientation, from the innermost depths, to the good’ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 195.

⁶¹ Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 285.

⁶² Schindler, *Freedom from Reality*, 283; Schindler cites here Robert Spaeman, ‘A Philosophical Autobiography,’ in *A Robert Spaemann Reader: Philosophical Essay on Nature, God, and the Human Person*, edited by D. C. Schindler and Jeanne Schindler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.

⁶³ According to Schindler ‘this inadequacy is due to an inadequate conception of the primacy of actuality, a conception that tends to reduce potency to act in such a way that potency, so to speak, “adds nothing” simpliciter’ *Freedom from Reality*, 286.

It is our hope that the discussion of the fundamental ontological principles presented in this article, mainly the idea of the social reality as the symbolical order analogically manifesting the beauty of the source of being, the idea of human being fundamentally defined as a being in relations, and the idea of proper freedom rooted in the goodness of things, prepares us for a deeper understanding of social order in the light of the Trinitarian ontology, the Trinitarian understanding of being.

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ONTOLOGISCHE VORAUSSETZUNGEN DER GEISTLICHEN BEGLEITUNG IN GEMEINSCHAFTLICHER SPIRITUALITÄT

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ABSTRACT

Ontological Presuppositions of Spiritual Guidance in Communitarian Spirituality

In the history of spirituality, a way to search for the wisdom facilitating the imitation of wise people's lives has been developed. This sort of spiritual guidance had been developed by the desert fathers and mothers, in the cloisters, and through the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. An important step in the achievement of spiritual guidance is a search for a guide to help the guided person learn to discern the spirits. The discernment of spirits is to help one in selecting the goals and means of one's activities of self-improvement. Spiritual guidance can be provided by individual men and women, but also by communities. A specific type of communitarian spiritual guidance was developed within the Focolare Movement, founded by Chiara Lubich, who understood God as love. Forsaken Jesus and Jesus who dwells in unity can be considered a foundation of this communitarian spirituality. The mystical experiences of Chiara Lubich in Paradise '49 point to the fact that this spirituality is premised upon an ontology, which has been developed into a Trinitarian ontology by Klaus Hemmerle.

Key Words

Communitarian spiritual guidance; Focolare Movement; Chiara Lubich; Klaus Hemmerle; Trinitarian ontology

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In der Geschichte der Spiritualität hat man immer wieder bei den klugen Menschen Weisheit für die Gestaltung des Lebens gesucht. So haben die Wüstenväter und Wüstenmütter die Heiligkeit in der Wüste, in der Abgeschiedenheit von den Menschen gesucht. Bald wurden sie von den interessierten Menschen besucht, die Rat für ihre Lebensführung suchten. So entstand bald die geistliche Begleitung als eine Art der Vermittlung von Lebenswahrheit für das praktische Leben. Sie wurde auch in Briefen fortgesetzt.¹ Diese Art der geistlichen Hilfe wurde dann in Klöstern und durch Einsiedler fortgesetzt. Im Mittelalter wurde sie vor allem durch Briefe geleistet, wie die hl. Hildegard von Bingen zeigt.² Viele Erfahrungen geistlicher Begleitung hat uns der hl. Ignatius von Loyola in seinen *Geistlichen Exerzitien* hinterlassen. Sie sind aus seinen Meditationen und den Erfahrungen mit der Unterscheidung der Geister erwachsen. Früher wurde öfter der Begriff „geistliche Führung“ oder „geistliche Leitung“ benutzt. Damit wurde die Art dieser Hilfe bezeichnet, die in einer Angabe der Direktiven geleistet wurde. Jetzt wird eher der Begriff „geistliche Begleitung“ benutzt. Damit wird ein Rat ausgedrückt, der vom Begleiteten freiwillig angenommen und ihm zur selbständigen Unterscheidung der Geister helfen soll, die zu einer Wahl der Ziele und der Mittel seiner Tätigkeit dienen soll. Geistliche Begleitung kann durch einzelne Männer und Frauen, aber auch durch eine Gemeinschaft erfolgen.

1. Gemeinschaftliche Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung

Geistliche Begleitung durch eine Gemeinschaft hat sich in der gemeinschaftlichen Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung entwickelt. Zu ihrer Gründung ist es im Jahre 1943 gekommen, als sich ihre Gründerin Chiara Lubich am 7. Dezember 1943 Gott geweiht hat. Es tobte damals der zweite Weltkrieg. Die Stadt Trient, wo sie mit ihrer Familie lebte, wurde bombardiert. Sie selbst erzählt von diesen Anfängen in

¹ Lorenzo Perrone, „The Necessity of Advice: Spiritual Direction as a School of Christianity in the Correspondence of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza,“ in *Christian Gaza in Late Antiquity*, ed. by Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, Arieh Kofsky (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004), 131–150.

² Laurence Moulinier-Brogi, „Maternità spirituale e direzione di coscienza secondo Ildegarda di Bingen,“ in *Storia della direzione spirituale. II. L'età medievale*, ed. by Sofia Boesch Gajano (Brescia: Editrice Morcelliana, 2010), 185–204.

einer Rede am Katholikentag in Düsseldorf im Jahre 1982: „Wir sind eine kleine Gruppe von Mädchen in Trient/Norditalien. Es ist das Jahr 1945. Der Krieg wütet. Unter den Bomben bricht vieles zusammen. Nichts bleibt verschont. Was unser Leben ausmacht (eine Familie gründen, das Studium abschließen, ein Haus bauen), wird uns genommen oder zumindest ernsthaft in Frage gestellt. Wir haben den Eindruck, als würde Gott uns durch diese schreckliche Zerstörung immer wieder sagen: ‚Alles vergeht. Alles ist nichtig‘ (Koh 1,2). Wir fragen uns, ob es nicht ein Ideal gibt, das keine Bombe zerstören kann, und wir kommen zur Überzeugung, dass nur Gott dieses Lebensideal für uns sein kann. So entscheiden wir uns dafür, Gott zur Mitte unseres Lebens zu machen. Aber wie lebt man für ein solches Ideal? Wie liebt man Gott? Die Antwort auf diese Frage finden wir im Evangelium: ‚Nicht jeder, der zu mir sagt: Herr, Herr, wird in das Himmelreich kommen, sondern nur, wer den Willen meines Vaters tut‘ (Mt 7,21). ... Doch sind wir ständig in Lebensgefahr, jeder Augenblick kann der letzte sein; denn die Bunker sind unsicher. So wächst in uns der brennende Wunsch herauszufinden, was Gott am meisten am Herzen liegt. Das möchten wir sofort in die Tat umsetzen, denn falls er uns zu sich rufen sollte, wollten wir wenigstens unsere letzten Tage nach seinem Willen gelebt haben. Da kommt uns ein Wort Jesu in den Sinn, das alle seine Wünsche zusammenfasst und seine ganze Lehre enthält: jenes Gebot, das er das ‚seine‘ und das ‚neue‘ nennt: ‚Das ist mein Gebot: Liebet einander, so wie ich euch geliebt habe‘ (Joh 15,12). Wir möchten, dass unser Leben zu einer Verwirklichung dieses Gebotes wird: ‚Ich bin bereit, für dich zu sterben‘, sage ich zu meinen Gefährtinnen. ‚Und ich für dich...‘ – jede für die anderen. Wir versuchen, das ernst zu nehmen: wir haben keinen Frieden, solange nicht die Liebe die Grundlage unseres Handelns ist. ... Wir verstehen auf einmal, dass Gott dort zu finden ist, wo Liebe und Güte ist. ‚Wo zwei oder drei in meinem Namen versammelt ist, da bin ich mitten unter ihnen‘ (Mt 18,20). Gott ist mit uns. Jesus ist mitten unter uns. Ihm begegnen die Menschen, die mit uns zusammenkommen, und er bewegt viele zur Umkehr. ... Eines Tages lasen wir in einem Luftschutzkeller, in dem wir vor den Bomben Schutz gesucht hatten, das 17. Kapitel des Johannesevangeliums: das Gebet um die Einheit. Für uns, die wir noch jung waren, war das ein schwieriger Text, doch als wir gemeinsam diese Zeilen lasen, schienen sich Wort für Wort zu erhellen. Wir hatten den Eindruck, das Testament Jesu zu verstehen. Dieses Gebet wurde gleichsam zur Magna Charta,

zum Leitmotiv all dessen, was um uns herum entstand: ‚Alle sollen eins sein‘ (Joh 17,21). ... Kurz darauf verstehen wir, welcher Weg zur Einheit führt: Jesus am Kreuz. Genauer gesagt, der Gekreuzigte, der schreit: ‚Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen?‘ (Mt 27,46).⁵ In dieser Rede zeigen sich die Grundstrukturen der Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung, die eine gemeinschaftliche Spiritualität ist. Ein besonderes Zeichen dieser Spiritualität ist die Gegenwart Jesu unter jenen, die eine Liebe füreinander haben. Das gegenseitige Aussprechen dieser Bereitschaft, für den anderen zu sterben, wird Pakt genannt.

Chiara Lubich bezeichnet die Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung als gemeinschaftliche Spiritualität.⁴ Diese wurde bereits von Jesus Castellanio in einem Brief an Chiara Lubich vom 21. 6. 1992 so bezeichnet.⁵ Chiara Lubich sieht in diesem neuen Weg der Spiritualität das verwirklicht, was Papst Paul VI. als Heiligkeit des Volkes bezeichnete.⁶ Chiara Lubich erinnert daran, dass die Mädchen in Trient im Krieg, falls sie sterben würden, in einem Grab beerdigt werden wollten mit der Inschrift: ‚Wir haben die Liebe, die Gott zu uns hat, erkannt und gläubig aufgenommen‘ (1 Joh 4, 16a).⁷ Und dieser Glaube an Gottes Liebe hat sie gedrängt, sich zuerst den Armen zu widmen. Sie lasen im Evangelium: ‚Was ihr für einen meiner geringsten Brüder getan habt, das habt ihr mir getan‘ (Mt 25,40). Dieser Satz hat sie inspiriert, den Armen zu helfen. Eines Tages fragte ein armer Mann nach Schuhen der Größe 42. Sie hatten keine. Im Vertrauen auf Gottes Hilfe bat eine von ihnen den Herrn im Tabernakel im Gebet: ‚Ich bitte Dich, Herr, um Schuhe der Größe 42 für den armen Mann.‘ Als sie aus der Kirche ging, traf sie eine Freundin, die ihr ein Paket gab. Darin waren Schuhe der Größe 42.⁸ Dieser neue Stil des Lebens hat bald viele Menschen angezogen. Es bildete sich ein Kreis von Menschen, die ähnlich leben

⁵ Silvana Veronesi, Guglielmo Boselli, Giulio Marchesi (Hrsg.), *Die Fokolar-Bewegung. Entstehung – Geistliche Grundlinien – Initiativen* (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1987), 5–11.

⁴ Chiara Lubich, *Una via nuova. La spiritualità dell'unità* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2002), 17. Dieses Buch enthält die Themen, die von Chiara Lubich für die Fokolaren und Fokolarinen in den Jahren 1994 – 2002 bei ihren Jahrestreffen behandelt wurden. Michele Lauriola, *Accompagnamento spirituale comunitario e personale nella spiritualità dell'unità* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2018), 45.

⁵ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 14–15.

⁶ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 17.

⁷ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 17.

⁸ Chiara Lubich, *La dottrina spirituale* (Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori, 2001), 46.

wollten. „Nach wenigen Monaten gab es in Trient bereits 500 Menschen, die versuchten, gemeinsam mit uns nach dem Evangelium zu leben. Das Wort Gottes wurde zum Band, das uns gleichzeitig einte.“⁹ Eines Tages lasen sie das Wort: „Wer euch hört, der hört mich“ (Lk 10,16). So gingen sie zum Bischof in Trient und erzählten ihm von ihrem Leben. Und er erkannte, dass hier Gott wirkt, und er sagte: „Hier ist der Finger Gottes.“¹⁰

Auf diesem neuen Weg sollte die Heiligkeit aus dem Leben der Einheit entstehen. Diese Einheit hat Chiara Lubich im Jahre 1947 mit schönen Worten dargelegt: „Oh, Einheit, Einheit! Welche göttliche Schönheit. Wir haben keine Worte, um zu beschreiben, was sie ist. Sie ist Jesus!“¹¹ Dieser neue Weg zur Heiligkeit zeigte sich darin, dass die Heiligkeit zusammen erreicht werden sollte. Um die Heiligkeit sollte sie sich nicht selbst bemühen, sondern sie als Geschenk annehmen. Als Geschenk für Maria, weil sie unsere Mutter und Königin ist. Chiara Lubich hat ihr Gebet um Heiligkeit so geändert, dass sie diese Heiligkeit als Geschenk für Maria geben will und damit ein Vorbild für viele werde. Chiara Lubich hat ihr Gebet um die Heiligkeit in einer kurzen Formel mit sechs „s“ ausgedrückt: „Ich werde heilig, wenn ich gleich heilig bin (sarò santa se sono santa subito).“¹² Die gemeinschaftliche Heiligkeit soll so geübt werden, dass jeder dem anderen in der Gemeinschaft dabei hilft, die Heiligkeit zu erreichen. In dieser gemeinschaftlichen Spiritualität geht man inmitten der Welt gemeinsam zu Gott. Als Mittel wird dabei das Wort benutzt, nicht die Stille.¹³

2. Instrumente und Punkte der gemeinschaftlichen Spiritualität

Für die Mitglieder der Fokolar-Bewegung, die offiziell *Werk Mariens* heißt und von der katholischen Kirche so anerkannt wurde, dienen die Instrumente gemeinschaftlicher Spiritualität als Mittel zur Heiligkeit.¹⁴

⁹ Chiara Lubich, *Einheit als Lebensstil. Aus der Geschichte und Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung* (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1989, 3. neu überarbeitete Auflage), 12.

¹⁰ Lubich, *Einheit als Lebensstil*, 13.

¹¹ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 19.

¹² Zur gemeinschaftlichen Heiligkeit vgl. Chiara Lubich, *Costruendo il „castello esteriore“* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2002), 55–58 (von 27. 8. 1998).

¹³ Chiara Lubich, *Santi insieme* (Roma: Città Nuova, 1994), 85–88 (von 26. 9. 1991).

¹⁴ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 21–29. Dieser Name *Werk Mariens* ist im Jahre 1954 entstanden. „1950 und 1951 kehrten wir in die Berge zurück. ... 1954 kam es uns dort oben

Dazu gehört der Bruder als Ausdruck für den Nächsten, das Wort, die Askese und die Gelübde, das gemeinsame Gebet und „die äußere Burg“. Der Bruder dient dazu, mit ihm die Einheit zu verwirklichen, sich mit ihm so zu einigen, dass gegenseitige Liebe entsteht und Gott in ihrer Mitte gegenwärtig wird (vgl. Mt 18,20). Das Wort dient dazu, diese Einheit zu schaffen nach dem Beispiel des hl. Paulus (1 Kor 9,22). Das Wort kann helfen, die Liebe zu entzünden, zum Nächsten, zum Feind, mit der Liebe zu beginnen, alle in der einzelnen Gemeinschaften der einzelnen Zweige des Werks Mariens (derer gibt es 18) zu lieben oder an Treffen teilzunehmen, um das Wort des Lebens, einen kleinen Kommentar zu einem Satz des Evangeliums von Chiara Lubich oder von denen, die es jetzt nach ihrem Tod vorbereiten, zu hören. Das Wort wird dazu benutzt, die Erfahrung mit der Verwirklichung des Wortes des Lebens oder die Erfahrungen aus der gemeinsamen Meditation auszudrücken. Das kann auch schriftlich oder mit den Mitteln elektronischer Kommunikation erfolgen. Wichtig sind die persönlichen Gespräche, in denen die Verantwortlichen mit den einzelnen Personen der Fokolar-Bewegung, besonders mit den gottgeweihten Fokolaren/innen, über ihr geistliches Leben und das Leben in der Gemeinschaft Auskunft geben, um Fortschritt zu ermöglichen. Das Wort wird auch dazu benutzt, die Stunde der Wahrheit zu leben, wo jemandem aus der Gruppe in gegenseitiger Liebe gute wie auch schlechte Eigenschaften aus seinem Leben aufgezeigt werden, was nach dem Beispiel der brüderlichen Ermahnung aus dem Evangelium geschieht (Mt 18, 15–17). Das Wort wird auch bei kleineren oder größeren Treffen der Mitglieder der Fokolar-Bewegung zum Entfachen des Feuers der gegenseitigen Liebe benutzt. Es werden keine speziellen Bußübungen gemacht, es genügt, den Bruder in der Liebe zu ertragen, oder besser gesagt, sich eins mit ihm zu machen, damit Jesus in der Mitte sein kann. Die Gelübde der Keuschheit, der Armut und des Gehorsams werden von gottgeweihten Fokolaren abgelegt, die als Laien zusammenleben. Eine weitere Besonderheit der Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung ist die Form des gemeinsamen Gebetes, die „consenserint“ benannt wird nach der italienischen Übersetzung des Wortes „gemeinsam“ des Evangeliums von Matthäus: „Alles, was zwei von euch auf Erden gemeinsam erbiten, werden sie von meinem himmlischen Vater erhalten“ (Mt 18,19).

irgendwie zum Bewusstsein, ‚Werk Mariens‘ zu sein.“ *Die Bewegung der Focolare* (München: Neue Stadt, 1966), 44–45.

Auch die Meditation wird oft gemeinsam gehalten. Es ist wichtig, sich um die Gegenwart von Jesu in der Mitte zu bemühen. Die äußere Burg bedeutet die Einheit mit den Brüdern in der Realität des mystischen Leibes Christi, dem wir gehören, also mit Jesus in der Mitte. Davon zeugt ein Text von Chiara Lubich: „Es ist wunderbar: dieser Aufriss Gottes, dieser himmlische Reichtum, diese äußere Burg, in der Gott mitten unter uns ist.“¹⁵

Die gemeinschaftliche Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung drücken noch zwölf Punkte, die den Willen Gottes für ihre Mitglieder darstellen und zur gemeinsamen Liebe anspornen, aus. Es sind diese zwölf Punkte, deren Verwirklichung zur Einheit führt:¹⁶ 1) Gott – Liebe, 2) der Wille Gottes, 3) Liebe zum Nächsten, 4) das Wort des Lebens, 5) die gemeinsame Liebe, 6) Jesus der Verlassene, 7) die Einheit, 8) Jesus in der Mitte, 9) Eucharistie, 10) die Kirche, 11) Maria, 12) der Heilige Geist.

Die Mitglieder der Fokolar-Bewegung sollen ihr Leben als Christus gestalten, ein anderer Christus sein, besonders durch die Liebe. Die Liebe hat Chiara Lubich als das Licht wahrgenommen, das sich im Tropfen in die sieben Farben des Regenbogens bricht.¹⁷ Diese Farben drücken aus, wie man konkret die Liebe in den einzelnen Bereichen verwirklichen soll. Diese Farben haben folgende Bedeutung: 1) Rot – Gütergemeinschaft und Arbeit, 2) Orange – Zeugnis und Ausbreitung, 3) Gelb – Spiritualität und Gebet, 4) Grün – Natur und Leben, 5) Blau – Harmonie und Umwelt, 6) Indigo – Weisheit und Studium, 7) Violett – Einheit und Kommunikationsmittel. Die Generalstatuten der Fokolar-Bewegung wurden am 29. Juni 1990 vom Päpstlichen Rat für die Laien approbiert.¹⁸

3. Jesus in der Mitte

¹⁵ Chiara Lubich, Text von 8. 11. 1950, in Jesus Castellano Cervera OCD, *Il castello esteriore. Il "nuovo" nella spiritualità di Chiara Lubich* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2011), 59.

¹⁶ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 51–61.

¹⁷ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 65–160. Klaus Hemmerle stellt diese Aspekte, dreifaltig entfaltet, verständlich dar. Klaus Hemmerle, Dreifaltigkeit. Lebensentwurf für den Menschen aus dem Leben Gottes, in *Dreifaltigkeit. Schlüssel zum Menschen, Schlüssel zur Zeit. Beiträge zu Zeitfragen des Glaubens*, hrsg. von Klaus Hemmerle (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1989), 119–135.

¹⁸ Lubich, *Una via nuova*, 67.

Das Leben der Einheit kostet Mühe, die zur gegenseitigen Liebe mit der Erfahrung Jesu in der Mitte führt. Sie führt zur Nachahmung der Beziehungen der göttlichen Personen in Gott. „Damit Jesus in unserer Mitte sein kann, müssen wir einander lieben, wie Er uns geliebt hat. Und Du weißt, dass das bedeutet, ein ‚anderer Christus‘ zu sein. Damit Christus unter uns sein kann, müssen wir zuerst Er sein. ... Wir sind nicht vollkommen Er, solange Er nicht unter uns ist. Ist Er unter uns, sind wir Einer und Drei, und jeder ist dem Einen gleich. Daran können wir feststellen, wann Er unter uns ist: wenn wir uns frei fühlen, eins und voller Licht, wenn Ströme lebendigen Wassers aus unserem Innern fließen. Unter uns vollzieht sich ähnliches wie in der Dreifaltigkeit.“¹⁹ Jesus in der Mitte kann man auch dann erfahren, wenn die Personen entfernt sind. Das bestätigt Chiara Lubich in einem Brief aus dem Jahre 1957: „Jesus kann unter uns sein, auch wenn wir weit voneinander entfernt sind.“²⁰ Jesus in der Mitte gibt auch das Licht, um das Wort Gottes zu verstehen. „Wenn wir nicht wissen, wie wir uns verhalten sollen, an wen wenden wir uns, wenn nicht an ihn? Deswegen sagen wir einander: ‚Halten wir Jesus in unserer Mitte, damit wir verstehen können, was Gott von uns will!‘ Er ist das Licht unseres Lebens, die Lösung unserer Probleme. Ähnlich äußert sich auch Origenes, wenn er schreibt: ‚Gelingt es uns nicht, ein Problem zu lösen und zu klären, dann sollen wir uns an Jesus wenden und einträchtig unsere Bitte vorbringen, denn er ist gegenwärtig, wo zwei oder drei in seinem Namen vereint sind. Wie er mit seiner Kraft und Macht gegenwärtig ist, ist er auch bereit, die Herzen zu erleuchten ..., damit wir die Fragen verstehen können.“²¹²² Jesus in der Mitte hilft auch auf dem Weg zur gemeinsamen Heiligung. „Gott führte uns immer mehr dahin, sein Reich nicht nur in uns, sondern auch unter uns zu suchen. Wenn wir es unter uns suchen, dann entfaltet er sich auch in uns. Der Einzelne sollte nicht allein auf Gott zugehen, sondern mit den anderen. Wir sollten nicht als einzelne heilig werden, sondern in Gemeinschaft miteinander, mit vielen Menschen.“²⁵ Jesus in der Mitte führt nicht

¹⁹ Chiara Lubich, Aufzeichnung von 1949, in *Jesus in der Mitte. Jesu Gegenwart unter den Menschen in der Fokolar-Spiritualität*, Judith M. Povillus (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1990, 2. Auflage), 55.

²⁰ Chiara Lubich, Brief aus dem Jahr 1957, in *Jesus in der Mitte*, 26.

²¹ Origenes, *Comment. in Matth.* XII, 15 (PG 13: 1131).

²² Chiara Lubich, *Mitten unter ihnen. Der auferstandene Christus in der Gemeinschaft* (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1989, 4. Auflage), 34–35.

²⁵ Lubich, *Einheit als Lebensstil*, 73.

nur einzelne Menschen zur Heiligkeit, sondern auch die Fokolar-Bewegung, *Werk Mariens*. „Chiara Lubich sieht in Jesus in der Mitte den Gründer, den Gesetzgeber und auch den verantwortlichen Leiter des *Werkes*.“²⁴ Jesus in der Mitte ist für Chiara Lubich der größte Schatz der Welt: „Wenn wir eins sind, ist Jesus unter uns. Und das zählt. Es zählt mehr als jeder andere Schatz, den unser Herz besitzen kann: mehr als die Mutter, der Vater, die Brüder, die Kinder. Es zählt mehr als das Haus, die Arbeit, das Eigentum; mehr als die Kunstwerke einer großen Stadt wie Rom, mehr als unsere Geschäfte, mehr als die Natur, die uns umgibt mit Blumen und Wiesen, dem Meer und den Sternen; mehr als unsere Seele.“²⁵ Chiara Lubich war sich dessen bewusst, dass Jesus in der Mitte der Menschheit das Neue gibt, ein neues Element in der Geschichte der Spiritualität: „Es ist Jesus in der Mitte, der das Mehr unseres Charismas darstellt ...“²⁶ Die Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte hat sie selber²⁷ wie auch ein Priester aus der Tschechoslowakei, wie sie das bemerkt, als ein mystisches Element bezeichnet.²⁸

4. Paradies '49

Chiara Lubich hat selbst eine mystische Erfahrung zusammen mit Igino Giordani und ihren ersten Gefährtinnen erlebt. Es war im Urlaub in den Dolomiten im Sommer 1949. Igino Giordani war ein verheirateter Abgeordneter im italienischen Parlament. Nach dem Kennenlernen der Spiritualität von Chiara Lubich war er entschlossen, im Geist dieser Spiritualität zu leben. Er wollte ihr ein Gelübde des Gehorsams machen. Sie hat das nicht angenommen, aber mit ihm einen Pakt der gegenseitigen Liebe mit einem absoluten Leersein des eigenen Ichs geschlossen. Dann nahm sie am 16. Juli 1949 an der Messe in der Kirche teil, nach der Kommunion wollte sie das

²⁴ Povilus, *Jesus in der Mitte*, 100. „Wir glauben, dass er das Haupt dieses Werkes ist.“ Chiara Lubich, Bandaufnahme von 19.8.60 (Grottaferrata, An Fokolare), in *Jesus in der Mitte*, 100.

²⁵ Chiara Lubich, *Bis wir alle eins sein werden* (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1979, 11. Auflage), 92.

²⁶ Chiara Lubich, „Le religiose e la spiritualità collettiva, alle Segretarie delle Religiose, Castel Gandolfo, 24.4.1995,“ in Chiara Lubich, *Gesù in mezzo. Testi scelti da scritti e conversazioni*, a cura di Dona Fratta e Deogratias Kasujja (Roma: Città Nuova, 2008), 21.

²⁷ Chiara Lubich, „Agli interni della Polonia, Lituania e Russia, Varsavia, 5.3.2000, risp. N. 6, in Lubich,“ *Gesù in mezzo*, 31.

²⁸ Chiara Lubich, „Ai perni dei religiosi, Saint Maurice (CH), 29.7.1987, risp. N. 8,“ in Lubich, *Gesù in mezzo*, 89.

Wort „Jesus“ aussprechen, aber sie konnte nur das Wort „Vater“ (Abba) sagen. Sie erfuhr sich im Schosse des Vaters, und der Heilige Geist gab ihr dieses Wort in den Mund. Diese Erfahrungen dauerten bis zum Jahr 1950. Sie erfuhr, dass sie alle, auch Igino und ihre Gefährtinnen, geeint in der Liebe, im Schosse des Vaters als eine Seele waren. Sie erzählte das ihren Gefährtinnen und Igino, schrieb ihre Erfahrungen später nieder und vernichtete dann die Texte, um sie nach Jahren in Worte zu fassen.²⁹ Diese Texte werden jetzt in der ‚Schule Abba‘ studiert, die sich der Entfaltung der spirituellen Erfahrungen von Chiara Lubich widmet. In diesen Erfahrungen von „Paradies ‘49“ zeigt sich eine neue Ontologie.⁵⁰ Klaus Hemmerle sieht das Neue dieser Erfahrungen in diesen Punkten:⁵¹ 1) Chiara Lubich hat die unendliche Liebe Gottes entdeckt. 2) Alles andere hat keine Existenz in sich. 3) Die ersten Fokolarinnen entschließen sich dazu, an ihrem Grab die Inschrift anzubringen: „Wir haben an die Liebe geglaubt“ (vgl. 1 Joh 4,16). Das bedeutet, ihr Sein hat seinen Grund in der Gott-Liebe, ihr Sein ist ein „Wir“ in einer gemeinsamen Erfahrung. Die Liebe Gottes macht aus ihnen eine Gemeinschaft. 4) Sie haben verstanden, dass sie auf Gottes Liebe mit ihrem Leben nach Gottes Willen im gegenwärtigen Augenblick antworten sollen. Die Zeit wird zur Beziehung zwischen Gott und ihnen. 5) Die Neuheit des Seins zeigt sich im neuen Blick des anderen: in jedem anderen kann man Gott begegnen. 6) Weitere neue Aspekte dieser Ontologie sind: die gegenseitige Liebe, die Einheit, Jesus in der Mitte. Sie haben verstanden, dass sie gegenseitige Liebe als Antwort auf Gottes Liebe haben sollen (vgl. Joh 13,34-35). Die Einheit der Trinität spiegelt sich in ihren Beziehungen (vgl. Joh 17,20-5). Es

²⁹ Einige Texte dieser Erfahrungen sind jetzt mit den Kommentaren veröffentlicht: Vera Araújo et al., *Il Patto dell' '49 nell'esperienza di Chiara Lubich. Percorsi interdisciplinari* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2012). Eine Einführung in die Texte dieser mystischen Erfahrungen und ihre Geschichte gibt jetzt Fabio Ciardi, *Viaggiando il Paradiso. L'esperienza di luce nel Paradiso '49* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2019).

⁵⁰ Klaus Hemmerle, „L'ontologia del ‚Paradiso‘ '49,“ *Sophia* 6, no. 2 (2014): 127–157. Diese Texte gliedern sich in zwei Teile. Der erste Teil behandelt die wichtigen Etappen vom Anfang der Fokolar-Bewegung ab der Weihe Chiara Lubichs an Gott am 7.8.1943 (Absätze 1–18). Im ersten Absatz wird erwähnt, dass in den ersten fünf Jahren die Mitglieder der Fokolar-Bewegung einige Punkte der Spiritualität kennengelernt und gelebt haben (Gott-Liebe, der Wille Gottes, Jesus im Nächsten sehen, das neue Gebot, Jesus der Verlassene, Jesus in der Mitte). Der zweite Teil behandelt die letzten Tage vor der mystischen Erfahrung am 16.7.1949. Dabei wird das intensive Leben mit dem Wort Gottes hervorgehoben. Die Absätze zum Pakt '49 sind formuliert nach: *Il Patto dell' '49 nell'esperienza di Chiara Lubich*, 15–25.

⁵¹ Klaus Hemmerle, „L'ontologia del ‚Paradiso‘ '49,“ 130–135.

entsteht ein neues „Wir“. 7) Diese Ontologie hat ihre Wurzel in Jesus dem Verlassenen.³² Jesus selbst wurde zur Sünde (2 Kor 5,21). In den ersten Jahren haben sich die elementaren Punkte der Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung mit ihren ontologischen Voraussetzungen formiert und wurden später klarer entwickelt. Sie sind aufeinander bezogen in einer gegenseitigen Perichoresis. Die Grunderfahrung ist die Gott-Liebe, und die Grundelemente sind Jesus der Verlassene und die Einheit. Auch die Personen in der gegenseitigen Liebe sind in der gegenseitigen Perichoresis, Ich, Du und Wir.

Die gottgeweihten Fokolaren/innen, die in kleinen Gemeinschaften leben, bemühen sich um die Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte. Ihr Ziel soll das Wachstum der Gegenwart Jesu in ihrer Mitte sein.³³

Auf dem Weg zu diesem Ziel hilft das Praktizieren der Punkte der Spiritualität, die auch Instrumente auf dem Weg der gemeinschaftlichen und personalen Begleitung genannt werden:³⁴ 1) das Aussprechen des Paktes der gegenseitigen Liebe, 2) das gemeinsame Erzählen von den Erfahrungen mit dem Wort des Lebens, 3) der Austausch der Erfahrungen spiritueller Früchte, 4) die persönlichen Gespräche, 5) die Stunde der Wahrheit. Die Erneuerung des Paktes der gegenseitigen Liebe, der Austausch der Erfahrungen mit dem Wort des Lebens und der eigenen Seele und die Stunde der Wahrheit erfolgen meistens in der monatlichen geistlichen Erneuerung. Das Wachstum der Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte kann auch durch die Beziehung mit anderen Mitgliedern der Fokolaren oder anderen Zweigen der Fokolar-Bewegung gefördert werden. Wichtig ist das Bemühen um die Gestaltung der Beziehung nach dem Vorbild der göttlichen Personen in der Dreifaltigkeit. Für die Verwirklichung des Zieles des Wachstums der Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte kann auch die Hilfe externer Begleiter wichtig sein. In der Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte gibt manchmal der

³² Jesus der Verlassene ist Jesus im Erleben seiner größten Schmerzen, als er am Kreuz die Wörter des Psalms 22 rief: „Mein Gott, mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen?“ (Mk 15,34) Chiara Lubich und ihre Gefährtinnen hörten das einmal von einem Priester. Sie nahmen dann „Jesus den Verlassenen“, wie sie ihn in seinem Schmerz nannten, als Vorbild für ihr Leben. Chiara Lubich, *Einheit als Lebensstil. Aus der Geschichte und Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung* (München: Neue Stadt), 55.

³³ Michele Lauriola, „L’accompagnamento dei focolari nell’Opera di Maria,“ *Unità e Carismi*, no. 3 (2018): 34–37.

³⁴ Zur gemeinschaftlichen Begleitung siehe Michele Lauriola, *Accompagnamento spirituale e comunio personale nella spiritualità dell’unità* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2018), 103–118; Michele Lauriola, „L’accompagnamento dei focolari nell’Opera di Maria,“ *Unità e Carismi*, no. 3 (2018): 34–37.

Heilige Geist den Impuls zur Unterscheidung, wenn sich einer fragt, was er tun soll, und die anderen bleiben still, sie bleiben aus Liebe „leer“, und er begreift seine Aufgabe.⁵⁵ Die gemeinschaftliche Begleitung geschieht besonders in der Stunde der Wahrheit. Dabei werden den einzelnen Mitgliedern von anderen positive wie negative Seiten ihres Verhaltens aufgezeigt. Es geschieht nach einer alten Praxis der Kirche und nach den Worten des Neuen Testaments über die brüderliche Ermahnung (Mt 18,15–17; Eph 4,25; Gal 6,1; Hebr 10,24). Wichtig ist, dass dies in der Atmosphäre gegenseitiger Liebe, also in der Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte geschieht.⁵⁶ Chiara Lubich bezeichnet diesen Punkt als „den am meisten verpflichtenden und den schwierigsten für unseren alten Menschen. Dabei sollen wir aus der Liebe ... und aus der Sehnsucht mit uns auch den anderen helfen sich zu heiligen, wir bemühen uns zu öffnen, was wir an ihnen Negatives und Positives beobachten können.“⁵⁷

5. Die Trinitarische Ontologie von Klaus Hemmerle

Die Bemühung um die Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte aufgrund der gegenseitigen Liebe wird von einigen als „Trinitarisierung“ bezeichnet, weil damit trinitarische Beziehungen nach dem Vorbild der Trinität entstehen. Stefano Mazzer gibt diese theologisch fundierte Definition der Trinitarisierung: „Das Reden von *Trinitarisierung* der Bindungen, während es diesem Ereignis die Qualität als *aus der Dreieinigkeit selbst herauskommende Gabe* kraft der Fleischwerdung des Sohnes sowie seines Todes sowie seiner Auferstehung versichert, beabsichtigt aber mit ebensolcher Kraft die Nicht-anspielung dessen zu betonen, was das Stichwort geltend macht: die intersubjektiven Bindungen, wenn sie *die Gestalt der trinitarischen agape* annehmen und sich *frei von ihr bestimmen* lassen, sind durch die Gnade wirklich trinitisiert, d. h. sie sind reale christologisch vermittelte und pneumatologisch geschenkte *Erfahrung* der Teilnahme am Leben Gottes selbst.“⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Chiara Lubich, „Alle Segretarie dei Religiosi, regolamento della branca – Introduzione al tema sullo Spirito Santo, 30.1.90,“ in Lubich, *Gesù in mezzo*, 18–19.

⁵⁶ Lauriola, *Accompagnamento spirituale*, 109–112.

⁵⁷ Chiara Lubich, *Santità di popolo* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2001), 31.

⁵⁸ Stefano Mazzer, „*Li amò fino alla fine.*“ *Il nulla tutto dell'amore* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2014), 10–11. Text der deutschen Übersetzung nach: Piero Coda, „Manifest. Für eine trinitarische Ontologie,“ *Diakrisis. Yearbook of Theology and Philosophy* 3 (2020): 91, Anm. 29.

Diese Gedanken inspirierten auch Klaus Hemmerle, den Theologen, Philosophen und späteren Bischof von Aachen.³⁹ Er versuchte sie in seinem Leben zu verwirklichen und Grundlage einiger seiner Schriften zu machen. Einige Gedanken dazu hat er schon in seinem Werk *Vorspiel zur Theologie* entwickelt.⁴⁰ Am Spiel müssen immer einige teilnehmen. Seinen Höhepunkt erfährt das Spiel in der Dreifaltigkeit. Es ist ein Urspiel des dreifaltigen Lebens, das sich im Sich-Geben⁴¹ äußert. Der Grundcharakter des Guten, das sich verschenken will, zeigt sich in der Selbsthingabe Gottes, in der Selbstäußerung seines Sohnes. Wir sind aufgefordert, in dieses Spiel Jesu einzusteigen, mit ihm mitzuspielen, von ihm das Spiel zu erlernen. „Die Wahrheit des Spiels ist Sich-Geben.“⁴² Wo es den Menschen gelingt, dort bezeugen

³⁹ Klaus Hemmerle wurde am 3. April 1929 in Freiburg als einziges Kind von Franz-Valentin Hemmerle und Maria, geb. Hummel geboren. Das Studium am Berthold-Gymnasium schloß er 1947 mit dem Abitur ab. In den Jahren 1947–1951 studierte er Theologie an der Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg. Zugleich wohnte er als Priesteramtskandidat im Theologenkonvikt Collegium Borromaeum. Dann trat er ins Priesterseminar ein. Am 25. Mai 1952 wurde er in Freiburg zum Priester geweiht. Von 1. Oktober 1952 bis zum 1. Mai 1954 war er Kaplan in Rheinfelden. Dann wurde er zum Weiterstudium und zur Promotion freigestellt. Er studierte in Freiburg bei Bernhard Welte und brachte 1957 seine Dissertation über Franz von Baader zum Abschluß. In den Jahren 1956–1961 war er der erste Direktor der Katholischen Akademie Freiburg. Im Sommer 1958 lernte er die Fokolar-Bewegung in den Dolomiten kennen, war von ihr begeistert und wurde ihr Mitglied. Im Jahre 1967 wurde er für die Habilitation freigestellt. Er habilitierte sich mit einer Arbeit über Schellings Spätphilosophie. Im Jahre 1968 wurde er als Geistlicher Direktor ans Generalsekretariat des Zentralkomitees der deutschen Katholiken (ZdK) nach Bonn berufen. In den Jahren 1970–1973 wirkte er als Professor für Fundamentalthologie in Bochum, in den Jahren 1973–1975 als Professor für Religionsphilosophie in Freiburg. Am 8. November 1975 wurde er zum Bischof in Aachen geweiht und war in diesem Amt bis zu seinem Tod am 23. Januar 1994 tätig. Er unterstützte die 1991 von Chiara Lubich gegründete ‚Scuola Abba‘. Wolfgang Bader, Wilfried Hagemann, Klaus Hemmerle. *Grundlinie eines Lebens* (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 2000); Klaus Hemmerle, Unser Lebensraum – der dreifaltige Gott. Die Gotteserfahrung von Chiara Lubich, in Klaus Hemmerle, *Gemeinschaft als Bild Gottes. Beiträge zur Ekklesiologie*, Ausgewählte Schriften, Band 5, ausgewählt und eingeleitet von Hanspeter Heinz und Anton E. van Hooff, (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 1996), 296–305.

⁴⁰ Klaus Hemmerle, *Vorspiel zur Theologie. Einübungen* (Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 1976).

⁴¹ Das Sich-Geben als das Ur-eigentliche des Lebens der Dreifaltigkeit wird bei Hemmerle öfters als Grundgedanke des dreifaltigen Lebens erwähnt. So auch in der Schrift: Klaus Hemmerle, „Bonaventura und der Ansatz theologischen Denkens,“ *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 37 (1974): 89–97. Skizzen zur Pastoral und zur Entfaltung der neuen Gesellschaft mit Jesus in der Mitte bringt Klaus Hemmerle in der Schrift: Klaus Hemmerle, *Der Himmel ist zwischen uns* (München-Zürich-Wien: Neue Stadt, 1978, 3. Aufl.).

⁴² Klaus Hemmerle, *Vorspiel zur Theologie*, 56.

sie das Spiel der Liebe des dreifaltigen Gottes (Joh 17,21).⁴⁵ Besonders prägnant hat sich Klaus Hemmerle zum Aufbau der trinitarischen Beziehungen in seiner Schrift *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie* geäußert.⁴⁴ Er skizzierte hier ein Programm zum Aufbau trinitarischer Beziehungen, das auf den Voraussetzungen der trinitarischen Ontologie basieren soll. Trinitarische Ontologie soll eine neue Ontologie sein. Diese neue Ontologie braucht Theologie wie Philosophie. Diese neue Ontologie soll auf dem unterscheidend Christlichen bauen, auf dem Glauben an Jesus Christus als dem menschgewordenen Gott und unserem Erlöser, auf seinem heilsamen Tod und seiner Auferstehung. Und seine Heilsgeschichte führt uns zugleich in das Geheimnis der Trinität ein. Wenn Gott dreifaltig ist und sich uns in der Menschwerdung Gottes in Christus, in seinem Tod und in seiner Auferstehung die Liebe Gottes gezeigt hat, dann will Gott uns in sein Leben der Dreifaltigkeit hineinnehmen, in das Sich-geben und Sich-verschenken. Trinitarische Ontologie entschlüsselt dieses innere Leben der Dreifaltigkeit und sein Hineinströmen in die Welt. Höhepunkte dieser Liebe sind die Kenosis des Gottessohnes und sein Warum-Schrei am Kreuz. Diese neue trinitarische Ontologie hat Konsequenzen für die Philosophie, Theologie und Gesellschaft. Mit Blick auf das Thema dieses Beitrags können uns am meisten ihre Bedingungen und Konsequenzen für die Spiritualität interessieren.⁴⁵ Diese Spiritualität schöpft aus der Liebe Gottes zu uns: „Wir haben an die Liebe geglaubt“ (1 Joh 4,16). Sie ist kontemplativ, weil sie die Spuren dieser Liebe auch in Problemen und Schwierigkeiten, auch in den dunkelsten Augenblicken des Lebens sieht, weil sie dort das Kreuzgeheimnis entdeckt. Sie ist zugleich aktiv, weil sie dazu gedrängt wird, diesen Schmerz in Liebe zu verwandeln. Sie ist auch kommunitär, weil das Sich-geben in der Gemeinschaft im Bemühen um die Gegenwart Jesu in der Mitte gelebt wird, damit die Welt glaubt (vgl. Joh 17,21; Mt 18,20).

Den Begriff „trinitarische Ontologie“ hat als einer der ersten Ernest J. Davey im Jahre 1956 verwendet.⁴⁶ Das Neue, das Klaus Hemmer-

⁴⁵ Hemmerle, *Vorspiel zur Theologie*, 31–59.

⁴⁴ Klaus Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1976).

⁴⁵ Hemmerle, *Thesen*, 68–72.

⁴⁶ „Eine der ersten Überlegungen zu den Entwicklungen einer trinitarischen Ontologie erscheint schon im Jahr 1956 aus der Feder von Ernest J. Davey. Ihr gingen die Werke von Theodor Haecker, Hans Eduard Hengstenberg, Wilhelm Mock und Clemens Kaliba voran, welche mit der Absicht geschrieben wurden, zur Erneuerung der

le mit seiner trinitarischen Ontologie bringt, ist ihr Ausgang aus der Erfahrung von Jesus in der Mitte, die er selbst erlebt hat und um die er sich dann bemüht hat. Das betont auch Bernhard Körner, wenn er schreibt, dass das gegenseitige Sich-geben die Bedingungen vorbereitet, dass zwischen diesen Menschen Jesus in der Mitte sein kann.⁴⁷ Klaus Hemmerle schöpft auch aus den mystischen Erfahrungen Chiara Lubichs des „Paradies ‘49“, in denen er eine neue trinitarische Ontologie als ihre Quelle entdeckt.

Schluss

Die trinitarische Ontologie ist eine ontologische Voraussetzung der gemeinschaftlichen Spiritualität der Fokolar-Bewegung. Jesus der Verlassene ist die Quelle und Jesus in der Mitte ist Ausdruck der gemeinschaftlichen Spiritualität. Klaus Hemmerle hat die trinitarische Ontologie in den mystischen Erfahrungen Chiara Lubichs vom Paradies ‘49 entdeckt und durch sein Denken vertieft. Diese trinitarische Ontologie ist auch eine Voraussetzung der persönlichen und gemeinschaftlichen Begleitung in der Fokolar-Bewegung, die ihren Ausdruck in den Instrumenten dieser Begleitung findet.

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Metaphysik im Licht des Geheimnisses und der Offenbarung Gottes Dreieinigkeit beizutragen – Werke, in denen neben den Termini *Analogia trinitatis*, *Wort-Ontologie* und *trinitarische Metaphysik* auch der Terminus *trinitarische Ontologie* erscheint“ Lubomír Žák, „Unità di Dio: questio princeps dell’ontologia trinitaria,“ *Path* 11, No. 2 (2012): 40. Text der deutschen Übersetzung nach: Coda, „Manifest,“ 90. Zur Geschichte des Begriffs der trinitarischen Ontologie vgl. Szymon Krzysztof Ciećko, „Alcune linee di ontologia trinitaria,“ *Teologia i człowiek* 49, No. 1 (2020): 27–42.

⁴⁷ Bernhard Körner, „La gnoseologia teologica alla luce di una ontologia trinitaria,“ in *Abitando la Trinità. Per un rinnovamento dell’ontologia*, eds. Piero Coda, Lubomír Žák (Roma: Città Nuova, 1998), 92.

VARIA

THE RESURRECTION IN THE WORK OF KLAUS BERGER

DAVID BOUMA

ABSTRACT

This article offers selected thoughts of the recently deceased New Testament scholar Klaus Berger (1940–2020). In the first part of the text, I will introduce some of his systematising theses concerning the theme of Easter. I will first present three critical suggestions on the topic under discussion and then give space to an equal number of his positive statements. In the second part of the text, I will introduce the original interpretation of 1 Cor. 15 as found in Berger's monumental work *Kommentar zum Neuem Testament*. Berger's interpretation of 1 Cor. 15 will thus complement the reflection on Easter themes as presented in his confrontation-oriented attempt *Bibelfälscher* from 2013. In conclusion, we will attempt to place the aforesaid within the broad framework of Berger's historical, biblical, and theological hermeneutics.

Keywords

Klaus Berger; Historical Jesus; Resurrection of Jesus Christ; Revelation of the Risen One; Easter faith; St. Paul's theology; Theological hermeneutics

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Klaus Berger has long been known as a critic of the exegetical and theological mainstream, and this is no different when it comes to the crucial question of Jesus' resurrection. While he defends the belief that Easter faith is defined by the empty tomb and the transfigured corporeality of the resurrection, he adds, surprisingly, that the Easter message of the New Testament witnesses is usually over-emphasised, since pre-Easter Jesus had clearly already manifested his

divine status. Berger's constructive suggestions point in a similar direction when he defends the historical basis of the Gospel Easter narratives, the Christological significance of the earthly Jesus story, and especially the Transfiguration on the mount as a compelling prefigurement of Jesus' bodily and historical resurrection. Before attempting to summarise Berger's view of the issues raised in the text in the context of his exegetical and theological method, we will present his highly original interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15.

1. Critical Suggestions

Before proceeding to the specific points of Berger's objections, it should be recalled that the author is polemical primarily against liberal Protestant exegesis and theology as he came to know it during his time at the theological faculty in Heidelberg, which, he believes, has also significantly influenced Catholic theology. The contaminated theological source is then supposed to have caused the dismal state of Christian churches in Germany and elsewhere.

1.1 The Overestimation of Easter

In recent decades, Berger observes a paradoxically distorted interpretation of Easter in the work of a number of his colleagues: on the one hand, by claiming that it is not a historical event, they deprive Easter of its core; on the other hand, they overemphasise its theological significance.¹ Since the 1960s, this concept of Easter has marked a diametric change of perspective – while Jesus looked ahead towards the Kingdom of God, the post-Easter community turns its attention to Jesus and itself. Berger argues that 'the ugly gulf' between the historical and post-Easter Jesus is deepening, human and divine action is radically separated, with the 'divine' meaning (in some versions) Jesus' earthly story and possibly the disciples' (gifted) understanding that his death is not the complete end. However, the church then begins to pile on misinterpretations and misjudgements; the 'human' (to

¹ According to Berger, Paul's vision at Damascus is, by more recent scholarship, seen as the foundation of Paul's gospel and has been compared to Martin Luther's *Turmerlebnis*. The Easter visions of the disciples are usually characterised as a figurative depiction of the experience of the community. Cf. Klaus Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher. Wie wir um die Wahrheit betrogen werden* (München: Pattloch, 2013), 90.

varying degrees, again depending on the author) then contaminates the tradition.²

Although God did awaken faith in the disciples, the church's practice, dogmatics, and structures were suddenly separated from the pre-Easter Jesus.³ The Easter faith is a product of the early Christians, and the historical Jesus is lost behind their theological and literary productivity. Our author takes a strictly dissenting position towards this trend: Easter remains important, but its significance cannot be disproportionately and one-sidedly overestimated. According to Berger, it remains an important experience, but it cannot be assumed that it begins a completely new era. For our author, Jesus' promise in John's Gospel that the Holy Spirit would 'remind the disciples of all things' is, of course, true; the Easter experience also opens up a new understanding of the Scriptures, as Luke points out.⁴ The power of the Easter experience, however, must not be overestimated and interpreted in the sense that everything divine and miraculous in the life of Jesus only begins with post-Easter interpretation. The stories of Jesus' childhood, the miracles, the predictions of suffering and other prophecies, the messianic mystery, and Jesus' statements about his own identity belong, according to our author, to the pre-Easter story of Jesus. The Resurrection brings *confirmation*, not a qualitative leap.⁵

² Cf. e.g. Hansjürgen Verweyen's Easter theses, where his somewhat exaggerated transcendental method detects this contamination already in the Gospel itself. Then in the German-speaking area, the leading expert on the Resurrection, Hans Kessler, perceives great errors in the post-biblical tradition, the so-called Hellenisation of Christianity.

³ Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 86–87. This approach, according to Berger, is related to the mistaken belief that we know almost nothing about the pre-Easter Jesus. G. A. van den Bergh van Eysing even questioned the very existence of Jesus. Berger names his predecessor from his former work in Leiden, the Netherlands, along with the historians of religion R. Reitzenstein and W. Bousset as scholars who greatly intensified the sceptical mood on the post-Easter side.

⁴ In the last decade, Berger has somewhat moderated his views in this respect. He used to argue that the Catholic theological tradition presumptuously substitutes the lack of awareness of the historicity of the Gospels by the Holy Spirit (the events did not actually happen, but the Spirit led the scribes to use them as symbols and metaphors to reveal the meaning of Jesus). In this, Berger saw a flaw comparable to Bultmann's grasp of the principle of *sola fides*, which regards as a virtue the idea that faith needs no support in the reality of Jesus' words and deeds. Cf. David Bouma, *Provokatör Klaus Berger: Kritika východisek současné novozákonní exegeze v díle Klause Bergera a její možné využití ve fundamentální teologii* (Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2011), 168–171.

⁵ Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 88–89. Here, Berger confronts his Heidelberg rival G. Theissen, who in his famous textbook (Gerd Theißen, Anette Merz, *Der historische Jesus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013)) declares that the scene of the

1.2 The Post-Easter Deification of Jesus

Klaus Berger believes that the liberal scholarship has declared Jesus to be a charismatic but humble teacher, and only the later vague experiences of the disciples after the crucifixion became the impetus for his deification. Berger suggests that it is then thought to be followed by the process of subsequent posthumous deification that we might place within the broader category of euhemerism.⁶ Jesus himself, however, took no action nor even suspected anything in this direction. Faith, in this interpretive scheme, is not based on Jesus but on the reflection of his disciples, for the Nazarene rabbi did not even allow himself to be addressed as a 'good master' (Mark 10:17–19). Jesus did not awaken faith in himself but concentrated on announcing the Kingdom of God, and any deification of himself was alien to him. This, however, sets up a fundamental conflict between Jesus and the church since the church in this interpretation is responsible for things no one asked for and which are not necessary: dogma, sacraments, institutions, etc. These are the results of later reflection, rather misleading with regard to Jesus.

In this view, Easter is about a change of consciousness (*Bewusstseinswandel*). The author is puzzled by the fact that, on the one hand, the present model derives all that is essential from Easter (faith, profession of faith, discipleship, church, sacraments, and opposition to Judaism), while on the other hand, it noticeably reduces the Easter events in their historical component. The Easter faith is caused by a change in the consciousness of the disciples and discipleship; sometimes, it is in a certain sense a conversion, and sometimes the cause is the enlightenment or simply insight into previously misunderstood contexts. In the New Testament, the 'primary' Easter texts are grounded on 1 Cor. 15:3–5; everything else beyond these rare hints must be evaluated as post-Easter in the sense of 'editorial' and therefore secondary.⁷

Transfiguration (Mark 9:2–10), Peter's identification as a sinner after a successful fishing trip (Luke 5:8), and quite possibly the Last Supper would have disappeared from Jesus' biography and history without the post-Easter interpretation. Berger's colleague G. Theissen (known in the Czech Republic for his globally successful exegetical novel *Galilejský*) provides an important context for understanding our author. More in my dissertation: David Bouma, *Provokatér Klaus Berger*, 130–141.

⁶ Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 90. The term was coined according to the legendary traveller Euhemerus, who claimed that, on an island he visited, the posthumous worship of rulers as gods was common.

⁷ Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 90–91.

1.3 The Grave was not Empty

Berger criticises those streams of Christian theology that regard the empty tomb tradition as unhistorical and assume that Jesus was buried with criminals in some unknown place. The empty tomb in a literal, not merely figurative, sense sounds less spiritual, too material, too matter-of-fact, and too wondrous for the liberal scholarship. Berger thinks that the source of Easter faith is then placed in psycho-immanent visions. Instead, our author defends the respected parallels to Jesus' empty tomb, namely the rapture of the prophet Elijah, as well as the powerful metaphor of the empty tomb of Job's children from the pre-Christian Hellenistic-Judaic *Testament of Job* 39:11–40:3.⁸ In all cases, the bodies do not lie in graves. As concerns Paul's writing, the critical scholarship on the question of Jesus' tomb is also mistaken as, by choosing to use the word 'resurrection', the apostle adheres to the Judeo-Hellenistic belief according to which a disembodied resurrection is unthinkable. The Pharisaically formed Paul does not accept the idea of the independence of the soul from the body, which is inherent to Hellenistic dualism; the opposite is true. In 1 Cor. 15, the verbs 'to change' and 'to put on' always presuppose 'something' that will be transformed or put on new, which is the old body. Nevertheless, our author admits that the apostle does not know the *ossilegium*, the report of the women's search for the body of Jesus. However, this does not convince Berger of the late apologetic origin of the tradition of Jesus' empty tomb. In this respect, let us also mention Berger's interest in the descent into hell, which our author wishes to defend against the charge that it is a naively mythological construction. The New Testament passages about Christ's descent into the realm of the dead (1 Peter 3:18; 4:6) and the corresponding article in the creed only confirm what the logical implication of the Resurrection is, namely, that Jesus died and consequently resided in the realm of death. For Klaus Berger, the nature of the descent into 'hell' unfolds on the axis of God's sonship – death – resurrection as a necessary consequence of the events between

⁸ Cf. Klaus Berger, *Kommentar zu Neuem Testament* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2017), 204; Berger devoted an extensive monograph to this issue, see Klaus Berger, *Die Auferstehung des Propheten und die Erhöhung des Menschensohnes. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Deutung des Geschickes Jesu in frühchristlichen Texten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976).

death and resurrection.⁹ We will return to these ideas in the second part of the article devoted to the interpretation of 1 Cor. 15.

2. Constructive Suggestions

2.1 Easter as a Continuation of Christology

Berger summarises the key issue as follows: W. Wrede (1859–1906) succeeded in his thesis that Jesus' life was 'non-messianic'; he did not consider himself a messiah and did not encourage his disciples to think so. The Easter revelations, however, changed the situation completely, for the disciples came to the firm conviction that he was and must be the messiah after all. From this point – not without the influential contribution of R. Bultmann¹⁰ – the construct of the successful theory of the *messianic mystery* unfolds. The evangelists, Berger summarises, brought their post-Easter insights into Jesus' pre-Easter story to give plausibility to the outburst of messianic faith and anchor it in Jesus' biography. According to this successful hypothesis, if Jesus speaks of his identity before Easter, the disciples must always remain silent because of the scribe's command. *Messiasgeheimnis*, then, is a post-Easter community measure that explains why Jesus' messiahship was not known during his ministry. Berger ironically compares the exegetes holding this view to the forensic scientists who revealed the 'machinations' of the early community regarding the wording of Jesus' biography by putting the famous 'tell no one' in his mouth.¹¹

Berger responds harshly on this point, showing that there is a better explanation of the messianic mystery than the 'fraudulent invention of the evangelists'. The author gives possible reasons why the pre-Easter Jesus himself commanded his disciples to be silent about his identity. He may have waited for the confirming evidence of his resurrection, or he may have wanted to postpone the dispute with the Jewish elites over his own identity in order to gain time and peace to proclaim his message. Berger suggests that he may have been familiar with both texts on the hunt for the righteous (Wis 2) and the biblical tradition of the 'suffering righteous' and thus knew that the potential for conflict

⁹ Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 92–94.

¹⁰ Berger refers to: Rudolf Bultmann, 'Die Frage nach dem messianischem Bewusstsein Jesu und das Petrusbekenntnis,' in: *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 19 (1919/1920): 165–174.

¹¹ Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 91–92.

around his person was fatal. Berger summarises that silence and secrecy in the Gospels do not conceal deception so a criminalistic interpretation is not right. He proposes either a solution in terms of the history of religion, which links hiddenness with wisdom, or a biographical-historical explanation, according to which Jesus needed time to clarify his legitimacy. Another point of Berger's interpretation will be the alleged diametric disparity between the systematic-theological significance of the Resurrection in liberal theology on the one hand and the weakness of the historical impulse on the other.¹²

2.2 The Transfiguration as a Prefiguration of the Resurrection

Berger maintains that the Transfiguration scene (Mark 9:2–10 par.) cannot be reduced to a symbolic narrative created by the early Christian community to imprint the belief that the Jewish Law and the prophets were fulfilled in Jesus. The process is rather reversed. Out of experiences such as the Transfiguration, a belief in Jesus as the Son of God was gradually born. According to the Heidelberg exegete, we have before us the theological centre of Mark's Gospel, and it confirms Peter's previous confession: 'You are the Messiah' (Mark 8:29). From the mountainside down which the disciples descend with their Master, Mark sketches a great arc leading up to the Resurrection of the Son of Man. Through the perspective of his favourite canonical typological exegesis, the scene of Transfiguration reminds Berger of the Old Testament encounter between God and Moses on Mount Sinai. The theophany at Sinai and the gift of the Ten Commandments to Moses are fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration in the radiant person of Jesus and in the message 'This is my beloved Son, listen to him,' which Berger reads as a message from above that is perceptible to the eyes and ears – a typical theophany. The way towards the communion with God is no longer Moses with the tablets of the Law, but a person to whom one can cling. According to Berger, there is one more case when Jesus surpasses Moses: instead of the blood of a sacrificial animal, he unites man to God by the sacrifice of his own blood. By his resurrection, he thus becomes the ruler of God's kingdom, the Easter ruler of transformed hearts.¹⁵

¹² Cf. Berger, *Die Bibelfälscher*, 92–95.

¹⁵ Cf. Klaus Berger, *Jesus* (München: Pattloch, 2004), 68–74.

For Berger, the Transfiguration is the axis of the gospel; it is an event which he defines as mystical, whose legitimacy is attested to by two witnesses, namely Moses and Elijah.¹⁴ It is not, in his view, a form of Easter vision but a theophany. It was the pre-Easter theophany, along with the miracles and prophecies, that co-created the story of the earthly Jesus and transitioned almost ‘organically’ into the Resurrection and Easter theophany. ‘As is almost always the case, the Easter date is not a boundary to be taken too seriously,’ the author explains.¹⁵

2.3 Resurrection as a Historical Event

Although Berger interestingly bridges the ‘Easter gap’ by emphasising the theophanic dimension of the earthly Jesus on the one hand and, very surprisingly for the theological mainstream, ‘toning down’ the meaning of Easter on the other, we will conclude the selection of his systematising suggestions by accenting the historicity of Jesus’ Resurrection. In his view, the Resurrection belongs to history because it took place in time and space. Only in this way is it comprehensible that it also had historical consequences and powerful impacts, such as, for example, the life of the disciples leading up to their martyrdom. For Klaus Berger, the Resurrection has a bodily dimension, which is not only manifested in the ‘empty tomb’ but also determines the identity of the Risen One, insofar as the disciples encounter the body transfigured. By emphasising the historicity of the Resurrection, the author underlines the fact that it is an event and not merely an idea. Early Christian anthropology leads us to view the resurrection of Jesus as a mystery that can be touched (1 John 1:1–4) since ‘touchability’ is both a fundamental parameter resulting from the incarnation and a distinguishing mark against docetism. It is precisely the illusory nature of the body that contradicts the Christian image of God and which, for Berger, is an unfortunate implication of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century exegesis. However, the author is still aware that the Resurrection remains a very delicate and special matter in terms of history and recommends a careful formulation: ‘The resurrection of Jesus is not an everyday event that can be controlled or reconstructed by the tools of historical science.’¹⁶

¹⁴ Cf. Bouma, *Provokater Klaus Berger*, 114–117.

¹⁵ Cf. Klaus Berger, *Sind die Berichte des Neuen Testaments wahr? Ein Weg zum Verstehen der Bibel* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 162.

¹⁶ Berger, *Sind die Berichte*, 80n, here 81.

The Heidelberg exegete recommends avoiding statements problematising the evidentiality of the Resurrection since there are numerous events that can only be satisfactorily explained on the assumption of perceiving the Resurrection as historical. Nor is it an obstacle that, due to the unimaginability of this mystery, the biological-anthropological approach to the phenomenon of Jesus' resurrection fails, and so it remains by its nature 'non-public' and accessible only to the chosen witnesses. Its effects are among those mysterious events that escape the normal course of history and yet leave their traces, imprints, and consequences. In this context, Berger mentions the raising of Lazarus or the healing of the man blind from birth.¹⁷

3. The Resurrection in 1 Cor. 15

Let us now proceed to a demonstration of what I believe to be Klaus Berger's original thinking on the Resurrection. He is aware of the importance of this passage as it links Christ's resurrection with the future general resurrection of all Christians; he also refers to this exclusive chapter of Paul with regard to the exegetically significant theme of the kingdom of God and discusses its Trinitarian potential in an intriguing way. As a scholar who emphasises the historical anchoring of the New Testament witnesses, he understandably does not overlook the chapter's historical introduction, in which Paul defends his place on the list of eyewitnesses to the Risen One.

Berger first recalls the context of Paul's chief theological composition: that of the people in Corinth who do not believe in an eschatological resurrection. The Corinthians, the exegete suggests, may still believe in the immortality of the soul, but they are perhaps even more sceptical. Paul is determined to give them proof of the bodily resurrection as the goal of Christian hope, and he wants to base this proof on the reality of Jesus' resurrection. That is why he devotes close attention to securing this key point of his theology and presents a list of 530 eyewitnesses, among whom he counts himself. These authorities can testify to the risen Jesus, but they can also interpret it, which the apostle does with his magnificent sketch of the theology of history. According to the Heidelberg exegete, Paul envisions history as a space in which God wants to encounter people. In this respect, the appearances of the

¹⁷ Cf. Berger, *Sind die Berichte*, 81; Cf. Bouma, *Provokater Klaus Berger*, 99–102.

Risen One are encounters of primary importance and are mainly about the physicality of the new creation. The implications of Jesus' bodily resurrection are crucial since the risen Christ foreshadows the destiny of believers. Jesus, the new Adam in Paul's view, opens up a different horizon for Christians, one in which death no longer plays a role and which is shaped – in sharp contrast to Hellenistic ideas – by the new corporeality of Christians.¹⁸

Berger approaches the question of Jesus' Jerusalem tomb, which, unlike in the Gospels, is not mentioned at all by Paul, by taking into account the paradigmatic role of Jesus' resurrection. Against the view that, according to 1 Cor. 15, Jesus' body remained in the tomb and the Risen One appeared in a purely spiritual form instead of in transfigured corporeality, Berger presents the following arguments to defend the hypothesis that Paul quite naturally assumes Jesus' empty tomb at the time of Easter:

a. As an expert on ancient Judaism, Berger makes an argument from the history of religion. He says that ancient Judaism knows no such thing as the idea of the 'purely spiritual' as opposed to the 'corporeal'. He states that the dualism of spirit and matter is found in the ancient world only in Plato, and then, through Christian Platonism, in the dogmatics of the ancient church; but in the New Testament, we are still dealing with the Jews. For this reason, Paul, when speaking of the resurrection, must mean something corporeal in the broadest sense of the word.

b. The next argument of Klaus Berger is derived from contemporary Jewish *apocalyptic eschatology*. Apocalyptic Judaism of the New Testament era shares with the Hellenistic milieu the term 'transfiguration' as found, for example, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In principle, according to our author, it is the transformation of man into something different and better, and even in extra-biblical contexts, it is a divine process. Judaism knows of a God-centred transformation, especially when one enters God's 'zone' or stands before His throne in order to withstand. This transformation, often expressed in the imagery of putting on new clothes, is found, for example, in the *Ethiopian Enoch*. In 1 Cor. 15:51–53, Paul speaks of the transformation of Christians, using the image of dressing; Berger emphasises that the whole person is transformed

¹⁸ Cf. Berger, *Kommentar zu Neuem Testament*, 619.

to the point that the old body (*Leib*) no longer exists. It is a complete ‘change of clothes’ in which the whole old man is integrated.

c. The third argument is based on *Paul’s own thinking*: ‘For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality,’ says the apostle in 1 Cor. 15:53. Through the above-mentioned ‘clothing’, the mortal is transformed. And just a verse later it says that this ‘clothing’ of imperishability will lead to swallowing up death. Berger concludes that the mortal is simply no longer there – it is absorbed by life through the Holy Spirit. It encompasses the soul as well as the body. The Holy Spirit embraces, overcomes, and replaces everything in man that is subject to death. The essence of this process, according to our author, lies precisely in the fact that the old no longer exists but has been integrated into the change (*hineinverwandelt ist*).¹⁹

Because of the above reasons, Berger concludes, we must necessarily assume that, for Paul, the resurrection account presupposes an empty tomb, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the *Corpus Paulinum*. The absorption of all that was mortal implies the replacement of the old with the new without residue.²⁰

However, important though it is, Berger does not wish to overestimate the category of transformation used by the apostle as the new is described in 1 Cor. 15 with the utmost restraint. In fact, Paul says only one thing: death will no longer be here, and the limitations imposed by mortality will be removed. Paul’s sober and mysterious statement contains the message that, in the resurrection, everything will be different and close to God. In fact, the mystery is twofold: transformation is possible, and Christians will still exist as persons after death, including the dimension of physicality. For Berger, transformation in Paul’s terms means both continuity of the person and radical newness.²¹

According to Klaus Berger, the contribution of 1 Cor. 15 lies primarily in linking Paul’s belief in the resurrection at the end of the ages with his belief in the resurrection of Jesus. The former he embraced as a Pharisee, the latter made him a Christian. He relates both to each

¹⁹ In this place, Berger cites his translation of *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection*, in which he appreciates the image of Christ swallowing up death as well as the Resurrection that integrates both the psychological resurrection and the restoration of the body: Cf. Klaus Berger, Christiane Nord, *Das Neue Testament und frühchristliche Schriften [vollständige Sammlung aller ältesten Schriften des Urchristentums]* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verl., 2005), 1143ff.

²⁰ Cf. Berger, *Kommentar zu Neuem Testament*, 619–620.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 620.

other and presents it to the Corinthians, whose understanding is further complicated by a Hellenistic cultural context, which regards the resurrection as absurd circling around the physicality of man. Paul proceeds in 1 Cor. 15:12–20 as follows: You Corinthians believe in the resurrection of Jesus; if this is the case, then the resurrection as such exists, and this possibility cannot be excluded. For Berger, the additional theme is the connection of the resurrection with the forgiveness of sins (1 Cor. 15:17): ‘And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.’ Up to this point, Berger notes, Paul associated the forgiveness of sins exclusively with the death of Jesus (still in 1 Cor. 15:3). Why, then, does he now condition the forgiveness of sins by Jesus’ resurrection? The Heidelberg exegete sees the answer in the fact that Jesus actualises his atoning sacrifice as a heavenly advocate and intercessor, that is, as the Risen One. If Jesus had not been raised, he could not offer his sacrifice to the Father to be our advocate and high priestly patron.²²

A further challenge to Berger is introduced in the passage starting with 1 Cor. 15:20: ‘But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.’ Rejecting outright the solution that Jesus is merely the first link in a chain that starts a ‘wave’ of resurrection perpendicular to history, so to speak, Berger seeks the true meaning of the ‘number one’ resurrection (1 Cor 15:20). The style and thinking of the Heidelberg exegete are aptly represented by his interpretation of the following eight verses in his *Commentary* (1 Cor. 15:20–28) so let us briefly summarise his method and results. Klaus Berger begins his interpretation with the concept of kingship twice mentioned by Paul: Christ reigns as a king. According to Paul, Jesus’ kingship lasts from his ascension to the right hand of God to his return for the judgment, including the resurrection of the dead. Before giving his kingdom to the Father, Christ lives in an in-between period defined by the Resurrection at the beginning and the Parousia at the end.²⁵ Referring to the parable of the wheat and the tares from Matthew’s Gospel (Matt. 13:24–30), Berger emphasises that, in

²² Cf. *ibid.*, 621–622.

²⁵ For Berger, the in-between time corresponds to the hiddenness of the Risen One. The identity of Christians, the ‘children of the Resurrection’, is also invisible, but recognisable in the fruits and perceptible in the effects. Cf. his interpretation of Col. 3:3 in Klaus Berger, *Die Urchristen. Gründerjahre einer Weltreligion* (München: Pattloch, 2008), 146–148.

the kingdom of the Son of Man, good and evil are mixed, and separation comes only at the end. In his view, we know this kingdom also from the Apocalypse of John as the so-called millennial kingdom (Rev 20:4–6: a thousand is the number of the unlimited). For the sake of the Son's empire, the Father abounds in activity as he gradually subdues the enemy powers. Because of him, the Father also forgives men's sins and cares for men by turning evil powers away from them and humbling them before the Son since in him he has acknowledged and established his love for men. The verses 1 Cor. 15:25–27 underline the whole struggle of the Father for the Son: 'The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet". Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.' By 'powers', then, Berger means the stupefying and enslaving ideologies as well as the old enemies of life such as avarice and envy. In his view, the activity of the Father emphasised by the apostle is also to be indicated in Rev 12, where Michael casts Satan down to earth from heaven. The adversary of men in heaven no longer stands at the throne of God and complains against them, for it is the Lamb alone who intercedes for them.²⁴

Without losing sight of the main subject of our concern, namely the Resurrection, which we now place together with the Heidelberg exegete in the Trinitarian framework of salvation history, we may repeat that the interim period of Christ's reign is by no means a period of rest; on the contrary, according to Rev 12, it is the time of the martyrs and of the church living in the desert. As was just mentioned, according to 1 Cor. 15, the Father himself is leading the fight against ideologies and seductive powers. Yet, there remain some bad people in the Church (Berger refers to Matt. 13:24–30) with whom it is necessary to live. The Father wages a struggle during the reign of Christ that culminates in the defeat of the most agonising enemy – death. Berger can now order the events: the resurrection of Jesus – his sitting at the right hand of the Father – the Father subdues the enemies of men for him – even the last enemy, death – Jesus comes again – the resurrection of the dead occurs. At this moment, according to the Heidelberg exegete, Paul's theology of history culminates. The following step is the Son's 'submission' to the Father, which is not a slavish necessity but a welcomed

²⁴ Cf. Berger, *Kommentar zu Neuem Testament*, 622.

occasion in which the Son once again shows who he is. Berger reminds us that, in Christianity, ‘submission’ is divine and that it corresponds to the fact that the Son in this relationship returns everything received in love to the Father. ‘Submission’ as an act of immeasurable filial gratitude expresses Jesus’ identity. After that, God can be all in all and permeate everything with his glory without things and persons losing their identity in the embrace of the Father and the Son. Everything will be transformed by God’s radiance and become beautiful. Berger illustrates the history of salvation on the Trinitarian horizon by the image of an unrolled and then rolled up carpet. The first stage goes from the Father to the Son and then to the Holy Spirit, while the eschatological stage has an inverse sequence: from the Spirit to the Son and from the Son into the hands of the Father. When Berger speaks of five epochs at this point, he also includes the recipient to whom God rolls out his ‘carpet’ of favour. The Spirit ‘takes possession’ of a person, who – as must be emphasised in our context – is completely saved, i.e., resurrected, journeys through the Son into the arms of the Father.²⁵

Conclusion

The method of the Heidelberg New Testament scholar is defined by an internally coherent approach. It is characterised by a *hermeneutic of trust*, in which he wants to be loyal to the New Testament texts and fearlessly ‘criticise criticism’, especially historical criticism, and by a *hermeneutic of strangeness*, which wants to preserve everything in the New Testament that is disturbing, incomprehensible, and perhaps even offensive. In my dissertation, I have pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of Berger’s radical historicism,²⁶ which is also evident in the Easter theme. In his last decade, quite in line with my 2011 estimate, Berger continued to adopt an ecclesial and liturgical hermeneutics of interpreting Scripture, and the two gigantic works of the last decade prove it. In his *Commentary on the New Testament*, he has no problem with using the treasury of Eastern liturgy or Cistercian spirituality. Yet, he has retained his most characteristic feature, which is – in working terms – the method of the ‘extended canon’. Like no one else, he uses the Old and New Testament Apocrypha and all the intertestamental

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, 622–624.

²⁶ Cf. Berger, *Sind die Berichte*.

literature in his exegeses. It is not surprising, then, that in commenting on the Easter passages in the Gospels, for example, he works extensively with the otherwise rather despised *Gospel of Peter*, etc.

Berger speaks somewhat misleadingly of mystical facts, among which he includes the Easter visions, which he is inclined to see as a protocol record of a meeting rather than a theological production of a community. Nevertheless, Ratzinger, who otherwise does not hesitate to show his admiration for Berger and who also included him in the prestigious list of favourite authors in his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy, rightly corrects him when he says that, in the Easter visions, we are not dealing with mysticism since the Risen One appears in a bodily form. Berger, however, insists on the term and regards it as closely related to his affinity for the sensually perceptible manifestations of God's love, which include Jesus' miracles in particular, but also the Transfiguration and, not least, Jesus' Easter 'visits from heaven'.

The author is convinced of a substantial continuity between the pre-Easter and post-Easter disciples, who, thanks to a general Jewish belief in the justification of eschatological martyrs and prophets and with the help of Jesus' sayings (Mark 9:31; 14:25; 8:31; 10:33–34), accepted both the appearances and the empty tomb as a bonus rather than a decisive argument for acquiring the Easter faith.

In the case of the Easter visions (and even the Transfiguration), Klaus Berger emphasises that something is happening from outside, from God's side, from the realm of the supernatural – *von außen her*. As we have just mentioned, he somewhat misleadingly labels the Easter perspective as mystical and inappropriately magnifies the intersection between these surely correlative gnoseological planes.²⁷

Berger is a recognised expert in the history of religion and often objects to inappropriate ancient parallels to Christianity. He finds Celsus's argument that the apostles offer only a variant of the metaphor of the vegetative deities (Dionysos, Isis, Osiris) unsatisfactory for the following reasons: first, Jesus lived; second, he rose once and for all; and, after all, cults of dying and reborn deities did not occur in first-century Palestine. For the Heidelberg exegete, there are two moments that catalyse Easter belief: the disciples' encounter with the risen Lord and the secondary negative supporting argument of the empty tomb.

²⁷ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth 2*, (München: Herder, 2011), 300–301.

The author, who is fond of defending the historicity of the Gospel accounts, knows well that the texts vary in their reports of the appearances of the Risen One. They disagree even on the basic details of where the encounters took place, who first met the Risen One, and what was said during these meetings. However, for Berger, these variations confirm multiple times that He appeared to Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the ‘eleven’. Yet, Berger claims, the apparitions are not the prevailing reason for the disciples’ faith in Jesus; rather, they stand in continuity with the miracles and theophanies before Easter.

The author knows that the Resurrection gives plausibility to the meaning of the Easter faith, and he often develops this eschatological, soteriological, and Trinitarian dimension. As much as Berger is regarded as a radical historicist who emphasises the need to listen to the external, public voice of the New Testament (Peter, Paul, Mary Magdalene), in his bestseller *Jesus*, he reveals that he also understands the inner voices that show us how belief in the Resurrection resonates deeply with a person’s deepest experiences and ultimate longings. Listening to history allows us to avoid *wishful thinking*; instead, sensitivity to inner experience teaches us that we cannot find faith in mere history.

Berger characterises the nature of the Easter appearances on several points: they were not accessible to disinterested observers; they were a revelation that affirmed the eschatological and Christological significance of Jesus; and they further called the recipients to mission through a unique experience that was not only internal but also external and visual.

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REVIEWS & NEWS

Iveta Strenková, *Devastata è Ninive, Studio esegetico di Na 3,1–7 alla luce del suo contesto storico-letterario*, (Studia Biblica Slovaca – Supplementum 4), Bratislava: Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave, Rímskokatolícka cyrilometodská bohoslovecká fakulta 2020, 383 stran, ISBN 978-80-223-5050-1.

PAVEL VĚTROVEC

Římskokatolícká cyrilometodějská bohoslovecká fakulta Univerzity Komenského v Bratislavě vydala v roce 2020 v edici Studia Biblica Slovaca jako Supplementum 4 mírně modifikovanou disertaci ThLic. Ivety Fides Strenkové, CJ, Th.D., *Devastata è Ninive!, Studio esegetico di Na 3,1–7 alla luce del suo contesto storico-letterario*, obhájenou na římské Papežské univerzitě Gregoriana 18. 06. 2012. Vedení práce se ujal „s moudrou inteligencí“ (s. 3 publikace) řádný profesor Papežského biblického institutu Peter Dubovský, SJ, přední představitel současné evropské starozákonní exegeze. Dílo má úctyhodný rozsah – 383 tištěné strany přibližně formátu B5, z toho 312 stran vlastního textu, opatřeného 771 poznámkou pod čarou, bohatou bibliografií autorů světové biblistiky, obrazovou přílohou, seznamem novoasyrských panovníků, rejstříky a detailním obsahem.

Po krátkém zahájení osobního charakteru v předmluvě a objektivně-metodologické osnovy v úvodu člení Iveta Strenková svoji práci do pěti velkých kapitol postupně hodnotících hlavní město novoasyrské říše Ninive a jeho pád: v první je nástin počátků a konce tohoto města, ve druhé obžaloby proti němu v Na 3,1–3, třetí obsahuje zdůvodnění jeho pádu a trestu v Na 3,4–7, čtvrtá obsáhle a systematicky připomíná vojenské aktivity asyrské říše a pátá nabízí dva zásadní pohledy na tutéž skutečnost pádu Ninive a shrnuje poznatky do závěru.

Zachování italštiny jako původní řeči disertace umožňuje četbu knihy pro významnou část světové odborné veřejnosti. Text je psán kultivovaným a čtivým jazykem s bohatou lexikou. Sama autorka neopomněla ve svém poděkování abatysi Robertě Lanfredini, OSBval, která jí pomáhala s italštinou, jmenovitě ji uvádí i tiráž knihy.

Komplexnost a pečlivost publikované práce lze nejlépe posoudit sledováním obsahu jednotlivých kapitol. První kapitola se věnuje faktickému a historickému pozadí Na 3,1–7. Kapitola je členěna do několika kroků, nejprve se věnuje hlavnímu městu novoasyrské říše a detailnímu popisu jeho vývoje. Ninive bylo čtvrtou a poslední metropolí po Aššúru, Kalchu a Dúr Šarrukín.

Poslední zmíněné město – „Sargonova pevnost“ – bylo poničeno exponenty islámského státu v roce 2015. Autorka pokračuje popisem oslabení impéria před jeho koncem, a to jak z pohledu novoasyrské říše za Aššurbanipala a jeho nástupců, tak i z novobabylonského pohledu přemožitele říše Nabopolasara. Pak je předmětem zájmu vlastní událost pádu legendárního města. Neschází ani rozbor důvodu pádu říše a shrnutí kapitoly, které popisuje i ekonomicko-správní a politické příčiny pádu metropole a zapojení Babyloňanů a Médů do této katastrofy.

U všímavého čtenáře může autorka podnítit i určité asociace s jinými dějinnými souvislostmi i s aktuálním stavem světa, jakkoliv to pravděpodobně nebylo autorčiným prvotním záměrem. Je však třeba jí připisat zásluhy za citlivé a kritické utřídění velkého množství dostupných podkladů s velmi životným popisem mnoha detailů – např. použitých materiálů a provedení, ať šlo o staviva, či poklady a dekorace při popisu města. Přestože prvotním cílem první kapitoly práce bylo vytvořit úplný popis historického pozadí pro pojednávání prorocký výrok, její význam jde dále: uspořádání a dikce kapitoly shrnuje podstatný v současnosti dostupný materiál pro historické a literární posouzení stavu novoasyrské říše v 7. století. Rovněž je zde zmínka o díle české historičky a archeoložky zaměřené na starověkou Mezopotámii PhDr. Jany Pečirkové (1942).

Druhá kapitola publikace se věnuje prvním třem veršům zkoumané perikopy. Základem postupu intertextuální exegeze autorky je podrobný rozbor a pečlivý překlad textu, komparace s dalšími starozákonními místy, vedoucí až ke klíčovým pojmům, které shrnují biblické poselství. Jde o šťastné vyjádření těžšího textu, které zhodnocuje výsledky detailního exegetického bádání shrnutím do obecně srozumitelných termínů, a tak činí publikaci přístupnou širší veřejnosti. Z pohledu biblických paralel jde nejčastěji o Nahumovy současníky a „souputníky“ Jeremiáše a Habakuka, nescházejí však ani poněkud vzdálenější proroci (např. Micheáš, Ezechiel nebo druhý Izaiáš), uvádí historické odkazy zejména v závěru 2. knihy Královské či zmínky o prapůvodu čerpající z toledót v 10. kapitole knihy Genesis. Uvedeny jsou také související podobnosti v knihách Job a Žalmy. Fascinující Nahumovu poezii s přeléhavými detaily válečné vřavy při pádu města nadepisuje autorka jako obžalobu či výtku (doslova invektivu, myšleno zřejmě Hospodinovu výtku vyslovenou skrze proroka) vůči Ninive, vedle obžaloby jde i o hrozbu. Prvním shrnujícím pojmem je charakteristika Ninive jako „krvavého města“. Různé významy tohoto pojmu odhalují pododstavce – město již bylo vybudováno a upevněno násilím, jež charakterizovalo postoje asyrského krále a jeho velmožů, a při své nesmlouvavé a hrozivé expanzi politice nedbalo na množství prolité (neviné) krve podrobených národů. Dalším pojmem je zde „loupeživá/ dravá politika“, jejíž ničivý dopad postupně rozvíjí přirovnáním ke lvu, imperiální nenasytlost i rostoucí násilí. Poslední charakteristikou je „město plné falše“, kde se pododstavce věnují lstivosti vnitřní i vnější politiky říše. Shrnutí na konci tří podkapitol pomáhají čtenáři zorientovat se v komplexní problematice.

Třetí kapitola knihy se věnuje zbylým čtyřem veršům pojednáváné perikopy a je nadepsána „Motivace pádu a trestu pro Ninive: intertextuální exegeze Na 3,4–7“. Autorka konstatuje, že v. 4 mluví o příčině pádu Ninive, zatímco vv. 5–6 mluví o trestu od Hospodina a v. 7 o lidské reakci kolemjdoucího člověka. Z toho vyplývá i dělení kapitoly na dvě části: 1. motivace (v. 4) a 2. trest (vv. 5–7). V prvním oddíle je tedy řeč o Ninive personifikovaném jako žena, odtud také vyplývají prorocké paralely, např. s Ozeášem, Jeremiášem či Ezechielem a dochází k pojednání o navazujících čtyřech klíčových charakteristikách, a to postupně jako „kouzelná žena“, tedy Ninive zprvu imponující svojí mocí, taktikou i diplomacií. „Kouzelná žena“ je často poměřována/ porovnávána s obrazem ženy v první sbírce knihy Přísloví (tj. v kapitolách 1–9). Druhým pojmem je „znesvětitelka“ (l'approfanatrice) ve smyslu ženy, která mění život podrobených národů a odvádí či svádí je k pozornosti na sebe. Textová srovnání zde často směřují k textům proroka Joela. V této linii pokračuje i třetí „titul“, a to „paní kouzel“ v kontextu především legislativních textů Tóry, ale i předních a zadních proroků. Vrcholem je poslední označení „nevěstka“, kde se pro porovnání používá výrazněji textů z knih Královských. Druhá část kapitoly proporcionálně mluví o trestu pro Ninive, které je nejprve „svlečeno ze své krásy“, vedle již naznačených paralel (s Ozeášem, Jeremiášem, Ezechielem a Pláčem) je sledován i vývoj pojmu v dynamice vlastního biblického textu; následně je řeč o „Ninive oděném špínou“, tedy hanbou a výsměchem po odhalení jeho skutečného stavu. Kontextuální opora čerpá z již zmíněných míst, pak je popis „znevážení“ města, k porovnání slouží především Deuteronomium a proroci, zvlášť Izaiáš. Další charakteristikou úpadku je, že město je „opuštěno svými věštcí“, tedy nemá budoucnost podobně jako Babylonie ve 47. kapitole Izaiáše. A konečně se před závěrečným shrnutím pojednává skutečnost, že Ninive je „zbaveno soucitu i útěchy“, v kontextu převážně proroků, a to u celého Nahuma, okrajově Žalmů, Joba a knih Královských.

Po pečlivém prostudování historického kontextu v první kapitole a po vlastní obšírné a názorné intertextuální exegezi všech veršů biblického textu ve druhé a třetí kapitole práce přichází ve čtvrté kapitole na řadu studium asyrských análů vztahujících se k tématu pojednáváného biblického textu, tedy vlastní připomenutí novoasyrských říšských armádních aktivit. Ze způsobu zpracování tématu vyplývá, že se autorka práce dobře orientuje v akkadském klínopisu. Akkadština byla v oblasti v 9.–7. století *lingua franca*. Autorka publikace nejprve krátce shrnuje vývoj zápisů asyrských análů a charakterizuje vybrané literární dokumenty v kameni, totiž zápis na Černém obelisku Salmanassara III. a Hranol A Aššurbanipalových análů. Pak se již věnuje jádru kapitoly, totiž různým systematicky uspořádaným literárním motivům spojeným s válečnými výpravami Asyřanů. Uspořádání třetí, nejpodstatnější části této kapitoly – literární motivy – se jednoznačně zaměřuje na jednotlivé aspekty vojenských aktivit, a to postupně a pod jasnými nadpisy. Práce je tak přehledná i pro laiky, zároveň poskytuje i kvalifikovaný a podložený přehled, a to jak z vybraného pohledu samotného 9. století, kdy říše sílila a postupně

se stávala hegemonom v regionu; tak i ze 7. století, na jehož počátku je říše na vrcholu své rozlohy a moci, což ale také nepřímo působí následnou krizí a pád. Sledování témat usnadňuje jak přehledný obsah knihy, tak i shrnující odstavce na konci jednotlivých bodů – témat. Prvním tématem je „dobývání a ničení“, kterým Asyřané prosluli. Poměrně detailně se popisují jednotlivé velké bitvy, oba panovníky charakterizuje krutost vůči podrobeným národům; Asýrie působí jako břitva, která „oholí“ všechno, a proto jsou popsány rozsáhlé masakry, boření a požáry. Dalším tématem je „obléhání měst“, autorka vybrala jedno město (Til Barsip) u Salmanassara a dvě (Týr a Babylon) u Aššurbanipala. Vedle tradičních válečných strategických postupů jako odříznutí od zdroje výživy, popř. využití propuknutí epidemie v obleženém sídle; čtenáře může zaujmout poznámka o rozdílu mezi Týrem, který kladl odpor a byl zachován, a Babylonem, který se vzdal a byl zničen. Následuje téma „bitev na volném poli“. Vybrané bitvy jsou popsány detailně, v jednom případě i s přehlednou tabulkou ztrát nepřítelů, v zásadě jde v obou dokumentech o velké a bezohledné masakry, rozdíl je v přesnosti uvádění počtu obětí, která je u Aššurbanipala pro někoho paradoxně nižší: používá totiž ve svých seznamech častěji neurčitá číselky. Autorka navazuje tématem „dobrovolného podřízení se“, a to jak na území, která ještě nebyla dobytá, tak i v dobytých oblastech. Přijetí role vazala a respekt k moci asyrských pánů umožňuje přežití při respektování podřízenosti vůči říši. Logicky dalším tématem jsou „nepřátelé“ novoasyrské říše, kteří jsou rozděleni do více skupin – jednak nepřátelé v obležených městech, nepřátelé při bitvě na válečném poli a samozřejmě i buřiči v již dobytých městech a územích. Více pozornosti je zde věnováno Aššurbanipalovi v určitých lokalitách postupně na území Egypta, Lýdie a Elamu. Protože se jedná o asyrskou tendenční historiografii, jsou osvoboditelské vzpoury domorodého obyvatelstva hodnoceny jako rebelie a nevděk vůči dobrotivé péči svrchovaného asyrského panovníka, který je nucen „spravedlivě“ potrestat. Oficiálním důvodem asyrského trestu je tak *hybris*, tedy pýcha, věrolomnost i arogance hraničící s urážkou „božsky stanoveného“ stavu věcí na straně vzbouřených podrobených národů. Dalším souvisejícím tématem je „kořist“, ať už získaná na válečném poli, v dobytých městech po dobytí, jistě i jako uznání porážky, a především pokuta, která se skládala z tíživých poplatků, odvodů a daně na dobytém území. V tomto ohledu vystupuje do popředí panování Tiglatha Pilesera III., ze kterého se dochovalo větší množství dokladů, jejichž přepisy, překlady a analýzy ukazují na věcný i literární vývoj a inovace v této oblasti. Válečnictví a administrativa zachycené v análech se neobejdou bez vlivu připisovaného vyšší moci, tedy bez náboženských a věšteckých prvků, jimž se autorka věnuje jako poslednímu aspektu, v pododstavcích se postupně zaměřuje na astrologii, sny a zlořečení. I zde autorka zaznamenává výrazný vývoj, zatímco Salamanassar III. se omezuje na konstatování, že jednal „na příkaz bohů“ – těsná vazba asyrského panovníka s božstvy se předpokládá –; pak u Aššurbanipala je věnováno otázce techniky věsteb a způsobu vzájemné komunikace s božstvy mnohem více prostoru, např. při sdělování pokynů pro

krále prostřednictvím věštců a vizionářů, poněkud výjimečně působí popis kolektivního snu vojska před zničením Sús, hlavního města Elamu, oznamující nastávající konec tamního království. Vedle toho poskytují králi informace i věštci, astrologové a zapisovatelé událostí. Nezanedbatelným prvkem jsou i profesionálně pronášená zlořečení, která mají ospravedlnit asyrskou agresi vůči „viníkům“ jako trestající vůli bohů. V závěrečném shrnutí třetí a nejpodstatnější části čtvrté kapitoly autorka srovnává přetrvávající i proměnlivá schémata vypravování novoasyrských zápisů u obou panovníků na více konkrétních případech.

Pátá, závěrečná kapitola knihy, na 26 stranách nadepsaných „Dvě tváře stejné skutečnosti, teologická a komparativní syntéza“ aplikuje výsledky bádání asyrských análů na biblický text Na 3,1–7. Nejedná se o vyhodnocení jednotlivé historické události izolovaně, ale spíše jako plodu dlouhodobého vývoje. Jednotlivé kroky syntézy jsou uspořádány podle biblického textu, nejprve se na základě obžaloby či pohružky („běda“ – v 3,1) krvelačnému městu Ninive píše „o politickém, ekonomickém a vojenském násilí“; pak o „věšteckých praktikách versus o důvěře v Boha v dějinách“, a to v návaznosti na dikci v. 4; a konečně o „trestu a zjevení pravdy“ v souvislosti s vv. 5–7. První část, která popisuje násilí, podkládá dikci Na 3,1 daty z análů, a tak vytváří plastický obraz totalitního ideologického uspořádání Novoasyrské říše a jejích poddaných – situace je kontrolována asyrskými vojenskými garnizony na dobytých územích. Z těch vycházejí kontroly prováděné úředníky a lokálními vládci dosazenými z Asýrie, promyšleným způsobem je sledován život obyvatelstva. K tomu přistupuje vysoké zdanění veškerých ekonomických aktivit a stálé nebezpečí vojenského násilí či udání za cokoli, a to vytváří v nevypočitatelném prostředí atmosféru strachu. Ekonomická, politická i vojenská kontrola ze strany Asyřanů tak jdou ruku v ruce. Na druhé straně zároveň motivují touhu po setřesení tohoto jha. Asyřané naproti tomu zdůrazňují vlastní benevolenci v kontrastu s „nepochopitelným“ a nevděčným odporem obyvatel podmaněných oblastí. Podmínky *pax assyriaca* představují pro podřízené regiony systematické ponižování a přijetí ideologického tlaku, jež dává autorka případně do souvislosti s „městem plným falše“ (pro srovnání Český ekumenický překlad: „je samá přetvářka“) a detailně poukazuje na důsledky, které by mohlo mít přijetí tohoto příměří králem Chizkiášem v r. 701 popisované jako hrozba v 2Král 18. Poněkud zběžněji je řeč o dalších souvisejících biblických i nebiblických událostech zmíněných na mnoha předešlých místech v knize. Určitá přetvářka nebo zamlčování skutečného smýšlení tak patří k podmínkám přežití původních obyvatel v daných poměrech. Nastalá situace vyvolává zejména u oponentů režimu touhu po Hospodinu a jeho spravedlnosti a otázku po způsobu jejího uskutečnění.

Druhý krok se v návaznosti na v. 4 věnuje věšteckým praktikám v protikladu k důvěře v Boha v dějinách. Ninive je zde hodnoceno jako prostitutka, která svými cizoložstvími a kouzly uvádí podřízené národy do otroctví; prorokova kritika má rovněž snížit přitažlivost věšteckých a magických praktik v očích Izraele. Asyrské analý vytýkají podřízeným národům krátkou paměť vůči

projevené moci i dobrotě asyrských bohů a panovníků, tím na sebe podrobení přivolávají nezbytný trest. Zároveň je tady otázka, zda dlouhotrvající okouzlení účinnosti asyrského režimu nezpochybnuje důvěru v konkrétní pomoc od Hospodina? Hrozí i zjednodušení v pohledu na Hospodina a jeho působení na jedinou otázku národního vymanění se z asyrské hegemonie. Prorokova slova však povzbuzují k přijetí účinné víry v Hospodina v každé situaci dějin.

V posledním kroku před závěrečným shrnutím je řeč o trestu. Iveta Strenková zde nejprve správně zdůrazňuje, že se pohled Nahumových současníků nutně lišil od pohledu dnešních čtenářů. Jablkem sváru je přijatelnost skutečnosti, že Hospodin dopustil takto krvavý konec Ninive: pro prorokovy současníky nezbytný a přiměřený projev vyšší spravedlnosti, snad dokonce trochu opožďený, pro lidi dneška sotva představitelné jednání ze strany Nejvyššího. Feministická teologie pravděpodobně shledá topos Ninive jako prostitutky, která je potrestána potupením, vyslečením a zavržením jako genderově nevyvážený. Zatímco Juda byl prostřednictvím Asyřanů spravedlivě potrestán za své hříchy, které prorok uvádí, a tak vede lid k vyznání vlastních chyb vůči Hospodinu; v asyrských análech se nenajde ani ve velmi kritické době žádná stopa uznání nějakého omylu, nespravedlnosti či selhání. Hospodin se stává – a tady autorka využívá všech kapitol Nahuma – tím, kdo stojí proti Ninive a kdo nad ním vykoná podle svého suverénního rozhodnutí trest. Ninive je následně zničeno a zcela poraženo a Juda prožívá osvobození, prvotně v politické a sociální rovině. V otázce viny Hospodin obyvatelům Judska odpouští, a tak vytváří prostor pro dobrou budoucnost lidu. Hospodinova spravedlnost se lidem zjevuje v čase způsobem, který On sám ve své moudrosti volí, vždy zůstává transcendentálním suverénním situace a zachovává vlastní tajemství.

Posledním, nečíslovaným krokem je v páté kapitole knihy závěr. Zde se syntetizují nejdůležitější výsledky záměru knihy, tedy nalezení důvodů pádu Ninive. Pro Judu je osvobození z podřízenosti tyranské tíživé totalitě spojeno s novou nadějí na uspořádaný život v pokoji v širokém smyslu, jak jej shrnuje hebrejské *šalóm*. Dalším důvodem je nutná odplata Ninive za jeho násilné zlé, ničivé skutky i za útlak a pokrytectví, které *pax assyriaca* provázely. Důvodem pádu jsou i „kouzla“ a „prostituce“, jimiž Asýrie upevňovala a posilovala svoji moc. Svádění národů věštbami, astrologií i zlořečenými musejí být demaskována a musí být zjevena pravda. Obsáhlé pojednání je zakončeno poznámkou o vědomí limitů, v nichž se práce pohybuje.

Dosud byla představena kniha výtahem a stručným komentářem k obsáhlým a erudovaným kapitolám knižně publikované disertace Ivety Strenkové z roku 2012. Práce má nesporné přednosti a je podložena časově náročným výzkumem. Výborný je detailní obsah knihy, z něhož lze snadno vyčíst smysl, řád a organizaci jednotlivých kroků, může napomoci při vyhledání jednotlivých informací; zpracování jednotlivých argumentů je propracované a zaměřuje se na popsání s metodickou důsledností. Jazyk práce je pro velkou část odborné veřejnosti srozumitelný a jeho úroveň je špičková. Znalost akkadštiny,

tedy klínového písma, a její vhodná aplikace předává informace bezprostředně z dobových literárních pramenů.

Nyní je namístě uvést obecnější hodnocení publikace a zmínit i otázky jejích limitů. Práce je zásadně přínosná z pohledu zpracování jak biblického kontextu, tak soudobého kontextu novosyrských klínopisných analů, vytváří tedy poměrně plastický dobový obraz, do něhož zasazuje biblický text Na 3,1–7. Náročný starozákonní text je uváděn způsobem samozřejmým spíše u novozákonních exegezí, tedy zevrubným pojednáním biblického textu i jeho historicko-kulturních a náboženských souvislostí. Rozsahem zpracování asyrských textů v tematických výsecích ze dvou pramenů z devátého a ze sedmého století je práce Ivety Strenkové jedinečná; a zřejmě je takové zpracování na hranici možností disertace. Nabízí se však otázka, na niž není snadná odpověď, zda jsou tyto dva prameny postačující k pokrytí fenoménu nebo zda by se třeba při pokračování a rozšíření výzkumu nemohlo a nemělo jít dále? Další podobná otázka vychází ze skutečnosti, že detailní výzkum biblistky přinesl mnoho konkrétních příkladů, ale poměrně málo objevů; jinými slovy i bez takto podrobného průzkumu by se daly mnohé závěry autorky, a to i v kontextu sporých všeobecných znalostí o Asýrii a poměrech Judska v 7. století, předpokládat. Dlouhodobý výzkum a množství práce v knize naznačuje cestu, shromažďuje mnoho materiálu, ale výsledek shrnutý do předpokládatelných formulací se zdá být přece jen trochu hubený, zejména pokud by byla publikace nahlížena jako pomyslná tečka za uzavřeným bádáním. Na druhou stranu je nepopíratelným faktem, že mnozí skvělí odborníci neučiní během svého letitého působení žádný objev a jistě jsou přínosem pro svou vědu i pro předávání jejich výsledků. Posledním otazníkem je, zda zaměření na popsání a doložení okolnosti prorockého výpovědi v Na 3,1–7 poněkud neupozaďují rozměr tajemství Božího slova? Ten je sice zmiňován, ale ne propracován a spíše přechází do výrazu osobní zbožnosti pisatelky. Každou činnost i každou publikaci provázejí otázky tohoto druhu, při jiném zaměření publikace by se naopak mohly pokládat jiné otázky podobného typu.

Celkově jde o velmi dobrou, poctivou a erudovanou práci, která osvětluje kontext Božího slova a činí jeden prorocký výrok a s ním i atmosféru jeho prostředí pro současného čtenáře srozumitelnějším a odborné veřejnosti nabízí množství konkrétních poznatků i použitelný způsob práce, to vše v jazykově zdařilé podobě. Autorce patří dík za její pečlivost a systematickosti, náročná téma je zpracováno přehledným a výstižným způsobem. Lze si jen přát více podobných publikací, které by veřejnosti přiblížily svět Božího působení v Písmu, s možným překvapením v kolika jednotlivostech se doba před 28 staletími podobá té naší.

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A Conference Report: ‘Symposium on Language in West Slavic Bible Versions: Shapes and Shifts’ (2 July 2021, Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague)

J I Ř Í H E D Á N E K

The fourth international symposium at the Charles University Catholic Theological Faculty on 2 July, 2021, drew on the already well-established tradition at the venue of meeting scholars interested in Bible versions the West Slavic peoples has used since the very dawn of their literacy till the present time. Given that it covers the linguistic variety of five to ten languages and dialects while the earliest versions of e.g. the whole Bible in Czech come from as early as the mid-14th century preceded by 11th–12th c. glosses and late 13th c. evangelaries and psalters), it is a formidable task that an attendance of several dozens of scholars from four countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Germany) found attractive.¹ Quite a few of them took part in earlier symposia as well.²

The day-long event was structured in four blocks interleaved with opportunities to meet, eat and discuss together in one of the four communicating Slavic languages. The *Novissima* block paid attention to Bible versions following 1900 as well as translation experiments. The *Media* block dealt with versions of the 16th to 19th centuries which were often formative for the Bibles that emerged in modern times. The *Vetera I* block focused on Psalms as texts that enjoyed the deepest impact from as early as Old Church Slavonic. The *Vetera II* block then examined various features of the language used in the four earliest Czech versions prior to book printing.

1. *Novissima*

‘Treatment of passives in modern Slovak gospel versions’

Mgr. Helena Panczová, PhD.³

Though Slavic languages generally prefer active verbs and switch subjects easily, passives are available both for altering viewpoints as well as concealing

¹ See www.ktf.cuni.cz/KTF-2475.html. One of the contributors was absent due to illness.

² See Hedánek (2020) *AUC Theologica* 10/1:197–202, Conference Report: ‘A Symposium on West Slavic Bible: Language and Style’ (3 July 2020, Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague).

³ Trnava University (Slovakia), Faculty of Theology, Chair of Biblical and Historical Sciences.

the subject (which, in the Bible, acquires a specific meaning). The study explored passives in eight different Slovak gospel versions (from 1946 to 2013) and compared frequencies of five stylistic forms of expressing a passive meaning. The development of strategies throughout the decades might be of use for translators especially of Bible texts who may often be at a loss which passive to use if any.

‘The 2020 Lower Sorbian Bible: The situation and specifics of the new translation’

PD Dr. Timo Meškank⁴

The editors of the 2020 Bible, a new Lower Sorbian version after 150 years, revised the language and spelling of the 1868 version, considering dialectal conditions and specific needs of liturgy. Timo Meškank took the opportunity to examine the development of language and approaches from 1548 through 1650, 1709, 1822 New Testaments and the 1868 Bible up to the 2007 liturgy.

‘The Bible in non-standard languages demonstrated from the Masurian translation of The Holy War by John Bunyan of 1900’

dr. Artur Czesak⁵

The translation of Bunyan is the only substantial witness to Masurian dialect in the Polish literature. Jakub Sczepan translated it from German and dr Czesak was specifically interested in Bible quotations, which are numerous in Bunyan. Sczepan borrowed from the Protestant Bible of Gdańsk, adapting it to his own native tongue. Despite that the language is not known to exist nowadays, it is a topic of current interest, revival attempts and printing (such as a translation of *Le Petit Prince*). Discussion turned to comparable phenomena in other languages such as *‘hantec* [‘hantets] of Brno as an extinct but artificially cultivated sociolect.

2. Media

‘On Moravian dialectisms in two Bible versions of late 1700s’

doc. PhDr. Josef Bartoň, Th.D.⁶

The translation of Psalms printed in Brno 1790 is a free rendition with notes and additional texts. It probably relied on the 1778/1780 Imperial Bible (a 1677–1715 St Wenceslas Bible in its 3rd, revised edition). The translation to compare with was the 1791 NT by Pollášek⁷ which also aimed at common people. The translation of Psalms is explicative, and prefers contemporary

⁴ University of Leipzig (Germany), Institute of Sorbian Studies.

⁵ Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Faculty of Philology, Institute of Linguistics, Translation Studies and Hungarian Studies, Chair for Translation Studies.

⁶ Charles University (Prague), Catholic Theological Faculty, Department of Biblical Sciences and Ancient Languages.

⁷ The Pollášek’s NT was dealt with in *AUC Theologica* 10, no.1 (2020): 200.

language to be read with ease. The approach is similar to the one of Pollášek. Dialectal Moravianisms in more linguistic layers throughout the Psalter and the NT were probably to help the text sound more familiar. The discussion pointed out that shaping of literary Czech can be observed in the texts as well as directions later development avoided.

“Pokuta” and “pokutować” lexems in the NT of the Bible of Gdańsk (1632): A return to Polish translating tradition, or a case of impact of the Czech Bible of Kralice (1579–1594) patterns?

prof. dr hab. Tomasz Lisowski⁸

The two equivalents for *μετάνοια*, *μετανοέω* associated with Roman Catholic penance (*pœnitentia*, *pœnitentiam agere*). Throughout the 16th c., attempts to find equivalents more in line with Martin Luther’s theology of repentance can be witnessed such as *upamiętanie*, *uznanie*, *upamiętać się* and *uznać się* (mainly trinitarians) and *(po)kajanie*, *(po)kajać się* (antitrinitarians) while the Roman Catholic translations of the time (1561, 1593) kept the traditional terms. The Bible of Gdańsk, however, looked to the Czech Bible of Kralice with its *pokání* and *činit pokání*, which motivated the translator Daniel Mikołajewski to put it back in texts – a clear example of restraining to project too much theology in Bible translations. While theologians do count among Bible users, the job of translating and selecting words is translators’ responsibility.

“Přiodítí” / “przyodziać”: Related forms in Czech and Polish Bibles of 1500s and early 1600s’

dr hab. Jarosław Malicki⁹

The two words were formed and used in a similar way both in Czech and Polish Bibles of the times, and are considered obsolete today, though the Polish word is used four-times as much (the incidence is still low). Synonymous ‘přiobléci’ / ‘przyoblec’ gain similar connotations such as ‘to put on *something new or special*. It exemplifies linguistic usage shaped by the Bible rather than the other way round, unmotivated by literalness (Greek and Latin structure differently).

‘Philological asset of the Kralice New Testament of 1601’

PhDr. Robert Dittmann, Ph.D.¹⁰

The 1601 NT is a crest of Kralice philology. Though little is known concerning its background and people (the extant documents of the Unity of the Brethren do not cover the period), the available prints are enough to appreciate

⁸ Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań (Poland), Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology, Department of Anthropological Linguistics.

⁹ University of Wrocław (Poland), Institute of Slavic Studies.

¹⁰ Charles University (Prague), Faculty of Arts, Institute of Czech Language and Theory of Communication.

the achievement. The notes were reworked, it differs how much but overall there is more text than in its 1st edition 1593/1594, e.g. more Grecisms, synonyms and additional semantic explanations are introduced. The text reflects the Greek more precisely at about 150 locations in Matthew and Mark solely, both in vocabulary and word order. The Czech improved, too, for instance the pronoun 'svůj' that is easy to ignore in translating literally from unrelated languages is seen to be back again (to stay in Czech until today), redundant auxiliaries in 3sg/pl and otiose conjunctions with direct speech are reduced, to name just a couple of linguistic features that put the Czech 1601 NT ahead of its competitors (such as the Melantrich Bible). It is obvious that this NT, so far in the shade of its older and later more renowned siblings, still awaits the appreciation it deserves.

3. Vetera

'Adnominal genitive as rendered in Old Czech Psalters'

Mgr. Kateřina Voleková, Ph.D.¹¹

Considered were four Czech Psalters: a version of the late 13th c. (preserved in the Wittenberg Psalter, rev. 1596 in the Poděbrady Ps.), a mid-14th c. version (as in the Clementine Ps., rev. 1580s in the Ps. of the Canons), a 14th/15th c. version (as in the Boskovice Bible, rev. 1410 as in the Padeřov Bible) and the first printed Psalter (1487). Latin adnominal genitive can be rendered in Czech most often with an adjective, or with a genitive, dative or prepositional noun phrase, or possibly with a clause. The latter approach is less frequent. Often an adjective can be produced in place of the original noun. Alternatively, a genitive adnominal such as is typical in Latin can be supplied. Genitive is employed in all Slavic languages while dative is marginal apart from South Slavic languages. The pattern of development shows increased use of genitive adnominals in most of the Psalters prior to 1500, especially if the phrase is qualified. Some later versions seem to prefer prepositional structures. It appears as if the translators of the Psalters tried increasingly to make their versions feel closer to Latin.

'Old Czech Psalters between the 3rd and 4th versions'

Mgr. Hana Kreisingerová, Ph.D.¹¹

This study took a different angle in viewing essentially the same body of texts, stressing the later versions. The reason is apparent when all the Psalters are put side by side: The 1st version Psalter (13th c. and on) was originally a word-focused interlinear. The 2nd version Psalter (14th c.) tried to translate anew considering Latin sentences and style. The 3rd version Psalter (14th/15th c.) aimed at clear, coherent Czech sentences. The 4th version Psalter (15th c.)

¹¹ Academy of Sciences (Prague), Czech Language Institute, Department of Language Development.

considered *Ps. iuxta Hebraeos* as well. Also, it seems to be a relatively independent new translation. These four versions witnessed gradual refinement of translating technique as well as growing confidence and erudition of the translators over these three centuries.

4. Vetera

‘The *ó* → *uo* diphthongization in selected texts of the Bible of Dresden’

Mgr. Anastasia Rozhkova¹⁰

If the variations in word selection, style and translation technique get us closer to identifying groups of translators as previous studies may suggest, phonological variations put us yet closer as variations in spelling may be another trace of idiolects. The oldest well documented complete Bible version speaks the mid-14th.-c. Czech. The chief scribe of this Leskovec-Dresden Bible put down texts from two groups of translators. One processed Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song, Wisdom, Sirach, Luke and John. The other produced prophetic books, Tobith and all the books from 2nd Thess. to Heb. 12:24. The *ó* → *uo* diphthongization varies between the two groups as well as inside them, and it seems individual translators might not be always consistent, too. It may be due to the scribe, and certainly stems, affixes and positions do differ. Statistical methods may confirm that the Czech of the former group of translators (as defined by specific religious terminology) displayed indeed a different (regional and social) background from that of the latter group.

‘The New Testament of the Bible of Prague (1488): language and style’

Mgr. et Mgr. Katarína Džunková¹²

The first print of a complete Czech Bible was made in 1488 and offered the 4th Czech version. It took up the earlier NT of Martin Lupáč which it developed further. The language is more modern, as seen in more finite verb clauses (which also Lupáč preferred to non-finite forms), fewer duals, aorists and 3sg/pl auxiliaries. Apart from natural development, however, intended edits were made. Old Czech imperfects were re-introduced, domestic vocabulary preferred and additional words were put in wherever it clarified the sense. Expressivity was enhanced. The intention to make the text clearer and more precise was supported by additional resources available to the translators. Provided examples show they succeeded in finding specific terms unlike more general words of their predecessors. On the other hand their unnecessary expressivity was not followed by later translators. And imperfects were doomed. Still, their re-introduced ‘Hospodin’ as a unique equivalent of the Divine Name significantly helped improve the word stock Czech Bible translators have available till today; no LORD/Lord distinction is needed in Czech.

¹² Charles University (Prague), Faculty of Arts, Department of East European Studies.

‘How stable is the style of Czech Bible versions: a diachronic stylometric analysis’

prof. Mgr. Pavel Kosek, Ph.D.,¹⁵ doc. Mgr. Radek Čech, Ph.D.,¹⁴
doc. Mgr. Ján Mačutek, PhD.,¹⁵ Bc. Michaela Nogolová¹⁴

As it has been obvious through many of the previous presentations, contemporary translators of the Bible in Czech are privileged to draw on an exceptionally rich heritage. Their responsibility includes uneasy decisions on what to re-introduce and what to invent; where to maintain the tradition and where to voice the message in a novel way. They face the same challenges their colleagues had to cope with centuries ago. The statistics of a few quantifiable properties suggests a few points: The Czech versions of the Bible across eight centuries (1360, 1417, 1570, 1593–94, 1677, 1909, 1969/1992 Petrů, 1995 ČEP, 2009 ČSP, 2014 B21) keep remarkable stability in some parameters as well as trends. If the B21 Matthew is compared to, the earlier versions decrease in almost linear proportion from ca. 70 % (2009) to below 30 % (1360) of identical forms: the closer in time, the more words are the same. Surprisingly, mean word lengths, despite variable spelling, keep around 6.4 letters in Matthew and 6.1 in Revelation. In lexical diversity, most versions stick to ca. 15 % of new words (esp. in Matth.) \pm a few % in Rev. of 1417, ČEP and Petrů. Also word count in Matth. shows a small margin (well under 10 %). Where a notable decrease can be observed, is the word count of Revelation that started to fall with the Kralice Bible 1593 while ČEP and B21 seem to need the fewest words (ČSP and Petrů are slightly higher). Apparently, less explicative versions are in demand today.

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