

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.

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