

RELATIONS, TIME, AND RELIGION: TRINITARIAN TEMPORALITY IN AUGUSTINE'S *DE TRINITATE*

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■ ABSTRACT

In his work *De Trinitate*, Augustine emphasizes the importance of time in understanding the Holy Trinity. He observes that any relational distinction or difference becomes more evident and graspable when it unfolds within the flow of time and parent precedes offspring by an interval of time. Time is a gift for us to receive with love so that the relational patterns of our lives, knowledge, and desire can become real by sharing in the eternal loving bond of the Trinity. For this reason, Klaus Hemmerle, an author of the *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976), claimed that no truth is more temporal than a religious truth. The article will explore the Augustinian origins of this claim and its Trinitarian meaning.

Keywords: Relations; Time; Religion; Trinity; Augustine; De Trinitate; Klaus Hemmerle; Trinitarian ontology.

<https://doi.org/10.63154/CETR2024.1-3>

Introduction^[2]

Time and relations belong together. Realities are simultaneous in relations. Realities in relations are also sequential, proceeding one after the other. Even the most exclusive events are unique by the nature of their relationality as they change everything by relating to everything, and everything undergoes a change in relation to them. The simultaneity, seriality, and eventfulness of time reveal the ontological priority of relations. The priority of relations is of course also manifested in the dimensions of static space, but only in time do relations become a real connection, sharing, and communication. The ontological priority of relations must therefore be interpreted in terms of the priority of time:^[2] only in this way can we understand the priority of relations according to their real signification, not just their relativistic or fixed givenness. And relations would not really be relations if they were merely a givenness of themselves or of their relational terms. A relation must relate.

This is why the twofold priority of relations and time is paradigmatically made known through religion. It does not matter whether etymologically derived from the uniting *religare* or the distinguishing *relegere*,^[3] the phenomenon of religion is determined by temporal relationality: it refers to the way in which the meaning of fundamental anthropological, economical, cosmological, and theological relations is negotiated and sustained.^[4] Accord-

ingly, the meaningfulness of these fundamental relations is announced in various forms of religious temporality. As forms, they can be the rule of work and days inscribed in the flow of time through festivities and celebrations. Or they can be the hidden formal principle of this ordered temporal regularity, which itself looks informal and unique as an event either fully accidental or incomparable to anything else. When signs are exchanged before the eyes of all, or routes of signification are established from seemingly insignificant, hidden sources, all these forms of religious temporality manifest the priority of relations and time. Klaus Hemmerle (1929–1994) even argued that no truth is more temporal than religious truth.^[5] Religion is not only one of the many manifestations of the priority of relations and time, but is directly its radicalization in history, a scandal to those who would piously associate only purely timeless truths with religion or, on the contrary, seek and engage with completely temporal truths outside of any connection with “conservative” religion.

What is the reason for this radicalization of the priority of relations and time in the phenomenon of religion? According to Hemmerle no truth is more temporal than the religious truth because the epiphanies and revelations – those very events of religious breakthrough – are not only external chronological data at the beginning of religious traditions, but internal events of their origin, apocalyptically opening up their own revelatory anthropo-

logical, economical, cosmological, and theological relationality. In his text *Die Wahrheit Jesu* (1976), Hemmerle argues:

Theophanic event is not only access to religion, but its very essence; for the sacred mystery enters the interest of religion not in an abstractly contemplated An-sich, but in a concrete Für-uns – and precisely this Für-mich, Für-uns is not determined by man, but pure, sovereign advent of the sacred. The theophanic event is in itself – this marks its specific temporality – coincidence of purest presence with sharpest difference. Only God is there, the wings of the seraph, or the cloud fill the whole room. And at the same time, I am thrown to the ground, I experience myself as dust and ash...^[6]

As a coincidence of purest presence with sharpest difference, the dimensions of past, present, and future are knotted together in a unique way in this specific relational temporality implied in theophanic event. On the one hand, the theophanic event takes place at a certain hour and moment in history, in a certain “now”, preceded and followed by some other moments of time. On the other hand, within this chronological “now” another “Now” is happening, which is chronologically indescribable and unconditional. At a particular time, all time is happening as the very origin of all that happens. Everything past that has happened so far is given over to this “Now”. History can no longer continue as before. Everything changes in relation to the One who reveals His mysteries. As Hemmerle stresses: “Where God appears, where he

speaks and calls, it is absolutely questionable whether the time and everything will continue at all. It is up to him, up to him alone... The future is his future, or it is not at all.”^[7]

Hemmerle’s phenomenology of religious truth as a truth of the theophanic event recognizes, at the heart of temporality, God’s sovereign presence and transcendence, identity and difference, or, in other words, religious revelatory relation. The priority of relations and time is thus radicalized in the phenomenon of religion. Perhaps the best example of this is the Old Testament theology of the Sabbath.

^[8] In Christianity, the true theophanic event is the event of Jesus Christ: his birth, life, and its culmination in Easter mystery of his crucifixion, death, and resurrection, in which the very religious relation at the heart of temporality is shown to be analogous to Trinitarian relationality.^[9] The self-giving of Christ as the structure of temporality is revealed as Trinitarian self-giving: both in relation to human self-giving and to supernatural self-giving in Christ.^[10]

Now, how is this discovery of Trinitarian relationality at the heart of time compatible with the traditional understanding of Trinitarian relationality as eternal, and thus completely other than the realities of time? Are we not confusing divine eternity with finite temporality in this Trinitarian conception of time? How do eternity and time relate when our God is the God of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Could philosophical and theological specula-

tions about the eternal generation of the Son from the Father or about the procession of the Holy Spirit from and between both the Father and the Son have anything to do with the finite structure of time in creation? Or is it possible to speak of something as Trinitarian only in the context of eternity, so that time or temporality must be completely set aside as non-Trinitarian or even anti-Trinitarian? In what follows, I will discuss this fundamental but difficult problem in relation to the Augustine's *De Trinitate* which can perhaps help us to think more deeply about both this apparent contradiction and the mystery of how time and relations belong together. Since, according to Augustine, the meaning of time or temporality is to enable for us the fundamental relations of remembering, knowing, and loving as oriented towards the Holy Trinity, in what sense is time itself already Trinitarian, how is this Trinitarian meaning of time already anticipated in created reality as lived in those fundamental acts of the human soul from within the religious community, and how is this anticipation related to its eschatological fulfilment?

To treat these questions properly, we must first define Trinitarian ontology and understand its transformative character because it is this transformative character that transforms the classical question of the relation of Trinitarian eternity and time into the question of the relation of Trinitarian time and Trinitarian eternity. Second, I will show in what sense Augustine's own Trinitarian ontology

associated with his Trinitarian analogies in *De Trinitate* implies a new, Trinitarian meaning of temporality and time. Finally, I will consider the question of how the discovery of Trinitarian relationality at the heart of time is compatible with the orthodox understanding of Trinitarian relationality as eternal.

Trinitarian ontology and Hemmerle's "Trinität und Zeit"

We began with the priority of relations manifested in time, especially in the time of religious theophany. Because the theophany of the Christian God is the theophany of relations, we find ourselves at a standstill. But if our God is the Holy Trinity, characterized by interpersonal relations of mutual self-giving (fatherhood, sonship, *spiratio*), then the reality created by the Triune God should also exemplify this Trinitarian relationality, which is love, in its metaphysical structure, and from the very beginning. Trinitarian ontologies argue that the priority of relations manifested in time and the priority of time over space is originally Trinitarian. There has never been a time that was not Trinitarian. This is also what motivated Klaus Hemmerle to write his *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976), where he proposed a Trinitarian ontology as a new form of Christian philosophy proceeding from the reality that it is only love that remains constant despite all temporal changes.^[11] If only love remains,

then the central term of metaphysics cannot be objective substance or subjective self-reflexivity, but rather a relation. Anything that would like to preserve its objective or subjective identity will lose it, because in trying to preserve its own identity it replaces itself and makes itself meaningless; by repeating itself over and over again, it becomes insignificant. All meaning is born from a true relation that involves non-being, difference, movement, and change. But at the same time, this centrality of relation cannot, according to Hemmerle, be absolutized in the sense that it can always ground the reality of relations unequivocally (univoce), or that all reality may be derived from the concept of relation. If only love remains, it needs to be analogically predicated. The focal meaning of the *analogia entis* – analogy of being – in Hemmerle’s Trinitarian ontology is “that movement which is agape itself,” the self-giving of Christ as he mediates the eternal self-giving of the Trinitarian relations.^[12]

We have already seen that this is the reason why Hemmerle recognizes the rhythm of giving at the heart of temporality: Trinitarian love and relationality serve as the foundation of our conception of time. In his later essay, “Trinität und Zeit” (1985), Hemmerle elaborates in greater detail on the Trinitarian nature of time in contrast to the modern a priori understanding of time, at the centre of which stands a subject, who is supposed to be the source of his own origin and past, and the master of all

that may yet happen in the future.^[13] Every new thing that could happen is possible in relation to the possibilities of the subject who becomes the only actor of history. Hemmerle observes that presence in time necessarily becomes, under these conditions, the subject’s exclusive relation to itself, resulting in the exhausting stress of a constant but unfulfillable journey towards itself, the paralyzing boredom of being enclosed within itself, or, conversely, the hectic escape of the subject from its own loneliness and isolation within itself. “The constant progress and the retreat into oneself, the flight to oneself and the flight from oneself, come to a monstrous coincidence.”^[14] In the modern system of this monstrous coincidence, time consists of the possibility of my effective participation in the functioning of the whole.^[15] But such participation can no longer be understood as a participation in common time, because here the “in-between” time of past and future has no original character, since the past is past only insofar as it is determined by the current function, and the same applies to the future. Moreover, this functionalized horizontal time no longer takes place vertically “in between” time and its transcendent origin or source. Finally, subject-centered time cannot be “in between” like the time of an interpersonal encounter in which we as persons are in relation to each other as past and future for each other in a common “we.”^[16]

These interpersonal constellations will be the key to Hemmerle’s proposal of how to radi-

cally transform the subjective conception of time by discovering Trinitarian temporality. But this transformation is not grounded in a phenomenologically identified eidetic relationality or interpersonality as such (which would correspond to the temporal consciousness of the expectant and remembering subject in relations), but in a participation in salvation history that, despite the catastrophes and abysses of time, reveals time as hope fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

Through the incarnation of the Son, not only is the temporal structure of our passing and decaying time 'appropriated' and accepted by God in His Son, but this appropriation and acceptance is also the assumption of all human destinies, all time lived by man. Jesus shares our time, makes it His own in the time of His life and death and at the same time makes Himself a part of it. This offers a new chance for our time: we can share our time with Him through His Spirit, we can live His life in our lives. We are baptised into His death and resurrection, equipped with His Spirit, so that we can say 'Abba' with Him and in Him to the Father."^[17]

Time thus transformed and redeemed is a shared presence or a time "in between" of the Holy Spirit in which our past is revealed as saved by the self-giving of Jesus Christ and the love of the Father, and the future is a movement in the Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ back to the Father by participating in the same self-giving, including all communal and relational patterns of our lives, knowledge, and desire as sharing in the eternal loving

bond of the Trinity.^[18] This releases "in-between" time from the constriction or impasse of the modern subjective. The "in-between" time of past and future is restored as a movement in the Holy Spirit from the Son to the Father. This movement involves the vertical dimension of the time "in-between," its finite rhythms and its transcendent origin as a spiritual exchange of gifts from the Father and back to Him through the sacrificial self-giving of Christ. All of this takes place within the patterns and constellations of interpersonal encounters in which we as persons in Christ are in relationship with one another and serve as past and future for each other in the life of Church. The priority of relations is manifested through the rhythm of Trinitarian movements which define time as Trinitarian.

In light of the above, the classical question of the relation of Trinitarian eternity and created time cannot remain as it is because it implies an external relation of eternity and time, while Trinitarian ontology argues that this relation must be understood as transcending the dialectic of the external and the internal as all real relations ultimately have to.^[19] It was this dialectic that alienated modern "internalized" subjective psychological time ("the flight to oneself") from modern "externalized" structural chronology ("the flight from oneself") and made it impossible for the modern subject to perceive time as the gift of a relational "in-between". So not only is the classical question of the relation of Trinitarian

eternity and created time thus transformed into the question of the relation of relational time and relational eternity, or more precisely Trinitarian time and Trinitarian eternity, but Trinitarian ontology also opens up a *kairos* that goes beyond a purely objective or subjective conception of time.^[20]

Augustine and time: *distentio animi*

This is a very bold intuition, and its continued relevance in discussions about Trinitarian ontology will depend largely on how the tradition of Christ's self-giving in the history of the Church is made present in this new Trinitarian concept of temporality, pointing to an apocalyptic horizon of witness going to the very end of time and world.^[21] As is obvious from the text of his *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology* (1976), Hemmerle himself knew, of course, that to some extent he was following a previous tradition of Trinitarian thinking, especially that established by Augustine.^[22] I mean not only a similar phenomenological recognition of the relational and Trinitarian structure of human subjectivity associated with Augustine's doctrine of the human soul as the *imago Trinitatis*, but above all a new conception of the relation between the eternal life of the Holy Trinity and its temporal creation.

These ideas are present in the famous Book XI of Augustine's *Confessions*. As is well known, a number of modern philosophers have seen

in Augustine's *Confessions* the key text of the philosophical tradition on time. In his lectures entitled *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewußtseins* (1904/1905), German phenomenologist Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) pointed out that “chapters 13–28 of Book XI of the *Confessions* must still be thoroughly studied by anyone who deals with the problem of time.”^[23] *Quid enim est tempus?* As Augustine wrestled with this problem, he observed that if no one asks him about time, he lives with the conviction that he understands it, but if someone actually asks him a question and demands an explanation, he is unable to answer.^[24] When we are in time, we are sure of it without thinking about it; when we start thinking about it, it seems to escape us. “The past, after all, no longer exists, and the future does not yet exist.”^[25] But as soon as we think about past things that no longer exist and future things that do not yet exist, we think in the present. The present therefore unifies the three planes of time: “There are three times: the present of things past, the present of things present, and the present of things future.”^[26] For Augustine, speech or song are examples of the kind of presence that is a “distention of the mind (spirit) itself” (*distentio animi*) in the dimensions of memory, attentive insight, and futural expectation.^[27] We remember, think, and expect, and thus participate in spiritual realities in time. But even the discovery of this threefold structure of the present time does not save us from its abyssal character: the present, too, is nothingness, because it has no duration, so it is clear that we cannot truly speak of time being,

because it tends not to be.^[28] Whereas Husserl clearly recognized the importance of Augustine's conception of time as a *distentio animi* involving the consciousness of retention and anticipation, for Husserl's disciple Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), it was exactly this philosophical attention to the nothingness implied in the historical factuality of the finite subject that motivated his interest in Augustine.^[29] How could he not be fascinated by Augustine's insight that man cannot grasp the meaning of his existence except through confessions of discontinuities, turns, and limits in time? At the end of his lectures *Augustinus und der Neoplatonismus* (1920/1921), Heidegger even recognized the Trinitarian structure of Augustine's conception of human being-in-time and subjectivity, but, disregarding its openness to the nothingness of being implied in historicity, Heidegger did not show a deeper interest in this specifically theological pattern in his later work.^[30] It is an irony of history that he thus repeated the same omission made several centuries before him by the author from whom he wished to distance himself, René Descartes (1596–1650).^[31]

It seems that, despite the extraordinary influence of Augustine on the twentieth-century philosophy of time, this Trinitarian pattern, crucial for Augustine, has remained unconsidered until recently.^[32] It turns out that a phenomenological understanding of the processual *distentio animi* involving finite non-being of difference and facticity as purely immanent cannot be sufficiently accurate as long as we

ignore the relations that analogically link immanence to transcendence under the creatureal circumstances of the historical development of religion belonging to the inseparable action of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation. This is the direction that John Milbank's recent reinterpretation of Augustine's concept of time takes when he explores its Trinitarian character:

Book XI of the Confessions points ultimately to an ontology of creatures who, as temporally self-creating, are taken as participating in a God who is himself (again according later to Eriugena) eternally 'self-creating' as Trinitarian. We can construe this as meaning that God is in himself within himself (as well as in himself outside himself as creator) spiritual gift, since he is both cognitive language and the felt or desired interpretative response to that language which issues in 'further' and fully completed action.^[33]

Milbank goes much further than Husserl, Heidegger, or later continental philosophers in his interpretation of Book XI of the *Confessions* because he does not shy away from a metaphysical interpretation of the subjectivity of the human soul against the background of the late development of Neo-Platonism. The processual *distentio animi* involving retention, attention, and anticipation is not a wholly immanent movement of self-consciousness, but rather a self-creative process imitating how the persons of the Trinity mutually confer their being upon each other as relations-entirely-in-act. On the other hand, it is surprising that Milbank does not connect the Trinitarian interpretation

of time in Book XI of the *Confessions* with the actual substance of Augustine's later major treatise *De Trinitate*. Had he done so, it would have become apparent that the analogy between the processual self-generation of temporal subjectivity and the self-generation of the Holy Trinity needs to be carefully refined, for, as we shall now see, the whole of *De Trinitate* is written to counter a conception of divine being understood as a pure eidetic relationality of power generating itself, that is, against the Neo-Platonic idol which is philosophically most similar to the Trinity but precisely for that reason most problematic.

Trinitarian temporality in *De Trinitate*

The author's philosophical aim is evident from the programmatic beginning of *De Trinitate*, where Augustine states that he writes against "the sophistries of those who scorn the starting-point of faith (*initium fidei*), and allow themselves to be deceived through an unseasonable and misguided love of reason (*immature et perverso rationis amore falluntur*)."^[34] He thereby contrasts his own speculative pursuit of wisdom based on scriptural analogies and metaphors with the purely philosophical knowledge of the relational divine potency that gives birth to itself in order to be (*quae se ipsam gignat ut sit*). According to Augustine, this intrinsically contradictory relational notion of the self-generating divine

potency corresponds neither to the creature nor to the Triune Creator.

Those who suppose that God is of such power (eius esse potentiae Deum) that he actually begets himself (ut seipsum ipse genuerit), are even more wrong, since not only is God not like that, but neither is anything in the world of spirit (nec spiritualis) or body (nec corporalis creatura). There is absolutely no thing whatsoever that brings itself into existence (nulla enim omnino res est quae se ipsam gignat ut sit).^[35]

Because of this programmatic critique of the concept of potency that gives birth to itself in order to be, it cannot simply be said that both the processual self-generation of the Trinity and the processual self-generation of subjectivity within *distentio animi* in time are examples of one and the same transcendental self-reflexive process known from autonomous attempts to intellectually grasp one's own identity by identifying oneself with one's own thinking. While Augustine sees this as a philosophically seductive attempt to overcome the obvious limitations of space-time metaphors and analogies, he recognizes that a rejection of the mystery of the created space-time corporeal and spiritual categories is also a rejection of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, and as such leads only to thinking of our own a priori presumptions (*praesumptiones opinionum suarum*) hypostatizing the nothingness implied in a purely rational starting point. In order that we may avoid this error and refrain from saying something about God that is not real either in Him or in

His creation, every instance of thinking and speaking of processual self-generation must follow the revealed relationality of the Trinity, both in relation to the Holy Trinity itself and in relation to the Trinitarian time in creation.

We can therefore agree with Milbank that Augustine does not consider the question of the relation between eternity and time as a question after external determination and definition as if the relationality that characterizes the Trinity and time were merely accidental.

^[36] Intimate self-generation or self-creation is really at the heart of everything that is real. But this self-generation is neither an absolutization of the logic of dialectical development by the movement of reflection from being, through self-opposing non-being, back to consummated being. As is already evident from Books X and XI of the *Confessions*, the intimate self-generation or self-creation at the heart of everything is paradoxical self-generation born of spiritual love and self-giving in relation to the beloved other. The programmatic beginning of *De Trinitate* invites us to further participate in this transformative exchange of gifts and overflow, in other words, in the analogical and metaphorical mediation between eternity and time which is historically taking place within the inseparable Trinitarian acts and constellations. Such participation allows us to be born again from the Spirit of our Trinitarian childhood and thus to follow Jesus Christ on his way towards the Father.

In the later books of *De Trinitate*, Augustine discusses how this paradoxical self-generation-from-the-other brings about the processual analogy between Trinitarian eternity and Trinitarian time. After laying the foundations of Trinitarian logic and metaphysics in Books V-VII, Augustine begins the phenomenological journey of exploring the analogy between the inner relational life of the Trinity and creation. This journey is phenomenological in nature because Augustine realizes that he must proceed *modo interiore*.^[37]

In Book VIII, after first exploring the fundamental act of the encounter between soul and being, truth, and good, Augustine discovers the created relationality that is most like the Trinitarian relationality or self-generation in love. Behold the three: the one who loves, the one who is loved, and love itself.^[38] In the Book IX, Augustine shows how this fundamental and shared intentionality of love must be accompanied in our inner life by the life of the whole mind (*mens*), which also includes knowledge (*notitia*). How could I love what I do not know? How could I know what I do not love? This is then the first form of Augustine's inner Trinity (*mens, notitia, amor*),^[39] which will become the starting point for all further investigations.

When Augustine's *intentio quaerentis* reaches its peak in examining the most intense element of the inner life, namely the self-relation of the thinking subject, it will be shown that reflective thinking must proceed from pre-reflective reality, from memory (*memoria*). This reveals

the so-called inner Trinity in its true order and sense: memory (*memoria*), intellect (*intellectus*), and will or love (*voluntas, amor*).^[40] But in order to better understand the significance of the generation of logos or thought from memory and the difference between the generation of thought from memory and the proceeding of love from both memory and thought, Augustine proposes to continue the exploration through a discussion of the external Trinity in the Book XI. Why does he do so? He argues that any differentiation will be more apparent in the external life of the soul.^[41] The external Trinity includes the corporeal element as the starting point (*res, forma corporis*), which is united through the soul's intentionality (*intentio animi, voluntas*) with our sensibility (*visio sensualis*), and thus the act of seeing is produced.^[42] Book XII then thematizes the relationship between the external and internal Trinity, and thus the relationship and distinction between science (temporal knowledge) and wisdom (knowledge directed toward eternity) is made clear. But this distinction can only be bridged through faith in Jesus Christ, in whom time and eternity are both united and distinguished. Therefore, Book XIII is a return to the first four books of *De Trinitate*, which contain the exposition of the scriptural and Christological revelation of the Trinity. On this occasion, in addition to the inner and external Trinity, the Trinity of religious faith is also explored phenomenologically.

As we can see, Augustine proceeds from the Trinity of the inner man to the Trinity of the

outer man, and then back again to the Trinity of the inner man contextualized by *scientia Christi*, that is: the Trinity of faithful religious life. Although not an ultimate step of the whole *De Trinitate*, this contextualization is crucial. Since the Incarnation, *scientia nostra Christus est*.^[43] Only this tacit but affective knowledge of the cross, mediated and shared within the Church, discerns and initiates the true love in us. It is only in light of this Christological and ecclesial contextualization of the inner Trinity that Augustine can proceed in Book XIV of *De Trinitate* to the most difficult task of all: the search for a wisdom of the eternal that integrates the science of the temporal so that this integration makes evident how unity and plurality, eternity and time, are united both in the Trinity itself and in our soul with its temporal relational patterns. Augustine seeks the proper *imago Trinitatis* in us, returning to the inner Trinity, but addressing the question of its self-generation or self-creation.

At the moment of his highest speculative striving, he describes the difference between the *temporalium rerum scientia*, and the self-generating self-knowledge of the soul. He shows that the self-knowledge of the soul does not actually have to involve the reflexive dualism of the inner and the external mediated by the adventitious travel of the subject into the world. The self-generating self-knowledge of the soul cannot be compared to standing in front of a mirror. "The mind is not adventitious (*adventicia*) to itself, as though to the mind which al-

ready was came (*venerit*) from somewhere else the same mind which was not yet.^[44] The simplicity of the mind is eschatological, there is no dialectical doubling or dualism between the mind which already was and the mind which should “advent” to itself. The very Advent of the mind to itself is not adventitious. “It never stopped remembering itself, understanding itself, loving itself.”^[45] As Augustine observes, this is especially true in the case of the minds of children. Does the child know itself?^[46] Yes, but it does not think of itself reflexively, because it is preoccupied with the desire and thirst for light, for all the new sensible and temporal realities of the external world. It cannot turn back to itself reflexively because it rests in the gift of its being and moves through the wonders of all being, so it is not wedged into the relational dialectic of the inner and outer, rest and motion. But to never fall into this dialectic, or to be rescued from this dialectic after we have fallen, we must follow Christ, who makes present in the dialogical community of the Church the reality of sonship and Trinitarian childhood, real relations, and peace that are resistant to diabolical perversion of self-contradictory structures like the potency that gives birth to itself in order to be.

This distinction is crucial to our understanding of the relationship between Trinitarian eternity and Trinitarian time. Both eternity and time are certainly characterized by processual self-generation or self-creation. However, Trinitarian eternity and time do not take their origin from dialectical self-relation, but

from the relational processes that generously binds and distinguishes the persons of the Trinity and the acts of the human soul, i.e., the paradoxical self-generation “from-the-other” and “towards-the-other”. The exploration of the external Trinity and of the Trinity of religious faith was so crucial for Augustine because it made these Trinitarian distinctions clearly visible. Just as the eternal Father is not the Father of himself but of the eternal Son, and the eternal Son is not the Son of himself but of the eternal Father, so the self-creating and self-generating *distentio animi* in time is not reducible either to absolute irrational paternal authority and power or to absolute filial rationality, but consists in the reciprocal interpenetration of memory in thought and thought in memory. At the same time, this reciprocal interpenetration itself is shown to be of the nature of relational exchange of gifts, self-giving, or the love of the Holy Spirit. What does this Augustinian gratuitous interweaving mean? Just as the momentary, timely call of love at first sight must be a gift relating to eternity (*ecce Agnus Dei!*), the eternal Trinitarian relations are fully in the act of mutual surprise, consisting in an unexpected timing of eternal love. It is perhaps the most surprising similarity: to be surprised by eternity in time or to be surprised by time in eternity.^[47]

This is the real metaphysical and theological reason why Augustine emphasizes the importance of time for knowing the mysteries of Trinity: “The distinction is easier to observe

where something crops up in time (*quod tempore accedit*) and where parent precedes offspring by an interval of time (*ubi parens prolem spatio temporis antecedit*).^[48] The non-being in the mode of differentiation that characterizes time (as we have already seen in Confessions) proves to be, in a Christological light, an opportunity to recognize the inseparable gift that the Father and the Son bestow on each other, and thus also the gift by which the inseparable unity of the human soul is formed on its way towards the eternal life.

Time as a gift for us to distinguish with love

This result of a brief analysis of Augustin's *De Trinitate* shows that we can never follow the author's explorations of time if, like most twentieth-century continental philosophers, we emphasize only the self-reflexive nature of consciousness or only the historicity of our complicated existential journey in time without considering the Trinitarian patterns of Augustine's thought. The processual *distentio animi* involving retention, attention, and anticipation is not a wholly immanent movement of self-consciousness, but rather a self-creative process imitating how the persons of the Trinity mutually confer their being upon each other as relations-entirely-in-act. Here, time is a gift for us to distinguish in love so that the Trinitarian patterns of our lives, knowledge, and desire may become real by sharing in the eternal lov-

ing bond of the Trinity. The analogy between the processual self-generation of temporal subjectivity and the self-generation of the Holy Trinity needs to be contrasted with a conception of being understood as a pure eidetic relationality of power generating itself which is most like the Trinity but precisely for that reason most problematic. Rather, this analogy should be seen in a Christological light as analogous to Christ's both temporal and eternal Trinitarian self-giving, as Klaus Hemmerle states when he argues that no truth is more temporal than religious truth.

Thus, speaking of Trinitarian temporality is not in opposition to traditional orthodoxy, which emphasizes the distinction between time in creation and the eternal life of the Trinity, but it is in direct opposition to the philosophical absorption of orthodoxy into systems of absolute logic based on the eternal self-relation of mere thought, which is supposed to be conceptually superior to creation and the Creator. Trinitarian temporality refuses to interpret the differentiation between time and eternity as a necessity of dialectical unfolding, but at the same time it does not deny it but reveals it as a differentiation in love. Trinitarian temporality is still distinct from eternity. The only thing that is new here is that this difference is neither non-thematic nor completely autonomous but is made real by Christ's self-giving. It is neither non-Trinitarian nor anti-Trinitarian, but simply Trinitarian.

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- [1] This publication was funded by the project “Trinitarian Ontologies: A New Philosophical Investigation into Trinitarian Relationality” (JG_2024_002) implemented within the Palacký University Young Researcher Grant.
- [2] The priority of time means that time is more fundamental than space. In the context of his attempt to ground the sciences conceptually (in a sense resistant to any psychologism), Bernardo Bolzano (1781–1848) formulated the priority of the concept of time over the concept of space. “Mir nun dünkt, dass der Begriff der Zeit einfacher sei als der des Raumes, so zwar, dass dieser jenen in der That schon als einen Bestandtheil enthalte; und dass wir somit die Eigenschaften des Raumes, wenn wir sie ableiten wollen aus ihrem objectiven Grunde, aus jenen der Zeit herleiten müssen; woraus sich denn von selbst ergeben würde, dass man die Lehre von der Zeit bei einer streng wissenschaftlichen Abhandlung jener vom Räume vorzuschicken habe.” Bernardo Bolzano, *Versuch einer objectiven Begründung der Lehre von den drei Dimensionen des Raumes* (Prag: Kronberger & Řivnač, 1843). This conception of the priority of time over space influenced later phenomenological and analytic philosophical traditions in that it linked time to the principle of non-contradiction, so that any phenomenon or state of affairs to which a subject directs its intention or which it names can be real in an objective sense only if it is so and so, and not at the same time the opposite. At any given moment, the tree either blooms or does not bloom. The problem with this account of the priority of time over space is the simultaneous privileging of the logical over the real, so that time here is time only as a conceptual, “spatialised” rule, a “Bestimmung,” and not an event or story that would include its relational origin, actuality, and final meaning along with reality in the sense of the givenness of objective logical determinations in time. On Bolzano’s role in the emergence of a “third realm” of logical truth beyond the psyche and the thing itself, cf. Catherine Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics* (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 92. Too much anti-psychologism makes us blind to the dynamics that transforms the givenness of objective determinations into a mode of self-expression of the psyche in interaction and communication with other spiritual realities of the intelligible world. Although not a philosophical text, Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) speaks of the priority of time over space in precisely this sense, going beyond the limits of the continental or analytic philosophical tradition. Cf. §222 of Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, 1st ed. (New York: Image, 2014).
- [3] “Il termine religio non deriva, secondo un’etimologia tanto insipida quanto inesatta, da religare (ciò che lega e unisce l’umano e il divino), ma da relegere, che indica l’atteggiamento di scrupolo e di attenzione cui devono improntarsi i rapporti con gli dèi, l’inquieta esitazione (il “rileggere”) davanti alle forme – e alle formule – da osservare per rispettare la separazione fra il sacro e il profano.” Giorgio Agamben, *Profanazioni* (Roma: Nottetempo, 2005), 85. From Agamben’s position, this critique is understandable, but the question is whether every distancing “relegere” presupposes a connecting “religare”, and vice versa.
- [4] Thus, I do not agree with the understanding of the phenomenon of religion as a particular form of sacred existence in contrast to profane existence. Cf. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1987), 14. The phenomenon of religion is more fundamental than this distinction.
- [5] Klaus Hemmerle, ‘Die Wahrheit Jesu’, in *Unterwegs mit dem dreieinigen Gott: Beiträge zur Religionsphilosophie und Fundamentaltheologie*, ed. Heinz-Jürgen Görtz, Klaus Kienzler, and Richard Lorenz, 1st ed., *Ausgewählte Schriften 2* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1996), 183.
- [6] Hemmerle, 184.
- [7] Hemmerle, 184.
- [8] In connection with the Sabbath, Heschel speaks of the discovery of the priority of time over space. Cf. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York, NY: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1978). Most recently cf. Ottilia Lukács, *Sabbath in the Making: A Study of the Inner-Biblical Interpretation of the Sabbath Commandment* (Leuven: Peeters, 2020).
- [9] Could the relationship of Old Testament to New Testament revelation be understood within a Trinitarian ontology in a non-supersessionist way? Sang Hoon Lee offers a certain way to this end in his interpretation of Jenson’s Trinitarian ontology. In the Holy Spirit, the second person of the Trinity is simultaneous to everything past and future. “By the Spirit, the Son Jesus is one with the old Israel in the Old Testament period, as the Spirit achieves the oneness between the Word of God and their (prophetic and inspired) words; by the Spirit, in the
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New Testament period, the two subsequent Israelites communities, the Jewish community and the gentile Christian community, are sustained in parallel, and in the final eschaton, the two will be one.” Sang Hoon Lee, Trinitarian Ontology and Israel in Robert W. Jenson’s Theology (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2016), 172. And because prophecy and inspiration are eventful in nature, it is clear that it is the Old Testament priority of time that corresponds to the New Testament priority of Easter time, and this connection is what takes place in history as it moves toward its apocalyptic end.

^[10] Hemmerle, ‘Die Wahrheit Jesu’, 197–98.

^[11] Klaus Hemmerle, *Theses Towards a Trinitarian Ontology*, trans. Stephen Churchyard, 1st ed. (New York: Angelico Press, 2020).

^[12] “For an ontology which starts from what is distinctively Christian, the basic question cannot any longer be what endures, and what changes. As little as this question can be permitted to drop away, it can just as little be the unquestioned starting-point. For whoever thinks starting out only from what remains, begins his thinking from a lonely starting-point, from enduring to the last, from self-intentionality. The revolutionizing force of the unadorned expression that love alone remains can hardly be overestimated.” Hemmerle, 35.

^[13] Klaus Hemmerle, ‘Trinität und Zeit’, in *Unterwegs mit dem dreieinigen Gott: Beiträge zur Religionsphilosophie und Fundamentaltheologie*, ed. Heinz-Jürgen Görtz, Klaus Kienzler, and Richard Lorenz, 1st ed., *Ausgewählte Schriften 2* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder Verlag, 1996), 280–94.

^[14] Hemmerle, 283.

^[15] Hemmerle, 285.

^[16] Hemmerle, 287–289.

^[17] Hemmerle, 289–290.

^[18] Hemmerle, 292.

^[19] Cf. Pickstock, *Aspects of Truth: A New Religious Metaphysics*, 232.

^[20] The term *kairos* was appropriated for Trinitarian ontology by Piero Coda in Piero Coda et al., *Manifesto: per una riforma del pensare* (Rome: Città nuova, 2021).

^[21] Cf. Acts 1, 1–8.

^[22] Hemmerle, *Theses* (Trans. Churchyard), 33.

^[23] Edmund Husserl, *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins: Mit den Texten aus der Erstausgabe und dem Nachlass*, *Philosophische Bibliothek*, Band 649 (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2013), 3.

^[24] Conf. XI, 14, 17.

^[25] Conf. XI, 15, 18. Augustine’s *Confessions* are quoted according to the translation Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2019).

^[26] Conf. XI, 20, 26.

^[27] Conf. XI, 26, 33.

^[28] Cf. Conf. XI, 14, 17.

^[29] This Augustinian influence is then manifested in the analysis of being (*Dasein*) in *Sein und Zeit* (1927). Cf. Ryan Coyne, *Heidegger’s Confessions: The Remains of Saint Augustine in ‘Being and Time’ and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 63–64.

^[30] Martin Heidegger, ‘Augustinus und der Neoplatonismus’, in *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, by Martin Heidegger (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995), 298–299.

^[31] Cf. René Descartes, *Oeuvres de Descartes. Vol. III: Correspondance – Janvier 1640-Juin 1643* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1956), 247.

^[32] Of course, a number of scholarly works have appeared in recent decades that have contributed to a more thorough interpretation of Augustine’s Trinitarian thought. Cf. in particular Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Phillip Cary, *Augustine’s Invention of the Inner Self: The Legacy of a Christian Platonist* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Lenka Karfíková, *Anamnesis:*

Augustin mezi Platonem a Plotinem, 1st ed. (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2015); Rowan Williams, *On Augustine* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016); Roland Kany, *Augustins Trinitätsdenken: Bilanz, Kritik und Weiterführung der modernen Forschung zu 'De Trinitate'*, *Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity* 22 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

^[33] John Milbank, 'The Confession of Time in Augustine', *Maynooth Philosophical Papers* 10 (2020): 55.

^[34] *De Trin.* I, 1, 1. Unless explicitly noted otherwise Augustine's *De Trinitate* is quoted according to the translation Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2015).

^[35] *De Trin.* I, 1, 1. My translation with consultation of the translations of Augustine, *On the Trinity: De Trinitate Libri XV*, trans. Arthur West Haddan (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887); Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill (New York: New City Press, 2015).

^[36] *De Trin.* V, 4, 5.

^[37] *De Trin.* VIII, 1, 1.

^[38] *De Trin.* VIII, 8, 12; VIII, 10, 14.

^[39] *De Trin.* IX, 4, 4: "Ipsa igitur mens et amor et notitia eius tria quaedam sunt, et haec tria unum sunt, et cum perfecta sunt, aequalia sunt."

^[40] *De Trin.* X, 11, 18: "Haec igitur tria, memoria, intellegentia, voluntas, quoniam non sunt tres vitae, sed una vita; nec tres mentes, sed una mens, consequenter utique nec tres substantiae sunt, sed una substantia."

^[41] *De Trin.* X, 12, 19.

^[42] *De Trin.* XI, 2, 3.

^[43] *De Trin.* XII, 19, 24.

^[44] *De Trin.* XIV, 10, 13.

^[45] *De Trin.* XIV, 10, 13.

^[46] *De Trin.* XIV, 5, 7.

^[47] Children often wish that the spontaneous moment just experienced in the safe and loving presence of their parents would last forever. In *De Trin.* XIII, 8, 11 and *De Trin.* XIII, 8, 12, Augustine reveals the logic of this desire and its Trinitarian fulfilment by the incarnation of the Son of God. Those who are already blissful (and children are, in a sense, already blissful) can no longer want to not to be blissful. So they do not want to perish. *Immortales ergo esse volunt*. Without the incarnation, this desire would be only illusory. "But if the faith possessed by those to whom Jesus gave the right to become sons of God (John 1,12) is to hand, then there is no question at all."

^[48] *De Trin.* XIV, 7, 10.