

2.1. "From" the Father

FATHER

1.3. "To" the Father

Path 1. The order of experience (1.1→1.3)
Path 2. The order of the divine life in the heart of the Trinity (2.1→2.3)

1.2 "Through" the Son

1.1. "From Within" the Spirit

2.2 "Through" the Son

SON

SPIRIT

2.3. "In" the Spirit

❖ These prepositions that describe patterns of mediation are preserved not only in early Christian writings but in the liturgy. As for early writers, cf. Irenaeus (d. 202 AD): "Here is ... the gradation and arrangement of those who are saved, and the steps by which they advance: they ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father" (*Against Heresies*, 5.36.2).

Twofold Path Of Approach to The Trinitarian Mystery (Early Church)

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.
Key Terms & Concepts
→ Early Church

Perichoresis (< "rotation," from *peri*: "around" + *khōrēsis*: "proceeding" or "going forward" and "to make room for"; [Gr: περιχώρησις]); **Circum-incepsio** (Latin transl. of Gr.: *circum*: "around" + *incedere*: "to go, to step, approach").

:= the mutual indwelling or inter-penetration of the three divine persons who are reciprocally in each other. The divine persons indwell each other in two senses: (1) *substantially*, by virtue of their common, shared, and identical *being*, essence, nature; (2) *personally*, by virtue of the *relations* that characterize and *constitute* the persons.

Perichoresis (Gr.)/ Circumincepsio (Lat.)

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.
Key Terms & Concepts

Procession (Gr., *ekporeusis* means 'emerge from, go forth from, stream forth from'; Lat.: *processio* means 'coming forth,' 'proceeding').

:= in Latin theology, procession (broadly speaking) refers to the eternal origin of the S and the HS from the F. But in a special sense, "procession" distinctly refers to the origin of the HS and is his relative property.

:= in Greek theology, procession refers exclusively to the origin of the Holy Spirit from the Father [→ *Ekporeusis*].

Processio and Ekporeusis (Latin and Greek)

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.
Key Terms & Concepts

Mission (< Lat., *missio*: "sending"; Gr., *apostellō*, *pempō*)

:= the *sending* of the S and HS in the economy.

Biblical Basis of Mission. The Scriptures tell us of the S being sent by the F (Gal. 4:4; Jn 3:17; 5:23; 6:57; 17:18) and of the HS being sent by the F (Gal. 4:6; Jn 14:16, 26) and the S (Lk 24:49; Jn 15:26; 16:7). The mission of the S in the incarnation takes a visible form. The mission of the HS in the indwelling of the HS in the hearts of those who have been justified (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Rom. 5:5; 8:11) is invisible but is constitutive of Christian living and experience.

Mission

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.
Key Terms & Concepts

The Order of Being refers to an approach that begins with the eternal Trinity and *then* treats the order of *sending*. In short: processions → *then* missions.

The Order of Knowing refers to an approach that begins with the missions and *then* treats their eternal presuppositions in the eternal Trinity. In short: mission → *then* processions.

The Difference: While this distinction might appear similar to *theology and economy, etc., the emphasis is distinct: as used in modern Trinitarian theology, it has two functions: (1) it refers to the *structure* of treating Trinitarian theology; but more importantly, (2) it refers to the *place* given to *epistemology* in Trinitarian theology, especially in light of the modern turn towards "subjectivity." [Cf. → *Twofold Path of Approach to the Trinitarian Mystery*]

The Order of Being and The Order of Knowing (modern usage)

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.
Key Terms & Concepts
→ Method & Approaches

St. Basil sums up **the twofold path** of approach to the Trinitarian mystery: “The way to divine knowledge ascends from one Spirit through the one Son to the one Father. Likewise, [God’s graces] ... reaches from the Father through the Only-Begotten to the Spirit” (*On the Holy Spirit* 18.47:74-5).

The first path is that of our *experience*. This path begins with the HS and, in the S, leads to the F. “For our mind, enlightened by the Spirit, looks upon the Son, and in Him, as in the Image, beholds the Father” (Basil, *Letter* 226.3). Under this aspect, the HS is in a certain way “the closest to us,” the one who is most intimate to believers because he is poured forth in their hearts. The HS is Gift in person: it is in *him* that believers are able to know the S and to have access to the F. In baptism, believers are consecrated to the F through the S, in the HS who accomplishes interiorly their regeneration (Thomas, *Comm. Matt.* 28:19, no. 2465).

Further Explanation regarding #2 above. The F is F only in relation to the S; the S is S only in relation to the F, and so forth [cf. →Relations]. Thus, the S is not begotten “outside” of the F, as though they were ‘individual monads’ that *then* entered into relation. Rather, the S is begotten within the F and he remains “in” the F: “I am in the Father and the Father in me” (Jn 14:10, 11). **Same for HS.** **Historical Usage.** The Greek verb *perichorein* was first used by St Gregory of Nazianzus Christologically, i.e. to describe the communication of the divine nature with the human nature in Christ. St. John Damascene was the first to use the term to refer to the mutual interpenetration of the divine persons, i.e. their mutual “being in.” *Each divine person is in the others.* Still more, it is necessary to recognize that *each divine person is in those who are in him.* The mutual indwelling of the divine persons shows their personal distinction in the most

Why the confusion? The common base for forming these descriptions is Jn 15:26, where the Spirit is described as one “who proceeds from the Father” (*ho para tou patros ekporeuetai*). It was from here that ‘proceeds’ was incorporated into the Creed at the *Council of Constantinople I (381). Here the challenges begin:

1. Early Greek theology distinguished between: *ekporeusis* = the HS’s origin from the F, the unoriginated origin, and *proienai* = the co-operation of the S in the procession of the HS.
2. The Latin Vulgate translated *ekporeuetai* as *procedit*, which has a more general meaning than *ekporeusis*.
3. The problem is twofold: one the one hand, Latin theology needed to develop a way of distinguishing between the

Important Concepts. The concept of mission includes two important factors: (1) As compared with the omnipresence of God that is entailed by God’s very nature, this is a new, free, and personal kind of presence of God in the world and in history. (2) The mission presupposes and has for its origin the eternal dependence of the S on the F and of the HS on the F and the S. The S is eternally from the F; the HS is eternally from the F and the S. The mission in time thus presupposes the eternal procession and adds to it a new, historical mode of presence in the created world (Thomas Aquinas, *ST I*, q. 43, a. 2, ad 5). The mission can therefore be regarded as a reproduction and diffusion, and even a prolongation of the eternal procession (M J. Scheeben, *The Mysteries of Christianity* (n. 30), 157).

Prof.’s Meditation (→ *Theological Opinion, not Magisterial Teaching*).

❖ Unlike any person ever, Jesus is his mission. He does not “receive” a mission, but his very existence in human nature is already an aspect of his *being sent* by the Father and his own *self-emptying* into the “form of a slave” (Phil 2:5-11).

Contemporary Usage. **The Order of Being.** The doctrine of the Trinity, as found in most manuals of dogmatic theology from the 12th to early 20th centuries, begin with the immanent Trinity, specifically with the eternal processions. Only at the end of the treatise do the manuals deal with the mission (*sending*) of the Son and the Spirit into the world in the economy of salvation. [A notable exception is the treatment of the Trinity in the Tübingen thinkers in the early 19th century].

The Order of Knowing. This path follows the order of how we came to know God as Trinity. It begins with the mission as they occur in the history of salvation, and then come to know the eternal processions via the missions as their ground and presupposition. Modern authors argue that this approach is more in keeping with the nature of human knowledge, which always starts from experience, and because it also seems more appropriate in view of the biblical witness. The starting point and basic category of this approach is the concept of mission or sending.

The second path is that of the order of the divine life at the heart of the Trinity. This is the *order of origin in God himself*. This path begins from the F. The F is the Source who communicates the fullness of divinity to the S (this is the eternal begetting) and to the HS (this is the eternal “spiration” of the HS). The one divine nature is possessed by the Three according to an order: F, and S, and HS. The action of the Trinity in our world reflects this same order: “The Father does all things *through* the Word in the Holy Spirit” (Athanasius, *Letter to Serapion*, 1:28). We likewise find here the order of sending: the F sends his S and his Spirit.

Source and end of the paths. The F who is the Source in the eternal Trinity (this is the order of the reality in God himself), which the order of sending reflects) is also the end to which the HS and the S lead believers (this is the order of experience and of baptismal grace).

(cont’d) **most profound unity.** The Latin trans. occurred c. end of the 12th cent.

Prof.’s Meditation (→ *Theological Opinion, not Magisterial Teaching*).

❖ Some describe *perichoresis* as a “**divine dance**.”

❖ The Gr. term has the connotation of not only ‘in-dwelling’ in the Other, but making room in oneself for the Other to in-dwell. Thus, we have: (1) a self-surrender of one to the Other; (2) a making room in one for the Other; and (3) a letting the Other be Other. In short: a surrendering in love to and receiving of the Other in the Other’s Otherness. .

❖ When the HS indwells us, the whole Trinity is present. The in-dwelling of the Trinity in the soul is a well-established tradition in the Church.

Cf. Bernard of Clairvaux: “If, as is properly understood, the Father is he who kisses, the Son he who is kissed, then it cannot be wrong to see in the kiss the Holy Spirit, for he is the imperturbable peace of the Father and the Son, their unshakable bond, their undivided love, their indivisible unity.” (Sermon 8; *Song of Songs*.)

(cont’d) procession of the S and that of the HS. On the other hand, the creed of Constantinople I remained entirely silent, and leaving open the relation of the S to the HS is, of course, not a solution.

4. The need to discern language to describe the S’s relation to the F rests on two convictions: (1) that the Trinitarian persons are only known and distinguished by virtue of their *relations* [→Opposition of Relations]. (2) According to Scripture, the HS proceeds from the F (Jn 15:26), but is also communicated by the S (cf. Jn 14:16, 26, among others). The HS is the Spirit of the Son (Gal. 4:6), the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19). According to Rev. 22:1, the water of life “flows (*ekporeuomenon*!) from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

(cont’d) As such, his entirely earthly existence is “*framed*” by a *mystery of self-giving love* that precedes it, is its transcendental condition, and which forms the depths of self-giving love that is manifested in it.

Illustration of the Mission of the Son.

The Son was sent by the Father into the world...

Consubstantial / Homousios claims that Jesus’ Mission begins with the Father himself. It reaches all the way to the level of God’s own life and existence.

... and then the Son returned to the Father from which he came.

In this space is where we understand his incarnation, birth, life, death, and resurrection.

Prof.’s Meditation (→ *Theological Opinion, not Magisterial Teaching*).

This distinction is somewhat helpful for thinking about the history of approaches in early modern and modern Trinitarian theology, but its usefulness is quite limited. It tends to presuppose a ‘descending’ approach (order of being → order of knowledge) vs. an epistemologically-responsible approach (order of knowledge → order of being). One important benefit of the second approach is that it re-roots us in the biblical witness and liturgical celebration of God’s mystery. But it is more helpful to think of our task today in terms of *foreground* (= stage of history) and *background* (the abyss and depths of Being itself) than in terms of *ascending* (knowledge → Being) and *descending* (Being → knowledge). The goal of Trinitarian theology in this regard should be to make the economic Trinity as encountered in Scripture, Tradition, and Christian experience open up to the *eternal and divine depths* of God’s *self-revelation* and *self-gift* that we encounter in it.

Adoptionism ⇒ a group of heterodox doctrines in which Jesus is simply a man who was <i>adopted</i> as a son by God. As such, this teaching holds that Jesus is not Son of God <i>by nature</i>, that is, it does not see Jesus’ sonship as rooted in God’s own eternal and intimate life. Rather, Jesus’ sonship is by <i>grace</i>, by “adoption” in a manner comparable to the prophets or saints.	Adoptionism <i>Stefano: Trinitarian Theology. Challenge of Heresies</i>
Unitarian Monarchianism (< Gr. <i>Monos</i>: “one,” “alone” + archē: “principle,” “source,” “rule”) ⇒ group of heterodox doctrines that exclude the <i>real distinction</i> of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in God. They reproach orthodox Christianity for professing two or three gods. While acknowledging the names of F, S, and HS that Scripture employs, they see there only <i>modes of manifestation of the same one God</i>. The same God manifests himself sometimes as F, sometimes as S (in the incarnation), sometimes as HS (in the Church). Hence comes the name “modalism,” which is also called “Sabellianism,” from the name of Sabellius, one of its early representatives.	Modalism / Sabellianism / Unitarian Monarchianism <i>Stefano: Trinitarian Theology. Challenge of Heresies</i>
Arius (256-336 AD), a presbyter in Alexandria, whose teachings sparked a controversy around 318 and 320 AD. Arius firmly denied modalism, but fell into the opposite error. For Arius, God = one, “unbegotten,” eternal. As such, the S cannot be “eternal begotten” of the F or “of the same substance” as the F. For Arius: 1. The Father alone is God (<i>LAA</i>; <i>Th</i>; <i>EL</i>). 2. The Son was made from nothing (<i>LEN</i>; <i>Th</i>; <i>EL</i>). 3. The Son is not true God, but is God only in name (<i>Th</i>). 4. The Son had a beginning (<i>LEN</i>; <i>LAA</i>). 5. Son as in-between creator (<i>EL</i>; <i>Synt.</i>). [Sources: <i>LAA</i> = Arius, <i>Letter to Alexander of Alexandria</i>; <i>Th</i> = Arius, <i>Thalia</i>; <i>EL</i> = Alexander of Alexandria, <i>Encyclical Letter</i>; <i>LEN</i> = Arius, <i>Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia</i>; <i>Synt.</i> = Asterius the Sophist, <i>Syntagmation</i>].	Arianism (Arius) <i>Stefano: Trinitarian Theology. Challenge of Heresies</i>
Arianism (Homoians) [< Gr. <i>Homoi-ousios</i>: “like the Father” instead of “<i>homo-ousios</i>” of one substance with the Father”] Three main characteristics of Homoian Arianism: 1. It is little interested in philosophy on the whole. 2. It was developed of the theology of Eusebius of Caesarea (a subordinationist) in a direction which can be thought of as distinctive of Arius’ theology because it always sedulously avoided introducing the word <i>ousia</i> or its compounds into accounts of the relation of F to S. 3. It usually preferred to describe the F and S as “like” without further qualification. — This was not, on the whole, because it wished to leave a wide margin for diverse interpretations but it genuinely held that further qualifications would introduce elements that would contradict the Bible.	Arianism (Homoians) <i>Stefano: Trinitarian Theology. Challenge of Heresies</i>
Arianism (Anomians) [< Gr. <i>anomoios</i> = “absolutely unlike”]. The doctrinal crisis arrived at one of its summits in the 350s with a new, radical form of Arianism, led by Aetius (d. 367) and his student, Eunomius (d. 394), who argued that the Son is absolutely unlike (<i>anomoios</i>) the Father in essence (hence the name “anomians”). The immovable foundation of Eunomius’s doctrine of God is the premise that the word-sign “Unbegotten/ unoriginated” (<i>agen[n]ētos</i>) renders the divine essence immediately present to the mind. Eunomius claimed that <i>un</i>-begotten is not merely a negation, but really makes present the divine essence in one’s mind, and the apprehension of that presence in turn enabled the denial that God is caused.	Arianism (Anomians) <i>Stefano: Trinitarian Theology. Challenge of Heresies</i>

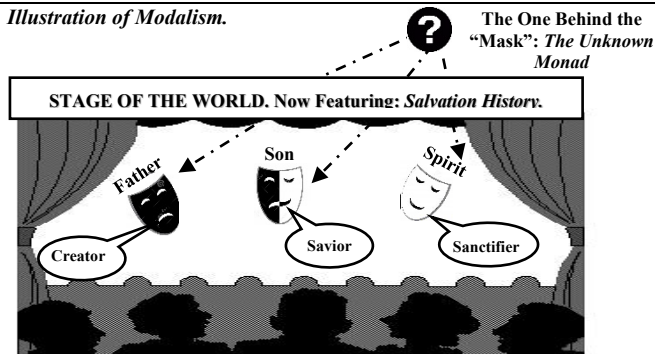
Further Information. This reading oftentimes tries to see Jesus in continuity with the tradition of prophets in the Old Testament in which the *Word of God* is said to indwell, even if they see Jesus as a more privileged site of indwelling.

History. Early forms of adoptionism focuses on the narrative of Jesus' baptism, and understood that to be the point at which he was 'adopted' as the "Son of God." Later forms of adoptionism, such as Elipandus and Felix in the 8th century, or the so-called neo-adoptionism of the 12th century, tended to blend heterodox Christology with their understanding of God, since they posited

(cont'd.) that the humanity of Jesus was "adopted" by the eternal Son at the moment conception. In their view, they were distinguishing between Jesus' humanity as adopted and the eternal Son "in" the human nature as the "natural Son." But this misunderstands the teaching of Chalcedon that it was the *person* of the eternal Son of God (the "who") that took human nature to himself and became flesh in Jesus Christ.

Significance. Every form of adoptionism destroys faith in the Trinity, since faith in the Trinity presupposes that we truly encounter God's *self-gift* and *self-revelation* in Jesus Christ.

Illustration of Modalism.



In its early forms, modalism attempted to preserve God's *transcendence* and the oneness of God (monotheism), as distinct from pagan polytheism. It poses three major problems:

- (1) **Not God's self-revelation.** It puts a divide between the *three figures or roles* (persons, i.e. masks!) that we encounter in salvation history and the One who subsists beneath them. As such, the *who* of whom we encounter is always truly concealed. We encounter an unknown *who* that is known to us only in a particular *role* taken on for us (eg, creator, savior, sanctifier). Thus, we never truly know *who* God is. *There is no self-revelation of God.*
- (2) **Imposes our concepts on God by not speaking analogically.** It seeks to preserve the oneness of God by imposing on God an understanding of oneness that is overly-determined by our concept of "one" as both a number (# 1) and as a unity conceived of as aloneness (*monos*). Oneness applied to God must follow the analogical way of speaking, just like all other attributes. Thus, as Hilary of Poitiers (4th cent) says: *God is one, but not alone.*
- (3) **Not the mystery of divine self-giving.** Whatever we receive in salvation history, we do not receive God's very self, handed over for us. Only if these roles (persons, masks) were real distinctions in God, that is, if these roles (persons) corresponded to the one who stood under them (hypostasis, subsistentia) would we have God's self-revelation and self-gift.

The Heart of the Problem. [Depiction of Arius' view of God-world]
Father = God, as Monad (One), "unbegotten")

FIRE WALL BETWEEN GOD AND THE WORLD
(Preserves God's transcendence)

Word of God = greatest & first creature

For Arius, the Word of God received title "Son of God," "Lord," and even "God" *honorifically* in view of the obedience he would have in the work of salvation (his reading of Phil. 2:5-11).

Can he ever say that the Cross is God's Self-Gift to us?

Arianism. St. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote vehemently against Arius and his followers, setting forth a virulent picture of this heresy, baptized "Arianism." [i.e., *Arianism* as an *-ism* comes from Athanasius]

What's at Stake? Of the many arguments that the Church Fathers offer, one stands out as the most important. It can be expressed today in this way: *What would it do to your faith if you found out that Jesus died on the Cross for \$64 million? ... It would destroy your faith. — Arius' Word of God* gains so much more out of salvation history than he could possibly ever give: he gains the title of "God"! He gets to be adored and worshipped as *God!* That's more than all the money in the world. What is lost here? *The mystery of divine self-giving.* Athanasius makes this clearer than anyone: it's God's gift of his very self that is at stake.

Homoian Arianism is a diverse phenomenon, both widespread and somewhat long-lasting. It occurred in both Greek and Latin-speaking writers.

Major Authors. Valens of Mursa (d. 371) and Ursacius of Singidurnum. Some years earlier, the Nicenes at the Western Council of Serdica (343) referred to them as "two vipers lately born from an Arian asp."

Main text. The main text of this form of Arianism is the Second Creed (dubbed the "Blasphemy") of Sirmium (357). It states: "But since some or many persons were disturbed by questions concerning substance—called in Greek *ousia*, that is, to make it understood more exactly, *homoousion*, or what is called *homoiousion*—there ought to be no

(cont'd) mention of this [idea] at all. Nor ought anyone to preach it for the reason and consideration that it is not contained in the divine Scriptures, and that it is above man's understanding, nor can any man declare the birth of the Son, of whom it is written, 'Who shall declare his generation' (Is 53:8)."

Q&A. What does Homoian Arianism tell us about the need for non-biblical words, such as "homoousios"? Such terms preserve the *contours of divine self-giving* that tells us how to read Scripture. The term "homoousios," therefore, is not an attempt at diluting or over-determining the biblical mystery by introducing philosophy. It is a case of "breaking open" a philosophical term so that it can serve as a vessel that *preserves* the very contours of God's self-gift as expressed in it.

Distinguishing Characteristics. its bold *rationalism* and its careful use of Aristotelean logic and late Platonic philosophy. It was against this type of Arianism that the Cappadocians wrote in the 350's and 360's, especially Gregory of Nyssa (d. 394-400).

Nyssa's Four Main Responses. (1) Against Eunomius's [= Eun.] claim that we can formulate a positive concept of God, Nyssa argued that the divine essence is infinite, and thus, incomprehensible: it cannot be fully encompassed or circumscribed by thought or word. But incomprehensible does not mean inaccessible. He uses the metaphors of journeying, approaching, traveling for knowing. Describing Abraham's faith-knowledge, Nyssa says: "[Abraham] proceeded from the beauty of what is beheld in contemplation and the harmony of the heavenly wonders to the desire of seeing Archetypal Beauty. ... When he had advanced beyond every hypothesis concerning the divine nature and purified his reasonings ..., he made this the fixed and manifest sign of the knowledge of God: *to believe that he is greater and higher than every sign by which he is known*" (C. Eun. 2.89).

(2) Nyssa characterizes Eun.'s epistemology by the attitude of "grasping" in the sense of the Stoic Zeno's image of comprehension (*katalēpsis*) as a hand closed tightly over an object that it grasps. Eun.'s approach denudes Being, whereas his own receives Being in wonder.

(3) The climax of Nyssa's claim is that we *know* God, not because our concepts can "grasp" him (have mastery over him), but because, by the power of God's self-humbling love, God has made himself comprehensible by us at our level in the economy of salvation:

"We hold that the reason why God allows himself to have conversation with human beings is his love for humanity (*philanthrōpian*). Because that which is finite by nature cannot rise above its own limits in order to lay hold of the transcendent nature of the Most High, he brings down to the level of our weakness his loving power, as a gift and help to us, according to our capacity to receive it. The divine power ... is like a compassionate mother who joins in the inarticulate cries of her infants, and so grants to our human nature what it is capable of receiving. Thus, in the various divine manifestations..., he presents himself in a form appropriate to human beings and speaks in human language and puts on the guise of anger and pity and such emotions, so that by everything that corresponds to our infantile life, we might be led by the hand by providential words and lay hold of the divine nature" (C. Eun. 2.236-42).

(4) Lastly, Nyssa argues that the source of Eun.'s concept of God is a mindset that is ashamed of the cross. Whereas Eun. thinks the cross removes from God's power and glory, Nyssa argues that it is precisely the Incarn. and Passion that show how God's power is not limited *even by his own transcendence*, thereby provoking our *wonder* at his self-humbling love.

Appropriation (< Lat. *appropriare*, “to make one’s own”)

:= When a common/substantial attribute of God (eg, wisdom, power, etc.) is attributed to one person in a special way. This is done because of an affinity of this common attribute with the property of the particular person, and thus helps to better manifest the divine person to the mind of the believer. Appropriation, therefore, allows us to meditate upon the divine persons more deeply.

Doctrine of Appropriation

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.

Begotten (Gr.: *gennētos* [γεννητός]; Lat.: *natus*)

:= The Father *begets* the Son and the Son is *begotten* of the Father. *Begotten* refers to the Son’s relation of origin from the Father. It is a way of describing the relation between the *persons* of the Father and the Son by pointing to the Son’s origin from the Father. It implies *no* temporal interval, *no* inferiority, but only origin, that is to say, a pure relation of principle.

Begotten

(+ Begottenness)

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.

[NB]

1. The analogy of being means, among other things, that God expresses himself in creation by having creaturely being bear a likeness to him even amidst an ever greater dislikeness.
2. The ‘transcendentals’ are characteristics of being that are understood to be expressive of God, though God remains beyond them. (Two main ways of listing the transcendentals: **1.** the one, the true, the good, where ‘the one’ functions like ‘the beautiful’ as ‘aesthetic unity’; or **2.** the true, the beautiful, the good, in which it is said that all three share in transcendental unity).

The Analogy of Being and The Doctrine of Appropriation

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.

There are two kinds of names serving to signify God:

- (1) **Common/substantial** names or attributes refer to what is common to Father, Son, and Spirit: their operation, power, nature, essence, and divinity.
- (2) **Proper/relative** names refer to what is proper to each divine person in a distinct way: the distinctive property of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which involves a relational mode of being.

St. Basil of Caesarea explains that our grasp of the mystery of the Triune God requires the “combination” of those two aspects (Cf. *Against Eunomius* 2.28).

Common/Substantial Names and Proper/Relative Names

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.

Economy (< Gr.: *oikonomia*; cf. Gal. 4:1-4; Eph. 1:9; 3:2, 9)

:= The works by which God reveals himself and communicates himself, particularly the incarnation of the Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit. [In the West, since Augustine, this has commonly been referred to as: God *ad extra*]

Theology (< Gr.: *theologia*, “speech about God”)

:= the mystery of God’s inmost life within the Blessed Trinity, the mystery of the three persons in the transcendent reality of their divine being. [In the West, since Augustine, this has commonly been referred to as: God *ad intra*]

Economy (*oikonomia*) and Theology (*theologia*)

Stefano: Trinitarian Theology.

Example. “Christ is ... the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24).

If the Son is the wisdom of God, does that mean that the Father is unwise? No, because wisdom is an attribute of the being of God that is common to the three persons (See ‘Common/ Substantial Names’), not a name or property proper to a particular divine person as such (See ‘Proper/ Relative Names’). According to Thomas Aquinas, for example, wisdom is “appropriated” to the Son because contemplating the Son as the incarnate Word enables one to apprehend the unity of the divine work of creation, revelation, and salvation as supremely manifesting the wisdom and love of God.

History. The term ‘begotten’ (Gr.: *gennētos*; Lat.: *natus*) is distinguished from ‘created’ (Gr.: *genētos*) or ‘made’ (Gr.: *poiēteos*; Lat.: *factus*). This distinction was secured at the Council of Nicaea I (325), against the Arians who understood ‘begotten’ to necessarily imply inferiority, a temporal interval, and thus, to mean ‘created.’

Begottenness.

⇒ is a personal property of the Son that consists in his relation of origin from the Father. The Father begets the Son and the Son is begotten of the Father.

3. The doctrine of appropriation in the medieval period became a way of connecting the analogy of being with the Trinity. Why? Because the analogy of being discloses to us aspects of God’s *being* analogically, though it can never reveal to us any ‘proper/relative’ attribute particular to a divine person.

4. As such, it offered thinkers two things: (1) new and deeper ways of meditating on the divine persons in their distinctness; (2) a way of seeing how creaturely being is the expression, even amidst ever greater dislikeness, of God’s own Triune life.

5. The following table is based off of Thomas Aquinas, *ST I* and Franzelin’s *De Deo Trino* (Rome, 1881); last row is Balthasar.

Q & A. Why is it important to distinguish between common/substantial attributes and proper/relative ones?

Consider the case of Arius who understood the divine nature (=common/substantial attribute) to be ‘unbegotten.’ This would mean that the Son is not God, but a creature. It is only through the careful distinguishing of what is said of God’s being, which is shared by the three persons, and attributes spoken properly of the divine persons. In this case, unbegotten is a proper/relative term attributed to the person of the Father, but not the divine nature.

Q & A. 1. How do we come to know that God is a Trinity?

Through the economy. We cannot know that God is a Trinity unless God freely revealed his own Triune life and invited us to share in it. God did this through the *sending* (→ *missions*) of the Son and of the Spirit.

2. If we only have “access” to the economy (God in his self-revelation and works of salvation), then how can we say anything about God as a Trinity in himself (theologia)? In the economy, God truly reveals himself and gives himself to us. As such, the *oikonomia* expresses and manifests *theologia*.

History. Appropriation as an explicit theological theory or method is largely a Western practice and was systematized during the Scholastic period. We find it in the Latin Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries (Hilary, *De Trin.*, 2; Augustine, *De Trin.*, 7; Leo the Great, *Sermons on Pentecost*, 76), but more fully developed in the scholastics (Bonaventure, *In I Sent.*, d. 34, q. 3; Thomas, *ST I*, 24). Appropriation was also very popular in theology textbooks in the baroque period and in late 19th century Neo-Scholasticism.

Prof.’s Meditation (→ *Theological Opinion, not Magisterial Teaching*). If ‘begotten’ implies *no* temporal interval, *no* inferiority, but only origin, what does it mean?

❖ It is a way of describing pure relation in verbal form that discloses an eternal dynamic of self-giving and gift within God.

❖ The Father gives himself and everything he has—for God, as God, ‘has’ nothing apart from what he ‘is’—to the Son; it is a giving-away that is the Father’s act of generation. The Son, receiving the Father’s gift of himself gives himself in total surrender to the Father in love. In this way, the Son is the perfect ‘image’ of the Father, apt to represent the Father’s self-giving in his creation in every respect. (See Jn 5:19; John 5:22-30; John 14:9-10, etc.).

Father	Son	Spirit
∴ <i>F as source and first principle of all things</i>	∴ <i>S is the perfect image of the F</i>	∴ <i>HS proceeds through love.</i>
God	Lord	Spirit (in the sense of immaterial substance)
Unity	Truth*	Goodness
Eternity	Beauty*	Fruition
Omnipotence, with all the operations it implies, esp. creation	Wisdom, and its works, esp. the order of the creation	Love* and its works, esp. sanctification
(“font of divinity” who makes himself known in S & HS)	Beauty & Love	Truth, Fruition, & Witness*

What are some examples of common/substantial attributes?

Simple, immutable, uncreated, eternal, incomprehensible, ineffable, a spiritual substance, infinitely intelligent, knowing all things, omnipotent, source of all truth and power, all-wise, etc.

What are some examples of relative/proper attributes?

❖ **For the Father:** Paternity (begetting), Inascibility (= unbegotten; principle without principle); and the common spiration of the Spirit.

❖ **For the Son:** Son (birth, begottenness, sonship), Word, Image.

❖ **For the Holy Spirit:** Spiration, Procession, Gift, and Love.

3. How do we know that God is a Trinity in himself (theologia), and that we don’t just merely experience God as a Trinity in the works of salvation (oikonomia)? 1. Revelation is not the reception of “knowledge” about God, but God’s *self-revelation* in which God truly gives himself. 2. As such, at the heart of the *oikonomia* is the *mystery of divine self-giving*.

4. Why must we preserve the difference between *theologia* and *oikonomia*? Because this distinction preserves the *freedom* and *gratuity* of God in his self-revelation and the works of salvation.