

# NEW ASPECTS IN THE THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF PERSON

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## Abstract

*The whole structure of theology depends on understanding the person's reality. The author of this study provides a perspective on this issue starting from patristic theology, going through Western approaches to the person and providing an indication of the current significance of the person in contemporary theology. Under the influence of classical philosophy, Augustine emphasized in his Trinitarian doctrine the unity of God, statically thought, independent of the incarnation and the order of salvation. This way of thinking has been the cause of many unfortunate misunderstandings in scholastic theology. Here the unity of the Trinity precedes the Trinitarian Persons, so the divine essence was in a way the cause of the Persons. In this context, the person is considered only as a relationship within the Trinity, a concept that changes the entire system of theology. Although some modern Western theologians attempted to correct Augustinian Trinitarian doctrine in the manner of Eastern Trinitarian theology, they could not overcome Augustine's own substantialist way of thinking. That is why their Trinitarian doctrine cannot be received in the theology and cultic life of the Church.*

**Keywords:** Holy Trinity, person, being, mode of existence, distinct mode of subsistence, communication of the Trinitarian God, man's response, interpersonal communion.

For a deeper appreciation of the person's understanding of modern theology, a trip to the Trinitarian teaching of Blessed Augustine is necessary. This is all the more so as Augustine's influence on Western Trinitarian theology – which largely depended on his conception of the person<sup>1</sup> – determined to take a stand in the direction of returning to a biblical conception,<sup>2</sup> personalist about God. Paradoxically, however, this theology also came to an attempt to overcome

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<sup>1</sup> K. Rahner, "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendenter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte", în *Mysterium Salutis*, Band 2, Einsiedeln, 1967, p. 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 373.

the classical aporias to an insufficient understanding of the person's reality. The paradox went so far that those who tried to go beyond Augustine's conception came to be on the same line with him.

In the Aryan dispute of the fourth century, Augustine sought to emphasize the equality of the divine Persons, but remained reserved for the use of the word "person". Instead, he took over the official formula of the Church "una substantia tres personae". In Augustine, however, this remained a simple formula, not discovering a relational character to the person, but an "absolute" one in the sense that the person applies only to "Deus Trinitas". This conception is present in his whole spiritual development, making him first of all interested in the unity of the divine being. On the other hand, he surprisingly developed the teaching about relationships that Thomas d'Aquino was able to unite with his notion of subsistence. Compared to the Quicumque Symbol<sup>3</sup> and the Synod of Toledo, which used the term "persona", Augustine remained in his reserved position. Regarding the Christological teaching, he does not feel difficulties, rendering through the formulas "una persona" and "unus et ipse" the unity of the person in Christ.

Regarding the teaching of God, however, Augustine is very sensitive, especially by expressing the impossibility of rendering the divine mystery by word. In the 7th book of his basic work "The Trinity", which argues with the Traditional formula "a being three persons", Augustine strives to show how he can speak of the Trinity in a more precise and secure way (ad certam regulam).

However, the difficulty increases with the question: "Why the difference between the Father, the Son and the Spirit, in which the Christian must believe, must be expressed by that word which interests him least, that is, the person"<sup>4</sup>.

Augustine states in this regard: "All we have to do is admit that this formula was created out of the need to talk about the Trinity? A comprehensive discussion is needed on the attacks and confusions of heretics ... The question is: who are these three? It was

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<sup>3</sup>H. Denzinger/P. Hünermann, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 39. Auflage, Freiburg im Breisgau, 2001, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup>B. Studer, "Der Person-Begriff in der frühen kirchenamtlichen Trinitätslehre", in *Th Ph* 57 (1982), p. 171.

said: three substances, that is, persons, and it was not intended to mean by these expressions a difference, but to reject a unity"<sup>5</sup>.

As the "tria quaedam" formula was not enough, the "persona personae" formula was needed against the Sabellians. The notion of person should have been used as a relative. For Augustine, "The person of the Father is nothing but the Father himself as nature (substance). That is why the Person of the Father (persona) is affirmed only for himself (ad se) and not for the Son or the Spirit. Just as in God, bonus, magnus, one cannot speak of tres boni, tres magna, so in the case of the person (persona) one cannot say "tres personae", but "una persona"<sup>6</sup>.

The reflections end again with the resigned statement regarding the negative character of the notion of person applied to the Trinity: "Why do we not call these three together a person as if we were talking about a being and a God, but they are called three people by whom we do not speak of three gods or beings? Why else, as if we wished that at least one word be available for the indication of the Trinity, so that we would not be completely silent when we are asked: what are these three that we confess to be three? (cur ergo non haec tria simul unam personam dicimus sicut unam essentiam et unum deum, sed dicimus tres personas cum tres deos aut tres essentias non dicamus, nisi quia volumus vel unum aliquod vocabulum servire huic significationi qua intellegitur trinitas ne omnino taceremus interrogati quid tres cum tres esse fateremur?"<sup>7</sup>

The person is not seen by Augustine as referring to other people, but referring to himself (ad se). Through his linguistic sense, Augustine knows only an "absolute" meaning of the person. At the same time, it emphasizes the identity between being and person.

By asserting the substantiality of the person, he pushes the identity between the person and the substance so far that he finds no room for relationships. In expounding the Trinitarian teaching, Augustine avoids the "person". In an epistle written in 415 – when he wrote the 7th book of the treatise *On the Trinity* – he explained the belief in the Trinity including the distinction of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, without using the notion of

<sup>5</sup> A. Augustin, *De Trinitate*, Liber VII, IV, 9, P.L. 42, coll. 941-942.

<sup>6</sup> B. Studer, *art. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>7</sup> Augustin, *De Trinitate*, Liber VII, VI, 11, P.L. cit., col. 943.

person<sup>8</sup>, but only "one nature" and "singles". By explaining the psychological analogy<sup>9</sup> the person is omitted. For Augustine, the person is nothing but a principle of unity. This is true both in its exegetical approach – which should have taken precedence – and in the philosophical approach which leaves the impression of a later preoccupation<sup>10</sup>.

Regarding the usual finding that Augustine has in mind the subject, that he anticipated to a large extent the modern anthropological change, it must be shown "how little personal, in the modern sense of the word, he expresses when he speaks of the three divine Persons"<sup>11</sup>. In addition, the comparisons he makes are not about love relationships. In addition, the comparisons he makes are not about love relationships<sup>12</sup>.

Even in the comparison between the Trinity and human love, Augustine does not enter the personal realm. Omitting the fact that in it he sees only an incomplete face of the Trinity because he lacks knowledge, he also shows that he does not need the notion of person. On the contrary, what modern man calls the personal comparison, that is, the one made between the Trinity and the family, in Augustine has little chance of acceptance<sup>13</sup>.

According to Augustine, the comparison of the Trinity with the family contradicts Holy Scripture and hides the danger of a Tritheist understanding, in which the main weight lies in the notion of person. According to the words, "Let us make man in our image and likeness" and "God made man in His image" (Genesis 1:26), God made man not in the image of a divine person, but in the image of the whole Trinity (*imago your*). However, in order not to think of three gods by this word, we understand that God made man in His own image<sup>14</sup>.

This view is further demonstrated in "The Trinity" with a subtle exegesis in which a considerable number of scriptural texts are only partially related to the reality of the relationship between

<sup>8</sup> *Idem, Epistola CLXIX, II, P.L. 33, col. 744.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem, II, 6, coll. 744-745.*

<sup>10</sup> B. Studer, *art. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 150.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 175.

<sup>14</sup> Augustin, *De Trinitate, Liber XII, VI, 6, P.L. cit.*, col. 1001.

man and woman (Genesis 2:22; I Corinthians 11:7, 5; I Timothy 5:5; Galatians 3:26). Augustine finds that the image of God in man does not imply the difference between the genders, but only his nature which belongs to both man and woman in the same way, and in the end the image is in the soul, in the highest part, in the mind<sup>15</sup>. Augustine thus sees the image of the Trinity only in one person, in the spiritual part of the soul<sup>16</sup>.

Since the difference between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can be neither substantial nor accidental, Augustine seeks to include it in the category of the relationship by verbally preserving the formula "tres personae". Augustine's focus on the divine nature is explained by taking over the idea of God's simplicity. Augustine regards the three persons as relations. On the other hand, he identifies each of these relations and each of the Divine Persons with "essentia divina", with "sapientia" and "voluntas divina".

Cuttat observes the following towards such a unifying conception: "If we depart with Augustine from the unity of God transcribed metaphysically, that is, from ipsum esse, from esse purum and not from the Three Persons, as the Greek Fathers show us and the New Testament in a unique way, if in other words the beginning and the starting point of the knowledge of God is a metaphysical one – natural, speculative and not an exegetical-supernatural, existential one, then the danger arises that the step towards the three Persons is made in the form of an unconfessed modalism (in der Form eines uneingestandenem Modalismus) meaning the price of a depersonalization (Entpersönlichung) of the three hypostases"<sup>17</sup>.

Cuttat adds along the same lines: "In reality, insofar as he (Augustine) metaphysically thought not only the abyss of his own soul, but also the abyss of God as pure unity, he had to be the personal, transcendent unity of God, that is, in definitively the tri-personal unity of God to appear to him as a metaphysical impossibility. Through this his conception could not open freely and unlimitedly to interpersonal communion as the highest form of unity (der interpersonalen Communio als der Höchsteform der Unitas), nor to the mystery of intersubjectivity in God (nie dem Geheimnis der

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, Lib. XII, 10, coll. 1003-1004.

<sup>16</sup> B. Studer, *art. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>17</sup> A. Cuttat, "Zum Trinitätsdenken Augustins", în *MThZ* 15 (1964), p. 143.

Inter-Subjektivität in Gott) as a metaphysical fulfillment of any unity”<sup>18</sup>.

Karl Rahner is on the same line of remarks. Rahner refers to post-Augustinian theology strongly marked by the Trinitarian doctrine of Augustine and in which the emphasis on the unity of God predominates: “If we start from the basic Augustinian-Western conception we discover an a-Trinitarian treatise on God one in existence before the treaty about the Trinity. Through this, however, Trinitarian theology gives the impression that in it one could speak absolutely formally about the divine Persons, and this would look only at a Trinity absolutely closed in itself and not one open outside in its reality (nur eine absolut in sich geschlossene und in ihrer Wirklichkeit nicht nach außen geöffnete Dreifaltigkeit), about which we, outsiders, would know something only by a paradox. Certainly in an Augustinian-psychological Trinitarian theology one tries to fill the formal concepts with content: processio, communicatio essentiae divinae, relatio, subsistentia, relative. But if we are honest, we could say that this path does not go too far”<sup>19</sup>.

Rahner adds: “We write and could actually write only a treatise «Of divinity one» (for the uniqueness of the divine being is based on this process), then it must be conceived philosophically (as it happens) very abstract and very little concrete in the direction of the history of salvation”<sup>20</sup>. Rahner does not want to present a specifically Latin Trinitarian conception, much less an Augustinian-Western one, but a biblical and Greek-oriented pre-Augustinian one. The purpose of this approach is to free Trinitarian theology from its “splendid isolation”<sup>21</sup>, in which he entered from Augustine, reaching Thomas Aquinas, Peter the Lombard, and Alexander de Halles by emphasizing nature toward the Divine Persons. In Thomas, Rahner points out, this takes place for reasons not yet elucidated: “Here we do not speak first of God the Father as the unprincipled principle in divinity and in the reality of the world, but first of the common nature of the three Persons”<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> K. Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 325.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 324.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*.

On the contrary, "when we understand with Scripture and the Greek Fathers God (o& Qeo!) First as Father, we might recommend in granting the validity of Greek Trinitarian theology the Trinitarian structure of the apostolic confessions of faith that speak first of the Father<sup>23</sup>".

The appeal to the pre-Augustinian tradition has its meaning because it does not start from the equality of the divine Persons, but from the order (tavxi)<sup>24</sup>, of the economy (oikonomiva). In his orientation towards the pre-Augustinian tradition, Rahner finds support in the research of Y. Congar, who showed that the Greek Fathers started from a Trinity "related to its economic revelation". Augustine, however, starts from a God-Trinity (Deus Trinitas) "statically thought, independent of the incarnation and the order of salvation"<sup>25</sup>.

Rahner's starting point is the first mode of subsistence in the Trinity, which is the Father: "He is constituted from the beginning by God as Father, as an unprincipled Principle of divine communication and self-mediation, so that the conception of any god beyond this first mode of subsistence can no longer be allowed (kein Gott hinter dieser ersten Subsistenzweise gedacht werden darf), which would precede this distinct mode of subsistence and which it would subsequently receive"<sup>26</sup>.

Rahner meets at this point with the Cappadocian Fathers who saw the specificity of each divine hypostasis in the "mode of existence or subsistence" (trovpo th` u & pavrxew). In addition, he acquired their terminology<sup>27</sup>.

Unlike Augustine, however, who is very reserved about the notion of person, Rahner wants to replace it. According to him, the reason is the "anthropological change" in Western culture that brought with it a modern notion of person: (corresponding to objective Greek thinking), through the "anthropological change" of the modern period came the profane notion of person as a subjective-spiritual reality understood in recto<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 323-324.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 391.

<sup>25</sup> Y. Congar, *Der Heilige Geist*, Freiburg, 1982, p. 380.

<sup>26</sup> K. Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 391.

<sup>27</sup> P. Schoonenberg, "Eine Diskussion über den trinitarischen Personbegriff. K. Rahner und B. Hilberath", in *ZKTh*, 111 (1989), p. 133.

<sup>28</sup> K. Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 388.

The difficulty lies in the fact that the subjective moment which is consciousness and which is present in the modern notion of person cannot be thought multiplied in God: "What we call in God" Three Persons "is in itself in God; In God is given the consciousness of the three Persons (each about himself as well as the other two), the knowledge of the Trinity both as consciousness and as the «object» of knowledge. But there is no three consciousness, but one consciousness subsists in three ways, there is one consciousness in God, possessed by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in a way peculiar to each. Thus the Trinitarian subsistence is not qualified by three consciousnesses"<sup>29</sup>.

That is why we misunderstand the expression "three divine Persons" if we want to understand it by the modern notion of person. Recourse to the modern understanding of the person, Rahner points out, leads to the following aporia in speaking of God: "When we speak today of the person in the plural, we think – according to the current understanding of the word – inevitably of several centers of spiritual acts, of several subjectivities and freedoms. Three such centers do not exist in God"<sup>30</sup>.

However, Rahner also objects to the use of the notion of person. A notion such as "person" or "individual" (logically called *individuum vagum*) indicates the specificity of someone who presupposes a multiplied nature among men, which may not be the case with God.

But when in God we speak of three Persons, we multiply the specific and by this "generalize and count, what cannot be counted"<sup>31</sup>. That's why Rahner is trying "the possibility of other ways of saying"<sup>32</sup>. In this sense, he sees as an alternative to the notion of person the expression "distinct way of subsistence" (*distinkte Subsistenzweise*).

He states, however, that a change in the language of the church "cannot be made by a single theologian as he pleases"<sup>33</sup>. Insists, however, that the expression "distinct way of subsistence" "does not imply any specifically Latin conception of the Trinity compared to an Eastern one"<sup>34</sup>. On the contrary, his expression "formulates

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 387.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 385.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 389.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 388.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 391.

something more modern" the traditional expression "three hypostases". However, the expression "distinct way of subsistence" in reality only renders the Thomistic definition of the person as "distinctum subsistens".

According to Rahner, this expression has the advantage that it is closer to the experience and language of the primary faith, at least when it must be translated as "concrete mode of communication" when referring to the "economic Trinity" and a "relatively concrete way of existence" when referring to refers to the "Immanent Trinity". In fact, the expression "concrete mode of communication" is pushed behind the technical term "distinct mode of subsistence" which in Rahner can be seen as a more accurate logical explanation compared to the notion of person.

At the same time, however, observes F. Miranda, the expression "distinct way of subsistence", "in its abstract formality is not very helpful for itself to be able to make the Christian religious life understood, especially in prayer"<sup>35</sup>.

W. Kasper even points out that "distinct modes of subsistence" cannot be worshiped and glorified ("«distinkte Subsistenzweisen» kann man nicht anrufen, anbeten und verherrlichen). In the face of the last anonymous mystery stated by Rahner, we better choose to remain silent"<sup>36</sup>. Rahner's basic axiom is given by the sentence: "The «economic» trinity is the «immanent» trinity and vice versa"<sup>37</sup>.

In the compressed formulations of the "Basic Course of Faith" regarding the "understanding of the teaching of the Trinity". Rahner links the foundation of his thesis to the verb "is", "because in God's self-communication to his creation by grace and incarnation God gives and appears as it is in itself"<sup>38</sup>.

"In the collective and individual form of the history of salvation there do not appear in the incommunicado (Unmittelbarkeit) to us certain numinous powers to represent God, but in reality appears the One God who gives himself, who in His absolute uniqueness,

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<sup>35</sup> F. Miranda, M. de, *O Mistério de Deus em nos vida. A doutrina trinitaria de K. Rahner*, São Paulo, 1975, p. 176.

<sup>36</sup> W. Kasper, *Der Gott Jesu Christi*, Mainz, 1982, p. 368.

<sup>37</sup> K. Rahner, *art. cit.*, p. 115.

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1976, p. 141.

in His unmistakable reality and unrepresented (by someone else) it reaches where we are and where we receive God Himself as He is"<sup>39</sup>.

The incarnation "at least as an economic reality of salvation that is not simply attributed to a certain divine Person, but is his own" is for Rahner "the case of a more comprehensive report" that confirms the verb "is" from the basic axiom: "God he relates to us in a Trinitarian way, and this relation of Him to us is not a face or an analogy of the inner Trinity, but is the Trinity itself, freely communicated and full of grace"<sup>40</sup>.

Hence the following version of his basic thesis: "These three communications are communications of a God who subsists in three ways"<sup>41</sup>. In the experience of the history of salvation we meet God as the Trinity, but the divine being is not exhausted in the existence that communicates economically. The economic trinity is immanent because the immanent trinity represents in a way the transcendent-possible condition of the economic trinity, just as man's own fulfillment through truth and love represents the possible transcendental condition placed by God in the experience of the history of salvation.

Since there is only one center of action in God, it is clear from this that the modern notion of person can be used extensively in relation to God-One who gives himself as a "person"<sup>42</sup>, in the current sense of the word. That is why when Rahner speaks of the economic Trinity he constantly avoids the notion of person as in shaping the communication of the Father's being to the Son and the Holy Spirit he prefers the neutral mode of affirmation: *das Ausgesagte* (spoken), *das Mitgeteilte* (communicated), *das Empfangene* (received). When speaking of the two Persons, the Son and the Holy Spirit consider the neutral form "*das Mitgeteilte*" (the communiqué), insofar as it subsists especially from the one who communicates (*Mitteilenden*)<sup>43</sup>.

Regarding the notion of person, Rahner pleads for a "co-use" (*Mitverwendung*) of the Thomistic definition of person with the expression "distinct way of subsistence". He sees his alternative

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem, Der dreifaltige Gott*, p. 337.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 375.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 384.

as "better, more open and closer to the traditional teaching of the Church"<sup>44</sup>.

As P. Galot points out, precisely in the tendency to bring a notion that is at the center, Rahner tends to eliminate the notion of person in his Trinitarian theology<sup>45</sup>.

However, there were also positions regarding his fundamental thesis regarding the identification of the economic Trinity with the immanent one as well as regarding his terminological initiative. Regarding the first aspect, Y. Congar analyzed the meaning of the expression "and vice versa" in Rahner's statement: "The economic trinity is the immanent trinity and vice versa". Congar pointed out the problematic nature of the expression "and vice versa", "insofar as it passes from knowledge to ontology"<sup>46</sup>. It is not easy to say that changing this relationship "to achieve a purely logical development"<sup>47</sup>.

In this context, the statement of Congar and P. Schoonenberg, who tried to carry on Rahner's thesis, appears problematic. Congar analyzes Schoonenberg's conception as follows: "Ignoring the whole tradition of thought which is based on the testimonies of inspired revelation" he states of the immanent Trinity "an apophatism, the impossibility of asserting or denying anything"<sup>48</sup>. "Schoonenberg", says Congar, "leaves the mystery of the immanent Trinity open, but as unknown, unable to be known"<sup>49</sup>.

Congar's remarks also concern Rahner's assertion that the notion of person was attributed only a logical function of explaining a reality. Such a function, Rahner points out, "explains because it specifies, but does not affirm for the explanation of a reality another reality"<sup>50</sup>.

When we speak of the three Persons, Rahner points out, we must return to the primary experience of the history of salvation: we experience the Father as God, the Son as God, and the Holy

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 389.

<sup>45</sup> P. Galot, "Valeur de la notion de personne dans l'expression du mystère du Christ", în *Gr.* 55, (1974), p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 334.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 335.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 336.

<sup>50</sup> K. Rahner, *Der dreifaltige Gott*, p. 351.

Spirit as God. "Generalization: «We live in experience three Persons» added later (nachträglich), is at least a logical explanation (which does not require any additional knowledge of this primary experience) and which helps the primary experience only in defense against modal misunderstandings"<sup>51</sup>.

Thus the person according to Rahner has in the Trinitarian theological context no positive function, but a defensive one. That is why he is postulating its replacement<sup>52</sup>.

In the face of these statements comes Congar's just observation: "What can be the communication of the three Persons if they are not first Persons? Rahner did not notice this"<sup>53</sup>. If we consider Rahner's identification between the economic and the immanent Trinity, we notice that the former shows God as the Trinity in His communication, the latter as a possible condition of transcendence. That is why the question remains whether Rahner has managed to keep his axiom unchanged.

J. Moltmann observes that "the thesis of a fundamental identity between the immanent and the economic Trinity remains incomprehensible, as long as the difference is preserved, because it appears as the disappearance of one into the other"<sup>54</sup>. Regarding the relationship between Rahner's axiom and the person's reality, T. Torrance expressed himself, pointing out its problematic character: "Didn't (Rahner) minimize his basic axiom that the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and vice versa? Under the premise that there are forms and images through which we speak of the personal relations between human beings and which we cannot apply to God, the main lines of connection are not even shortened, we cannot speak of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as Persons. both in terms of the economic and the immanent Trinity. If we cannot use the term «person» to refer to the internal relations between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, then we cannot use it to refer to personal distinctions in the economy of God's communication to us in the history of salvation without introducing a separation between God's revelation and His communication"<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 386.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 353.

<sup>53</sup> Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

<sup>54</sup> J. Moltmann, *Trinität und Reich Gottes*, München, 1980, p. 177.

<sup>55</sup> T. Torrance, *Toward an ecumenical consensus of the trinity*, in: *ThZ* 31 (1975), p. 346.

J. Moltmann sees the starting point of such principles in Rahner's modalist-idealist and monosubjectivist conception: "Rahner's idealistic modalism leads from the teaching of the Trinity back to the Christian monotheism of «a single being, of the uniqueness of a consciousness, and of a single freedom» which is in the most intimate part of the being «of one man»"<sup>56</sup>. Rahner changes "the classical teaching of the Trinity into the Trinitarian reflection of the Absolute Subject"<sup>57</sup>. Moltmann calls this conception "the mystical variant of the idealistic doctrine of the Trinitarian structure reflected in the Absolute Subject"<sup>58</sup>.

Observations were also made regarding Rahner's appreciation of the modern notion of person. Rahner favored in a unilateral and exclusive way a certain emphasis on modern thinking about the person: "What Rahner calls «the use in modern language of the profane way of naming the person» has nothing in common with modern personal thinking. What he describes is more of an extreme individualism: each is in itself a center of acts"<sup>59</sup>.

W. Breuning wonders in this regard whether Rahner did not take into account a certain clarification of the modern notion of person. "The so-called personalism means by person more and more than «conscious center of documents». The relationship with «you» becomes constitutive of the present person ... Man's relationship with "you" and «we» is given by the divine You who gives himself to him for communion. There is no starting point in the phenomenon of the person for receiving God's own communication by faith"<sup>60</sup>. Breuning made this observation because Rahner had stated that in "«intertrinitarian» mode there is no «reciprocal» You"<sup>61</sup>.

Although he tried to distance himself from Augustine's teaching, Rahner could not prove it but, on the contrary, through his point of departure regarding the involvement of the one to whom the communication addressed by God is approaching Augustine. If Augustine wants to maintain the unity of being of the Persons,

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<sup>56</sup> J. Moltmann, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 164.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 165.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 162.

<sup>60</sup> W. Breuning, "Trinitätslehre", în *Bilanz der Theologie im 20 Jahrhundert*, hg. von R. van der Gucht, Bd. 3, Freiburg, 1970, p. 33.

<sup>61</sup> K. Rahner, *Der dreifaltige Gott*, p. 366, nota 29.

Rahner wants to make sure that in the experience of the history of salvation God the One is met.

Through this, however, he reaches again the "Western essentialist tradition founded by Augustine and strengthened in the extreme form by Anselm of Canterbury"<sup>62</sup>, whose main shortcoming consists in the fact that "he understands the intercession of the Trinity in unity as knowledge and will and thereby as the fulfillment of the being of God. This implies the danger that People can only be understood as ideal moments in the realization of the absolute Spirit"<sup>63</sup>.

Both Rahner's initiative on the notion of the person and his basic axiom overlooked the dialogical and interpersonal reality. Even in the phenomenological description of the data of the experience of the history of salvation, it is not necessary after Rahner to introduce the notion of person: "If we truly and systematically use the economic path to the mystery of the Trinity, it is not necessary to treat the history of revelation from the very beginning in a treatise using the notion of person"<sup>64</sup>.

Kasper shows that if instead of the notion of person in the teaching about the Trinity we speak of the modes of subsistence then instead of the concrete freedom of love an abstract concept of being is explained to the extreme, while the meaning of the teaching about the Trinity is that the whole reality is personally structured, respectively interpersonal<sup>65</sup>.

Other contemporary theologians have proposed a notion of a communicative person that would make it possible to affirm in the Trinitarian teaching the evangelical truth "God is love". They brought the Trinitarian teaching of Richard de Saint-Victor as a paradigm. We have shown this in more detail in the study "The Problem of the Person in Boethius and Richard de Saint-Victor".

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<sup>62</sup> W. Kasper, *op. cit.*, p. 363.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>64</sup> K. Rahner, *Der dreifaltige Gott*, p. 344.

<sup>65</sup> W. Kasper, *Jesus der Christus*, Mainz, 1974, p. 219.