

Between Eternity and Historicity

Exploring the 'After' of Christianity

International Seminar May 9, 2017

In the past, society found a profound source of reference and support in religion and theological reflection, but, after the “Disenchantment of the World”, these often proved to be irrelevant, outdated, or unequal to the task. The “fluidity” of the world is surely a valid metaphor of contemporary times, derived from its quickly changing forms as well as from the relativity resulting from individualization and privatization. In short, we find ourselves in the midst of the secular age after (the end of) Christianity.

Although many would agree with the statement that we live ‘after’ Christianity/Christendom, the interpretation of this situation is less obvious. One possible approach to the problem is the perspective of chronological succession of time. Once upon a time, we lived in a Christian culture, however, this world has come to its end. Christendom is over, and we are Christians living after the dusk of Christianity. The ‘after’ thus stands for the result of somewhat obvious historical-sociological analysis, the result which does not surprise us simply because certain forms of Christianity are the matter of the past. Some might want to reverse it, some might want to embrace it, but no one can pretend that it is not true. Second, and much more thought-provoking, approach to the ‘after’ is well captured in Jacques Derrida’s exclamation: “Something has not yet arrived, neither at Christianity nor by means of Christianity. [...] Christianity has not yet come to Christianity” (The Gift of Death). In this sense, the ‘after’ of Christianity refers to an inherent, dynamic element of the Christian being-in-the-world and thus to the possibility within Christianity to go beyond and constantly overcome itself.

Having in mind the theorems like ‘religion without religion’ (Caputo), ‘anatheism’ (Kearney), ‘non-religious Christianity’ (Vattimo), or ‘the deconstruction of Christianity’ (Nancy), this expert seminar will explore the current reconsiderations of Christianity after Christianity in contemporary continental philosophy. Is Christianity eternal, unchangeable *positum* adopting various historical appearances? What is Christianity’s relationship to historicity? And what does it mean to interpret Christianity as a historical religion? We will investigate these and further questions in the expert seminar organized within the research project Christianity after Christendom: Paradoxes of “Theological Turns” in Contemporary Culture (PRIMUS/HUM/23), for which we cordially invite you.