

Lumsa University
(Rome)
Sophia University Institute
(Loppiano – Florence)
Heirs

Venue:
Rome,
Lumsa University
May 20-21, 2014

Invited speakers:

Giorgio Agamben *
(European Graduate School – Switzerland)
(* to be confirmed)
John Milbank
(University of Nottingham)
Paul Oslington
(Australian Catholic University)
Adrian Pabst
(University of Kent)
Tomáš Sedláček
(Charles University – Prague)
Giacomo Todeschini
(University of Trieste)

Scientific committee:

Luigino Bruni
(Economics, Lumsa & Sophia UI)
Piero Coda
(Theology, Sophia UI)
Benedetto Gui
(Economics, U. Padua & Sophia UI)
Mauro Magatti
(Sociology, U. Cattolica-Milan)
Adrian Pabst
(Political philosophy, U. Kent)
Vittorio Pelligra
(Economics, U. Cagliari & Sophia UI)
Pier Luigi Porta
(Economics, U. Milan-Bicocca & Irec)
Andrea Simoncini
(Law, U. Florence)
Alessandra Smerilli
(Economics, Auxilium-Rome)
Stefano Zamagni
(Economics, U. Bologna & SEC)

Organizing committee:

Luigino Bruni
(Lumsa, & Sophia UI)
Antonella Ferrucci
(Economy of Communion)
Tommaso Reggiani
(U. Cologne & Heirs)
Matteo Rizzolli
(U. Bozen & Heirs)

Deadlines and participation fee:
Proposals, from 100 to 300 words,
have to be sent not later
than March 31, 2014
to the following email address:
heirs.unimib@gmail.com

Acceptance: April 21, 2014
Final paper and registration: May 7, 2014

Registration fee
(food and beverage included):
Seniors: 200 euro
Juniors: 100 euro

Conference website:
<http://www.heirs.it/?p=411>
Conference venue:
Lumsa University
(close to Vatican City), Rome

Call for papers

ECONOMIC THEOLOGY,

THEOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

An interdisciplinary conference

In writers and philosophers like Shakespeare, Marx, Weber, Benjamin, Bataille, Girard, and more recently Taylor, Pasolini, Dumont or Agamben, the link between economy and religion, or more to the point, Christianity and Capitalism, has occupied a central theoretical place. In the late 20th century, in particular after the fall of communism, the religious nature of capitalism has been ignored. Recently, however, interest in “economic theology” is once again growing, an expression used analogously with Carl Schmitt’s Political Theology: “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts” (1922). No doubt Political Economy too, in its foundation phases, was deeply influenced by both theological categories and languages, as Giacomo Todeschini has showed for the pre-modern era, and economists such as Jacob Viner or Deirdre McCloskey, and Giorgio Agamben for modern Political Economy. We call this influence of theology over economics “Theological Economics”. At the same time, theology, in particular in the first centuries of the Christian era, borrowed from the Greek oikonomia fundamental tools for expressing key elements and novelties of Christianity (i.e. God as Trinity) with respect to Judaism and Polytheism. We call “Economic Theology” this other side of the nexus theology-economy. Therefore the analogy with Carl Schmitt’s Political Theology is only partial. Something similar to the first centuries, however, is happening again today where some currencies of theology (i.e. Piero Coda’s Trinitarian ontology) is in dialogue with new tenets of economics and social sciences (i.e. the theories of reciprocity and relational goods). This debate is characterised by mutual influence and a complex interplay of concepts with practices.

The Rome international conference intends to convene scholars from different disciplines and cultural backgrounds to reflect on this very timely and significant topic.

The issue

The philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote in 1921 that “one can behold in capitalism a religion, that is to say, capitalism essentially serves to satisfy the same worries, anguish, and disquiet formerly answered by so-called religion. (...) Capitalism itself developed parasitically on Christianity in the West” (Capitalism as Religion, 1921). And prophetically he added: “A commanding view will, however, later become possible”. Indeed, the religious nature of capitalism is much more evident today than it was in the 1920s, especially when one considers how increasingly rare it is to find areas of our lives that are not for sale. It is a pagan religion that calls for an exclusive form of worship and aims to replace Christianity (not any other religion), because it stems from Jewish-Christian humanism. Modernity is not characterized by a desacralization or disenchantment of the world, but instead by the affirmation of a new religion, i.e., by the transformation of the Christian spirit into the “spirit” of capitalism. The argument is strong and inevitably controversial, but it undoubtedly captures a fundamental dimension of our time, one that was perceived at the dawn of capitalism by the philosophical genius of Antonio Rosmini in the mid-19th century. The intertwined relations between Christianity and Capitalism run deep since their very origins. Capitalism borrows from the vocabulary of the Bible (fides-faith-trust, credit-credere...), and even the Evangelists use the economic language of their time to make comparisons and compose parables. And we cannot understand the Middle Ages, the Reformation or Modernity unless we take properly into account the numerous intersections between grace and market, blood and money. Nevertheless, only in recent times has Capitalism fully revealed its true nature as a new (pagan) religion. This new religion promises and offers a pseudo-eternity, a surrogate for eternal life, where commodities take the place – in Lacan’s terms – of the traditional religion and God.

The topics

Relevant topics for submitting papers are the following:

- Theology and economics in historical perspective, with a special focus on the Protestant Reformation/Catholic Counter-Reformation period, when the “spirit” of capitalism emerged.
- Market and grace, economy and gift: are there influences of theological debates?
- The theological influences in the formation of the Italian/Latin 17th century Civil Economy, in relation to Smith’s Political Economy?
- Economic theory as a new form of religion.
- The different visions of capitalism (US, European, Latin, Chinese, Japanese): it is possible, not only historically, to think of a non-capitalist market economy?
- The charismatic principle in the economic and civil life.
- Is capitalism possible without a “spirit”? Today which “spirit” is replacing the old “spirit of capitalism”?
- What are the implications of ‘economic theology’ in organization and business life?
- Papers on specific “classic” figures of economic theology (Augustin, Luther, Calvin, Marx, Weber, Agamben...)
- Are we witnessing a renaissance of both “theological economics” and “economic theology”?