2. LUTHER'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRINITY IN THE DOCTORAL DISPUTATION OF GEORG MAJOR AND JOHANNES FABER (DEC. 12, 1544)

In the medieval disputatio, Luther found a genre that he valued highly as an academic exercise for training theologians to be ministers of the church. He insisted on its practice to demarcate the boundaries between regions in the academic context, to test the adequacy of diverse tools of reason in studying the subject matter at the center of a region, and to hone the strategy of defense against attacks at the border. In this chapter, I study how Luther articulates his understanding of the Trinity in the genre of the doctoral disputation, and show how Luther relates the elements of narrative and promissio to the genre's particular determination of the subject matter to be the infinity of the inner-Trinity. The representative text for this chapter is the doctoral disputation of Georg Major and Johannes Faber (1544). Also drawn into the discussion are three other disputations that Luther held, late in his life, on the Trinity: the doctoral disputations of Erasmus Alberus (1543), of Theodor Fabricius (1544), and of Petrus Hegemon (1545). Through the study of the disputatio, I aim to show how Luther advocates the use of reason to distinguish, exclude and define terms used in the debate. The first section introduces the disputatio as a form Luther relished using throughout his theological career. Luther's commitment to the genre is related to his view of how various academic regions make up the medieval university, and to the distinct purpose of defending the center of the theological region from heretical attacks at the boundaries. In the second section, I discuss Luther's determination of the inner-Trinity as the subject matter of the disputatio, and the perceived anti-trinitarian threat prompting Luther's turn to this medieval form. In both heretical attacks against the Trinity and in Aristotle's philosophy, Luther sees a rationalistic reduction of reason to the order of the finite that challenges the concept of infinity associated with the Trinity. By theologically reinscribing the eternity of God in terms of the eternal inner-trinitarian relations, Luther opens up the theological region to a particular deployment of reason that is fitted to rightly
speculate on the inner-Trinity. Luther's debate with Aristotle is the theme of the third section. In this debate, Luther demonstrates his use of reason both to exclude particular metaphysical and natural philosophical determinations of the term, "infinity," from the theological region. Concluding the chapter is an extended discussion of Luther's use of the tools of metaphysics, semantics and logic in the theological region for determining the terms of the inner-trinitarian proposition that three res are one and the same as one res.

2.1. THE DISPUTATIO

There is no clearer way to show how Luther regards the positive role of reason in investigating the theological subject matter than by studying his use of the disputatio. The genre can be shown to significantly shape Luther's theology, and to demonstrate his rootedness in a specific trajectory of medieval thought. If an existential-interpretive approach to Luther's theology is often seen to contrast reason with faith, then the study of the disputatio opens up a view of Luther's understanding of the activity of reason that is illuminated by faith. The aim of this section is to introduce Luther's use of the disputatio within the context of the medieval university. The section begins with a biographical sketch of the place this genre occupies in Luther's theological career, from his earliest days as a doctor of theology to his last disputatio held in 1545. Turning to the later trinitarian disputations, I study Luther's insistence on the doctoral disputation as a necessary part of training theologians of the church. In the process of examining the doctoral candidate, boundaries are drawn to exclude attacks of heresy, and the theological region is opened up to the use of reason. A discussion of the way Luther conceives the theological region to be one of many regions in the medieval university, and the role of the disputatio in demarcating these regions, concludes the section.

2.1.1. Luther and the disputatio

The disputatio was the practice of a medieval genre that Luther valued throughout his career as an academic theologian to sharpen, develop and clarify central themes of his biblical theology. Luther was a master, as he self-confidently claimed, of this form.¹ As a doctor of theology, Luther

¹ "... wens aber disputirens gilt, kem einer in der schul zu mir! Ich wils im scharff genug machen vnd im antworten, er machs, wie krauss er wil." WATr 4, 635, 19-21 (no. 5047, May 21 to June 11, 1540).
made use of the disputatio at pivotal occasions in his career.\textsuperscript{2} From the Ninety-Five Theses (1517), to his early encounters with the foremost theologians of his time, Cajetan (1518) and Eec (1519), and to the last doctoral disputation of Petrus Hegemon (1545), Luther relished exercising the disputation to propose reforms, to defend his writings, and to teach his doctoral students. Disputations on the divine Majesty as the triune God\textsuperscript{3} did not occupy the center stage of Luther's early years, that were devoted to struggling to articulate the elements associated with the dispensation of Christ's benefits; the catholic dogma of the Trinity was not up for dispute.\textsuperscript{4} The early years served to train Luther in the disputational style of his thinking that would appear in other genres,\textsuperscript{5} and emerge as significant in articulating his understanding of the Trinity in the last years of his life.

Luther recovered the disputational genre for developing his understanding of the trinitarian article between 1543 and 1545. The disputations themselves contain remarks on a controversy with various contemporaries, as Luther mentions in the preface to the Major disputation.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{2} Luther's letter to pope Leo X in 1518 claims his right as a doctor of theology to dispute publicly. WA 1, 528, 27-31 ("Beatissimo Patri Leoni Decimo Pontifici Maximo Frater Martinvs Luther Avgvstianivs Aeternam Salvtem," in Resolutiones disputationum de indulgentiarum virtue, 1518).

\textsuperscript{3} The term, "divine Majesty," is not synonymous, but co-extensive with the terms, "deus absconditus" and "deus nudus." For example, "Deus in maiestate et natura sua," or "Deus absconditus in maiestate" [WA 18, 685, 14. 21 (De servo arbitrio, 1525)], are formulations referring to the aspect of hiddenness that rises up above the word in the context of demonic temptation (2 Thess. 2:4). In introducing sermons held on Trinity Sunday, Luther often speaks of the deus nudus or the deus in maiestate as the triune God, in eternity, apart from his revelation in the "clothes" of his works. Luther uses the same terms to refer to both the triune God, and that aspect of the divine nature that is the enemy of the demonic attack against the truth of the divine revelation. For a discussion of the naked God as the subject matter of Luther's sermons on the Trinity, see: ch. 4, section 1.3. In ch. 4, section 3.3, the theme of the hidden God is treated in relation to the sermon's exhortation.

\textsuperscript{4} "Und ist solcher artikel im Bapstum und bey den Schultheologen rein blieben, das wir mit ijnen daruber keinen zanck haben." WA 54, 64, 19-21 (Von den letzten Worten Davids, 1543). In his Schmalcald Articles (1537), Luther concludes his comments on the trinitarian and christological articles with, "Diese Artikeln sind in keinem Zank noch Streit, weil wir zu beiden Teilen dieselbigen [gläuben und] bekennen." The footnote to this sentence indicates that Luther crossed out the word, "gläuben," retaining, at least, the verb, "bekennen." The confession of faith is common to all Christians. See: BSLK, 415, 1-2 and n. 1.

\textsuperscript{5} Bernhard Lohse suggests that the disputational style is evident in other genres of Luther's writings. Bernhard Lohse, "Luther als Disputator," Evangelium in der Geschichte. Studien zu Luther und der Reformation. Zum 60. Geburtstag des Autors, eds. Leif Grane, Bernd Moeller and Otto Hermann Pesch (Göttingen, 1988), 250.

\textsuperscript{6} Servetus and Campanus had noted the lack of Biblical evidence, at least historically prior to John the Evangelist, for the trinitarian dogma. Luther's preface introducing the Major disputation mentions this attack against the trinitarian article. WA 39/II, 290, 14-17. See section 2.2.1. on the anti-trinitarian dangers Luther perceives to be articulated by Servetus and Campanus, Cochlaeus and Eck.
Perceived in these later years was an anti-trinitarian threat that Luther addressed from diverse perspectives in a variety of genres. In the ongoing revisions to his translation of the Old Testament into German, Luther took care to adequately represent the divine speech that he understood to distinguish between the three trinitarian persons. Sections of disputations record both the more pastoral questions concerning the invocation of the triune God in prayer, and the attribution of the divine essence to each of the three persons in the discourse of praise. With the sense of urgency to pass on true doctrine to a new theological generation, Luther turned to the Trinity as the theme of four doctoral disputations.

7 The exegetical text that will be used in this chapter to discuss Luther's trinitarian hermeneutic is entitled, "Von den letzten Worten Davids (1543)," in WA 54, 28, 1-100, 27. This treatise, an exegesis of 2 Sam. 23:1-7, was based on a fresh translation of these verses that Luther had previously revised in his Bible revision of 1539-1541. Particularly the translations of verses 2 and 3 show Luther's interest in distinguishing between the three persons of the Trinity: "Der Geist des Herrn" (v. 2a), "der Gott Israel" (v. 3a), and "der Hort Israel" (v. 3b). See: WADB 3, 413, n. 1. See also the introduction to "Von den letzten Worten Davids" by F. Cohrs in WA 54, 16-24, esp. 19. The final revisions to the Luther Bible were published in 1545.

8 In a polemical section of the Fabricius disputation, Luther argues that the true invocation of the triune God consists of the certainty that God bestows the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. See: WA 39/II, 278, 30-279, 5 (Fabricius).

9 A part of the Major disputation includes the question of how the divine attributes, such as wisdom, goodness, justice and mercy, are predicated of the divine essence and of the Father. See Major's response in Ibid., 294, 12-13. The logic of predicking infinity of each of the three persons is thematized in the disputations. See section 4.4 of this chapter. In the hymn, "O lux beata trinitas," Luther converts the disputation's proposition into the first to second person discourse of praise. The Trinity is praised through the attributes of infinity. For the text of the hymn, see: WA 35, 473, 13-29.

10 The records of the disputations include the theses published before the occasion of the actual disputation, and the student notes that document the disputation. The 38 theses written by Luther, including an extended debate with Aristotle on the concept of infinity, a small disputational fragment, and Luther's Quaestio, spoken at the Promotionsfeier, remain of the doctoral disputation of Erasmus Alberus (Aug. 24, 1543) in WA 39/II, 253, 1-257, 37. The theses Melanchthon wrote for the doctoral disputation of Theodor Fabricius and Stanislaus Rapagelanus (May 23, 1544), Luther's praefatio as well as fragments of the latter's role as opponens, are recorded in Ibid., 260, 1-283, 5. The doctoral disputation of Georg Major and Johannes Faber (Dec. 12, 1544) contains, by far, the most material on the trinitarian subject matter. The records of the disputatio include Luther's praefatio, his 26 theses on the Trinity for Major and 21 theses on the incarnation and soteriology for Faber, and the disputatio that is documented in two variant forms. Ibid., 287, 1-320, 12. The disputation also includes a nice picture of the preparatory work Major conducted under Melanchthon's supervision. Ibid., 320, 13-336, 29. Luther's last disputation, the doctoral disputation of Petrus Hegemon (July 3, 1545), includes Luther's short praefatio and his 17 theses on the Trinity, as well as an extended record of the disputation on a host of theological themes: the incarnation, original sin, traducianism and papal authority. There are three variants of the disputation. Ibid., 339, 1-401, 21. Another disputation of this period, the disputation "de divinitate et humanitate Christi (Feb. 28, 1540)," focuses on the christological dogma and the nova vocabula of theological discourse. Ibid., 93, 1-121, 22. Thesis 40 refers to the incarnation as the work of the Trinity with an allusion to
later disputations record, in the discourse of the classroom, Luther's understanding of the *ineffabile res*\(^{11}\) in propositions and in concepts handed down in Scripture, the Creeds, the early church, in the *Sentence Commentaries* of William Ockham, Pierre d'Ailly and Gabriel Biel,\(^{12}\) as well as in his Erfurt education by his teachers, Usingen and Trutvetter.\(^{13}\) Witnessing to the importance of academic formulation as a theological necessity of disputing not the event of revelation but its truth, the later disputations document Luther's articulation of the trinitarian subject matter in a genre firmly rooted in the medieval context.

Bonaventure. Ibid., 95, 19-21. Theses 16-20 of „Die Disputatio de sententia: Verbum caro factum est (Joh. 1, 14) (Jan. 11, 1539),“ allude to the expository and communal syllogisms discussed in medieval trinitarian theology. Ibid., 4, 24-33. Copies of student notes in Wolkenbüttel and Munich were discovered by Paul Drews as the basis for his edition printed in the WA. Drews also used additional records of the disputations that were found in Hamburg, Riga and elsewhere. See the text critical introduction by Heinrich Hermelink in WA 39/I, ix-xii.

\(^{11}\) „Quia rem ineffabilem volebant effari, deinde omnis similitudo claudit nec unquam (ut dicunt) currit quatuor pedibus.“ WA 39/II, 96, 3-4 (de divinitate et humanitate Christi, thesis 50).

\(^{12}\) A picture of Luther's sources can be reconstructed by statements gleaned from Melanchthon and Luther himself, from the curriculum of Luther’s arts education at the University of Erfurt, and of his theological education in the Augustinian monastery. Melanchthon attests that Luther could recite portions of Augustine, Biel and Ailly from memory, that he was familiar with Ockham and Gerson, and that he lectured on Aristotle’s dialectics and physics in his early teaching career. See: CR VI, 159-160 (Epistolarium Lib. X, 1546). Luther’s own account of his education is recorded in WATr 3, 563, 31-565, 9 (no. 3722, Jan. 31 to Feb. 2, 1538). In preparation for his ordination, Luther mentions that he had read Biel’s „Canons misse expositio.“ Ibid., 564, 5. For a study of Luther’s sources, see: Otto Scheel, *Martin Luther. Vom Katholizismus zur Reformation*, vol. 1, *Auf der Schule und Universität* (Tübingen, 1921), 121-238; vol. 2, *Im Kloster* (Tübingen, 1930), 118-42. 190-94. 337-64, 397-410; Walter Mostert, „Luthers Verhältnis zur theologischen und philosophischen Überlieferung,“ *Leben und Werk Martin Luthers von 1526 bis 1546*, ed. Helmar Junghans (Göttingen, 1983), vol. 1: 347-48; footnotes in vol. 2: 839-40.

\(^{13}\) Bartholomaeus Arnoldi de Usingen, who taught at Erfurt, was one of the last logicians in the early sixteenth century to write commentaries on both the *Logica vetus* (1514) and the *Logica nova* (1507, 1516). The *Logica vetus* was already known in the twelfth century. It was composed of Aristotle’s *Categories* and *De Interpretatione*, together with Porphyry’s *Isagoge*. The *Logica nova*, also known during the twelfth century, was composed of Aristotle’s *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics* and the *Sophistici elench*.* Johannes Eck, Karlstadt’s and Luther’s opponent at the Leipzig disputations (1519), and professor at the University of Ingolstadt, published a commentary in 1516-1517 on both parts of the Organon. He used Johannes Argyropoulos’ translation of the Organon. Jodocus Trutvetter (isenachensis) (d. 1519) taught both at Erfurt and Wittenberg and is regarded, along with Usingen and Eck, as one of the last logicians standing in the medieval logical tradition. For a discussion of the medieval reception of Aristotle’s Organon, see: Sten Ebbesen, „Ancient scholastic logic as the source of medieval scholastic logic,“ in CHLMP, 118-27. For two studies of the shifts taking place from the medieval logical tradition to the study of logic in the sixteenth century, see: E. J. Ashworth, „Traditional logic,“ in CHRP: 143-72; Lisa Jardine, „Humanistic logic,“ in CHRP: 173-98.
2.1.2. The doctoral disputatio

The academic practice of the disputatio is valued by Luther, who insists on its use as a necessary tool to train theologians. Luther discloses his conviction that the university be the fitting academic context in which theologians are educated by advocating the disputatio as the genre to be employed in specific situations. An initial clue for the disputation’s occasion is recorded in the first thesis of the Major disputation. Citing Mt. 17:5, Luther writes, „Disputationes de articulis fidei extinctas voluit Deus pater, dum dicit de Deo filio suo: Hunc audite.“\(^\text{14}\) The Father’s revelation of the Son, and the Son’s speech, when it is heard, should suffice to end all controversy.

Some, however, are not prevented from contesting the Father’s imperative or the Son’s word. When certain people rise up and question the divine word, then the disputation is used to provide instruction in sound teaching, and to defend the latter from the invasion of false doctrine.\(^\text{15}\) In view of the addressees, Luther distinguishes the deployment of the disputation from the use of other genres. When adversaries challenge the divine word, Luther can talk of „resisting them“ by disputing with them.\(^\text{16}\) In a thesis written for the Major disputatio, Luther calls on Christ as the example. „Sic Christus dominus ipse pro infirmis (non egens disputatores) saepius contra Pharisaecos discipavit.\(^\text{17}\) Christ disputes, not with the weak who seek to be comforted, but with those who call his word into question. In this thesis, Luther identifies the opponents (opponens) of the disputation to be those who directly contest the truth of the divine word. Theologians must be trained to recognize their opponents, and must learn how to respond to them.\(^\text{18}\) For the purpose of training the theologian in her role as respondens, Luther advocates Christ as the example of listening to and of defending the Father’s word.

The practice of the disputatio is an exercise in both recognizing the opponens’ attack, and in articulating a fitting response. Luther summarizes

\(^{14}\) WA 39/II, 287, 5-6 (Major, thesis 1).
\(^{15}\) The argument is recorded as Major’s response to the opponens. „Tota epistola Pauli est disputatio quaedam. Ergo Deus voluit esse extinctam, et per consequens vestra propositione falsa. Major: Disputationes, quae sunt contra verbum Dei, illas voluit Deus esse extinctatas et præcipue argumenta facta ex ratione humana, sed disputationes ex sacris litteris sumptas probat vulgque conservati, sicut et Paulus dicit, episcopum debere esse instrumentum ad docendum et repellandam falsam doctrinam [1 Tim. 3:2].“ Ibid., A310, 22-28 (Major).
\(^{16}\) „... et resistatur adversario.“ Ibid., 287, 10 (Major, last clause of thesis 3).
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 287, 11-12 (Major, thesis 4). With the designation „Pharisaecos,“ Luther is alluding to the adversaries of Christ in the New Testament gospels who dispute the truth of Christ as the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity. The designation should not be read in light of Luther’s anti-Jewish polemic, but should be interpreted as a cipher in biblical terminology for those attacking the truth of the divine revelation.
\(^{18}\) „... ut discamus respondere,...“ Ibid., 266, 20 (Fabricius, preface).
the former aim. A theologian must be prepared to „resist the adversary.“\textsuperscript{19} The term, „to resist,“ alludes to the medieval theory of obligations, the rules governing the execution of the disputatio. According to one rule of the doctoral disputation, it is the task of the respondens to reply to an opponens’ attack by either granting or denying the opponent’s argument. The respondens is not required to defend the true thesis under dispute.\textsuperscript{20} Often sympathetic to the role of respondens, Luther is not satisfied with merely exposing the error of the opponens, but establishes as necessary the practice in learning how to respond with an affirmative. Theologians must learn, „ut discamus respondere, docere alios et propagare verum Dei doctrinam ad posteros.“\textsuperscript{21} The converse side of resisting the adversary is the demonstration of one’s capacity to respond in a way exhibiting a grasp of the true doctrine. Luther claims the perpetual task in the church to be twofold. „Opus est igitur perpetuo in Ecclesia Ministerio verbi, quo curetur infirmi, et resistatur adversario.“\textsuperscript{22} The theologian must be trained in the two areas of resistance and care, defense and comfort.

Where each task is practised is best illustrated by a geographical metaphor that represents the disputatio. The disputatio covers an area marked by a boundary and enclosing a center. For Luther, the work of the theologian includes the twofold task of defending the borders against the adversary, and of articulating the truth at the center. When the heretics attack the articles of faith in such a way as to shatter the certainty of the center, the theologian must be ready to repel the challenges launched from the border, and to clarify the central themes under attack.

The work at the center involves more than a conversion of the defense into a positive assertion. Theological fitness is demonstrated by the capacity to articulate what is meant by the articles of faith.\textsuperscript{23} It is also exercised when various languages are used to explain the subject matter. Pastoral concerns are threaded through Luther’s testing of the doctoral students, requiring them to translate the Latin and Greek terms of technical theological discourse into German; „propter infirmos et docendi causa also reden.“\textsuperscript{24} A fit theologian is bilingual, not only in view of the capacity to translate classic terminology into a language the laity can grasp, but also in view of the ability to match the genre of discourse with a particular audience. The example of Luther’s responses to his students discloses his

\textsuperscript{19} „... et resistatur adversario.“ Ibid., 287, 10 (Major, last clause of thesis 3).

\textsuperscript{20} Ashworth, 166-67.

\textsuperscript{21} WA 39/II, 266, 20-21 (Fabricius, preface).

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 287, 9-10 (Major, thesis 3).

\textsuperscript{23} „... damit dem Teuffel die Thu(e)r auffgesperret sind, hinein zu fu(e)rten, was er wil, So ists nutz und not, das doch etliche, beide Leien und Gelerten, sonderlich Pfarrhern, Predigere und Schulmeistere, von solchen no(e)tigen Artickeln unsers Glaubens auch lernen dencken und Deutsch reden...“ WA 54, 59, 1-5 (Von den letzten Worten Davids).

\textsuperscript{24} WA 39/II, A305, 20 (Major).
pedagogical intention that differs from the harsh tone in which he addresses the heretics. Once the propositional discourse of the disputation is mastered and its terms understood, then its content can be articulated in other genres more fitting to comfort consciences in terror. What one learns in the disputatio can be converted into genres, such as the hymn or prayer, that are used to assert and to adore the central certainty in the benefits of Christ. The primary aim of the theologian's training is to learn how to respond to the differing concerns located at the boundary and at the center. The genre in which this goal is best accomplished is the disputatio, in which both the response to the opponens at the boundary, and the articulation of the center are trained.

As a genre used to train theologians, the disputatio's academic site cannot be regarded as marginal to its purpose. The doctoral disputation, a festive occasion regulated by the University as the final examination required for obtaining the doctoral hood, was a medieval form appropriated in the early and late phases of Luther's career as a university profes-

25 In a Tischreden, Luther compares his disputational style with that of Melanchthon. Melanchthon's critical style displeases Luther, who prefers to gently lead his students up the ladder of learning. "Disputationum usus. Deinde dixerunt de utilitatem disputationum circullarium, quae magnum utilitatem et exercitium afferrent adolescentiae: Vind man furet die stolzten gesellen vnter die ruden, ut experientur, quales essent. Ideo ego adolescentibus laudo argumenta quanvis incompesita, et displicet mihi Philippus Melanchthonis exacta ratio, das er die armen gesellen so bald vberumpelet; nam oportet per gradus nos ascendere, auff einer treppen zur andern stufen, nam nemo repente fit summus." WATr 4, 104, 32-39 (no. 4055, Oct. 11-13, 1538). In some situations, Luther forgets his role as opponens, and further develops the position of the doctoral candidate, the respondens. In this way, Luther goes beyond what is required in the medieval doctoral disputation in order to help prepare his students for the trials and temptations of university and parish life. Asworth describes the practice of the disputatio as follows. The ideal disputation begins with the argument articulated by an opponens who obliges the respondens to defend or attack a proposition initially advanced. The aim of the opponens is to force the respondens to commit errors of logic. During a series of defenses, the logical errors accumulate, and eventually result in a position that is impossible for the respondens to hold. At this point, the disputatio ends. In the doctoral disputation, that differs from the obligatory disputation, the opponens attacks a thesis presumed to be true. The burden falls on the respondens to grant, deny or qualify the attack; the respondens is obliged only to show how the argument is invalid, and not to argue on behalf of the proposition advanced. Ashworth, 166-67. Angelelli discusses two medieval methods of disputing: the question method, favored by medieval logicians, and the argument method. Ignacio Angelelli, "The techniques of disputation in the history of logic," The Journal of Philosophy 67 (1970), 801.

26 See footnotes 8 and 9.

27 The doctoral disputations are prefaced by a festive speech. See: Luther's prefaces to the Fabricius and Rapagelanus disputation (WA 39/II, 266, 1-22), the Major and Faber disputation (Ibid., 290, 1-21), and the Hegemon disputation (Ibid., A343, 1-13; B343, 1-12). Graduation was celebrated on another day. At the ceremony, a doctoral speech was read by an appointed speaker. The quaestio doctoralis was delivered to the new doctor by a boy (puer). A quaestio doctoralis, written by Luther, is recorded at the end of the Alberus disputation (Ibid., 257, 1-37). The quaestio doctoralis for the Hegemon disputation was delivered to Hegemon by Luther's young son, Johannes (Ibid., 338).
Luther’s love for this form dovetailed easily with its academic purpose in the dialectical pursuit of truth. Text interpretation in the medieval theological faculty took the form of dialectically balancing the reception of authoritative knowledge of Scripture, and the academic theological canon that was already established and often appearing to be contradictory. In seeking to understand the truth of the subject matter, the theological material was presented in the literary form of questions and articles, the *quaestio*, alongside of which the various kinds of *disputationes* emerged as its spoken complement. Rules governed the presentation of the material in a series of questions and articles. Theses were written for the *disputatio* that, through arguments and inferences, would establish a truth persuading one’s opponent. With the rise of an interest in particular facets of medieval logic, especially the fallacies and *sophismata*, treatises on obligations flourished in the thirteenth century. Obligations, sets of rules for consequences and inferences intended for the disputation, formed the basis for outlining the rules determining the validity of granting or rejecting a logical series of arguments or inferences. When Luther

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28 Academic disputations were regulated at the University of Wittenberg. The prescriptions for the theological faculty differed from those valid in the arts faculty. The statutes of 1508 prescribed circular (weekly) disputations for the master during the semester. During vacations, the task fell to the baccalaureats. Also prescribed in the statutes were doctoral disputations for the obtaining of the doctoral degree, and the formal disputations ("solemniter") that took place once a year for each master. There are records of twenty Luther disputations until 1521. From 1521 to 1533, the disputations diminished in importance as a pedagogical form. Karlstadt, dean of the theological faculty in 1521, permitted both the circular disputations and the doctoral disputations to take place. However, records of both types disappeared between 1525 and 1533. In 1533 with the University reforms, new statutes were proposed by Melanchthon, the *praecensor Germaniae*, and on May 5, 1536, the Elector Johann Friedrich authorized the program. The doctoral disputations were reinstated, and the circular disputations were required to be held by each master once every three months. These regulations remained in place until Luther’s death in 1546, after which the practice of the disputations rapidly declined. For a detailed account of the history of the disputations in the theological faculty at the University of Wittenberg, see: Ernst Wolf, "Zur wissenschaftsgeschichtlichen Bedeutung der Disputationen an der Wittenberger Universität im 16. Jahrhundert," *Peregrinatio*, vol. 2, *Studien zur reformatischen Theologie, zum Kirchenrecht und zur Soziologie* (Munich, 1965), 38-51.

29 Lombard’s *Sentences*, a commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Romans, is structured by the *quaestio* method. The *quaestio* begins with an initial question or problem. A section follows that consolidates authoritative statements arguing for and against the initial question. Concluding the section is the author’s response to the opposing positions that challenge the author’s own position. This form of interpreting texts established the structure for the medieval *Summa*.


31 A precise understanding of obligation treatises, the function of obligations, their purpose and relation to medieval logic, remain to be clarified. Eleonore Stump, "Obligations. From the beginning to the early fourteenth century," in CHLMP, 315.
insists on the twofold aim of theological education, he is committed to using the medieval disputation as the genre best suited to achieve his purpose. Luther is convinced that theologians of the church be accomplished in the skill of distinguishing boundary from center, and in deploying strategies to articulate responses at both sites. The exercise of the disputational genre trains theologians to dialectically weigh positions, and to present them according to practices consistent in all academic regions.

The doctoral disputation is received by Luther in his later years as a medieval academic form fitting to train his doctoral students in the use of reason. By staking out the boundary, reason is employed to defend it from the attacks of the opposers. The use of reason is also required to articulate the center in a way that speaks words of comfort and certain knowledge to those whose faith is eroded. Used to introduce the deployment of reason in the disputation have been the geographical metaphors of boundary and center. The same metaphors can also be related to the issue of the division between various academic regions, and their proximity and distance to each other in the medieval university. In the next section, the discussion focuses on how Luther specifies distinct applications of reason with respect to differing academic regions.

2.1.3. The regions of academic inquiry and the disputation

The way in which scholars have determined the relationship between philosophy and theology has played a crucial role in interpreting the significance of reason in Luther’s thought. One way in which Luther has been read assigns weight to Luther’s surface polemic. Luther’s rhetoric, on the surface at least, leaves an impression that his theology begins and ends with a sharp rejection of any philosophical intrusion into the theological region. If Luther’s disputations are studied from the perspective


The following examples from the later trinitarian disputations expose Luther’s rhetoric that implies the strict separation between theology and philosophy. „13. Excludenda est igitur mathematica et omnis totius creaturae cogitation in credenda divinitate... 17. Quod dialectica arguit haec sui regulis non quadrare, dicendum Mulier taceat in ecclesia [playing on 1 Cor. 14:34].“ WA 39/I, 254, 7-8. 15-16 (Alberus, theses 13 and 17); „Error itaque est universa Mathematica, ipsoque fortiter crucifigenda, dum de Deo ipso quaeritur.“ Ibid., 287, 27-28 (Major, thesis 13); „Summa, per rationem et philosophiam de his rebus maiestatis nihil, per fidem vero omnia recte dici et credi possunt.“ Ibid., 340, 12-13
of a strict separation between theology and philosophy, then some interpretations have been proposed that do not wrestle seriously with the issue of reason in theology.

One aspect of the difficulty is concerned with the characteristically modern issue of double truth. Considered relevant to the question of the theology-philosophy relation is the inquiry into the possibility of Luther's "logica fidei." The question whether Luther's logic of faith asserts a theological truth that contradicts a truth claim in philosophy has implications for accusing Luther of a double truth theory. Although the charge is anachronistic, the thematization of double truth exposes a conceptual framework that pits two regions, philosophy and theology, against each other. Once theology is seen to be explicitly divorced from philosophy, the claim regarding a distinct type of theological discourse surfaces. In a study of Luther's disputations, Gerber's argument represents the problem of equating the disputatio's propositional discourse to a "Glaubenssprache." In Gerber's analysis, philosophy is so sealed off from theology (Hegemon, thesis 17). Many theses of the 1539 disputatio on John 1:14 refer to the exclusivity of the theological truth of the incarnation against philosophical invasion. See the theses of this disputatio in Ibid., 3, 1-5, 40.


34 In an early phase of research into Luther's understanding of the relation of theology to philosophy, scholars interpreted Luther's position in light of the charge of a double-truth theory. They countered the charge by claiming that, for Luther, the two regions of theology and philosophy are incommensurable realms, a claim that does not necessarily imply a theory of double-truth. See: Bengt Hägglund, Theologie und Philosophie bei Luther und in der oecumenischen Tradition. Luthers Stellung zur Theorie von der doppelten Wahrheit (Lund, Sweden, 1955), 87-102; Karl Heim, "Zur Geschichte des Satzes von der doppelten Wahrheit," Studien zur systematischen Theologie. Theodor von Haerenz zum 70. Geburtstag, ed. Friedrich Traub (Tübingen, 1918): 1-16; Streiff, 93-114.

35 Gerber's study of Luther's disputations takes as its starting-point, Ebeling's position on "Luther als Sprachereignis" that situates Luther's language and thought entirely within the realm of an existential "Sprachmodus." According to Gerber's interpretation of Ebeling, Luther's understanding of language is based on the distinction between the deus ascendiplus, the God not clothed with his word, and the word of God or Christ. Christ is preached as the twofold word: the second use of the law, and the comfort of the gospel. By transposing Ebeling's position into a discussion of the disputatio, Gerber pits the theological assertio against all philosophical "attacks." [Al]s 'existenzieller Sprachmodus' des Glaubens, the disputatio has 'ausschließlich theologische Funktion... Sprache, und damit die disputatio, kann nur theologisch, im Streit mit der Philosophie, vom Verbum incarnatum et praedicatum, also vom mündlich ergehenden und gehörten Wort her vollzogen, verstanden, interpretiert werden." Uwe Gerber, Disputatio als Sprache des Glaubens. Eine Einführung in das theologische Verständnis der Sprache an Hand einer entwicklungs geschichtlichen Untersuchung der disputatio und ihres Sprachworts, in: Basler Studien zur historischen und systematischen Theologie, no. 15 (Zürich, 1970), 290-293. The theological proposition, according to Gerber, is an assertio of faith, asserted in the situation of attack.
that the only window onto theological discourse is that of a "language of faith" as an "existential mode of speech." By determining theological language in this way, the proposition is reduced to a defensive *assertio* in the event of an attack from philosophy, and it is interpreted solely according to its kerygmatic intention. A similar view is held by Työrinoja. Työrinoja pits the syllogistic form of human reason against the theological proposition that falls "outside" of human reason. Whether reason has any role to play in determining the theological subject matter is left open by this position.

Whether the possibility of a double truth theory is explored or Luther's propositional discourse is placed in a theologically exclusive frame of reference, a similar claim is made regarding the connection between theology and philosophy. For these types of inquiry, the separation of theology from philosophy is secured; the language of faith is determined to fight against the language of philosophy. According to White, this reading of Luther is distinctly modern. What White discovers and then rejects is the Idealist presupposition of setting philosophy against theology as two monolithic blocks. A conceptuality characteristically modern is presupposed that pits the logic of abstract reason against the non-rational, existential leap of faith. By interpreting Luther's statements of

from philosophy. Ibid., 281-82. When the propositional content of the language of faith is reduced to the status of an *assertio*, Luther's use of the disputational form as a process of distinguishing terms and arriving at definitions in the theological region is misunderstood. By using Ebeling's interpretation of Luther's understanding of language in the genre of the sermon, Gerber limits his reflections on the propositional discourse of the *disputatio* to an *assertio*, thereby neglecting an in-depth study of the logic, the semantics and the metaphysics of the proposition.

Työrinoja assumes that Luther views theology to be strictly separated from philosophy, "... in the case of Trinitarian and Christological formulas a definite position towards the relationships between theology and philosophy. This position is founded on his [Luther's] view about the essential difference between theological and philosophical language... When Luther furthermore presupposes that human reason (ratio humana) and its acts essentially have the syllogistic structure and form, it follows that theological propositions also fall outside of human reason." Työrinoja, "Proprietas Verbi," 169. Työrinoja's claim concerning theological propositions that "fall outside" natural reason remains vague. It could mean: unprovable by natural reason or unintelligible by natural reason. Työrinoja pits Luther against Ailly by assuming that the latter attempts to articulate a logic of trinitarian faith in the syllogistic form and the former, insisting on the non-epistemic "notion of religious belief," does not only disregard Ailly's understanding of the relation between mystery and reason, but also fails to see the various rational factors informing Luther's realism. Ailly would not agree that his articulation of the Trinity is sufficient for the assent of a non-believer. Considered to be an epistemic category, belief, for both Ailly and Luther, embraces and invites the activity of reason to investigate its content. See: Petrus de Ailliaco, *Quaestiones super libros sententiarum cum quibusdam in fine adjunctis*, Book I, q. 5 (Straßburg, 1490; reprint, Frankfurt, 1968). I would like to thank Marilyn McCord Adams for pointing out the problems in Työrinoja's argument to me.

Gerber, 293.

White, 54-55, 82-83.
theological exclusivity according to the strict separation between theology and philosophy, the dialectical richness of Luther's thought is collapsed into the surface veneer of his rhetoric. The propositional form as a distinct and complex type of "language of faith" is reduced to an un-touchable assertio. Luther's serious wrestling with particular philosophical tools to articulate his understanding of the Trinity is either not even perceived or merely avoided. Against the backdrop of a strict separation between theology and philosophy, Luther is often understood to minimize the use of reason in theology, a conclusion that misunderstands what his late medieval contemporaries would have considered to be a more reciprocal relationship between the two academic regions.

In order to uncover the dialectic lying underneath Luther's rhetoric, the academic location of his theological activity must be considered. Viewed against the backdrop of the medieval academic context, Luther's polemic loses some of its surface provocation. Some philosophers have recently challenged the typically modern perspective that pits theology against philosophy. They emphasize the link between philosophy and theology in the Middle Ages to be more fluid and interwoven. They expose the fiction of double truth to be a product of positive historical description, and argue for the integration of, rather than the separation between, faculties in the medieval university. When the current research into the medieval context of Luther's theological reflection is taken seriously, then a more accurate understanding of his view of philosophy can be perceived.

A precise determination of the role of reason in Luther's theology must represent not only its relation to an academic context, but must also locate Luther's thought in a distinct historical trajectory. During the Middle Ages, an increasing rift between philosophy and theology took place that played a role in Luther's own understanding of the type of reason employed on the two regions. Luther's polemic can be seen, at one

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39 Perler's study involves both a synchronic and a diachronic perspective. He views each philosophical question as a structural chain of inter-connecting themes, and compares each structure with earlier and later developments. Dominik Perler, "Prädestination, Zeit und Kontingenz. Philosophisch-historische Untersuchungen zu Wilhelm von Ockhams 'Tractatus de praedestinatione et de praescientia Dei respectu futurorum contingentum,'" in: Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie, no. 12 (Amsterdam, 1988), 3-5.


level, to reflect a gradual separation between theology and philosophy occurring during the historical development of the medieval university.

It began with the introduction of a procedure into the arts faculty that grounded the study of any university curriculum. In the thirteenth century, Aristotle's works and method were adopted at the University of Paris by the philosophical faculty as the foundations for academic study. Rules governing scientific acceptability were determined in the arts faculty, and applied in the higher sciences of medicine, law and theology. According to the model of Aristotelian demonstrative science, the premises on which syllogistic inferences were based remained axiomatic for each particular region. Into the fourteenth century, axioms continued to be privileged as the first principles of science. What relaxed between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were the strict requirements of the demonstrative scientific model governing the types of inferences that could be made. The belief in the contingency of creation corresponded to a worry about the demonstrability of essences from necessary principles, as stipulated in Aristotle's Posterior Analytics. A model of scientific thinking emerged that worked out the plausibility, rather than the certainty, of arguments advanced respective to the subject matter under investigation. In the newer model, the principle of non-contradiction was elevated as the criterion for scientific truth. By orienting scientific arguments to show plausibility, rather than strict certainty, the academic regions soon restricted their relations with one another. To each academic region was assigned the task of showing the plausibility of its own inferences, rather than demanding that each region conform to strict demonstrations of certainty that were valid for all regions.

The increased separation between regions, however, did not prohibit the use of the tools of reason, available to all regions, to investigate a subject matter located in a specific region. For example, theologians in the fourteenth century continued to discuss the theological subject matter of the Trinity in relation to medieval logic. What would later surface in

42 Kenny and Pinborg, 14.
44 When a fourteenth-century scholar, such as Pierre d'Ailly, argues for the plausibility, rather than demonstrates the strict certainty, of a scientific conclusion, this model of scientific reasoning does not imply conjecture. It represents a late medieval development in scientific argumentation that defines its type of certainty to be formed by an epistemological theory distinguishing between natural light and natural reason. See: Maurice Patronnier de Gandillar, "De l'usage et de la valeur des arguments probables dans les questions du Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly sur le 'Livre des Sentences'," Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age (Paris, 1933): 43-91.
Luther’s case would be a heightened separation between the theological and philosophical regions that was not entirely determined by a radically new understanding of faith pitted against reason. Rather, Luther’s view can be represented according to a more modest claim. He is located in a trajectory that sees the relations between academic regions in terms of a late medieval development in the scientific method defining academic study.

The role that reason plays in Luther’s thought is related to his view of the academic context in which various regions are located. By taking into account the more fluid relation between theology and philosophy as well as the historical trajectory of increasing separation between these two regions, a more nuanced judgment of Luther’s understanding of reason can be made. In a remark uttered in his Galatians Commentary, Luther does not dismiss reason from the theological task. He generously admits the use of „reason illuminated by faith,” to investigate the divine will of love. This position sees the activity of reason inquiring into the content of faith no differently from some theologians of the fourteenth century.

Luther’s Augustinian view of reason is reproduced on the Aristotelian ground of science that allocates a particular region to a specific object under investigation. Reviewing the regionalism discussed by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics, Luther argues in the disputation on John 1:14 that, in order for a truth claim to be made with respect to a distinct field of scientific research, specific tools of measurement must be employed that are suited to investigate the subject matter. Each region has its distinct


47 Nic. Ethics, I (?), 1098a 20-1098b 8 [vol. 2, 1735-36].

48 Taking his cue from Aristotle’s comparison between the carpenter and the mathematician who each employ different tools to measure their respective subject matters, Luther uses the example of the arts and trades (“Ita per singula artifcia vel potius opera,...” (WA 39/II, 5, 31, first clause of thesis 38)) to show that tools employed in the philosophical region are inadequate to measure the truth of the theological subject matter. He concludes, „Quanto minus potest idem esse verum in philosophia et theologa, quorum di-
subject matter. In order to investigate it accurately, tools must be fitted to use in that specific region. For Luther, the type of reason employed in the theological region must be obedient to Christ. This view of reason, illuminated by faith and obedient to Christ, initially qualifies the type of reason Luther advocates using in the theological region. Its fit to the subject matter, however, must be tested.

The *disputatio* is the genre in which a type of reason is fitted to a particular subject matter. While the region of theological inquiry shares the terminology and concepts available to other academic regions, the *disputatio* serves to critically receive terms and to define them in view of the subject matter under investigation. The trinitarian disputations reveal Luther in this light. When the trinitarian article is contested by attacks from the boundary, Luther uses the *disputatio* in his struggles to articulate a defense as well as an understanding of the central faith. Throughout this process, he advocates and seeks to apply a legitimate use of reason in order to determine the subject matter and to define its terms. Luther regards the doctoral disputation to be the academic form employing reason to draw boundaries between the theological region and other academic regions, as well as to investigate its center in obedience to Christ. In the discussion that follows, Luther’s theology will be shown in light of a distinct appreciation for reason to study the trinitarian mystery.

### 2.2. THE INNER-TRINITY AS THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE *DISPUTATIO*

The discussions of Luther’s regionalist view of the medieval university, and of the function of the disputation leave open the question as to why Luther uses the *disputatio* in the academic context to respond to heresy. In the doctoral disputations, Luther thematizes a particular aspect of the Trinity in his defense against what he considers to be the imposition of temporal categories onto the theological region. Associating a particular use of reason with heresy, Luther’s defense of the trinitarian article fo-


49 In *De anima*, Aristotle discusses the act of thinking. He shows that the thinking part of the soul must be capable of receiving the form of an object of thought, without itself being the object. In this way, one can know an object for what it is. See: *De anima*, III (4-5), 429a 10-430a 26 [vol. 1, 682-84]. I would like to thank Kevin Mongrain for kindly referring this text to me.

50 Luther’s Augustinian understanding of the use of reason, employed in the theological region, to shed light on the content of faith, is represented in the following thesis from the *disputatio* on John 1:14. "Cum contra Paulus doceat, captivandum esse omnem intellectum (haud dubie et philosophiam) in obsequium Christi [2 Cor. 10:5]." WA 39/II, 4, 6-7 (thesis 8).
2.2. The inner-Trinity as the subject matter of the disputatio

The inner-Trinity as the subject matter of the disputatio

2.2.1. The attacks on the Trinity in Luther's later years

The last years of Luther's life are marked by a passionate resurgence of the theme of eternity. Some of the most moving sermons preached on the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35-58), 51 and the trinitarian-doxological tenor of the last hymn he composed, 52 unveil Luther's longing for the comfort of eternity in a context of personal tragedy, illness and frustration. 53 Regarding weak Christians, Luther acknowledges the extent of injury that any challenge to the promissio effects. When the certainty that the eternal benefits, 54 revealed in the Son, is eroded, then the conscience cannot trust the God who forgives sins, propter Filium. 55 Counting

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51 Luther’s sermons on 1 Cor. 15:35-58 are found in WA 49, 395, 4-415, 7 (Cantate Sunday, May 11, 1544); Ibid., 422, 14-441, 10 (Exaudi Sunday, May 25, 1544); Ibid., 761, 13-780, 13 (Trinity Sunday, May 31, 1545).

52 The last hymn Luther wrote was published without a melody in the 1543 Klug hymnbook. It was a translation of the fifth-century Latin hymn, "O lux beata trinitas." The three stanzas are devoted to the praise of the eternal and triune God. WA 35, 285-86. For the hymn's text, see: Ibid., 473, 13-29.

53 Luther’s daughter, Magdalena, died in 1542 and Spalatin, Luther’s close friend, died in early 1545. Luther writes of his exhaustion in a letter to Anton Auerbach: "... cum sim senex, exhaustus et piger..., ut in quiete et pace agerem et obdormirem;..." WABr 10, 614, 14. 20 (no. 4013, second half of July or August (?), 1544); see also: Ibid., 642, 4-10 (no. 4023, Letter to Prince Johann von Anhalt, Aug. 27, 1544); Martin Brecht, Martin Luther, vol. 3, Die Erhaltung der Kirche 1532-1546 (Stuttgart, 1987), 185-89.

54 "Si habetes filium, Tunc loquor vobiscum, Spiritus sanctus schwebet, et quicquid facit, ist et vel wolgefallen und sonst nichts... Sed hic loquitur de aeternis bonis, da wir nimmer sterben, malam conscientiam haben. Si illum auditis, estis mei filii et beati, nihil nocebit mors etc." WA 49, 315, 3-4. 5-7 (Sermon on the First Sunday after Epiphany, Jan. 13, 1544).

55 "Nos loquimur de voluntate Dei remittente peccata et justificante impium propter Filium." WA 39/II, 278, 23-24 (Fabricius). Fabricius' response indicates that he learned
himself among the weak, Luther is compelled, in these last years, to search for comfort in the themes of eternal life and the eternity of God.

A place at which Luther notices a weakness regarding the articulation of claims of certainty is the relation between Scripture and dogma. At this juncture in his theological career, Luther notices a crack begin to develop in the theological unity of Scripture and dogma that, in the seventeenth century, breaks the two extremes apart.\(^5^6\) In 1544, Luther initially observes the rift in the context of discussing the relationship between Scripture and the church's authority. In a role as *respondens*, Luther disputes a thesis representing both Eck and Cochlaeus who, Luther alleges, ground the authority of the trinitarian dogma in the church and not in Scripture. "Esell sein Eccius und Cochleus, qui non per scripturas, sed per doctores et papam articulum trinitatis stabilitum et confirmatum esse dicunt. Das ist erlogen."\(^5^7\) Eck and Cochlaeus represent a position similar to Ailley, who also notices the absence of the trinitarian article in Scripture, preferring to see it as a matter of the Spirit's special revelation to the church (John 16:12-13).\(^5^8\) It appears that Luther accuses his opponents of pulling the authority of extra-biblical language apart from its biblical ground. Luther's rhetoric suggests his disagreement with a position claiming the authority of the trinitarian dogma to rest on an ecclesiological, and not on a biblical warrant. The problem, as Luther sees it, has to do with the way in which an appeal to the church's authority results in a pulling apart of Scripture from the articulation of dogma. By invoking the authority of dogma over Scripture, Luther sees a privileging of the something from his teacher. He links together the trinitarian nature with the divine will to show mercy. "Cognoscere voluntatem Dei est scire non solum, quod punit paecatum, sed est credere, Deum ab initio genuisse filium, qui filius sit factus pro nobis homo et mediator. Haec est propria Dei voluntas, ut credatis in eum, quem misitis ipse." Ibid., 278, 18-21. Complete knowledge of both the triune essence and the divine nature of mercy contrasts with imperfect knowledge of God. Partial knowledge consists of the concept of one God based on the proof by conservation, and is articulated in a proposition concerning God's nature to reward good deeds. Luther summarizes this point in the Fabricius disputation. "Gentes vero, die konnen nuhr so hoch, das sie sagen: Deus vult exaudire bonos, non impios, weitter konnen sie nicht." Ibid., 278, 24-25.

\(^{5^6}\) Medieval theologians underline the close relationship between Scripture and the articles of faith by stressing the apostolic origin of the confession of faith, a position Luther also holds. "Das gebet oder bekentnis haben wir nicht gemacht noch erdacht, die vorigen Vetter auch nicht... also ist die Symbolum aus der lieben Propheten und Apostel bu(e)chern, das ist: aus der gantzen heiligen Schrift, fein kurz zusammen gefasset fur die kinder und einfeltigen Christen." WA 41, 275, 29-30. 32-34 (Sermon on Trinity Sunday, May 23, 1533). For a study on the seventeenth-century Socinian criticism of dogma, see: Klaus Scholder, *Urspriinge und Probleme der Bibelkritik im 17. Jahrhundert*, in: Forschungen zur Geschichte und Lehre des Protestantismus, series 10, no. 33 (Munich, 1966), 34-55. For a brief history of „anti-trinitarians,” see: Gustav Adolf Benrath, „Antitrinitarier,” TRÆ, vol. 3: 168-74.

\(^{5^7}\) WA 39/II, A305, 24-26 (Major).

\(^{5^8}\) Ailley, Sent. I, q. 5, D, E.
church's later doctrinal formulations over Scripture, a position he fears greatly. The question as to why this rift would present a threat to the trinitarian dogma, and thereby compel a disputatio to take place, demands a closer look at what Luther perceives to be the danger.

In order to paint a fuller picture of what Luther regards to be a threat, a look is required at another rift that Luther detects. For Luther, the issue of a rift presents itself in the relation between Father and Son. Luther begins the series of theses in the Major disputatio by citing the Father's imperative in Mt. 17:5 as the reason why disputationes should not be held. "Disputationes de articulis fidei extunctas voluit Deus pater, dum dicit de Deo filio suo: Hunc audite." When the Father is obeyed by listening to the Son, no defense of the Father's speech is necessary. Scripture secures the trinitarian article by virtue of a structure of mutual revelation in which one person is heard and the other person is obeyed. By hearing the Son and obeying the Father, both Son and Father are acknowledged to exist in an intimate relation. The relationship between Father and Son is secured by the dogma that articulates their natural unity. When Luther claims that the position arguing for the church's confirmation of the trinitarian article is a "lie," he is formulating his attack from the perspective shaped by the first thesis of the Major disputation. For Luther, the dogma cannot be confirmed independently of Scripture by the church. The church's dogma is placed under the authority of the Father's speech, a position already implying a trinitarian theological claim of a natural unity between Father and Son.

On the surface, Luther's statement could be interpreted to pit Scripture against the tradition in view of the question of authority. The issue of authority, however, does not turn on the disjunction between privileging either dogma or Scripture as the authoritative ground of the trinitarian article. For Luther, playing one off against the other does not touch

59 WA 39/II, 287, 5-6 (Major, thesis 1). In the genre of the sermon, the Mt. 3:13-17 text plays a significant role in Luther's understanding of a trinitarian structure of revelation. The pericope of Christ's baptism was the gospel lesson, prescribed by the late medieval lectionary Luther used, for the Feast of Epiphany. For a discussion of the texts Luther used to preach on the Trinity, see ch. 4, section 1.2.

60 In ch. 4, I discuss what I call the "trinitarian structure of mutual revelation" as it is shaped by the genre of the sermon. To summarize, trinitarian revelation takes place in a matrix of speech in which one person speaks, revealing another person in relation to the speaker. Likewise, the second person reveals another person by speaking either to that person directly or about him. In this matrix of revelation, all three persons are revealed by revealing each other.

61 Luther contrasts his position with an Arian one. "Non ibi de consensu, sed de unitate naturae loquitur, id est, Pater et Filius sunt unum natura." WA 39/II, A298, 3-4 (Major).

62 A claim articulated in the Major disputation reveals, at the surface level, a sympathy for Scripture as the source of the trinitarian article. "Necesse enim credere vel Augustini vel Magistri scriptus, nisi hunc de trinitate articulum vetus et novum testamentum liqui-
the heart of the issue centering on the authority of extra-biblical language. In fact, Luther’s position on extra-biblical language offers an insightful clue for discovering the way in which he views the relation between Scripture and dogma. In the Major disputation, Luther refers to two extra-biblical theological terms, "ὁμοούσιον" and "Ερβσύνεια, and states that although the discrepancy in words might distinguish between the early church and Paul, the different terms refer to the same res. With respect to a trinitarian understanding, what Luther conceptually executes is to orient both Scripture and the church to the relation between Father and Son. In view of the authority of the Father’s speech, the trinitarian claim regarding the natural unity between Father and Son is made, a claim articulated both in the Father’s revelation of the Son in Mt. 17:5 (parallel: Mt 3:17), and in the extra-biblical trinitarian language of the church. By orienting the trinitarian claim to the issue of obedience, Luther succeeds in demarcating the theological region inside which no disputations are necessary. If, on the contrary, the Father’s voice is disobeyed, a cloud of suspicion is moved over the Father’s natural unity with the Son, and the issue becomes the subject for dispute.

The occasion for the disputation presents itself when attacks are launched from the outside. The intimate relation between Scripture and dogma is threatened by attacks that Luther attributes to the devil. For Luther, the devil’s work is constant from Genesis throughout the entire history of the church. Luther does not distinguish historically between

dissimne ostenderent." Ibid., A305, 10-12 (Major). This statement must not be isolated from Luther’s view of the mutual relation between Scripture and dogma. For Luther, the question of authority is related to the issue of obedience. Obedience to the Father’s speech already implies an understanding of the Trinity in terms of hearing both the Son’s voice, and listening to the Spirit’s grammar." On the Spirit’s speech, see the following sections 2.2 and 2.3 in this chapter.

53 Already in 1521, Luther encounters a difficulty with extra-biblical language. In the response to Latomus (1521), Luther misquotes Jerome, and arouses suspicions of Arian leanings. See the introduction to "Rationis Latomianae confutatio (1521)," in WA 8, 40. Luther argues, "Nec est, quod mihi ‘homousion’ illud objectes adversus Arrianos receptum. Non fuit receptum a multis iisque praeclarissimis, quod et Hieronymus optavit aboleri, adeoque non effugerunt periculum hoc invento vocabulo, ut Hieronymus querratur nescire, quid veneni lateat in syllabis et literis, adeo illud Arriani magis quam scripturas etiam exagitabant." Ibid., 117, 20-25. In the letter to which Luther is referring, Jerome does not address the term, "homoeosios," but speaks of the three hypostases whose meaning can be interpreted in an Arian fashion. See: Jerome, Epistula 15, 3-4 [PL 22, 356f.].

attacks against the Father's word in Scripture and in the extra-biblical heresies. The demonic challenge from Adam to the Apocalypse consists of questioning if the word revealed by the Father „auch nu(e)glich sey. Ey nu disputiere in des Teufels nemen.“ What the devil calls into question is the unity between the Father and his word. In its defense, passages in Scripture are written. The church's history continues to witness to the defense of the Father's unity with the Son against ancient and recycled heresies. In the early church, the dogma of the substantial unity was formulated by raising the level of discourse from the uncontroversial baptismal formula to the type of eternity associated with the inner-trinitarian generation of the λόγος in order to combat Arius, one of Luther's favorite heretics. The formulations of the Creed, the decisions of medieval church councils that would be discussed at great lengths in the medieval Sentence Commentaries, and Luther's remarks dressing sixteenth-century heresies in the new garb of an old demonic attack, all defend the unity between Father and Son. In Luther's thought, the devil is responsible for both, for disobeying the Father, and for denying the truth of the trinitarian article, a disobedience that results in eroding both true doctrine and the faith of weak Christians. The disputation, then, becomes a form of speech to demonstrate obedience to the Father in a defense against those who, like the devil, attempt to separate the Father from his word.

65 WA 49, 409, 26 (Sermon on Cantate Sunday, May 11, 1544).
66 „... tamen res ipsa defendenda est per scripturas contra Diabolum.“ WA 39/II, 287, 15-16 (Major, second clause of thesis 6).
67 „Videmus iam repurgata doctrina verae religionis, quod diabolus non cessat impugnare et confundere articulos fidei, quibuscunque artibus potest.“ Ibid., 290, 5-7 (Major, preface).
68 In an excursus on Col. 1:15 and John 17:22, Luther explains that the unity between Father and Son is an inner and natural unity, and he contrasts this unity with the Arian position claiming a unity of consensus or will. Ibid., A297, 19-20. 298, 1-14. 299, 1-13. 300, 1-2. B297, 21-22. 298, 15-31. 299, 14-29 (Major).
69 The important trinitarian definitions were articulated in the following councils: XI. Synod of Toledo (675) in DS 525-41; Fourth Lateran Council (1215) in DS 800; „Cantate Domino“ of the Council of Florence (1441 or 1442) in DS 1330-31. For a brief and excellent discussion of the medieval development of the trinitarian doctrine, see: Jürgen Werbeck, „Trinitätslehre“, Handbuch der Dogmatik, vol. 2, ed. Theodor Schneider (Düsseldorf, 1992): 491-511.
70 „Ideo non solum necesse est, ut nos simus certi de vera Evangelii doctrina, sed etiam ut nostri posteri habeant aliquid veri et certi de religione. Quare haec est causa, cur hi conventus celebrentur, nemaque ut defendatur sana doctrina, nos aliqui doceamur, et denique ignita tela diaboli deleantur. Es wurde doch nichts Anderst daraus, es muß vanner- dar gefochten sein.“ WA 39/II, 266, 11-16 (Fabricius, preface). In a Major thesis, Luther mentions the demonic attack against weak Christians. „Sed hunc doctorem non aequaliter audient omnes, et sunt semper aliqui infirmi, quos cribret satan.“ Ibid., 287, 7-8 (Major, thesis 2).
The occasional necessity for deploying the disputatio is related to what Luther perceives to precipitate the rift. Concerning the rift between Scripture and dogma, Luther detects the erosion of the trinitarian article to issue from a particular application of reason. Noted is Luther’s explicit mention of an infamous sixteenth-century heretic, Servetus, but exhibited is his fear that a type of reason might be responsible for the attack. Responsibility for eroding the trinitarian dogma, as suggested by Luther’s preface to the Major disputatio, is attributed explicitly to Servetus, as well as to the Anabaptists and to Campanus. Servetus, famous not only for his anti-trinitarian position, but also for his contributions to the study of geography and medicine, is cited in the same breath with Campanus, whom Luther had met at Torgau in March 1530. In his monograph on Servetus, Bainton shows how Servetus challenged the trinitarian dogma by placing the Biblical text under the scrutiny of reason independent of dogmatic formulation. Although Luther does not mention his exact motivation for referring to Servetus in the context of the later trinitarian disputations, a relevant clue can be found in the text, „Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament (1544).” In this text, Luther insists on the interconnection between what Ockham had defined as the three relations that, in the theological region, are relative and not absolute entities: the relations in the eternal Trinity, the two natures in Christ, and the relation of accidents to substance in the Eucharist. Referring explicitly to

71 „Et hoc quidem hactenus strenue fecit; per Anabaptistas sacramentum baptismi et per alios sacramentum altaris impugnavit. Neque adhuc hodie cessat cribbare articulum iustificationis, et adhuc venient, qui persecuti sunt articulum de trinitate, et erunt valde sapientes ad cavillandum..., quales fuerunt Servetus et Campanus...“ Ibid., 290, 7-11. 15 (Major, preface).

72 Servetus, a Spaniard who had witnessed the forced conversion of the Jews and the persecution of the Moors, wrote two famous books, De Trinitatis Erroribus Libri Septem (1531), and Dialogorum de Trinitate libri duo, de justicia regni Christi, capitula quattuor (1532), for which he was executed by Calvin’s order in 1553, and posthumously sentenced by the papal court at Vienne. For an exciting biography, see: Roland Bainton, Hunted Heretic: The Life and Death of Michael Servetus 1511-1553 (Gloucester, MA, 1978).

73 WA Tr 5, 615, 17 (no. 6351, Tischreden aus verschiedenen Jahren).

74 Bainton summarizes Servetus’ anti-trinitarian argument that consists of questioning the authority of dogma by comparing it with the earliest Biblical layers. Bainton, 31. Servetus reveals his knowledge of the canon of trinitarian doctrine by taking to bat Ockham’s followers, Holcot, Rimini, Ailly and John Major (not George!), four theologians who, like Luther, stress the mystery and indemonstrability of the Trinity. Bainton suggests that these names bridge the late medieval critics of a type of scholastic conceptualization of the trinitarian doctrine and the anti-trinitarians of the sixteenth century. Ibid., 28-29.

75 The Major preface refers to the Anabaptists [„... per Anabaptistas sacramentum baptismi et per alios sacramentum altaris impugnavit.“ WA 39/II, 290, 7-8 (Major, preface)], to whom the „Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament“ of September 1544 is a lengthy reply. See: WA 54, 141, 1-167, 9.

76 For Ockham, the three relations are theological mysteries that cannot be proven by natural reason and, as relative entities distinct from absolute entities, are to be accepted on
these relations, Luther betrays his concern that when one article is eroded, the others will fall as well. The splintering of the dogmatic household is countered by the "all or none" principle, demanding the coherence of the articles of the faith. What Luther could be suggesting is that the danger of erosion is presented when a wedge is driven between two entities in a relation: for example, when a separation is achieved between Father and Son. The problem Luther is addressing seems to be a uniform application of a principle of reason that, if it succeeds in dividing Father from Son, could consequently separate Scripture from dogma.

The particular danger is represented by a distinct group of thinkers. Luther mentions these thinkers in the later trinitarian disputations, all concerned with the central tenets of the Christian faith. Although some political events in the backdrop can be linked to the motivation for disputing the trinitarian article, such as fears in Germany of an Ottoman invasion, or the increased political measures to exile the Jews from German states, Luther remains almost silent in polemicizing against the basis of the authorities of Scripture, the sayings of the Saints and the church. See: Marilyn McCord Adams, William Ockham, 2 vols., in: Publications in Medieval Studies at the Medieval Institute of the University of Notre Dame, nos. 26/1 and 26/2 (Notre Dame, IN, 1987), vol. 1, 267-76 and vol. 2, 996-1007.

77 A surprising similarity between Ockham’s specification of the three theological relations and Luther’s own position is seen in the treatise, "Kurzes Bekenntnis vom heiligen Sakrament (1544)." In this text, Luther argues for the coherence of three articles of faith: the Lord’s Supper, the two natures in the one person of Christ, and the Trinity. See: WA 54, 157, 25-158, 6. He concludes with the "all or none" principle. "Darumb heisst, rund und rein gantz und alles geglieubt, oder nichts geglieubt, Der heilige Geist lest sich nicht trennen noch teilen, das er ein stueck solt warhaftig und das ander falsch leren oder gleuben lassen... Denn alle Ketzer sind dieser art, das sie erstlich allein an einem Artikel anfahren, darnach muessen sie alle hernach, und alle sampt verleugnet sein,..." Ibid., 158, 28-30, 36-159, 1.

78 The Ottoman conquest in 1541 at Ofen, Hungary, gave rise to an increasing tension in Germany regarding an impending war with the Turks. In 1542, Luther and Melanchthon wrote introductions to a Latin translation of the Koran that was published secretly in Basel. On Luther’s writings regarding this political situation, see: Brecht, Martin Luther, vol. 3, 346-51.

79 The forced exile of the Jews from many German states and imperial cities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries has been linked to economic and political developments of the rise of early capitalism. In August 1536, the Elector of Saxony, Johann Friedrich, exiled the Jews from his territory. A similar edict was issued on May 6, 1543. See: Ernst Ludwig Ehrlisch, "Luther and the Jews," Luther, Lutheranism and the Jews: A Record of the Second Consultation between Representatives of The International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation and the Lutheran World Federation Held in Stockholm, Sweden 11-13 July 1983, eds. Jean Halperin and Arne Sovik (Geneva, 1984), 37; Brecht, Martin Luther, vol. 3, 331. 344. During this period of intensified political anti-Jewish measures, Luther published two vitriolic writings that cannot be simply excused as the rantings of an ill man: "Von den Juden und ihren Lügen (1543)" (WA 53, 417, 1-552, 38), and "Von Schem Hamphoras und vom Geschlecht Christi (1543)" (WA 53, 579, 1-648, 15). In these years, Luther was also involved with completing the revisions to his translation of the Old Testament, finishing his ten-year commentary on Genesis in 1545 (WA 42-44), and
concepts of God in other religions. Except for one thesis explicitly mentioning the "world's" challenge of Christ's divinity, Luther's references to attacks against the Trinity situate his response against Servetus and Campanus, in connection to the Anabaptists, entirely on the level of an academic intra-Christian debate. Even the remarks on Eck and Cochlaeus serve a similar purpose. What unites these thinkers, in Luther's perception, is a particular use of reason that drives a rift between entities in uniquely theological relations.

Related to the demonic disobedience of the Father's word is, for Luther, a special use of reason. When Luther remarks at different junctures in the Major disputation on the threats he perceives to issue from Servetus and Campanus on the one hand, and from Eck and Cochlaeus on the other hand, he could be equivocating the two groups at a common front. The early mention of Servetus could serve to preliminarily orient the discussion to the connection between Scripture and dogma. Appearing in the context of the reference to Eck is an explication of this theme; the rift between Scripture and dogma is discussed together with the factors of both the church's authority and the Spirit's dispensation in the church. Luther argues at length against Eck's position, and in doing so, sets the stage for exposing the full force of the anti-trinitarian attack as the disobedience of the Father's word.

During the course of the Major disputatio, Luther forgets himself in his role as opponens, and uses the opportunity to dispute Eck's position at length. The debate concentrates on the church's authority in confirming the trinitarian article of faith, and thematizes the problem of how extrabiblical language adequately grasps what is materially contained in Scripture. The difficulty turns on the issue of the Spirit's historical dispensa-

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80 ibid., 685, 1-746, 19 (1544/1550).


82 Jansen has found evidence of Luther's suspicion, in 1527, that the Strasbourg theologians propounded a heretical understanding of the Trinity. Jansen, 132-34. Luther's increasing conflict with Melanchthon, due to the latter's efforts together with Calvin to seek peace with the Swiss, led up to a confrontation that did not settle the debate. Brecht, Martin Luther, vol. 3, 319-27. Bucer sought to alleviate both what he anticipated would be Luther's unkind reception of the decision made in Zurich on August 31, 1543 to publish Zwingli's writings, and to hinder the publication of the "Kurzes Bekenntnis" by writing one letter to Bugenhagen and Melanchthon. In the letter that was never given to Luther, Bucer admits his allegiance to the Wittenberg Concord written by Bucer, and he distances himself from the Zurich theologians. See: Letter from Martin Bucer to Luther in WABr 10, 651, 1-653, 2 (no. 4028, Sept. 9, 1544).

83 Luther refers to Servetus and Campanus in the preface to the Major disputation (WA 39/II, 290, 15), and mentions the names of Eck and Cochlaeus while disputing the eighth thesis. Ibid., A305, 24.

84 "Simul nihilominus haec unitas, est trinitas, seu trium personarum distinctarum divinitatis." Ibid., 287, 19-20 (Major, thesis 8).
tion in the church that Luther isolates to be the common element in Servetus’ and Campanus’, Eck’s and Cochlaeus’ respective positions. A closer look at the historical backdrop to the disputation helps to clarify the issue at stake.

Cochlaeus, Luther’s first biographer, argues in his book, *Philippica Quinta in tres libellos Phil. Melanchthonis* (1543), that Servetus’ heresy cannot be combated by Scripture, but by the church.⁸⁴ Eck, Luther’s famous disputation partner on the topic of the church’s authority,⁸⁵ wrote a book directed against Melanchthon, *Enchiridion locorum communium.*⁸⁶ In this text, Eck links the teaching authority of the church to the Holy Spirit’s guidance initiated temporally after Christ’s ascension. He charges that “the Lutherans will not observe the Apostles’ Creed, the homoousios of Athanasius, person in the Godhead.”⁸⁷ Brushing the polemical formulations aside, Eck and Cochlaeus seem to be arguing on the basis of the Spirit’s authority in guiding the church’s formulation of dogma, linking the Spirit’s authority to its dispensation after the historical moment of Christ’s ascension. Church dogma is authoritative, codified under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁸ Luther, however, sees the position of both Eck and Cochlaeus recur in the heresy of Servetus and Campanus, “qui dixerunt, hunc articulum non esse tractatum ante Ioannem Bap-

⁸⁴ Ibid., 304, n. 2.
⁸⁵ Johannes Eck, professor at the University of Ingolstadt, began a friendly correspondence with Luther in 1517. Eck’s correspondence soon developed into a lifelong controversy with Luther, that was later extended to include the Swiss reformers, and then to Melanchthon at the Diet of Augsburg (1530). By dismissing Eck merely as one of Luther’s opponents, one does not do justice to Eck’s learned struggle to preserve the unity of the church. In ch. 1 of the *Enchiridion*, entitled, “On the church and her authority,” Eck challenges the objection that, “[t]he authority of the Scripture is greater than that of the Church,” with a differentiated series of arguments ending with a footnote to Cochlaeus’ book: the church is older than Scripture, the church has determined the Biblical canon, and validates its authenticity. John Eck, *Enchiridion of Commonplaces. Against Luther and Other Enemies of the Church* (1541), trans. by Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI, 1979), 11, 12-17.
⁸⁶ Melanchthon alludes to Cochlaeus’ and Eck’s attacks against the faith of the weak.
⁸⁸ Eck, 45, Ch. 4, entitled, “That the heretics rashly oppose the Scriptures,” begins with the first axiom: “That the heretics wish to receive nothing unless it be expressly proved through the Scriptures.” Ibid. At the end of this chapter, Eck relates Luther’s literal reading of Scriptures to Jewish exegesis because he thinks that both types of biblical interpretation challenge the authority of the church. “The Lutherans receive the Scriptures just as the Jews do the Old Testament, because they insist alone on the literal sense,... to impugn the Church by the Scriptures.” Ibid., 49.
⁸⁹ “Proposition 2: The Church does not err, not only because she always has Christ as her Bridegroom, but also because she is ruled by the teaching authority of the Holy Spirit who never forsakes her.” Ibid., 9.
tistam, et cavillantur scripturas." The discrepancy between dogmatic formulation and biblical subject matter is not linked, for Luther, to the historical sequence distinguishing between biblical language before John the Evangelist and the creedal norm articulated after the Spirit's sending (Acts 1:8-9; 2:1-13). For Luther, the Spirit's dispensation is the pivot on which the issue of the relationship between Scripture and dogma turns. Luther can accuse Servetus and Campanus, Eck and Cochlaeus of attacking the trinitarian article because he detects a temporal separation between Scripture and dogma in their positions. The separation between Father and Son is effected from the side of those who limit the Spirit's dispensation to the church. The Father is separated from his word when the Spirit's voice, who speaks through the prophets, is not heard.

The occasion for the disputations on the Trinity seems to reflect a more general alert for what Luther considers to be the use of a distinct type of reason. For Luther, various manifestations of a temporalizing use of reason are responsible for sequentially eroding the articles of the Christian faith. With the application of this reason, a rift is driven, separating between those entities that are determined to constitute an eternal relation. The Arians, as Luther mentions, attempt to separate the Father from the Son by conceiving the unity as a "unity of will and consensus," not as a "natural" and "substantial" unity. The constant defense of the church against diverse stripes of the Arian heresy is to articulate the eternal relation between Father and Son. With respect to the Scripture-dogma connection, Luther detects a similar activity of temporalizing reason. Luther accuses both Servetus and Eck of invoking the Spirit's dispensation after John the Evangelist for the aim of eroding the trinitarian dogma. In the case of Servetus, the dogma is eroded when a historical use of reason drives dogma apart from Scripture. In the case of Eck, an inadequate determination of the Spirit's dispensation in Scripture to reveal the trinitarian article is tied together with an understanding of the Spirit's historical advent in the church, a position Luther also fears results in a separation between Scripture and dogma.

The implications of this rift are far-reaching. Luther never forgets to stress his concern for weak Christians when they are confronted with doubts about the eternal benefits of Christ. If the danger of an illegitimate use of reason succeeds in temporalizing what, in the theological re-

89 WA 39/II, 290, 16-17 (Major, preface). The note reads that Luther confuses John the Evangelist with John the Baptist. Ibid., 290, n. 2. Although Luther attacked Servetus' 1532 Dialogues on the Trinity [See: WATr 1, 99, 18-21 (no. 237, April 7-15, 1532)], it is more likely that Melanchthon read Servetus' work. See: CR XXI, 262, 9b; 263, 10b; 359 (Loci Communes, 1533). The Alberus fragment mentions the debate on the Spirit's dispensation after John. See: WA 39/II, 256, 11-20. The debate seems to focus on the sending of the Spirit as a historical event connected to the resurrection of Christ. Ibid., 270, 29-271, 31 (Fabricius).

90 Ibid., A297, 19-20. 298, 3. 11-13 (Major).
2.2. The inner-Trinity as the subject matter of the disputatio

gion, are eternal relations, then the disputatio becomes the genre in which the right type of reason is tested out to determine the concept of infinity.

Luther considers the challenges against the trinitarian article to provide the occasion for disputation. That Luther locates the trinitarian disputations in the academic context is, perhaps, surprising to those who consider his theology in light of an existential "word-faith" correlation. Luther, however, considers urgent the position that historically postpones the trinitarian article to its formulation in John's gospel and in the early church Creeds. Luther sees the Arian heresy recur in any position that temporalizes the relationship between the Father and his word, by historically separating dogma from Scripture for the purposes of either invoking the authority of dogma or of criticizing it on rational grounds. For Luther, a common front is represented by the heretics, the theologians, and the philosophers (to be discussed at a later point) who deploy reason to reduce the theological subject matter to the temporal domain. Although the heretics' discourse varies from that of the philosophers, Luther sets up a single strategy to rebuff the rationalist reduction of the trinitarian article to either a historical dispensation or to a philosophical phenomenon. Luther begins to draw the borders of the theological region in order to open up a space in which the Trinity is discussed in relation to a theologically determined concept of infinity.

2.2.2. Infinity and the inner-Trinity

Luther draws the boundaries of the theological region by starting to define the categories he considers to be central to the issue at stake. The initial theses of the Major disputatio serve to orient the debate around two crucial distinctions in the concept of God that Luther requires in order to relate the concept of infinity to a specific site. In this section, the discussion will concentrate first on the distinction between Creator and creature, and then on the second and central distinction in Luther's understanding of the Trinity: the inner and the outer-Trinity. Only when these distinctions are in place can the task begin of testing out which determinations of infinity are suited to the inner-Trinity.

While Luther is ultimately concerned with the determination of infinity in the theological region, he does not immediately direct his attention to this term. The initial distinction Luther draws is not one distinguishing between time and infinity. Rather, the first distinction Luther sets up is a response to what he perceives to be the challenge launched from the borders of the theological region. What Luther sees as a common front, although diverse with respect to different discourses, is a blurring of the distinction between Creator and creature. The third clause of thesis five in the Major disputation makes a clear distinction between the two ex-
tremes. There is "... omnium rerum extra se creatorem unicum."91 Luther
draws the distinction between Creator and creature in terms of a spatial
orientation. In fact, a biblical allusion to Is. 45:5 serves to locate the Cre-
tor in relation to creation that exists on its "outside." With this distinc-
tion, Luther intends to ground any resistance to importing particular uses
of created reason into a subject matter that transcends the creature's
grasp. Discussions in the following sections will show how this primary
distinction figures significantly in Luther's understanding of the source of
theological language, the relation of the theological region to other aca-
demic regions, and the use of the analogy to grasp what ultimately exists
outside of the creature and "inside" the Creator.

When the "outside" is assigned to creaturely existence, the question
arises as to how Luther conceives the relation of the Creator to both its
"outer" and "inner" sides. The second distinction Luther draws is a neces-
sary step for the purpose of securing a site at which the concept of infini-
ity is protected from the imposition of reason that is limited to the spa-
tio-temporal domain.

The spatial metaphor feeds into the way Luther conceives the central
distinction in his understanding of the Trinity. In thesis five of the Major
disputatio, Luther articulates, in most compact fashion, the proposition
that can be seen to summarize his conceptual view of the relation be-
tween the Trinity and creation. Luther states, "Indisputabilis veritas est,
unum esse Deum et trimum, omnium rerum extra se creatorem unici-
um."92 The terseness of this thesis does not betray the extraordinary
length that Lombard dedicates to its unfolding and explaining in his own
Sentences.93 Luther devotes brevity to what he considers to be indispu-
table: a thesis, or an article of faith, that conceptually orders the "one
Creator" in relation to creation "outside," and subsequently orders this
Creator-creature relation to the Trinity. By virtue of this move, Luther
can then discuss the Trinity according to a distinction he makes between
the two sides of God. The Trinity has an "outer" side at which the Cre-
tor is situated in relation to the creature. By implication, the Trinity has
an "inner" side, a side "outside" the creature's grasp.

The term is Luther's own, and it summarizes the theme of the trinitari-
ian disputations. In the Hegemon disputatio, Luther speaks of the "ad in-
tra" side of God.94 It is a side that is "extra creaturas hinweg."95 On the

91 Ibid., 287, 13-14 (Major, third clause of thesis 5).
92 Ibid., 287, 13-14 (Major, thesis 5). The first clause of this thesis ("Indisputabilis veri-
tas est,...") will be explained in section 2.2.3.2 on tense and truth claims of the inner-
Trinity.
93 This thesis is extremely broad in scope. It covers the first 34 questions of Book I of
Lombard's Sentences [55-254]. Cf. footnote 212.
95 Ibid., A-B296, 23 (Major).
other side and turned „towards us“ is the outer-Trinity. The inner side is not separated spatially from the outer side. Rather, the terms, „outer“ and „inner“ are each predicated of a „side“ that is either turned towards creation in its works or, as will be discussed shortly, turned to creation in the revelation of the „inside,“ inaccessible to finite reason and known solely through the action of the Holy Spirit. By first distinguishing the „inner“ from the „outer“ side of the Trinity, Luther achieves a conceptual privileging of the inner-Trinity as the site to which the concept of infinity can be assigned. Only on the „inside“ are located the eternal trinitarian relations that are beyond finite reason.

The fundamental distinction between the „inner“ and „outer“ sides of the Trinity plays an enormous role in Luther’s articulation of his trinitarian understanding in the genre of the disputatio. In other genres, such as the hymn and the sermon, the distinction serves to orient the spatial direction necessary for discussing the Trinity as a narrative from the inner to the outer side. The genre of the disputatio shapes a theme in more propositional language. Its task is to determine the inner-Trinity as the starting-point for the stories told in other genres. The task, however, is not possible without the action of the Holy Spirit.

The deployment of the disputatio is connected with the appeal to the third person of the Trinity. Disputations become necessary as the form in which the defense and articulation of the truth takes place for every generation of theologians. In connection with this aim, Luther notes the significance of the Spirit’s work. Luther calls on the Spirit, who alone speaks of what is inaccessible to natural reason. The Spirit, who has spoken through the prophets, speaks of a subject matter that is ultimately a mystery. Luther cites the relevant clause in the Apostles’ Creed to make his claim, „Denn solch hoch heimlich ding kundte niemand wissen wo es der Heilige Geist nicht durch die Propheten offenbart,...“ By pointing to the revelation of the inner-Trinity, Luther can secure the Spirit’s task under the same rubric that accounts for the occasion of disputing. The appropriate attitude of obedience to the Father consists of listening to the Son that, in a situation in which the deployment of the disputatio becomes necessary, is redirected to the Spirit. In times of defense, the Spirit’s speech is the only source of knowledge concerning a subject matter that exists beyond the bounds of natural reason. Connected to the necessity of disputing against those who disobey the Son is the insistence on listening to the Spirit.

96 „Loquitor autem quoad nos seu quoad extra.“ Ibid., A398, 18-19 (Hegemon).
97 On the narrative of trinitarian advent, see: ch. 3; on the narrative of trinitarian revelation, see: ch. 4. It will be shown in these chapters that the inner-Trinity is not disregarded, but plotted as the starting point of the respective narrative.
98 See above section 2.2.1.
99 „... non ex ratione, sed ex verbo.“ WA 39/II, A375, 17-18 (Hegemon).
100 WA 54, 48, 20-22.
The subject matter of the Spirit's speech is beyond the reaches of natural reason. In a debate with Hegemon on the interpretation of Is. 53:8, Luther insists against the error of inferring that those things that are not seen or heard cannot be told. The relation between Father and Son is hidden until the Spirit reveals it through the prophets. Through the Old Testament prophets and the Psalms of David, the Spirit speaks of the eternal generation of the Son. Luther does not distinguish logically between the Spirit's precise act of speaking and the content of the speech. For Luther, the content of the speech is available through the language of the biblical prophets, a language that Luther ultimately attributes theologically to the Spirit. During the disputatio, Luther calls on the Spirit in order to provide the language, and the knowledge of the inner-Trinity. The appeal to the Spirit does not result in turning the academic formality into a superfluous exercise. In the situation of an attack by a united front

101 "Ergo de his tantis rebus nos adhuc latentibus non est loquendum. Non sequitur." WA 39/I, C375, 28-29 (Hegemon). The context of this disputational exchange is prompted by the passage in Is. 53:8, "Generationem eius quis narrabit." Ibid., A375, 2-3. Hegemon interprets the passage to refer to the preaching of the church after the resurrection of Christ. In a role as respondens, Luther is more dedicated to correctly interpreting the Isaiah passage than aiming to force his student to make an error. He corrects Hegemon by arguing that the referent of the verse is the inner-trinitarian generation of the Son. In light of this discussion, Luther states that what is above and beyond creaturely imagination cannot be used as an excuse for silence. Indeed, much theology is concerned with what no eye has seen nor ear has heard, yet it is the task of theology to understand the God located in eternity.

102 The eternal Trinity is not to be identified with the "hidden God," as White assumes. White, 382-83. White is correct in showing Luther's identification of the eternal God with the "naked God," and with what is "outside of time before the world." That this deus nudus or the divine Majesty is revealed as the three persons in the eternal essence is, however, not hidden. For Luther, the term, "deus nudus," can refer to the inner-Trinity existing in eternity before the creation of the world in time. "Quia extra illud initial creature nihil est quam nuda essentia divina et nudus Deus. Is autem quia est incomprehensibilis, illud etiam incomprehensibile est, quod fuit ante mundum, quia nihil est nisi Deus." WA 42, 14, 28-31 (Lectures on Genesis, 1535-1545, to Gen. 1:3). The same term is also used to refer to the divine Majesty that encounters the devil and the heretics as its enemy. "Ergo fanaticum est, sine verbo et involucro aliquo de Deo et divina natura disputare, sicut solent omnes Haeretici; ea securitate de Deo cogitans, qua de porco aut vacca disputant... Qui autem extra ista involucra Deum attingere volunt, isti sine scalis (hoc est verbo) nituntur ad coelum ascendere, ruunt igitur oppressi maiestate, quam nudam consuntur amplecti, et percutunt." Ibid., 11, 19-21. 28-30. On the theme of the divine Majesty that encounters the devil as its enemy, see: ch. 4, section 3.3.

103 The major disputations refer to Ps. 2:7, Micah 5:1, Heb. 13:8 (WA 39/II, A291, 6-8; A293, 9-13; A302, 16-18), as biblical texts referring to the eternal generation of the Son. The Spirit's speech, "qui locutus est per prophetas," is the central focus of Luther's trinitarian understanding of 2 Sam. 23:2. Citing 2 Pet. 1:21 in association with the passage from 2 Samuel, Luther writes, "Da her singet man in dem artikel des Glaubens von dem Heiligen Geist also: 'Der durch die Propheten geredet hat', Also gibt man nun dem Heiligen Geist die gantze Heilige schrift und das eusserliche wort und Sacrament, so unser eusserliche ohren und synne ruren oder bewegen." WA 54, 34, 38-35, 4.
of temporally restricted reason, Luther clings to the Spirit as the revelatory source of the inner-Trinity.

The aspect of the Trinity that is shaped by the disputatio is the inner-Trinity. To be defended and understood as the central determination of the inner-Trinity is the attribute of infinity. In Luther’s understanding, any heretical attack challenges the infinity of the relation between Father and Son, and his initial appeal in its defense is to the Holy Spirit, who alone knows and then reveals what no human eye has witnessed. The Holy Spirit’s speech through the prophets, the Psalms and the church’s dogmatic formulations, reveals this relation as the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. When one listens to the Spirit, the Father’s word in Mt. 17:5 is heard to point to his Son. Listening to the Son includes the moment of acknowledging his substantial unity with the Father; obeying the Father’s imperative involves knowing that the Son exists in an eternal relation with the Father. Luther’s claim regarding the infinity of the trinitarian relations is supported by the appeal to listen to the Spirit, who opens human ears to hear the Son who, in turn, dwells in an eternal unity with the Father. While listening to the three persons, the area of the theological region is drawn by this trinitarian claim. The theological issue of listening to the Trinity in the theological region must be supplemented by a discussion of the discourse particular to the disputatio. Studied in the next section will be the concrete form of the Spirit’s language in this genre, how propositional discourse can refer to the inside of God, and how tense can be understood to make truth claims of infinity.

2.2.3. The inner-Trinity and the discourse of infinity

Once the boundaries of the theological region are demarcated, the question arises regarding the type of discourse that refers to the “inner-side” of the Trinity. For Luther, the “new language” of theological discourse must account for the way in which terms refer to a subject matter in an eternity lying beyond creaturely grasp. That Luther addresses the question of right speaking about the divine eternity is not to be easily dismissed as marginal to the soteriological focus in genres other than the disputatio. Luther’s interest in the inner-trinitarian proposition discloses a soteriological axis, and around this axis pivots the truth claim associated with the eternity of the triune relations. The truth status Luther assigns to the inner-trinitarian proposition provides the semantic and logical apparatus necessary to understanding Luther’s great confidence and unshakeable certainty in the promissio. The disputatio is an indispensable genre in showing how Luther uses reason, not to retreat behind an intellectually naive facade of an existential language of faith, but to provide
arguments for determining the type of infinity associated with the inner-Trinity. Such a determination has implications for defining the trinitarian essence in terms of other attributes, such as mercy that, in other genres, surface more explicitly in relation to the *promissio*.

This section addresses the issue of the particular discourse fitted and used to refer to the infinity of the inner-Trinity. Luther attributes this language and its grammar to the Spirit who reveals them on the outer-trinitarian location. For Luther, revelation cannot be seen to excommunicate reason, but it provides a space in which reason is invited to articulate what it understands by the Spirit's "improper" speech. In this section, I propose that Luther understands the Spirit's speech according to both Augustine's sign theory and scholastic logic. Particularly the tool of scholastic logic will be discussed to show how "improper" language can refer to an eternal referent, and how propositions can make truth claims that are invariably tensed. I conclude by pointing out how Luther envisions the "new language" to refer to both the eternal generation of the Son and the eternity of God.

2.2.3.1. *The "improper" language of the Spirit*

Luther's interest in what he calls the "nova lingua" first emerges in the Palladius disputation and its Preface (1537). The term appears in the disputation on John 1:14 (1539) in a discussion of the intrusion of philosophy into the theological region, and it surfaces again in the Major disputation. The term "nova lingua," not found in either Ockham or Ailly, seems to be associated with the type of discourse Luther advocates using in the theological region. Initially, the term is not specifically limited to either the genre of the *disputatio* or the subject matter of the inner-Trinity. As the *disputatio* on John 1:14 suggests, the *nova lingua* seems to refer to the different types of discourse uttered in the theological region, especially those articulating the theme of christology: for example, "verbum caro factum est." By virtue of its appearance in the text of the two disputations mentioned above, the term "new language," can neither be prematurely restricted to the genre of the homiletical address, nor can it be too quickly associated with the mediality of the language of faith. Pertaining to the various discourses in the theological region, the

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104 WA 39/I, AlI231, 1-2; AlII-B231, 18-19 (Die Promotionsdisputation von Palladius und Tilemann held on June 1, 1537). In the doctoral speech for Palladius, Luther comments on Luke 21:15, and speaks on the new wisdom and mouth Christ gives to theologians in order that they might speak the *nova lingua*. Ibid., 260, 16-17; 261, 27-28.

105 WA 39/II, 5, 36 (John 1:14, thesis 40).

106 For example: "Oportet hic etiam grammaticam totam induere novas voces, cum loqui vult de Deo." Ibid., A303, 23-24 (Major).


108 Streiff pits the "nova lingua" of Luther's discourse against the "closed system of science" represented by "Scholasticism." The conceptuality underlying this opposition
nova lingua must be specified with respect to the subject matter it articulates in a particular genre.

The nova lingua associated with the inner-Trinity is of a specific type. Terms used to refer to the inner-Trinity, such as „person“ and „trinitas,“ are, for Luther, „bad“ German or Latin, as he states in some sermons.109 In the genre of the disputatio, and in view of its inner-trinitarian subject matter, Luther tends to refer to the „nova lingua“ as „improper“ speech.110 The focus of the disputatio is a proposition that Luther calls „improper,“ and then refers to a divine speaker. „Deus loquitur ibi, audio, esse unum Deum et tres personas.“111 If God speaks „improperly,“ then the speech cannot be understood without the „new grammar“ taught by the Spirit.112 Luther does not hesitate to acknowledge that the inner-trinitarian language is „improper.“ It is, however, the only language he knows. Luther admits, „Verum est, quod improprie sit dictum: Tres res sunt una res,... ich muß aber pro captu infirmorum so reden.“113 By designating this new language to be „improper,“ Luther signals the unlikeness of the proposition’s terms to what they might stand for in other academic regions. By stressing distance to other regions, Luther is also marking the special consideration of the nature of inner-trinitarian language in the theological region. The language is improper because it articulates a subject matter that is above and beyond what creatures can conceive or imagine. The question arises as to how Luther understands

looks like the position pitting faith against reason. In order to describe what he means by the „nova lingua“ of faith, Streiff uses a distinction found in the contemporary linguistic-literary disciplines. The distinction between instrumental and medial language is appropriated in order to gain an understanding of Luther’s particular view of the theological language in the disputations. Showing that Luther’s emphasis on the certainty of faith cannot be articulated in the prescriptive or instrumental language of „Scholasticism,“ Streiff suggests that Luther’s understanding of theological language is best described in terms of its mediality. Whereas „instrumental“ terms are used when pointing to objects that appear in an already established frame of reference, medial language is used when the terms point to objects that do not appear in a fixed frame of reference. Medial language evokes and shapes a new frame of reference. Streiff, 241-42.

109 For a list of these terms, and Luther’s resigned use of them, see: ch. 1, footnote 2, and ch. 4, section 2.1.
110 „... quod improprie sit dictum:...“ WA 39/II, A305, 14 (Major).
111 Ibid., A365, 1-2 (Hegemon). Similar to: „... Spiritus sanctus in loquitur.“ Ibid., A-B296, 16 (Major).
112 Luther relates the nova vocabula to the third person of the Trinity. In the disputatio „de divinitate et humanitate Christi,“ the respondens attributes to the Holy Spirit the role of providing the grammar for the theological region. Ibid., A104, 24-105, 3.
113 Ibid., A305, 14. 16 (Major). In the Hegemon disputatio, Luther makes a similar claim. Regarding the term, „persona,“ that is constituted by the essence and the relation, Luther states, „Das ist improprissime geredt, aber wie soll man im thun, natura humana non potest aliter,....“ Ibid., A384, 17-19 (Hegemon). The B version states, „Nos in his rebus non possimus perfecte loqui, et tamen ita loquendum est.“ Ibid., B384, 20-22. The C version states, „Ita loquendum est docendi causa, quamvis sit sermo impropric dictus, tamen sic loquentur ad explicandum utrumque.“ Ibid., C384, 30-31.
this language, although improper, and its capacity to articulate truth claims.

One factor playing into Luther’s understanding of „improper“ language seems to be shaped by the distinction between the inner and the outer-Trinity. The inner-Trinity is connected to an understanding of eternity that resists any spatio-temporal determination. Any sign that refers to the inner-trinitarian res cannot be understood according to creaturely reason. Luther alludes to Augustine’s distinction between res and signum when he discusses the outer-Trinity’s revelation in creation. In his text, „Von den letzten Worten Davids,“ Luther distinguishes between the creature taken absolutely, and the creature taken relatively. Taken absolutely, the creature is the res itself. The creature, taken relatively, can serve as the signum for the revelation of a particular trinitarian person. The voice and the dove at Christ’s baptism in Mt. 3:16-17 are sina for the Father and the Spirit, respectively. What Luther means by the sign as the creature, taken relatively, is what Augustine refers to as a figurative sign. The creature, taken relatively, is a figurative sign, not for itself, but for another res; the voice signifies the Father, and the dove signifies the Spirit. With respect to the „improper“ inner-trinitarian proposition, the terms are figurative signs that refer to a res outside of any creature. „Improper“ speech, such as the term, „tres personae,“ functions as a sign for Father, Son and Spirit. In the Hegemon disputatio, Luther eventually admits that the content of the divine speech, spoken in its outer-trinitarian location, is „something else“ in the inner-Trinity. „Loquitur

Augustine’s understanding of proper and figurative signs is discussed in De doctrina christiana I, 2 (4-6) [CSEL 80, 9]. Proper signs point immediately to the thing for which the sign stands, whereas improper or figurative signs are used when the things themselves, that are indicated by proper names, are used to signify something else. Augustine uses the example, „bos.“ As a proper sign, it points to the thing itself, the ox. As a figurative sign, it points to the ox under which is understood the preacher of the gospel. De doctr. chr. II, 10 (32-33) [CSEL 80, 42]. According to the metaphorical understanding of theological truth proposed by Jüngel, the metaphor is given the status of improper speech, and its meaning is grasped when the term is transferred from one region to another. „Die Sprache des Glaubens ist durch μεταφορὰ konstituiert.“ Jüngel, „Metaphorische Wahrheit,“ 110. Jüngel’s reduction of „improper speech“ to the metaphor fails to take into account the analogy as another aspect of theological speech. On the other hand, White has recently argued, on the basis of Luther’s disputations, that the transfer of a term from one region to the other effects a change in the term’s signification, and not in its supposition. White, 334-38.

„Also sihestu, das die Creatur zweierley weise anzusehen ist, ut Res et signum, das sie etwobs fur sich selbs ist, von Gott geschaffen, Und auch gebrachte wird etwas anders zu zeigen oder zu leren, das sie selbs nicht ist.“ WA 54, 62, 37-39. Luther reads Augustine according to the distinction between the creature, „taken absolutely,“ and „taken relatively.“ The terminology of „absolute“ and „relative“ appears again when Luther discusses the semantics of essence terms, such as „divine essence.“ See section 4.3 of this chapter.

Augustine writes, „Personae tres non propriæ dictae.“ De Trin., V, 9 [PL 42, 917].
autem quoad nos seu quoad extra. Sed quod ad intra, alia res est."\textsuperscript{117} For Luther, the central aim of the \textit{disputatio} is to preserve an understanding of this inner-trinitarian \textit{res} as an "alia res."

Another dimension to Luther's understanding of "improper" language is related to a medieval discussion of how tensed propositions are understood to refer to the divine infinity. For example, in the Major \textit{disputatio}, Luther mentions different tenses that ultimately refer to the sempiternity of God.\textsuperscript{118} There is a specific difficulty, respective to the theological region, that is concerned with how tensed propositions can refer to the divine infinity in a way hindering the introduction of multiplicity into the divine essence.\textsuperscript{119} Propositions articulate the object of belief that is apprehended in the form of a judgment. Formulating such propositions requires disqualifying any elements introducing diversification into the \textit{res} that is, by definition, immutable.\textsuperscript{120} The concern with propositional tense is of tantamount importance for the divine science founded on axioms true for all eternity. From a strictly grammatical perspective, propositional meaning and truth values are altered by modifying the verbs. Aristotle's claim that the verb consignifies time, presides over the medieval discussions of grammar and logic.\textsuperscript{121} In the twelfth century, Abelard defined the \textit{dictum} as a proposition referring to a state of affairs that is temporally determined.\textsuperscript{122} Abelard distinguished between mere predication, and a \textit{dictum} that articulates the truth value assigned to the state of affairs for which the predication holds. The truth value of a proposition is determined by the duration of time for which the state of affairs is asserted to be the case. In later development, the issue of time emerges as significant to both the disputatio's and the written proposition's truth status.

For the disputatio, the length of time, the \textit{tempus obligationis}, controls the granting or rejecting of a logical series of propositions.\textsuperscript{123} For the written proposition, the truth value can be modified by an impersonal prefix that determines the span of time for which the proposition is held to be true. With the addition of the prefix, the truth value is signaled for the state of affairs articulated by the \textit{dictum}, or the \textit{enuntiabile}.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{117} WA 39/II, A398, 18-20 (Hegemon).

\textsuperscript{118} "Quare sive futurum sive praesens sive praeteritum accipias, semper est verum, semper nascetur, natus et nascetur,..." Ibid., A293, 23-24 (Major).

\textsuperscript{119} An adjacent issue is concerned with how the divine attributes can be predicated of the divine essence without violating its simplicity.

\textsuperscript{120} M.-D. Chenu, "Contribution à l'Histoire du Traité de la Foi. Commentaire historique de II\textsuperscript{a} IIae q. 1, a. 2," Mélanges Thomistes, in: Bibliothèque Thomiste, no. 3 (Paris, 1934), 124.

\textsuperscript{121} Aristotle, De int. c. 3, 16b 6-7 [vol. 1, 26].

\textsuperscript{122} Gabriel Nuchelmans, "The semantics of propositions," in CHLMP, 200-201.

\textsuperscript{123} Angelelli, 803. Angelelli writes that the \textit{tempus obligationis} functions to "avoid any change of truth value for contingent propositions during the \textit{lapsus} of the time of the obligation." Ibid.
Dependent on verb tense and related to the prefix modifier, the modality of an enuntiabile plays into the later medieval understanding of truth. Specific modal concepts of necessity, possibility and impossibility qualify the type of extension in time over which a truth claim can be made. The three modes of time are related to the modal qualification of propositions according to the predominant view in which the past is seen as necessary, the present as necessary in a qualified sense, and the future is regarded as contingent. Necessity per se is considered to be an eternal truth. Indicated by the qualifier ut nunc, possibility is related to a temporal truth that could have been false in the past though not necessarily in the present or future. The impossible is never true at any time. Arouding the curiosity of medieval theologians is the modality of possibility: God's relation to the world as discussed in the theme of future contingents. Future contingents relate the modality of possibility to the future tense, while distinguishing human possibility from divine immutability. This distinction preserves, on the one hand, human freedom to act and, on the other hand, the necessity of the divine foreknowledge of the individual as reprobate or predestined. Luther's particular question concerning the modality associated with the inner-trinitarian proposition is thematized against this backdrop of the medieval discussion of truth and modality.

2.2.3.2. Tense, modality and the eternal generation of the Son
In his trinitarian disputations, Luther gives two examples of how a theologian can construct tensed propositions in such a way as to refer to the eternal generation of the Son. Luther uses the vel disjunction to show that two differently tensed propositions refer to the same subject matter. "Movent quidam, an dicendum sit: Pater semper genuit, vel generat Filium, vel, an Filius semper natus sit, vel semper nascatur." In the medieval discussion of tensed propositions, Chenu shows, verbs are understood to refer to a subject that is logically identical, in spite of difference in tense. Three different tenses can be used in propositions signifying infinity, yet the truth value is understood to be unchanging with respect to different modes of time. In Luther's case, the Latin term, "vel," accomplishes this aim. In order to preserve the sameness of the object of faith in a complex judgment, a disjunction indicates that all three temporal modes can be used to refer to the eternity that embraces past, present and future.

124 The future, unlike the past and present, is understood by the medievals in general to be contingent. Ailly is the exception. He holds that the necessity of the past is probable, and the contingency of the future is to be held on faith. Calvin Normore, "Future contingents," in CHLMP, 358-59. 377.
125 Simo Knuutila, "Modal logic," in CHLMP, 348-49.
2.2. The inner-Trinity as the subject matter of the disputatio

Luther gestures to another way in which tense can be understood to refer to the divine infinity. This time, Luther qualifies the present tense or the praeteritum with the modifier, *semper*. The relevant thesis in the Alberus *disputatio* is formulated as follows: "Alterum modum loquendi qui tenent, causantur Filium Dei debere dici semper natum, quia praeteritum tempus perfectum, praesens, imperfectum notet." In this proposition, Luther uses the Latin, "semper natum," a perfect passive participle, in the Aristotelian sense to denote all three modes of time. For Aristotle, the knowledge articulated by a proposition is related to the truth claim that depends on the ability of the proposition's tense to function in a way referring to a temporally indefinite content. In the case of accusative-infinitive propositions using the verb, "esse," the *esse* is considered to function atemporally in a way similar to *semper*. It can be grammatically convertible into the three temporal modes of past, present and future without changing the unity of the subject encompassing all times. When referring to the eternity of God, an atemporal indicator, such as "semper" or "esse," is taken to mean, not the absence of time or solely one mode of time, but "plenum et perpetuum tempus."!

Luther uses another strategy to qualify the eternal referent of tensed propositions. In propositions of two types, Luther conjugates one verb across three tenses. Two theses in the Alberus *disputatio* illustrate this conjugation of two verbs, "nasci" and "manere," respective to the subject matter of the Son's relation of origin and of the divine essence.

26. Quia idem Filius est ab aeterno, in aeternum natus, nascens, nasciturus, id est, aernemus ex Deo Deus.
27. Sic ut recte de Deo dicitur nobis: Deus mansit, manet, manebit, cum nihil aliud signifcetur, quam esse Deum semper seu aeternum.

In these two theses, the conjugation of verbs is understood to articulate the eternity of the divine essence. Luther summarizes this point at the end of each thesis by mentioning the adjective, "aeternus," or the word that appears in other propositions, "semper." In both cases, the verbs are referred to the subject matter from two perspectives. For Luther, the eternity of the divine essence is the same as the infinity of the Son's eternal generation. Luther’s conjugation of the verbs, in participles and in the indicative form, resembles Lombard’s discussion of tense in the *Sentences*. Lombard's position grew from the *nominales*, who considered

130 WA 39/II, A293, 11 (Major).
131 Ibid., 254, 35-38 (Alberus, theses 26 and 27).
132 Lombard articulates the theme of tense regarding the generation of the Son in Sent. 1, d. 9, c. 4 (32) [106]. The chapter begins, "Utrum debeat dici 'semper gignitur' vel 'semper est genitus Filius'."
grammatically modified verbs to have differing accidental significations, as Chenu shows. The grammatical distinction in tenses accidentally signifies a content that, from the view of the unity of faith, is not compromised by the differing tenses. For Lombard, as well as for Luther, tense does not introduce change into the being of God who remains trine for all eternity.

For Luther, the variety in tense does not compromise the proposition's truth claim. Regardless of tense, the truth status of propositions referring to the divine eternity eliminates any contingent ut nunc qualification. When a truth claim is made concerning the eternal nature of God, it is true according to the modality of necessity. In a Major thesis, Luther writes of the "indisputable truth" of the inner-Trinity. "Indisputabilis veritas est, unum esse Deum et trinum, omnium rerum extra se creatorem unicum." The inner-trinitarian proposition is necessarily true for all eternity. Luther insists on the pastoral implications of the indisputable truth claim regarding the eternal nature of God. Rather than concerning himself with the modality of possibility that characterizes Ockham's worry about future contingents, Luther is motivated by a soteriological interest in claiming the inner-Trinity to be a necessary truth. Weak consciences, terrified by the demonic temptation eroding trust in the benefits of Christ, are to be comforted by knowing that what God reveals about his nature, his "eitel Gnade und Barmhertzigkeit, Gu(e)le und Trewe, is true for all eternity. Faith in the Son includes the knowledge that the divine attributes of mercy and goodness are bound together with the inner side of God. How much more comforting is it to know that these

134 A related issue is concerned with the proposition on the incarnation. The temporal location in which the proposition is articulated determines the proposition's truth value. For Lombard, the identity of Christ is preserved through time; the faith in Christ of the Old Testament patriarchs is the same as the faith in Christ of Christians. "Sicut antiqui Patres crediderunt Christum nasciturum et moriturum, nos autem credimus cum iam naturam et mortuum..." Lombard, Sent. I, d. 41, c. 3 (183) [293]. The truth value of a proposition articulating faith in Christ who will or who has come is dependent on the temporal location of the statement. If the proposition is articulated with respect to the Old Testament, it is true if the verb, "to come," is in the future tense. In the case of the time after Christ's resurrection, the proposition is true if the verb is in the past tense. In light of this position, Luther's understanding of the unity of faith in both testaments can be related to his harsh polemic against the Jews of the sixteenth century who, in Luther's mind, articulate a false proposition of faith in the Christ who is to come, false because of its location in time after the fact of Christ who has already come.
136 WA 54, 82, 29.
137 "Nun aber sollen wirs doch lernen, wie gott sich hie erweiset, Item was Er sey in omnibus suis attribitus, wie er sich beweiset, was fur gnade er uns erzeiget, wie freundtlich und gutig. In jenem leben wollen wir sie sehen, nicht in bilden, sondern de facie ad faciem [1 Cor. 13:12]. Hie mußen wirs gleuben, quomodo tres sint unus Deus, ein
attributes are infinite? In the Fabricius disputation, Luther initially responds that God hears according to the divine attribute of mercy.\(^{138}\) Later, Luther connects the invocation of the triune name with the divine benefits of the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.\(^{139}\) There is comfort in knowing that the work of redemption from death, sin and damnation is attributed to the eternal God, and not to a mortal creature.\(^{140}\) What the eternal God has established is an eternal peace with his creatures, as Luther preaches in a sermon.\(^{141}\) For Luther, the divine attributes, the divine promise to hear, and the act of redemption are true regardless of the temporal locations of invocation and religious rites. He concludes the relevant section in the Fabricius disputation by using both the present and the perfect tenses to articulate the unity of faith and the object of its belief; "there is and has always been one and the same invocation and faith."\(^{142}\) For all eternity, God's triune essence is true. Bound together with an understanding concerning the infinity of the divine nature is the comfort that the attribute of mercy is also true in eternity. This is a truth that Luther sought, fought for, and found in the disputation.


\(^{138}\) "Exaudiri per misericordiam est habere benevolent et propitium Deum." WA 39/II, 272, 29-30 (Fabricius).

\(^{139}\) In this disputation, Luther contrasts a right understanding of invoking the triune God with the invocation of the "papistae." It seems that Luther links a right invocation with the knowledge that only the triune God can forgive sins and grant eternal life. See: Ibid., 278, 30-279, 5.

\(^{140}\) Luther preaches in a sermon, "... nemlich das er 'seligmache nach barmherzigkeit', Der muss gott sein, Das wretch ist gottlich, steht keiner Creatur zu selig machen, erlosen vom tod, sunden, verdammis, das gehort gott zu,..." WA 49, 645, 22-25 (Sermon on the First Sunday after Christmas, Dec. 28, 1544, Stoltz version).

\(^{141}\) "Das ist die herrlich schon predigt, quam nemo potuit dare quam pater, nemo afferre quam filius Dei. Non loquitur de pace corporali aut de ea, quam nos habemus fu(e)r den Wolffen, sed pacem praedicat inter nos et Deum et Creaturas. Est aeterna pace." Ibid., 363, 15-19 (Sermon on Easter Monday, afternoon, April 14, 1544, Rörer version).

\(^{142}\) "Semper est et fuit una et eadem invocatio et una fides, sed tempora fuerunt dissimilia, alii ritus et caeremoniae fuerunt." WA 39/II, 270, 1-2 (Fabricius). Luther's statement is remarkably similar to a statement found in Lombard's Sentences. In the context of discussing the possibility of introducing change into the object of faith by tensed verbs, Lombard writes, "... nec tamen diversa credimus nos et illi, sed eadem. 'Tempora enim, ut ait Augustinus, variata sunt', et ideo verba mutata, 'non fides'." Lombard, Sent. I, d. 41, c. 3 (183) [293]. The citation from Augustine is found in the exegesis of John 10:1-10 in the Commentary on John. "Tempora variata sunt, non fides. Quia et ipsa verba pro tempore variantur, cum varie declinantur:" In Joannis Evangelium tractatus, tr. 45 (9) [PL 35, 1722].
2.2.4. The infinity of the inner-Trinity: conclusion

The doctoral *disputatio* invites reason to demarcate the region in which the inner-Trinity can be investigated. In this section, I have described the type of discourse that articulates the inner-Trinity. Although „improper,“ Luther attributes the speech concerning the inner-Trinity to the Spirit. Governed by the Spirit’s speech, the theological region embraces a particular use of reason to define the infinity linked with the eternal generation of the Son. The particular language available in the theological region requires an account for the way in which it refers to the inner-Trinity. The variety of ways in which tensed propositions articulate the divine eternity, whether by a disjunction, an atemporal indicator or a series of verbs in the past, present and future tenses, are placed under the rubric of improper language, and are taken to refer to the eternity of God. The proposition, „God is eternal,“ makes a truth claim uninterrupted by the modality of possibility associated with the contingency of time. Its truth status is determined to be of the strictest necessity. At this juncture, Luther adds no determination to the divine infinity other than by showing that „improper“ language must be understood to refer to the inner-side of God. Still lurking at the boundary of the theological region, however, is the danger of a foreign determination of infinity. Luther adds another dimension to what he sees is the anti-trinitarian disobedience to the Father’s word. Luther’s debate with Aristotle is the theme of the next section.

2.3. LUTHER AND ARISTOTLE ON THE DIVINE INFINITY

In the medieval academic context, the theological region shares boundaries with other areas, most notably, the various disciplines associated with philosophy. For Luther, the theological specification of infinity, a term appearing in both the theological and the philosophical regions, figures crucially in his understanding of the inner-Trinity. A large part of Luther’s disputations on the Trinity is devoted to the process of determining the term, „infinity,“ by distinguishing between the natural philosophical, the metaphysical and the theological definitions. During the course of drawing the borders between the academic regions and defining the type of infinity respective to each region, it is not surprising that Luther turns to debate Aristotle.

Aristotle, or more precisely, a medieval Aristotelian, was engaged in the high Middle Ages as a serious conversation partner on the terrain of natural philosophy. In the first half of the fourteenth century, especially in Oxford, the *Physics* was the one work among Aristotle’s natural philo-
sophical corpus that inspired the most commentaries. With the challenge posed to theology’s doctrine of creation by Aristotle’s understanding of infinite temporal extension, or the eternity of the world, the discussion extended beyond the boundaries of the natural philosophical arena to reach into the discipline of metaphysics. The concepts of time and infinity played a significant role in medieval theological discussions. These discussions necessarily distinguished between the eternity of the Creator, and creation that had a beginning in time. A host of related themes fascinated the medievals quickly burgeoned. Specific topics became the focus of study, such as the logic regarding the term, "infinite," that was formed by the distinction between the categorematic and the syncretic categrematic use of the term, as well as the paradox of unequal infinites. More theological issues were also addressed, such as the relation of God to the eternal ideas as an "improper infinite," and the relation of the divine infinity to both the actual and the potential infinity.

The theses in the Alberus disputation introduce Aristotle as a respected disputation partner. Luther, intimately acquainted since his Erfurt education with at least the Physics, the Metaphysics and the Nicomachean Ethics, engages Aristotle in a sustained argument distinguishing between a theological and a metaphysical determination of the term, "infinity." In this section, I describe Luther's disputation with Aristotle.

143 John E. Murdoch, "Infinity and continuity," in CHLMP, 565.
144 For Aristotle, motion and time have no beginning. The Christian understanding of the doctrine of creation demands viewing the divine act of creating in time. Aristotle claims that time, rather than spatial extension, is infinite. On the other hand, the universe provides the limits of spatial magnitude; spatial extension is neither potentially nor actually infinite. Phys. III (7), 207b 16-21 [vol. 1, 353].
145 The term, "infinite," functions categoretically when it follows the subject term. Its determination of the subject term is numerically adjectival. For example, "hominis infiniti currunt," refers to an infinite number of men. The syncretic use of the term, recognized if the word, "infinite," precedes the subject term, is taken to mean that its distribution over the subject term is relative to the predicate term. The distinction between the categorematic and syncretic uses of the term, "infinite," plays into the metaphysical distinction between the actual and potential infinite. Murdoch, "Infinity and continuity," 567-68.
146 The paradox of the unequal infinites was used as an argument against the existence of the actual infinite. The paradox assumes the existence of some actual infinites. If some exist, then they will be parts of other actual infinites, which is a paradox as all actual infinites are, by definition, equal. Ibid., 569-71.
147 Augustine, Conf., 11, 13 (16) [PL 32, 815].
148 Luther's words of appreciation for Aristotle arise in an early Christmas sermon. "Vide quam apte serviat Aristoteles in Philosophia sua Theologiae, si non ut ipsa voluit, sed melius intelligitur et applicatur." WA 1, 28, 19-21 (1514). In "An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung (1520)," Luther recommends reading Aristotle without any commentaries or interpretations altogether! "Das mochte ich gerne leyden, das Aristoteles bucher von der Logica, Rhetorica, Poetica behalten, oder sie in ein andere kurz form bracht nutzlich gelesen werden, junge leut zuwen, wol reden und predigen, aber die Comment und secten musten abethan, und gleich wie
on the subject matter of both the actual and the potential infinity, and show how Luther excludes these determinations from the theological region. Luther then turns to the term, „generation,“ in order to distinguish its natural philosophical definition from its theological articulation as the „eternal generation of the Son.“ This section concludes with a discussion of the way in which the disputatio shapes Luther’s resistance to any analogies that are imposed by natural reason onto the inner-trinitarian infinity. In the process of excluding the activity of natural reason to define the terms, „infinity“ and „generation,“ Luther begins to carve out a theological space for determining his understanding of the inner-Trinity.

2.3.1. The actual infinity

Luther exegetically focuses the debate over the term, „infinity,“ on a passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans that, in the trajectory from Augustine, arises in the context of discussing the knowledge of God.149 Quoting Rom. 1:20 in the Alberus disputatio, Luther writes, „S. Paulus Rom. 1. recte dicit: Notum Dei manifestum esse gentibus, id est, virtutem eius aeternam et divinitatem.“150 This passage in Romans, itself written in a rhetorical disputational style, is acknowledged in the tradition of biblical interpretation as the locus classicus concerning the knowledge of God revealed to all humans as divine traces in creation. Augustine refers to this passage in the context of the Platonists’ discussion of sense perception and the intelligible Idea.151 According to Augustine, the Platonists argue that each changing form has its being from what is unchanging and simple. These philosophers, who „surpass all others,“ conclude that God is known from the traces of the eternal power and divinity in what is created. In his first book of the Sentences, Lombard also refers to the Rom. 1:19-20 passage in a section devoted to the question of the creature’s knowledge of the Creator.152 With the medieval proofs for the existence of God, the traces of the infinite in creation are interpreted according to the capacity of natural reason to infer, through various sequences, what

Ciceronis Rhetorica on comment und secten, szo auch Aristoteles logica einformig, on solch gross comment gelesen werden." WA 6, 458, 26-31.

149 White concludes that the logical structure of Luther’s theses cannot be determined by analyzing the logical connectives linking specific consequences that are deduced from a general assertion. Rather, the theses are organized „into successive sections on various theological themes“ and possibly, according to „some sort of metatheological principle.“ White, 120-21. In this section, I suggest that Rom 1:19-20 structures the series of theses. In these theses, Luther aims to distinguish between the theological, the metaphysical and the natural philosophical regions.


151 De Civ. Dei, 8, 6 [CCL 47, 222-24].

152 „Incipit ostendere quomodo per creatum potuit cognosci Creator.“ Sent. I, d. 3, c. 1 (9), a. 1 [68].
can be known about God based on aspects of created existence. By alluing to Rom. 1:20, Luther acknowledges a tradition of medieval thought that relates the knowledge of God to the metaphysical implications of natural philosophical observations.

The Romans passage overarches the controversy Luther initiates with Aristotle on the possibility of legitimately inferring the infinity of the Creator from the traces of the infinite in creation. After referring to Paul’s text, Luther turns to gradually specify the way in which the Jews and then the Greek philosopher determine the concept of infinity. Prior to the allusion to Aristotle, Luther mentions the „sacred tetragrammaton,“ „Iehova,“ as the ineffable name by which the Jews refer to God. In this series of theses, Luther perhaps mentions the term, „ineffability,“ in order to build a bridge to what he decides to be the significant focus of his debate. In thesis 30 of the Alberus disputatio, Luther gestures to Aristotle’s introductory remarks in both the Physics, and the Metaphysics concerning the incomprehensibility of the infinite. Luther uses Aristotle’s specification as a springboard in order to launch his own debate on the divine infinite.

The particular type of infinity that Luther intends to engage is the actual infinity. Luther’s formulation of thesis 31 in the Alberus disputation makes this point clear. He writes, „Imo affirmat infinitum seu aeternum, in quantum huiusmodi, existere non posse, et secundum rationem visus est recte dicere.“ Luther refers to a type of infinity whose existence many medieval interpreters of Aristotle considered the Philosopher to have denied. The question, posed by both medieval philosophers and theologians, on whether something infinite can be real, focuses on Aristotle’s rejection of the existence of an actual infinity as a numerical infinity. In the Physics, Aristotle denies the existence of an actual infinity, and in the Metaphysics, he argues that an infinite number of actual things is impossible. For medieval thinkers, Aristotle’s actual infinity is understood to have no highest number in an endless temporal succession. Maier provides the Latin definition, in Aristotelian terminology, of the

154 „Sensit et Aristoteles, aeternum seu infinitum, in quantum eiusmodi, esse ignorant et incomprehensibile.“ Ibid., 255, 5-6 (Alberus, thesis 30).
155 Phys. I (4), 187b 7-35 [vol. 1, 320-21].
156 Met. II (2), 994b 21-25 [vol. 2, 1571].
158 Phys. III (6), 206a 20-21 [vol. 1, 351].
159 Met. II (2), 994b 20-28 [vol. 2, 1571] denies that one can apprehend infinity. Hintikka argues that Aristotle understood the actual infinity to exist in „the precise sense,... in which the infinite was found to exist potentially...“ Hintikka uses what Lovejoy has termed Aristotle’s principle of plenitude, „according to which no genuine possibility can remain unactualized through an infinity of time“ in order to show that the actual infinity exists in the above precise sense. Hintikka, „Aristotelian Infinity,“ ch. 6 in Time & Necessity, 117. 114.
actual infinity: „infinitum est quo nihil est maius. “\(^{160}\) By definition, the actual infinity prevents there being a last number of a series in thought as well as in reality. Although some medieval scholars tend towards accepting the existence of the actual infinity in a sophisticated and qualified sense, such as Robert Holcot, Gregory of Rimini and William Ockham,\(^ {161}\) the predominant denial of its existence is entertained by Luther who intends to use it in an inference to deny the existence of God.

Luther uses the antecedent premise to construct an inference that shows why he excludes an imposition of natural reason onto the theological determination of infinity. From the denial of the existence of the actual infinity, Luther infers the denial of God’s existence. Luther writes, „Sed consequentiam non vidit, vel potius videre noluit, scilicet quod apud rationem ex hoc sequitur, Deum non esse, nec esse posse. “\(^ {162}\) The inference Luther draws presents an intriguing conflation of two concepts that, for a medieval thinker such as Scotus, would have been illegitimate.

A concept Luther conflates with the actual infinity is already found in Scotus’ work. Scotus makes an inference from the intensive finitude of creation to the intensive infinity of the divine being.\(^ {163}\) For Scotus, the concept of infinity is crucial to his understanding of the relationship between metaphysics and theology. Scotus predicates infinity of the highest being as the metaphysically determined attribute distinguishing between creature and Creator.\(^ {164}\) In order to make an inference from the finitude

\(^ {160}\) Anneliese Maier, „Diskussionen über das aktuell Unendliche in der ersten Hälfte des 14. Jahrhunderts,“ Ausgegebenes Mittelalter. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts, vol. 1 (Rome, 1964), 44. The actual infinity defined analogically to the potential infinity is: „tantum quod non maius,“ or „tot quod non plures“ or, reversing the definition of the potential infinity and considered to be less precise: „infinitum est cius nihil est extra sumere. “ Ibid. Maier writes that the question concerning the existence of the actual infinity was posed in the case of the number of the last units of a continuum. The predominant Aristotelian interpretation considered the continuum to be composed of „semper divisibilia,“ „d.h. die Anzahl seiner letzten Teile ist potentiell unendlich gross, und ihre Grössse entsprechen potentiell unendlich klein,...“ Ibid., 42, n. 2.

\(^ {161}\) Ibid., 43. Maier suggests that Ockham accepted the reality of the actual infinity, not in the sense of a „tantum quod non maius“ or „tot quod non plures,“ but as what lies beyond all finite number and proportions. Ibid., 62. Wolter suggests that, although Scotus „was well aware of the difficulty involved with the very concept of an actual infinite multitude, he personally believed that one could form a constructed or higher level concept of it at least, and if one could, by some flash of ‘insight,’ conceive this as a whole, it would be a step towards giving some sense to what he regarded as the peak of metaphysical thought, where one reaches the very limits of language and of abstract speculation.“ Allan B. Wolter, The Philosophical Theology of John Duns Scotus, ed. Marilyn McCord Adams (Ithaca, NY and London, 1990), 67.


\(^ {163}\) I would like to thank Marilyn McCord Adams for suggesting Scotus’ distinction between extensive and intensive infinity as a way of interpreting Luther’s inference from the denial of the existence of the actual infinity to the denial of the existence of God.

\(^ {164}\) For a detailed presentation of Scotus’ understanding of the principle of non-identity and its relation to the divine attribute of infinity, see: Étienne Gilson, Jean Duns Scot.
of creatures to the infinity of the divine being, Scotus distinguishes between extensive infinity and intensive infinity. Basing his argument on the efficiency of a first mover that must be infinite, Scotus shows that extensive infinity does not explain why the power of this first mover is sufficiently infinite to produce the sum total of an infinite series of effects. Extensive infinity merely explains how a finite effect is produced over an infinite period of time. In order to show that the prime mover has an infinite power at one and the same moment to create all creatures simultaneously, Scotus begins his argument by proving that God’s knowledge is infinite. Scotus then argues from God’s infinite knowledge to the infinite power of the divine being. From the intensive finitude of creatures, Scotus infers the existence of an intensively infinite being.

Luther locates his own inference in the metaphysical region in order to show that this inference is entirely incapable of attaining even the existence of the infinite being. Beginning with the antecedent, the denial of the existence of the actual infinity, Luther forces an equivocation between the actual infinity and the intensive infinity, and infers the denial of the existence of God. By equivocating two terms that Scotus would have distinguished, Luther’s inference ends up denying the very existence of the being that a metaphysician, such as Scotus, aims to demonstrate.

Luther imposes an equivocation onto an inference from the denial of the existence of the actual infinity to the denial of the existence of God, in order to characterize the extent to which natural reason, operating in the metaphysical region, is restricted. Luther reads Aristotle in such a way as to force Aristotle into making an inference that he is not able to see. This position is finally attributed to one of Luther’s favorite whipping boys, Epicurus who, according to Luther, denies the existence of God. “Ideo tam frigide ubique de religione disputat, et in cute perfectus est Epicurus.” Although the historical Epicurus is regarded as having articulated his thoughts in opposition to Aristotle, Luther locates the two Greek philosophers in the same metaphysical region.


Wolter, 270.

Wolter summarizes Scotus’ argument from the infinite knowledge of God to the intensive infinity of God’s power in Ibid., 271.


In the sermon on Rom. 11.33-36, Luther identifies the Epicureans as the people who are only interested in filling their bellies. They are not at all interested in the divine justice, and commit acts of injustice against others. The Epicureans are not at all the addressees of his sermon. WA 45, 95, 2-8, See: ch. 4, section 2.3.


Luther frequently refers to Epicurus as a superficial hedonist. Epicurus’ philosophical writings are available as fragments in the works of thinkers who received him, to a large extent in Cicero’s de natura deorum, a work with which Luther was most likely fa-
in that region either shies just short of, or is successful in, denying the existence of God. On Luther’s terms, the metaphysical region is occupied by some fools (Ps. 14:1) who are pious enough to avoid drawing the metaphysical conclusion denying the existence of God.

Luther constructs an inference that he locates in the metaphysical region in order to expose the incapacity of natural reason to attain even the slightest bit of knowledge concerning the infinity that he associates with the Trinity. The equivocation that Luther imposes on the inference he draws, shows how he blocks an inference from the metaphysical region to the theological region. With respect to natural reason, Luther argues that it is utterly incapable of inferring the existence of the being that, according to Scotus, would be the intensively infinite being. The metaphysical enterprise threatens to be dismantled entirely when an equivocation results in the denial of both the existence of the actual infinity, and the existence of the intensively infinite being.

In his debate with Aristotle, Luther constructs his inference in such a way as to separate the theological region from the metaphysical region. An increasing distance between the two regions locates Luther in a trajectory that marks Ockham’s criticism of Scotus. From Scotus to Ockham, an increasing separation between the two regions is related to what can be claimed concerning the epistemic accessibility of the theological subject matter. Scotus believes he can prove the existence of the intensively infinite being from the intensive finitude of the creature. Ockham, however, thinks metaphysics can formulate but not prove the infinity of the divine being; he considers the subject matter in the theological region to be less epistemically accessible than his predecessor. Located in the trajectory following Ockham, Luther’s inference goes so far as to suggest that the metaphysical project is unsuccessful on its own terms. By showing its incapacity to attain the knowledge of the existence of the infinite divine being, the use of metaphysics for determining the infinity associated with the triune God is dismissed entirely. For Luther, the concept of infinity, and its relation to the divine being, is located only in the theological region, the region in which the trinitarian God is revealed. In his debate with Aristotle, Luther understands the Pauline passage to locate the traces of the eternal power and divinity in the theological region; any traces found in the metaphysical region are rejected as incapable of shedding light on the infinity of the divine being, and of the triune God. The increasing separation in the Scotus-Ockham trajectory between the two regions culminates in Luther’s reliance on the revealed word of God to

miliar. Epicurus’ philosophical work concentrates on understanding the relation between the unchangeability of the gods, and the principles of physics related to the change occurring in the world. A physical explanation underlies Epicurus’ understanding of the eternity of the gods. Wolfgang Schmid, „Epikur,” RAC, vol. 5: 681-819, esp. 735-36.

2.3. Luther and Aristotle on the divine infinity

define the divine essence as infinite; the meaning of infinity must be provided by the Spirit in the theological region.

2.3.2. The potential infinity

After debating Aristotle on the actual infinity, Luther turns to the second type of infinity that also appears in the medieval discussion. The potential infinity is considered by both Aristotle and his medieval interpreters to exist in reality as well as in the mind. Luther introduces the set of these on the potential infinity by acknowledging Aristotle's position. "Concedit [Aristotle] tamen, infinitum potentia et esse et cognosci posse, ..." In the Physics, Aristotle entertains the possibility of conceiving the existence of an infinite temporal sequence by posing the question whether time can be said to have actuality. He asks whether time might exist, at least, "barely, and in the obscure way," when past and future time are regarded as non-existent, and the present separates the already from the not-yet. Against the backdrop of continuous time as a past that has receded and a future arriving to the present, Aristotle conceives the potential infinity according to two examples. He writes that the way in which the infinite can be said to exist is not to be regarded as a "this," like a person or a house, but in the sense of existing as things whose being consists in a process of coming to be and passing away. Not considered as an object to which one can point, time is understood according to the sense in which a day is or the Olympic Games are. This succession of continuous coming into and going out of existence, of which the totality can never actually exist simultaneously, exists "as an attribute of certain sequences of individual things or individual events—"definite if you like at each stage, yet always different." In his "Von den letzten Worten Davids," Luther articulates a position similar to one that Aristotle holds. Creaturally existence can be conceived in the sense of a coming in-

172 Aristotle, Phys. III (6), 207a 8-9 [vol. 1, 352]. The medieval Latin, quoted in Murdoch, reads, "Non enim eius nihil est extra, sed eius semper aliquid est extra, hoc infinitum est.... Infinitum quidem igitur hoc est, eius secundum quantitatem accipientibus, semper est aliquid accipere extra." Murdoch, "Infinity and continuity," 567, n. 6.


174 Phys. IV (10), 217b 32-218a 3 [vol. 1, 369-70].

175 Phys. III (6), 206a 21-26. 29-34 [vol. 1, 351].

176 The inconceivability of infinity as the unactualizability of the last number in an infinite temporal series, in Met. II (2), 994b 21-28 [vol. 2, 1571], is contrasted with the conceivability of a potential infinite as the existence of finite things coming to be and passing away, as Aristotle states in Met. IX (6), 1048b 15-17 [vol. 2, 1655-56].

177 Hintikka, 116.
to and a going out of existence.\textsuperscript{178} On the issue of an infinite sequence, however, Luther's theological claim differs drastically from that of his opponent.

Luther constructs another inference in order to show how the inference from the potential infinity is incapable of reaching the divine infinity. Even worse, the constructed inference cannot move beyond the eternity of the world. The relevant thesis of the Alberus disputatio is articulated as follows: "Concedit tamen, infinitum potestia et esse et cognosci posse, etsi iterum hic mundi aeternitas eum confudit."\textsuperscript{179} Luther qualifies his thesis by accusing Aristotle of confusing the potential infinity with the eternity of the world. Of course, on Aristotle's terms, this inference is legitimate as Aristotle understands the first mover to move the heavens that exist for all eternity.\textsuperscript{180} With his accusation against Aristotle, Luther is also pointing out a bone of contention with Scotus. In medieval theology, a thinker, such as Scotus, would draw the inference from the infinitum in fieri to some knowledge of the divine infinity only by making the necessary distinction between extensive and intensive infinity.\textsuperscript{181} Luther does not replicate Scotus' careful distinction. Rather, Luther uses a strategy of collapse in order to expose the captivity of reason to a world-immanent realm. In a manner similar to his inference based on the actual infinity, Luther's inference from the potential infinity is drawn by forcing an equivocation between the potential infinity and the extensive infinity. Luther conflates the potential infinity, as the continuous process of things coming into and going out of existence, with the extensive infinity, that is understood by Scotus in terms of the finite effects of a first cause over an infinite period of time. By equivocating the two terms, Luther constructs an inference that is opposed to the theological claim of the creatio ex nihilo. The rhetorical veil of Luther's thesis, however, disguises a traditional medieval theological view of the incompatibility between Aristotle's understanding of an infinite temporal succession and the Christian understanding of a creation in time.

By constructing the inference from the potential infinity to the infinity of the world, Luther follows a strategy similar to the first inference from the actual infinity. Luther aims to expose the incapacity of the metaphysical project to infer beyond the premises of its own region. Natural reason cannot infer from the potential infinity to any type of infinity associated with a divine being. Caught in its own region marked by

\textsuperscript{178} Contrasting the divine eternal kingdom of 1 Chron. 17:14 with an earthly and temporal kingdom, Luther writes, "Auch nicht ein Vergenglich, Zeitlich, Irdisch Reich sein, welsch ein ende hat,..." WA 54, 46, 11-12.

\textsuperscript{179} WA 39/II, 255, 13-14 (Alberus, thesis 34).

\textsuperscript{180} Met. XII (8), 1073a 24-33 [vol. 2, 1696].

\textsuperscript{181} Maier sums up the three medieval definitions of the potential infinity: a- "infinitum in fieri" as "non tantum quin maius" for infinite magnitudes; b- "non tot quin plures" for infinite number; c- the syncategorematic use of the term, "infinita." Maier, 43-44.
a sequence of coming into and going out of existence, reason cannot sufficiently transcend its own premises, and reach towards the being that exists beyond all change. In succeeding his aim to restrict the domain of natural reason to the metaphysical region, Luther shows how this region is entirely separated from the theological region.

Luther's intentional dismantling of the metaphysical task serves his theological aim. It is only in the theological region that the infinity related to the triune God, and the nature of the triune God to create ex nihilo are revealed as articles of faith. In the Hegemon disputatio, Luther does acknowledge that natural reason can, at best, draw an inference from the traces of conservation in creation to the knowledge of a divine conserver. With this claim, Luther's position is unveiled to be in continuity with a trajectory in which Ockham is already located. The trajectory marked by the increasing separation between the metaphysical and the theological regions does not turn on the issue over what can be conceived. Scotos, Ockham and Luther agree on the capacity of natural reason to conceive the existence of the potential infinity. What can be proved, however, is the subject matter of dispute. Luther follows Ockham by claiming only an incomplete knowledge of the Christian God by natural reason operating in the metaphysical region. Separated from the metaphysical region, the theological region is the only region in which the trinitarian article is revealed.

Luther's dispute with Aristotle in the Alberus theses is overarched by the Rom. 1:20 passage, cited at the end of the series of theses on the actual and potential infinity. The controversy between the theological and the philosophical determinations of infinity uncovers Luther's intention to show, with Paul, that only from the perspective of the incarnation is the "glory of the divine Majesty" manifest as the trace of infinity in creation. The traces of the infinite power and divinity are revealed, not in

182 In a sermon on Gen. 1:3, Luther speaks of the structure of language that cannot grasp three things at once. There is no term capturing all three trinitarian persons together. It is ultimately sight, rather than language, that can apprehend how the three persons are one God. WA 24, 31, 24-26 (Über das 1. Buch Mose, Predigten, 1527).


184 Luther acknowledges that natural reason can, from the traces of the conservation of creation, infer a conserver. However, natural reason cannot know God as Creator. "Verum gubernationem servatis speciebus potest natura videere et cognoscere Deum gubernantem, sed creationem ipsam non intelligere." Ibid., B346, 8-11 (Hegemon). Luther makes a similar argument in the sermon on Rom. 11:33-36. See: ch. 4, section 2.2.

185 Ockham does permit a qualified use of metaphysical reason concerning the final and efficient causes. For a study of Ockham's arguments concerning the proofs for the existence of God, see: McCord Adams, Ockham, vol. 2, 966-79.

186 "Qui scrutando non volet errare, nec a maestatis gloria opprimi, is fide tangat et apprehendat Filium Dei in carne manifestatum." WA 39/II, 255, 20f. (Alberus, thesis 37).
the metaphysical region, but in the theological region. In the Hegemon disputation, Luther interprets the Romans’ passage at length in order to make a similar claim to the Alberus theses. Luther alludes to a range of philosophers to show that right knowledge of God cannot be inferred from traces of the divine conservation in creation. The incomplete knowledge of a divine conserver in the metaphysical region is regarded, from the vantage-point of the theological region, as no knowledge at all of the triune God as Creator. Natural reason that attempts to move beyond its capacity, ends up as either the Psalmist’s fool or stands under Paul’s charge of idolatry. By determining the boundaries between the theological and the philosophical regions in the course of debating Aristotle on the actual and the potential infinity, Luther does not discredit reason as such. Its limits are pointed out in order to make room for a theological use, adequate to study the subject matter of the eternal generation of the Son.

2.3.3. Natural philosophy and the generation of the Son

The infinity of the inner-Trinity is not only distanced from its metaphysical determination. For Luther, the inner-trinitarian infinity is specified by another term, also found in the region of natural philosophy. The term, „generation,“ is used to refer to the eternal generation of the Son as well as to the generation of finite entities in time, and from a source. In

187 In the Hegemon disputation, Luther interprets the capacity of reason to infer a God on the basis of the conservation of the world, a God who is „primum movens et summum ens.“ Ibid., A346, 4. Luther throws Plato, Aristotle and Cicero together into one metaphysical soup, stating that the partial knowledge of God on the basis of the gubernatio is inadequate to reach both the trinitarian essence of the Creator and the nature of mercy. Ibid., A345, 24-27. 346, 1-23. The Hegemon debate clarifies Luther’s interpretation of Rom 1:20 by distinguishing between two kinds of knowledge of God, „una est ex creaturis visibilibus,... Deinde est altera cognitio Dei, quae est ex eius verbo,... ex quo solo cognoscimus voluntatem Dei.“ Ibid., A345, 5-6. 12-13. 14-16. In Rom. 1:19-20, the passage quoted by Luther, Paul picks up a theory of the knowledge of God from the Stoas, as contemporary New Testament scholars claim. See: Ernst Käsemann, An die Römer, in: Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, no. 8a (Tübingen, 1974), 34-38; Walter Schmithals, Der Römerbrief. Ein Kommentar (Gütersloh, 1988), 78.

188 In a lengthy response recorded in the Hegemon disputation, Luther interprets Rom. 1:21, and explains why those people who have an incomplete knowledge of God are charged with idolatry. Although they have some knowledge of God, they do not give God the glory. „Paulus in textu [Rom. 1:21] solvit hoc argumentum: Etsi cognoverunt Deum, tamen non glorificaverunt verum Deum. Illa quantulacunque cognitione, quamquam imperfecta, contempo agnito illo Deo ex gubernatione versi sunt ad cultum animalium, quadrupedum, volucrum, et non tribuerunt Deo gloriam. Gentes sciebant, unum esse Deum, sed tamen suas idolatrias non volebant omittere. Haec est causa, cur sint inexcussables, quia sciebant, sua idola esse lignea et lapidea, tamen adorabant et divinum honorem illis tribuebant.“ WA 39/II, A347, 10-25 (Hegemon).
this section, the discussion shows how Luther argues for a theological referent to the term, "generation," by drawing the boundary between the theological and the natural philosophical regions.

The term, "generation," is located by Aristotle and his medieval interpreters in the regions of natural philosophy and biology. Related to the potential infinity, "generation," is defined as the coming and passing away of finite entities; generation is a process of change occurring in the temporal succession of the potential infinite. In the tradition of Aristotelian natural philosophy, the determination of the term includes a discussion of the elements of time and motion that are related to the change taking place when a finite entity comes into and goes out of existence. According to Aristotle’s *Physics*, time is defined as the measurement of motion, and motion is the central concern of natural philosophy. The existence of the potential infinite is argued on the basis of the connection between time and motion. In the medieval reception of Aristotle’s work, Ockham continues to define time as the number of motion in reference to a before and after, and motion as the generation and corruption of entities. The use of the term, "generation," in the regions of natural philosophy and biology requires Luther to show how the theological determination of the term is related to a concept of eternity that admits no change, either as a coming to be or a passing away.

At junctures in the Major *disputatio*, Luther distinguishes between a theological and a natural philosophical use of the term, "generation." When discussing the relationship between Father and Son, Luther identifies the christological proposition in Col. 1:15 with the substantial unity between the two persons. In this unity, the concept of eternity is

189 Phys. III (1), 200b 12-25 [vol. 1, 342].
191 The capacity of the soul to measure time by motion is related to the time-motion correlation. Perler, 226.
192 McCord Adams describes Ockham’s understanding of time as "a cosmic clock by means of which we can measure their [temporal events and things] duration." McCord Adams, *Ockham*, vol. 2, 874. Ockham distinguishes between three notions of time, and concludes that time is the number by which one numbers in the sense of the distinct before and after of the first motion. This time is then used to measure other motions. Ibid., 876. There are also three senses in which the term, "time," can be understood when it is related to motion: the first motion, or motion of heavenly bodies that is strictly uniform, and the fastest, inferior motion as the basis of measuring the first motion, and an imagined motion. Ibid., 886.
194 “In divinis dicitur character et quidem substantiae, id est, ut etiam ingrediatur in substantiam Patris, ut, quod Pater est, sit et Filius... Filius est imago eius invisibilis Dei,...” WA 39/II, A-B296, 17-18. 22-23 (Major). Luther is here referring to Me-
linked to the Father's generation of the Son. When speaking of Christ's "birth," no determinations of past, future or present can be imposed onto the generation that takes place in eternity. Christ's birth in eternity can in no way be understood as a finite entity coming into existence. In the inner-trinitarian unity, there is no change of coming to be or passing away, because "[h]ic non est tempus." Any generation from a principium that is privileged temporally as the origin of its effect is excluded from the determination of the Son's eternal generation. Such an understanding of generation attacks the co-eternity between the Son and the Father. Major also repeats his teacher's words. Orienting his response to the term, "hodie" in Ps. 2:7, Major says that, in the eternity of God, there is no "principium, medium vel finis temporis." For Luther, the type of infinity appearing in the theological region is determined by the Son's inner-trinitarian generation that cannot be confused with the generation of finite entities from an origin.

2.3.4. The inner-Trinity and the analogy

The disputatio is a medieval academic genre that Luther adopts to locate the activity of natural reason in the regions of metaphysics and natural philosophy, and to carve out a theological region in which the activity of reason is employed to investigate its particular subject matter. For Luther, the disputatio serves to distinguish between the same terms that are used to articulate both the inner-Trinity and the characteristics of creaturely existence. In the process of distinguishing the use of terms, Luther draws boundaries between the academic regions. These boundaries func-
tion to exclude natural reason from the determination of the theological term, „the eternal generation of the Son.“ Luther’s claim prohibiting the use of an analogy to explain the inner-Trinity, can be interpreted against the backdrop of the exclusion for which he argues.

Luther’s exclusion of natural reason offers a lens through which his insistent surface polemic against a variety of academic regions can be viewed. For Luther, the inner-Trinity exists entirely outside the creature, and is beyond creaturely comprehension. The Son is the image of the invisible God, Luther exclaims, „[d]as ist schon extra creaturas hinweg.“ When responding to the opponens’ challenge that there cannot be a unity of three persons, Luther says that the co-eternity and co-equality of the three persons cannot be understood according to the order of number, of location and of time. Major articulates a rule that characterizes Luther’s exclusion of natural reason from investigating the inner-trinitarian unity. „Non valet argumentum a creaturis ad creatorem.“ What is considered to be invalid is the maneuver of taking terms that apply to the creatures in a given sense, and then applying them to define the divine infinity in its specific theological sense. For Luther, each science must define and use the terms proper to its own domain. With respect to the infinity associated with the inner-Trinity, „creaturely“ thinking must be excised from the theological region. An imposition of temporalized reason is forbidden, from the onset, to determine a subject matter that transcends creaturely thought.

Luther’s exclusion of a „creaturely“ use of reason can help to shed light on his prohibition of the analogy. In the genre of the disputatio, at least, Luther restricts the power of the analogy to explain the inner-Trinity. There is no analogical precedent in creation for comprehending the unity between Father and Son. By excluding the analogy that

199 Ibid., A-B296, 23.
200 „... sed hic nullus numeri ordo, loci et temporis est... Hic nullus ordo, sed coaequalitas, coaequalitas, imago, natura muß gar neue sein.“ Ibid., A303, 25. 304, 1-2.
201 Ibid., A308, 1.
202 „Jam non debet ars etem impedire, sed unaqueque debet retinere sum quas quasi cursum et uti suis terminis.“ WA 42, 35, 35-36 (Lectures on Genesis, 1535-1545, to Gen. 1:14). See also: Ibid., 35, 37-42. 36, 4-16. Luther writes on the distinction between philosophy and theology with respect to the subject matter. In this citation from a Table-talk, Luther does not, from the onset, exclude the use of philosophical tools in the theological region. Rather, his worry concerns an unreflected confusion between the two regions. „Philosophia non intelliget res sacras, vnch ich hab sorg, man werde sie zu hartt in die theologia vermisschen;...“ WATr 5, 25, 9-10 (no. 5245, Sept. 2-17, 1540). See also the entire talk, as well as an extended German transcription in Ibid., 25, 8-26, 10.
203 In the genre of the sermon, Luther does not shy away from using specific analogies to explain the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, or the term, „person.“ See: ch. 4, section 2.1.
inerts from the creature to the Creator, any inference from an academic region into the theological region is blocked. Luther attacks the incapacity of philosophy to grasp the inner-trinitarian distinctions between persons; he excludes both grammar, and mathematics from investigating the inner-Trinity. These polemically formulated theses can be interpreted as restrictions to the explanatory power of any analogy, coming from any scientific region, that would attempt to import a temporalized use of reason into the theological region. In this light, the restrictions against analogical thinking can be correctly understood to pertain to the genre of the disputatio, and its function to use reason in a way testing types of reason as to their fittingness to the object of study.

Luther's initial attitude towards the analogy is complemented by another position. Once the theological region is circumscribed, Luther does permit the use of the analogy inside this region. In the Major disputatio, Luther acknowledges that some analogies can be used to explicate the res. „Similitudo etiam in natura non currit quatuor pedibus. Dantur autem ad declarandas res.“ Even a language that evokes the natural philosophical talk of generation is allowed inside the theological region. When responding to the challenge that there is no inner-trinitarian generation at all because whatever is generated, is a subject of a passio, Luther says that the type of generation in the inner-Trinity is a „passio interna.“

205 „Summa, per rationem et philosophiam de his rebus maiestatis [referring to the preceding thesis on the inner-trinitarian distinctions between persons] nihil, per fidem vero omnia recte dici et credi possunt.“ Ibid., 340, 12-13 (Hegemon, thesis 17).

206 Speaking of the tened propositions referring to the eternal generation of the Son, Luther responds, „Grammaticum est de futuro et praesenti. Iliae autem speculationes non habent locum in divinitate...“ Ibid., A293, 20-21 (Major).


208 Ibid., A-B296, 13-14 (Major). In the chapter on Luther's sermon (ch. 4, section 4.2.), it will be shown that Luther sees the analogies of the Trinity to be articulated in the eschatological-doxological language of Rom. 11:36.

209 WA 39/II, A308, 4 (Major). The challenge of the opponens is: „Quicquid generatur, est subjectum passioni. Deus autem non patitur. Ergo non est generatio in divinis.“ Ibid., A307, 25-26. Luther's entire response is, „Dixi in hoc articulo novam esse faciendam grammaticam, et si vultis inferre passionem, inferte internam, non actionem aut passionem externam.“ Ibid., A308, 3-5. It remains an adjacent theme to whether the proposition, „God dies,“ introduces a temporal change into the triune eternity. For Luther, the proposition is true without qualifying the divine nature as vulnerable to death. The christological proposition predicating human attributes in concreto to the divine nature, however, is rendered soteriologically harmful when divorced from an understanding of the nature of God as eternal. For soteriological certainty as well as for acknowledging what human salvation „cost God,“ the discourse of infinity must remain an integral moment in theological reflection. „Daher singen und ruhe(men wir mit allen freuden, Das Gottes Son, der rechte Einige Gott, mit dem Vater und Heiligem geist, sey fur uns Mensch, Ein knecht, Ein sunder, Ein wurm worden, Gott sey gestorben, Gott trage unser sunde am
ther does admit the possibility of the analogy to shed light on the mystery, its use in the disputational genre is hardly perceivable. The cautious reference to the analogy is related to Luther's view of reason in the disputatio. Reason is called upon to establish the boundaries of the theological region. Its function is to exclude foreign determinations, rather than to proclaim central words of comfort. In other genres, such as the sermon, reason is located more at the center of the theological region. Its use is to illustrate what is meant by terms for hearers that are not from the onset regarded as heretics, but for those seeking God's mercy. On the other hand, the disputation guides reason to investigate the terms of propositions. Articulated is an understanding of the terms that is less evocative, and decisively reflecting its location in an academic setting.

2.3.5. The divine infinity: conclusion

On the surface, Luther's rhetoric could suggest a defiant stance against any activity of reason. In the genre of the disputatio, however, Luther's rhetoric is formed by his view of reason in distinguishing between regions, and in determining the particular application of reason used to fit the study of its respective subject matter. By distinguishing between different senses of terms, reason is tested for its adequacy to study the finite entities with the tools of either natural philosophy, grammar, metaphysics or logic, or to study the inner-Trinity with the tools of theology. The excluding activity of reason was demonstrated in this section with respect to the concept of infinity. Luther excludes the actual and potential infinity used in the metaphysical region as well as the natural philosophical use of the term, "generation." The equivocations Luther forces on the metaphysical region aim to block any impositions of natural reason onto the theological subject matter. Once the inferences drawn by natural reason are prohibited, Luther opens up the theological region, and invites reason to understand the glorious mystery of the inner-Trinity. The tools of reason Luther uses will be discussed in the next section.

2.4. THE INNER-TRINITY

The aim of the doctoral disputatio is not only to limit the activity of spatio-temporally limited reason to regions outside theology. By strictly setting the borders between Creator and creature, room is opened up at the center of the theological region for articulating a right understanding of the eternal trinitarian relations. Luther's "nescio" does not relegate the

Creutz, in seinem eigen leibe, Gott hat uns Erlo(e)set durch sein eigen blut,... " WA 54, 92, 13-17.
mystery to the silence of adoration, but it provides the starting-point for reflecting on the inner-Trinity.\textsuperscript{210} In this section, I discuss a metaphysics, a semantics and a logic that Luther fits to understand the inner-trinitarian proposition. I begin with a description of the discursive form common to structuring any medieval truth claim, the proposition. For Luther, the inner-trinitarian proposition, that the three res are one and the same as the one res, serves as the basis for any further study on the theological determination of its terms. The terminology of res implies a metaphysical claim that will be analyzed in the second section. The third section isolates the semantic difficulty with how essence terms, such as „essentia“ and „Deus,“ are taken to refer to either the distinct res as person or the indistinct res as the divine essence. I explain how Luther arrives at his position that these essence terms supposit for the distinct res. In the fourth section, the discussion focuses on how Luther appeals to two terms, known as exponibles in the Middle Ages, the totus and solus in order to explain how the essential attribute, „infinity,“ can be predicated of each person. The use of three tools of reason demonstrates the complex contours of a trinitarian understanding that Luther articulates in conversation with the tradition of trinitarian reflection before him.

2.4.1. The inner-trinitarian proposition

The discursive backbone of scientific investigation, received from Aristotle's \textit{De Interpretatione} into the medieval \textit{disputatio}, is the proposition.\textsuperscript{211} All four of Luther's disputationes on the inner-Trinity can be seen to be summarized by the proposition: „Indisputabilis veritas est, unum esse Deum et trinum, omnium rerum extra se creatorem unicum.“\textsuperscript{212} The structure of Luther's proposition is commonplace in later medieval logic.\textsuperscript{213} The proposition is composed of a \textit{dictum}, formulated as an accusative plus infinitive, and a mode. The \textit{dictum} signifies a state of affairs, and the mode „modifies“ how the subject is related to the predicate. Handled in the section on tense and modality (2.2.3.), the prefix,

\textsuperscript{210} „Do nuß man still schweigen vnd sprechen: Deus loquitur ibi, audio, esse unum Deum et tres personas, wie Das zugeht, nescio.“ WA 39/II, A364, 17. 365, 1-3 (Hegemon); Luther adds the word, „credam,“ in \textit{Ibid.}, B364, 10. The C variant is: „Wie es zugehet, hic simpliciter taccendum est et credendum Deo, qui se ita cognoscedum in verbo suo nobis proposit.“ \textit{Ibid.}, C364, 29. 365, 19-20.

\textsuperscript{211} Aristotle summarizes the subject matter of his text, \textit{De Interpretatione}, as the „statement-making sentence,“ propositions investigated under their grammatikal-syntactical and logical-semantic aspects. De int. c. 4, 17a 4-5 [vol. 1, 26].

\textsuperscript{212} WA 39/II, 287, 13-14 (Major, thesis 5). Cf. footnote 93.

\textsuperscript{213} Nuchelmans discusses various types of propositions, and how they are understood to refer to a particular state of affairs. Represented in his study are: Abelard, Gregory of Rimini, William Ockham and Robert Holcot. Nuchelmans, 200-207.
"indisputabilis veritas est," functions to denote what is signified by the accusative plus infinitive construction that follows. The mode of "indisputable truth" modiﬁes the relation of the one God to the three persons. It denotes what is signiﬁed by the three res that are one and the same as the one res, according to the modality of necessity associated with the truth claim that is valid for eternity. This type of mode corresponds to the axiomatic status of the proposition. It is curious that Luther proposes a proposition for dispute that is an axiom in the theological region. Given the situation of attack, Luther employs the disputation in order to defend the proposition as axiomatic in obedience to the Father’s word (Mt. 17:5).

An unpacking of Luther’s inner-trinitarian understanding begins with the terms used in the proposition. In the medieval arts faculty, the burden of analyzing propositions was shared between the grammarians and the logicians. The grammarians studied the eight parts of speech in order to arrive at rules of syntax.214 The logicians studied the signiﬁcations of terms in propositions.215 Boethius, who translated Aristotle’s Organon into Latin, is regarded to have founded the medieval study of logic.216 His two works on the Topics gave medieval logic a foundation by representing Aristotle’s topics in a series of axioms that were received into commentaries classifying inferences well into the fourteenth century.217 The medieval logicians’ focus on the way terms signify in propositions, i.e. or their supposition, led to reﬁned statements of truth conditions for propositions of different logical forms. Although Ockham followed William of Sherwood and Peter of Spain in recognizing three kinds of supposition, simple, personal and material, his nominalist conceptualist view of universals led him to say that terms have simple supposition for concepts.218 Supposition theory made its way into medieval reﬂections on the Trinity in order to determine the referents of categorematic terms. Beginning

214 The study of grammar in the Middle Ages is considered to have its origins in the Stoa. Medieval grammar was based, to a great extent, on Priscian’s sixth-century Latin grammar that was oriented to the work of Apollonius Dyscolus. Ebbesen, 109-111.

215 Ibid., 123.

216 The books of Aristotle’s Organon were ordered by the third-century commentator, Porphyry, in the latter’s Isagoge. The Isagoge was translated into Latin by Boethius in the late fourth century, and it served as the foundation for medieval logical study. The Organon is composed of the Categories, De Interpretatione, Prior Analytics and Sophistici elenchi as well as the Posterior Analytics and the Topics that most medieval logicians placed after the Prior Analytics. Ibid., 101-105. 121-23.

217 Aristotle’s Topics are primarily dialectical strategies of argumentation and principles conﬁrming the strategy. An axiom is a self-evident principle of a demonstrative science from which consequences, governed by laws of inference, are deduced.

with a debate against Scotus, Luther turns to consider the referent of the
categorematic term, „res,“ according to a metaphysical claim.

2.4.2. The Scotus/Ockham trajectory: the metaphysical claim of the
inner-trinitarian res

The determination of the inner-trinitarian subject matter begins, for Lu-
ther, as for Scotus and Ockham before him,\textsuperscript{219} by ascribing to the termi-
nology stipulated by Fourth Lateran.\textsuperscript{220} Using the terminology of res
found in the records of the Church Council held in 1215, Luther writes
two theses in the Alberus disputatio.

12. Quia ratio non capit, unam rem indistinctam esse tres res distinctas...
15. Vere tamen impossibilior est, unam indistinctam rem esse tres res dis-
tinctissimas.\textsuperscript{221}

With this gesture acknowledging the terminological authority of the tra-
dition before him, Luther disavows the demonstrability of the inner-
trinitarian proposition, that the one indistinct res is one and the same as
the three distinct res. The inner-trinitarian proposition is an article of
faith, and an axiom in the theological region. For the purpose of showing
what can be conceived, Luther seizes on one word of the proposition
that he will carefully study. He turns to the term, „res,“ a metaphysical
term. Although Luther wants to distinguish a theological from a meta-
physical use, his retention of „res“ situates his arguments in a debate
fought two centuries before.

Luther works out his understanding of the theological aspect of „tres
res sunt una res“ by retracing a trajectory from Scotus to Ockham. With
a few concise theses, Luther sets up the metaphysical stage on which he
forgets the principle of charity, and criticizes Scotus’ attempt to explain
the Trinity by appealing to the latter’s notion of formal and real distinc-

\textsuperscript{219} Scotus, Lectura I, d. 5, q. u, n. 16 [Vaticana XVI, 416]; d. 23, q. u, n. 23-24 [Vaticana
XVII, 309]; cf. Ord. I, d. 5, p. 1, q. u, n. 8-9 [Vaticana IV, 13-14]; n. 26 [Vaticana IV, 24-
25]; Ockham, Ord. I, d. 2, q. 11 [OTh II, 374].

\textsuperscript{220} One looks in vain through the records of the Fourth Lateran Council for the pro-
position, „tres res sunt una res.“ Rather, the records state that „alia et alia persona sunt
una res.“ The term, „res,“ refers to the divine essence. „..., quia quaelibet trium person-
arum est illa res, videlicet substantia, essentia seu natura divina.“ DS *804 (Against Joa-
chim of Fiore); „Licet igitur 'alius sit Pater, alius Filius, alius Spiritus sanctus, non tamen
aliud'...“ DS *805 (Against Joachim of Fiore). There is no reference to „three res.“ DS
*803-804 (Against Joachim of Fiore); McCord Adams, Ockham, vol. 2, 999.

\textsuperscript{221} WA 39/II, 254, 5-6. 11-12 (Alberus, theses 12 and 15). In the genre of the sermon,
Luther formulates the mystery of the Trinity in this manner: „Und ist ein unbegrifflich
ding, quod istae tres distinctae personae unus Deus. Quomodo unus, cum video tres?“
WA 49, 308, 11-12 (Sermon on the First Sunday after Epiphany, Jan. 13, 1544, Rörer
version).
tions. Luther begins his criticism: "Leviter et frigide consolantur nos Scotus et Scholastici cum suis distinctionibus formalibus et realibus." Extending the attack against both Scotus and the Scholastics for rhetorical force rather than for scientific precision, Luther mounts an attack against the power of the formal and real distinctions to explain the relation of the one indistinct res to the three distinct res.

The formal and real distinctions form a significant part of Scotus' metaphysics. They are used to explain how an attribute can be predicated of a substance, how attributes are predicated of God, and how the three inner-trinitarian persons are distinguished from each other as well as how each person is distinguished from the divine essence. According to Scotus' moderate realist view of universals, particulars are metaphysically constituted by a nature common to numerically distinct particulars, and an individuating principle or "haecceity." Although really one and the same res, Scotus insists that the nature and the individuating principle are formally distinct. Unlike mere distinctions of reason, formal distinctions are distinctions in reality within one and the same res prior to and independent of any act of conceiving of it. With respect to the divine attributes, the attributes are formally distinct from the essence. In terms of the inner-Trinity, the person is distinct formally from the essence, and each person is really distinct from the other two persons.

Luther criticizes Scotus on the grounds that reason is incapable of comprehending both the formal and the real distinctions. Luther, however, is not the first theologian to criticize Scotus in this regard. In the fourteenth century, Ockham launches a similar criticism against Scotus. From the perspective of his understanding of universals, Ockham both rejects the formal distinction, and shows how Scotus' position is contradictory even if the formal distinction is granted. Ockham claims that it is impossible for any creature to be formally distinct from another without being really distinct. When Luther attacks Scotus on the issue that reason is incapable of grasping the formal and the real distinctions, his

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224 Ord. II, d. 3, p. 1, q. 1, n. 4 [Vaticana VII, 393]. Unlike Aquinas, Scotus rejects the idea that matter is an individuator or even matter signed by quantity.
225 Ibid., q. 5-6, n. 188 [Vaticana VII, 483-84].
226 "Nam utcunque ista subtiliter dici videantur, ratio tamen non capit distinctionem formalem esse alienam, quam realem seu essentialem." WA 39/II, 254, 3-4 (Alerus, thesis 11). A similar criticism is found in the Hegemon disputation. "Scotus facit triplicem distinctionem, aliam formaliam, aliam realem etc. Ista quidem possunt dici, sed non ratione comprehendendi, quia ratio vel animus non potest concipere aliam distinctionem, quam formalem." Ibid., A364, 2-8; see also: B364, 1-6; C364, 25-27 (Hegemon).
227 For a detailed study of Ockham's criticism against Scotus' formal distinction, see: McCord Adams, Ockham, vol. 1, 46-59.
228 Ockham, Ord. I, d. 2, q. 1 [OTH II, 14].
agreement with Ockham is established on the basis of Ockham's metaphysical claims.

When the formal distinction is used to explain the relation between the inner-trinitarian persons and the essence, Ockham's position changes slightly. For Ockham, and then more radically for Luther, less confidence is placed in the capacity of metaphysical reason to explain, or even conceive of, the trinitarian distinctions and their relation to the divine essence. Ockham's position reveals a humility in the face of the incomprehensible trinitarian mystery. He gives a form of words, but can offer no semantics for it. "There is some sort of nonidentity between the divine nature and the divine suppositum. It can be said that in a good sense they are distinct formally, although they are not really distinct." What Scotus can metaphysically assert about the inner-trinitarian persons that are formally distinct from the divine essence, Ockham can only modestly veil in a terminology that, for him, is an exception to what unaided natural reason can conceive. Ockham's general rejection of Scotus' formal distinction as a metaphysical description of entities leads to a hesitation, within the theological region, about using a terminology related to metaphysics.

Luther not only follows Ockham by rejecting the formal and real distinctions to explain the metaphysical composition of particular entities. In the theological region, Luther goes one step further by rejecting the terminology of the formal distinctions altogether. If reason cannot even grasp the formal and real distinctions in the metaphysical region, then their importation into the theological region to articulate the way in which the trinitarian person is distinguished from the essence must also be rejected. In this regard, Luther's position is similar to one held by Robert Holcot. Holcot, with whom Luther possibly made an acquaintance through Biel's Commentary on the Sentences, explicitly rejects the

229 Ibid., q. 11 [OTh II, 364]; d. 30, q. 4 [OTh IV, 366]; quoted in McCord Adams, Ockham, vol. 2, 1001.

230 A series of theses in the Alberus disputration also shows Luther's attack against Scotus' formal and real distinctions. According to Luther, the distinctions cannot be used to conceive the distinction between person and essence, or the distinction between person and person. The series of theses begins with the difficulty of how the distinction between person and essence is made. Not even the angels, who see the Trinity in eternity, can comprehend how the person is distinguished from the divine essence. "7. Quomodo distinguatur persona a divinitate ipsa, non est rationis inquirere, nec angelis comprehensibile. 8. Imo periculolum et cavendum est ibi, ullam esse putari distinctionem, cum sit quaelibet persona ipsissimus et totus Deus." WA 39/II, 253, 13-16 (Alberus, theses 7 and 8). Luther follows by rejecting Scotus' formal and real distinctions. "9. Frustranea est cogitatio et nihilii Scoti et simillium, qui formalem vel aliam distinctionem hic finxerunt. 10. Ne sciant quid loquentur vel affirmant, dum talibus sapientiae pharmacis rationem iuvare volunt. 11. Nam utcunque ista substantia duci videantur, ratio tamen non capit distinctionem formalem esse aliam, quam realem seu essentialem." Ibid., 253, 17-18. 254, 1-4 (Alberus, theses 9-11).
formal distinction to articulate the inner-trinitarian proposition. The argument Holcot advances is one that blocks the formal distinction, articulated in the region of natural philosophy, from conceiving of a subject matter that is governed by faith and "supra philosophiam naturalem." Although no evidence is found in the doctoral disputations for a similar argument in Luther's rejection of Scotus on this point, Luther's position agrees with both Ockham and Holcot with respect to differing regions. In the metaphysical region, Luther and Ockham agree that reason cannot grasp the formal and real distinctions, and in the theological region, Luther and Holcot agree that the distinctions cannot even be used to speak of what the angels themselves find incomprehensible. In this regard, Luther finds himself in the company of those who would expel altogether the "violent" terminology of the formal and real distinctions. Luther differs from his student Major who, under the advising of Melanchthon, continues to use Scotus' terminology of the real and formal distinctions to articulate both the formal distinction between person and essence, and the real distinction between person and person. If particular terms are rejected, the question then arises as to how Luther articulates what he considers must be defended against attack.

Luther privileges a discourse to articulate the inner-Trinity that looks remarkably traditional. Moving beyond both Scotus and Ockham, Luther turns back to a terminology he claims is biblical. It is the language of "person," "hypostasis" and "substantia." In the Hegemon disputation,

231 Holcot writes that no expository syllogism can demonstrate that three res are one res. "Similiter, non est inconveniens quod logica naturalis deficiat in his quae fidei sunt, et ita sicut fides est supra philosophiam naturalem ponens res produci per creationem, ad quam philosophia naturalis non attingit..." Robert Holcot, Sent. I, 4 [S. Lyons], Exploring the Boundaries of Reason. Three Questions on the Nature of God by Robert Holcot, OP, ed. Hester Goodenough Gelber, in: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies in Toronto (Wetteren, Belgium, 1983), 26, n. 72. Holcot rejects the various distinctions between essence and relation. For Holcot, to be distinguished means to be distinct. "Ideo ad articulum dico sex: primo quod essentia et relatio in divinis non distinguuntur realiter nec modaliter nec formaliter nec ratione nec convertibiliter nec aliquo alio modo. Ratio est quia sic distinguui infert distinguui, sequitur enim: distinguuntur ratione, ergo sunt distincta rationes vel secundum rationem, et ultra: ergo sunt aliqua distincta secundum rationem, ergo sunt aliqua, consequens falsum, ergo etc." Holcot, "Utrum cum unitate essentiae divinae," a. 3 in Ibid., 102-103, lines 1001-1006. Holcot's criticism of the formal distinction to articulate the relation of the person to the essence is mentioned by Biel in Sent. I, d. 2, q. 11, a. 3, dubb. 2 (M) in Gabriellis Biel, Collectiorum circa quattuor libros Sententiarum, vol. 1, Prologus et Liber primus, eds. Wilfridas Werbeck and Udo Hofmann (Tübingen, 1973), 200-201. Biel argues against Holcot's rejection of the formal distinction to even conceive the distinction between person and essence. Biel, needless to say, argues the position that, "[h]aec est similia scientibus logician et quid dicit distinctio formalis clara sunt." Ibid., 201.

233 "Quod autem Scotus dicit, realam aliam esse [quam formalem], violenter dictum est." Ibid., A364, 8-10 (Hegemon); similar to C364, 24.
234 See Major's preparatory notes in Ibid., 333, 14-18.
Luther states, "sed quod scriptura sacra dicit, tres personas esse distinctas άποστάσεις, diceret, natura esse tres substantias. Verum Scotus non intelligit seipsum. Sunt 3 άποστάσεις ita distinctae, ut altera alteram generet et tertiam spirent."\textsuperscript{235} Of course, Luther, as a life-long translator of Scripture, knows that the technical trinitarian term, "hypostasis," does not appear in the Greek New Testament to stand for what the Latin tradition labels, "persona." In this excerpt, Luther also reflects terminological inconsistency by claiming the three distinct persons to be three "substantias." In this matter, Luther is fully aware of the third and fourth century terminological confusion in the Greek between "ονήμα" and "οπόστοψιες."\textsuperscript{236} Another disputation records Luther's rejection of the term "substantia" to stand for "hypostasis," for reasons of terminological consistency.\textsuperscript{237} Although Luther is convinced that the words he is using for the inner-Trinity are biblical, he is, in fact, appealing to extra-biblical sources for a language whose difficulties are known even to Augustine.

Another curious statement illustrates how closely Luther sees the dogmatic terminology to be intertwined with the biblical subject matter. A reference to a biblical passage, 1 John 5:7-8, appears in only the C version of the Hegemon disputation. "Ex ratione declarare non possimus, sed sacrae literae dicit, I. Ioan. 5: Pater, Filius, Spiritus sanctus, hi tres unum sunt."\textsuperscript{238} Luther's reference to 1 John 5:7-8, the three witnesses in heaven and on earth, as a statement in Scripture for the three trinitarian persons is, on the surface, surprising. In his 1522 translation of Erasmus' Greek New Testament, Luther follows the Humanist's early historical-critical lead by rejecting the two verses of the textus receptus absent from every known Greek manuscript except four, quoted by none of the Greek Fathers, and first appearing in a Greek version of the Latin records of Fourth Lateran.\textsuperscript{239} Erasmus' third edition of his New Testament includes these verses that Luther also interprets in his second Commentary on 1 John.\textsuperscript{240} Luther excludes the verses from the 1545 publication of his Bible translation, although in the same year he refers to them in the

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., A364, 10-16 (Hegemon).

\textsuperscript{236} "Dicunt quidem et illi hypostasim; sed nescio quid volunt interesse inter usiam et hypostasim: ita ut plerique nostri qui haec graeco tractant eloquio, dicere consueverint, μικόν ονήμα, τρεις άποστάσεις, quod est latine, unam essentiam, tres substantias." Augustine, De Trin., 5, 8 (10) [PL 42, 917].

\textsuperscript{237} "Est una substantia, non tres. Eset quidem non impium, dicere, esse tres substantias, sed tamen nos debemus in docendo docere, esse unam essentiam tantum, ut vitetur amphibologia. Ita etiam nos scritura docet. Nam in vulgo est una certa regula retinenda de trinitate, quam proponit scritura, ne perturbentur mentes." WA 39/II, 282, 10-14 (Fabricius).

\textsuperscript{238} Ibid., C384, 27-29 (Hegemon). A and B do not refer to this biblical passage.

\textsuperscript{239} Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament (London and New York, NY, 1975), 715-16.

\textsuperscript{240} Ezra Abbot, "I. John V. 7 and Luther's German Bible," The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel and Other Critical Essays (Boston, MA, 1888), 459-60.
Hegemon disputation. Luther is perhaps alluding to a traditional source that uses the controversial Johannine passage as a biblical warrant for the three persons. In the records of the Fourth Lateran Council, the section on Fiore's anathematization appeals to this verse.²⁴¹ Luther's agreement with the renowned church council on a theological, rather than on a historical point, betrays a position that does not divorce the tradition from Scripture, but rather appreciates the two in harmony.

In articulating the inner-trinitarian relations, Luther finds the appropriate terminology in Scripture, in the Church Fathers, and even in the Fourth Lateran Council. For Luther, the literal mention of technical trinitarian terms in Scripture is marginal to his primary concern with the capacity of language to refer to the subject matter. Rather than distinguishing historically between biblical and extra-biblical language, a position he concedes to the heretics, Luther opens up the theological region to a flexible terminology that is unified at the level of the res, as an extended discussion of this theme in the Major disputation shows.²⁴² The choice of terminology seems to reflect a privileging of the three persons, a choice most likely based on the Creed's confession of faith in the Father, Son and Spirit. Luther uses terms that pick out the three res, whether in the terminology of Fourth Lateran that Luther qualifies with the term, „distinctas,“ or in equivalent Greek and Latin terms.²⁴³ With respect to the one „indistinct res,“ Luther's strategy takes the logical form

²⁴¹ DS *803 (Against Joachim of Fiore).

²⁴² In the Major disputatio, Luther discusses at length the theme of the relation between extra-biblical trinitarian terms and the subject matter of Scripture. He disputes the „vocabulistaes,“ who say that only the use of a particular term can demonstrate the truth of the trinitarian article. „Adversarii nostri volunt, articulos nostros non satis esse fundamentos in scripturis, suntque vocabulistaes, cipiant enim, vocabulis sibi demonstrari veritatem articuli trinitatis, sicut et Ariani sibi volebant ostendii vocabulum ὁμοούσιον.“ WA 39/II, A305, 1-4 (Major). Luther claims that, in the case of the extra-biblical term, „Erbsünde,“ Erasmus is wrong to demand the original term. „Vocabulum quidem non est in Paulo, sed res ipsa et in Paulo et in tota scriptura sacra habetur et exprimitur expressius verbis.“ Ibid., A305, 6-7. For Luther, the diversity of terms, in both Scripture and in the Creeds, does not connote a difference at the semantic level of the res. Luther can refer to terms, such as „persona,“ and claim, „[i]ta tres personae et unus Deus in scriptura clarissime probantur.“ Ibid., A305, 9-10. Even the terms, „trinitas“ or „hypostasis,“ can be appropriate to articulate the biblical subject matter. „Tres res sunt una res, verum est, etiam ipsum vocabulum trinitatis non esse expressum in sacris scripturis, ich muß aber pro captu infirmorum so reden. Et veritas nostrae fidel loqui ita requirit; ὑπόστασις significat personam Patris, Filii et Spiritus sancti, wiliu ein ander vocabulum gebrauchen, so thue es, modo ut rei proprietatem serves et exprimas.“ Ibid., A305, 14-19. By uniting the terms at the level of the res, Luther can then attribute the speech of the prophets, of David, and of the church councils to the Spirit.

²⁴³ „... et tres (ut vocant) personas verissime distinctas.“ Ibid., 253, 2-3 (Alberus, second clause of thesis 1). „Simul nihilominus haec unitas, est trinitas, seu trium personarum distinctarum divinitas.“ Ibid., 287, 19-20 (Major; thesis 8).
of showing how each person is divine. When Luther rejects the terminology of the formal and real distinctions, he is not, at the surface, battling the philosophy of the "Scholastics" as such. At the level lying beneath the polemic is a serious engagement with the theological tradition that includes the "Scholastic" church council of Fourth Lateran. Luther's ultimate intention is to stake out the terminological trajectory of a tradition that can be sustained against a rationalist reduction while inviting the employment of reason to defend the divinity of all three persons.

The terminological stress on the three persons opens up a front at which Luther must define the term, "res." The term appears twice in the proposition: as a "distinct res" and as an "indistinct res." In order to understand what is meant by the term, Luther turns to the tool of metaphysics, and specifies the way in which the three res are metaphysically constituted. The particular theological concern with the inner-trinitarian res requires thematizing the ontological status of the relation, an issue Luther addresses in light of Augustine's concern that accidents cannot be spoken of God according to substance. Augustine's view, intending to avoid the modalism associated with the relation as an accident, remained normative for any discussion of the ontological status of the three distinct res. The point of controversy in the Hegemon disputatio reflects Augustine's contribution, but couches his concern in the medieval terminology of relations. Luther airs his worry about the "moderns" who regard the relation to have minimal ontological status. "Relatio in rebus non efficit rem, ut dicunt, relatio est minimae entitatis, et non per se subsistens, imo secundum Modernos est nihil." The terms Luther uses in this thesis are common to a medieval discussion of the three entities of a relation, the two relata and the relation obtaining between them, either in reason or in reality. The "moderns" who regard the relation as "nothing" could be the "moderns" whom Ockham criticizes in his own work. On the other hand, Ockham himself could be the "moderns"

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244 For Luther, the unity of the three persons is articulated in Scripture, particularly in Rom. 11:36, as a doxology. See: ch. 4, section 4.2.

245 In De Trinitate, Book 5, Augustine writes that nothing can be said of God according to accidents. Accidents impose a change into the thing (res). God, by definition, cannot change. What can be said of God must be said, "according to substance or relation."


247 McCord Adams, Ockham, vol. 1, 144. McCord Adams writes that the moderns whom Ockham is criticizing view the metaphysical world as a composite of substances,
whom Luther challenges. According to Ockham, the relation as really
distinct from substance and quality is "nothing"; the claim that relative
things are really distinct from absolute things is only marginally intelligible.\(^{248}\) For unaided natural reason, Ockham maintains that "it is easier to
deny than to sustain" that which opposes the authority of Scriptures and
the church.\(^{249}\) Luther is correct in attributing to the "moderns," the posi-
tion that the relation has an ontological status significantly less than that
of the substance. The issue, however, differs when the inner-Trinity is
considered in the theological region.

Luther formulates the question concerning the person, the distinct \textit{res}
as a relation, in the context of determining the priority of either the rela-
tion or its \textit{relata}. A thesis in the Hegemon \textit{disputatio} articulates Luther's
argument that is curiously couched in both the Augustinian terminology
of the relation, and in the language of the \textit{res distinctae} used by both
Fourth Lateran and the late Scholastics. "Relatio hic non arguit distinctionem rerum, sed \textit{res} distinctae probant esse relationem."\(^{250}\) Luther
argues that, in view of the inner-Trinity, the \textit{relata} have priority over their
relations.\(^{251}\) In this regard, Luther follows Ockham who finds it is easier
to hold that the three really distinct things constituting the three persons
are really distinct absolute things.\(^{252}\) There are no relative things (\textit{res}) in
God. Ockham, however, concedes to the authority of the Saints, who de-
fine the inner-trinitarian \textit{res} as three relations.\(^{253}\) Luther agrees with Ock-

quantities and qualities as absolute things. Relations are "respects" or relative things (\textit{res relativa}e). Ibid., 144-46.

\(^{248}\) Ibid., 268.

\(^{249}\) Ockham, \textit{Ord.} I, d. 30, q. 1 [OTH IV, 306].

\(^{250}\) WA 39/II, 340, 6-7 (Hegemon, thesis 14).

\(^{251}\) In his commentary on Ps. 51, Luther speaks of grace as a relation, rather than as a quality. "Gratia significat favorem... Pertinet autem ad praedicamentum relationis, quod dixerunt Dialectici minimeae entitatis et maximae virtutis esse, Ne putetis esse qualitatem, sicut Sophistae somniarunt." WA 40/II, 421, 21. 22-24 (Enarratio Psalmi LI, 1532/1538, to v. 12).


\(^{253}\) Ockham writes, "... because the authorities of the Saints seem explicitly to posit rel-
ations in the Godhead—not merely that some relative concepts are truly predicated about
the divine persons the way we say that Socrates is similar or that Socrates is father or son,
but that there is there genuine real paternity and filiation, and that they are two simple
things, one of which is not the other—therefore I hold with them that the divine persons
are constituted and distinguished by relations of origin." Ord. I, d. 26, q. 1 [OTH IV, 156-
57]; quoted in McCord Adams, \textit{Ockham}, vol. 2, 1066. The trinitarian relations, of which
there are four (paternity, filiation, active and passive spiration), show the relations be-
tween the three persons to be identical with the personal properties. The relations are dif-
f erent from the five notions that are five ways in which we know the trinitarian persons
to be distinguished from one another: the insascibility of the Father, the active generation
of the Father and passive generation of the Son, the active spiration of both Father and
Son and the passive spiration of the Spirit. From the four relations, one arrives at three
persons when active and passive spiration are conflated in the one person of the Spirit.
Werbick, 504-505.
ham, although he uses the term, „essential distinction,“ to indicate three absolute res. When defining the res as a relation, Luther, like Ockham, admits that, „in divine matters,“ the relation is the res, that is, the „hypostasis et subsistentia.“

Once Luther defines the inner-trinitarian distinct res as a relation, he can then turn to the metaphysical implications of his claim. Using a language Ailly or Ockham would never have considered, Luther responds in the Hegemon disputation that the person is constituted by two res. The relation is one res, the essence of the Father is another res. The person is constituted by the two res: the one distinct res as the relation, and the one indistinct res as the divine essence. Luther recognizes that he is speaking „improperly.“ His position, however, does not shy away from making a metaphysical claim. The language of two res that constitute the distinct person implies that each person is metaphysically constituted by the one distinct res as its distinguishing characteristic, the relation, and the one indistinct res as the essence. The quasi-compositional language of Scotus' own formal distinction appears again when Luther appeals to the terminology of Fourth Lateran. The use of the term, „res,“ forces Luther to make a claim concerning the person's metaphysical constituents. This claim will figure significantly in Luther's determination of the referents of trinitarian terms.

In this section, I have discussed the metaphysical claim Luther makes concerning a subject matter that he considers to be incomprehensible: the way in which person and essence are distinguished. In order to understand how the three distinct res or persons are distinguished from the one indistinct res or essence, Luther engages Scotus through the lens of Ockham's rejection of the formal and real distinctions in the metaphysical region. Luther parts ways with Ockham with respect to the term, „formal

\[254\] „... sed si qua est essentialis distinctio, sunt tres personae,...“ WA 39/II, C364, 27 (Hegemon).

\[255\] „In divinis relatio est res, id est, hypostasis et subsistentia. nempe idem, quod ipsa divinitas; tres enim personae, tres hypostases et res subsistentes sunt.“ Ibid., 340, 3-5 (Hegemon, thesis 13). Luther's insistence on the distinct persons as relations cannot be interpreted as a tension between the person and the relation, as Peters suggests. See: Peters, „Die Trinitätslehre,“ 570.

\[256\] „Persona constituitur ex relatione et essentia Patris, sic oportet nos loqui, quamvis non proprie sic loqui possimus, tamen ad res explicandae ita dicendum est: Natura et relatio faciunt personam, relationi est res, essentia est res, et sunt duae res constituentes unam personam.“ WA 39/II, A384, 9-17 (Hegemon); similar to Ibid., B384, 9-22; „Persona constituitur ex relatione et ex essentia tamquam ex duabus rebus.“ Ibid., C384, 29-30. In contrast to Luther, Major uses the term, „formal distinction,“ to distinguish the person from the essence. Major avoids making Luther's metaphysical claim concerning the two res that constitute the person. „Hoc sic intellige: Essentia divina et persona sunt una res, una essentia divina.“ Ibid., 333, 15-16 (Major's preparatory notes).

\[257\] „Das ist impropriissime geredt, aber wie soll man im thun, natura humana non potest aliter, es heist crede.“ Ibid., A384, 17-20 (Hegemon).
2.4. The inner-Trinity

distinction, "that Ockham uses hesitantly in the theological region to articulate, rather than to explain, the way in which the person is distinguished from the essence. Located in Ockham's trajectory marked by an increased distancing of the metaphysical from the theological region, Luther resorts to a distinct terminology to articulate the inner-trinitarian proposition in various ways. Using a combination of Scripture, Greek, Latin and Scholastic terms, Luther's terminology reflects a theological privileging that points to the three distinct res as persons. Luther follows the authority of the Saints, as Ockham does, by defining the persons as relations. Luther then moves beyond Ockham, although he veers remarkably close to Scotus, when he makes a claim in the theological region concerning the metaphysical constituents of the term, "distinct res." The person, or distinct res, is understood to be metaphysically constituted by two res: the distinct res, that is, the person as relation, plus the indistinct res, or the divine essence. Behind Luther's metaphysical claim, however, lurks the danger of positing a quaternity in the inner-Trinity. His claim could be interpreted as positing four res: three relatives and the essence. The next section explains how Luther possibly detects the quaternity in his own position, and resolves it by attributing this problem to the Master himself, Peter Lombard.

2.4.3. The semantics of the inner-trinitarian proposition

Consistent with a late medieval debate, Luther is concerned with determining the particular referent of the essential term, "essence," in propositions of the type, "essence generates essence," and "essence is generated by essence." The aim of this section is to clarify the meaning of the relevant trinitarian propositions by explaining what entities the terms stand or supposit for in specific propositional contexts. This discussion is motivated by a lengthy debate, recorded in the Major disputatio, between Luther and a decision made at the Fourth Lateran Council. In this debate, Luther detects a contradiction in Lombard's position and takes issue against the Council's decision that upheld Lombard and anathematized Fiore. The reasons for Luther's attack play a role in showing how Luther understands the essential term, "essentia," to supposit relatively, rather than absolutely, for the trinitarian persons.

The subject matter for dispute is presented when Luther considers propositions articulating the inner-trinitarian generation of the Son. An entry into the debate is found in a proposition advanced by the Master of the Sentences, Peter Lombard, and articulated as a thesis in the Major disputatio. "Quin M. Sententiarum, non satis recte docuit, Essentiam
divinam nec generare nec generari." Luther notes the contradiction when he considers the problem of what "essentia" stands for in propositions such as, "Essentia generat essentiam," or "Essentia generatur ab essentia." The equivocal terminology of essence terms, such as "essentia," "Deum," or "lumen," as Luther states during the course of the Major disputation, requires an explanation at the semantic level in order to demonstrate the distinctions of referents in propositions that, at the terminological level, reveal no difference. When the property of generation from an origin used to distinguish between the three persons is eliminated, as in Lombard's proposition, then no distinctions between the persons can be claimed. Luther begins to address this difficulty by turning to a debate between Lombard and Fiore held a few centuries earlier.

Luther is most likely acquainted with the controversy between Lombard and Fiore through Ailly's discussion of the debate in the latter's Sententiae Commentary. In a series of Major theses, Luther traces the controversy back to Ailly's disagreement with Lombard. Ailly, who formulates his defense of Fiore in the pluperfect subjunctive tense, is lauded by Luther as the "Cardinali Cameracensi, doctissimo inter Scholasticos." Lombard, who "ista abominatio in loco sancto stans determinavit [Dan. 7]," is castigated. Luther is familiar with Fiore's criticism of

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261 Ailly, known for his sympathies with the conciliar movement, formulates his defense of Fiore in the more careful pluperfect subjunctive. "Sic igitur... potuisse respondere Magistro, ante determinationem." Ailly, Sent. I, q. 5, E. On Ailly's choice of verb tense, see: White, 216.


263 Ibid., 288, 9-10 (Major, thesis 20).
Lombard and the former's anathematization. Lombard and the former's anathematization.\textsuperscript{264} Fiore's book, \textit{De unitate trinitate}, lost to theological posterity, accuses Lombard of positing a quaternity in the inner-Trinity. Fourth Lateran cites Lombard in support of the Council's condemnation of Fiore's position.\textsuperscript{265} The theme of the quaternity is what motivates Luther to seize the opportunity to debate on the referents of essence terms. Luther, like Ailly, begins the debate by agreeing with Fiore.

There are two possible explanations for Luther's agreement of Fiore's criticism of Lombard. In a Major thesis, Luther applauds Fiore's charge that Lombard posits a quaternity in the inner-Trinity.\textsuperscript{266} From the evidence in the Major disputation, it is possible to reconstruct how Luther arrives at the four terms he accuses Lombard of positing. In the fourteenth century, the difficulty of four terms is related to the expository and communal syllogisms in which four terms are used. Luther explicitly mentions both syllogisms in the disputation on John 1:14.

18. Iste syllogismus communis: Omnis essentia divina est pater. Filius est essentia divina. Ergo filius est pater, est bonus.\textsuperscript{267}

In these syllogisms, four terms are used whose referents must be correctly determined in order for the logic of the syllogism to hold. The difficulty rests on the referent of the term, "essentia." If "essentia" is taken to supposit for both the person and the essence, four terms are posited: the Father, the Son, the Spirit and the divine essence. The issue of the quaternity turns on the referent of the term, "essentia." In an exchange in the Major disputation, Cruciger plays the role of the opponens, and argues with the following syllogism to conclude with Lombard's position. "The essence of the Son is not really distinct from the essence of the Father, but what generates is distinct from what is generated. Therefore the essence does not generate."\textsuperscript{268} If the essence is defined as that what neither generates nor is generated, it appears that the essence is distinguished from the persons, who are defined by their relations of origin. When the essence term, "essentia," is taken to refer to either the divine essence or to the three persons in propositions of the type, "Essentia [divina] generat essentiam [divinam]," a quaternity of terms is posited. The subject,
"essentia," stands for the *una res*, and the direct object stands for the person. For Luther, the quaternity is avoided when the term, "essentia," in both the subject and predicate position, is taken to refer to a distinct *res*.

A more likely problem that Luther detects in Lombard's proposition is the difficulty of positing, not a quaternity of terms, but at least a binity of divine substances. This problem seems to arise when an inference from what applies to creatures in a given sense is applied to theology in another sense. If "generat" in "Essentia [divina] generat essentiam [divinam]" means the same thing in the theological region as it does in biology, the subject, "essentia," would have to stand for one divine essence, and the direct object, "essentiam," would have to stand for another divine essence. By taking both the subject and the object to each stand for one divine substance, the theological absurdity of two divine essences would result. Two essences are posited when both subject and object stand for the *una res* in the proposition, "Essentia [divina] generat essentiam [divinam]." In the Major *disputatio*, Major responds that this absurdity arises by transferring the argument from biology to theology. "Respondeo ad maiorem, quae tantum de creaturis loquitur, ubi omne, quod generatur, ab alio generatur." Major's response could be what Luther has in mind when the latter accuses Lombard of positing at least a binity of divine substances. In two Major theses, this accusation is summarized.

21. Metuit (ut videtur) Magister, ne duae vel tres essentiae dicerentur, si una de alia nascetur.
22. At similiter illi metuendum fuit, ne duo vel tres dierent, si unus de alio generetur.

Luther agrees with Major that one must not simply transpose the term, "generare," from biology into theology.

The difficulty Luther addresses has to do with distinguishing, at the semantic level of the proposition, between the distinct *res* as the origin of generating, and the indistinct *res* as ungenerated and ungenerating. For Scotus, the formal distinction was supposed to help conceive the distinction between the two *res*. The danger of a quaternity does not figure into the positions of either Scotus or Ockham because the formal distinction serving to distinguish between person and essence is not a real distinction. Luther, who eliminates the terminology of the formal distinction, must find another way to articulate the distinction.

He turns to supposition theory in order to explain the referents of essence terms, such as "essentia." For Luther, the term, "essentia," in pro-

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269 Ibid., A302, 8-9. The *opponens* concludes his syllogism with Lombard's proposition, "Ergo non generat substantia divina." Ibid., A302, 6-7. Major points out why the *opponens* syllogism is invalid. "Non igitur valet ad argumentatio a creaturis ad creatorem." Ibid., A302, 10-11.

270 Ibid., 288, 11-14 (Major, theses 21 and 22).
positions of the type, „Essentia [divina] generat essentiam [divinam],“ must supposit for the distinct res as begetting, begotten or spirated.\(^{271}\) Luther supports his view of the semantics of such propositions by appealing to Augustine, Hilary and the Creed: „Cum igitur Magister [Lombard] ex Hilario et Augustino lumen de lumine sumeret relative, non erat causa, quare non et vocabulum essentiae ita intelligeret, praecipue cum omnia alia vocabula relative acciperet, ut vocabulum Deus, natura etc...“\(^{272}\) Luther views the referents of essence terms in propositions of the type, „Essentia [divina] generat essentiam [divinam],“ to be governed by the model, „Deum de Deo“ or „lumen de lumine.“ In the Creed, the rule is stipulated as a semantics signaled by the grammatical distinction between the accusative and the ablative case: „Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine.\(^{273}\) The grammar is established by the Creed. It can neither be explained by reason,\(^{274}\) nor does it follow the rules of predication established in the region of logic.\(^{275}\) As the *regula fidei*, the Creed dictates the semantics of propositions to show the persons as the referents of the essence term, „essentia.“ Luther concludes by pointing out a blind spot in Lombard’s position. Lombard, Luther sympathetically remarks, does refer to the Creed.\(^{276}\) Therefore, the Master should have known better.

Luther makes use of a semantics to distinguish between „essentia,“ taken to stand for the divine essence, and „essentia,“ taken to stand for the divine person. The distinction is made between the absolute and the relative supposition of the term, „essentia.“ Luther summarizes the rule of supposition as follows: „Esse Deum absolutum est, sed generare est

\(^{271}\) Ockham distinguishes between three kinds of supposition: personal, simple and material. Boehner, *Collected Articles on Ockham*, 237-41. Boehner defines the three kinds of supposition as follows. „Personal supposition is had when the subject or predicate of a proposition supposit for its significate and has a significative function.“ Ibid., 237. „Simple supposition is had when a term supposit or stands for an intention of the mind, that is, for a concept or mental term when it has no significative function.“ Ibid., 238. Boehner uses as an example for simple supposition, „Homo est species.“ „Material supposition is had when a term does not supposit in its significative function, but supposit either for a spoken or written sign only.“ Ibid., 239. Boehner’s example for material supposition is, „Homo est nomen.“

\(^{272}\) WA 39/II, A-B295, 16-20 (Major). For other propositions rehearsing this point, see: Ibid., 288, 5-6 (Major, thesis 18); A291, 19-23; A292, 1-2; A294, 21. 295, 1-5; A-B295, 13-21; A313, 26-314, 8; A316, 16-25; A317, 6-15; C370, 21-27 (Hegemon).

\(^{273}\) Luther cites this portion of the Creed in Ibid., A317, 13 (Major). This is similar to: „Filiius est lumen de lumine, deradiatio et character substantiae.“ Ibid., A-B296, 14-15.

\(^{274}\) „... non potest rationem dicere, quare non et vocabulum essentiae relative acceperit.“ Ibid., A-B295, 20-21.

\(^{275}\) „In praedicamento substantiae non docetur, radios claritatis esse de substantia solis, et tamen Spiritus sanctus ita loquitur.“ Ibid., A-B296, 15-16. The rule of predication is stated by Major during his doctoral disputation. „Quare tenenda est haec regula: Subiecta debere intelligi, ut concedunt praedicata proprie sumpta.“ Ibid., A316, 11-12.

\(^{276}\) „Inde recte dicitur, Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine.“ Ibid., A317, 13.
relativum." For Lombard could reject the proposition, "essentia generat essentiam," by taking the "essence" to have absolute supposition for the *una res*, that is, the "essentia." For Luther, on the other hand, the verb, "generat," in the same proposition makes the subject and the direct object to have relative supposition for the persons. "Hoc est, essentiam non absolute generare certum est, sed relative sumpta certa generat. Cum dicitur: Pater generat, do muß ich sagen cogente articulo nostrae fidei,..." The term, "essentia," in the proposition under consideration must be taken to supposit for the two persons in order to show that one person, the Father, generates another person, the Son. In view of the relative supposition of the term, "essentia," Luther can oppose the decision of Fourth Lateran favoring Lombard, and can even accuse Lombard of proposing a new opinion. The terminology of the distinction Luther makes is flexible. Sometimes he distinguishes between absolute and relative supposition. Other times, he distinguishes between substantial or essential supposition and personal supposition. The variable terminology underlines the one point that "generare" dictates relative supposition.

By using a semantics, Luther is able to distinguish between the three persons in specific propositions. The only way in which the distinctions between persons can be articulated is by taking essence terms, such as "essentia" and "Deus," to have relative supposition in the context of verbs, such as "generat" and "spirat," "generare" and "spirare." The

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277 Ibid., A316, 24-25.
278 "Hic quierit an Pater genuit divinam essentiam vel ipsa Filium, an essentia genuit essentiam vel ipsa nec genuit nec genita est." Lombard, Sent. I, d. 5, c. 1 (15) [80].
279 WA 39/II, A316, 21-22 (Major).
280 "Magister ita arguit hoc, quod essentia non generet essentiam, quia vult essentiam retinere absolute, contendit, non sumi relative,... Iam contra Magistrum et papam dicens,..." Ibid., A-B295, 13-14. 15-16. Lombard cites both Augustine and Hilary to hold the contrary opinion in this debate. Sent. I, d. 5, c. 1 (15) [83]. The reference to Augustine is taken from: De Trin., 7, 1 (2) [PL 42, 936]; Ibid., 15, 20 (38) [PL 42, 1087]. The reference to Hilary is taken from: De Trin., 5, num. 37 [PL 10, 155 A].
281 "Una quaeque persona est natura divina et essentia, darumb solt er nicht haben no-vam opinionem dran gehencxt." WA 39/II, A314, 6-8 (Major).
282 Ibid., A291, 22; A-B295, 14. 16-17. 19-21; A313, 29; A314, 2-3; A316, 16. 20. 25; A317, 12-14.
283 Ibid., A316, 23; A369, 1-3 (Hegemon); A370, 10. 13-14; B370, 10. 15. 17-19; C370, 21-23. 27. Luther’s distinctions can function in the same way as Ailly’s distinction between mediate and immediate supposition. Ailly, Sent I, q. 5. Immediate supposition determines the referent of the term, "essence," to stand for the divine essence. Mediate supposition determines the referent of "essentia" to stand for the person that is constituted by the divine essence. Ibid., M. In Ibid., N, Ailly formulates the rule for mediate and immediate supposition. Luther rejects Ailly’s terminology in the 1517 "Disputatio contra scholasticam theologian." [WA 1, 226, 19-20 (thesis 46)], and again in the disputation on John 1:14 [WA 39/II, 4, 15-16 (thesis 12)]. A further issue to be explored regards whether Luther rejects Ailly’s terminology and replaces what it stands for with the terms, "absolute" versus "relative," or whether Luther entirely rejects Ailly’s understanding of "immediate" and "mediate" supposition.
source for this semantics is the Creed. For Luther, the proposition, "essentia generat essentiam," follows the model dictated by the creedal confession, "Deum de Deo," and "lumen de lumine." The essence term cannot be taken to stand for the divine essence, but must stand for a person according to its relation of origin. Another issue at stake is related to propositions such as the one articulated by Lombard and cited at the Fourth Lateran Council. In this proposition, the verb, "esse," might be understood to refer the essence term to the divine essence. This use might be what Lombard has in mind when he writes that the divine essence, as the "three persons in common," neither generates nor is generated. Luther, however, is not prepared to concede to Lombard an absolute supposition for "essentia" in the context of discussing "generare." The claim of absolute supposition for essence terms does not play into Luther's determination of the inner-Trinity. There is another way in which Luther treats essence terms in propositions. In order to predicate attributes, such as infinity, of the divine essence constituting each person, Luther appeals to a type of medieval logic. The logic of the *totus* and *solus* is the final theme to which we will now turn.

2.4.4. The logic of the *totus* and *solus*

The final determination of the inner-Trinity reflects Luther's concern with predicating essential attributes, such as "infinity," of the three persons. If infinity can be predicated of the divine essence, the difficulty then arises as to how the same attribute is predicated of the three persons that are distinguished from each other by relations of origin. The theme of predicating essential attributes of each person differs from the above discussion on essence terms that supposit relatively for distinct persons. In this section, I intend to show how Luther determines the distinction between the essence and the person by using two terms commonly identified with the medieval study of logic, *totus* and *solus*. By making use of this logic, Luther can predicate attributes of each person while avoiding the case in which the attribute is predicated of one person to the exclusion of the others.

The question of trinitarian predication is initially posed by the young Luther. While reading Book Seven of Augustine's *De Trinitate*, Luther expresses concern over the particular problem of predicating attributes of the three persons, attributes that Augustine predicates substantially of the

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284 "Hic autem nomine 'essentiae' intelligimus divinam naturam, quae communis est tribus personis et tota in singulis." *Sent. I, d. 5, c. 1 (15)* [81].
essence. A question scrawled on the margins is later thematized at length in the trinitarian disputations. In the Hegemon disputation, Luther mentions the divine attribute he will predicate of the three trinitarian persons. By definition, "proprium Dei est a se ipso existere." For Luther, the divine attribute must be predicated of the essence in such a way as to account for its predication of each trinitarian person. He turns to the tool of logic in order to accomplish this task.

Luther's reflection on the totus and solus in inner-trinitarian propositions takes up an issue that fascinated late medieval logicians. Syn-categorematic terms, for example, conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions, were the primary objects in the medieval consideration of logic. Differing from categorematic terms, syne-categorematic terms do not themselves signify or supposit completely as subject or predicate, yet their addition to propositions determines how the categorematic term supposits or stands for things in the proposition, and so affects the truth conditions of the proposition. "Supposition theory" analyzes how syne-categorematics affect the distribution of the subject or predicate term with which they are connected. Particularly the logica moderna found supposition theory useful in fallacy detection. Words of conjunction, conditionals, disjunctions and inclusions, such as "omnis," and excep-tives, "praeter," even verbs technically known as exponibles, and the term, "infinite," would be strategically placed in a proposition, thereby altering the ability of the categorematic term to pick out a referent. Some terms, such as "infinite," "totus," and "solus," were taken to function categorematically sometimes, and syne-categorematically other times, depending on their location in the proposition. For example, Ockham considers the terms, "solus" and "totus," to be taken either categorematica-

285 WA 9, 20, 22-28 to Augustine, De Trin., 7, 1 (1) [PL 42, 931-33]. White discusses in detail Luther's marginal notes to Augustine's De Trinitate on the theme of predicating attributes of the essence. White, 196-200.

286 Deus Pater existit a se ipso ab aeterno, Filius existit a se ipso ab aeterno, Spiritus sanctus existit a se ipso ab aeterno," WA 39/II, A398, 9-12 (Hegemon); similar to: Ibid., B398, 9-12. The variant in Ibid., C398, 26-27, predicates "existit a se ipso" of each person while omitting the "ab aeterno." With these propositions, Luther concludes the Hegemon disputation that are his last recorded statements spoken in the disputational genre.

287 Ibid., A-B397, 17-18; C397, 31.

288 Categorematic terms are either subject or predicate terms, and coincide with groupings defined by medieval grammarians: names (both substantival and adjectival), personal and demonstrative pronouns, and verbs (excluding auxiliary verbs). The verb, "esse," is an exception and can be considered as both a categorematic and a syne-categorematic term. Norman Kretzmann, "Syn-categoremata, exponibilis, sophisma," in CHLMP, 211-12.

289 For example: "differt," "vult," "incipit," "desinit," "esse." The verb, "esse," is a special case. It can be used categorematically or existentially, as in the proposition, "Socrates est," or syne-categorematically or copulatively, as in the proposition, "Socrates est homo." Ibid., 214. 211, n. 5 and n. 7.

290 See footnote 145.
cally or syncategorematically. The question soon arose as to how the exonsibles could be used to determine propositions found in the theological region.

In his early days as a student, Luther pays attention to the logic of syncategorematic terms with respect to inner-trinitarian propositions. White discusses Luther’s 1509 marginal notes to Lombard’s Sentences, in which Luther carefully considers the placement of the term, “solus,” in the proposition, “Deus est pater/creator.” Luther’s concern reflects a common medieval topic of discussion. Also found in Ockham’s work, the inner-trinitarian proposition, “Solus Pater est Deus,” is discussed as to how the term, “solus,” can be taken, either categorematically or syncategorematically and if taken either way, why the proposition is true or false. The early Luther picks up Ockham’s discussion of the semantic alterations taking place when solus determines the subject and the predicate term.

Luther’s interest surfaces again in the Alberus and the Major theses. In the Alberus theses, the distinction between the feminine noun, “persona,” and the masculine noun, “deus,” makes it grammatically more obvious how the solus and totus are distributed. Sola is distributed to persona, and totus is distributed to deus. Grammatically less perspicuous are the Major theses in which Luther uses two feminine nouns, “persona” and “divinitas,” to which the solus and totus are distributed.

2. Harum personarum quaelibet totus est Deus, extra quam nullus est alius Deus.
3. Nec tamen dici potest, quaelibet personam solam esse Deum.
4. Hoc enim idem est dicere, Deum nullum esse, cum quaelibet persona exclusa totus Deus esset exclusus, et quaelibet persona esset exclusa.
5. Aliud est dicere: [a] Una persona est totus deus, [b] et una persona sola est unus Deus.
6. Imo periculosum et cavendum est ibi, ullam esse putari distinctionem, cum sit quaelibet persona ipsissimus et totus Deus.

292 White, 206-210. White discusses Luther’s marginal notes [WA 9, 46, 23-29; 47, 1-2] to Lombard’s Sent. I, d. 21, c. 2 (88) [175-76]. Lombard’s quaestio is posed in the following manner: “Utrum possit dici: solus Pater est Deus, solus Filius est Deus, solus Spiritus Sanctus est Deus, vel Pater est solus Deus, Filius est solus Deus, Spiritus Sanctus est solus Deus.” Ibid. [175].
293 Ockham discusses the question in Ord. I, d. 21, q. u. “Utrum haec sit concedenda de virtute sermonis ‘Solus Pater est Deus’?” [OTh IV, 40-44].
294 9. Ut quaelibet persona sit ipsa tota divinitas, ac si nulla esset alia. 10. Et tamen verum est, Nullam personam esse solam, quasi alia non sit, divinitatem.” WA 39/II, 287, 21-23 (Major, theses 9 and 10).
295 Ibid., 253, 4-8. 11-12. 15-16 (Alberus, theses 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8).
Considering thesis 2, the term *totus* distributes „Deus“ in the proposition, „totus est Deus.“ When *totus* is associated with *Deus* in the predicate position, the true proposition [theses 2 and 6a] is articulated: „una persona est totus deus.“ In this true proposition, *totus* is taken syncategorematically. In the proposition, „totus est Deus,“ „totus“ is taken syncategorematically because it distributes for each person that is constituted by the essence. "296 It „does not distribute the term outside itself to which it is added."297 If it were taken categorically, *totus* would distribute the „Deus“ to the „Deus“ made up of its parts; *totus* would distribute the „Deus“ to the „Deus“ as „person plus person plus person."

In the inner-Trinity, however, three persons are one and the same as the essence. Thus, *totus* cannot be distributed categorically in the proposition, „totus Deus est una persona.‖ *Totus* must be taken syncategorematically, that is, it distributes the „Deus“ to each person. In view of the metaphysical claim that „person‖ is constituted by the indistinct *res* plus the relation, the logic of the *totus*, taken syncategorematically, provides the rule for showing that the entire divinity is distributed to each person.

The exponible, „solus,“ is also used in order to make true propositions about the divine persons. The issue is whether or not „solus“ is used as an excluding term in propositions such as, „Solus Pater est Deus,“ and „sola persona est deus.“ Luther considers theses 3, 4 and 6 to be false because „solus“ is used in these propositions as an exclusive term. In thesis 3, *sola* added to *persona* makes it stand for the included person. Luther considers thesis 3 to be false and gives his reason in thesis 4. *Solus* is an exclusive term because it makes the proposition say, „this person and no other person is God“ (thesis 4). Luther says if any person is excluded, the whole God is excluded, which is absurd. In thesis 6, *sola* is distributed to *persona*, which is false. Thus, in thesis 6, the proposition, „una persona sola est Deus“ is false.

Luther might have appropriated Ockham's extended discussion of *solus* in order to make his claims. Ockham states that the theologians usually understand the *solus* in the proposition, „Solus Pater est Deus,“299 to be taken in the exclusive sense and therefore, syncategorematically.300 Taken in this way, *sola* distributes *persona* in the exclusive sense. The proposition, „Solus Pater est Deus,“ signifies that only the Father, to the exclu-

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296 If „totus“ is taken syncategorematically, it distributes for all its integral parts. For example, „Totus A est B“ is equivalent to „quaelibet pars A est B.“ See: Ockham, SL II, c. 6 [OPh I, 268]. I would like to thank Marilyn McCord Adams for these references to Ockham, and their explanations in her unpublished notes to this theme.

297 Kretzmann, 233.

298 Taken categorically, „totus“ means the same thing as „perfect“ or „composed of all its parts.“ For example, „Totus A est B“ signifies the same as „A est B."

299 Ord. I, d. 21, q. u. [OTh IV, 40-44]. Lombard discusses the *quaestio*, „Utrum posit dici: solus Pater est Deus,...“ in Sent. I, d. 21, c. 2 (88) [175].

300 Ord. I, d. 21, q. u. [OTh IV, 42]; SL II, c. 17 [OPh I, 296].
sion of the other two persons, is God. This proposition is absolutely false. Luther's three theses distribute solus to persona in the exclusive sense and therefore, syncategorematically. Ockham explains why these propositions are false.\(^{301}\) The proposition, "Solus Pater est Deus," signifies that "Deus" is true of "Pater," and "Deus" is truly denied of whatever "Pater" is truly denied. In the inner-Trinity, the Son is also "Deus," but not "Pater." "Solus Pater est Deus" is false when taken exclusively because, "Filius non est Pater et Filius est Deus." If, on the other hand, solus were taken categorically, it would not be an exclusive expression. The term, "solus," implies that the term to which it is added, is solitary.\(^{302}\) "Solus Pater est Deus" would imply that the Father, who is solitary, is God. This proposition is false. Taken either syncategorematically or categorically, sola, distributed to persona in propositions of the type, "una persona sola est Deus," makes the propositions false.

The use of the two exponibles, solus and totus, forms the way in which Luther understands how attributes are predicated of each trinitarian person. Luther's inner-trinitarian logic clarifies his underlying metaphysical claim that each trinitarian person is constituted by the indistinct res and the distinct res, or the relation of origin. The logic of totus shows that the indistinct res is distributed to each person; the logic of solus shows that each person, but not to the exclusion of the other persons, is the divine essence. How essential attributes can be predicated of each person, but not of each person alone, is achieved through the syncategorematic function of the term totus in a proposition. The distribution of the sola to persona shows that essential attributes cannot be predicated of one person to the exclusion of their predication of another person. For Luther, each divine attribute can be said to be predicated of the divine essence that is distributed to each person, although not to each person exclusively.\(^{303}\) Luther concludes the Hegemon disputation by predicating the attribute, "a se ipso ab aeterno," of each person. "Deus Pater existit a se ipso ab aeterno, Filius existit a se ipso ab aeterno, Spiritus sanctus existit a se ipso

\(^{301}\) The summary of Ockham's argument is taken from Marilyn McCord Adams' unpublished class notes to Ockham, Ord. I, d. 21, q. u.

\(^{302}\) Ockham, SL II, c. 17 [OPh I, 296].

\(^{303}\) Luther's view can be critically compared to Pannenberg's approach who, in receiving Cremer's nineteenth-century text, *Die christliche Lehre von den Eigenschaften Gottes* (1897), distinguishes between the negative attributes of the essence, such as infinity, that serve as preliminary and abstract metaphysical determinations of the concept of God, and the concrete attributes derived from Scripture, such as love and mercy. For Pannenberg, the abstract attribute of infinity is determined by a preliminary, or metaphysical knowledge of the divine essence. This attribute is predicated of the unity of the essence. Concrete attributes are not appropriations, but are the one work of God in creation accomplished by the three persons. Pannenberg predicates these concrete attributes of the three persons acting in the essential unity of an economic dispensation. Pannenberg, 416-29.
ab aeterno, ... Each term supposits personally for Father, Son and Spirit, and the essential attribute of "a se ipso ab aeterno" picks out its referent through the indistinct res constituting each person.

2.4.5. The inner-trinitarian proposition: conclusion

In the theological region, Luther sets up an intra-mural theological discussion in order to determine his understanding of the inner-Trinity. The subject matter, articulated in the propositional language shaped by the genre of the disputatio, is given an initial contour in a debate situated between Scotus and Ockham. Refusing to use the terminology of the real and formal distinctions to articulate his inner-trinitarian understanding, Luther draws on other ways to define how the persons are distinguished from the essence, and how the persons are distinguished from each other. Luther discusses the metaphysical implications of the terminology of res that he receives from Fourth Lateran. Luther claims that the three distinct res, one and the same as the one indistinct res, are each constituted by the distinct res as a relation, and the indistinct res as the divine essence. The distinct res as persons are defined by their relations of origin. Luther turns to the semantics of the inner-trinitarian proposition in order to show how essence terms can be used to distinguish between the relations of origin in propositions of the type, "Deum de Deo." The discussion of the referents of essence terms is staged as a feisty debate, with Luther, Ailly, Fiore, Augustine and Hilary on one side, Lombard and Fourth Lateran on the other. The outcome, supported by Augustine and Hilary, is the model established by the Creed; essence terms used in propositions distinguish between the persons and are taken relatively, rather than absolutely. Based on the metaphysical claim of the two res constituting the person and connected to the semantics of essence terms suppositing for distinct persons, the logic of inner-trinitarian propositions explains why each person is constituted by the relation plus the whole essence. The exponible, "totus," taken syncategorematically, is used in propositions to govern the predication of essential attributes to each trinitarian person; the exponible, "solus," also taken syncategorematically, hinders this predication to the exclusion of the others. By using the logic of solus and totus in his determination of the inner-trinitarian propositions, Luther shows an unhindered transfer of medieval logic into the theological region.

394 W.A 39/II, A398, 9-12 (Hegemon); similar to: Ibid., B398, 9-12. Omitting the "ab aeterno," the C version predicates "exsistit a se ipso" of each person. Ibid., C398, 26-27.
2.5. CONCLUSION

In the last years of his life, Luther thematizes his understanding of the Trinity in four doctoral disputations. Motivated by his concern to comfort consciences terrified by demonic attacks, and to train theologians to articulate the truth of the inner-Trinity against the heretics, Luther makes use of the medieval academic genre of the disputatio. Below the surface veneer of Luther's theological exclusivity is a sophisticated use of reason that cannot be easily dismissed by pitting philosophy against theology or reason against faith. The study of Luther's trinitarian disputations has shown how necessary it is to closely view aspects of his trinitarian understanding in order to gain a balanced and rich picture of his use of reason in the theological region.

Luther's discriminating use of reason has been introduced by the regional way in which Luther regards the various academic regions in the medieval university. From this regional perspective, it has been shown how Luther conceives the attacks from the boundary of the theological region to motivate a defense at the center. At the boundary, heretical attacks threaten to separate the Father from his word, and reason, reduced to the spatio-temporal level, threatens the theological determination of the infinity associated with the eternal generation of the Son. For Luther, the practice of the disputatio aims to demarcate the boundaries from which the attacks are launched, and to articulate a right understanding of the center. The dual rational discourse of the heretics and the philosophers prompts Luther to insist on the Spirit's speech as the source of any knowledge of the inner-Trinity. Luther attributes all „improper“ language of the inner-Trinity, whether in Scripture or in the church councils, to the Spirit, who alone, in his outer-trinitarian location, speaks of the inner-trinitarian relations. Once the center has been established, Luther proceeds to hinder a determination of terms, such as „infinity“ and „generation,“ that are used in the regions of metaphysics, natural philosophy and biology.

In order to understand a subject matter dependent on the divine speech for its articulation, Luther resorts to using both biblical and dogmatic language. Luther's terminological repertoire emphasizes the three res as distinct persons. On the basis of this distinctive language, Luther makes use of some tools of reason in order to articulate how the three res as persons are one and the same as the indistinct res as the divine essence. By rejecting the formal and real distinctions, Luther uses metaphysics to show how the three persons are each constituted by the relation and the divine essence. A semantics is required to show how essence terms in inner-trinitarian propositions supposit for the persons who are distinct from each other by virtue of their relations of origin. The logic of the totus and solus is used to explain why essential attributes can be predicated
of the divine essence, as well as of each person, although not to the exclusion of the other persons.

Through the process of the *disputatio*, Luther succeeds in excluding a determination of the term, „infinity,“ used in the metaphysical region, while making a claim in the theological region regarding the metaphysical constituents of the trinitarian person. Luther excludes a natural philosophical determination of the term, „infinity,“ and discusses the term as a divine attribute that is predicated of each person. A biological determination of „generatio“ is excluded, while a semantics is used to determine the referents of essence terms. Luther's theological exclusivity reflects his conviction that the inner-Trinity is a subject matter revealed only in the theological region. Nevertheless, the contours of his trinitarian understanding are formed by claims of metaphysics, semantics and logic.

In this chapter, I have shown how the propositional discourse of the *disputatio* and the subject matter of the inner-Trinity are closely intertwined. When the form of the proposition is privileged to articulate the eternal relations of the inner-Trinity, the category of narrative is excluded from the discussion. The exclusion of narrative is related to the form in which the subject matter is articulated. In the genres of the hymn and the sermon, the inner-Trinity is viewed as the origin of the narratives of outer-trinitarian advent and revelation. In the *disputatio*, the inner-trinitarian proposition is understood to refer to an eternal *res* that is outside the creature; even though the verbs are tensed, no narrative movement can be applied to the subject matter. The trace of the *promissio* has been detected in this chapter’s discussion of the attacks against „weak“ Christians. When certainty in the eternal benefits of Christ is eroded, the Christian's faith is shattered. One aspect of locating the *promissio* in propositional discourse has to do with the necessary truth claim of the inner-trinitarian generation of the Son. Bound together with the Son’s generation from the Father is the *promissio* that the benefits of Christ are true for eternity. It is, however, only when the outer-Trinity is fully explicated as a narrative in the genres of the hymn and the sermon, that the inner-trinitarian location of the *promissio* comes to view.