

**FINO PhD Program in Philosophy**  
**History of Philosophy Curriculum**  
**A.Y. 2021-2022 / cycle 36**

*The course is open to all Curricula, all years of the FINO PhD program,  
but is mandatory for cycles 36 and 37*

**Title**

*Pure Being and Being as First Created Thing.  
Medieval Transformations of the Proclean Tradition*

**Course Description**

The fourth proposition of the *Liber de causis* (“Prima rerum creatarum est esse et non est ante ipsum creatum aliud”) is undoubtedly one of the most famous and frequently quoted passages of the work. Like many others, it results from an assemblage of various propositions of Proclus’ *Elementatio theologica*. Thomas Aquinas had, with his usual precision, identified two of them: prop. 138, which explicitly posits the primacy of Being in the order of realities that participate in the Divine and its superiority over Intellect and Life (a theme that is also found in propositions 39, 101 and 139), and prop. 89, according to which everything that is being in the true and proper sense derives from the Limit and the Infinite (which is also postulated in prop. 138). In spite of all these common elements, the fourth proposition of the *De causis* nevertheless reveals profound differences with respect to the Proclean system: in the latter, for example, there is obviously no mention of creation, nor is there any identification between the first principle and pure being. Moreover, if common to the *Elementatio* and the *Liber* is the theme of the diversification of the intellects or intelligences, it should be noted that in Proclus the diversity of the intelligible Forms is related (upwards, so to speak) to the distinctive character of the various henads, while in the *De causis* it is related (downwards) to the infinite multiplicity of individuals in the lower world. Above all, there is no trace in the *Liber* of the Proclean doctrine of the *ontōs on* or *prōtōs on*, i.e. of the primacy of being as an intelligible Form, superior to the intellect, which constitutes one of the salient features of the *Elementatio*. In his intention to emphasise the divine monocausality by eliminating the separate intelligible Forms, the Author of the *De causis* affirms instead that the (first created) being is intelligence, and depends directly on the First Cause (which is itself pure being). The term ‘being’ is thus used in the *De causis* to designate both the first cause and its first effect. The fourth proposition therefore represents a real ‘ontotheological’ (to borrow an abused Heideggerian expression) short-circuit, and indeed a reduplication of the ontotheological dilemma at the level of the supreme Being as created being, and not only of the supreme Being as First Cause: is the first created being a universal form (‘common’ being), or is it instead a ‘determinate’ supreme being, namely an intelligence (or the first intelligence)? The course will consider how this issue is dealt with by some major masters of the thirteenth century, in particular Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent and Giles of Rome.

**Course organization**

The seminar will consist of a series of six lectures (each of two hours, including discussion).

**Teacher(s):** Pasquale Porro (University of Turin), Maria Evelina Malgieri (University of Turin)

**Duration and Credits**

12 hours (6 Credits)

**Teaching period**

March 21-22-23; March 28-29-30  
14.00 – 16.00

**Requirements**

No requirement

**Details**

Details will be provided on the page of the History of Philosophy curriculum:

[https://www.finophd.eu/?page\\_id=2166](https://www.finophd.eu/?page_id=2166), and on the personal institutional page of Prof. Pasquale Porro ([https://www.studium.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Show?\\_id=pporro#submenu](https://www.studium.unito.it/do/docenti.pl/Show?_id=pporro#submenu))