

BEING OF ONE SUBSTANCE

John Heil • Washington University in St Louis • Monash University

We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almighty: but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.

And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.

[*Quicumque Vult*, the Creed of St Athanasius as it appears in the 1662 Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (Church of England) and in the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (of the United States).]

Article I. There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

[From the Articles of Religion in the 1662 Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (Church of England) and in the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* (of the United States).]

Suppose the soul of *Castor* separated during his sleep from his body, to think apart. Let us suppose, too, that it chooses for its scene of thinking the body of another man, e.g., *Pollux*, who is sleeping without a soul. For if *Castor*'s soul can think while *Castor* is asleep, what *Castor* is never conscious of, it is no matter what place it chooses to think in. We have here then the bodies of two men with only one soul between them, which we will suppose to sleep and wake by turns; and the soul still thinking in the waking man, of which the sleeping man is never conscious, never has the least perception. I ask then, whether *Castor* and *Pollux*, thus, with only one soul between them, which thinks and perceives in one what the other is never conscious of, nor is concerned for, are not two as distinct persons as *Castor* and *Hercules* or as *Socrates* and *Plato* were? (*Essay II*, i, 12)

Real distinction. *A* and *B* are really distinct just in case *A* and *B* are distinct substances.

Distinction of reasoning reason: *A* and *B* can each be conceived through itself, but *A* and *B* are not really distinct, and the distinction 'has no foundation in reality'.

Distinction of reasoned reason: *A* and *B* each can be conceived through itself, and, although *A* and *B* are not really distinct, the distinction has a foundation in reality.

The other kind of mental distinction arises from inadequate concepts of one and the same thing. Although the same object is apprehended in each concept, the whole reality contained in the object is not adequately represented, nor is its entire essence and objective notion exhausted by either of them. This occurs frequently when we conceive an object in terms of its bearing on different things. Hence such a distinction invariably has a foundation in fact, even though formally it will be said to spring from inadequate concepts of the same thing. Thus in God we distinguish His justice from His mercy, because we do not conceive the sublimely simple virtue of God as it is in itself and according to the full range of its energy. (Suárez 1597, 19)

Things said to be thus distinct are real entities, or rather a single real entity conceived according to various aspects. The same is evident from the fact that reason does not produce the entities it thus distinguishes, but merely conceives things [that] are not distinct as though they were distinct. Hence it is not the objects distinguished but only the distinction itself that results from the reasoning. (Suárez 1597, 19)

It is evident that although two attributes may be conceived to be really distinct (i.e., one may be conceived without the aid of the other), we still cannot infer from that that they constitute two beings, or two different substances. For it is of the nature of a substance that each of its attributes is conceived through itself, since all the attributes it has have always been in it together, and one could not be produced by another, but each expresses the reality or being of substance.

[Spinoza, *Ethics* I, 10, translated in Melamed forthcoming: 16. Spinoza's argument bears on Descartes argument for the real distinction between minds and bodies in *Meditation* VI.]

REFERENCES

- Locke, J. 1690/1978 *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. P. H. Niddich. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Melamed, Y. Y. forthcoming 'The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance, Attributes, and Modes'. In Della Rocca forthcoming.
- Suarez, F. (1597/1947) *Metaphysical Disputations* VII: *On the Various Kinds of Distinction*. Trans. C. Vollert. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.