

The Metaphysics of the Trinity: New Directions

14th – 16th March 2016
Corpus Christi College, Oxford

Provisional Schedule

Monday 14th March

14.00-15:00: Arrival and registration

15.00-16.30 **Brian Leftow** (Oxford): *The Trinity is Unconstitutional*

17.00-18.30 **John Heil** (Washington University, St Louis): *Being of One Substance*

18.45 onwards: Informal socialising and dinner (location tbc)

Tuesday 15th March

10.00-11.15 1st submitted paper

11.30-13:00 **Rob Koons** (U. Texas, Austin): *Divine Persons as Relational Qua-Objects*

13:00-15:00: Lunch at own arrangements

15:00-16.30 **Shieva Kleinschmidt** (USC): *Simple Trinitarianism*

16:45-18:00 2nd submitted paper

18.00 onwards: drinks and conference dinner

Wednesday 16th March

9.00-10.30 **Nikk Effingham** (Birmingham): *Proceeding and Filioque*

11.00-12.30 **Richard Swinburne** (Oxford): *Defending the Social Theory of the Trinity*

12.45: Conference closes

The conference is financially supported by *The Metaphysics of Entanglement* Project, [The Aristotelian Society](#), [The Analysis Trust](#), [The Mind Association](#), the New College Ludwig Humanities Fund and the [Templeton World Charity Foundation](#).

Abstracts

[Nikk Effingham](#): *Proceeding and Filioque*

It is standard to believe that one Divine Person proceeds from another e.g. that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. This paper discusses the metaphysics of proceeding, arguing that it is best thought of as a form of metaphysical dependence (rather than, e.g., a causal, temporal, or quasi-temporal procession). Theories whereby metaphysical dependence is symmetrical have been discussed in the recent literature on dependence. That said, I end the paper by discussing the extent to which holding that the Divine People proceed from one another makes for an irenic resolution of the long-standing debate concerning filioque.

[John Heil](#): *Being of One Substance*

After expressing doubts that a fully satisfactory metaphysical account of the trinity is possible, the paper takes up an ontological picture proposed by Descartes (against a late scholastic background) and developed by Spinoza. The picture includes, in addition to substances, attributes and modes. After a brief excursion into Locke's account of persons, an account of the Trinity in terms of a single substance triply attributed is sketched and defended against one line of objection.

[Shieva Kleinschmidt](#): *Simple Trinitarianism*

Some trinitarians, such as Thomas Aquinas, wish to claim that God is mereologically simple; that is, God has no parts distinct from Himself. In this paper, I present Simple Trinitarianism, a view that takes God to be simple and incorporates resources used in metaphysical debates about Ontology to produce Trinitarian-friendly results for claims about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Unlike with Aquinas' view, Simple Trinitarianism does not attempt to find a place for the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our ontology. Thus, Simple Trinitarians avoid multiplying gods, conflating Persons, and identifying the Persons with minor entities such as modes. The Simple Trinitarian then uses semantics to explain how our ordinary sentences about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are true.

[Rob Koons](#): *Divine Persons as Relational Qua-Objects*

Is the Christian doctrine of the Trinity consistent with a very strong version of the thesis of divine simplicity? Yes, so long as the simple divine nature is a relational nature, a nature that could be characterized in terms of such relations as loving, knowing, and executing. This divine nature functions simultaneously as agent, patient, and action: as lover and beloved, knower and known, effector and effected. We can then distinguish three really distinct aspects of the one simple reality: God-qua-lover-simpliciter, God-qua-beloved-simpliciter, and God-qua-lover-cum-beloved, which can be identified with Father, Spirit, and Son, respectively. However, it would be a mistake

to suppose that God-qua-lover loves but is not beloved, or that God-qua-beloved is loved but does not love, since it is essential that each of the three Persons both loves and is loved (knows and is known, effects and is effected). Instead, we must attach the qualifications also to the action and not just to the agent or patient. So, the Father (God-qua-lover) loves-qua-lover, and similarly the Spirit loves-qua-beloved. I will draw on Fine's (1982, 1985) theory of qua-objects, on my own account of relational facts, and on recent work on the semantics of as-clauses to elucidate this model more fully.

[Brian Leftow](#): *The Trinity is Unconstitutional*

A number of recent authors propose to use the metaphysics of material constitution to make sense of the doctrine of the Trinity. I argue that this won't do.

[Richard Swinburne](#): *Defending the Social Theory of the Trinity*

In previous publications I have defended a social theory of the Trinity in terms of three divine 'persons', the Son and Spirit being produced by the Father necessarily in virtue of his perfect goodness. These 'persons' have individual consciousness. I give my a priori argument for the truth of this version of the social theory. I then defend it against objections. In particular I defend it against William Hasker's two objections - that this theory assumes more than one divine essence, and it assumes that the Father 'creates' the other two. I deny that it has these implications; and I give reason to suppose that 'Latin' theory of the Trinity is incoherent.