

The Metaphysics of the Trinity: New Directions

14th – 16th March 2016

Corpus Christi College, Oxford

Schedule

Monday 14th March

1400-1500: Arrival and registration

1500-1630: **Brian Leftow** (Oxford): *The Trinity is Unconstitutional*

Chair: Martin Pickup

1700-1830: **John Heil** (Washington University, St Louis): *Being of One Substance*

Chair: Chris Hughes

1930: Dinner at Chiang Mai Kitchen, Oxford

Tuesday 15th March

0930: Tea and coffee

1000-1115: **Daniel Molto** (York): *The Mereology of Latin Trinitarianism*

Chair: Daniel Kodaj

1130-1300: **Rob Koons** (U. Texas, Austin): *Divine Persons as Relational Qua-Objects*

Chair: David Glick

1300-1500: Sandwich lunch provided in college

1500-1630: **Shieva Kleinschmidt** (USC): *Simple Trinitarianism*

Chair: Anna Marmodoro

1645-1800: **Mark Makin** (Biola): *God from God: The Essential Dependence Model of Eternal Generation* (Winner of the Metaphysics of Entanglement Essay Prize)

Chair: Martin Pickup

1900: Conference dinner in hall

Wednesday 16th March

0830: Tea and coffee

0900-1030: **Nikk Effingham** (Birmingham): *Proceeding and Filioque*

Chair: George Darby

1100-1230: **Richard Swinburne** (Oxford): *Defending the Social Theory of the Trinity*

Chair: Daniel Kodaj

1245: 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.

[Mark Makin](#): *God from God: The Essential Dependence Model of Eternal Generation* (Winner of the Metaphysics of Entanglement Essay Prize)

According to the doctrine of eternal generation, the Son is eternally begotten of the Father. Although the doctrine is enshrined in the Creed of Nicaea and has been affirmed by Christians for nearly 1700 years, many Protestants have recently rejected the doctrine. Eternal generation, its detractors contend, is both philosophically and theologically suspect. In this paper I propose a model of eternal generation and demonstrate how it avoids standard philosophical and theological objections. Eternal generation, I argue, can be understood as a form of essential dependence. To say that the Son is begotten of the Father is just to say that the Son essentially depends on the Father. The essence of the Son involves the Father, but not vice versa

[Daniel Molto](#): *The Mereology of Latin Trinitarianism*

According to one version of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, each of the three divine persons is wholly God. In this paper, I consider whether there is a mereological model which is compatible with this doctrine. I argue that any such model will be incompatible with the axioms of classical mereology. I outline several alternative non-classical mereological models which have some claim to compatibility with the doctrine, and show how they deviate from classical mereology. Ultimately, I suggest that the model which is most clearly compatible with the doctrine is one which allows for two non-identical objects to be improper parts of one another. In the last part of the paper, I consider whether the deviations from classical mereology that this model involves can be motivated independently of theological considerations. I argue that they can.

[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.