

# Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers

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Volume 38 | Issue 4

Article 6

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10-1-2021

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### Recommended Citation

Williams, Scott M. (2021) "Gregory of Nyssa, Conciliar Trinitarianism, and the Latin (or Conciliar) Social Trinity: Response to William Hasker," *Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*: Vol. 38: Iss. 4, Article 6.

DOI: [10.37977/faithphil.2021.38.4.6](https://doi.org/10.37977/faithphil.2021.38.4.6)

Available at: <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/faithandphilosophy/vol38/iss4/6>

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# GREGORY OF NYSSA, CONCILIAR TRINITARIANISM, AND THE LATIN (OR CONCILIAR) SOCIAL TRINITY: RESPONSE TO WILLIAM HASKER

Scott M. Williams

The disagreement between William Hasker and myself includes discussion of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian theology, the relevance of Conciliar Trinitarianism for evaluating models of the Trinity, and the defensibility of my Latin Social model of the Trinity. I respond to Hasker's recent objections regarding all three areas. I contest Hasker's interpretation of Gregory and argue that Gregory is indeed a "one-power" theorist. I make historical connections between Gregory's Trinitarian theology and Pope Agatho's "one-power" statements that were endorsed by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680-681ce); and I make explicit the Sixth Ecumenical Council's interest in the general issue of how "ousia" and "hypostasis" pertain to the Trinity *and* the Incarnation. Lastly, I defend and develop the Latin Social model in response to Hasker's five objections. In light of my findings in the Sixth Council, I retire the name "Latin Social Trinity" for my model and replace it with a name more apt for my model, that is, the "Conciliar Social Trinity."

In, "Is the Latin Social Trinity Defensible? A Rejoinder to Scott M. Williams," William Hasker (again) argues that the Latin Social model of the Trinity is indefensible.<sup>1</sup> First, given his interpretation of a passage from Gregory of Nyssa's "Not Three Gods," he infers that his Social model is consistent with, but my Latin (Conciliar) Social model is not consistent with, this interpretation of the relevant passage. Second, Hasker raises some metaphysical objections. In what follows I respond to each consideration to show that Hasker's discussion is mistaken on both counts. If I am successful in undermining Hasker's interpretation of Gregory and in showing the coherence of the Latin (Conciliar) Social model, then we should prefer the Latin (Conciliar) Social model over Hasker's Social model because the Latin (Conciliar) Social model (i) is a simpler account of the necessary unity of the divine persons' actions toward creatures, (ii) is a better fit with

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<sup>1</sup>The first response is in Hasker, "Can A Latin Trinity Be Social?" 356-366.



Conciliar Trinitarianism (assuming this is desirable),<sup>2</sup> and (iii) is metaphysically and theologically defensible.

In section one below I discuss Gregory's "To Ablabius, On Saying Not Three Gods" and Hasker's interpretation of a passage from it and challenge this interpretation. I also say how all this connects with the "one-power" statements from the Sixth Ecumenical Council, that is, Constantinople III (680-681ce). In section three I respond to Hasker's philosophical objections. In perhaps the best objection (objection five) against my Latin (Conciliar) Social model, I make use of Duns Scotus's ontology of intuitive intellectual cognition to address Hasker's question about ontological grounding. Given my findings from Constantinople III, I am hereby retiring the name "the Latin Social Trinity" and replacing it with what is more apt, "the Conciliar Social Trinity."

*Section One: Gregory of Nyssa and the Sixth Ecumenical Council*

In, "In Defense of the Latin Social Trinity [. . .]" I quoted some passages from a letter by Pope Agatho that was endorsed by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (henceforth, "Constantinople III"). I used these passages to show that Hasker's Social model of the Trinity is logically inconsistent with an ecumenical council. If one is somewhat committed to the ecumenical councils as general guides for our theorizing about the Trinity, and one of us (i.e., Hasker) posits a model that contradicts these general guides, then that is a reason for us to revise or reject, or at least lower our confidence in, that model.

Hasker responds in three ways to my objection from Conciliar Trinitarianism against his Social model. First, he suggests that I have engaged in the dubious practice of proof-texting—taking a passage out of its context and using it for my own ends. Hasker suggests that the reason that Pope Agatho's letters were endorsed by Constantinople III had to do with what he said about Christ's two wills, and not what he said about the (immanent) Trinity. There is much historical work to be done,<sup>3</sup> but there are good reasons to believe that this council was interested in how to understand the terms "ousia" ("essentia") and "hypostasis" ("persona") in relation to the (immanent) Trinity *and* the Incarnation. For, the council was interested in how to *count* "ousia" (and nature(s) and power(s)) in relation to "hypostasis" with regard to the Trinity *and* the Incarnation.<sup>4</sup> This was not merely a semantic claim or a claim about linguistic conventions, but also an ontological claim. The existence of Trinitarian theology

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<sup>2</sup>For discussion of "Conciliar Trinitarianism" see Williams, "In Defense of a Latin Social Trinity," 98; O'Byrne, "On the Economic Focus of Conciliar Trinitarianism," 5–7. The former was written prior to the latter, and it is what led Branson, Jedwab, and myself to edit a volume on *Conciliar Trinitarianism for Theologia* in 2019–2020.

<sup>3</sup>See Williams, "Discovery of the Sixth Ecumenical Council's Trinitarian Theology: Historical, Ecclesial and Theological Implications," 332–362.

<sup>4</sup>For example, see *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, part 2, 836–839.

in Constantinople III is unknown by most everyone, historians of theology included. (One cannot find any discussion of it most anywhere; I made this historical discovery and wrote about it in "Discovery of the Sixth Ecumenical Council's Trinitarian Theology.") Agatho's letters express the "canonical logic" that the number of e.g., will-powers (and, volitions, etc.) does not correlate to the number of persons, but rather, the number of e.g., will-powers correspond to the number of natures.<sup>5</sup> This rule applies to the Trinity *and* the Incarnation.<sup>6</sup> Agatho's letter to emperor Constantine IV is not the only text that gives this canonical logic. It is found expressed or assumed in other documents endorsed by Constantinople III, including the letter of the Roman Synod of 125 bishops (including Agatho) to Constantinople III,<sup>7</sup> and an edict by Constantine IV that was given after the council concluded.<sup>8</sup> In the letter from the Roman Synod there is an exposition of Nicene-Constantinople creed regarding the immanent Trinity, as is found in the following passage:

We believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in his only-begotten Son, who was begotten of him before all worlds; true God from God, Light from Light, begotten not made, co-essential [*homoousion*] with the Father, that is of the very same essence [*ousias*] with the Father; through him were all things made which are in heaven and which are on earth; and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, and with the Father and Son together is worshiped and glorified; the Trinity in unity and unity in the Trinity; a

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<sup>5</sup>Agatho, "Letter to the Emperor, Constantine IV," in *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, 58, ln. 25 / 59, ln. 23–60, ln. 2 / 61, ln. 3. "This then is the status of our evangelical and Apostolic faith, to wit, that as we confess the holy and inseparable Trinity, that is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, to be [*einai*] of one deity, of one nature and essence, so we will profess also that it has one natural will, power, operation, domination, majesty, potency, and glory. And whatever is said of the same Holy Trinity essentially in singular number [*henikoi arithmoi*] we apprehend [*katalambanometha*] as from the one nature of the three co-essential *prosopa*, having been so taught by canonical logic [*kanonikoi logoi*]." Translation by Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 330, with slight changes by me.

<sup>6</sup>Agatho, "Letter to the Emperor, Constantine IV," in *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, 68, ln. 4–12 / 69, 4–11: "Consequently, therefore, according to the rule of the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ, she also confesses and preaches that there are in [Christ] two natural wills and two natural operations. For if anybody should mean a personal will [*hean gar tis prosopikon noesei to thelema*], when in the holy Trinity there are said to be three *persons* [*prosopa*], it would be necessary that there should be asserted three personal wills and three personal operations [*tria prosopika thelemata kai treis prosopikas energieas*] (which is absurd and truly profane). Since, as the truth of the Christian faith holds, the will is natural, where the one nature of the holy and inseparable Trinity is spoken of, it must be consistently understood that there is one natural will and one natural operation [*hen phusikon thelema kai mia phusike energiea*]." Translation by Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 332–333.

<sup>7</sup>See *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, part 1, 122–138.

<sup>8</sup>See *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, part 2, 836–839. The content of this part of the edict parallels what is in the exposition of the Nicene-Constantinople creed that is in the letter from the Roman Synod. For translations and discussion, see Williams, "Discovery of the Sixth Ecumenical Council's Trinitarian Theology," 352–353.

unity of essence [*ousias*] but a trinity of *prosopa* or *hypostases*; and so we confess God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; not three gods, but one God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; not a *hypostasis* of three names, but one essence of three *hypostases* [*trion hypostaseon mian ousian*], thus one essence and nature, that is to say one deity, one eternity, one power, one kingdom, one glory, one adoration, *one essential will and activity* of the same Holy and inseparable Trinity [*hen ousiodes tes autes agias kai akoristou triados thelma kai energeia*], which ha[s] created all things, ha[s] made disposition of them, and still contains them.<sup>9</sup>

This canonical logic is also found in other (source) texts. Constantinople III implicitly endorsed Emperor Justinian's *Letter to Zoilus* (often labeled "Against the Monophysites"),<sup>10</sup> and explicitly endorsed Sophronius of Jerusalem's *Synodical Letter*. This letter was read aloud in its entirety<sup>11</sup> (about 42 pages in the critical edition) in the eleventh session of Constantinople III and was solemnly endorsed<sup>12</sup> in the thirteenth session of Constantinople III. Sophronius's *Synodical Letter* is perhaps *the most* technical letter on Trinitarian theology that was ever explicitly endorsed by one of the seven ecumenical councils. (For example, Sophronius calls some of those who violate this canonical logic, "tri-theists." The concern about, and rejection of, "three Gods" and three divine will-powers, is reflected in the passage above.)<sup>13</sup> Sophronius's *Synodical Letter* was translated in full into a modern language for the first time in 2009.<sup>14</sup>

This canonical logic derives from, or was inspired by, these earlier sources, and is not some ad hoc statement thrown into the two letters that were endorsed by Constantinople III. Rather, this canonical logic was a central part of the council's reasoning to the conclusion that there are two will-powers in Christ. (See footnote 6 for the relevant quotation.) The canonical logic says that the number of will-powers corresponds to the number of natures, and denies that the number of will-powers corresponds to the number of persons. So, if there is one divine nature, then there is one divine will-power. As I argue in detail elsewhere,<sup>15</sup> the council endorses this canonical logic for the immanent Trinity and then applies it to the case of the Incarnation. Hence, if there are two natures in Christ,

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<sup>9</sup>Agatho and 125 Bishops, "Letter to the Sixth Council," in *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, 126, ln. 26 / 127, ln. 23–128, ln. 8. / 129, ln. 8. Translation by Percival, *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 340, with slight changes by me.

<sup>10</sup>Agatho, "Epistola I, Ad Augustos Imperatores," 1197D. See *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, part 1, 101, and 353–357. For discussion, see Williams, "Discovery of the Sixth Ecumenical Council's Trinitarian Theology," 347–348.

<sup>11</sup>See *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, part 1, 410–494. After introduction, the letter begins with discussion of the (immanent) Trinity, followed by Christology, doctrine of creation, and concludes with a long list of heretics and heresies.

<sup>12</sup>See *Concilium Universale Constantinopolitanum Tertium*, part 2, 580, ln. 8, 581, ln. 7–12.

<sup>13</sup>Sophronius of Jerusalem, *The Synodical Letter*, 79–83.

<sup>14</sup>See Pauline Allen, *Sophronius of Jerusalem and Seventh-Century Heresy*, 63.

<sup>15</sup>Williams, "Discovery of the Sixth Ecumenical Council's Trinitarian Theology," 342–354.

then there are two will-powers in Christ. And, if there are two natures in Christ, there remains only one person.

Let this suffice to show that Agatho's and Constantinople III's canonical logic was not ad hoc. Rather, it was key to the council's theological agenda in rejecting "tri-theism" (including, a "multi-powers" account of the Trinity), in rejecting a "one-power" account of the Incarnate Christ, and in affirming a "two-power" account of the Incarnate Christ.

Hasker's second response to the objection from Conciliar Trinitarianism is to compare Agatho's statements with his own interpretation of a passage from Gregory of Nyssa's "Not Three Gods." He says, "[R]ather than rushing forward with my [i.e., Hasker's] own interpretation of Agatho's statements, I would like to inquire about the consistency of those statements with certain ideas of Gregory of Nyssa, as expressed in his well-known treatise, *On "Not Three Gods."* In short, Hasker avoids direct engagement with Agatho's texts having to do with the Trinity and which were endorsed by Constantinople III. Moreover, given his interpretation of the passage from "Not Three Gods," Hasker suggests that we may need to find a way to interpret Agatho's statements so that they are consistent with Hasker's interpretation of Gregory's text.

Before discussing the passage from Gregory, it is important to say that Hasker raises another worry about the Conciliar Trinitarian objection. He contends that the ecumenical councils are not infallible. If they are not infallible, then we can disagree with them if we have good (philosophical or theological) reason(s) to do so. I worry that Hasker has misunderstood what I have said about these ecumenical councils. I have not asserted that they are infallible. Rather, I suggested that if one accepts the ecumenical councils—(here I add) whether as fallible or infallible theological sources—then a good model of the Trinity will be consistent with what's declared in the ecumenical councils. This criterion is dialectical—it was my attempt to find a shared criterion by which Hasker and I might evaluate our respective models of the Trinity.

Hasker and I agree that Gregory of Nyssa is deeply concerned about the divine persons' "unity of action." Hasker contends that the only way to make sense of Gregory's statements is to interpret him as claiming that the divine persons (necessarily) agree on what is willed and should be willed. The divine persons (always) share a common pursuit or goal. In Hasker's interpretation, Gregory's "unity of action" means that the divine persons have numerically distinct mental powers, numerically distinct and unshared mental acts, but (always) the same pursuit or goal. The number of sets of divine power(s) corresponds to the number of divine persons. Given that there are three divine persons, it follows that there are three sets of divine power(s). (Note that this is a claim rejected by Constantinople III.) He justifies this interpretation of "unity of action" (in part) by way of his interpretation of the following passage from Gregory of Nyssa's "Not Three Gods."

[2] For as when we learn concerning the God of the universe, from the words of Scripture, that He judges all the earth, we say that He is the Judge of all things through the Son: and again, when we hear that the Father judgeth no man, we do not think that the Scripture is at variance with itself... (for He Who judges all the earth does this by His Son to Whom He has committed all judgment; and everything which is done by the Only-begotten has its reference to the Father, so that He Himself is at once the Judge of all things and judges no man, by reason of His having, as we said, committed all judgment to the Son . . .) (Gregory of Nyssa 1976, 334)<sup>16</sup>

Hasker comments on this passage, saying: "The upshot of this is: the Father delegates the work of judging to the Son; this delegation is an act of the Father alone, not of the Son, since no one delegates a task to himself. Also, the Son performs the task of judging, not the Father; it is explicitly said that the Father does not, himself, perform this task." Hasker's interpretation is *prima facie* plausible, if we read it out of context. Consider a passage from "Not Three Gods" that precedes the one quoted by Hasker.

[1] Since it has been shown by us with reason and by proof that the name of deity has not as its reference point nature but activity, perhaps someone would declare with reason why men who share with one another the same pursuits are counted and named in the plural but the deity is mentioned in the singular as one God and one deity, even if the three *hypostases* are not distinguished from the significance reflected in "deity." He might state that as regards men, even if many partake of one activity, each individually set apart work at the thing proposed, sharing in common nothing with the *individual activity* of those pursuing the same thing. For if the orators are many, among the several the pursuit has one and the same name, but those who pursue it work each individually, this one practicing oratory independently, the next one doing the same thing. Therefore, among men, because the activity of each is distinguished, although in the same pursuit, they are properly mentioned in the plural. Each of them is separated into his peculiar context from the others *in accord with his peculiar manner of the activity*.

But in reference to divine nature, we have learned that this is not the case, because the Father does something individually, in which the Son does not join, or the Son individually works something without the Spirit; but every activity which pervades from God to creation and is named according to our manifold designs starts off from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed by the Holy Spirit. On account of this, the name of activity is not divided into the multitude of those who are active. The action of each in any regard is *not divided and peculiar*. But whatever of the anticipated things would happen, whether for our providence or to the administration of the whole and to its constitution, it happens *through* the three, the things which do happen are not three distinct things.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Hasker, "Is the Latin Trinity Defensible?" 507. I label this passage as "[2]" to represent the order in which it occurs in relation to the other two passages from "Not Three Gods" that I give below.

<sup>17</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, "Not Three Gods," 154–155, emphases are mine.

In the first paragraph Gregory talks about human activities, and distinguishes “the same pursuit” and “individual activity.” Human beings can do the same kind of activity, but each does their own activity apart from each other; human beings’ actions are divided from each other. In other words, Gregory expresses the distinction between specific sameness (same pursuit) and numerical difference (divided actions). But what makes each speech numerically distinct, for Gregory? The speeches are individualized by their “peculiar manner,” that is, each speech’s *idioma*. The speeches are not individuated by an agent (or *hypostasis*), but by peculiar facts intrinsic to the speech itself. Actions are not individuated by their agents, but rather by their own “peculiar” characteristics.<sup>18</sup> Just after the above passage, Gregory gives us a counting rule about how to count action(s) in relation to *hypostases* who perform the action. “Therefore, then, the holy Trinity works every activity according to the manner stated, not divided according to the number of *hypostases*, but one certain motion and disposition of goodwill occurs, proceeding from the Father, through the Son to the Spirit.”<sup>19</sup> (Note that this is the counting rule that is endorsed by Constantinople III.)

In the second paragraph Gregory contrasts this account of human activity with his account of the divine persons’ activity. Divine persons not only share specifically the same kind of activity, but also *numerically* (“individually”) the same activity. Given that an activity isn’t individuated (i.e., have its numerical identity) on the basis of the agent, but rather on the basis of its intrinsic “peculiar” characteristics, Gregory denies that the divine persons’ divine activity is “divided,” that is, numerically distinct. The Father’s activity of creating X is not numerically distinct from the Son’s activity of creating X, nor numerically distinct from the Holy Spirit’s activity of creating X. Numerically the same “motion” or “individual activity” is shared by the three divine persons because the very same intrinsic “peculiar” characteristics of the activity is shared by the divine persons.

The last sentence in [1] implies that the divine persons (can and do) cause numerically the same thing. (Gregory says that the divine persons cause numerically the same thing(s) in the next paragraph in the text.)<sup>20</sup> But on Hasker’s Social model, this cannot happen because the divine persons cannot share numerically the same creative actions. For example, if a child in Sunday School were to ask the question, “Who created me?” Hasker would have to say something like: only one of the divine persons created you, and the other two divine persons agreed that you were to be created. (Or, he could appeal to causal overdetermination. All three divine persons create numerically the same human being. But then we would

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<sup>18</sup>For excellent discussion on this issue, see Branson, *The Logical Problem of the Trinity*, 178–184.

<sup>19</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, “Not Three Gods,” 155.

<sup>20</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, “Not Three Gods,” 155–156.



want to know: is there any good evidence from e.g., Gregory that supports causal overdetermination?) Gregory of Nyssa would disagree; the divine persons share numerically the same creative action because their creative action has numerically the same “peculiar” characteristics (*idioma*).

What remains to be seen is how the passage that I just quoted, [1], fits with the subsequent passage, [2], that Hasker quoted. The answer may be found in the passage that is subsequent to passage [2]. Gregory writes:

[3] For, as it has been stated above, the principle of power of oversight and beholding in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one. It starts off from the Father as from a spring; it is effected by the Son, and by the power of the Spirit it completes its grace. No activity is divided to the *hypostases*, completed individually by each and set apart without being viewed together. All providence, care, and attention of all, both of things in the sensible creation and of things of the heavenly nature—and the preservation of what exists, the correction of things out of tune, the teaching of things set right—is one and not three, kept straight by the Holy Trinity. It is not severed into three, according to the number of persons beheld in faith, so that each activity, viewed by itself is of the Father alone or of the Only-begotten individually or of the Holy Spirit separately.<sup>21</sup>

Here we find the key claim: activity is not divided (“not severed into three”), that is, numerically multiplied, according to the number of divine persons. Rather, numerically the same activity is performed by the three divine persons. (Again, this counting rule is precisely what Agatho and Constantinople III endorsed.) And, for Gregory this can be so because actions are not individuated by their agent(s) but rather by their own intrinsic “peculiar” characteristics. But how does all this fit with the passage, [2], quoted by Hasker?

Hasker claims that Gregory wrote [2] in order to indicate that the Father and Son don’t have numerically the same power(s) and each has their own unshared actions with regard to creatures.<sup>22</sup> It is important to point out that Gregory raises the example from John 5:22–23 *not* as an *illustration* of his own account (as Hasker suggests), but rather as a potential *objection* against his own account. Gregory introduces the reference to John’s gospel saying, “And when we heard that the Father judges no one [John 5:22], we do not think that Scripture wars with itself.” Gregory goes on to try to explain how the quotation from John’s gospel fits with his account of the divine persons’ unity of action, which he gave in [1].

There is an important interpretive question regarding the second sentence of [3] where Gregory says that “[. . .] the principle of power of oversight and beholding [. . .] is one. It starts off *from* the Father as from a spring; it is effected *by* the Son, and *by* the power of the Spirit it completes its grace..” (This English translation has “by the power of the Spirit,” but the Greek text has “in the power of the Holy Spirit.”) There is a similar sentence in [1]: “[. . .] every activity which pervades from God to creation

<sup>21</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, “Not Three Gods,” 156–157.

<sup>22</sup>Hasker, “Is the Latin Social Trinity Defensible?” 507.

and is named according to our manifold designs starts off from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is completed by the Holy Spirit." (This English translation has "by the Holy Spirit," but the Greek text has "in the Holy Spirit.") If we look at the Greek text, we see that the prepositions in [3] and [1] are "from" (*ek*) for the Father, "through" (*dia*) and "by" (*hupo*) for the Son, and "in" (*en*) for the Holy Spirit.<sup>23</sup> And, in the last sentence of [1] we find that such actions are "through the three persons." These prepositions come from Gregory and his brother Basil's<sup>24</sup> engagement with various passages in the New Testament. The upshot is that Gregory and Basil are not positing or suggesting numerically distinct powers for each divine person, but rather they use language from the New Testament to express an account of the divine persons' unity. It's Gregory's explicit account that should determine our interpretation of [2]. (Basil discusses all of these prepositions as found in the Bible in his treatise, *On The Holy Spirit*.) The prepositions themselves do not bear the metaphysical weight in the way that Hasker might be tempted to suppose they bear.

Nevertheless, should we interpret Gregory as saying that the Father performs one action, and then the Son performs a numerically distinct action that is the same kind of action, and then the Holy Spirit performs a numerically distinct action that is the same kind of action? In this interpretation, we might say that the action in question is individuated by the divine person performing the action. Or, is Gregory trying to say that the action *and* what is pursued, which the Father performs, are shared with the Son and Holy Spirit? In this interpretation, the action in question is *not* individuated (i.e., have its numerical identity) by the person performing it. In the first interpretation, the divine persons engage in the same "pursuit" but do it separately (that is, numerically distinct) from each other (assuming that each divine person has their own unshared set of divine powers). In the second interpretation, the divine persons share numerically the same action. It may be unclear (to some) which interpretation is closer to Gregory's intention. Still, we can ask, "which interpretation fits better with other passages from "Not Three Gods"?" Gregory points to the second interpretation in [1]: "On account of this, the name of activity is not divided into the multitude of those who are active. The action of each in any regard is not divided and peculiar." Here, Gregory *denies* that the action in question is "divided" by the divine persons "who are active." The counting rule here is: don't count the number of actions by the number of divine persons. From earlier in [1] we know that "divided" action means numerically distinct actions or separate actions. Given all this, the second interpretation is much more likely. That is, Gregory denies that there are three numerically distinct actions performed by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; rather there is numerically one action shared by the three persons.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, *Quod Non Sint Tres Dei*, 48, ln. 1–2, 50, ln. 15–17.

<sup>24</sup>See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 96–103.

<sup>25</sup>For excellent discussion on this issue, see Branson, *The Logical Problem of the Trinity*, 178–184.

Given all of these considerations, Hasker's interpretation of passage [2] does not fit with Gregory's "Not Three Gods." Where does Gregory ever write, in any text, that we should count the number of divine powers or actions by the number of divine persons? We have yet to find any such passage. Still, what of John 5:22–23? And, how does Gregory interpret John 5:22–23 to fit with his own account of the divine persons' unity of action? Unfortunately, "Not Three Gods," itself does not provide sufficient fine-grained details for us to know exactly how Gregory responds to the question. What we have is the following statement in [2]:

[. . .] for He Who judges all the earth does this by His Son to Whom He has committed all judgment; and everything which is done by the Only-begotten has its reference to the Father, so that He Himself is at once the Judge of all things and judges no man, by reason of His having, as we said, committed all judgment to the Son [. . .].

Given that Gregory clarifies his answer in the immediately subsequent passage in [3], how should we interpret what he says here? If we assume that Gregory aims to avoid contradiction, then we should interpret this passage in [2] in a way that is consistent with his account found in [1] and [3]. Hasker is correct that the way I resolve this apparent inconsistency is to appeal to the doctrine of appropriation, according to which we can speak of divine actions in relation to one divine person without mentioning the other divine persons. We can say that God the Son created contingent things, without implying that God the Father and God the Holy Spirit didn't also create contingent things. We can say that the Father gave "judgment" to the Son, without denying that it is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who gave "judgment" to the Son. Even more, we can say that it is the Son in his human nature that he will "judge" all humankind. So, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit give to the Son the relevant authority to judge. The Son, in virtue of his human nature, will judge all humankind. Following the lead of Constantinople III, we might say, "[Christ] had a human although deified will, and this same he had as well as his divine will, which was one and the same with that of the Father."<sup>26</sup> This interpretation is supported by, or consistent with, John 5:27, where we learn that according to Jesus, "[the Father] has given him [i.e., the Son of Man, Jesus] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." This title "Son of Man," was often understood by early church theologians, including Gregory, to refer to Jesus' human nature.

Nevertheless, I concede that Gregory could have written more in "Not Three Gods" to be even clearer about how his stated account of the unity of divine power fits with John 5:22–23. This example brings us away from theorizing about the immanent Trinity toward how Christ's human nature and human actions relate to his divine nature and divine actions.

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<sup>26</sup>Agatho, "Epistola I. Ad Augustos Imperatores," 1188D-1189A. See *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, part 1, 86, ln. 21–23.

Fortunately, in his *Antirrheticus*, Gregory gives clarification when commenting on Christ's agony in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. I take this passage to be fairly decisive against Hasker's interpretation of passage [2] and in favor of mine:

[Ant.] He who does not wish his own will to be done certainly has this desire, that what he wants should not come about. Then how can there be brought to fulfilment the prayer of one who says, "What I want is that what-I-want should not come about"? [. . .] For this puzzle in reasoning there is but one remedy—the true confession of the mystery, namely that the dread at the passion pertained to the human weakness [. . .] while the acceptance of the passion as a result of the dispensation pertained to the divine will and power. Since therefore the human will and the divine will were different, the one who had appropriated our emotions uttered, as from his manhood, what fitted the weakness of this nature, and he added a second utterance, expressing a wish that the high and divine purpose should be confirmed (in contradiction to the human one) for the salvation of mankind. For by saying "not mine" he indicated by word the human purpose, but by adding "yours" he showed the conjunction of his own Godhead with the Father, of which (divinity) there is not one difference of will because of the commonality of the nature; for in speaking of the Father's will he revealed also that of the Son.<sup>27</sup>

Given Gregory's consistent indication in "Not Three Gods," and *Antirrheticus* that there is "one divinity" and "not one difference of will because of the commonality of the nature," Hasker's interpretation of [2] seems much less plausible. (It should be mentioned that this passage, [Ant.], was quoted by Constantinople III in support of the belief that there are two natures and two wills in Christ, and that there is numerically one shared divine will-power because of the one shared divine nature.)<sup>28</sup>

### *Section Two: The Latin (Conciliar) Social Trinity is Conciliar and Defensible*

In this section I address objections that Hasker raises against my Latin (Conciliar) Social model of the Trinity.

#### *Objection 1 and Reply to 1: Delegating a Task to Oneself?*

The first objection comes from Hasker's discussion, and interpretation of, passage [2] from Gregory's "Not Three Gods." Recall that Hasker contends that, for Gregory, God the Father delegates a task to God the Son; in this case, the task is the judgment of human beings. According to Hasker's interpretation of [2], the Son doesn't delegate the task to himself because

<sup>27</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus*, 90–91.

<sup>28</sup>Agatho, "Epistola I, Ad Augustos Imperatores," 1188A–B. See *Concilium universale Constantinopolitanum tertium*, part 1, 84, ln. 13–23. In one place, Constantinople III affirms that when Christ experienced agony in the garden of Gethsemane, he showed us that we should obey the "divine will" (the Latin has "divinae [. . .] voluntati" (1177A)) or "the will of God" (the Greek has "toi tou Theou thelmhmati" (1178A)).

“no one delegates a task to [themselves].” I concede that this interpretation of [2] has some *prima facie* plausibility, if taken out of context. But, given my explanation of Gregory’s text in section one, I don’t find his interpretation to be plausible regarding Gregory’s intent. Still, even if Hasker were wrong in his interpretation of Gregory, there is still the issue of whether a person can delegate a task to themselves. If we have independent reason to suppose that no person (created or uncreated) can delegate a task to herself or himself, then we’d have a reason to suppose (as Hasker suggests) that the Father and Son have numerically different sets of (mental) powers. However, I think Hasker is incorrect about this general claim.

Suppose ten human beings are on a tenure-committee at Elsewhere University. A decision needs to be made about who will contact the tenure-candidate about the committee’s positive recommendation. Suppose that the committee has a rule saying that the chairperson can delegate the task of communicating the committee’s recommendation to the tenure-candidate. Suppose it is an extremely busy semester for all the committee members, and so the chairperson, Neera, delegates the task to herself, and she tells the candidate the good news. There is no contradiction here. So, Hasker’s general claim doesn’t hold; or at least, it is not self-evident or sufficiently clear. In the case considered by Gregory, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit delegate the task of judging human beings to the incarnate Christ because he is “the Son of Man.” The Son will judge human beings through his human nature that is deified by his (shared) singular divine nature.

### *Objection 2 and Reply to 2: Confused Persons?*

In the section, “Ambiguity in the Divine Language of Thought,” the objection is raised (again) based on a putative case in which a divine person (here, the Holy Spirit) communicates something to the Apostle Peter. The story begins, “Suppose the Holy Spirit says to Peter, ‘I am God the Father, who sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.’ Sometime later Peter learns that it was in fact the Holy Spirit who spoke to him. Peter is troubled by this; he complains that he has been misled, perhaps even lied to. The Holy Spirit, however, explains that there was no intentional deceit; the problem was rather one of translation.” Hasker goes on to raise the worry that in the ontological analysis of divine thoughts that I have previously articulated, the divine persons are confused, and perhaps confusing to human beings like Peter. So, the objection is that on the Latin (Conciliar) Social model, the divine persons are confused and confusing. But they aren’t confused or confusing. So, my analysis of divine thoughts is incorrect.

Unfortunately, this restatement of this objection from Hasker’s previous article<sup>29</sup> does not engage with my detailed response to this objection (which I labeled “Objection 3” in “In Defense of the Latin Social Trinity

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<sup>29</sup>Hasker, “Can the Latin Trinity Be Social?” 365.

[. . .],” pp. 108–110). I won’t rehearse those details here; suffice it to say that Hasker has yet to engage with my detailed response. So, I am not yet clear on what Hasker would find problematic with my detailed response. Moreover, Hasker has yet to address my (previous) observation that his putative counterexample is a red herring.

It seems that the sort of objection that Hasker may wish to raise is not some communication between a divine person and a created, human person (e.g., the Apostle Peter), but rather a communication between a divine person and another divine person regarding things that are true of the former person but not of the latter person. In my article, “Unity of Action in a Latin Social Trinity” p. 332, I raised precisely this sort of objection against my proposed analysis of divine thoughts. There the example was a divine mental token of, “The Son and I are sent, and the Father is not sent.” There I explained how such a case does not undermine my analysis of the divine persons’ thoughts. The upshot is that no divine person is “confused” according to my account of divine thoughts.

### *Objection 3 and Reply to 3: No Self-Knowledge?*

Like Objection 2, Objection 3 focuses on Hasker’s contention that my analysis of the divine persons’ use of divine mental token involves “ambiguity.” Hasker says, “this ambiguity, as I pointed out, has the unfortunate consequence that *no divine person can formulate a sentence in the divine language of thought that identifies that person as the person he is*. Any referring expression used to refer to a divine person (say, to the Holy Spirit) can be understood as, “the person who is NSWI [numerically the same without identity] to the divine essence, which is NSWI to the Holy Spirit, who . . .” Why, then, we may ask, does God put up with this, consenting to conduct God’s own internal thoughts in this seriously ambiguous medium? The only answer to this I have been able to find is that without this ambiguity Williams’s theory of a Latin Social Trinity could not be made to work!”

Three things need to be said in reply. First, I have already given an account of how each divine person is self-aware. I have given and restated this account on several occasions (and develop it further in reply to objection 5 below).<sup>30</sup> Second, Hasker may be suggesting another putative counterexample, namely a parody. Suppose instead of the divine persons’ sharing a use of a divine mental token like, “I am God the Father,” they share the use of another divine mental token, namely, “the person who is NSWI to the divine essence, which is NSWI to the Holy Spirit, who [. . .].” If this parody divine mental token were ascribed to the divine persons, and the divine mental tokens that I have ascribed to the divine persons (e.g., “I am God the Holy Spirit,” “I am God the Father) were not to obtain among the divine persons, then Hasker would be correct. The Holy Spirit

<sup>30</sup>See Williams, “Indexicals and the Trinity: Two Non-Social Models,” 86–87; Williams, “Unity of Action in a Latin Social Model of the Trinity,” 328–333; and, Williams, “In Defense of a Latin Social Trinity,” 103–106, 110–111.

would not know which divine person they (singular “they”) are. This objection from a parody does not succeed, however, because Hasker omits the very way in which I have claimed the divine persons are each self-aware. I have given an account of how each divine person is self-aware. This account includes supposing that the divine persons share a use of a divine mental token that includes a first-person indexical (“I”). Moreover, I have not stipulated that the divine persons share a use of divine mental tokens like, “the person who is NSWI [. . .].” I have said that the divine persons are aware of *propositions*, which are expressed by the divine persons using a divine mental sentence-token, and which include numerical sameness without identity. These known propositions include numerical sameness without identity, but the sentence-token itself (in the case under consideration) does not. To this extent, this objection misrepresents what I have stated by ascribing to me something that I have not stated. (By analogy, consider the difference between the grammar of a sentence like, “I love you,” and the proposition that is expressed by it when one person says it to another person. On my account, the divine persons share the use mental sentence-tokens, and depending on the sentence-token, each divine person may be aware of a different proposition.)

The third thing to be said is this. Hasker worries that on my account “no divine person can formulate a sentence in the divine language of thought that identifies that person as the person he is.” Put otherwise, the worry is that on my account it is not possible for a divine person, say, the Holy Spirit, to use a divine mental token that *only* is used to identify that divine person (the Holy Spirit). If we interpret the objection in this way, then it isn’t an objection against my view but rather a restatement of it. For, in my analysis, a divine person can’t get away with using a mental token and that use of the mental token not being shared by all divine persons. On this interpretation, this objection is like the incredulous stare: “You assert that *p*? I can’t believe it!”

#### *Objection 4 and Reply to 4: Why Suppose Divine Mental Language?*

The fourth objection begins with the question, “Why should we suppose that God’s mental life is conducted in such a ‘language of thought’ at all?” I had argued in “In Defense of a Latin Social Model of the Trinity,” that one independent reason for positing that the divine persons use a divine mental language (that is, divine mental tokens of mental sentences) is that this explains “why a divine person’s mental act is directed at (among all possible propositions) the proposition it is directed at.” But now Hasker raises the worry that my explanation is arbitrary and unnecessary; for, “‘it just is’ seems to be all the explanation that is called for. Explanations have to stop somewhere.”<sup>31</sup> Perhaps it is better to take it as a primitive,

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<sup>31</sup>Hasker, “Is the Latin Social Trinity Defensible?” 510.

an unexplained fact that mental acts are directed at propositions. So, if it's a matter of comparing "primitives" why go with Williams's proposed explanation?

I should state some of my motivations for developing this account of the divine persons' mental life. One thing that I believe is needed is some mechanism that guarantees that whatever the divine persons think, or choose with regard to contingent beings, conflict or disagreement is not metaphysically possible. (This is clear from my previous article, "Unity of Action in a Latin Social Model of the Trinity.") Given that appeal to divine wisdom, goodness, etc. won't secure this necessary unity of action (in my view), we need something else. Divine mental tokens seem one possible route to go—and the claim about divine mental language is already a part of the tradition. Augustine and many other theologians talk about divine mental language (and in many cases regarding the Father's eternal intellectual generation of God the Word) when they reflect on the first chapter of John's gospel.<sup>32</sup> So, why not see if we can articulate a model of the Trinity using this part of the tradition to help us make some progress in the on-going disputes between Social Trinitarianism, non-Social Trinitarianism, and my Conciliar Social Trinitarianism?

Hasker continues the objection by offering some reason to suppose that my proposed explanation is not generally true of all intellectual beings, including race car drivers. And, if it's not true of all intellectual beings, then we don't have sufficient reason to apply this explanation to the case of the divine persons. Hasker asks us to consider a race car driver who negotiates a road circuit. "The driver does not say to himself, 'If I run over that curbing I will have less control of my car as I exit the course.' If he needed to do that for each of the hundreds of decisions he makes in a single circuit of the course, he would be unable to drive the car. Instead, he simply sees where his car is going and makes a small adjustment with the steering wheel."

In reply it should be said that the kind of example given here is of someone's "ability knowledge" or know-how. They know-how to drive a car safely through a circuit: "[H]e simply sees where his car is going and makes a small adjustment with the steering wheel." (In fact, there need not be any intellectual acts in order to do this. My sighted dachshund, Origen, and my blind dachshund, Didymus, each can successfully roam around the house without bumping into furniture. Suppose each doesn't have any intellectual acts; that doesn't take away from the fact that each is successful in their endeavors.) Know-how is different from propositional knowledge. But it is propositional knowledge that we have

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<sup>32</sup>For extensive discussion and documentation, see e.g., Friedman, *Intellectual Traditions at the Medieval University*. Also, Williams, "Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Henry of Ghent, and John Duns Scotus: On the Theology of the Father's Intellectual Generation of the Word," 35–81.



been discussing in regard to the divine persons. So, the example does not seem relevant.

Still, it may be that Hasker is after the issue of whether I am proposing that the divine persons must consciously deliberate about what to do in relation to contingent beings. I have not ascribed to the divine persons the need to consciously deliberate in order to perform some creative action. Rather, I have offered an account of how it is that the divine persons may be self-aware *and* that they share numerically the same divine essence, nature, power, and uses of mental tokens (without being identical to the same singular divine essence). Or, Hasker may be after the issue of whether a divine person must be aware of a mental token itself in order to think and act based on thinking. In the analysis I've given, a divine person uses a mental token and thereby is aware of a proposition. A divine person need not be occurrently aware (so to speak) of the mental token itself in order to use it. The mental token itself is dispositionally present (so to speak) to the divine person. Given this, a divine person can just think different propositions without being (occurrently) aware of the mental tokens themselves.

Hasker ends this objection with speculating on why I have posited a divine mental language in the first place. He judges that the only justification is "the role they play in Williams's own model, in that they enable him to avoid a multi-powers view of the divine persons." Hasker is half-right. A *desirable outcome* of the Latin Social model, what I am now calling a Conciliar Social model, is that it is consistent with Jewish monotheism and Conciliar Trinitarianism, and with metaphysical arguments that conclude that there is just one ultimate source or cause of contingent beings. If I were to adopt or champion a "multiple-powers view" of the Trinity, then I would judge that I would not have a model of the Trinity that is consistent with Jewish monotheism, nor with Conciliar Trinitarianism, nor with e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, nor with metaphysical arguments that conclude with there being just one ultimate source or cause for contingent beings. These are good reasons to work out a defensible Conciliar Social model of the Trinity, and that's what I'm trying to do!

*Objection 5 and Reply to 5: What is an Occurrent Intellectual Act, Ontologically Speaking?*

In the following passage Hasker summarizes my ontological account of the divine persons' awareness of a given proposition and then raises what I label a "truth-maker objection."

The mental act that is shared between the Persons is the use of the token of the mentalese sentence, "I am wise." So far, perhaps, so good. It is this shared token that directs this mental act to a proposition—in this case, to a different proposition for each Person. But where, we may wonder, is the ontological account of the awareness on the part of each Person of the diverse propositions of which each of them becomes aware—in the case of the Father, that "I (viz. the Father) am wise," for the Son, that "I (viz. the Son) am wise," and

for the Spirit, that “I (viz. the Spirit) am wise”? No such account is provided by merely stating that each of the Persons is making use of the same identical mental token. Williams, however, states that his account of indexicals like “I” is “an externalist account; so, the ontological facts required are the agent and the agent’s context. Here, the ontological facts are (1) God the Father and (2) using a token of “I am wise.” I claimed that these explain (and ground) why the Father knows what it’s like to think <I (God the Father) am wise>.” I don’t think such an account can be satisfactory. It may well be that facts (1) and (2) *explain* the Father’s awareness, in that it is impossible that those facts obtain and yet the Father fail to be aware. But it cannot be that those facts *ground* the awareness, in the sense that those facts, by themselves, are what the awareness consists of.<sup>33</sup>

I especially like this objection; it points out a need for further clarification. Without this further clarification, the account is incomplete. Even if I have given an explanation, it’s only an incomplete explanation because I still need to identify the ontological ground of each divine person’s self-awareness. If I don’t do this, then everything that is distinctive about the Conciliar Social model won’t work, and it would be seen as indefensible. What can be said in defense of this Conciliar Social model?

To respond to this objection, I limit myself to discussing a specific example in which each divine person has self-knowledge. I exclude discussion of any contingent or created beings. The example to be considered is this: each divine person shares numerically the same use of a divine mental token of “I am.” In a previous articulation, I claimed that each divine person would be aware of a different proposition in such a case. Case 1: God the Father is aware of the proposition that “I (i.e. God the Father) am.” Case 2: God the Son is aware of the proposition that “I (i.e. God the Son) am.” Case 3: God the Holy Spirit is aware of the proposition that “I (i.e. God the Holy Spirit) am.” Now the question: shouldn’t we count three different mental acts here, one for each proposition that is the object of awareness? The suggestion is that mental acts are numerically distinct on the basis of different known propositions (or intentional objects). On this suggestion, it’s the object of which one is aware that individuates such intellectual acts. More needs to be said about all this.

There are several ways that I could develop an answer to this question. I will suggest one way, while being cognizant that there might be different ways to develop an answer. (This is speculative stuff!) Constantinople III’s “canonical logic” says that we should not count the number of powers or volitions according to the number of divine persons. Likewise, we should not count the number of divine intellectual acts according to the number of divine persons, as if one divine person could think something that the other divine persons don’t think. What, then, is a divine intellectual act, that is, an act of being aware of a proposition? I suggest the following: the divine persons share numerically the same use of the divine mental token

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<sup>33</sup>Hasker, “Is the Latin Social Trinity Defensible?” 512.

of “I am,” but they do not share certain relations that are in addition to the shared use of the divine mental token. In this example, I think it’s plausible to posit certain relations in addition to the shared use of the divine mental token of “I am.” The divine persons’ shared use of a mental token is like an absolute quality.<sup>34</sup> One of the relations is the object’s *measuring* the use of “I” in the mental token. The “I” gets associated with a specific semantic meaning, that is, a referent. The second relation is that the use of “I” is *measured by* a referent. (This is a correlative of the measuring relation.) The third relation (in this case) is that the divine person *tends to* herself. This *tending to* relation picks out the fact that a divine person is aware of herself as present and existing (rather than in abstraction from their own existence).<sup>35</sup> This account is general, and we can plug in Cases 1–3 in order to address Hasker’s truth-maker objection. Before going into the application, I sum up the proposal as follows. (I use “themselves” as a singular reflexive pronoun.)

A divine person, *p*, is aware of a *de se* proposition that *p* herself is if and only if (i) *p* is united to an absolute quality, *q*, namely the quality of ‘using a mental token of “I am,” (ii) *p* measures *q*, (iii) *q* is measured by *p*, and (iv) *p* tends to *p*.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to restate that what each divine person is aware of is a certain proposition. Being aware of a given proposition is different from being aware of (i)–(iv).

Why posit (ii) and (iii)? (ii) and (iii) are the ontological grounds for the general claim that the one who says or thinks, “I am,” contributes to the meaning of “I am.” The meaning of “I am” is (partially) determined by who says it. (I assume that Hasker accepts something like the claim that the one who says “I” contributes to its reference. But it remains to be seen if Hasker takes this in any ontological sense. If we accept his suggestion that it’s just “primitive” that a mental act has the content it has, then it’s not clear what it would mean to claim that an agent contributes to the meaning of “I.” Surely it is very plausible that an agent contributes to the reference of “I,” as David Kaplan and John Perry have argued.)<sup>37</sup> Why posit (iv)? We need to make some ontological sense of the claim that sometimes a person is aware of herself here and now, as present and existing, rather than in an abstract way (abstracting from her existence here and now). So, this “tending to” relation exists in such a case.

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<sup>34</sup>For discussion of categorizing such a mental act as a quality, or a relation, or an action, see Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 102–121.

<sup>35</sup>This account is inspired by Duns Scotus. See Cross, *Duns Scotus’s Theory of Cognition*, 150–169.

<sup>36</sup>With regard to intellectual cognition of something as existing and present before the agent, there is an additional concern in the case of merely contingent beings, namely, that the relevant intentional object needs to exist and be intellectually accessible to the knower. In the case of the Trinity, the divine persons are not contingent existents. So, to be more explicit we may add the condition that *p* exists and is intellectually accessible to *p*.

<sup>37</sup>For discussion, see Williams, “Indexicals and the Trinity,” 78–82.

Here is the application of this proposal to Cases 1–3:

Case 1: God the Father is *de se* aware of himself if and only if:

- (1.i) God the Father shares (with all other divine persons) numerically the same use of the divine mental token of “I am,”
- (1.ii) God the Father *measures* the shared use of “I am,”
- (1.iii) The shared use of “I am,” is *measured by* God the Father, and
- (1.iv) God the Father *tends to* God the Father.

Case 2: God the Son is *de se* aware of himself if and only if:

- (2.i) God the Son shares (with all other divine persons) numerically the same use of the divine mental token of “I am,”
- (2.ii) God the Son *measures* the shared use of “I am,”
- (2.iii) The shared use of “I am,” is *measured by* God the Son, and
- (2.iv) God the Son *tends to* God the Son.

Case 3: God the Holy Spirit is *de se* aware of himself if and only if:

- (3.i) God the Holy Spirit shares (with all other divine persons) numerically the same use of the divine mental token of “I am,”
- (3.ii) God the Holy Spirit *measures* the shared use of “I am,”
- (3.iii) The shared use of “I am,” is *measured by* God the Holy Spirit, and
- (3.iv) God the Holy Spirit *tends to* God the Holy Spirit.

How many mental acts are there? Well, it depends on what you mean by a “mental act.” For many Social Trinitarians, their attention has been drawn to what’s on the left-hand side of the “if and only if.” If we focus on that, we’ll be tempted (perhaps like Hasker) to posit that there’s just one mental act for each proposition that is known. For, he says, “*To be aware of a proposition is precisely to perform a mental act.*”<sup>38</sup> But if we look at the right-hand side of the “if and only if” we get a complex ontological account because it is attentive to specific facts, such as the fact that the one who says “I” contributes to the meaning of “I.”<sup>39</sup> But what does this mean, ontologically speaking? In my analysis, this requires (i)–(iii). And, we need (iv) to pick out the fact that the divine person in question is aware of himself as

<sup>38</sup>Hasker, “Can a Latin Trinity Be Social?” 365.

<sup>39</sup>For my discussion of the indexical “I,” and my rejection of e.g., Brian Leftow’s analysis of it, see Williams, “Indexicals and the Trinity,” 78–83.

present and existing (and not being aware of oneself in a manner that is abstracted from one's own existence).

So, how many "mental acts" are there? It depends what we are talking about. If we focus only on what we might label the phenomenology, that is, the left-hand side of the "if and only if," then we might be tempted to say that there are three unshared "mental acts." (So: The Father's act of being self-aware, the Son's act of being self-aware, and the Holy Spirit's act of being self-aware.) And, if we suppose that, then we might be tempted to assert that there are (or must be) three distinct mental powers for each unshared mental act. So, we'd be led to counting the number of divine persons by the number of unshared "mental acts," understood as what's on the left-hand side of the "if and only if." That's how Hasker would seem to reason. And it is this way of reasoning that seems to lead him to disagree with the pronouncements of Constantinople III. (At least, that is how one might reconstruct his reasoning.)<sup>40</sup>

But my commitment to articulating an ontological account of "mental acts," and an account that is consistent with the "canonical logic" endorsed by Constantinople III (and consistent with Gregory of Nyssa's "Not Three Gods"), and my other reasons for rejecting a "multi-power" theory, each lead me to question this way of reasoning. If we wish to understand (a little better) how the communion of the divine persons figures into the topic of the divine persons' "thoughts," it seems to me that the question, "How many unshared mental acts are there?" is only one of several relevant questions. We need to attend to the right-hand side of the "if and only if." By doing that it becomes clearer that there is no straightforward answer to that question. If we focus on (iv) the "tending to" relation alone, we would count three unshared acts, assuming that we call this relation an "act." If we focus on (i) the shared use of a divine mental token, we would count just one (shared) act. So, I take it that the question, "How many unshared mental acts are there?" is not as informative as one might otherwise have supposed. What's clear(er) is that we must attend just as much to the ontology of "thought" as to the (so-called) phenomenology of "thought."

By attending to the ontology described in (i)–(iv), we can recognize that the "tending to" relation shouldn't be treated as a standalone entity, as though it itself identifies or explains the ontological ground of what's on the left-hand side of the "if and only if." A "mental act," as defined by (i)–(iv), turns out to be a complex thing, like a whole. One might be tempted to use whole-part relations to describe what's going on. (I'm not certain about this, yet; but it is illustrative.) One might suppose that Case 1 identifies one whole that shares a key part with Case 2 and Case 3, namely (i) the shared use of a divine mental token. If one gives this description, then we have a way to show how the ontology of the divine persons "thoughts" is analogous to the traditional ontology of what unifies and what distinguishes

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<sup>40</sup>See Hasker, *Metaphysics and the Tri-Personal God*, 206–207.

the divine persons. Just as the divine persons share numerically the same divine nature and power(s), so too do the divine persons share numerically the same use of all divine mental tokens. Just as each divine person has their own incommunicable or unshareable ontological property,<sup>41</sup> so, too, are the divine persons united to *some* incommunicable or unshareable intellectual relations (measuring, measured, tending to). These incommunicable intellectual relations only obtain in special cases in which an essential indexical like “I” is involved.

In most cases, the divine persons share the same intellectual relations (measuring, measured, tending to). When we consider the divine persons’ actions with regard to created things “visible and invisible,” on my account, the divine persons share numerically the same actions (including these three intellectual relations). Note that in most cases in which the divine mental token does not include indexicals like, “I,” the divine persons share all of these intellectual relations. This is in accord with how Gregory of Nyssa individuates divine actions when writing about the divine persons’ shared actions toward creatures. Creative actions are not individuated by any of the divine persons’ personal (unshared) properties, but rather by whatever is intrinsic to the action itself. This is precisely what we should expect from a model of the Trinity that posits a “one-power” account.

Still, there is an informative question for my proposed account regarding (i). If the divine persons share numerically the same use of the divine mental token of “I am,” then wouldn’t the Father be aware of the Son? In fact, wouldn’t the Father be aware of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and not only himself?<sup>42</sup> This objection has a crucial assumption, namely: If a divine person, *p*, is united to a shared use of a mental token, then *p* is united to any and all measure and tending relations that accompany the shared use of “I am.”

Given my analysis, this conditional is false. That is, I deny that the antecedent is sufficient for the consequent. In my view, the Father’s using “I am,” entails that the Father is aware that the Father is; it doesn’t entail that the Father is aware that the Son is. But why is this conditional false? To answer this question, I need to describe the connection between the shared use of the mental token of “I am,” and the three accompanying relations as given in (ii)–(iv). (The short answer: that’s just how the essential indexical “I” works!)

These relations are not identical to the shared use of the mental token of “I am.” The term “I” is itself undetermined with regard to its referent, and it itself remains so even when accompanied with a measured by relation. For, the “I” itself is semantically undetermined, but the measured by relation is semantically determined. This indicates that the mental token of “I” itself is not identical to the accompanying measured by relations.

<sup>41</sup>See Williams, “Unity of Action in a Latin Social Trinity,” 324–327.

<sup>42</sup>Thanks to Richard Cross for discussion on this question in relation to Duns Scotus.

Although the “I” in the mental token is *measured by* each divine person, this measured relation does not change the “I” in the way that a potentiality is changed into an actuality. It is not the case that “I” is like matter that becomes a specific semantic content (form). In this potentiality-actuality model (which I reject), if “I” were actualized by a measure, then the measured by relation would be an attribute of the mental token of “I” itself. If the measured by relation were an attribute of the term “I” itself, then any divine person who is united to this use of the term “I” would be united to its attributes, including all three of the measured by relations.

The following is an illustration of something that can be accompanied by three different measured by relations, and yet it itself is undetermined. A grassy field can be measured by 360’ by 160’ (for playing American football). The same grassy field can be measured by 64’ by 30’ (for playing dodgeball). And the same grassy field can be measured by 125 meters by 85 meters (for playing actual *football* (soccer)). The same grassy field can be measured (at the same time) by three different measures, and the same grassy field is not identical to any of these measured by relations. The mental token of “I” is like the grassy field in the sense that it can be accompanied by different measured by relations at the same time. (There are many significant disanalogies, of course. The only point I’m trying to make here is that the divine persons’ shared use of “I” is compatible with different measured by relations, and this use of “I” is not identical to any of these measured by relations, just as the same field can be accompanied by different measured by relations without being identical to any of these measured by relations.)

While the divine persons share numerically the same use of “I am,” they do not share the same measuring relations in this case. Only God the Father can measure the “I” such that the “I” is measured by God the Father. God the Son is just the wrong person to do that (given that the Father and Son are not identical to each other). God the Father’s *measuring* the use of “I” is ontologically incommunicable. Likewise, God the Son’s *measuring* the use of “I” is ontologically incommunicable, and so too God the Holy Spirit’s *measuring* the use of “I” is ontologically incommunicable. Each of the *tending to* relations exists because of (i)–(iii) in each of the three cases. The reason why the Father isn’t aware of the Son or the Holy Spirit in their shared use of “I am,” is because the Father fails to satisfy the following Essential Indexical Principle for Divine Persons.

*Essential Indexical Principle for Divine Persons:*

If a divine person, *p*, is united to a divine shared use of “I am,” then among the *tending to* relations that accompany this shared use of “I am,” *p* is united only to the *tending to* relation that is partially caused by, or explained by, *p*’s measuring the shared use of “I am.”

In case (1), only the Father tends to the Father because they are the only measure of the use of the mental token of “I am” that partially causes (or explains) the “tending to the Father” relation. Although the shared use of “I am” is accompanied by the relation of being measured by the Son, the

Father's union with this shared use of "I am" doesn't unite them to this measured by relation (i.e., measured by the Son). Why? Because in the special case of the essential indexical token, "I am," only the one measuring (*p*) the use of the token of "I" is united to the correlative measured by relation. This is a feature that makes the essential indexical "I" so unique. This special case doesn't happen in other cases that do not include the essential indexical "I."<sup>43</sup>

Here is a parallel example to illustrate how different divine persons share numerically the same thing, but not the same relations that accompany that shared thing. God the Father is united to the singular, shared (trope of the) divine essence in an "ungenerated" way, and the singular (shared) divine essence is "in" the Father in an "ungenerated" way. God the Son is united to the singular (shared) divine essence in a "generated" way, and the singular (shared) divine essence is "in" the Son in an (eternally) "generated" way.<sup>44</sup> Although the Father is united to numerically the same divine essence as the Son is, it does not follow that the Father is united to the divine essence in a "generated" way. Just as the divine persons are united to numerically the same divine essence, though in different ways,<sup>45</sup> so, too, are the divine persons united to numerically the same use of the mental token of "I am," though in different ways.

God the Father is united to numerically the same use of the mental token of "I am" in the "ungenerated way"; God the Son is united to numerically the same use of the mental token of "I am" in the "generated way"; and God the Holy Spirit is united to numerically the same use of the mental token of "I am" in the "spirited way." Each of these different ways of being united to the singular divine essence are compatible with different measuring relations, measured by relations, and tending to relations. The way that God the Father is united to this shared use of the mental token of "I am," is that they add (ii) God the Father's measuring the use of the mental token of "I am," and as a consequence of (ii), they thereby add to the use of the mental token of "I am" that it is (iii) measured by God the Father.

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<sup>43</sup>Consider a different example: the divine persons share the use of the divine mental token of "God the Father is wise." In this case, each divine person is aware of the proposition that God the Father is wise. Here, only God the Father measures the subject term in the mental token of "God the Father." And, the correlative measured by relation accompanies the divine persons' shared use of this divine mental token. There are no other "measured by" relations that accompany this shared use of this mental token of "God the Father." So, there's only one subject in the proposition that is available to be known through the divine persons' shared use of the mental token, "God the Father is wise." Note that this is an incomplete account because I am not here focusing on the predicate term "wise."

<sup>44</sup>This is in accord with what Gregory says about the distinction between (e.g.,) the Father being "ungenerated" and the Son being "begotten." See Gregory of Nyssa, "Not Three Gods," 160. For more on this see, Friedman, *Medieval Trinitarian Thought from Aquinas to Ockham*; and Paasch, *Divine Production in Late Medieval Trinitarian Theology*, 31–45, 61–77. I am working on a book on Henry of Ghent's Trinitarian theology in which I object to some of Paasch's interpretations of Henry of Ghent. Nonetheless, his discussion is very informative.

<sup>45</sup>This is in accord with what Gregory of Nyssa says in "Not Three Gods," 160.



This being “measured by” relation accompanies the (shared) use of “I am.” Further, given God the Father’s existence and intellectual presence, (iv) the relation of tending to the Father, obtains. The (iii) measured by relation and the (iv) tending to relation (in these cases) essentially depend on (i) the use of the mental token of “I am” and (ii) the measuring relation. A divine person can’t be united to (iv), the tending to God the Father relation, merely through the use of the mental token of “I am,” alone. Rather, they need to satisfy conditions (i) *and* (ii). If another divine person, e.g., God the Son, is united to numerically the same use of the mental token of “I am,” but God the Son is not identical to (i) the measure that is God the Father, then God the Son can’t be united to (iv) the tending to God the Father relation, through the use of the mental token of “I am.” God the Son meets only one necessary condition for tending to God the Father (that is, sharing the same use of “I am”), but God the Son does not meet all the conditions that are necessary and jointly sufficient. For, God the Son doesn’t satisfy the *Essential Indexical Principle for Divine Persons*. That is, God the Son doesn’t *per se* cause, or explain, this tending to God the Father relation, nor does God the Son *per se* cause, or explain, God the Father’s measuring the use of “I am.” So, God the Son can’t tend to God the Father in this case.

By distinguishing the “use of a mental token of ‘I am,’” and the relations that accompany it, namely (ii), (iii), and (iv), there is a coherent way to explain why it is that the divine persons share numerically the same use of a divine mental token but not identically the same intentional objects (here, propositions) through this shared use of this mental token. In case (1), God the Father is *de se* aware of himself, and not any other divine person, because they satisfy the conditions for it. And in this example, they do not satisfy the conditions for being *de se* aware of God the Son, nor for being *de se* aware of God the Holy Spirit. Similarly, in case (2), God the Son is *de se* aware of himself, and not any other divine person, because they satisfy all the necessary conditions that are jointly sufficient for this, but not all the conditions for being *de se* aware of God the Father or God the Holy Spirit.

Hasker contends that although I explained the divine persons’ sharing the same use of a mental token such that each is aware of a different intentional object, nonetheless I hadn’t identified the ontological grounds for the divine persons’ being aware of the different propositions. I have now answered this truth-maker objection by proposing, and motivating, (i)–(iv), as the requisite ontological grounds.

### Conclusion

Whereas Hasker appeals to each of the divine persons’ own *unshareable* wisdom, *unshareable* omniscience, and *unshareable* goodness as an explanation for the necessary unity of their actions,<sup>46</sup> I have given an account that

<sup>46</sup>For my discussion and references, see Williams, “Unity of Action in a Latin Social Trinity,” 321–322, 339–344.

makes their necessary unity of action a little less mysterious, and it better secures their *necessary* unity of action. I did this by articulating the Conciliar Social model according to which the divine persons share numerically the same divine nature, numerically the same divine power(s), numerically the same divine volitions, etc., and by offering an account of how all this can fit with a consideration of the unique example of each divine person's unshared *de se* propositional awareness.

Given the Conciliar Social model's coherence, and fit with Conciliar Trinitarianism, it remains defensible. But Hasker's Social model is inconsistent with Conciliar Trinitarianism and inconsistent with a more plausible interpretation of Gregory of Nyssa's "Not Three Gods." These, then, are good reasons to doubt the defensibility of Hasker's Social model of the Trinity, and remain theologically and philosophically optimistic about a Conciliar Social model of the Trinity.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>Thanks to William Hasker for his thoughtful engagement in print, and through email, regarding the Trinity. This is hard stuff; it's so much better to suffer divine things together! I also wish to thank Tim Pawl, Beau Branson, and Matthew Baddorf for comments on an earlier draft of this paper. I have further objections against Hasker's Social model, but I leave these for another time and place.

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