

A Gödelian Approach to the Trinity

[Abstract: A thesis of Thomistic theologians is that natural reason cannot know that mysteries like the Trinity are possible (see, e.g., Yves Simon, "The Rationality of the Christian Faith" in Philosopher at Work, p. 46). That means we cannot prove they are consistent. Gödel showed the same thing about arithmetic. I think we can show the converse of the Trinity: No one can prove that it is inconsistent, at least not on the grounds that it violates the transitivity of identity (TI). We can show that anyone who uses TI against the Trinity can only beg the question by assuming that TI must apply to the Trinity. Usually it is not question begging to refute a thesis by showing that it violates a law of logic. But Aquinas has premises from which it follows that, in this individual case, i.e., the case in which these premises are true, a situation exists that is not governed by TI without qualification. So from these premises it follows that TI is not an "absolute" law of logic in the sense of applying to all possible cases. Against premises whose possible truth permit a "violation" of TI, it is not enough to argue that their truth is not possible since they imply that TI is not true in all possible cases. We must either refute the premises independently of invoking TI or provide a demonstration showing that any violation of TI would be outside the realm of possibility, i.e., be inconsistent. Short of that, you cannot prove that the Trinity is inconsistent. But that is all we need for the Trinity to be eligible to be an object of faith. The fact that we cannot prove the consistency of arithmetic does not make it illogical to believe that arithmetic is consistent. A fortiori, if we knew we could not prove that arithmetic is inconsistent, we would know that nothing could show the belief in its consistency to be illogical. Likewise, knowing that we cannot prove the inconsistency of the Trinity, we know that the Trinity is eligible to be an object of belief without fear of its ever being shown illogical. As far as reason can know, the falsehood of the Trinity is logically possible, but that holds for any "epistemologically contingent", contingent as far as our ability to know it is concerned, truth.]

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Whether or not Aquinas's apparent response to the objection about transitivity of identity in the Trinity works, there is another implicit answer in Aquinas to that objection. There is an implicit answer that we can get out of what he says, and one that is consistent with everything else he says, but an answer he does not explicitly make. And that answer does work.

Kurt Godel shows that it is impossible to prove the consistency of arithmetic. To show this is not to show that arithmetic is inconsistent. It is only to show that its consistency is not subject to proof.

This study argues that the converse can be shown for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity: It is impossible to prove the inconsistency of the Trinity. Showing the impossibility of proving the inconsistency of the Trinity is not the same as showing that the Trinity is indeed consistent. My argument will leave open a logical possibility of the doctrine of the Trinity containing an inconsistency. If my argument is correct, however, it is impossible for us to know that the Trinity is inconsistent. So the unreasonableness of believing in the Trinity is not subject to logical proof. If the doctrine of the Trinity is false, it's falsehood is as much a matter of faith as is it's truth.

Some theologians have held that the Trinity is so far above reason that reason cannot even know it's possibility. This position would be paradoxical if we were able to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is, at least, consistent. When we know that something is not logically inconsistent, we know that it is logically possible. The godelian approach avoids that paradox. We don't know that the Trinity is consistent, only that it's (logically possible) inconsistency is beyond knowledge.

To establish the godelian thesis about the Trinity I will make use of Aquinas's analysis of the Trinity. In fact, I will show that the godelian thesis follows from some of Aquinas's principles. Whether or not the godelian

conclusion was what Aquinas had in mind and is another matter into which I will not enter.

The Trinity's appearance of inconsistency comes from its apparent violation of the transitivity of identity. There is one God. The Father is that God. The son is also that God. But the Father and son are not the same person.

Aquinas's reply is based on his assumption that the distinction of persons in God is constituted by the presence in God of relatedness. Each of the persons is identical with the divine being because a specific form of relatedness is identical with the divine being. But relatedness is, by definition, a relatedness between terms, terms that are at least logically distinct. Similarity is similarity of one thing to another. Equality is equality between quantities represented twice in order for there to be a multiplicity of terms for the relation. Relatedness, therefore, involves at least a minimal otherness, opposition, difference, between terms of the relation. Therefore where there is identity between a form of relatedness and the divine nature, there is also some kind of relative opposition, nonidentity, with something. Where there is identity from the point of view of a form of relatedness also being a nature that is one, there is some kind of nonidentity from the point of view of the opposition required in order for a form of relatedness to be a form of relatedness.

Specifically, the relatedness postulated by Aquinas is an asymmetric form of relatedness. That is, in aRb , the existence of the R requires of the existence of the (at least logically) distinct terms a and b and also implies the truth of bR^*a , where R^* is a distinct form of relatedness from R . For example, the truth of " a knows b " requires the truth of " a is known by b ", and the meaning of " knows" is not the same as the meaning of " is known by", though it is possible that in a particular case, what is referred to by " knows" and " is known by", as well as by " a " and " b ", may be only logically

distinct.

Aquinas's assumption is that to the truth of " God knows God" there corresponds a genuine form of relatedness answering to the verb " knows". In other words, not only does "a knows a" imply a logical distinction between a's nature and its knowing of itself, but in the case of God, it involves a genuine form of relatedness.

What is the cash value of speaking of a " the genuine form of relatedness" in the case of God? A relation can be either a real (non-imaginary, not merely conceived) being or a being of reason. For a relation to be real, it's terms must be really distinct. Hence, postulating relatedness as a feature of God identical with his nature implies the existence of a real multiplicity in God. But how can this multiplicity exist in God?

Relations are not the only features we can predicate of God. But the multiplicity of predicates does not imply any real multiplicity in the divine nature. God's justice is his mercy, is his knowledge, etc. Relations, however, differ from other predicates in implying their correlative opposites, as we have just seen. If a knows b, b is known by a. And Aquinas holds that relations allow for multiplicity in God because, if one relation can be predicated of God, so can its correlative opposite. Thus, just as there is a relation corresponding to God to being a knower of himself, so there is a relation corresponding to the God's being known by himself. Note that the opposition between these relations is not the opposition of contradictories but of correlatives. If the opposition were between contradictories, we could demonstrate the impossibility of the Trinity on Aquinas's account. In fact, there is no reason for what is expressed by "A's knowing B" and "B's being known by A" to be in anyway really different. (They are, of course, logically different.) But the cash value of saying that in God, there is a genuine relatedness corresponding both to his knowing and his being known by himself is that the relatedness puts relative opposition, and,

hence multiplicity, in the God while preserving identity, on the part of each form of relatedness, with the unitary **the divine nature**.

Aquinas's reply is based on the assumption that there are a plurality of really distinct forms of relatedness in God, each form of relatedness being identical with the divine nature. Considered absolutely, that is, considered in their identity with a being who is not just a form of relatedness to another existent, there is no distinction between these forms of relatedness. But relation, as such, implies opposition to a correlative. Therefore, these relations can remain opposed, and, hence multiple, as relations even while being identical with something that is more than just a relation.

The assumption just stated may itself appear to violate the transitivity of identity, but before replying directly to that objection let us see how Aquinas tries to use the assumption to defend the Trinity against the charge of violating transitivity.

He tells us that transitivity of identity holds if the identity is both real and logical but not if the identity is real only. On its face, this formula is not consistent with Aquinas's theory of truth, which always requires a logical diversity of what is really identical. If the formula is correct, transitivity could never hold for things whose identity we know by means of true statements. Whatever Aquinas might mean by this formula, it is not difficult to see how the examples by which he illustrates it apply to the problem of transitivity in the Trinity.

To understand his main example, we have to understand a little of Aristotle's analysis of causality. (To understand Aristotle, we have to put aside the acquired, post-Humous conceptions of causality or academic training has imposed on us.) For Aristotle, a thing undergoes a change because it cannot remain what it is given that something other than itself (the efficient cause) the is what he is. For example, it is impossible to imagine one billiard ball rolling and striking another without imagining some other change

taking place when they meet. The hypothesis of the moving ball hitting the stationary one with no other change taking place is contradictory. If the previously moving ball ceases to move, that is a change. If it does not cease to move, some change must take place in the previously stationary ball, if it does not move out of the path of the first ball, it must change from being solid to a state that enables the first ball to pass through it.

Whatever the second change is, it takes place because something cannot remain what it is given that it, the material cause, and something other than itself, the efficient cause, are what they are. That is the sense in which an efficient cause "produces" a change in the material cause. Given the state the efficient cause is in, for example, in motion as it contacts the material cause, and given the nature of the material cause, the material cause cannot remain what it is; it must change.

In addition to thus producing the change, does the efficient cause produce something else we might call it's "action" or its "causing of the change?" Such an hypothesis is not only superfluous, it initiates an infinite regress. The only thing that emanates from the efficient cause is the change that the material cause undergoes. That change is the action of the efficient cause. But that change is also the passion of the material cause. The change is identical with the action of the efficient cause and identical with the passion of the material cause. Is action therefore identical with passion?

Aquinas replies no. Action is the change as related to the efficient cause by a relation of the emergence-from; passion is the change as related to the material cause by a relation of residing-in. therefore transitivity of identity does not apply to action and passion even though both are identical with a change.

The application to the Trinity is clear. Both the Father and the son are identical with the divine nature. But the Father is the divine nature insofar as the divine nature has (is) a relation of paternity. The son is the divine nature insofar as the divine nature has (is) a relation of filiation.

As one with the divine nature, these relations are not opposed; but as relative, they are opposed. Therefore, transitivity of identity fails for the Father and son as it does for action and passion.

But does it really fail for action and passion, even granting Aquinas his Aristotelian assumptions about causality? There is an objection to Aquinas's analysis of transitivity in the case of action, passion, and change, that illuminate his analysis of transitivity the Trinity. Is action or passion identical with the change or with the composite of change and its relation to the efficient or material cause, respectively? If identical with the composite, there is no transitivity of identity, but there is no identity with the change taken as distinct from the relation, on the one hand and the composite the change makes with the relation, on the other. The union of change and a relation to an efficient cause is identical neither with the union of change and a relation to the material cause nor with that change considered in itself.

On the other hand, by "action" for "passion" we can mean that which has either of the relations, taking the *that which* as something nonidentical with the relation or with the composite the relation makes with it. If so, when we say an action is identical with a change and a passion is identical with a change, an action is identical with a passion; for that which is an action is also that which is a passion. Note that we are not saying that action is passion in the sense that to be an action would be identical with being a passion. To be an action is to have one relation; to be a passion is to have another. But the identity under discussion is not between what it is to be an action and what it is to be a passion; the identity is between that which is an action and that which is a passion.

This objection seems to nullify the examples by which Aquinas tried to show how transitivity of identity can be restricted. But what is illuminating about the objection is that it does not work against Aquinas's analysis of transitivity in the Trinity. The Father is God taken with the relation of

paternity; the son is God taken with the relation of filiation. But each of these relations is identical with the divine nature; they do not form composites with it. Therefore, if diverse relations can be identical with the divine nature, we can say that the Father and son are the same insofar as they are identical with the nature yet diverse insofar as, being relations, they imply opposition to their terms, the terms being in this case the opposite relations. Since the relations are opposed as relations, as forms of relatedness, as relative, we cannot identify God taken as having the relation of filiation with God taken as having the relation of paternity. But we can identify each of these relations with the divine nature.

The crucial assumption, then, is the assumption that the divine nature can include diverse relations. There is an obvious objection to this assumption. But let us put off consideration of it until we have reflected on what the cash value is of positing relations, as opposed to absolute modes of being, in God.

Aquinas holds that, among our predicates, some of them signify modes of being capable of existing in an infinite state and some of them signify modes of being capable of existing only in a finite state. For some modes of being, the causes necessary for their existence, as determined by their nature, make it impossible for them to exist in an infinite state. For others, the causes necessary for their existence do not require that their existence be limited. Among the latter modes of being are goodness, wisdom, power, knowledge, and so on. What is significant for us is that in their finite states such modes of being are often distinct from one another. But in their infinite state they can imply no diversity. God's wisdom must be the same as his love, his power, his goodness etc. the diverse predicates by which we attribute absolute modes of being to the divine nature imply no multiplicity in that nature itself.

It is precisely in this that attributing relations to God differs from

attributing absolute modes of being. Relatedness requires diversity of the terms of the relation. Even the logical relation of identity, as in $A = A$, requires diverse representations of a unitary thing in order for the relation to have diverse terms to relate.

Another way to express this is that as related, the terms of a relation are opposed. They may not be opposed in other respects, but they cannot function, either really or logically as the case may be, as terms of a relation *without ipso facto* being different terms of the relation. Often the opposition is only logical. When we say God knows himself, we signify God, his knowing, and the object of his knowing, distinctly, as if his knowledge of himself constituted a real binary relation. To posit even one relation as really identical with the divine nature, then, is to imply the existence of some diversity to supply the terms for the relation. By God's absolute attributes, he is not really related to anything. We use logical relations to articulate those attributes but they imply no real relatedness in God.

What can a relation postulated to be really identical with the divine nature relate God to? Only to himself. A necessary relation to creatures would limit his freedom in creating them and give creatures a causal role in specifying a feature of the divine nature. But how can God be related to himself by a real relation, requiring real diversity, if God is one? The diversity of terms for relations can be supplied only by relations themselves. Therefore, we can postulate one real relation in the divine essence only if we postulate another to provide the diversity of terms that the nature of relatedness requires. The sole significance of whatever differences there are between these relations, for example, between paternity and filiation, is to provide a term for the other relation. Other than being terms for one another, other than providing the relative opposition they each require in order to exist, the relations are identical. They are identical in the way

that God's goodness and knowledge are identical, that is, insofar as they are identical with a nature that is not really related to anything other than itself. They are not identical insofar as this nature is related to itself by a relatedness that is more than logical and that as relatedness requires real diversity of terms (since that is what real relatedness means).

Now to the objection. There is just one slight problem with the assumption of relative opposition with absolute identity in the divine nature; it violates the principle of transitivity of identity. The diverse relations could be found in God only if they were each identical with the divine nature and yet not identical with each other. If we cannot postulate one form of relatedness to be really identical with the divine nature without also postulating a *different* form, then we cannot postulate one form, for two different forms would have to be identical with a third thing while not being identical with each other. Aquinas's theory therefore assumes as possible the very point that must be shown possible.

But Aquinas's theory, or at least my use of it, is not an attempt to show the possibility of anything. It is only an attempt to show that the impossibility of something cannot be proven. And when she uses the transitivity of identity to show the impossibility of diverse relations in God, it is the opponent who begs the question; she assumes what she must prove. Aquinas can prove that from the assumption of real relatedness in God, it follows that a multiplicity of relatively diverse terms each identical with the divine nature but diverse as relative opposites, terms of the real relatedness, exist in God. He can also show that the truth of this assumption is not impeded by the fact that the relatedness is not accompanied by the inherence of a form in a subject really distinct from itself as in creatures. The only thing else that could impede it is the other kind of diversity that relations require, namely, the relative contrariety of terms called for by the

nature of relatedness.

Why would that diversity impede the postulation of relatedness in God? Because it would imply a case in which identity would not be transitive? But why should identity be transitive in such a case? Because it must always be transitive? But Aquinas's assumption supplies a reason why that would not be true in this case, assuming that his assumption is true. (Before Cantor it was thought always to be true that the whole was greater than the part. Cantor gave a reason why that is not true in a particular case.) As we saw above it is not just any assumption that will generate real multiplicity in God. Attributing absolute predicates to him will not do that. It is the nature of relatedness that would call for really diversity while preserving identity in all other respects (since the relations relate God to himself and not to anything other than himself.) Transitivity of identity would not apply to these relations insofar as they are relatively opposed, that is, insofar as they provide diverse terms for each other. For the sole thing accomplished by these relation's diversity is to constitute relatively opposed terms. Otherwise they are identical with this thing whose being has no real relations to anything other than himself, and as identical with the being of this thing, transitivity does apply to them.

It may be that transitivity is universally true, just as it may be that there can be no actually infinite multitude. But to prove that Aquinas's hypothesis is false one must do more than argue that it restricts transitivity of identity, just as to prove that an actually infinite multitude cannot exist, one must do more than argue that such a multitude would not be the greater than its parts. Since Aquinas can give a reason, which follows from his premises, for concluding that transitivity of identity is not true in a particular case, to use that conclusion to disprove his premises begs the question. You must argue against his premises on other grounds than that they

make identity intransitive in one case. Or you must argue independently that all identity must be transitive (For example, in Causal Realism, I argue against Cantor's premise of an actually existing infinity, not by just assuming that his conclusion must be false, but by giving an independent reason why his conclusion that a whole need not be greater than a part must be false.)

Footnote: Aquinas's assumption does not depend on his theory of real relations or even on his theory that logical relations are genuine relations. It only depends on the assumptions, first, that genuine relatedness does not require inherence-in where, second, genuine relatedness means a mode of being requiring real diversity of relative terms.

Xxx End of first draft, extended unfinished notes follow, 7-6-99

It is the opponent who must prove that transitivity applies even in that case. But he cannot do that without begging the question. But can we then assert any absurdity and accuse the opponent of begging the question if he denies the absurdity. No, the conclusion follows from assumptions that are not themselves contradictory. And if the opponent claims that they are contradictory solely on the grounds that their conclusion violates transitivity of identity, he is then begging the question by making the assertion that something that violates transitivity follows from these otherwise not contradictory assumptions is a proof that the assumptions are contradictory.

Summation: the way the argument is supposed to work is this. If we postulate the presence in God of a form of relatedness that is both identical with his essence and is a real as opposed to logical relatedness, it would follow necessarily that transitivity of identity would not apply to the identity between the essence and the relatedness. That would follow because there can be a real as opposed to logical form of relatedness only if there is a really existing term for that way of being related and distinct from that relatedness itself. But God can only have a real relation to himself. So if we postulate a form of relatedness in God, identical with his essence, we must postulate something really distinct from that relatedness to provide the term for that way of being related.

What could such a term be in God other than the contrary opposite form of relatedness? The distinction that is called for is the distinction between relative opposites. So it would follow that there is a distinction in God that amounts to no more than a distinction between a, which is nothing more

than a relation to b, and b, which is nothing more than a relation to a. In other words it would follow that there is a distinction in God between a, which is nothing but a way of facing b, and b, which is nothing but a way of facing a.

Since both a and b are identical with the divine essence, the divine essence is identical with one way of relating to itself, facing itself, communicating with itself, because it is at the same time identical with the corresponding relative opposite way of relating to, facing, and communicating with itself.

So there is identity between the essence and a, but the identity does not transfer. It is blocked from transferring by the fact that for a to be identical with the essence requires that the contrary opposite relation, b, is also identical with the essence. Or the essence can be identical with a only if it is also identical with the contrary opposite of a, b. A can have the divine essence only if it shares the divine essence completely with b. The divine essence is fatherhood only if it is also sonhood. Fatherhood can be the divine essence only as long as sonhood is the divine essence at the same time. Fatherhood can inhabit the divine essence completely only as long as sonhood inhabits it completely also. (They "inhabit," "dwell in," "subsist in," "exercise existence in" the same individual essence, and they inhabit it completely. "Inhabit" and "dwell in" "live in" are terrific metaphors, and I should use them more often. They do not solve any logical problems, but add a very helpful kind of intelligibility.) The divine essence can be identical with a way of facing itself, relating to itself, communicating with itself, only by being at the same time identical with the corresponding asymmetric opposite way of facing, relating, communicating with itself.

At this point can an opponent say that the fact that postulating a relation in God requires that transitivity of identity not apply to the

identity between the relation and God constitutes a view that is a reductio ad absurdum of that postulate?

The opponent would be begging the very question at issue. The whole point of postulating one relation in God is that (1) all other apparent problems with postulating one relation in God have been nullified. A relation does not require matter in order to exist, so nothing prevents it from existing in an infinite state. Nor does it require inherence in a subject to be a genuine relation. And (2) it follows necessarily from postulating a relation in God that transitivity does not apply to the identity between God and the relation. Since the premises of the argument show that if we postulate a relation in God, transitivity of identity does not apply, to show the impossibility of relation in God, you would have to show that the failure of transitivity leads to some other impossibility, and show it independently of merely assuming that transitivity of identity must apply in all cases.

Merely affirming a belief that transitivity must hold here would be like replying to the ontological argument for the existence of God merely by saying that the argument errs by trying to conclude from thought to thing. Unlike the belief in transitivity, it is true that one cannot conclude from thought to thing. But that truth is not sufficient as a refutation of the ontological argument. For that argument claims to show that there is one thought that, because of its unique content, precisely allows us to conclude from thought to thing.

In other words just as the Trinitarian claims to have a postulate, which, because of its unique content, escapes the law of transitivity, the ontological arguer claims to have a postulate that uniquely escapes from the law against concluding from thought to thing. The Trinitarian argument tries to give a reason for saying there is one particular case where transitivity of identity does not hold. Likewise the ontological argument tries to show that

there is one particular case where reasoning from thought to thing is not a fallacy.

In fact, in the whole history of philosophy only Cajetan has a refutation of the ontological argument that does not beg the question in this way, as Maritain implicitly recognized in The Dream of Descartes.

Trinity, formal systems, quantification, existence, 4-20-93:

An opponent might try to put the burden of proof on us by claiming that we must produce a version of a predicate calculus which does not have a transitivity law, although it has every other law that we might want, especially a law against contradictions. While it might be nice, in fact it would be nice, to have such a formal system, the opponent is begging the question in another way by asking for one.

Awareness that we can reach a formula by following the rules of a system for arranging strings of shapes, is not the same as awareness that any of the rules for the formula express something that is logically necessary. In fact, it's the other way around. Awareness that a step in a formal argument conforms to a rule requires an awareness of the validity of an inference about the step's instantiating the rule. And awareness of the validity of any inference requires implicit awareness of the necessary truth of laws of logic like modus ponens, categorical syllogism, and so on.

What this means is that formal methods of inference and formal systems are tools of logic, but not identical with logic, just as mathematics is a tool of physics, although awareness of mathematical truth is not the identical with awareness of truths of physics. And formal methods are even indispensable tool of logic, just as mathematics is an indispensable tool of physics.

But any tool has its limitations. For example, propositional calculi do not capture the centrality of principles of noncontradiction among necessary truths. A principle of noncontradiction is just one more formula of the calculus. So formal systems, no matter how indispensable they are to doing logic, are still imperfect models of logical relationships.

This is especially true of the way formal methods handle quantification. And the way logic handles quantification is very relevant to questions about making predications of, both absolute and relative predications.

By the rules of modern logic, making identity assertions like the God is the goodness, truth, fatherhood, sonhood, requires quantifying over a different range of items, namely predicates, than does quantifying over the individuals of which the predicate's are true. But metaphysics proves that distinction is irrelevant in the case of the individual we call the God and the properties of God that our predicates express. And so requiring that statements about God must be justified in terms of the rules of formal methods just begs the question in another way, by assuming the relevance of formal systems to the question.

Of course, those, and they are legion, who are habituated to thinking of every philosophical questions in terms of formal systems will not be satisfied with this. To them I point out that Aquinas has a premise from which non-transitivity follows. Aquinas has a premise, P, from which it logically follows that identity is not transitive in a certain case. Against that premise, in begs the question to argue that the premise cannot be true because it makes identity in transitive.

To show him wrong it is not enough to point out that a violation of transitivity follows from the premise. For the most that that can show is that the Trinity is not a model (i.e., an interpretation) for a system that has the transitivity law.

But some system could "model" Aquinas's premise (this of course uses "model" in a different sense, but I don't have a better word at the moment, and the fact that there is not a better word is probably significant. I should have said that the Trinity is not an interpretation for a system with the transitivity law.); the system would not have a transitivity law, because the failure of transitivity follows logically from that premise. So the opponent must show that no formal system would have an interpretation where Aquinas's premise held on grounds other than the fact that system did not have a transitivity law.

6-16-00

To defend my position, must I be able to argue that there can be a formal system in which transitivity of identity is not true but all other logical laws, the principle of noncontradiction, etc., are true? The construction of such a system would only be relevant if within that system that system we can express Aquinas's assumptions about the existence of relatedness in God. In order to express those assumptions we would need a different means of symbolizing so-called quantification. The inability of our present tools to symbolize quantification in the way necessary to express Aquinas's assumptions is not an argument against Aquinas's assumptions. It is just evidence for something that we should all know anyway, namely, that any tool is limited. And the inability of our present tools to express his assumptions is simply an indication of the limitation of the tools, not of any defect in his assumptions. And the limitation in the tool is not necessarily a defect in the tool, either.

Let us assume however that we have a system in which we can symbolize predicating relatedness of God just as we can symbolize predicating with identity goodness of God, etc. It would be necessary within that system that to predicate relatedness of God you also have to predicate an opposite kind of

relatedness. So the very consistency of the system, that is, the fact that the system supports the principle of noncontradiction, would require that transitivity of identity not apply to predications of relatedness in God the way they would apply to predications of all other perfections in God. So if all of Aquinas's other assumptions preceding and justifying the assumption about relatedness in God are correct, it follows that in this system, which must be able to express those assumptions, transitivity of identity could not and should not apply to relatedness in God. If it did, there would be something wrong with this system.

Another comment about whether my arguments could be expressed by means of a formal system. If so, we would have to be able to express the doctrine of the Trinity in the formal system. By that I mean that we would have to be able to express the identity of fatherhood with God, sonship with God, spiration with God. If we could not express the doctrine of the Trinity in the formal system, we could not use the formal system as an argument against, or to argue against, my defense of the Trinity. If the doctrine of the Trinity could not be expressed in a formal system, the formal system would be irrelevant to the truth or falsity of the doctrine Trinity.

But why would transitivity of identity be a law in this system for predicates of the relative kind? In general, the rules of the system allow predicates to be identical with the entities of which they are predicated. God is goodness. God is beauty. And so on. The rules of the system must also allow expressions of the doctrine of the Trinity to be well formed formulas. So just as God is goodness is a well formed formula of the system, so God is fatherhood is a well formed formula of the system. So relative predicates can be themselves identical with entities, the entities of which the predicates are predicated. (But I also need the premise that this

particular entity, God, is not – cannot be? – related to something other than itself by this real relation; and I need the premise that a real relation must have a real term distinct from itself.)

The rules for relative predicates in general, and not just the syntactical rules of well formed formulas but the rules of the truth of the formulas, require that when a real relation exists, whether or not it is identical with the entity of which is predicated, something nonidentical with the relation must exist to provide a relative opposite term for the relation. And that rule is satisfied by all ordinary statements about relations.

In the Trinity, however, when we apply that rule, we get the result that when an entity that is identical with the relation exists, something nonidentical with the relation must also exist. But in this case, we also get the result that the only way such a nonidentical term can exist is for an opposite relation to be also identical with the entity of which the relation is predicated.

But the rules of the system not only allow formulas like God is goodness to be well formed formulas, they also allow formulas like that to be true, possibly. They also allow formulas like God is fatherhood to be well formed. The question is whether such a well formed formula could be a truth of the system. The system would also have to be able to express to a formula like this: a relation does not have to have a potential subject in which it resides in order for it to exist. Rather, in order for it to be a genuine relation. And we have to be able to use that as a true premise.

But if that premise is true, and it is also true that the existence of a relation requires the existence of a distinct term, it will follow that transitivity of identity does not hold in that case. So transitivity of identity should not be a law of this system if the premise of the preceding paragraph can be accepted as a law.

Remember, we are talking about an ontological question not a logical question, just as the problem of the divine names is an ontological question not a logical question, as I show in the last chapter of Causal Realism. So when we are asking whether a formal system can show my argument to be incorrect, we have to be talking about a formal system operating under the ontological assumptions that precede the question of transitivity of identity. In other words, words we have to be talking about a formal system applied to the case where an entity can be identical with a relative predicate that is predicated truthfully of it. And we are talking about a formal system applied to the case where relations do not need to have subjects in which they inhere. And so on for any other assumption from which it would follow that fatherhood in sonship are each what the divine nature is, although fatherhood is not what sonship is.

For the final issue, the ultimate issue, is whether transitivity of identity must hold in a universe where those ontological assumptions hold. So the transitivity of identity in question is the issue of whether what fatherhood is is the same as what sonhood is, since what fatherhood is is the same as what the divine nature is and what sonhood is is the same as what the divine nature is. This is an ontological, not a logical, issue. For it if these ontological statements are true, then it follows that certain predicates must be attributable in a case where transitivity of identity will not hold for them. Likewise, if goodness does not require a matter in order to exist, then we must be able to predicate good or goodness of an infinite being, and so whatever logical analysis of these predicates we come up with (for example, that they must be analogical, not univocal) that analysis will have to be consistent with our predicating them of an infinite being.

01-04-00

The following remarks apply both to my treatment of the Trinity and my treatment of the incarnation. In fact they may well provide the key that ties together those two treatments.

Maybe only a pure act of existence can be identical with its own subsistence. Relations in God are not just identical with the essence they are identical with a pure act of existence. Maybe where there is a distinction between existence and essence it is impossible for the existence to be its own subsistence, because all the existence can do is to be received by something other than itself; to actualize something other than itself. Such an existence cannot be a subsistence.

In other words maybe there cannot be a distinction between existence and subsistence in God, but there must be such a distinction in us. In God there is no difference between having and exercising existence. That is, no difference between a pure facticity and a pressure exerted relative to another for another, that between self-identity and a breaking forth, a blossoming, in *relation* to others.

Perhaps subsistence is "analogous" to the ability to relate to others, where to relate does not mean that just to have a static relation to others, like being double the size of something, but to have a dynamic relation to something. The difference is that a static relation like being the double of something can change and cease to exist without any change occurring to the subject of the relation or without the subject doing anything. We might also call it a passive relation vs. an active relation.

Since subsistence is virtual causality, it is a virtual dynamic relation. Perhaps existence cannot be identical with such a virtual dynamic relation when the existence is received by and possessed by a mere potency for existence. The reason it cannot be identical with a dynamic relation, when it

is merely the actualization of a passive potency for it, is that for the passive potency to have dynamic relations to others the potency must first cause the existence of its own powers of action by a virtual efficient causality. That virtual efficient causality requires some difference between itself and both the existence and essence.

In God, of course, subsistence is identical with a dynamic relation to another, since the relation is one of generating or proceeding. A dynamic relation to another that is at the same time a way of relation to itself. So notice this connection between the problem of the Trinity and my approach to subsistence in Christ. The problem of the Trinity is how can something be at the same time identical with itself and not identical with itself. Problem in creatures is how can an efficient cause be identical with a material cause.

The Following is copied from the MS "A Theory of the Incarnation," with some revisions that I did not put in that MS, or its online file, itself.

6. Applications to the Trinity

What does this theory of subsistence, and concept of personality based on it, have to do with God and the persons of the Trinity? As I have already said, "subsistence" as the name of the factor enabling a substance to be a cause need not be what we mean by subsistence when we speaking God as subsisting being or intelligence. Still, "subsistence" in our sense does name a pure perfection that must be found in God. That subsistence in this sense is a pure perfection is evident from the fact that something is an efficient cause by reason of actuality, not potentiality. Also, this pure perfection is necessary for the existence of a person. A person is a substance who is able to perform activities of the rational kind; therefore, a person is a substance that is able to

be an agent. On the other hand, the descriptions I have given of this pure perfection are all taken from its effect, from what happens as a result of a substance's having it; I have not described it directly. This creates a difficulty in expressing what the corresponding perfection in God is, since God is at a step even further removed from the effect that is the source of the description. But our inability to directly describe a perfection of God does not imply that God lacks the perfection. In fact, God has innumerable perfections for which we do not have names. It remains the case that the perfection I have designated "subsistence" exists in God, and in Him, unlike in us, it is identical with His existence.

And if describing a particular perfection in God is beyond the limits of natural knowledge, that does not prevent revelation from coming to our aid. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity can contribute to our understanding of how subsistence in this sense is found in God, and this theory of subsistence can contribute to our understanding of what we are claiming in asserting the doctrine of the Trinity.

In God, personal acts of knowledge and love do not imply causal emanation, the emanation of an effect from something really distinct from the effect. In creatures, personal acts do imply causal emanation from powers and from the substance to which the powers belong, both of which are really distinct from the acts. But in both creatures and God, personal acts involve relations to really distinct terms; for God's personal acts involve relations to terms that are really distinct from one another. A procession is from one thing to another, and God's knowledge and love of Himself involve Persons distinguished from one another as opposite terms of relations of procession, that is, as the source of a procession, that from which a procession is, and the goal of a procession, that to which a procession is, are distinguished. (I am using lowercase "r" for relations in the general sense, and will use uppercase "R" for the

Trinitarian Relations. The processions in God involve relations in the general sense, since procession is from one term to an opposite term. Thus, if we knew that one person proceeded from another in God but did not yet know that the persons were Relations, we would still know that the persons were opposite terms of relations of proceeding-from and proceeding-to.)

In creatures, opposite terms of relations of causal emanation are analogous (here in the technical sense) to opposite terms of relations of procession in God. But subsistence in creatures is what enables a substance to be the term of created relations of causal emanation. Likewise, the distinct terms of relations of generation and procession in God so terminate those relations by being subsistents (so relate God to terms by being subsistents). For there to be relations of emergence-from of which a substance is the term, the substance must subsist. For acts of knowledge and love in God to involve relations of procession from and to, there must be subsistents that are terms of those relations; what is proceeded from and what is proceeded to must be characterized by subsistence, the same perfection a created substance must have to be the term-from-which of its personal acts' relations of emanation.

And when the Son becomes man, that which is the term-toward-which of the Relation of paternity in God is also that which is the term-from which of relations of causal emanation in Christ's properties and their acts. That which is the term-toward-which of the Relation of paternity by being a subsisting is the term-from-which of relations of causal emanation by the *same* subsistence. (Relatedness F-to-S has for its term the divine act of existing as identical with relatedness S-to-F, and so only if the divine act of existing is also the term of relatedness S-to-F.)

Finally, subsistence in my sense is a way a substance relates to its act of existing, and each of the persons in God is a way of Relating to the divine act of existing. In fact, what

constitutes the plurality of persons in God are distinct ways of Relating to the divine act of existing. For what constitutes the plurality of persons are distinct ways of Relating to each other, and the term of each of these Relations is something identical with the divine act of existing. A substance's way of relating to its act of existing is a way of relating to something really distinct from the substance, and the way of relating is also distinct from the substance. In God, a way of Relating to His act of existing is a way of Relating to Himself, and the way of Relating is also God Himself. And that is what is to be expected, since subsistence in God cannot be really distinct from God.

But even in God, subsistence involves, as it does in creatures, **some** distinction between that which Relates and that which is Related to. A way God Relates to Himself can be a real, as opposed to a logical, Relation, only if the Relation has a term really distinct from itself. But such a term must be God Himself, since God cannot be really related to creatures. How can this be if the Relation, from which this term is distinct, is God? A relation requires a correlative opposite relation, an opposite relation predicable of the first relation's term. Sometimes the opposite relation can be a merely logical relation, a being of reason, but the being of reason must be founded on some real distinction between the first relation and its term, and/or, in the case of creatures, the subject of the first relation. No such foundation for a merely logical correlative opposite relation can occur in God. So a way God Relates to Himself can be a real Relatedness if and only if there is a correlative opposite way God Relates to Himself that is also a real Relatedness. The first way of Relating to Himself can be real only if it has a really distinct term, and only another real Relatedness can provide that term. Therefore, there can be real Relatedness in God if and only if there is another real Relatedness different from the first in God. But the divine existence cannot be really related to anything but itself, so each of these forms of

Relatedness has for its correlative opposite something identical with the divine existence.

Hence, both forms of Relatedness must be identical with the divine existence. They can be identical with the same thing while being different from each other, because each is a way the thing Relates to itself, a way of Relating to itself that requires the thing also to be identical with another way of Relating to itself, another way of Relating that provides the term for the first way.

Thus, wherever it occurs, subsistence is a way a thing relates to its own act of existing and at the same time a way it relates to a term really distinct from itself. Wherever it occurs, subsistence also enables the subsisting to share existence with another, either the same existence shared with another person, in God, or another existence shared with a substance's effects, in creatures. And subsistence is what enables a person to be a term of relations characterizing personal acts of knowledge and love, relations of causal emanation in creatures and relations of procession in God.

Once again, therefore, the theory of subsistence I have proposed is consistent with revelation, this time with the revelation of a Trinity of subsistents in God.

8-9-00

Another approach?

I am not sure where the thoughts I'm about to begin developing will lead, so I am not sure whether they constitute a totally new approach or not. So I am not sure exactly how they will relate to what I have done the above.

I'm sure the opening move I have in mind has been tried before by logicians. The move is to define a special type of identity for the case where we are asserting the identity of a relational predicate of a being as opposed to other kinds of predicates. With this type of identity we could say that if the father is identical to God, God is identical to the father. But we could not say that if the father is identical to God and the son is identical to God, the father is identical to the son. Nor could we say that if God is identical to fatherhood and God is identical to sonship, then fatherhood is identical to sonship.

What I would like to do is to use this general idea to maneuver to a conclusion that parallels the kind of conclusion about religious language that I reached in the last chapter of Causal Realism. There I said that the question whether, say, goodness can be predicated of God or intelligence can be predicated of God may appear to be a logical question whose answer calls for a discussion of alternatives to univocal or equivocal predication. But really the logical aspects of the question is secondary. It is really a metaphysical question which translates into whether the causal conditions necessary for goodness, or the causal conditions necessary for intelligence necessarily produce the effect that goodness must be limited and intelligence must be limited.

Once we have successfully answered that metaphysical question, there are logical questions. But having successfully answered the metaphysical question we know beforehand that there must be answers to the logical question. We

know beforehand that we can successfully predicate goodness and intelligence of God, and so we know that doing so does not violate any logical laws. The only question is not whether it violates any logical laws but what is the correct way to express those law's. The answer to this last question however is obviously secondary, the answer to the first does not depend on it, but the answer to it depends on the fact that the answer to the first is affirmative.

Can we do something similar with the special kind of identity I am talking about? Can we say that it is not really a question of whether there are logical laws by which this kind of identity is legitimate, but whether any metaphysical conditions prevent relational predicates from being truthfully asserted of an entity. Notice that in the last clause even though I claim to be speaking on the metaphysical level, I speak of predicates, which is an epistemological concept, a logical concept. That illustrates perfectly the kind of ambiguity that I tried to point out and over come in the last chapter of the book with respect to past discussions of religious language.

We already know that relational "predicates" can be asserted of entities, because that is what the doctrine of transcendental relations, or what I call material relations, is all about. So the real issue is not whether relational "predicates" can be asserted of entities that are not just ways of being related, entities that are not just forms of relatedness. The real issue is whether predicates that express formal relations can be asserted of entities that at the same time are not just formal relations but are absolute entities.

This is a metaphysical, not a logical, question. It concerns the causal conditions required, or the causal conditions whose absence is required, for the existence of formal relations and for the existence of absolute entities and in particular for the existence of an infinite absolute entity whose nature is absolutely simple. If we know that formal relations do not require

existence in a potential subject, we know that the nature of formal relations does not prevent them from existing in an infinite state where they would be identical with the infinite entity that is not just a formal relation. (God is not merely a formal relation, does not behave only like a formal relation. To the extent that God does not behave only like a formal relation, God can be identical with two contrary formal relations. To the extent that he behaves like a formal relation, he cannot be identical with another formal relation.)

Or do we know that? The opponent could say we know there is no obstacle to that identification from the point of view of any potency required for a formal relation. But that is not the only obstacle there could be. There is also the obstacle that identification with a formal relation would require, because of the nature of relations as relations not as formal relations, the existence of something distinct from the relation as the term of the relation. And since God cannot be really related to any creature, the existence of the term of the relation would require multiplicity in God, which is ruled out by the simplicity of God.

But why is it ruled out by the simplicity of God? The answer would seem to be that multiplicity in God, that is, real multiplicity in God, would violate the identity of God with each of his properties. But if that is the reason why multiplicity in God is ruled out, then the opponent is assuming what he has to prove, namely, that this special kind of identity cannot exist. For he is basically saying that the reason it cannot exist is that it violates ordinary identity. But I am granting him that. I am asking him why there cannot be another special kind of identity, a kind as I have described here.

If there is no obstacle to asserting relational predicates of God other than the fact that doing so would require special logical laws, so be it. Logical laws are subordinate to metaphysical truths. This is what the last chapter of Causal Realism was saying. Once we know that the metaphysics of

goodness and intelligence do not prevent them from existing in an infinite state, we know as a secondary conclusion that the predicates we use to express that fact must conform to whatever logical laws are necessary if they are to express that fact. That is, we know that if something other than univocal or equivocal predication is called for logically, then that other form of predication must exist in a valid sense even if we have not yet found the right way to express what it is, that is, even if we have not yet found the right way to express logically how that other form of predication works.

The opponent is saying that even if a formal relation's apparent requirement for a potential subject is only apparent, and so is not what prevents predication of an infinite being, something else about formal relations does prevent predication of an infinite being. What is that something else? That something else is that predication of a formal relation would ultimately require a real distinction in God, and so a violation of identity in God. But this shows that the opponent is making the gratuitous assumption that there can only be one kind of logically legitimate identity. Or to put it another way, he is making the gratuitous assumption that the law of transitivity of identity would have to hold in this case. And that is precisely the point that he has to prove. But he cannot do it, cannot prove it, without assuming what he has to prove.

We cannot prove the "possibility" of the Trinity. Since we know there can be no accidents in God, if the Trinity is possible at all in God, it is necessarily real in God. It cannot be just contingently real in God. So if we knew that the Trinity was "logically possible" for God, we would know that there is a Trinity in God. So we cannot prove a logical possibility of the Trinity.

But that does not prevent us from proving something else, namely, that we cannot disprove the logical possibility of the Trinity. In other words, we might be able to prove that an opponent has no hope of constructing a sound argument against the possibility of the Trinity. And proving that there can be no sound argument against the possibility of the Trinity, is really all the defense faith in the Trinity needs.

We can describe the latter situation by saying that it is "logically" possible that there is a Trinity. But in this sense it would also be logically possible that there is no Trinity. The only thing that would not be logically possible would be a proof either way of the logical possibility or logical impossibility of the Trinity.

In this sense, the Christian could be perfectly consistent in her faith in the Trinity if she also believed that it was logically possible that there not be a Trinity. A logical possibility here refers to a strictly epistemological fact, not an ontological fact. Ontologically, there is no possibility that God is not whatever he is, whether we know what he is or not. Epistemologically, if we cannot claim to have ruled out a possibility by a sound argument, an argument showing the ontological impossibility of the opposite, we have to allow that possibility as a "logical" possibility.

But our faith in the Trinity implies the faith that there is not a sound argument showing the ontological impossibility of the Trinity. So a demonstration that there can be no such sound argument is a demonstration that the Trinity is a logical possibility in the epistemological sense

of something whose nonexistence can never be known to reason. So when we are contemplating whether to put our faith in the Trinity were not, we would have the complete confidence of knowing that nothing can ever prove our faith wrong.

The father is the divine nature as expressing itself to itself. The son is the divine nature as the expression of itself to itself; the son is the divine nature as expressed to itself by itself. What does this verbiage mean?

Maybe we can put it this way. The father and the son are one and the same divine nature. So the divine nature is a different kind of "nature." It is a nature so expansive, so all-inclusive, that it can contain relations as identical with itself, and so of necessity contain distinct relations each identical with itself. The father is that divine nature subsisting in the relation of expressing itself to itself. The son is the divine nature subsisting in the relation of being the expression of itself to itself or having been expressed to itself by itself.

The father is the divine nature as identical with a relation of expressing itself to itself. The son is the same divine nature as identical with a relation of the expression of itself to itself. Since these relations are really distinct, the divine nature as expressing itself to itself is really distinct from the same divine nature as the expression of itself to itself. For that is only to say that those two relations are really distinct from one another, even though they are each identical with the same divine nature.

Feb. 14, 95

It is false that the Father and Son are not the same, if "the same" means the same entity or individual nature. It is true that they are not the same, if "the same" means the same way that individual nature relates to Itself. It can relate to Itself, by a formal relation, if and only if it also relates to Itself by the opposite formal relation; otherwise there would be nothing to

terminate the first formal relation and, by terminating it, make it a genuine formal relation as opposed to a material relation.

How can they be the same, if they are different? The essence of God is identical with a relatedness (F) to different relatedness (S), which other relatedness is also identical with the essence of God. These relatedness are nothing more than ways one and the same essence faces itself, relates to Itself. They are only ways for one and the same essence to face Itself, to stand face-to-face with Itself. They are only faces the essence shows to Itself. Because by F relating to S, F is relating to Itself, since S is identical with the same essence that F is identical with. The only thing that differentiates F and S is whatever is necessary for F and S to provide the essence with a way of relating, not to something distinct from itself, but to itself. And that (whatever it is that is necessary for the essence to relate to itself, can only be a mode of relatedness, a mode of terminating opposition. To be a mode of terminating opposition is to be merely a term of a relation of opposition, but to be such a term is to be a relation, since Poinset shows that to be a term is to be relative.

All that is possible, because relations do not require subjects to be genuine forms of relatedness, hence an all-perfect being can be identical with a relation. And because, if there is a being that is identical with a mode or relatedness, that being can only be an infinitely perfect being.

Oct 9, 1997

That which is fatherhood itself is identical with that which is truth itself. But there can be a thing of which we can predicate fatherhood itself if and only if there is a thing such that (1) we can predicate sonship itself of it and (2) we can predicate all the same nonrelative predicates of it that we predicate of that which is fatherhood itself, including uniqueness, unicity,

infinity, etc.

We can predicate being a Relation itself of an infinite being because formal relations need not be predicamental accidents to be formal. That which is goodness is the same as that which is truth. Goodness itself is truth itself. But fatherhood itself is not sonship itself.

Nothing *ontological* prevents there being an infinite formal relation. What prevents it is the alleged logical relation of identity and the alleged transitivity of the logical relation of identity. But can that logical relation ground an ontological truth.

Being fatherhood or sonship itself is not like being truth or goodness itself in all respects. Truth or goodness do not call for the existence of a relative opposite that, despite its relative opposition, is also something identical with the sole goodness itself and truth itself. If truth itself and goodness itself called for the existence of a corresponding opposite, they would call for the existence of contradictory or at least contrary opposites. But relative opposites need be neither contradictory to one another, like truth and untruth, nor contrary to one another, like truth and falsity.

There is one and only one that-which-is truth itself and goodness itself. Now this one and only that which is truth and goodness can also have something related to it by the relation F. But in order to have something related to it by the relation F, this one and only that-which-is-truth-and-goodness-themselves must also have something related to it by the relation S.

New Notes:

Another way of putting this conclusion is that if there is a real Relatedness in God, transitivity of identity does not apply between the Relatedness and God. For there can be a real Relatedness identical with God if and only if there is another real Relatedness identical with God. So if

the assumption of one real relatedness in God is not contradictory, which is what Aquinas shows by the arguing that the nature of relatedness does not require inherence in a receiving subject, the failure of transitivity of identity in God is not contradictory, since the failure of transitivity follows from that (non-contradictory) assumption. The temptation is to argue that the failure of transitivity proves that assumption of a real Relatedness in God is contradictory. On the contrary, to argue from transitivity of identity to the contradictoriness of that assumption begs the question. Since the limitation on transitivity follows from that assumption, transitivity only holds where that assumption is not true. I do not claim that this argument shows that one cannot prove the contradictoriness of the Trinity (the Godelian theological method discussed in Section 1), only that one cannot prove the contradictoriness of the Trinity from the failure of transitivity of identity.

We are dealing in analogies in the sense of comparisons, not necessarily in the technical sense of non-generically abstracted concepts, and all such analogies limp to some degree. But here the limp can reinforce the need for a state of existence distinct from mere reception if the substance is to cause its properties. Reception describes the relation of a passive potency to its act; exercise describes the relation of an operative potency to its act. (So essence does have 2 potencies relative to existence. One is the potency to receive existence, but fulfilling that potency does not fulfill the other potency, to exercise existence.)

Keep in mind that the Son is the term of the Relation of paternity, not of the Relation of filiation; the Son is the Relation of filiation. The term of the Relation of paternity, the Father, is the Relation of filiation, the

Son, just as the term of the Relation of filiation, the Son, is the Relation of paternity, the Father. The Father is the Father-of the Son, and the Son is the Son-of the Father.

01-04-00

Aquinas's assumption is the only one where an attribute that passes the other tests necessary for predication of God would require a violation of transitivity of identity. But that is precisely the virtue of that assumption.

Assume my discussion of the Trinity works. The discussion is essentially metaphysical and ontological, not logical. But our knowledge, which we are capable of having, that my argument works shows that we have an implicit grasp of logical principles that permit what would otherwise be violations of the transitivity of identity. We need not be able to articulate those principles, anymore than a person, say a child, who recognizes the validity of a syllogism (can chimps do this?) need be able to articulate a law expressing the validity of syllogisms of that structure.

The next step would be to try to articulate this principle. This would be entirely comparable to coming up with concepts like supposition and ampliation to express different causes of the truths, and our knowledge of the truths of apparently similar sentences, so that invalid inferences are known to be blocked by fallacies of equivocation. These concepts would be employed in the formulation of logical laws.

A final step would be to try to construct a formal system in which these laws could be arrived at by rearrangement of symbols according to rules of formation and detachment. This would probably be the kind of thing Chuck Kelly is doing. While this would be a very interesting and even important thing to do, doing it would not be necessary in order for us to possess the

kind of knowledge described in the previous two paragraphs. And that illustrates the relationship of constructing formal systems to logical knowledge and ontological, metaphysical knowledge.

July 24, 2000

But we would also have to express, or have to be able to express, Aquinas's assumptions about the way relational predicates behave. I mean that the assumptions that lead to the conclusion that transitivity of identity does not hold in the Trinity. Specifically, the assumption that the identity of a relation with the divine nature requires the presence of a distinct relation which is identical with the divine nature. Or perhaps that can be expressed in a way that does not immediately appear to contradict transitivity of identity.

First, we would have to express the assumption that a relative predicate can be identical with what the divine nature is. This is what Aquinas establishes by, first, the general proposition that immaterial predicates can be directly said of the divine nature, and second, that the nature of relations does not imply potency because relations do not require inherence in a subject.

The second assumption is that the existence of relatedness in God requires the existence of a term for the relatedness that is really distinct somehow from the relatedness. This second assumption, with perhaps some embellishments, is what leads to the conclusion that if there is one relation that is identical with the divine essence, then there must be another distinct relation that is identical with the divine essence. For only the opposition of another relation could possibly provide the distinct term that the existence of the first relation requires.

In other words, the first assumption, the existence of one relation

identical with the divine essence, would require expression in the formal system by means of symbols for the two terms of the relation, where one of the two terms has to be distinct from the relation.

But the rules for relative predicates, not just the syntactical rules of well formed formulas but the rules for the truth of the formulas, require that when an entity that is identical with a relative predicate exists, something nonidentical with the relation, with the form of relatedness, must exist as a term for the relatedness. No there is a better way to put this. It is better not to start with the rules for relative predicates that are identical with their entities.

Formal systems, logic, Putnam, P of NC, Trinity, September 15, 1993

It is not whether the p of NC is in the language or in the metalanguage. It is not whether a language contains the corresponding formula. It is whether what the formula expresses, what the P of NC expresses, is obeyed by the sentences, any sentence, in any language.

The same with a formula for transitivity of identity and the Trinity.

YYY

09-15-01

Do I need to prove that transitivity need not apply when the identity is relative, not absolute, that is, when the terms of the identity are relations each of which is identical with the divine nature? Notice the possible misinterpretation of the last sentence. The terms of the identity are not two relations. They are not identical. Terms of the relation of identity are a relation and the divine nature. Terms of the identity are the divine nature

and a particular way the divine nature relates to itself.

1-13-89, Trinity

What does Aquinas mean by "logically identical" when he says that transitivity applies only when things are both really and logically identical. He can only mean that transitivity applies only when things are not logically distinct of necessity -- only when there is not an irreducible logical distinction.

The Father *is* really identical with God and so only logically distinct from God. But this logical distinction is irreducible. The father is logically distinct from God of necessity. (On the other hand, George W. Bush is only logically distinct from (is really identical with) the husband of Laura Bush. But that logical distinction does not hold by necessity.) So because the Father is irreducibly logically distinct from God, something else can be identical with God also.

What does this all mean? The foundation of the Father's logical distinction from God, the Father's relatedness, requires another relatedness that founds another logical distinction. Each of these relatednesses is only logically distinct from God, but they are logically distinct in a way that posits or constitutes or requires an irreducible logical distinction. That is, each is logically distinct from the other by necessity. So transitivity of identity does not apply.

Or, the basis of the logical distinction between the Father and God is not like the relation of identity, a mere logical relation, that permits transitivity. The basis of the logical distinction between the Father and God is a relatedness that is both a real, not logical, relatedness *and* really identical with God, that is, only logically distinct from God.

When you have that kind of foundation for the logical distinction, you have a condition beyond what you have when you just have a logical distinction

(e.g., identity) but you have less than what you have when the foundation for the logical distinction is a real distinction, that is, is something really distinct from God. Because the foundation is not in some real distinction, you can not only say X is God, but the foundation for the distinction between X and God is God, is what God is.

xxx Trinity 4-23-93

Note taken during the discussion of Dick Hennessy's paper on transcendental quantity. Division by contradiction: this being is not that being. Division by relative opposition: this way of a thing's terminating a relation to itself is not that way. (this way of a thing's relating to itself; this relation of a thing to itself.

But what is the cash value of speaking of stronger and weaker forms of opposition? Each form results from the use of negation, "This is not that."

12-29-00

4 relations, 3 persons. As terms of diverse relations of knowing and being known, the father and the son are somehow distinct. As terms of relations of loving and being loved, they are absolutely, completely NOT distinct but are one. Their love for one another makes them completely one. That is the meaning of the fact that there are not 2 different spirations of the holy spirit, only one. And the holy spirit is the one subject (or should I say the one term) of the relation of being spirated by the father and son's love, because that love is one spiration of loving. That is, they are made one by being subject of the relation of loving the divine nature and (hence) of loving each other, and (hence) of spirating the holy spirit, whose state of being spirated is what the holy spirit it is. For his state of being spirated is what the love of the father and the son for one another is. And the state

of spirating the holy spirit, state of loving the divine essence together, is what the father and son together are, is what the union of the father and the son is.

Jesus is God's perfect expression to himself of what he is. The spirit is the expression of the Father's and the son's mutual love, the their mutual expression of love. The spirit is the Father's and the son's sigh of mutual love. The spirit is the Father and the son's mutual sigh of love. The Father, the son and the spirit of their mutual love, and their mutual spirit of love, and their spirit of mutual love.

The Father is the originator, the son is the originated. The Father and son are the breathers, the spirit is their breath. They are the sighers. The spirit is their sigh.

