

ON “NOT THREE GODS”—AGAIN: CAN A PRIMARY-SECONDARY SUBSTANCE READING OF *OUSIA* AND *HYPOSTASIS* AVOID TRITHEISM?

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Our position . . . is, that as in the case of a horse, or an ox, or a man, the same definition applies to all the individuals of the same species, and whatever shares the definition has also a right to the Name; so in the very same way there is One Essence of God, and One Nature, and One Name; . . . and that whatever is properly called by this Name really is God . . .

—Gregory of Nazianzen¹

The following article is both historical and constructive in its aims. The historical side addresses the question of whether a consistent line of analogy for the Trinity can be found among the Cappadocian fathers. I answer in the affirmative, arguing that an analogy of primary-secondary substance for the one *ousia* and three *hypostases* of the Godhead is present in Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzen; and while assorted differences may exist between these three thinkers, this line of Trinitarian analogy—what I will call Primary-Secondary Substance Trinitarianism (henceforth PST)—is common to all three and can be quite usefully systematized using Aristotelian categories.² The constructive side of this article concerns the question raised by modern critics of PST over whether it can ultimately avoid the charge of tritheism. Thus, after making explicit my understanding of this line

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of Cappadocian analogy, I will consider several objections in an effort to show that PST can successfully sustain its claim to monotheism.

This article consists of three sections. After outlining Cappadocian PST in section one, I make plain in section two how this form of PST avoids polytheism. I argue that the main difference between polytheism and PST monotheism lies in which secondary substance is specified by *ousia*—genus or species? I contend that Hellenistic polytheism, as understood by the Cappadocians, employs “god” as a genus, in which there are many natures. Polytheism contrasts starkly with PST monotheism, therefore, because PST identifies only one nature in the Godhead—a contrast that makes Arian *homoousia* the true tritheism of Christendom. With this distinction between monotheism and polytheism in place, I address a criticism drawn from Brian Leftow and Vincent Brümmer. Leftow and Brümmer share the intuition that any Trinitarianism that affirms genuine individuation of the *hypostases* is no different than polytheism with like-minded gods.³ I argue that this objection displays a gross misunderstanding of Patristic metaphysics, and demonstrate how, when playing by the Cappadocians’ rules, there are significant differences between polytheism and PST monotheism.

Having identified, in section two, *homoousia* as the defining difference between monotheistic PST and polytheism, defending the full divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit becomes crucial to PST’s cogency. Therefore, in section three, I establish that PST can affirm the full divinity of the Son and the Spirit without compromising the orthodox doctrines of generation and procession. Drawing from Aetius the Anomean, I address a triad of interlocking issues, each of which threatens to undermine PST’s affirmation of *homoousia*:⁴ (1) Can the Begotten and the Unbegotten be of the same nature? (2) Can generation and procession be affirmed without ontological subordination? (3) Can the Son be begotten and exist *a se*? I address each of these questions in turn in an effort to demonstrate that PST can affirm *homoousia* without abandoning generation and procession. In the end, I demonstrate that PST is both distinct from polytheism and capable of retaining the full divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without abandoning the doctrines of generation and procession. In short, I show that PST is not tritheism.

Before proceeding, it is important to make explicit a number of my pre-suppositions relative to existing scholarship. Within the current literature, disagreement exists over which philosophical systems are most influential on the Cappadocian understanding of substance. Some, such as Lewis Ayres, Vincent Brümmer, Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *et al.*, argue for a more Neo-Platonic reading of the Cappadocians;⁵ others, such as J. N. D. Kelly, A. H. Wolfson, John Zizioulas, *et al.*, argue for an Aristotelian reading;⁶ and still others, such as Reinhard Hübner and Stephen M. Hildebrand, suggest Stoic influences—specifically on Basil of Caesarea.⁷ Disagreement also exists over whether we can in fact talk about a “patristic” understanding of

substance. Ayres argues for continuity in the fathers' overall Trinitarian "strategy" via a more Augustinian lens,⁸ while John Behr affirms a certain continuity among the Eastern fathers, but sees genuine differences between East and West.⁹

While I am unconvinced that East and West are as compatible as Ayres might suggest, I do presume that general continuity exists among the Cappadocians, at least with regard to the line of Trinitarian analogy discussed below. As for my understanding of the primary philosophical influences on the Cappadocian view of substance, I have tipped my hand by dubbing this line of analogy "Primary-Secondary Substance Trinitarianism." I hold that those who read the Cappadocian analogy of the general noun (*human*) and the particular names (*Peter, James, and John*) in an Aristotelian, primary-secondary substance light are reading this analogy accurately.¹⁰ This is not to say that I think the Cappadocians are Aristotelian in all respects. Considering Cappadocian thought as a whole, I think those, such as Hans von Balthasar, who see in the Cappadocians an eclectic mixing of Platonism and Aristotelianism, are quite right.¹¹ The Cappadocians will affirm in one moment the NeoPlatonic notion of Ideas in the divine mind;¹² but in the next moment they will affirm a more Aristotelian hylomorphism¹³ and deny that human knowledge, not only of God but of things generally, is knowledge of essence, arguing for a more Aristotelian epistemology.¹⁴

This admixture of Aristotelian and NeoPlatonic concepts should not be surprising. As John Dillon has shown, many within the NeoPlatonic school did not see their advancements on Plato as contrary to Aristotle. Plutarch argues that Aristotelian logic is present in *Timaeus*;¹⁵ Albinus' *Didaskalikos* demonstrates that ten categories can be found in *Parmenides*;¹⁶ and studying Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides*, Dillon himself shows a NeoPlatonic affinity for Aristotle's categories in both Iambichus and Proclus.¹⁷ Citing Simplicius', *de Caelo*, Henry J. Blumenthal identifies Aristotelians who claim that Aristotle, if read correctly, simply repeated everything Plato said.¹⁸ John P. Anton identifies two general approaches to Plotinus' use of Aristotle's categories in current scholarship, neither of which is adverse to the categories.¹⁹ And A.C. Lloyd argues that Alexandrian NeoPlatonism clearly understood *individuals* in an explicitly Aristotelian way.²⁰

In this light, to find within the Cappadocians an admixture of NeoPlatonism and Aristotelianism, specifically one that couples NeoPlatonic Ideas with Aristotelian categories, would be far from novel for the period, and I think it the best interpretation of the evidence. But because the focus of this article is a line of analogy for the Trinity that builds on the creaturely realm, the Aristotelian dimensions of Cappadocian thought on substance will be far more pronounced throughout the argument.

One last issue should be addressed before proceeding with my exposition of Cappadocian PST. Recent scholarship on Basil has driven a rift between Basil and the two Gregories. I have in mind here Reinhard Hübner's

well-known theory that Basil's view of substance is Stoic; thus, *Ep.* 38, which displays a more Aristotelian view of substance, cannot be penned by Basil and is likely the work of Gregory of Nyssa.²¹ Hübner offers evidence such as the following. In *De Spiritu Sancto* 17, 41, Basil uses *ousia* as the most generic of genus terms, followed by more specific predication, such as *living, human, living human*, until reaching the most specific of predications: individual names. Hübner sees this as contrary to the Aristotelian definition of *ousia* as species.²² Similarly Hübner finds in *Con. Eun.* 2, 28 that Basil uses *ousia* in reference to that which underlies "the winged, the walking, those living in water and on land, the rational and the irrational." This application strikes Hübner as contrary to the Aristotelian species designation of *ousia*, which would not identify the rational and the irrational as of the same *ousia*.²³ The underlying substratum both here and in *De Spiritu Sancto*, Hübner contends, must be something akin to the Stoic concept of an undefined material substrate (*proton hypokeimenon*)—what is essential "prime matter"²⁴—that takes on specific qualities in the concretizing of individuals.²⁵ This claim Hübner sees shored up by the fact that Basil uses *ousia* and *hypokeimenon* interchangeably in *Con. Eun.* 1, 19, confirming that Basil's concept of the underlying substratum is the *proton hypokeimenon* of the Stoics.²⁶

While I do not presume that I can overturn Hübner's widely-accepted thesis in this essay, I will say that I find Hübner's evidence less than conclusive. To say that Aristotelian *ousia* refers to species only is plainly false. Aristotle is quite clear that secondary substance (*ousia deuteria*) includes both species and genus.²⁷ Basil's occasional use of *ousia* as the most generic genus thus in no way violates Aristotelian usage, given that for Aristotle any genus, species, individual, or particular is rightly called substance; some are secondary, others primary, but all are substance.²⁸ As for the claim that *Con. Eun.* 2, 28 provides similar evidence because rational and irrational cannot be of the same substance, this charge is dubious, not because Aristotle presumes that irrational and rational animals are of the same species, but because Aristotle affirms quite plainly that *animal* is the genus of both man (rational) and horse (irrational); and this genus is the common secondary substance of both, since secondary substance is not restricted to species but includes genus as well—and the same is true of the winged, terrestrial, and aquatic.²⁹ As for Basil's use of *hypokeimenon*, this term is not an exclusively Stoic term. Aristotle too uses *hypokeimenon* in reference to the individuated nature of particular substances.³⁰ Interestingly Basil also uses interchangeably in *Con. Eun.* 1, 19 *to einai*, another Aristotelian term for individuated nature. When considering Basil's terminology, I find it to be far more fitting to an Aristotelian metaphysics, wherein the individuated nature displayed in one subject, the Father, should also constitute the nature of the Son.³¹ Such a reading is far less awkward than a stoic reading in which Basil is referring to some material substrate shared by the father and the son.³²

David G. Robertson rightly notes that Hübner's thesis depends on a stark division between Stoic and Aristotelian views,³³ and thus the utter incompatibility of Basil's terminology with that of Aristotle. Given that we have reason to think this supposed incompatibility is less than decisive, we have reason to pause before embracing Hübner's thesis. Thus, for the purposes of this article, I will presume Basil's authorship of *Ep.* 38, and likewise presume continuity between Basil and the two Gregories.

A PST Reading of the Cappadocians

The basic claim of PST should be familiar enough to most readers: the Cappadocian fathers utilize a species-particular analogy in order to explain the one-ness of the divine nature or substance (*ousia*) and the three-ness of the *hypostases*, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.³⁴ By identifying this as PST, the claim is that this line of analogy displays a broadly Aristotelian understanding of secondary substance or nature that is a repeatable, immanent universal; this universal may be individuated (though not divided, as if it were material), and when doing so, it combines with accidental properties of matter, so that each individual also bears non-repeatable, particular traits. This provides an analogy for conceiving of a single, undivided nature (e.g., *human*) and multiple particulars (e.g., *Peter, James, and John*); and this line of analogy for the Godhead exists throughout the Cappadocian fathers: the substance (*ousia*) in the Godhead is akin to secondary substance, which constitutes the common nature of the three particulars (*hypostases*), Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Beginning with Basil of Caesarea, we find evidence for PST in *Ep.* 38. Therein Basil opens by identifying the synonymous use of *ousia* and *hypostasis* in his day. He suggests that, due to this lack of distinction in terms, some refer to one *ousia* as well as one essence or substance in the Godhead, while others talk of three *hypostases* as well as three essences or substances. Basil identifies both tendencies as errors.³⁵ Basil goes on to discuss the proper use of general nouns, such as *man*: "When we so say, we employ the noun to indicate the common nature, and do not confine our meaning to any one man in particular who is known by that name. Peter, for instance is no more *man*, than Andrew, John, or James."³⁶ The general predicate, Basil notes, rightly extends to all (Andrew, John, and James) equally, but a note of distinction is required in order to specify particulars. Names, Basil points out, are themselves a note of particularity—"Paul" does not apply to Timothy. Therefore, "there is a separation of certain circumscribed conceptions from the general idea, and expression of them by means of their names."³⁷

Johannes Zachhuber has argued that what is espoused in *Ep.* 38 is a collective theory of universals, typically associated with Platonism.³⁸ In a response, Richard Cross notes that the various Platonic ways of rendering universals and particulars include the following notions: "the indivisibility of the extrinsic idea or form; the divisibility of the immanent universal, and the

resultant collective theory of such universals.³⁹ Cross goes on to show that Gregory of Nyssa ultimately rejects all of these claims in favor of “a theory of indivisible immanent universals (referred to indifferently as *ousiai* and *phuseis*)”;⁴⁰ and, according to Cross, the inception of Gregory’s tendency toward this alternative can be traced to *Ep.* 38.⁴¹ Cross makes plain that what this epistle is intended to avoid is (1) any notion of extrinsic universals that would result in a fourth divine thing, (2) any understanding of the divine nature as divisible, the way a material substrate might be, and (3) any understanding of divine nature that is seen as a collection of particulars.⁴² The key insight that begins the Cappadocian preference for immanent universals is that “the divine substance can be seen as a universal without this *universality entailing divisibility*,” an insight first articulated in *Ep.* 38.⁴³

While I cannot do justice to the many nuances of Cross’ argument here, a key insight for the purposes of this article is that *Ep.* 38 uses the terms *ousia* and *phusis* synonymously—a point that is evident in the epistle’s use of “common” (*koinon* and other cognates)—and this use of “common” clearly describes *immanent* universals.⁴⁴ This distinction between general nouns or universals and particulars Basil identifies as the difference between *nature* or *essence*, which is singular and common among members of a species (per Cross’ immanent universals), and particular members within the species. According to Basil, nature is not, what Cross calls, *extensional*—“a list of the hypostases included in the collection”—but rather “natures—like substances—admit of intensional description.”⁴⁵ This nature constitutes an immanent universal that, without partition (like a material substrate),⁴⁶ is repeated in various particulars. Were we to set two or more individuals next to one another (e.g., Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy) and inquire “into the essence or substance of humanity; no one will give one definition of essence or substance in the case of Paul, a second in that of Silvanus, and a third in that of Timothy.”⁴⁷ To the contrary, the word for Paul’s nature or substance will be used also for the others. But were we to inquire into the particular (e.g., Paul), what would be catalogued of the one would be different than what is catalogued of the others. Thus, we have what seems to be an analogical species-particular distinction at work. In *Ep.* 237, Basil identifies this distinction as the proper understanding of the *ousia-hypostasis* distinction: “The distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is the same as that between the general and the particular; as, for instance, between the animal [*human*] and the particular man.”⁴⁸

Given Basil’s view of nature or essence as an undivided, immanent universal, which is repeatedly individuated in numerous particulars, I think it fair to say the general-particular distinction Basil here employs broadly reflects the primary-secondary substance distinctions of Aristotle.⁴⁹ For Aristotle, substance first and foremost connotes an individual thing: a man or a horse is an example of substance.⁵⁰ Substance in this sense is primary substance, which “appears to signify that which is individual.”⁵¹ Secondary substance, however, refers to “a class with a certain qualification.”⁵² An

example of secondary substance would be genus or species (e.g., *animal* or *human*). Genus and species are distinct types of secondary substance, however, given their difference in specificity: "The determinate qualification covers a larger field in the case of the genus than in that of the species: he who uses the word 'animal' is herein using a word of wider extension than he who uses the word 'man'."⁵³ Species is predicated only of the individual, while genus is predicated of both species and individual.⁵⁴ Therefore, "species is more truly substance than the genus."⁵⁵

Two additional points are noteworthy regarding Aristotle's notion of substance. First, primary substance is neither in a subject nor predicated of a subject; it is the subject. Yet, secondary substance is not reducible to any particular; it is predicated of the particular: "'man' is predicated of the individual man."⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it seems that Aristotle holds that the given secondary substance is a universal that may be repeatedly individuated, though not divided, since it is not a material substrate.⁵⁷ This brings us to our second point: Aristotle points out that substance does not come in degrees. "For instance, one particular substance, 'man,' cannot be more or less man either than himself at some other time or than some other man. One man cannot be more man than another, as that which is white may be more or less white than some other white object."⁵⁸ This is not to say that substance is incapable of admitting contrary qualities. Aristotle thinks one of the most unique features of substance is its ability to remain "numerically one and the same," while also admitting "disease or health, whiteness or blackness"; but a sick person is no less human than a healthy person. Such contrary qualities are accidental properties of informed matter.⁵⁹

Aristotle's understanding of general-and-particular parallels quite closely what we find in Basil's *Ep.* 38. In addition to Basil's terminology being compatible with Aristotle's, Basil's take on particulars (e.g., Paul) as contrasted with the species (e.g., human) fits comfortably Aristotle's description of primary-secondary substance categories: Basil affirms, with Aristotle, that substance does not admit degrees;⁶⁰ Basil agrees that substance is capable of admitting contrary qualities without affecting the nature of the thing;⁶¹ and Basil agrees that secondary substance, while rightly predicated of particulars, is not reducible to any particular—"the same words which have been employed in setting forth the essence or substance of Paul will apply to the others also"; yet were one to inquire into the particular, "the definition by which each is known will no longer tally in all particulars with the definition of another, even though in some points it be found to agree."⁶² Moreover, if Cross is right in reading *nature* in *Ep.* 38 as unpartitioned, immanent universals, Basil's scheme is in strong accord with Aristotle. Therefore, it seems fair to read Basil's use of *ousia* as paralleling, secondary substance predication: Basil uses *ousia* in a way akin to the Aristotelian understanding of *species*, which is predicated of particular members, or *hypostases*. In the case of God, the divine *ousia* is predicated of the *hypostases*, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Among the Cappadocians, Basil's use of *ousia* is not unique. As Cross has shown, Gregory of Nyssa's understanding of universals are a natural extension of the concerns, and subsequent solutions, first displayed in *Ep.* 38—hence Gregory of Nyssa's well-known comparison in *Ad Ablabium* of the Trinity to Peter, James, and John, since "the term 'man' does not belong to the nature of the individual as such, but to that which is common."⁶³ The parallels with *Ep.* 38 should be evident enough, given that the question of possible Gregorian authorship is built on the evident parallels; thus I will forego any lengthy comments on Gregory's view of substance for brevity's sake. As we look into Gregory of Nazianzen's work, we find not only analogy that appears to fit primary-secondary substance patterns, but the explicitly employment of species-member language in explanation of the common divine nature. Gregory boldly declares,

Our position . . . is, that as in the case of a horse, or an ox, or a man, the same definition applies to all the individuals of the same species, and whatever shares the definition has also a right to the Name; so in the very same way there is One Essence of God, and One Nature, and One Name; . . . and that whatever is properly called by this Name really is God . . .⁶⁴

In short, *ousia* is a single nature predicated of multiple particulars, the way *human* is singular and predicated of Peter, Paul, and John. These particulars are not three *humanities*, but three members (or individuations) of one species.⁶⁵ The three *hypostases* of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, are therefore properly analogous to particulars, each being properly predicated by the one nature, *God*.

What we have seen heretofore are indications that Basil develops a line of analogy akin to primary-secondary substance concern, and this line of analogy is picked up by Gregory of Nyssa, and made quite explicit in Gregory of Nazianzen. I think it significant that this line of Trinitarian analogy not only appears in keeping with primary-secondary substance categories, but it is expounded along plainly Aristotelian lines by one of the earliest interpreters of the Cappadocians, namely, John of Damascus. In John of Damascus' *Dialectica*, he provides an exposition of philosophical topics that are plainly in keeping with Aristotelian patterns of thought (*viz.*, form, matter, genus, species, individual, etc.),⁶⁶ and at points makes explicit reference to ten categories and even to Aristotle himself.⁶⁷ In this context he goes on to identify these Aristotelian patterns of thought as that which is present in "the holy Fathers" when they discuss substance. John writes,

There is that which is more particular and is numerically different, as, for example, Peter, an individual, a person, and a hypostasis. This signifies a definite person. For when we are asked who this man is, we say that he is Peter. The term "other" signifies the same thing, for Peter is one and

Paul is another. Likewise the terms "he," "this," and "that"—these and such others as stand of themselves are applied to the individual. But that which includes the individuals is called *species* and is more general than the individual, because it does include several individuals. An example would be man, because this term includes both Peter and Paul and all individual men besides. This is what is called *nature* and *substance* and *form* by the holy Fathers. Now, that which includes several species is called *genus*, an example of which is animal, for this includes man, ox, and horse, and is more universal than the species. Moreover, both species and genus were called *nature* and *form* and *substance* by the holy Fathers. Furthermore, the species—that is, the nature or substance and the form—does not produce something which is "other" or something which is "of another sort," but rather "another" of the same sort. . . .⁶⁸

This backdrop provides strong evidence for the claim that John of Damascus takes the Cappadocian view of substance to be broadly Aristotelian in nature. And thus, when John himself goes on to employ the species-member analogy in explanation of the orthodox view of the Trinity,⁶⁹ it seems difficult to deny that John takes this analogy to be properly read through a broadly Aristotelian lens.

While I do not want to press the implications of PST beyond what the Cappadocians offer, I think it fair to say that, for the Cappadocians, PST implies that the individuation of the Father, Son, and Spirit is such that each particular bears mind and will. This is not to say the *nature* of divine mind or divine will is distinct in the three particulars—they are one in nature—but it is to affirm genuine individuation and distinction; or as Basil puts it, "distinction in hypostasis and conjunction in essence."⁷⁰ While the complaint is common these days that the post-Cartesian view of "person" is more decisively tied up with intellect and will than it was for the Ancients,⁷¹ it seems Gregory of Nyssa in fact associates *hypostases* with will and intellect:

If, then, logic requires him to admit this eternal subsistence of God's Word, it is altogether necessary to admit also that the subsistence of that word consists in a living state; for it is an impiety to suppose that the Word has a soulless subsistence after the manner of stones. But if it subsists, being as it is something with intellect and without body, then certainly it lives . . . If, then, the Logos, as being life, lives, it certainly has the faculty of will, for no one of living creatures is without such a faculty. Moreover that such a will has also capacity to act must be the conclusion of a devout mind.⁷²

Gregory's concern in demonstrating that the *Logos* lives and bears the faculty of will with the capacity to act is set in the context of "prevent[ing] our argument in our contention with Greeks [from] sinking to the level of Judaism."⁷³ While Gregory clearly opposes polytheism, he makes plain that

the eternality of God's Word is not the eternality of a non-living, non-thinking, rock-like object alongside God, but a living, subsisting being with "independent life," will and capacity to act.⁷⁴

At this point, certain readers are no doubt curious about the implications of this reading of the Cappadocians for social Trinitarianism. To be sure, PST, as I have described it, is not concerned with making "teamwork" the source of unity between Father, Son, and Spirit, nor do I intend to indicate that the individuated intellects and wills within the Godhead are autonomous and capable of independent (or even rebellious?⁷⁵) activity. As will become clear in section three of this article, I understand Cappadocian PST to require that the unity between the persons be, not only perichoretic, but metaphysically necessary and essential to the respective identities of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Cappadocian affirmation of genuine individuation is not, therefore, a defense of the autonomy of the *hypostases*. The *hypostases*, according to the Cappadocians, always act in unison.⁷⁶ Thus, while social Trinitarianism often employs a form of PST,⁷⁷ I am unconvinced that a properly Cappadocian PST necessarily yields a social analogy.⁷⁸ But to be sure, my concern with social Trinitarianism is not its affirmation of genuine individuation in the *hypostases*; the problem would be its divergence from the tradition, insofar as the social application, from what I can tell, is nowhere in the purview of the Cappadocians. As for genuine individuation, this, I think, is an entirely appropriate and orthodox way of thinking about the Trinity. Hence, the theological imagination is justified when cognizing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three particulars predicated of the same nature, provided, of course, the sanctified imagination understands the difference between creaturely primary-secondary substance and divine primary-secondary substance.

This last proviso still requires explanation. Three main differences distinguish divine and creaturely substance in this Cappadocian analogy. The first is straightforward: unlike creaturely *ousia*, which includes the general nouns *genus* and *species*, divine *ousia* only identifies the divine species, nature, or essence; no genus exists in which the divine nature is included as subset.⁷⁹

The second regards the fact that God is not a composite being, comprised of form and matter. The divine *hypostases* are not distinguished by spatial separation—hence the doctrine of *perichoresis*, where the divine *hypostases* interpenetrate one another, analogous to the way light intermingles with light, for example;⁸⁰ nor do the *hypostases* possess the type of accidental personal properties derived from matter, such as variations in color; nor do the *hypostases* bear potentiality, which is peculiar to matter. The *hypostases* are pure actuality: what they were is what they are and what they ever will be.⁸¹

The third main difference between divine and creaturely substance concerns generation and procession. The Cappadocians do not hesitate to use analogies of human procreation to explain begetting and proceeding. A proper analogy for the eternal generation of the Son, they maintain, is a father's begetting a son. In such an analogy, the son's existence is caused by the father, and both father

and son are predicated of the same nature (or secondary substance).⁸² As for procession, the Cappadocians distinguish procession from begetting—the Son is the *only* begotten.⁸³ Gregory of Nazianzen therefore uses the analogy of Eve being formed from Adam's rib. In this analogy, a human person proceeds from another human person and bears the same nature, but Eve's procession is not begetting in the standard sense.⁸⁴ An Adam-Eve-Seth analogy, therefore, offers three particulars (*hypostases*), one nature (*ousia*), and three distinct causes:⁸⁵ Adam is unbegotten (with regard to human origin), Eve proceeds from Adam, and Seth is begotten of Adam.⁸⁶

While the Cappadocians are quite clear regarding the appropriateness of the Adam-Eve-Seth analogy, they are equally clear on the differences between creaturely procreation and divine begetting and procession, and here we find clear explanation of the Creator-creature substance gap. The Cappadocians are adamant that begetting and proceeding within the Godhead is unique and happens, "without passion . . . and without reference to time."⁸⁷ Regarding the former, generation and procession are passionless because God is incorporeal, and therefore does not have passions or other mutative capacities.⁸⁸ As for the latter, the Cappadocians presume successionless duration in God, so that *ad intra* God is not subject to change or sequence, which they also associate with mutation.⁸⁹ Therefore, the Father *eternally* generates the Son, and the Spirit *eternally* proceeds from the Father. The Father has always been Father and therefore has always had a Son.⁹⁰

By rejecting *ad intra* temporal sequence in the Godhead, the Cappadocians eliminate the Arian contention that there was a time when the Everlasting was not (*ēn pote ote ouk ēn*).⁹¹ Moreover, since no temporal succession or mutation exists in the Godhead, generation cannot be a successive, organic secretion, which breaks off from its source. The Cappadocians regularly recoil from such imagery.⁹² Rather, generation and procession are unbroken, non-organic, non-mutative, and non-successive, which is the basis for perichoretic unity.⁹³ As Basil explains, "the Son [is] to be thought of as deriving existence from the Father, and yet the Only-begotten [is] not to be divided from the existence of the Father by any intervening extension in space, but the caused [is] to be always conceived of together with the cause."⁹⁴

One final point is worth noting. The Cappadocians reject the Arian claim that the Son is *willed* into being in the same (contingent) way a creature is. But at the same time, the Cappadocians deny Eunomius' view that generation and procession are involuntary emanations of the Father.⁹⁵ The middle ground between Arian willing of the Son and Eunomian emanationism is what we might call a "natural" or "fitting" volition. Because it is the nature of the Father to be Father, he begets and does so volitionally.⁹⁶ Athanasius puts it thus: "For it is the same as saying, 'The Father might not have been good.' And as the Father is always good by nature, so He is always generative by nature."⁹⁷ In this light, I think it safe to conclude that, for the Cappadocians, the Son (and Spirit) are metaphysically necessary—there is no possible

world where the Father is not Father—and yet, the Father does not beget involuntarily.

Is This Form of PST Monotheism?

How is the foregoing distinct from polytheism? How many Gods are there in PST? For an initial answer, I think it helpful to look at an insight from Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.⁹⁸ Plantinga points out that there are three ways in which “God” is used in classical Christian theology: (1) God may be used in reference to the Father, which is the dominant use in Scripture (e.g., 1 Cor. 8:6); (2) “God” may be used as a predicate, identifying the divine nature—the Cappadocian reading of “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit”;⁹⁹ and (3) “God” may be used in reference to the entire Trinity.¹⁰⁰

Plantinga points out that each use identifies only *one* God. No one doubts that reference to the Father as “God” is a singular reference; this much is clear to all. As for the second (i.e., “God” as reference to the divine nature), the Cappadocians make it quite clear (and I think rightly so) that this too is singular. Peter, Paul, and John do not bear three *humanities*; only one nature is present and common to all. Leftow may take issue with this claim, given that in his understanding of particulars, or “tropes” (what he considers individuations of attributes), “Abel’s humanity ≠ Cain’s humanity.”¹⁰¹ Under Aristotelian metaphysics, however, Leftow’s claim is simply wrongheaded. Abel’s humanity is not unique to Abel. Rather, humanity is predicated of Abel, and the same predicate applies to Cain. No distinction exists on the level of secondary substance. This is precisely what makes secondary substance—be it *ox*, *horse*, or *human*—a universal and not a particular: it is repeatable. Leftow’s peculiar understanding of tropes, may yield displeasure with the singularity of secondary substance, but this is not a problem for an Aristotelian-based PST; it is only a problem for Leftow’s own metaphysic. For Basil and the two Gregories, the singularity of a given nature or essence is apparent.¹⁰²

As for the third use of “God” (i.e., God as a reference to the entire Trinity), this use is the most questionable in its singularity. However, I think it should also pass as monotheistic without concern. When answering the question, “How many Holy Trinities are there?” the answer is “One.” That three *hypostases* are in the Godhead should not be of concern, for if asked, “How many classes on the Trinity are currently being offered at Calvin Seminary?” the answer would return, “One.” That numerous students are within the class does not falsify the response; the question concerns the class, not the number of attendees.

I believe Plantinga’s point regarding the three senses of “God” is helpful in showing PST to be sufficiently monotheistic. But clearly die-hard objectors like Leftow and Brümmer are not satisfied. Leftow and Brümmer explicitly attack social Trinitarianism as tritheistic, and it is clear from their criticisms that their complaint is against any form of Trinitarianism that affirms genuine

individuation, which would include PST generally. Their discontent is characterized by a sense that such views are playing semantics. Self-evident is PST's unabashed embrace of plurality within the Godhead. On the face of it, PST presents to the imagination three divine beings, just as Hellenistic polytheism presents to the imagination a plentitude of divine beings. Hence, Brümmer complains,

The obvious difficulty with this approach is that it seems to deviate from the monotheism of the biblical tradition. To claim that the Trinity consists of three discrete divine beings looks more like tritheism than like monotheism. The fact that the three Persons share the same divine nature does not make them one God any more than the Olympian gods can be called 'one god' because they share the essential property of being gods!¹⁰³

Leftow levels a very similar criticism, suggesting that, according to PST ways of thinking, Hellenistic polytheism would qualify for Christian monotheism were "Zeus and his brood only far more cooperative, and linked by procession."¹⁰⁴ To prove the point, Leftow conducts a thought experiment. Imagine Zeus were able to kill all other gods, and in place of his former divine companions, he produces a series of gods "qualitatively just like himself"; moreover, he begets these gods from his own substance and upholds them by his power.¹⁰⁵ Would the latter state of Greek polytheism be different from its former polytheism? Would Zeus and his new horde of deities be one god? Leftow thinks it evident the answer is No.¹⁰⁶ But how is this different from PST?

To answer this question, we must look at two significant differences between PST and polytheism. First, one identifiable difference between PST and polytheism is the type of secondary substance identified by the term "God" (or "god"). Notice that for the Cappadocians, *ousia* designates a single nature predicated only of particulars. If we know what *human* means, when *human* is predicated of a substance, we have a clear idea of that person's properties. Contrast this species designation with a *genus* designation (e.g., *animal*), which is predicated of many species (e.g., *dog*, *horse*, *human*) and many particulars (e.g., *Lassie*, *Seabiscuit*, *Paul*). The latter, it seems, is the nature of Greco-Roman polytheism. On one level this difference could be intuited simply from the nature of polytheism: the pantheon of gods all have different attributes and even distinct physical traits. Contrast the terrestrial nature of Zeus with Triton's aquatic nature. Therefore, while the genus, *god*, may be singular, within that genus, there are many divine species. No uniform nature is common to all.

If this conclusion were merely intuited from the nature of Greek myth, this distinction between PST and polytheism may be suspect. However, it is apparent that the Cappadocians understood polytheism along these very lines. In Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto*, he discusses a heretical tendency to "sub-numerate" the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁷ As Basil goes on to explain, sub-numeration is

essentially the construction of a porphyry tree, which diagrams the ontological hierarchies (i.e., various genera and species) of the Great Chain of Being. Sub-numeration of the Spirit places the Spirit lower on the chain than the Son and the Father, making the Spirit of a different nature. Basil objects, emphasizing that Father, Son, and Spirit are of one nature—certainly not a surprising response. But what is fascinating about Basil’s retort is that he charges his opponents with polytheism! After explaining *ousia* as the nature predicated of the three *hypostases*—so the “true dogma of the Monarchy is not lost”—Basil goes on to say, “They . . . who support their subnumeration . . . ought to be informed that into the undefiled theology of Christians they are importing the polytheism of heathen error. No other result can be achieved by the fell device of subnumeration than the confession of a first, a second, and a third God.”¹⁰⁸ Basil’s response indicates that unity of essence or nature is the very thing that secured monotheism in the eyes of the orthodox. Therefore, I think it fair to say that, for Basil (and the Cappadocians), Trinitarian monotheism hinges on *homoousia*. Polytheism, by contrast, affirms a plethora of *ousia*, thus making Arian *homoiousia* and other forms of ontic subordinationism the tritheism of the early Church.

The distinction between monotheistic and polytheistic uses of *ousia* may offer assistance in distinguishing PST from outright polytheism, but what of Leftow’s Zeus scenario? Are not Zeus and his offspring *homoousia* in Leftow’s thought experiment? It seems the answer is Yes. However, there is something misleading about the analogy. Leftow capitalizes on the fact that Zeus and his hoard are dubbed “gods.” This title makes the resulting *homoousia* analogy appear more exact than other *homoousia* analogies (e.g., Adam, Eve, and Seth). Yet, this is clearly not the case. Our concept of Zeus includes physical form, spatial separation from other gods, as well as a life of temporal succession and mutation—defining marks of “creature” in the Cappadocians’ minds, and the very things that must be abandoned when applying primary-secondary substance analogies to the Godhead. In this light, the *homoousia* of Zeus and his hoard is no more analogous to PST than the *homoousia* of Adam, Eve, and Seth. The very things that must be rejected in the Adam-Eve-Seth analogy (viz., temporal succession, physical separation, mutation, etc.) must also be rejected in Leftow’s thought experiment: Zeus and his hoard fit the Patristic definition of “creature”! As mentioned in the previous section, to apply succession, mutation, and separation to the Godhead is, to the minds of the Cappadocians, “utter nonsense.”¹⁰⁹ As Gregory of Nazianzen exhorts, “cast away your notions of flow and divisions and sections, and your conceptions of immaterial as if it were material birth, and then you may perhaps worthily conceive of the Divine Generation.”¹¹⁰ Leftow would be wise to heed these words.

Putting aside the creaturely nature of Greco-Roman gods, we must also note that Leftow’s picture of Zeus’ begetting is at some distance from the Cappadocian view of begetting—or any orthodox theologian’s view, for that matter. Leftow’s picture of *begetting* is *creating*. There was a time when Zeus’

hoard of gods was not, which makes the creation of these gods a successive, mutative form of Arian begetting. Leftow admits that he finds it hard to see how a Trinitarianism that "entails divine 'begetting' can avoid the claim that God creates the Son *ex nihilo*."¹¹¹ Aside from this flying in the face of Athanasius' entire corpus and going against the creedal formula, "begotten not made," Leftow here proves his understanding of orthodox metaphysics inadequate, for the fathers offer a very clear metaphysical distinction between begetting and creating.

Patristic thinkers like John of Damascus, Athanasius, Theodoret, and the Cappadocians were very clear that creation entails mutation. The underlying concept here is that, when presuming a realist (as opposed to a nominalist) view of nature, there is a sense in which something is *in potentia*, even if it is nowhere actualized—destroying all particular roses does not destroy the essence of rose-ness.¹¹² Hence, the movement from potentiality to actuality is itself a successive movement, which implies mutation.¹¹³ One of *the* reasons Arianism was unacceptable in the early Church was that its view of the Son as *created* required (in the minds of Arius' opponents) that the Son be mutable and thus of a different nature than the immutable Father.¹¹⁴ Begottenness (and procession) was therefore taken by the orthodox to be successionless and non-mutative, which ensured the Son's sonship and protected the *homoousia* doctrine.¹¹⁵ Being *uncreated* is, therefore, an attribute of Father, Son, and Spirit in Patristic metaphysics, while being *unbegotten* is not. To use Gregory of Nazianzen's words, "If you mean that the Uncreated and the created are not the same, I agree with you; for certainly the Unoriginate and the created are not of the same nature. But if you say that He That begat and That which is begotten are not the same, the statement is inaccurate."¹¹⁶ This distinction is important for correcting both misunderstandings like that of Leftow as well as certain social Trinitarian defenses of generation and procession, such as that of Richard Swinburne, who unflinchingly speaks of generation and procession as the "creation" of a second and third God, thus making his view tritheistic.¹¹⁷

Anticipating a retort that emphasizes the eternity of the Son's generation (as well as the Son's moral perfection), Leftow contends that "this is an unacceptably low standard of divinity."¹¹⁸ Leftow thinks it low, in my opinion, because he does not see the difference between The Eternally Begotten and the eternally created. Leftow suggests that he can conceive of God creating angels who "exist eternally . . . and [are] morally perfect, even by nature."¹¹⁹ By Leftow's lights, these angelic creatures look remarkably like The Eternally Begotten: they exist alongside God from all eternity; they are morally perfect; they are even immaterial, thereby bypassing the complaint against the corporeality of Leftow's Zeus analogy; and they depend on God for existence. Would not such beings be divine by PST standards?

When viewing Leftow's inquiry through the lens of the aforementioned Patristic metaphysics, the answer is an unqualified No. At the very least, such

beings are metaphysically unnecessary: as far as we know, there is one possible world in which they do not exist, namely, our own. This in itself makes theirs an existence characterized by potentiality. Moreover, even if somehow present in all possible worlds, all creatures, according to Patristic thought, consist of form and matter, including non-physical beings like angels. Given that matter is pure potentiality, even if Leftow's eternal angels never move from pure potentiality to actuality (i.e., from non-existence to existence), their composition includes potentiality, and thus ongoing temporal mutation—even if only mutation from good to better.¹²⁰ The ontic status of such beings, according to Patristic metaphysics, is unquestionably “creature.” Such temporally successive, mutative entities cannot possibly be of the same nature as the immutable God. This is the very reason Arianism was unacceptable in the minds of the orthodox.¹²¹

In light of the polarized differences between Cappadocian metaphysics and Leftow, I think it safe to say that, playing by the Cappadocian's rules, Leftow's scenarios fall flat. What we have seen, however, is that from within a properly historical, Cappadocian framework, *homoousia* is the crux of the monotheism-polytheism divide. If *homoousia* cannot be defended from within a PST framework, then polytheism does result. Thus, to the defense of *homoousia* I now turn.

In Defense of Homoousia

The charges against *homoousia* in this section I take largely from Aetius the Anomean. Aetius levels the following complaint:

If the ingenerate Deity is superior to all cause, he must for that reason be superior to origination; if he is superior to all cause clearly that includes origination, for he neither received existence from another nature nor conferred it on himself; if he did not confer existence on himself (not because of ineffectiveness of nature but by virtue of his complete transcendence of cause) how could anyone grant that the nature which is posited is indistinguishable in essence from the nature which posited it, when such a substance does not admit of origination?¹²²

Lying beneath this complaint is a triad of interlocking issues that will occupy the remainder of this article.

The first and second concerns are the simplest to address—from an Aristotelian perspective, at least. The first asks: How can The Unbegotten and The Begotten be of the same *ousia*? The question has rhetorical potency, for it juxtaposes the Father and the Son by highlighting seemingly contradictory characteristics, thereby casting suspicion on their common *ousia*. Yet, here Aristotle's fourfold causality is quite useful. Suffice it to say that Aristotle identifies four types of causality: formal cause, material cause, efficient cause, and final cause. The first two of these concern what a thing is (i.e., its form

and its matter), while the third concerns how it came to be, and the last, why it came to be—that is, for what end.¹²³

Drawing on these causal distinctions, the Cappadocians point out that *unbegotten* and *begotten* refer to efficient cause, which does not tell us *what* something is, only *how* it is. The Cappadocians happily point out that this *how* cannot alter the *what*: whether a man plants a tree, or a tree grows because an acorn falls to the ground, what grows is still a tree.¹²⁴ Moreover, to suggest that the generation of a son from his father indicates that the son is of a different nature than his father is contrary to reason. We in fact presume the opposite: because a son proceeds from his father, the father and son are of the same nature.¹²⁵ Hence, by employing appropriate causal distinctions, the Cappadocians make easy work of this complaint.

The second issue concerns ontological subordinationism. If the Father is the cause of the Son and the Spirit, is not the Father ontologically superior? Aetius believes this is another *prime facie* strike against *homoousia*. If the Father is uncaused and the Son is caused, the Father is clearly superior to the Son and the Spirit. Gregory of Nazianzen responds to this line of argumentation with no small amount of sarcasm: "Are you also your father's father, so as in no respect to fall short of your father, since you are the same with him in essence?"¹²⁶ Needless to say, while Aetius' argument on this point may sound as if it has some initial sense to it, the idea that the begetter is necessarily greater than the begotten is dubious. I can be stronger than my father, wiser than my father, and better looking than my father. As for any qualitative distinction in nature, such a concern is unintelligible: I cannot be more or less human than my father, for secondary substance does not admit degrees.

The third and final issue facing *homoousia* is not so easily undone. This objection is a more cogent form of the first two, and it concerns the issue of aseity. It runs as follows:

1. To possess aseity is to be uncaused.
2. The Son's existence is caused by the Father.
3. Therefore, the Son does not possess aseity (1 & 2).
4. The Father possesses aseity by nature.
5. Therefore, the Father and Son are not of the same nature (3 & 4).

While one could (and, I believe, should) respond that, in a properly Nicene PST, "caused" and "uncaused" refer to efficient cause, and as such tell us *how*, not *what*, something is, this objection links aseity with the divine nature, thereby complicating the issue by making "cause" formal cause. Given that in theology (and in some forms of the ontological argument) aseity is treated as an *attribute* of divinity—that is, as a kind property—the divinity of the Son seems suspect if the Son does not "possess" the attribute of *aseitas*. Yet, aseity, on the face of it, appears incompatible with begottenness: How, after all, can the uncaused, self-existent be caused? To affirm generation and procession therefore seems to require the denial of the Son's (and the Spirit's) aseity,

which, to some, is a (if not *the*) defining mark of divinity.¹²⁷ Such an objection to *homoousia* requires careful consideration.

One possible solution to this difficulty is to assert that what exists *a se* is the divine nature, while only the Father-Son relation is begotten. As Richard A. Muller points out, this approach was used by John Calvin to secure the Son's aseity. Muller writes,

Calvin consistently agreed with traditional orthodoxy that the person of the Son subsists in relation of the Father by generation, but he also insists that, considered according to his full divinity, the Son shares the divine attribute of self-existence, or *aseitas*. After all, the essence is undivided in the three persons, so that each of the persons contains in and of himself the full essence of the Godhead. . . . Calvin insisted that the subordination of the Son and the Spirit was a matter of order, not of essence, and that the subordination referred only to the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit.¹²⁸

While this position came to be generally accepted among the Reformed, it did not advance without dispute.¹²⁹ Jacobus Arminius, in particular, took issue with the orthodoxy of this solution, arguing that it was contrary to the teachings of the fathers. Muller summarizes:

Arminius insisted that Christ, as God, has both his sonship and his essence by generation. Arminius, in short, rejected the distinction, then generally accepted among the Reformed, between the second person of the Trinity considered personally and the second person of the Trinity considered essentially. In Arminius' view, the Reformed doctrine of the Son's aseity or self-existence, departed from the patristic norm. . . . The fathers, Arminius argued, intended "by the word 'Son' a certain mode of having [the divine essence], which is through communication from the Father, that is, through generation." Thus, "to have deity from no one" can be characteristic of the Father only who, in the teaching of the fathers is the sole *principium* of the Godhead.¹³⁰

Regrettably, this dispute cannot be resolved by simply appealing to the fathers. A case can be made that Calvin's solution is derived from a certain reading of Augustine.¹³¹ Whether this reading is accurate or not (and Arminius took it to be decisively inaccurate¹³²), Arminius finds plain evidence against the Son's aseity in the other fathers, not least of which are the Cappadocians, who plainly understand the Son "as deriving existence from the Father."¹³³ Given that this article is focused on PST as espoused by the Cappadocian fathers, I will side with Arminius and offer a defense of the view that the Father is the locus of aseity in the Godhead.

Proceeding under this assumption, I think the more appropriate answer to the aseity problem is to identify unbegottenness as a personal property of the Father, which addresses the how-it-is question regarding the *hypostases*, not

the what-it-is question regarding the divine nature.¹³⁴ I think this solution proves more cogent and is decisively in line with Cappadocian thought on the issue. But this solution does raise the question of whether the existence of the Son (and the Spirit) is contingent, and therefore, whether the Father might have existed without the Son (or Spirit), especially given that the generation of the Son (and the procession of the Spirit) is considered volitional by the Cappadocians. Since contingency is the mark of creation, this question represents a serious threat to *homoousia*. Can we affirm that the Father alone exists *a se* without endangering the metaphysical (or modal) necessity of the Son and the Spirit? I believe we can. The solution is found in the Cappadocian claim that the Father's fatherhood depends upon the Son. To understand how this solution protects the metaphysical necessity of the Son (and the Spirit), we must look at the difference between internal and external relations.¹³⁵

Internal relations are similar to essential properties: If x would no longer be x were a property, P , removed from x , then P is an essential property of x . Internal relations take on this same character. They are relations that are essential to the identity of a thing. For example, if it is essential to the identity of the state of Maine to be north of Boston, then the relation of Maine to Boston is an *internal* relation for Maine. Yet, not all things north of Boston are defined by their geographic position. A car driving from Maine to Grand Rapids is presumably not defined by its geographical position. Therefore, being north of Boston is an *external* relation for the car.

Granting the legitimacy of internal relations, essential properties may be kind properties (it is an essential property that I am *human*) or relational properties (I bear the internal relation of being my father's son). Assuming *homoousia*, begottenness and unbegottenness within the Godhead cannot be kind properties, lest the Father (as well as the Son and Spirit) be properly predicated of both fatherhood and sonship. Therefore, the fatherhood of the Father and the sonship of the Son—unbegottenness and begottenness—must be personal properties. But can these personal properties be essential properties? If they can, then the Cappadocian claim that there exists a bilateral dependence of identity between the Father and the Son is justified, as is the metaphysical necessity of both the Father and the Son, despite aseity having its locus in the Father. In my view, orthodoxy is on firm ground when arguing that the fatherhood of the Father is an internal relation.

Let us begin with a paternal example of an internal relation: Jill is John's daughter. Presumably, Jill's daughterhood is a personal property that exemplifies an internal relation—Jill's identity is wrapped up in her relation to John.¹³⁶ Yet, John's paternity of Jill is not an internal relation for John. John may not have married Joan, and John and Joan may not have bore Jill. Therefore, John's paternity of Jill is an external relation for John. However, I think in the case of the divine Father and the divine Son, we have reason for thinking the Father's paternity is an internal relation. Three considerations point in this direction.

We must first recall the above distinctions between *created* and *begotten*: the generation of the Son is eternal, without temporal succession, and non-mutative—that is, without change. Contrary to John’s relationship to Jill, there is (among other things) no time when the Son is not (contra Arius), nor has the relationship between the Father and the Son ever been other than what it is.

While the nature of eternal generation (as contrasted with creation) moves the Father-Son relation much closer to an internal relation, these qualifiers do not necessarily mean that the Father’s fatherhood is an internal relation, for if the fatherhood of the Father is volitional in a way that may cease or might not have been, then the relation is external. This proviso brings us to a second consideration, namely, the difference between the Arian understanding of the Father’s “willing” of the Son and the Cappadocian understanding of generation as natural volition. As discussed above, the Cappadocians affirm a volitional begetting of the Son, which is neither the contingent willing of Arius, nor the involuntary emanation of Eunomius. Rather, the Father naturally and volitionally begets the Son because it is natural for the Father to do so.¹³⁷ The Father is not forced to cope with involuntary paternity, but at the same time there is no possible world where the Father is not Father. In this light, I think it safe to conclude that if the Father were of such a disposition that he might not beget the Son, the absence of the personal property, *paternity*, would make the Father quite different than he is. In other words, this personal property is a defining characteristic of the Father. Therefore, the Father-Son relation, which is the natural outworking of this personal property, constitutes an internal relation for the Father as well as for the Son.

But let us consider the possibility that some die-hard objector takes the bit in his mouth and insists that, despite the modal necessity of the Father’s fatherhood, the ontic dependence of the Son upon the Father is unilateral, and therefore, the relationship between the Father and the Son is still external for the Father. This objection brings us to a third consideration in favor of the Father-Son relationship as an internal relation. The Cappadocians seem well aware that some types of personal properties (for them, those rooted in causal relations) are required to distinguish the *hypostases*. As Basil notes,

If we have no distinct perception of the separate characteristics, namely, fatherhood, sonship, and sanctification, but form our conception of God from the general idea of existence, we cannot possibly give a sound account of our faith. We must, therefore, confess the faith by adding the particular to the common. The Godhead is common; the fatherhood particular.¹³⁸

We may say that the Cappadocians anticipated Leibniz’s law, the indiscernibility of identicals: *a* and *b* are identical and indistinguishable if every property, *P*, of *a* is also a property of *b*.¹³⁹ The importance of this principle for

Trinitarian theology is that the persons of the Godhead are not conceived as having *ad intra* accidental properties. According to the indiscernibility of identicals, if every property of the Father is also a property of the Son, so that we have essence with no unique personal properties, the Father and Son become indistinguishable, and the identifiers, *Father, Son, and Spirit*, are merely arbitrary distinctions. If, however, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* are real distinctions *ad intra*, then the only bases for distinction are the relational properties, *unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession*. In this light, what makes the Father the Father and not the Son or the Spirit is his relational property, *font-of-divinity-ness*. Fatherhood is *the* personal property that defines the Father's identity; and therefore, the Father's fatherhood is a defining personal property—that is, it is an internal relation.

We may also note that the internal nature of the Father-Son relation cuts off at the pass the potential objection that the Father could be father by necessity, while generating a different Son. If the causal relations within the Godhead constitute *the* personal properties that distinguish Father, Son, and Spirit, then the Son's identity is defined by his begottenness. Therefore, in begetting a Son, the Father necessarily begets the Son he has, in this world, begotten. No other Begotten One is possible.

In the end, the cogency of the Cappadocian position is evident. Using Aristotelian causal distinctions, we can see quite plainly how generation and procession do not create ontological subordination within the Godhead, but are, nevertheless, metaphysically necessary, personal properties of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Thus, we can, with intellectual integrity, affirm the Nicene position that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *homoousia* without denying the causal relations unbegotten, begotten, and procession. And in securing the *homoousia* doctrine, we secure the very thing that protects Cappadocian PST from the charge of tritheism.

Conclusion

The foregoing demonstrates that there exists textual and historical legitimacy for considering a primary-secondary substance interpretation of *ousia* and *hypostasis*. We have seen that the Cappadocian model of PST, while perhaps not matching up to Leftow's and Brümmer's standards of monotheism, is, on its own terms, sufficiently distinct from polytheism and fully capable of affirming monotheism. (And we may note, such were the standards of the Nicene Creed.) Moreover, we have seen that the crux of PST monotheism, when read on Cappadocian terms, is the upholding of *homoousia*. While the doctrines of generation and procession may seem, on the face of it, to move contrary to *homoousia*, there exist sufficient resources within the Cappadocian model for retaining generation and procession without compromising the one-*ousia*-three-*hypostases* formula.

NOTES

- 1 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 29, 13. Citations of the Church fathers refer to the following editions: *Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, Wernerus Jaeger (ed) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1958); Gregory Nazianzen, *Discours*, Jean Bernardi, et al. (eds) (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1978); Basil, *Homélies sur l'Hexaéméron*, Stanislas Giet (ed) (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1968); Basil, *Contre Eunome*, Bernard Sesboue, et al. (ed) (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1982–1983), vol. II; The Book of Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, On the Holy Spirit: Written to Amphilocheus, Bishop of Iconium, Against the Pneumatomachi, ed. C.F.H. Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892); *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, P. Bonifatius Kotter O. S. B. (ed) (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969–); *Athanase d'Alexandrie, évêque et écrivain: une lecture des traités Contre les Ariens*, Théologie historique, 70, Charles Kannengiesser (ed) (Paris: Beauchesne, 1983). Unless otherwise noted, English translations are based on *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994). My thanks to my research assistant, Dylan Pahman, for his help digging up sources throughout the writing of this piece.
- 2 Citations of Aristotle refer to *Aristotelis Opera*, Immanuel Bekkeri (ed) (Oxonii e Typographo Academico, 1837). English quotations are taken from *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon (ed) (New York, NY: Random House, 2001).
- 3 Brian Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O' Collins (eds) *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Vincent Brümmer, *Atonement Christology and the Trinity: Making Sense of Christian Doctrine* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005). Both of these essays focus their criticism on social Trinitarianism, but their critiques can easily be applied to any Trinitarianism that, like PST, affirms genuine individuation (and, in the case of Leftow, eternal generation and procession).
- 4 Quotations of Aetius are taken from J. Wickham, "The Syntagmation of Aetius the Anomean," *Journal of Theological Studies* 19 (1968), pp. 532–569. The triad of questions I address from Aetius are, of course, not exclusive to PST. Any Trinitarianism that affirms *homoousia* while also accepting generation and procession, be it a "Latin" Trinitarianism or a non-PST reading of the East, must address these questions.
- 5 See Lewis Ayres, "On Not Three People: The Fundamental Themes of Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as Seen in *To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods*," *Modern Theology* 18/4 (October, 2002), pp. 445–474; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), pp. 676–679; Brümmer, *Atonement Christology and the Trinity*, p. 99ff.; Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1991), chs. 1–3; see also Maurice Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 133; Alcuin A. Weiswurm, *The Nature of Human Knowledge According to Saint Gregory of Nyssa* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952); N. Joseph Torchia, "Sympatheia in Basil of Caesarea's *Hexameron*: A Plotinian Hypothesis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 4/3 (1996); E. P. Meijerling, *God Being History Studies in Patristic Theology* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co.; New York: American Elsevier Pub. Co., 1975), pp. 103–113; Johannes Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, 46 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 61–118; and perhaps Pier Franco Beatrice, who could well be placed in this category, as he understands the term *homoousion* to be derived from Egyptian, semi-Neoplatonist tractates. See Pier Franco Beatrice, "The Word 'Homoousios' from Hellenism to Christianity," *Church History* 71/2 (2002), pp. 243–272.
- 6 See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1978), pp. 263–269; H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 337f.; John D. Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution," in Christoph Schwöbel (ed) *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1995), p. 47ff.; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1985), p. 36f.; see also Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *The Thomist* 50 (1986), pp. 325–352; Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988), pp. 37–53; Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Social

- Trinity and Tritheism," in Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. (eds) *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), pp. 21–47; and William P. Alston, "Substance and the Trinity," in Davis *et al.*, *The Trinity*, p. 179–186.
- 7 See Reinhard M. Hübner, "Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. Ep. 38 des Basilios. Zum unterschiedlichen Verständnis der ousiva bei den kappadozischen Brüdern," in J. Fontaine and C. Kannengiesser (eds) *Epektasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts à Jean Daniélou* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), pp. 463–490; and Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), p. 47ff. David G. Robertson could also be lumped into this category, insofar as he finds Hübner's work to be an important advancement in our understanding of Basil. However, Robertson thinks too stark a line is drawn between Aristotelian and Stoic lines of thought in both Hübner and his critics (David G. Robertson, "Stoic and Aristotelian Substance in Basil of Caesarea," *Vigiliae Christianae* 52/4 [1998], p. 416, n. 88). Robertson holds that it is more accurate to say "Basil is somewhere in between Stoic and Aristotelian doctrines of substance." Robertson, "Stoic and Aristotelian Substance," p. 417.
 - 8 See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). In a special colloquium edition of *Harvard Theological Review*, Ayres summarizes his aims and intended contribution in *Nicaea and Its Legacy* as follows: "I hope that one of the most useful contributions *Nicaea [and its Legacy]* makes to debate over fourth-century Christianity is in offering an account of pro-Nicene trinitarianism in which Greek, Latin, and Syriac speakers shared a set of fundamental 'strategies' in their Trinitarian theologies." Lewis Ayres, "Nicaea and its Legacy: An Introduction," *Harvard Theological Review* 100/2 (2007), p. 141. In characterizing Ayres as seeking to achieve this aim via a more Augustinian approach to the Trinity, I am siding with John Behr's assessment (and criticism) of Ayres' project in "Response to Ayers: The Legacy of Nicaea, East and West," *Harvard Theological Review* 100/2 (2007), pp. 145–152. Note that this criticism can also be applied to Ayres, "On Not Three People."
 - 9 See Behr, "Response to Ayers," pp. 145–152. See also Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem," esp. pp. 43–48; and Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," esp. p. 35–42.
 - 10 To my mind, those who oppose this reading tend to display the sort of Western, Augustinian presuppositions Behr identifies as problematic in Ayres' work. See Behr, "Response to Ayers," pp. 145–152. See also Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem," pp. 43–48; and Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," pp. 35–42.
 - 11 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, Mark Sebanc (trans) (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1995), pp. 49–50. Perhaps one problem in current scholarship is to posit too stark a contrast between various philosophical schools. See Robertson, "Stoic and Aristotelian Substance," p. 416, n. 88; and p. 417; for potential overlap between Stoic and Aristotelian patterns of thought, see Margaret E. Reesor, "The Stoic Categories," *The American Journal of Philology* 78/1 (1957), p. 69ff.; for evidence of NeoPlatonic mergers of Aristotelian and Stoic logic, see John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 178–179; 227; Plutarch, *Against Colotes* (1115Dff.); and Philo of Alexandria, *Dec.* 30f.
 - 12 See, e.g., Basil, *Hex.* 1, 8; and 2–3. Cf. Roger Miller Jones, "The Ideas as the Thoughts of God," *Classical Philology* 21/4 (1926).
 - 13 Basil, *Hex.* 2, 3. Cf. Richard Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56/4 (2002).
 - 14 Basil, *Ep.* 235, 2. See also Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 28, 22–28. The unknowability of essence generally is important to keep in mind when placing the Cappadocians philosophically, as the unknowability of the divine essence is sometimes attributed to NeoPlatonic influences, specifically Plotinus, *Enneads* 5, 4. (See, e.g., Ayres, "On Not Three People," p. 458). Yet, the Cappadocian claim that essence—all essences—do not fall in the purview of human knowledge is decisively non-Platonic.
 - 15 Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 226–227.
 - 16 *Ibid.*, p. 279. See also C. F. Hermann's edition of Plato (Leipzig, 1921–36), vol. 6, pp. 159, 35. Dillon notes, "A diligent investigator might uncover the following 'categories', some in the First Hypothesis (137O–142A), being denied of the One, others in the Second (142A–155E)

- being asserted of it; Quantity (150B), Quality (137D, 144B), Relation (146B), Place (138A, 145E), Time (141A), Position (149A), State (139B), Activity and Passivity (139B)." Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 279.
- 17 John M. Dillon, *The Great Tradition: Further Studies in the Development of Platonism and Early Christianity* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.), XVII, p. 35.
 - 18 Henry J. Blumenthal, "Plotinus' Adaptation of Aristotle's Psychology: Sensation, Imagination, and Memory," in R. Blaine Harris (ed) *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (Norfolk, VA: International Society for NeoPlatonic Studies, 1976), p. 41.
 - 19 John P. Anton, "Plotinus' Account of Categorical Theory," in *The Significance of Neoplatonism*, p. 83: "a) those who say that Plotinus subordinated the Aristotelian categories of the sensible world to the Platonic Forms of the intelligible world, and b) those who take the position that Plotinus accepted Aristotle's categories as proposed but limited their usefulness exclusively to the domain of the sensible." In favor of choice a), see John M. Rist, *Plotinus: The Road to Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 103. In favor of choice b), see Philip Merlan, "Greek Philosophy from Plato to Plotinus," Pt. 1 in A. H. Armstrong (ed) *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 37–38.
 - 20 A. C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of Neoplatonism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p. 94.
 - 21 For additional exposition and defense of Hübner's claims in "Gregor von Nyssa," see Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil*, p. 47ff.; and Robertson, "Stoic and Aristotelian Substance."
 - 22 Hübner, "Gregor von Nyssa," p. 471.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 472–473.
 - 24 See Plutarch, *Comm. Not.* 1076c, 1086a.
 - 25 Hübner, "Gregor von Nyssa," p. 481.
 - 26 This claim, Hildebrand suggests, is further substantiated by *Con. Eun.* 2, 4, where Basil states explicitly that his reference to human *ousia* is a reference to the "material substrate [*hylikon hypokeimenon*]." See Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil*, p. 47.
 - 27 See Aristotle, *De Cat.* 5.
 - 28 See *Ibid.*, Cf., e.g., John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, 9.
 - 29 See Aristotle, *De Cat.* 5.
 - 30 See C. J. F. Williams, "Aristotle's Theory of Descriptions," *The Philosophical Review* 94/1 (1985), p. 69.
 - 31 Note that this possible rendering of *hypokeimenon* may also have implications for how best to translate *Con. Eun.* 2, 4, where Basil identifies his reference to human *ousia* is a reference to the "material substrate [*hylikon hypokeimenon*]."
 - 32 Other potential difficulties exist for Hübner's theory. Much of Hübner's best evidence comes from *Con. Eun.*, which is potentially problematic, given that Basil's understanding of substance develops with time. See, e.g., Lucian Turcescu, *Vigiliae Christianae* 15/4 (1997), pp. 374–395. Turcescu suggests that Basil was early on more prone to *prosopon*, but abandoned it in favor of the pious enumeration of the *hypostases*, terminology suggested to be drawn from Aristotle's *Met.* A, 8, 31–38. See Marina Silvia Troiano, "Il concetto di numerazione delle ipostasi in Basilio di Cesarea," *Vetera Christianorum* 24 (1987), p. 350f. V. H. Drecoll also makes the case that Basil's terminology becomes incoherent under Hübner's reading. See Volker Henning Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), p. 64, n. 55; p. 67; p. 95, n. 135; p. 323; and pp. 327–329. In Basil's *Ep.* 361, his affirmation of *homoousia* is contingent on avoiding both the errors of a material substrate and the assigning of genus to the Godhead (see *Ep.* 361), concerns that he later combines, if Hübner's reading is right. In addition, among the ancients, the Stoic view of substance was understood to imply that Socrates and Socrates' matter are distinct subjects. See Plutarch, *Comm. Not.* 1083cd. Basil would thus knowingly be employing a metaphysic that would be perceived to give rise, not to a Trinity, but to a Quaternity. For additional considerations in favor of Basilian authorship of *Ep.* 38, see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 297–331; Wof-Dieter Hauschild (trans) *Basilius von Caesarea: Briefe Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur*, nos. 3, 32, and 37 (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1990), I, pp. 182–189, nn. 181–202; Jürgen, "Zur Echtheit von Basiliusbrief 38," In Ernst Dassmann and Klaus Thraede (eds) *Tesserae. Festschrift für Josef Engemann*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum,

- Ergänzungsband, no. 18 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1991), pp. 416–419; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 41, n.36; p. 88, n. 65; J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, fifth edition (London: A & C Black, 1993), p. 263ff.; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and the Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993); and Najeeb G. Awad, "Between Subordination and Koinonia: Toward a New Reading of the Cappadocian Theology," *Modern Theology* 23/2 (April 2007), p. 200, n. 20. Consider also Jean-Robert Pouchet, *Basil le Grand et son univers d'amis d'après sa correspondance: une stratégie de communion*, *Studia ephemeridis "Augustinianum"*, 36 (Roma: Institutum Patristicum "Augustinianum," 1992).
- 33 See Robertson, "Stoic and Aristotelian Substance," 416, n. 88.
- 34 To my mind, one of the clearest and most straightforward accounts of PST—even if not the most scholarly, by patristic-studies' standards—is that of Alston in "Trinity and Substance," pp. 179–186.
- 35 Basil, *Ep.* 38, 1. Prior to the Cappadocian use of *ousia* for the general predicate and *hypostasis* for the particular, *ousia* and *hypostasis* were synonyms. This is especially apparent when looking at the Nicene Creed of 325 A.D., which condemns those "who affirm that the Son of God is of a different subsistence or essence" (i.e., *hypostasis* or *ousia*), as contrasted with the Nicene Creed of 381 that affirms one *ousia* and three *hypostases*. See W. A. Curis, *A History of the Creeds and Confessions of Faith in Christendom and Beyond, with Historical Tables* (Kessinger Publishing, 2006), p. 70.
- 36 Basil, *Ep.* 38, 2.
- 37 *Ibid.*
- 38 See Zachhuber, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa*, pp. 61–118. As Zachhuber's title indicates, he accepts the Gregorian authorship of *Ep.* 38. For a good synopsis of the philosophical background of NeoPlatonic views of universals and particulars, see Richard Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," §1. Cross relies heavily throughout on A. C. Lloyd, "Neoplatonic Logic and Aristotelian Logic: I," *Phronesis*, 1 (1955–56), pp. 58–79; and Lloyd, *The Anatomy of NeoPlatonism*.
- 39 Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," p. 380.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 While Cross leans in favor of Gregorian authorship of *Ep.* 38, he does not think the theory is without its flaws. Thus, he tends to refer to "the author" of *Ep.* 38, rather than Gregory of Nyssa. See Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," §3. Given the assumptions of this essay, however, I will distinguish the author of *Ep.* 38, whom I take to be Basil, from Gregory of Nyssa.
- 42 Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," pp. 382–386.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 386.
- 44 *Ibid.*, pp. 389–391.
- 45 *Ibid.*, p. 391.
- 46 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 7. Cross draws out this point as a clear implication of *Ep.* 38. See Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," p. 391f.
- 47 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 2; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, 132M.
- 48 Basil, *Ep.*, 236, 6.
- 49 Cross suggests that, while he finds the views espoused in *Ep.* 38 and in Gregory of Nyssa to be quite contrary to NeoPlatonic understandings of universals and particulars, he does not therefore jump to an Aristotelian interpretation, but thinks the view is unique. This claim he does not develop or defend in his essay, however. See Richard Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa," p. 373. To my mind, how Aristotelian one takes Cross' treatment of immanent universals to be depends largely on how one interprets Aristotle on this point. The relationship between universals and individuated form is a disputed one in Aristotle-studies, but a strong history of interpretation exists that takes Aristotle to distinguish an individual (*tode ti*) from a particular (*kath' hekasta*). On this interpretation, while a particular is non-repeatable and cannot be predicated of another object, a universal can be individual and in this sense is immanent and undivided. The interpretive controversy centers on Aristotle, *Met.*, Z,13. See, e.g., G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotle: The Growth & Structure of His Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968); Frank A. Lewis, *Substance and Predication in Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Joseph Owens, *Cognition: An Epistemological Inquiry* (Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1992). Because I side

- with those interpreters who affirm individuation of universals without division, I take Cross' exposition to be quite helpful to the case for a broadly Aristotelian reading of the Cappadocians on universals and particulars.
- 50 Aristotle, *De Cat.*, 4
 - 51 *Ibid.*, 8.
 - 52 *Ibid.*
 - 53 *Ibid.*
 - 54 *Ibid.*
 - 55 *Ibid.*
 - 56 *Ibid.*
 - 57 See Aristotle, *Met.*, Z, 13.
 - 58 Aristotle, *De Cat.*, 5.
 - 59 *Ibid.*
 - 60 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 2.
 - 61 *Ibid.*
 - 62 *Ibid.* Cf. Basil's application of this principle to the Father, Son, and Spirit in *Ep.*, 38, 4.
 - 63 Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, 120M. See Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," §§3–4 for continuity between the developments of *Ep.* 38 and Gregory of Nyssa's comparable analogies.
 - 64 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 13.
 - 65 Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, 119–20M.
 - 66 See, e.g., John of Damascus, *Dialectica*, 5 (quoted below); 19; 30; 41; 47; 48.
 - 67 See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 49; and 61.
 - 68 *Ibid.*, 5, quotation taken from Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (trans) *The Fathers of the Church*, vol. 37 (Washington DC: Catholic University, 1958), pp. 17–18.
 - 69 See, e.g., John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, III. 4.
 - 70 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 6.
 - 71 See, e.g., Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 vols., G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (eds) (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936–1969), IV/I, p. 404ff.; and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us*, chap. 8. For a survey of historical definitions of *person*, from Ancient through Modern, see W. M. Thorburn, "What is a Person?" *Mind* 26/103 (1917), pp. 291–316.
 - 72 Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica*, 1. Alston echoes the sentiment that he is unconvinced of a great divide between Ancient and Modern views of *person*. See Alston, "Substance and the Trinity," pp. 187–188.
 - 73 Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica*, 1.
 - 74 Gregory's reference to "independent life" appears in the ellipses portion of the above quote of Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio Catechetica*, 1.
 - 75 Both Leftow and Feser raise this potential problematic as a consequence of divine individuation in social Trinitarianism. See Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," pp. 218–219; and Feser, "Swinburne's Tritheism," p. 179f.
 - 76 See, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, 128–29M; and *Con. Eun.* 2, 28.
 - 77 See Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity"; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*; Plantinga, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy"; Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem"; and Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism."
 - 78 See André de Halleux, "Personnalisme ou Essentialisme Trinitaire chez Les Pères Cappadociens," in *Patrologie et œcuménisme: recueil d'études* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), pp. 215–268.
 - 79 See, e.g., Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 18, 47; *Ep.* 361; and Athanasius, *Epistulae to ad Serapionem*, 1, 28.
 - 80 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 29, 2. See also Daniel F. Stramara Jr., "Gregory of Nyssa's Terminology for Trinitarian Perichoresis," *Vigilae Christianae*, 52/3 (1998), pp. 257–263.
 - 81 See, e.g., Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 1, 28; 3, 66; Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 29, 2; 29, 4; and 29, 6–9.
 - 82 See Gregory of Nyssa, *Con. Eun.* 1, 34; and Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 31, 11.
 - 83 See *Ibid.*, 31, 7.
 - 84 See *Ibid.*, 31, 11; see also Basil, *Con. Eun.* 4.
 - 85 Note that the Cappadocians, while employing causal distinctions to refute the Eunomians, also affirm that there is something undoubtedly unique about the Father's generation of the

- Son. However, given that the focus here is the line of Trinitarian analogy within the Cappadocians that can be systematized according to Aristotelian lines of thought, I will here, and in the latter portions of this article, give preference to the line of defense that focuses on causal distinctions.
- 86 The Cappadocians do not, of course, take this analogy to imply that the Son is begotten of the Father and the Spirit; the analogy only shows three distinct persons may be of one nature, despite having their respective origins in three distinct efficient causes. See Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.* 31, 11.
- 87 *Ibid.*, 29, 2; see also Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 1, 28.
- 88 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 4.
- 89 While the parameters of this article do not allow a lengthy discussion of God and time, suffice it to say that the primary concern of the Patristics generally on the issue of God and time seems to be a rejection of divine mutation. See, e.g., John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, 3; Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 10; and Alexander of Alexandria, *de Arii depositione*, 2. Note that there is an issue of authorship regarding this last work. See G. C. Stead, "Athanasius' Earliest Written Work," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 39/1 (1988).
- 90 See, e.g., Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 2.
- 91 See, e.g., Basil, *Ep.*, 8, 2.
- 92 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 7.
- 93 See Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 2.
- 94 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 7.
- 95 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 2.
- 96 Gregory of Nyssa, *Con. Eun.*, 2, 2.
- 97 Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 3, 66.
- 98 See Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," pp. 31–32.
- 99 See, e.g., Basil, *Ep.*, 236, 6. Basil rarely uses the phrasing, "God the Holy Spirit," given his sympathies for those who did not want to go beyond the language of Scripture in creedal formulae. On rare occasion, however, Basil does use such terminology, indicating his personal affirmation of the formula. See Basil, *Ep.*, 8, 2; and *Ep.* 236, 6.
- 100 Caution should be taken with this last use of "God," given that, as Behr notes, the rendering of "the Triune God" is not even possible in Greek, and most often the Eastern fathers speak in terms reflective of the Nicene Creed: "I believe in one God, the Father . . . and in one Lord, Jesus Christ . . . and in the Holy Spirit. See Behr, "Response to Ayers," p. 147f.
- 101 Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," p. 204.
- 102 See Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, 120M; and 132M; Basil, *Ep.*, 38; and Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 3, 13.
- 103 Brümmer, *Atonement Christology and the Trinity*, p. 99.
- 104 Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," p. 232.
- 105 *Ibid.*
- 106 See *Ibid.*, p. 233.
- 107 Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, 18, 45.
- 108 *Ibid.*, 18, 47. See also Athanasius, *Epistulae iv ad Serapionem*, I, 28, where Athanasius makes precisely the same argument.
- 109 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 9.
- 110 *Ibid.*, 29, 7.
- 111 Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," p. 242. Cf. Brian Leftow, "A Latin Trinity," *Faith and Philosophy* 21/3 (2004), pp. 304–307.
- 112 Contrast the Patristic view of essence with Leftow's view that Abel's humanity dies with Abel. See Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," p. 204.
- 113 Cf. John of Damascus, *Expositio fidei*, iii; Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, x; and Alexander of Alexandria, *de Arii depositione*, §2.
- 114 See Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 10; and Alexander of Alexandria, *de Arii depositione*, §2.
- 115 This is a continual theme in Athanasius' writings. See esp. Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*.
- 116 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 10.
- 117 See Richard Swinburne, "Could There Be More Than One God?," *Faith and Philosophy* 5/3 (1998). While certain advocates of social Trinitarianism, such as Plantinga, are concerned

- with showing social Trinitarianism to be monotheistic, this is clearly not the case for all forms of social Trinitarianism. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, not only rejects outright classical substance metaphysics, but juxtaposes Trinitarianism with monotheism, viewing the latter as contrary to Christian theology. See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 3; p. 8; p. 25; etc.
- 118 Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," p. 210.
- 119 *Ibid.*
- 120 According to Nyssa, the infinite gap between God and creatures assures that even the blessed continue to increase (or mutate) in goodness, moving from good to better, or glory to glory, to use Paul's phrase, in the eschaton. See Balthasar, *Presence and Thought*, pp. 34–35.
- 121 See, e.g., Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 10; and Alexander of Alexandria, *de Arian depositione*, §2.
- 122 Aetius, "The *Syntagmaton*," ii–iii.
- 123 See, e.g., Aristotle, *Physica*, 2, 3, 7.
- 124 Gregory of Nyssa, *Con. Eun.*, 1, 18; and I, 34.
- 125 *Ibid.*, 2, 7.
- 126 Gregory of Nazianzen, *Or.*, 29, 12.
- 127 Cf. Leftow, "A Latin Trinity," pp. 304–307.
- 128 Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003–), vol. 4, p. 324. For Muller's complete discussion of this debate in *Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 324–332.
- 129 *Ibid.*, vol.4, p. 328.
- 130 *Ibid.*, vol.4, p. 329.
- 131 See Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, 19, 13. It is not entirely clear that this is a right reading of Augustine, given that certain key figures within the Augustinian tradition, such as Thomas Aquinas, do not appear to take this line of interpretation. See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 4, 8, 7.
- 132 See *The Works of James Arminius*, trans. James Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), p. 695. Arminius points specifically to Augustine, *De Trin.* 5, 14; 4, 10; and *Against Maximinus*, 3, 23, 2.
- 133 Basil, *Ep.*, 38, 7. To be sure, Arminius did not see Calvin's view as a right reading of Augustine.
- 134 While I will not here go into a discussion of how my preferred solution affects the ontological argument, suffice it to say I believe more contemporary versions of the ontological argument that build on possible-world semantics (e.g., Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974], II, c., 1–10) remain compatible with aseity as a personal property of the Father. From what I can tell, aseity as efficient cause (or as lack of cause) still fits with the modal definition of metaphysical necessity, even if not a kind property.
- 135 My treatment of internal and external relations is drawn primarily from Paul Edwards (ed) *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 7 vols. (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company & The Free Press, 1967), vol. 7, pp. 125–133. Dispute exists over whether all relations are internal or no relations are internal. The former is based on the absolute idealist school in England and America, while the latter is drawn from Ernest Nagel. Suffice it to say that the driving assumptions of both the former and the latter are counter to (or anti-, as in the case of the latter) Aristotelian, and therefore, given the assumptions of this article, these positions will not be considered.
- 136 Someone could contest that Jill's daughterhood under John is an external relation, given that Jill can be imagined as the daughter of Bill, Bob, or Boethius. Granted. But, given that Jill's genetic makeup is linked with John, a great many of Jill's personal properties (not least of which is her DNA), would be different were she the daughter of Bill, Bob, or Boethius. Such a change in Jill seems, to my mind, a clear change in identity—and I think a trial lawyer would likely agree. Therefore, Jill's daughterhood under John is an internal relation.
- 137 See, e.g., Athanasius, *orations contra Arianos iii*, 3, 66.
- 138 Basil, *Ep.*, 236, 6.
- 139 See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "On the Principle of Indiscernibles" (ca. 1696), in *Leibniz: Philosophical Writings*, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson, trans. Mary Morris and G. H. R. Parkinson (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1973), pp. 133–135.

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