Grounding Eternal Generation

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This article aims to provide an explication of the Christian doctrine of eternal generation. A model of the doctrine is formulated within the ground-theoretic framework of Jonathan Schaffer and E. Jonathan Lowe, which enables it to be explicated clearly and consistently, and two often raised objections against the doctrine can be successfully answered.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Doctrine of Eternal Generation

At the center of the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century was a dispute concerning the nature of the Son and the Spirit's generation from the one God, the Father.[1] This controversy, which was initially sparked by the teaching of Arius of Alexandria, found its theological basis in the language expressed by the following scriptural passages:[2]

(a) "*Ages ago I was set up*, at the first, before the beginning of the earth" (Proverbs 8:23).

(b) "Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, *I was brought forth*" (Proverbs 8:25).

(c) "I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, 'You are my Son; *today I have begotten you'*" (Psalm 2:7).

(d) "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the *only begotten from the Father*, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

(e) "But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, *who proceeds from the Father*, he will bear witness to me" (John 15:26).

These types of passages provided a means for the development of the view that the Son is generated by the Father in the form of a "begetting"

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[1] I use the term "generation" to refer both to the begetting of the Son and the procession of the Spirit. When I mean to distinguish them, I will speak of the "begetting" of the Son and "procession" of the Spirit.

[2] The following verses are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

and the Spirit is generated by the Father in the form of a "procession." Prior to the fourth-century debates, individuals such as Origen of Alexandria came to construe these generation relations as "eternal," which, specifically in the case of the Son, lead to him writing: "We recognise that God was always the Father of his only-begotten Son, who was indeed born of him and draws his being from him, but is yet without any beginning."[3] Furthermore, we also see Origen writing: "The existence of the Son is derived from the Father but not in time, nor from any other beginning, except, as we have said, from God Himself."[4] Thus, according to Origen, the Son's "begetting" is not out of nothing, nor was it a temporal begetting similar to created reality—rather, the Son is, in some manner, *eternally* begotten by the Father.

From the conceptual foundation established by Origen, we then see in the early part of the fourth century, individuals such as Athanasius of Alexandria writing:

> if they dare not to say this openly, and the Son is confessed to be, not from without, but a natural offspring from the Father, and that there is nothing which is a restraint to God…it follows that the Word is from Him and is ever co-existent with Him, through whom also the Father caused that all things which were not should be. That, the Son comes not of nothing but is eternal and from the Father, is certain even from the nature of the case.[5]

For Athanasius, the Son is *correlative* with the Father and thus exists alongside him from all eternity—contrary to Arius, there is no time when the Son was not—neither was there a time when the Son was generated out of nothing. Rather, the Son is eternally generated from the Father alone and thus has always existed as the only begotten Son *of* the Father. This "pro-Nicene" position defended by Athanasius helped to further formulate the conceptual framework of the debate that was to be played out in the latter half of the fourth century.[6] During this specific period, we find individuals such as Aetius of Antioch and Eunomius of Cyzicus providing an alternative conceptualization of the relationship between the Father and the Son, which suggested that the Son was a temporal product of the Father's creative will. Specifically, for Aetius and Eunomius—who represented the *heterousian* position—the Son was a creature who is *unlike* the Father in essence and thus is an ontologically subordinate entity. This heterousian position gained some momentum during this specific period and elicited ferocious responses from the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil of

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[3]Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles*, 1.2.2.

[4]Origen of Alexandria, *On First Principles*, 1.2.11.

[5]Athanasius, "Epistula ad episcopos encyclica," 7:27.

[6]The term "pro-Nicene" refers to a specific group of Greek and Latin speaking theologians who favored the interpretation of Trinitarianism offered by the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and the First Council of Constantinople (381 CE). For a further explanation of this term, see Ayres, *Nicaea And Its Legacy*, 239.

Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus, where, as a paradigm example of their response, Basil wrote:

> The Father is the principle of all, the cause of being for whatever exists, the root of the living. From him proceeded the source of life; the wisdom, the power, and the indistinguishable image of the invisible God; the Son who was begotten from the Father; the living Word; he who is both God and with God; he who is, not adventitious; he who exists before the ages, not a late acquisition; he who is Son, not something possessed; he who is Maker, not something made; he who is Creator, not a creature; who is everything that the Father is.[7]

Basil, as with the other Cappadocians, conceived of the Father as the generative source of the Son. However, *contra* Aetius and Eunomius, the Son is not to be conceived of as a creature, due to his begetting enabling him to be "everything that the Father is." That is, the generation of the Son is not founded upon a creative action that stems from the will of the Father, but, instead, is an eternal relation that renders the Son as ontologically equal to the Father. So, on the basis of the argumentation provided by the Cappadocians, an eventual settlement of the issue was finally reached through a creedal declaration made at the Council of Constantinople (381 CE),[8] which stated that the Son is "*begotten of the Father before all worlds*."[9] Constantinople thus affirmed the eternal begetting of the Son as being a generation that is distinct from the creation of the spatiotemporal world, and is the means by which the divinity of the Father is communicated to the Son.

Yet, the declaration made at Constantinople did not only affirm the Son's eternal generation by the Father, but a further extension was made to include the Spirit in this generative action. That is, against the Pneumatomachian teaching—of the Spirit being an ontologically subordinate created entity—the declaration posited the fact that the Spirit "*proceeds from the Father*" and, therefore, "*with the Father and Son together is worshipped and glorified*."[10] Thus, the generation of the Spirit was to be metaphysically construed in the same manner as the Son's "eternal begetting." And hence, as with the Son, the Spirit's processional relation to the Father was the means by which the Father's divinity is communicated to the Spirit, resulting in a sameness of essence between them.

After the fourth century, however, a further means of securing the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son was proposed by certain individuals operating within the Latin-speaking pro-Nicene trajectory.

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[7]Basil of Caesarea, "Homily 15."

[8]Though one could argue that the settlement of this issue was not made solely on theological grounds, but also on political grounds stemming from imperial support of the pro-Nicene side of the debate. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.

[9]Tanner, *Decrees Of The Ecumenical Councils*, 5 (emphasis added).

[10]Tanner, *Decrees Of The Ecumenical Councils*, 5 (emphasis added).

Specifically, at the Third Council of Toledo (589 CE), an amendment—known as the *Filioque* amendment—was made to the creedal declaration of Constantinople, where it now stated that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father *and the Son*" (i.e. *Filioque*).[11] This specific amendment, which took an extended period of time to become a point of contention between the Latin and Greek-speaking churches, became an integral part of the doctrine of eternal generation (hereafter EG) within the Latin-speaking pro-Nicene trajectory.

So, in focusing on the specific construal of EG found within this Trinitarian trajectory, we can now state the central tenets of this teaching as follows:

(1) (Generation):

   (i) *Begetting*: the Son is eternally begotten of the Father.

   (ii) *Procession*: the Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son.

EG, as construed in this particular way,[12] was affirmed by individuals such as Augustine of Hippo—specifically for its important role in grounding the correlativity and consubstantiality of the Son and the Spirit with the Father—as Augustine writes:

> As, therefore, the Father begat, the Son is begotten; so the Father sent, the Son was sent. But in like manner as He who begat and He who was begotten, so both He who sent and He who was sent, are one, since the Father and the Son are one. So also the Holy Spirit is one with them, since these three are one. For as to be born, in respect to the Son, means to be from the Father; so to be sent, in respect to the Son, means to be known to be from the Father. And as to be the gift of God in respect to the Holy Spirit, means to proceed from the Father; so to be sent, is to be known to proceed from the Father. Neither can we say that the Holy Spirit does not also proceed from the Son, for the same Spirit is not without reason said to be the Spirit both of the Father and of the Son.[13]

Yet, despite the importance of this doctrine for pro-Nicene Trinitarian theorizing, one can indeed raise two important objections against it: the *intelligibility objection* and the *monarchy objection*. The intelligibility objection raises the issue of the apparent meaninglessness and philosophical incoherence of EG. More specifically, the intelligibility objection takes EG, as expressed by (Generation), to be a teaching that appears to lack

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[11]This is not to say that the teaching of the *Filioque* was formulated first at this council, as the teaching certainly predated the provision of this amendment to the Constantinopolitan creed.

[12]This article is thus focused on explicating and defending a specific construal of the doctrine of eternal generation that includes the *Filioque* amendment. Furthermore, for brevity's sake, I will no longer state the Filioque amendment as an additional teaching to the doctrine but instead assume it within the doctrine itself.

[13]Augustine of Hippo, "On the Holy Trinity," 15.26.

sense, and is thus unintelligible, as John Feinberg in voicing this objection writes that:

> This [the Son's eternal generation] is not a begetting at all like human be-getting… Now, if the eternal generation of the Son must be different from human generation, then how can we make sense of it? Christ cannot get something he already has, nor does it make sense to say this receiving has been happening for all eternity. If we are told that this is a mystery, the proper response seems to be that this is not mystery, but nonsense and con-fusion. The same line of explanation is given for the Holy Spirit's eternal procession, and it is just as problematic as the eternal generation of the Son for the same sort of reasons.[14]

For individuals such as Feinberg, EG is simply unintelligible—that is, we have no clear grasp of what the propositions contained in the doctrine mean—and thus, as Mark Makin notes, this specific issue seems to place the doctrine on an unhappy spectrum somewhere between "philosophi-cally incoherent, at worst, and unclear, at best. In this way, the doctrine's unintelligibility renders it untenable."[15] Thus, given the apparent unin-telligibility of the doctrine, there is indeed a great need for one to further clarify the nature of the eternal generation relations so as to render this doctrine *as* intelligible.

In addition to this issue, we have the monarchy objection, which high-lights the apparent incompatibility between the *Filioque* amendment—taken to be an integral part of EG, as expressed by (Generation)—and another central doctrine found within the pro-Nicene trajectory: the doc-trine of the monarchy of the Father. More precisely, the objection raises the issue of the *Filioque* amendment seemingly compromising the monarchy of the Father, which is that of the Father, and the Father alone, being the *sole principle* or *source* of the existence of the Son *and* the Spirit within the Trinity.[16] This specific objection is expressed clearly by Robert Letham, who writes that:

> The Greek fathers held that the Holy Spirit is the treasure and the Son is the treasurer—the Son receives and manifests the Spirit but he does not cause its existence as such, since only the Father is the source or origin or cause of both the Son and the Holy Spirit through ineffably different but united acts.[17]

Thus, for the Greek-speaking pro-Nicenes, the amendment made to EG that included the Son within the generative act of the Spirit results in there being another "principle" within the Trinity through the Son being a source of the Spirit's existence, which is incompatible with the teaching

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[14]Feinberg, *No One Like Him*, 489 (emphasis added).

[15]Makin, "God from God," 381.

[16]For a detailed unpacking and philosophical elucidation of the doctrine of the monarchy of the Father, see Sijuwade, "Building the Monarchy of the Father."

[17]Letham, "East is East and West is West? Another Look at the Filioque," 76.

that the Father, and the Father alone, is the single principle and source of his existence. Thus, given the apparent incompatibility of this amendment with the monarchy of the Father, there is also a further need for one to show how this doctrine, construed in *this* specific way, is, in fact, compatible with the latter doctrine.

So the important question now is: can the issues raised by these two objections be sufficiently dealt with? I believe that they can by one employing the tools of analytic philosophy and applying them to the task at hand. Specifically, this article will seek to utilize the (ever-popular) notion of metaphysical grounding, as formulated by Jonathan Schaffer and E. Jonathan Lowe, to help, firstly, clarify the nature of EG, which will deal with the intelligibility objection and, secondly, to help show how the doctrine does not negate the monarchy of the Father (but, in fact, helps to preserve it), which will ultimately deal with the monarchy objection.

Thus, the plan is as follows: in section two ("The Nature of Grounding"), I explicate the nature of metaphysical grounding and construe it as a genus (i.e. a natural resemblance class) that includes within it (at least) two species of grounding relations: a directed-dependence relation, introduced by Jonathan Schaffer, and an identity-dependence relation, introduced by E. Jonathan Lowe. In section three ("Grounded Eternal Generation"), I then apply the notion of metaphysical grounding detailed and analyzed in the previous section to the issue at hand, which will provide a grounding-based model of eternal generation that is not plagued by the issues raised by the intelligibility objection and the monarchy objection. After this section, there will be a final section ("Conclusion") summarizing the above results and concluding the article. So, this is the plan of action that will be followed in this article; however, before we set off on our task, some important "viability" requirements for our task will need to be made clear.

1.2 Eternal Generation Requirements

For any model of EG to be viable, it will need to fulfill certain desiderata concerning the nature of the relations between the Trinitarian persons. Mark Makin has helpfully provided a plausible set of desiderata that can aid our task here.[18] These desiderata center around four requirements:

  (i) The personal relation requirement

  (ii) The non-diachronic requirement

 (iii) The asymmetric requirement

 (iv) The non-spuriosity requirement

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[18]Makin, "God from God," 383.

The first desideratum: the personal relation requirement requires that the relation between the Trinitarian persons be one that can take in particular objects as terms, due to EG depicting a relation between three persons (more specifically, three "personal" particular objects).[19] The second desideratum: the non-diachronic requirement requires the relation between the Trinitarian persons to be one that does *not* hold across time, which would result in them being temporally ordered. As each of the persons of the Trinity is an eternally existent (correlative) entity—and so one of them cannot be temporally prior to another—the relation that ties them together must be non-diachronic. The third desideratum: the asymmetric requirement requires the relation between the Trinitarian persons to be asymmetric—the Son must be eternally generated by the Father, and the Spirit must be eternally generated by the Father and the Son, and not vice versa. Lastly, the fourth desideratum: the non-spuriosity requirement requires that the relation between the Trinitarian persons be such that nothing else besides the Father brings about the Son and nothing else besides the Father and the Son brings about the Spirit. The relation must preclude entities (such as necessarily existent objects) from being involved in the eternal generation of the Son and the Spirit.

Following Makin's lead, I take a viable model of EG to be one that meets these necessary desiderata. Therefore, the question that faces us is: what type of model can be provided that meets these desiderata and provides a clear explication of EG that is thus able to ward off the intelligibility and monarchy objections? The focus of the following sections will be on providing an answer to this very question. So, to achieve this end, it will be important to now detail the nature of the notion of metaphysical grounding which will then be subsequently applied to the task at hand.

2. The Nature of Grounding

2.1 Grounding: Initial Characterization

Metaphysical Grounding (hereafter, grounding or ground) is regularly characterized as a primitive expression of dependence, determination, and/or explanation. This expression is typically introduced by "grounders" (i.e. grounding theorists) through the following paradigm examples:

(2) (Mental): Mental facts obtain *because of* neurophysiological facts.

(3) (Chemistry): H_2O molecules are *grounded by* H, H, and O atoms.

(4) (Ethics): Normative facts are *based on* natural facts.

(5) (Language): Meaning is *due to* non-semantic facts.

(6) (Set-Theory): Singleton-Socrates exists *in virtue of* Socrates.

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[19]Particular objects are property-bearing particulars that have determinate existence and identity conditions. For a further explanation of this, see Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics*, ch. 2.

(7) (Aesthetics): What *makes* something beautiful are certain facts about the perception of its beholders.

What is of concern in these examples for grounders is not so much the truth-value of the claims, but rather what is shared between the examples—which is that of them jointly expressing some form of *ontological priority* that is related to "determination", "dependence," and/or "explanation." More specifically, there is a common structure in the paradigm examples above, in that each of them contains a connective that divides the sentences into an *antecedent* (i.e. what comes before the connective) and a *consequent* (i.e. what comes after the connective). In each of the examples above, the consequent provides some form of explanation for *why* the antecedent obtains—the antecedent clauses seem to be *explained* by the consequent clauses, which are both connected by expressions which enable the consequent clauses to provide a *reason for*, or an *account of*, the antecedent, based on the dependence or determination of the entities that are expressed by the consequents. Thus, through this initial characterization of grounding, we can take it to be an expression that provides a means for the nature and/or existence of an entity to be accounted for by reference to the nature and/or existence of another (ontologically prior) entity in whom the former is dependent upon or determined by. On the basis of these paradigm examples, and the initial characterization of grounding that can be derived from them, the consensus for grounders is that of it coming in two varieties: a *full* variety and a *partial* variety, which can be construed as follows:

(8) (Full): x is a full ground of y if x on its own is sufficient to ground y.

(9) (Partial): x is a partial ground of y if x on its own is not sufficient to ground y.

In its "full" and "partial" varieties, grounding is regularly taken to be governed by the following three formal principles:

(10) (Irreflexivity): No x is grounded in itself.

(11) (Asymmetry): If x grounds y, then y does not ground x.

(12) (Transitivity): If x grounds y, and y grounds z, then x grounds z.[20]

Furthermore, grounding is also usually taken to be governed by the following principles that express a modal pattern:

(13) (Non-monotonicity): If x grounds y, it does not follow that y is grounded by x and any other fact (or entity) r.

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[20]However, all of these formal principles are indeed controversial. Thus, first, for issues with asymmetry, see Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Grounding is not a Strict Order." Second, for issues with irreflexivity, see Jenkins, "Is Metaphysical Dependence Irreflexive?" Third, for issues with transitivity, see Schaffer, "Grounding, Transitivity, and Contrastivity."

(14) (Hyperintensionality): If x grounds y, it does not follow that x grounds any fact (or entity) that is intensionally equivalent to y.

(15) (Necessitarianism): If x grounds y, then x necessitates y.[21]

Thus, given the formal principles, grounding induces a strict partial order over the entities that are in its domain.[22] In other words, grounding gives rise to a hierarchy of grounds, in which the grounds of a fact (or entity), as Johannes Korbmacher notes, "rank 'strictly below' the fact (or entity) itself."[23] And, given the principles that express a modal pattern, grounding entails a necessary dependence of the grounded on the grounds, in that the existence of the latter entails the existence of the former. In short, grounders guarantee what they ground.[24] However, they perform this necessitating action in a "fine-grained," rather than a "coarse-grained," manner in that they do not necessarily ground other superfluous entities as well. Thus, grounding, in its most basic construal, is an expression that conveys some form of *directedness* (i.e. principles (10)–(12)) and a "*fine-grained*" *necessitation* (i.e. principles (13)–(15)).

Given this more detailed characterization of grounding, an important clarificatory point can now be made. In the specific framework that we are operating within, grounding is *not* taken to be a single expression or relation, but a *genus* that includes within it a variety of different relations that form a unified family.[25] More specifically, it is a natural resemblance class that includes within it a variety of distinct *metaphysical dependence relations* that possess a family resemblance—each of them is a directed and necessitating relation. Hence, the ground-theoretic framework that is being formulated here assumes the truth of *grounding pluralism* (i.e. there being more than one species of grounding relation), rather than that of *grounding monism* (i.e. there being only one species of grounding relation).[26] Specifically, we take there to be (at least) two different species of

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[21]First, for an explanation of the non-monotonicity of ground, see Audi, "Grounding." Second, for an explanation of the hyperintensionality of ground, see Jenkins, "Is Metaphysical Dependence Irreflexive?" Third, for an extended explanation of necessitarianism, see Trogdon, "An Introduction to Grounding." And for issues with it, see Leuenberger, "Grounding and Necessity." For a defense of it, see Cameron, "Turtles All the Way Down: Regress, Priority, and Fundamentality."

[22]See Trogdon, "An Introduction to Grounding." For arguments against ground being a "strict" order, see Rodriguez-Pereyra, "Grounding is Not a Strict Order." For a defense of ground as a "strict" order, see Raven, "Is Ground a Strict Partial Order?" and Raven, "In Defense of Ground."

[23]Korbmacher, "Axiomatic Theories of Partial Ground I," 161 (parenthesis added).

[24]Trogdon, "An Introduction to Grounding."

[25]For a different, but highly influential, conception of ground that does not take it to be a relation (or, a class of relations), but a sentential operator that has facts within its purview, see Fine, "Guide to Ground."

[26]For a further explanation and defense of grounding monism, see Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image of Causation," 91. The version of grounding pluralism that is being explicated here is original to this article. However, it is important to not view this version as being closely related to Jessica Wilson's version, which takes there to be many small "g" grounding

metaphysical dependence relations that fall within the grounding genus: a *direct-dependence* relation and an *identity-dependence* relation. These two relations are invoked by an individual in order to underwrite answers to different metaphysical questions: firstly, if one is seeking an answer to a question concerning *why* a *certain entity exists*—what we can term a *why*-question— such an answer will invoke a direct-dependence relation that connects the entities under question—and so using grounding terminology we can call this relation an *existence*-grounding relation. Secondly, if one is seeking an answer to a question concerning *who a certain entity is*—what we can term a *who*-question—one's answer will invoke an identity-dependence relation that connects the entities under question— and so using grounding terminology, we can call this relation an *identity*-grounding relation. So, in taking this characterization of grounding into account, we can now succinctly construe the notion as such:

> (16) (Grounding): A genus that functions as a unified family (i.e. a natural resemblance class) that includes within it a variety of distinct relations that are directed and necessitating and thus induce a partial order over the entities within their domain.

Grounding, as conceptualized in this specific way, will be helpful in further elucidating the nature of the eternal generation relations. Specifically, the two relations of directed-dependence and identity-dependence (each of which is taken to reside within the grounding genus) will be of great use to us in dealing with the intelligibility and monarchy objections. Thus, it will be helpful to now further detail the nature of these species of grounding relations and then proceed in the next section to apply them to the task at hand.

2.2 Existence Grounding: Direct-Dependence

Existence grounding (hereafter, e-grounding) is best modelled as a *primitive "directed-dependence" relation* associated with the notion of fundamentality. This specific relation can be conceptualized as follows:

> (17) (Existence) x e-grounds $y = y$ is directly-dependent on x in a manner that is analogous to causation, which backs an explanation for y existing as it does.

E-grounding, construed as a directed-dependence relation, was introduced into the literature by Jonathan Schaffer.[27] According to Schaffer, the

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relations (such as token identity, realization and set membership, etc.); see Wilson, "No Work for a Theory of Grounding." Rather, in a similar manner to Fine (in "Guide to Ground") and Kevin Richardson (in "Grounding Pluralism: Why and How"), the version of pluralism that is being affirmed here is that of there being many big "g" grounding relations that are simply species distinct relations that are not to be reduced to localized small "g" relations.

[27]See Schaffer, "On What Grounds What" and "Grounding in the Image of Causation." As noted previously, Schaffer is a proponent of grounding monism and thus does not affirm the conceptualization of e-grounding as a species of relation that falls into the grounding genus;

relation of direct-dependence takes in terms from any arbitrary ontological category and links a *more fundamental input* to a *less fundamental output*.[28] That is, there is an ontological ordering within reality in that some entities are derivative of other, more fundamental, entities. The fundamental entities of reality ontologically undergird the derivative entities and grounding is the relation that connects the undergirding entity to entities that are at a higher level in the structure of reality.[29] Thus, within this perspective, there is a hierarchical view of reality that is ordered by priority in nature. Once one distinguishes more from less fundamental entities, it is natural to posit a relation linking certain more fundamental entities to certain less fundamental entities which derive their existence from them.[30] E-grounding is thus the name of this direct "linkage" which connects the more to the less fundamental entities and thereby imposes a *hierarchical structure* over what there is.[31]

Now, closely related to e-ground's ability to structure reality are two further roles that it serves: its explanatory and generative roles. First, for its explanatory role, which centers around the explanatory principle of "separatism," explanation tracks grounding, and grounding, in some sense, backs explanation.[32] E-grounding entails the explicability of the grounded on the basis of its grounds and thus serves the role of providing a *synchronic metaphysical explanation* for the nature and/or existence of a *less fundamental* entity on the basis of the nature and/or existence of another, *more fundamental* entity.[33] Thus, taking (Set-Theory) as an example, if one is seeking an explanation for the existence of Singleton-Socrates, a synchronic metaphysical explanation for this particular case would simply cite the relevant metaphysical laws (i.e. the principles of grounding) and the fact that Socrates exists.[34] More fully, in this example Socrates grounds Singleton-Socrates and, thus, a synchronic metaphysical explanation for the existence of the less fundamental entity (Singleton-Socrates) would cite the more fundamental source(s) of that entity (which is that of Socrates) as mediated through the principles of grounding. Thus, in this case, and others like it, the *grounds provide an explanation for the grounded*—e-grounding is thus a relation that is intimately tied to *explanation*.

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see Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image of Causation." However, nothing internal to the conception of e-grounding that he provides requires one to assume a monistic position, and thus we can continue to include this conception within our pluralistic framework.

[28]Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image of Causation."

[29]Schaffer, "On What Grounds What."

[30]Schaffer, "Ground Rules: Lessons from Wilson," 145.

[31]Schaffer, "On What Grounds What."

[32]Another view within the literature is that of "unionism" which identifies ground with explanation. For a statement of this view, see Raven, "Ground," 326, and Maurin, "Grounding and Metaphysical Explanation: It's Complicated," 1578.

[33]Schaffer, "Ground Functionalism."

[34]The principles of grounding are taken to be (10)–(15) above.

Secondly, for its generative role, which centers around the generative principle of "super-internality," e-grounding is super-internal in the sense that the existence and intrinsic nature of one of the *relatum* ensure, firstly, that the e-grounding relation obtains and, secondly, that the other *relatum* (or *relata*) exists with the intrinsic nature that it has.[35] So, taking (Set-Theory) as an example again, it is Socrates, and the intrinsic nature that he possesses, which makes it the case that Singleton-Socrates exists and has the nature that it does (namely, being the singleton set that includes Socrates as a member). Thus, as there is a *generation of the grounded from the grounds*, once there is a "fixing" of the intrinsic nature of the grounds, there is also a "fixing" of the intrinsic nature of what is grounded, which, as Schaffer notes, allows a grounded entity to inherit "its reality from its grounds."[36] More specifically, this "reality inheritance" is made possible by the grounds *synchronically* bestowing upon the grounded whatever it needs to exist as the entity that it is, which emphasizes the fact that the existence (and intrinsic nature) of the grounds is sufficient to account for the existence (and intrinsic nature) of the grounded—e-grounding is thus a relation that is *generative* by nature.

Consequently, given the fulfillment of these explanatory and generative roles, e-grounding thus provides the direction and linkage needed for metaphysical explanation and generation in a *similar* manner in which causation provides the direction and linkage needed for causal explanation and generation. More specifically, we can say that as the relation of causation links the world across time (i.e. causes are diachronically linked to their "generated" effects), the relation of e-grounding links the world across levels (i.e. grounds are synchronically linked to the "generated" (grounded) effects).[37] Thus, as a directed-dependence relation, e-grounding is *analogous* to causation in such a manner as to render the former as one that has a *species-similarity* to the latter.[38] That is, once one (again) distinguishes the more from the less fundamental, it is quite natural to posit an explanatorily-backed, generative relation that is analogous to causation, which leads to the following principle:

(18) (Causal-Analogy): If *x* e-grounds *y*, then *y* is a generated 'effect' of *x*, as mediated by the principles of grounding.

The *systematic analogy* between e-grounding and causation centers on the manner in which a directed-dependency relation is mediated within a

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[35]See Schaffer, "The Metaphysics of Causation." That grounding is super-internal was first posited by Bennett, which is not to be confused with the *internality* of a given relation—the former, and not the latter, requires that only one of the *relatum* exists in order for the relation to hold between the *relata*; see Bennett, *Making Things Up*, 32–33.

[36]Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image of Causation," 95.

[37]Schaffer, "The Ground Between the Gaps."

[38]Thus, grounding, in this conceptualization of it, is distinct from (rather than identical to) causation as Alastair Wilson has recently argued that it is; see Wilson, "Metaphysical Causation." For an argument against this identification made by Wilson, see Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image of Causation," 94–96.

causal and grounding context. That is, if laws of nature mediate a given directed-dependence relation, then it is a case of causation—for example, the throwing of a stone is a sufficient cause of the breaking of a window, as this relation is mediated by laws of nature. Whereas if the (law-like) *principles of grounding* (or *grounding principles*) fulfill the role of mediating a given directed-dependence relation, then it is a case of e-grounding—for example, the existence of Socrates is a full (i.e. sufficient) ground of the existence of Singleton-Socrates, as this relation is mediated by the (law-like) principles of grounding.[39] Thus, in other words, in an e-grounding relationship, the more fundamental input generates and provides an explanation for the less fundamental output *analogously* to how a cause generates an effect and provides an explanation for its occurrence—e-grounding is thus a relation that is *analogous to causation*.

From this explication of the notion of e-grounding, we can now further precisify the concept of grounding that was previously introduced as follows:

(19) (Grounding$_1$): A genus that functions as a unified family (i.e. a natural resemblance class) that includes within it a variety of distinct relations that are directed and necessitating and thus induce a partial order over the entities within their domain. This genus includes:

(1) The relation of directed-dependence: a primitive relation that is generative, in a manner that is analogous to causation, and backs a synchronic metaphysical explanation for the existence of a given entity on the basis of another, more fundamental entity that the former is directly-dependent upon.

So, with the inclusion of a directed-dependence relation within the grounding genus, we now have a means for one to answer a *why*-question concerning the *existence* of a given entity. For example, if one is seeking an answer to a *why*-question regarding Singleton-Socrates (namely, why does Singleton-Socrates exist?), the correct answer to this question would be that of Singleton-Socrates existing *because* of Socrates, who fulfills the role of being the e-ground of his existence in a manner that is explanatory, generative, and analogous to causation. Thus, at a general level, through the notion of e-grounding, one can gain a better understanding of *why* a certain entity exists at a given time, which will center around it existing in *virtue* of another entity (or entities) that it is directly-dependent upon. Given this unpacking of the first grounding relation, we can now turn our attention to the second species of relation within the grounding genus: identity-dependence.

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[39]Schaffer and Wilson further elucidate the nature of the systematic analogy between grounding and causation through the use of Structural Equation Models; see Schaffer, "Grounding in the Image of Causation" and Wilson, "Metaphysical Causation." For an unpacking and employment of this type of modelling within a Trinitarian context, see Sijuwade, "Building the Monarchy of the Father," 8–9 and 12.

2.3 Identity Grounding: Identity-Dependence

Identity grounding (hereafter, I-grounding) is best construed as a *primitive "identity-dependence" relation* associated with the notion of essence. This specific relation can be conceptualized as follows:

> (20) (Identity) x I-grounds y = y is identity-dependent on x by the identity of x fixing (metaphysically determining) which entity of its kind y is, which results in the individuation of y.

I-grounding, construed as an identity-dependence relation, was introduced into the literature by E. Jonathan Lowe.[40] According to Lowe, the relation of identity-dependence is one that helps to specify the requirements for an entity being a *particular entity of its kind*.[41] At the heart of this specification would be the further notion of an *essence*. The essence of an entity x, as Lowe, in following Aristotle and John Locke, notes, is "the very being of anything, whereby it is, what it is."[42] In other words, what the essence of x is, is *what x is*, or *what it is to be x*.[43] An essence thus constitutes the *identity* of an entity, which can be further specified in two ways: as a *general* essence (or identity) or as an *individual* essence (or identity). A general essence of an entity is the *whatness* of that entity, which centers on the fact that a given x must be a thing (i.e. an instance) of some *general kind*—at the very least, it must belong to an ontological category. And thus, if an entity is of some kind (or ontological category), then that entity's general essence is *what it is to be of* that kind (or ontological category). For example, we can take Socrates to be an instance of the general kind Human (i.e. he is a human-instance), which results in Socrates's general essence being what it is to be human. However, an individual essence of an entity is the *whoness* of the entity, which is that of it expressing *what it is to be an individual* of a kind or ontological category, as opposed to any other individual of that kind.[44] For example, Socrates's individual essence is *what it is to be Socrates*, as opposed to any other human.

So, focusing our attention now on the notion of an individual essence, the obtaining of a relation of identity-dependence between entities x and y is contingent upon it being *part of the (individual) essence* of y that y depends for its identity upon x, in such a manner that *which* thing of its kind x is fixes

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[40]See Tahko and Lowe, "Ontological Dependence" and Lowe, "*The Possibility of Metaphysics*. Lowe does not construe the relation of identity-dependence as that of a grounding relation. Rather, he takes it to be a relation of ontological dependence. However, I do believe that identity-dependence fits within the grounding family better than that of the ontological dependence family, given that the latter includes relations that are formally and modally very different from the former. Identity-dependence seems to be out of place in the class of ontological dependence relations, but can easily find its place among the grounding relations.

[41]Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics*.

[42]Locke, 1975: III, III, 15, quoted in Lowe, "Two Notions of Being," 34.

[43]Lowe, "Two Notions of Being."

[44]Lowe, "Two Notions of Being," 35.

(or at least helps to fix) *which* thing of its kind *y* is.[45] I-grounding is thus a *relation of individuation*, where a given entity is individuated by it having its individuality "fixed" (or determined) by the individuality of another entity. So, taking (Set-Theory) as an example again—and focusing now on the identity of the singleton set, rather than its existence—according to I-grounding, as Socrates grounds Singleton-Socrates, Socrates *individuates* Singleton-Socrates in such a manner that *which* set Singleton-Socrates is is "fixed" solely by Socrates. In other words, it is part of Singleton-Socrates's individual essence that it is the *specific set that it is* and no other. Or, if we take another example, as events are regularly taken to be grounded in their constituents (and not vice versa), then, according to I-grounding, Julius Caesar *individuates* the event of his death, as the identity of Julius Caesar's death is (at least partially) "fixed" (or determined) by its being *Julius Caesar's* death, as opposed to that of any other person's.[46] Again, it is part of the event's individual essence that it is *Julius Caesar's* death and no other. In these cases, as with others, the grounds function as the *individuator* of the grounded.

However, as I-grounding is an asymmetrical relation that is intimately tied to explanation, no two distinct entities can be each other's individuators—in short, the identity of the grounded is *explained* by the identity of its grounds, and not vice versa. In fulfillment of this explanatory role, the notion of I-grounding allows one to provide a *synchronic principle of individuation* and *criterion of identity* for the entity under question. A synchronic principle of individuation is a principle, as Lowe notes, which tells us what it "is to count as one instance of a given kind."[47] In other words, this principle states what it takes for *x* to be that *very* entity at a given time (such as what makes the event of Julius Caesar's death the *very event that it is*). Whereas, a synchronic criterion of identity is one that governs the kinds that the items under question are related as instances.[48] A potential synchronic criterion of identity can be stated as follows (where we take "Φ" to stand for a sortal term, such as a set, and "R" to stand for a specific relation in terms of which the criterion of identity is formulated, such as the relation of having the same members):

(21) (Criterion of Identity) $(\forall x)(\forall y)\ ((\Phi x\ \&\ \Phi y) \to (x = y \leftrightarrow Rxy))$.

One instance of a criterion governing sets is provided by the Axiom of Extensionality: if *x* and *y* are sets, then *x* and *y* are the same set if, and only if, *x* and *y* have the same members. That is, the set's members determine the individuality of the set, in such a manner that they individuate that set.[49] A synchronic principle of individuation and criterion of identity

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[45]Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics.*
[46]Lowe, "Asymmetrical dependence." 2012, 214.
[47]Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics*, 74.
[48]Lowe, *The Possibility of Metaphysics.*
[49]Tahko and Lowe, "Ontological Dependence."

thus captures the individual essence of a given entity by stating what it is to be that particular entity. So, in taking a more concrete example, in the case of the person of Socrates, there is a synchronic principle of individuation and criterion of identity that appeals to two numerically distinct entities: Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, each of whom he is identity-dependent on.[50] More fully, the identity of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete (i.e. the individuality of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete) each *partially* grounds Socrates's identity. Socrates is in some relation such that he, and he alone, has that relation to Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, which is that of him being the son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete. Thus, within this relationship, *which* entities of their kinds Sophroniscus and Phaenarete are *partially* "fixes" (or metaphysically determines) *which* entity of his kind Socrates is. In stating this more precisely, we can express the identity of Socrates (i.e. his "identity conditions")—which is the combination of his individual essence, a synchronic principle of individuation and criterion of identity—as follows:

Socrates's Individual Essence	Socrates's Synchronic Principle of Individuation	Socrates's Synchronic Criterion of Identity
(SOCRATES$_I$)	(SOCRATES$_{IP}$)	(SOCRATES$_{IC}$)
Particular Kind of Entity: The child of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete	Socrates is the entity of the kind Human that has Sophroniscus and Phaenarete as his parents.	If x is Socrates, then y is the same person as x *iff* y is: the child of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete.

Table 1: Socrates's Identity Conditions

The specific manner in which an entity can be picked out within their kind—by the possession of a particular individual essence, a synchronic principle of individuation, and criterion of identity—is determined by another entity (or entities) who fulfills the role of being their individuator(s). So, in our example, Socrates will be able to be picked out within his kind, due to Sophroniscus and Phaenarete (his parents) bestowing upon him a specific individual essence, a synchronic principle of individuation, and criterion of identity, and thus each of them fulfilling the role of individuating him. In cases such as these, however, we see that the identity of a particular entity can be dependent upon, and individuated by, *more* than one entity—in our example, we have two entities: Sophroniscus and Phaenarete—due to the fact that the identity of either entity *alone* does not suffice to fix, or determine, the identity of the former entity. Rather, these entities are each taken to be partial, rather than full,

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[50]The following assumes the cogency of origin essentialism. For an explanation of this notion, see Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 111–114.

individuators—that is, each of these entities partially fixes the identity of the entity under question.[51] Thus, in our example, as partial "fixers" of Socrates' identity, Sophroniscus and Phaenarete provide an explanation for him having the identity that he does—the identity of Socrates is *explained* by the identity of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, and not vice versa. Hence, as with that of an e-grounding relation, the relation of I-grounding is an asymmetrical determination relation that fulfills an explanatory role by allowing *the identity of the grounds to fix (or determine) the identity of the grounded.* Thus, on the basis of this explication of the notion of I-grounding, we can also further precisify the conception of grounding as follows:

> (22) (Grounding$_2$): A genus that functions as a unified family (i.e. a natural resemblance class) that includes within it a variety of distinct relations that are directed and necessitating and thus induce a partial order over the entities within their domain. This genus includes:
>
>> (i) The relation of directed-dependence: a primitive relation that is generative, in a manner that is analogous to causation, and backs a synchronic metaphysical explanation for the existence of a given entity on the basis of another, more fundamental entity that the former is directly-dependent upon.
>>
>> (ii) The relation of identity-dependence: a primitive relation that enables one entity to fulfill the role of being the individuator of another entity, by the identity of the former entity "fixing" (or metaphysically determining) the identity of the latter entity.

Thus, with the inclusion of an identity-dependence relation within the genus of grounding, we now have a means for one to also answer a *who*-question concerning the *identity* of a given entity. For example, if one is seeking an answer to a *who*-question regarding Socrates (namely, who is Socrates?), the correct answer to this question would be that of Socrates being who he is *because* of Sophroniscus and Phaenarete, each of whom fulfills the role of grounding his identity—they fix which entity of the kind that he is. Thus, at a general level, through the notion of I-grounding, one can gain a better understanding of *who* a certain entity is at a given time, which will center around this entity having its identity in *virtue* of another entity (or entities) that it is identity-dependent upon. Taking all of these things into account, we have fully explicated the notion of grounding (i.e. a genus that has within it the relations of directed-dependence and identity-dependence) and thus we can now apply these concepts to EG so as to further clarify its conceptual structure and deal with the intelligibility and monarchy objections.

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[51]And thus, the identity of Socrates is only fully fixed by the identities of his parents together.

3. Grounded Eternal Generation

3.1 Grounded Eternal Generation (i): Fulfillment of Desiderata

The position of Origen of Alexandria, the pro-Nicenes, and the conciliar declaration made at the Council of Constantinople (381 CE)—as further elucidated at the Council of Toledo (589 CE)—helped to establish a conceptual foundation for EG, which posited the existence of two eternal relations that stem *from* the Father *to* the Son, and *from* the Father *and* the Son *to* the Spirit. Conceptualizing this doctrine within our grounding theoretic framework allows us to begin to deal with the intelligibility objection by providing a means for us to clarify the nature of the eternal generation relations. More specifically, we can now conceive of the eternal generation relations *as* grounding relations, which provides a re-construal of EG as follows:

(23) (Generation$_1$):

   (i) *Begetting*: the Son is grounded by the Father.

   (ii) *Procession*: the Spirit is grounded by the Father and the Son.

Grounding, at a basic level, is an expression that is intimately related to the notion of ontological priority—grounds are ontologically prior to the grounded. Thus, by us taking the eternal generation relations *to be* grounding relations, these relations are such as to induce a partial order over the entities within their domain. More specifically, the eternal generation relations are to be conceived of as ones that are, firstly, governed by certain formal principles—specifically, irreflexivity (the Son and the Spirit do not ground themselves), asymmetry (the Son and the Spirit do not mutually ground the Father), and transitivity (if the Father grounds the Son, and the Son grounds the Spirit, then the Father grounds the Spirit)—which all induce a partial order within the Trinity, ordered *from* the Father *to* the Son, and *from* the Father *and* the Son *to* the Spirit. Secondly, the relations are also to be conceived of as ones that are governed by principles that express a modal pattern—in that, for necessitativeness, hyperintensionality, and non-monotonicity, the Father necessitates the Son, and the Father *and* the Son necessitate the Spirit, without, in both cases, any other entities necessarily existing alongside them. Thus, as the Father is eternal, then given that grounding involves metaphysical necessitation (which must be instantaneous), the Son and the Spirit will be eternal as well—which is in keeping with the demands of pro-Nicene tradition.

Conceiving of the eternal generation relations as grounding relations provides a means to deal with the intelligibility objection by allowing us to further precisify the nature of these relations—and thus propositions about these relations not being meaningless. However, more can indeed be said here, as the notion of grounding, rather than it being a single relation, is correctly conceived of as a *genus* that includes within it a number of *different species* of grounding relations that form a unified family. Thus,

the holding of a grounding relation in the Trinitarian life is simply a shorthand for the holding of two different grounding relations that tie the Trinitarian persons together. More precisely, we take the eternal generation of the Son and the Spirit to be the obtaining of *two* grounding relations in the Trinitarian life: an e-grounding relation (i.e. a directed-dependence relation) and an I-grounding relation (i.e. an identity-dependence relation), which results in our re-construal of the generation relation *as* a grounding relation in (Generation₁) as being that of the holding of two distinct grounding relations that fulfill different roles within the Trinitarian life. It will be helpful to now further elucidate the nature of these grounding relations within a Trinitarian context. However, before we do this, it will be important to now explain how the grounding-based model proposed so far fulfills the necessary desiderata and thus is a viable model of EG.

The manner in which the grounding-based model fulfills the necessary desiderata is as follows: first, for the personal relation requirement, grounding can relate particular objects (specifically, "personal" particular objects) due to e-grounding and I-grounding relating entities from any arbitrary ontological category. The Son and the Spirit thus remain persons, despite being the input of these two grounding relations. Second, for the asymmetrical requirement, given the formal principle of asymmetry that governs e-grounding and I-grounding, these relations are asymmetrical in that the Father grounds the Son, and the Father and the Son ground the Spirit, and not vice versa. Third, for the non-diachronic requirement, due to the explanatory and necessitativeness of e-grounding and I-grounding, these two relations are non-diachronic (i.e. they are synchronic) in that the metaphysical structure established by these relations concerns that of the notions of fundamentality and individuation (i.e. order relative to being and identity) and not that of temporality (i.e. order over time)—thus the Father's existence and identity back a *synchronic metaphysical explanation* for the Son's existence and identity, and the Father and Son's existence and identity back a *synchronic metaphysical explanation* for the Spirit's existence and identity.[52] Fourthly, for the non-spuriosity requirement, given the modal pattern of e-grounding and I-grounding, each relation is non-monotonic, which enables it to preclude spurious eternal generation—there is nothing that brings forth (i.e. grounds) the Son but the Father, and there is nothing that brings forth (i.e. grounds) the Spirit but the Father and the Son.[53] The grounding-based model thus meets the necessary desiderata, and thus provides us with good "grounds" for further fleshing out EG within a ground-theoretic framework.

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[52]Specifically, it is the existence of the Father that solely backs an explanation for the Spirit's existence.

[53]For spatial requirements of this article, these formal features were previously only detailed at the genus level rather than at the species level.

3.2 Grounded Eternal Generation (ii): Existence Grounding

The first eternal generation relation that is operative within the Trinity is an *e-grounding* relation, identified as a primitive relation of directed-dependence. This relation of directed-dependence, within the Trinitarian structure, stems *solely* from the Father to the Son and the Spirit. Thus, even though the Spirit is generated by the Father *and* the Son, the Spirit is not connected to the Son by *this* specific relation. On the basis of this, we thus can construe the e-grounding of the Son and the Spirit by the Father as follows:

> (24) (T-Existence): (i) the Father e-grounds the Son and the Spirit = the Son and the Spirit are directly-dependent on the Father in a manner that is analogous to causation, and which backs an explanation for the Son and the Spirit existing as they do.

According to the grounding-based model, as expressed by (T-Existence), there is a directed-dependence of the Son and the Spirit *on* the Father. The Father is the *full* ground of the Son and the Spirit, in that the Son and the Spirit exist *in virtue of* the Father—his existence is sufficient *on its own* to ground their existence. Hence, what we have within the Trinity is that of this eternal generation relation linking a *more fundamental* input (the Father) to *less fundamental* output (the Son and the Spirit) which creates a fundamentality ordering within the Trinity.[54] More specifically, there is a hierarchical structure within the Trinity, as a fundamental entity undergirds two derivative entities, with the generation relation (i.e. an e-grounding relation) connecting the undergirding entity to entities at a higher level in the structure of reality.[55] By the Father e-grounding the Son and the Spirit within this hierarchical structure, he fulfills the role of being their "generator" such that the Son and the Spirit "inherit" their reality from Father. Yet, the Son and the Spirit are not a product of the Father (à la Aetius and Eunomius), but are taken to be *consubstantial* entities that *necessarily* derive their existence and intrinsic nature from the Father.

More specifically, on the basis of the super-internality of e-grounding, a "fixing" of the Father's existence and intrinsic nature ensures that the Son and the Spirit exist with the intrinsic nature that they have. In the e-grounding of *ex nihilo* created reality, a "fixing" of the existence and intrinsic nature of the Father results in creation existing with an intrinsic nature that is *different* from that of the Father's. However, in the Trinitarian case, there is a "reality inheritance" in the sense of an inheritance of

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[54]For an explanation of the link between grounding and fundamentality, see Bennett, *Making Things Up*, 102–175.

[55]This is without assuming any form of *ontological inferiority* between the Son and the Father, due to them sharing the same nature. For a further explanation of the ontological equality of the Son and the Spirit with the Father, despite objections against equality raised by Mullins—in "Trinity, Subordination, and Heresy," 98–99—see Sijuwade, "Building the Monarchy of the Father," 13–17.

the intrinsic qualities of the Father, in that of the Father (synchronically) *bestowing* upon the Son and the Spirit *his divinity*—the Son and the Spirit have the intrinsic nature that they have *in virtue* of inheriting the Father's divinity. Thus, despite the Father being the more fundamental input that generates the Son and the Spirit—each of whom is taken to be less fundamental/derivative output —they are a not a product of his will or a creation of him. Instead, they are *consubstantial* with the Father, who serves as the ultimate, synchronic metaphysical explanation for their existence. In other words, the Father is the sole source of the existence (and intrinsic nature) of the Son and the Spirit, in that his existence (and nature) are sufficient to account for theirs, which ultimately backs an explanation for them existing as they do.

E-Grounding, conceived as a relation of directed-dependence, plays the needed role of a necessary explanation-backing link that stems *from* the Father *to* Son and the Spirit and is mediated by the principles of grounding. More precisely, the Son and the Spirit are the output of these principles on the input of the Father and thus are the necessary grounded "effects" of the Father in a manner analogous to causation. The notion of e-grounding allows us to deliver the verdict that the Son and the Spirit's existence is dependent upon the Father's existence in an *intelligible* manner—namely, there is a directed-dependence of the former on the latter. Hence, if one is seeking an answer to a *why*-question concerning the *existence* of the Son and the Spirit (such as why do the Son and the Spirit exist?), the correct answer to this question would be that of them existing *because* of the Father.

So, from the position reached here, it will be important to now understand how the second grounding relation: an I-grounding, fits into the picture being painted, which will also allow us to further elucidate the role that the Son fulfills in cooperating with the Father in generating (i.e. grounding) the Spirit.

3.3 Grounded Eternal Generation (iii): Identity-Dependence

The second eternal generation relation that is operative within the Trinity is an *I-grounding* relation, identified as a primitive relation of identity-dependence. In the context of the generation of the Son, this relation of identity-dependence stems solely *from* the Father *to* the Son. However, in the context of the generation of the Spirit, this relation stems *from* the Father *and* the Son *to* the Spirit. Hence, unlike that of e-grounding by the Spirit, the Spirit is, in fact, connected to the Son by *this* specific relation. On the basis of this, we thus can construe the I-grounding of the Son and the Spirit by the Father (and the Son) as such:

(25) (T-Identity):

(i) The Father I-grounds the Son = the Son is identity-dependent on the Father in that the identity of the Father fixes (metaphysically determines) which entity of his kind the Son is, resulting in the Father being the individuator of the Son.

(ii) The Father and the Son I-ground the Spirit = the Spirit is identity dependent on the Father and the Son in that the identities of the Father and the Son partially-fix (metaphysically determine) which entity of his kind the Spirit is, resulting in the Father and the Son being the individuators of the Spirit.

According to the grounding-based model, as expressed by (T-Identity), there is an identity-dependence relation that ties the Son *to* the Father, and the Spirit *to* the Father *and* the Son. The Father *fully* I-grounds the Son and the Father and the Son *partially* I-ground the Spirit, such that, in the former case, the Son has his identity *in virtue* of the Father—the identity of the Father is sufficient *on its own* to ground the identity of the Son—whereas, in the latter case, the Spirit has his identity *in virtue* of the Father and the Son—the identities of the Father and the Son *together,* rather than alone, are sufficient to ground the identity of the Spirit.

Now, the holding of this identity-dependence relation in the hierarchical structure of the Trinity centers around it being *part of the* (*individual*) *essence* of the Son that he depends for its identity upon the Father and it being *part of the* (*individual*) *essence* of the Spirit that he depends for its identity upon the Father and the Son. An essence, as previously noted, can be general (i.e. what it is to be an entity of a given kind or ontological category) or it can be individual (i.e. what it is to be a particular entity of a given kind or ontological category). Each of the persons of the Trinity is an individual of the general kind Deity and thus possess the same general essence (i.e. they are each divine entities). However, where the distinction lies between the persons of the Trinity, specifically that of the Son and the Spirit, concerns the manner in which they are individuated—which is achieved by their individuality being "fixed" (or determined) by the individuality of another entity (or entities). More fully, for the Son, the identity of the Father (i.e. the individuality of the Father) *fixes* the Son's identity. The Son is in some relation such that he, and he alone, has that relation to the Father, which is that of him being the Son *of* the Father. Whereas the identity of the Father *and* the Son (i.e. the individuality of the Father and the Son) each *partially fix* the Spirit's identity. The Spirit is in some relation such that he, and he alone, has that relation to the Father and the Spirit, which is that of him being the Spirit *of* the Father and the Son. Given this, there is thus a *synchronic principle of individuation* and *criterion of identity* for the Son and the Spirit—where, firstly, the synchronic principle of individuation tells us what it is for the Son and the Spirit to be the *very* entities that they are at any given time and, secondly, the synchronic criterion of identity functions as a criterion that govern the kind Deity in which the Son and the Spirit are instances. So, for the Son, there is a synchronic principle of individuation and criterion of identity that appeals to one entity: the Father, of whom he is identity-dependent upon. And, for the Spirit, there is a synchronic principle of individuation and criterion of identity that appeals to *two* numerically distinct entities: the Father and the Son, each of whom he is identity-dependent upon. More precisely, the

identity of the Son is solely "fixed" (or determined) by the Father's identity, and the identity of the Spirit is partially "fixed" (or determined) by the Father and the Son's identity. In stating this more succinctly, we can express the identity of the Son and the Spirit (i.e. their "identity conditions") as follows:

Son's and Spirit's Individual Essences	Son's and Spirit's Synchronic Principles of Individuation	Son's and Spirit's Synchronic Criteria of Identity
(SON$_I$) Particular Kind of Entity: the Son of the Father	(SON$_{PI}$) The Son is the entity of the kind Deity that has God as his Father.	(SON$_{IC}$) If x is the Son, then y is the same person as x *iff* y is: the Son of the Father.
(SPIRIT$_I$) Particular Kind of Entity: the Spirit of the Father and the Son	(SPIRIT$_{PI}$) The Spirit is the entity of the kind Deity that has the Father and the Son as "originators."	(SPIRIT$_{IC}$) If x is the Spirit, then y is the same person as x *iff* y is: the Spirit of the Father and the Son.

Table 2: The Son's and Spirit's Identity Conditions

The specific manner in which the Son and the Spirit can be picked out within their kind—by their possession of a particular individual essence, a synchronic principle of individuation, and criterion of identity—is determined by another entity (or entities) who fulfills the role of being their individuator(s). So, in the theistic case, the Son and the Spirit will be able to be picked out within their kind due to the Father, for the Son, and to the Father *and* the Son, for the Spirit, bestowing upon them their individual essence, a synchronic principle of individuation, and criterion of identity, and thus each of them fulfilling an individuating role. In this specific case, however, the identity of the Spirit, unlike that of the Son, is determined, and dependent upon, *more* than one entity—the Father *and* the Son—due to the fact that the identity of either of them *alone* does not suffice to fix, or determine, the identity of the Spirit. Rather, the Father and the Son are each partial, rather than full, individuators of the Spirit in that each of them partially fixes the identity of the Spirit. And, thus, as partial "fixers" of the Spirit's identity, the Father and the Son provide an explanation for him having the identity that he does. In short, the identity of the Spirit is *explained* by the identity of the Father and the Son, and not vice versa.[56] Hence, as with that of an e-grounding relation, the relations

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[56]Interestingly, one has a positive argument here *for* the *Filioque* within this ground-theoretic framework as there is no way to individuate the Spirit from the Son without supposing that the Spirit proceeds from (derives his identity from) both the Father and the Son.

of identity-dependence connecting the Son to the Father, and the Spirit to the Father and the Son, are asymmetrical determination relations that fulfill explanatory roles in the Trinity. Thus, as with a *why*-question, *if* one is seeking an answer to a certain *who*-question concerning the *identity* of the Son and the Spirit (such as "who is the Son?" or "who is the Spirit?"), the correct answer to these questions would be that of the Son being who he is *because* of the Father and the Spirit being who he is *because* of the Father and the Son. Through the notion of I-grounding, one can thus gain a better understanding of *who* the Son and the Spirit are at a given time, which centers around them having their identity in *virtue* of the Father (and the Son). Taking this all into account, we can illustrate the (existence and identity) grounding structure in the Trinity as follows (with a solid line representing a full grounding relation and a dashed line representing a partial grounding relation):
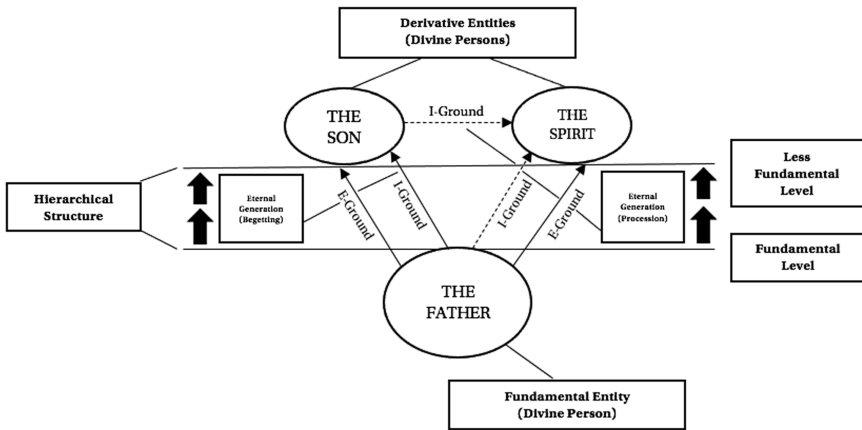

Figure 1: Trinitarian (Grounding) Structure

From the position reached here, we thus have a successful answer to the intelligibility objection, as we now have a clear and intelligible construal of EG, which can be stated as follows:

(26) (Generation$_2$):

> (i) *Begetting*: the Son is fully e-grounded and I-grounded by the Father (i.e. the Son is directly dependent and identity-dependent on the Father).

> (ii) *Procession*: the Spirit is fully e-grounded by the Father (i.e. the Spirit is directly-dependent on the Father) and is partially I-grounded by the Father and the Son (i.e. the Spirit is partially identity-dependent on the Father and is partially identity-dependent on the Son).

According to the grounding-based model, as expressed by (Generation$_2$), the Father begets the Son by e-grounding and I-grounding him, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son by him being e-grounded by

the Father *and* by him being I-grounded by the Father and the Son. Thus, *contra* Feinberg, EG, as construed in *this* specific way, is *not* unintelligible but, in fact, is one that can indeed aid us in further understanding the nature of the inter-Trinitarian relations. Moreover, this specific grounded-based model can also successfully meet the challenge raised by the monarchical objection as follows: as noted previously, the monarchy of the Father posits the fact of the Father being the sole principle and source of the existence of the Spirit. The monarchical objection to EG, as expressed by (Generation), is that of it failing to uphold this specific doctrine by allowing the Son to serve as a source, principle, and cause of the existence of the Spirit—which transgresses the monarchy of the Father by creating more than one source of being within the Trinity. However, in answer to this objection, we can clearly see that the grounding-based model proposed here does not in fact "transgress the monarchy of the Father," as, despite the Son being involved in the generation of the Spirit, the Father is the *sole* source of the existence of the Spirit. That is, as the relations of eternal generation are conceived of as the holding of the *two* grounding relations of e-grounding and I-grounding, the Father is taken to be the *sole* entity that e-grounds the existence of the Son and the Spirit—in other words, there is a directed-dependence relation stemming *solely* from the Father to the Son and the Spirit—and thus the latter exist *in virtue* of the Father alone. The Son and the Spirit being e-grounded by the Father establishes a specific "fundamentality structure" within the Trinitarian life that is founded upon the sole principality of the Father. Thus, the Son's involvement in the generation of the Spirit is solely that of him fulfilling a role of *individuating* the Spirit—namely, there is an identity-dependence (I-grounding) relation that partially stems from the Father *and* partially stems from the Son to the Spirit. Thus, in line with the monarchy of the Father, the Father is, in fact, the sole principle and source of the existence of the Son and the Spirit, with the *Filioque* only committing one to that of the Father and the Son sharing the role of individuating the Spirit. We, therefore, have a preservation of the monarchy of the Father within the grounding-based model. And thus, as with the intelligibility objection, the monarchical objection is not applicable to this type of model.

So, by utilizing the notion of grounding within this specific Trinitarian context, we have a conception of EG that is clear, consistent, and free from any intelligibility or compatibility issues with other important pro-Nicene doctrines. A grounding-based model of eternal generation can thus be of great use in helping us to further understand the nature of the intra-Trinitarian relations.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, EG has been consistently and intelligibly explicated by taking the "eternal generation relations" to be grounding relations. In reaching this end, the notion of grounding was explicated and shown to include

(at a minimum) two species of grounding relations: directed-dependence and identity-dependence relations. The eternal generation (i.e. begetting) of the Son was conceptualized as his dependence on the Father for his existence and identity—he is fully e-grounded and I-grounded by the Father. Whereas the eternal generation (i.e. procession) of the Spirit was conceived of as his dependence on solely the Father for his existence— he is fully e-grounded by the Father—and his dependence on the Father *and* the Son for his identity—he is partially I-grounded by each of them. Thus, given this grounding-based precisification of EG, we can indeed affirm the veracity of the doctrine in an *intelligible* manner without having to negate the veracity of other central teachings within the pro-Nicene trajectory.

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