

Monarchical Trinitarianism: A Metaphysical Proposal

JOSHUA R. SIJUWADE

London School of Theology

joshua.sijuwade@lst.ac.uk

Abstract: This article aims to provide a metaphysical elucidation of a specific model of the doctrine of the Trinity: Monarchical Trinitarianism, within the formal, neo-Aristotelian ontological and metaphysical framework of Jonathan Lowe (i.e. his four-category ontology and serious essentialism). Formulating the model through this ontological and metaphysical framework will enable us to explicate it in a clear and consistent manner, and the important 'multiple-natures' problem raised against the proposed model will be shown to be ineffective.

Keywords: Trinity; Ontology; Objects; Modes; Essence

Introduction

According to pro-Nicene Trinitarianism, there exists within the Trinity three 'persons' (ὑπόστασις) who each share one divine 'nature' (οὐσία).¹ In certain streams of contemporary analytic and historical theology, this one divine nature is taken to be a numerically singular universal of divinity that renders the persons as *homoousios* (i.e. them 'possessing' or 'being of' one nature) due to each of them individually *instantiating* this universal. This instantiation-based position, however, faces a problem, termed the 'multiple-natures problem', which threatens to place it outside of the boundaries of pro-Nicene Trinitarianism. More specifically, as Timothy Pawl (2020) has highlighted,² an instantiation relation seems not to 'fit the bill' for the task of further elucidating the doctrine

¹ Pro-Nicene Trinitarianism, which developed in the second half of the 4th century, centred on a certain set of principles that governed the grammar of trinitarian discourse for the Greek and Latin speaking theologians, who favoured the interpretation of Trinitarianism provided by the First Council of Nicaea (325 CE) and the First Council of Constantinople (381 CE), and whose defense of the consubstantiality and irreducibility of the Father, the Son and the Spirit set the standard for Trinitarian orthodoxy. For a further detailing and explanation of the notion of "pro-Nicene", see: (Ayres, 2004, 239).

² Pawl (2020) did not fully explicate the critique of the development of the model featured in this article. Thus, the 'multiple-natures' problem should be seen as a further development of his critique.

of the Trinity. As it stands, on the one hand, it fails to provide a plausible construal of the necessary 'Person–Nature' relation that fundamentally ties each of the Trinitarian persons to the one universal of divinity. However, on the other hand, it will also need to preserve the ontological unity of the persons, which is central to the doctrine of the Trinity—namely, the persons being *homoousios*.³ But, as the objection goes, the relation of instantiation, unfortunately, enables a proliferation of particular divine natures within the Trinitarian life and thus fails to achieve this second task. In other words, it ultimately allows a form of ontological disunity to creep into the depths of the foundation of the Trinity, which an adherent of pro–Nicene Trinitarianism would clearly find problematic.

The aim of this article will thus be focused on introducing, and coming to the defense of, a specific model of the Trinity: *Monarchical Trinitarianism*, which seems to be plagued by this issue, once a helpful metaphysical elucidation is provided for it. This defense will thus be made by providing a further metaphysical development of the proposed model within the neo–Aristotelian ontological and metaphysical framework of Jonathan Lowe (i.e. his four–category ontology and serious essentialism). Elucidating this specific model within this ontological and metaphysical framework, will enable it (and others like it) to be placed squarely within the boundaries of pro–Nicene Trinitarianism and thus the 'multiple–natures' problem (and any other variant of it) will be shown to be a non–issue for a neo–Aristotelian based Trinitarianism.

Thus, the plan is as follows: in section 1 ('Monarchical Trinitarianism and the Multiple–Natures Problem') I briefly introduce the model of Monarchical Trinitarianism and provide a helpful metaphysical elucidation of it (in light of the model of Social Trinitarianism). I then highlight an important problem that can be raised against this proposed development, which I term the multiple–natures problem. Then, in section 2 ('A Neo–Aristotelian Ontology') I unpack Jonathan Lowe's four–category ontology by detailing the fundamental categories in this ontology and the various formal ontological relations that connect these categories together. In section 3 ('A Neo–Aristotelian Trinity: Phase One') I situate the model of Monarchical Trinitarianism within the ontological framework as detailed in the previous section, where my discussion in this section will provide an answer to the multiple–natures problem. However, as we shall see, it will also generate a further problem, which I term the multiple–modes problem. Thus, in section 4 ('A Neo–Aristotelian Trinity: Phase Two') I respond to this second problem by explicating a further metaphysical thesis provided by Jonathan Lowe: serious essentialism, and apply it to the issue at hand. This will demonstrate that the multiple–modes problem, like the multiple–natures

³ We can further understand the term to mean that each of the persons is *extensively equal* such that they possess numerically the same essential property of divinity. For a further explanation of this construal of the notion of the *homoousion*, see: (Mullins, 2020, 2).

problem, is not, in fact, a problem for a metaphysically robust version of Monarchical Trinitarianism. Finally, in the concluding section ('Conclusion') I will summarise the above results and conclude the article.

1. Monarchical Trinitarianism and the Multiple–Natures Problem

In contemporary analytic and historical theology, certain 'models' of the doctrine of the Trinity have been proposed which have their roots in Latin and Greek-speaking pro-Nicene Trinitarianism. By a model, following Alvin Plantinga (2000), I mean a collection of propositions that shows how it *could* be so that another collection of target propositions are true or actual. In light of this, certain models of the doctrine of the Trinity seek to provide a possible means in which the doctrine could, in fact, be true. In this case, we can focus on a specific model within Greek-speaking pro-Nicene Trinitarianism: Monarchical Trinitarianism. This model of the Trinity has been most recently defended by John Behr (2004), in the historical theological literature, as well as by Beau Branson (n.d),⁴ in the analytic theological literature.

The following two conditions below are central to this specific model:

- (MT) (a) There are three entities within the Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Spirit, each of whom share one divine nature and thus are each equally termed 'God' (in the predicative sense).
 (b) The one 'God' (in the nominal sense) is numerically identical to one of the entities: the Father, who is the sole ultimate source of the Son and the Spirit.⁵

According to Monarchical Trinitarianism, as expressed by (MT), the Father is the *sole ultimate (unsourced) source* of everything else and thus possesses a specific priority within the Trinity (and reality as a whole). This specific priority grounds the fact of the Father being designated as 'God' in the primary (i.e. nominal) sense of the word. That is, the Father is numerically identical to the one God. Whilst the Son and the Spirit are each, with the Father, 'God' in a secondary (i.e. predicative) sense of the word (by each of them sharing in the one divine nature). Therefore, this specific view of the Trinity posits the existence of three entities: the Father, the Son and the Spirit, who are each 'God' in the secondary (predicative) sense. Yet, there is only one 'God' *within* the Trinity, as only one of those entities: the Father, is 'God' in the primary (nominal) sense of the word.

⁴ Branson (n.d.) introduces the term Monarchical Trinitarianism into the literature and is helpful in highlighting the historical foundations of the model and the neglect that it has faced in contemporary analytic theology.

⁵ The terminology of 'predicative' and 'nominal' used in expressing the Monarchical Trinitarian position is original to this article.

This model of the doctrine of the Trinity clearly secures monotheism (which is a central aim of any model of the doctrine),⁶ through equivocating on the usage of the word 'God'. As, on the one hand, it is used as a predicate in reference to each of the entities who possess the one divine nature. Yet, on the other hand, it is also used as a name which solely designates the Father, who is thus taken to be numerically identical to the one 'God'.

However, despite the model's benefits, important questions can be raised concerning the metaphysical commitments that the model requires one to make. That is, one can ask certain questions concerning the ontological category that the entities within the Trinity fall under. Are they, for example, 'Barthian modes',⁷ 'Leftovian lifestreams',⁸ or 'persons' (in the modern sense of the word)? And what is the nature of the relation that ties each of these entities to the one divine nature enabling them to each be equally called 'God' (in the secondary/predicative sense of the word)? Is it a relation of instantiation, identity or exemplification? As it stands, answers to these questions have not been forthcoming from the adherents of Monarchical Trinitarianism, and thus this approach seems to provide a model of the doctrine of the Trinity that is, unfortunately, underdeveloped at a metaphysical level—let us call this problem the *underdevelopment problem*.⁹ Yet, if Monarchical Trinitarianism is to serve as a helpful means of showing how it *could* be so that the collection of target propositions concerning the doctrine of the Trinity are true or actual—namely, it is a successful model of the doctrine of the Trinity—it will indeed be important to investigate the means in question to deal with this problem.

Now, a potential way to do this, without requiring one to abandon the model as a whole, is through utilising certain elements of (a more popular) type of model which also resides within Greek-speaking pro-Nicene Trinitarianism: *Social Trinitarianism*.¹⁰ Social Trinitarianism, which has recently been championed by a number of analytic theologians and philosophers such as

⁶ For an explanation of the importance of a model of the doctrine of the Trinity securing monotheism for scriptural and historical reasons, see: (Tuggy, 2003).

⁷ For Karl Barth, God is a unitary entity, where each of the hypostases is to be identified as a *mode* or *way* of being (*seinsweise*) of this entity. For an explanation of this, see: (CD I/2:359).

⁸ For Brian Leftow, God lives his life through three simultaneous streams, where each of the hypostases are identified as event-based Lockean 'persons' that are founded upon a particular stream. For an explanation of this, see: (Leftow, 2004, 2007).

⁹ However, Branson (n.d.) does begin to sketch out a metaphysical framework for this type of model. Yet, he does not focus on answering these important questions. One of the core aims of this article is thus to build on the work of Branson's more historically focused piece by providing answers to these important metaphysical questions.

¹⁰ The traditional view of Social Trinitarianism's roots harkening back to the Trinitarian models of the Cappadocian Fathers has been recently contested by various theologians, for an explanation of this, see: (Coakley, 1999). For a defense of these historical roots, see: (Hasker, 2013, Ch.3).

Cornelius Plantinga (1988), William Hasker (2013), William Lane Craig (2003), Edward Wierenga (2004) and Stephen T. Davies (2006), ultimately finds its paradigm formulation in the work of Richard Swinburne (1994) and (2018).¹¹ This paradigm formulation posits the following two conditions as central to this type of model:

- (ST) (a) There are three relationally distinct persons (i.e. pure mental substances) within Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Spirit, each of whom instantiates the one divine nature (i.e. the same essential, intrinsic property of everlasting omnipotence).
 (b) The one 'God' is numerically identical to the unified collective composed of the three divine persons.

Social Trinitarianism, as expressed by (ST), postulates, in a similar manner to Monarchical Trinitarianism, the existence of three distinct entities: the Father, the Son and the Spirit. These entities, however, are to be identified as fully distinct persons in a *modern sense* of the term. More specifically, they are *pure mental substances*, which results in each of them possessing, firstly, their own mental life, secondly, a privileged access to this mental life, thirdly, a capacity to perform separate intentional actions and, fourthly, a 'token distinct' consciousness that is, however, 'type identical' (Swinburne, 2018). The three persons are thus, as Swinburne writes: "distinct centres of knowledge, love, will and action" (Swinburne, 2018, 10). In addition to this, and more importantly, these persons are also divine entities, in the sense that each of them possesses the same nature — the same essential, intrinsic property that is necessary and sufficient for *being divine* — the universal of essential, everlasting omnipotence.¹² And the manner in which the persons are related to this essential intrinsic property is through a relation of *instantiation*, as Swinburne writes:

a divine individual just is the *instantiation* of his properties...there is nothing more to a divine individual than the *instantiation* of the divine essence...it is exactly the *instantiation* of the same essence of divinity which makes the Father God, as makes the Son God, as makes the Spirit God. (Swinburne, 1994, 166, 189, emphasis added)

¹¹ Swinburne's approach is a paradigm formulation of Social Trinitarianism due to it not (unlike Craig's approach or Hasker's approach) including within it certain 'Latin' elements (such as there being one soul or three 'lifestreams' within the Trinity) which can call into question the real 'personhood' of the members of the Trinity. For the differences between these approaches, see: (Hasker, 2013, Ch.17, 18 and 23).

¹² According to Swinburne (2016, 174), the property of omnipotence entails the further properties of omniscience, omnipresence, perfect goodness etc.

Thus, even though the Father, the Son and the Spirit are distinct persons, they all possess (i.e. instantiate), the same nature and thus are equally divine. In short, they are *homoousios*. And taking into account this sameness of nature, each of the persons is then solely to be individuated by their essential relational properties, where:

- (i) the relational property of the Father is that of ‘unbegottenness’ (i.e. *being uncaused*),
- (ii) the relational property of the Son is that of ‘begottenness’ (i.e. *being caused to exist, by an uncaused divine person acting alone (i.e. the Father)*), and
- (iii) the relational property of the Spirit is that of ‘spiritedness’ (i.e. *being caused to exist by the uncaused divine person (i.e. the Father) and the divine person caused to exist by the uncaused divine person acting alone (i.e. the Son)*).

Therefore, the Father is individuated by *not* having any (inevitable) cause of his existence, whilst the Son and the Spirit *are* individuated by having an (inevitable) cause of their existence. Nonetheless, these causal relations indicate that the persons are (in some manner) *existentially dependent* upon each other. Specifically, this existential dependence is due to the causal relation that stems *from* the Father. Where the Father, due to his perfect goodness, would inevitably bring about the existence of the Son, and the Son likewise would inevitably co-operate with the Father in bringing about the Spirit. However, due to this ‘tripersonalisation’ being an inevitable act of the Father – which is an *act of essence* (or *nature*), rather than an *act of will* – the Trinitarian persons could not exist without each other.¹³ Moreover, there is a further unity that ties them together: a unity of action, which wards off any possibility of volitional conflict between them.¹⁴ This unity of action is based on the fact that, due to their omniscience (which would provide them with knowledge of every true proposition, and no false beliefs), each of the

¹³ One could ask the following question: “well, since the Father is said to be a cause of the Son, is it not the case then that prior to causing the Son, the Father must have existed on His own?” No. As Swinburne posits that to say that the Father (inevitably) caused the Son and the Spirit to exist is to say that the Father caused the Son and the Spirit to exist through a *beginningless period of time*. That is, any period, in which the Son and the Spirit exist, the Father, would have acted at an earlier instant to bring them about (Swinburne, 1994). There was thus not a time in which the Son and the Spirit did not exist, and the Father existed alone. As for every period of beginningless time that one proceeds back to, there is an earlier moment in which the Father caused the Son and the Spirit to exist. According to Swinburne, there is thus never an instant in which the Son and the Spirit do not exist.

¹⁴ This volitional conflict is known as the problem of omnipotence, which Swinburne (1994) took as his starting point for constructing his Social Trinitarian model. The potential issue presented by this problem is that of a possible failure of volitions (i.e. a ‘clash’ of wills) between two (or more) omnipotent beings, showing that there logically cannot be more than one divine being, unless there is some mechanism to forestall this clash.

persons would understand that at any given point of time there are different *spheres of activity* that they would be *morally* required to operate within. Given their possession of this knowledge concerning which sphere they are to operate within *and* their perfect goodness (requiring them not to perform any morally bad action), they would each believe that it would be bad for them to perform a non-cooperative action outside of their sphere of activity, and thus desire not to do so (Swinburne, 2008). However, it is the Father, through his initial primacy (i.e. him being the ultimate source of the two other divine persons),¹⁵ who would have the authority to establish these distinct spheres of activity for each of the Trinitarian persons to operate within. Thus, each of the persons being omniscient and perfectly good, they would therefore co-operate with each other and back the actions of the other persons within their own sphere of activity. Therefore, there is a *volitional interdependence* between the three divine persons. Accordingly, this unity of being, as well as action, enables the Trinitarian persons to be an interdependent collective that ‘functions’ as a totally unified society that is ‘rightly’ designated with the name ‘God’.

Thus, we see that Social Trinitarianism (in its paradigm formulation) posits the existence of three distinct divine persons, each of whom instantiates the *same* nature—the same essential, intrinsic property of everlasting omnipotence—ultimately resulting in the persons being *homoousios*. They are existentially dependent, in that they rely upon each other for their continued existence. Moreover, they are volitionally interdependent, in that they co-operate together, within, and without, their designated spheres of activity. This all establishing a unified ‘collective’ termed ‘God’. Taking all of these things into account, we can now assume elements of the metaphysical model provided by Social Trinitarianism into that of the Monarchical Trinitarian framework detailed above.¹⁶ The ultimately enabling us to deal with the underdevelopment problem and provide a more ‘fine-grained’ construal of the two conditions of (MT) as such:

- (MT*) (S) There are three relationally distinct persons (i.e. pure mental substances) within Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Spirit, each of whom instantiates the one divine nature (i.e. the same essential, intrinsic property of everlasting omnipotence) and thus are each equally termed ‘God’ (in the predicative sense).

¹⁵ This is still true despite the Father’s cooperation with the Son in bringing about the Spirit, as the Father is defined as the uncaused cause of all the other divine persons, and thus the Son’s causal role is simply that of the Father operating *through* him. That is, in their cooperative act, the Father is the ultimate source of the Spirit, and the Son is the means by which the Spirit exists.

¹⁶ Importantly, however, this would not include the nominal use of the term ‘God’ in reference to the Trinity. This will be further explained below.

(M) The one 'God' (in the nominal sense) is numerically identical to one of the entities: the Father, who is the sole ultimate source of the Son and the Spirit.

Therefore, Monarchical Trinitarianism,¹⁷ construed in this more specific and metaphysically robust way (hereafter, Monarchical Trinitarianism*), has, through (M) of (MT*), a *monarchical* strand. Within this monarchical strand, the one God is numerically identical to the Father (rather than the Trinity, as found within the paradigm formulation of Social Trinitarianism (ST)).¹⁸ And, through (S) of (MT*), which is the extension made to the model, it also has a *social* strand. Within this social strand, each of the members of the Trinity is a *person* who individually *instantiates* the one divine nature (rather than them being undefined entities that are related to the one divine nature by an undefined relation, as was previously posited by Monarchical Trinitarianism (MT)). We can thus illustrate the central aspects of Monarchical Trinitarianism* through the following diagram (with 'CR' standing for a 'causal relation', 'DN' standing for the 'divine nature', 'Ins' standing for an 'instantiation relation', the 'dashed line' representing 'the Son's mediation of the causation of the Spirit by the Father' and the 'outer-circle' representing the Trinity (i.e. the unified collective composed of the Trinitarian persons):

¹⁷ The starring of this name emphasises that the version of Monarchical Trinitarianism under discussion here is that of the metaphysically robust version expressed by the conditions of (MT*) rather than (MT). Thus, whenever Monarchical Trinitarianism is unstarred, this will be in reference to the underdeveloped version expressed by (MT).

¹⁸ The assumption of Social Trinitarianism into the framework of Monarchical Trinitarianism* does not only help to deal with an issue plaguing Monarchical Trinitarianism but also can help Social Trinitarianism face up to an issue concerning the plausibility of identifying the one God as the collective of divine persons. That is the plausibility of using the name 'God' for a collective entity. This does indeed seem implausible as 'God', used in this specific nominal sense within Christianity and the other Abrahamic religions (i.e. Judaism and Islam), is usually a term that solely designates a personal entity (which is evidenced in the holy scriptures of these religions by the usual replacement of this name with the personal pronoun 'He') rather than an impersonal collection of personal entities. It thus seems to be a stretch for one to secure monotheism in the manner that Social Trinitarianism has sought to do through using the term God in this specific way. By combining this model of the Trinity with Monarchical Trinitarianism, we can drop the identification made here and re-identify God *as* a personal entity: the Father.

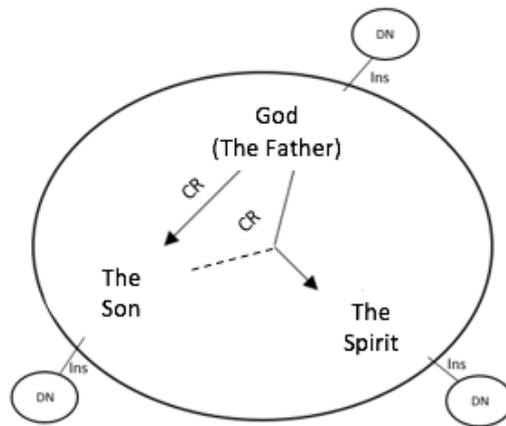


Figure 1.1 Monarchical Trinitarianism*

The model of the Trinity that is proposed here secures monotheism, through its monarchical foundation, whilst warding off the underdevelopment issue that previously plagued it, through an assumption of some of the metaphysical elements that underpin Social Trinitarianism. However, despite the advantages of this proposal, an important question can be asked concerning the ‘orthodox credentials’ of this specific model.¹⁹ That is, as this formulation of Monarchical Trinitarianism* now includes within it a ‘social strand’ that utilises certain metaphysically robust notions such as personhood and instantiation, one can now ask if these metaphysical additions render the notion of Monarchical Trinitarianism as ‘unorthodox’?

Focusing our attention on the second robust notion,²⁰ that of the instantiation relation, a more specific question becomes: how many ‘natures’ are there in this construal of the doctrine of the Trinity? Is there actually only *one homoousios* nature that is shared between each of the Trinitarian persons (as expressed in the historical creeds of Nicaea (325 CE) and Constantinople (381 CE)), or not? An adherent of Monarchical Trinitarianism* would plausibly answer this question in the affirmative and state that there is solely *one* nature, as the persons each instantiate the *same* universal of divinity (hereafter, divinity–attribute), which renders them each as ‘God’ (in the predicative sense). However, one can surely ask why this ‘sameness’ is simply not that of each of the persons instantiating a particular attribute of the *same type*, rather than there being a *single instance* of this attribute (which pro–Nicene Trinitarianism seems to require)? Our hypothetical adherent of Monarchical Trinitarianism* would, again, plausibly affirm that the attributes have a sameness in type over that of instance and thus agree that there seems to be a *multiplicity* of particular instances of the divinity–attribute present

¹⁹ With the standard of orthodoxy here being that of pro–Nicene Trinitarianism.

²⁰ For a defense of the ‘orthodoxy’ of the first robust notion, which is that of the members of the Trinity being persons in the modern sense, see: (Hasker, 2013, 19–49).

within the Trinity. The three divine persons thus fall under the same kind, thereby each *individually* instantiating the divinity–attribute. However, an adherent of Monarchical Trinitarianism* can themselves now ask the question of why construing the model as an instantiation–based position through its social strand, which results in there being a multiplicity of instances within the Trinity, is indeed problematic?

In answering this type of question, Timothy Pawl (2020, 12) has given an interesting parity example, which he states as follows:

When my daughters, Mary, Beatrice, Edith, and Agnes, each instantiate the universal, Humanity, and each has proper characteristics such that we don't confuse them, what we have there are four humans, not a single human.

In other words, when we count human people, we count by individual instances of humanity. Thus, if there are a multiplicity of instances of humanity, then there are multiple humanity–attributes (i.e. humanity natures). The Trinitarian persons, in a similar manner, can be taken as *individual instances* of a specific universal (i.e. the divinity–attribute). However, understood in this way, it does not seem as if there is only *one* divinity–attribute (i.e. one nature) within the Trinity, which is surely problematic. More specifically, *if* we posit the existence of an instantiation relation between the Trinitarian persons and the divinity–attribute, then it seems that when we are counting the number of attributes within the Trinity, we are also to count by *individual instances* of that specific universal. Since there are three instances of this divinity–attribute, each of the Father, the Son and the Spirit, we can take there to be *three particular natures* (i.e. attributes) within the Trinity. Therefore, taking this issue into account, instead of Monarchical Trinitarianism* solely positing one nature—a numerically singular divinity–attribute—it appears to allow a proliferation of particular natures that correspond to the number of instances within the Trinitarian life. And, given that there are three divine persons, this leads to there being three particular natures within the Trinity. This postulation of an instantiation relation between the Trinitarian persons and the divinity–attribute thus seems to be highly problematic in securing the *homoousion* between the Trinitarian persons, as each of the persons has their *own* particular nature, rather than being *of the same, numerically identical nature* (attribute). Thus, as Pawl (2020, 12) notes, such approaches, seem to have ‘given up’ on monotheism. That is, even though Monarchical Trinitarianism* seemingly secured monotheism through its equivocation in the use of the word ‘God’, it seems to have lost a hold of it in another respect—namely, this approach fails to capture the ontological unity of the persons of the Trinity, through further metaphysical considerations. Specifically, through positing this particular metaphysical development of

Monarchical Trinitarianism, which utilised elements of Social Trinitarianism, it seems as if we have swapped one problem, the underdevelopment problem, for an even more serious problem, the multiple–natures problem. The question now becomes: is there any way to deal with this specific problem? I believe that there is, by providing a further ontological and metaphysical precisification of this model. This precisification task will focus on situating Monarchical Trinitarianism* within a specific ontological framework developed by Jonathan Lowe, which provides an alternative relationship between the Trinitarian persons and the divine nature (i.e. the Person–Nature relation). This will ultimately result in there being no multiple–natures within the Trinity. To this task, we now turn.

2. A Neo–Aristotelian Ontology

Jonathan Lowe (2006, 2009 and 2012a,b) has developed a formal, neo–Aristotelian categorial ontology, termed the *four–category ontology*,²¹ which aims to provide a metaphysical foundation for the natural sciences. Within this ontological framework, Lowe posits the existence of four, cross–categorial, fundamental ontological categories. These four fundamental categories are constituted by drawing together the substance/property dichotomy with the universal/particular dichotomy.²² According to Lowe (2006), these two distinctions cut across one another, ultimately producing the four fundamental ontological categories of:

- (1) objects (substances), (2) modes (property–instances), (3) kinds (substantial universals) and (4) attributes (non–substantial universals)

which are individuated by the three ontological dependence relations of:

²¹ This ontology is neo–Aristotelian as it finds its roots in Aristotle’s ontological categorisation in his work *Categories*. Furthermore, this ontology is situated within the branch of analytic metaphysics called formal ontology. Formal ontology focuses on identifying the fundamental ontological categories and the formal relations that obtain between members of those different categories (Lowe, 2006).

²² Within this ontological framework particulars specifically instantiate universals but do not have instances. Whilst universals are instantiable entities. Furthermore, universals and particulars are themselves not categories, but act as transcategorial entities, which, according to Lowe, are “not more fundamental than those of the third level [the four categories] because they are mere abstractions and do no serious ontological work on their own account” (Lowe, 2006, 39, square parenthesis added). The four categories are thus the most basic categories within this ontological framework.

(5) rigid existential dependence, (6) non-rigid existential dependence and (7) identity-dependence

and are related to each other by the three formal ontological relations of:

(8) instantiation, (9) characterisation and (10) exemplification.

The four fundamental categories of (1)–(4) are thus defined in terms of the ontological dependence relations (i.e. dependence profiles) of (5)–(7) and the formal ontological relations of (8)–(10), with the four categories and formal ontological relations being helpfully represented through a diagram, which has been termed by Lowe (2006) and others, the Ontological Square.²³ This diagram can be represented as such (Lowe 2006):

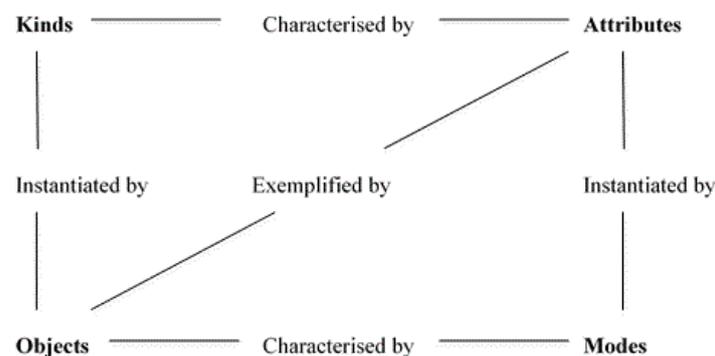


Figure 1.2 Ontological Square (Version 1)

The defining features of the four fundamental categories are thus as follows: firstly, particular (substantial) objects are property-bearing particulars that have determinate existence and identity conditions. They are countable entities and are not themselves borne or possessed by anything else.²⁴ Furthermore, particular objects are characterised by modes and, more importantly, they are instances of kinds. They are *rigidly* existentially dependent upon these kinds, where the term ‘rigid’ used here indicates a lack of flexibility in this dependence relation. That is, the existence of an entity (a given x) requires the existence of another *specific* entity (a given y) (Tahko and Lowe, 2015). The dependence of x upon y , in this form of ontological dependence, is thus a *strict implication*, mainly x ’s existence strictly implying y ’s existence. Thus, within this context, it is necessary that a particular object’s existence is dependent upon the existence of that *specific* kind.

²³ With the ontological dependence relations (i.e. dependence profiles) being included *within* the categories of the Ontological Square.

²⁴ For a further helpful explanation of the conditions of objecthood, see: (Lowe, 1998, Ch.2).

Secondly, kinds (or substantial universals) are universals that are (secondary) objects and kinds of *being*.²⁵ Kinds thus have their membership determined by certain distinctive existence and identity conditions, which can be determined *a priori*.²⁶ Additionally, kinds can be construed as *forms* (in a hylomorphic sense) that constitute the essence or very identity of a member of that kind (i.e. what it is *to be* a member of that kind).²⁷ The particular instances of a given kind are thus (identical to) *particular forms* and, more specifically, these instances are particular objects which the kind is *non-rigidly* existentially dependent upon. The term 'non-rigid', in contradistinction to rigid existential dependence, is instead used here to express *flexibility* in this dependence relation, in that the existence of *x*, does not require the existence of a *specific* entity, but only an entity that possesses characteristics of a certain class (Fs). That is, this dependence relation only requires simply that at least some Fs exist, rather than with the rigid requirement of a specific object existing. Therefore, within this context, it is necessary that a kind's existence is dependent upon the existence of *some* instance of that kind. In addition to this, kinds are also characterised by attributes, which they depend upon for their identity. This specific notion of *identity-dependence*, as noted by Lowe, centres around the fact that "the identity of *x* depends on the identity of *y* —or, more briefly, that *x* depends for its identity upon *y*—is to say that *which* thing of its kind *y* is fixes (or metaphysically determines) *which* thing of its kind *x* is" (Lowe, 1998, 147, emphasis added). In this context, it is thus of the *essence* of the kind in question to derive its identity from the specific attributes that characterise it.

Thirdly, attributes (or non-substantial universals/properties) are *universal ways* of being of a given entity. Specifically, attributes function as characterising property universals. Any given two entities can thus be qualitatively the same whilst being numerically distinct. Attributes have modes as their instances, rather than particular objects, and are non-rigidly existentially dependent upon the category of kinds (which they also characterise). It is thus important to note that this specific ontological framework is a version of *immanent realism*, according to which there exist no un-instantiated attributes (i.e. universals).

²⁵ Lowe (2006) makes a distinction within this ontology between 'first' or 'particular' objects and 'secondary' objects—identified as kinds—given that both types of entities fulfil the requirements of objecthood (i.e. are property-bearers, have determinate existence and identity conditions, are countable and are not themselves borne by any other entities).

²⁶ The *a priori* determination of these conditions distinguishes a kind of being from a natural kind, which would have the conditions for its membership determined *a posteriori* (Lowe 2006).

²⁷ More on the nature of an essence below. Furthermore, Lowe (1998 and 2012a) puts forward an original interpretation of the Aristotelian thesis of hylomorphism, by taking a form to be a universal (i.e. a substantial universal/kind) and de-ontologises the category of matter. Entities are thus not a combination of matter and form but solely are identified as particularised forms.

Therefore, it is an essential feature of any attribute that it has particular instances which ground its existence.

Fourthly, and finally, modes (or property–instances) are *particular ways* of being of a given entity. Specifically, modes function as *particular ways* in which a given particular object may be a certain thing. Any given two entities can thus be qualitatively similar whilst being numerically distinct. Modes are instances of attributes, upon which they are rigidly existentially dependent, and they serve the role of characterising objects, upon which they are also identity and rigidly existentially dependent.

These four fundamental ontological categories of objects, kinds, attributes and modes, are related by (and are partly defined in terms of) the asymmetrical formal ontological relations of characterisation, instantiation and exemplification.²⁸ These ontological relations, according to Lowe (2006), are *irreducible* and *primitive* notions. The implication here is that we cannot provide a reductive analysis or definition of their nature.²⁹ Yet, we can still draw certain distinctions between them. Firstly, characterisation, which is traditionally termed ‘inherence’, is a relationship that takes the characterising entities (i.e. modes and attributes) not as constituents (or parts of) the entities they characterise (i.e. objects and kinds), but as ‘characteristics’, ‘features’ or ‘aspects’ of these entities. For example, a redness–attribute characterises the kind Tomato, and thus the colour ‘redness’ is to be taken as a ‘characteristic’, ‘feature’ or ‘aspect’ of the kind Tomato. Additionally, a redness–mode, which is an instance of a redness–attribute, characterises a particular tomato, and thus the colour ‘redness’ is a particular ‘characteristic’, ‘feature’ or ‘aspect’ of that tomato.

Secondly, instantiation is a relationship between a particular entity and a universal. However, the particular entities (i.e. objects and modes) are again not to be taken as constituents of universals (i.e. kinds and attributes), but simply are particular *instances* of them. That is, a particular tomato is to be taken as an instance of the kind Tomato.

Thirdly, exemplification is a relationship between an object and an attribute. Exemplification, however, is not a *primitive* formal ontological relation but is instead an *indirect* relationship between an object and an attribute. It is non–primitive (and non–direct) given that it is a resultant relationship derivable from

²⁸ These asymmetrical formal ontological relations play a role in defining the entities within the four fundamental categories; however, this is only a partial role, due to this defining role being shared with the various dependence relations.

²⁹ Furthermore, these asymmetrical formal ontological relations are construed as ‘internal relations’, in that they are necessitated by the existence of the entities that they relate, and thus, because of this, they are ‘no addition of being’. Lowe thus sees that these formal and ontological relations are to be more accurately taken as ‘relationships’ rather than relations. For a further explanation of this distinction, see: (Lowe, 2006, 44–46).

the two other formal ontological relations of instantiation and characterisation. These formal ontological relations are species of the relationship of exemplification which provide two fundamentally *different ways* in which a particular object can be indirectly related to an attribute. That is, either the particular object exemplifies an attribute through instantiating a kind which, in turn, is characterised by the attribute or, the object exemplifies an attribute through being characterised by a mode which, in turn, instantiates the attribute itself. For example, a particular tomato exemplifies a redness–attribute by either instantiating the kind Tomato, which is itself characterised by a redness–attribute or, by being characterised by a redness–mode, which is an instance of the *same* redness–attribute.

Furthermore, these two distinct species of exemplification, according to Lowe (2009), obtain in two different varieties, modes or manners, which are termed ‘dispositional exemplification’ and ‘occurrent exemplification’. However, for Lowe, the distinction between the dispositional and the occurrent does not represent a distinction between two different types of *properties*.³⁰ Rather the distinction is between dispositional and occurrent *predication, relations and state of affairs*. Thus, the four–category ontology disposes with dispositional and occurrent properties and instead describes things at three levels:

(State of Affairs Level): Dispositional & occurrent state of affairs

(Relational Level): Dispositional & occurrent exemplification

(Linguistic Level): Dispositional & occurrent predication.

In light of these three levels, a dispositional state of affairs is one in which a particular object instantiates a kind. This is in turn characterised by an attribute, resulting in the object *dispositionally* exemplifying that attribute.³¹ This then can be expressed linguistically through dispositional predication, which is stated formally as such (with ‘Dis[*a*, *F*]’ standing for ‘*a* exemplifies attribute *F* dispositionally’ ‘/’ standing for instantiation, and a juxtaposition of the constants or variables (e.g. ‘βG’), representing ‘characterisation’:

(Dispositional): Dis[*a*, *F*] =_{df.} (∃ϕ)(ϕ*F* & *a*/ϕ). (Lowe, 2009, 178)

Whereas an occurrent state of affairs is one in which a particular object is characterised by a mode which, in turn, instantiates an attribute, resulting in the

³⁰ The majority of metaphysicians favour the term ‘categorical’ rather than ‘occurrent’ for properties that are not dispositional. However, Lowe sees this term as being metaphysically loaded, and so prefers the latter.

³¹ Thus, a state of affairs here is simply the *indirect* ‘possession’ of a property (attribute) by an object.

particular object *occurrently* exemplifying that attribute. This then can also be expressed linguistically through *occurrent* predication, which is stated formally as such (with ‘Occ[*a*, *F*]’ standing for ‘*a* exemplifies attribute *F* *occurrently*’, ‘*r*’ standing for ‘mode’):

$$\text{(Occurrent): } \text{Occ}[a, F] =_{df.} (\exists r)(ar \ \& \ r/F). \text{ (Lowe, 2009, 178)}$$

Particular objects can thus exemplify a given attribute in either of these two ways: dispositionally or *occurrently*, which is thus the obtaining of either a dispositional or *occurrent* state of affairs, that is expressed, linguistically, through dispositional or *occurrent* predication. For example, a particular tomato dispositionally exemplifies a redness–attribute through it being an instance of the kind Tomato which is, in turn, characterised by a redness–attribute.³² However, a particular tomato *occurrently* exemplifies a redness–attribute by it being characterised by a redness–mode which is, in turn, an instance of a redness–attribute.³³ We can further illustrate this dispositional/*occurrent* distinction through another version of the Ontological Square which can be illustrated as follows (Lowe 2009, 117):

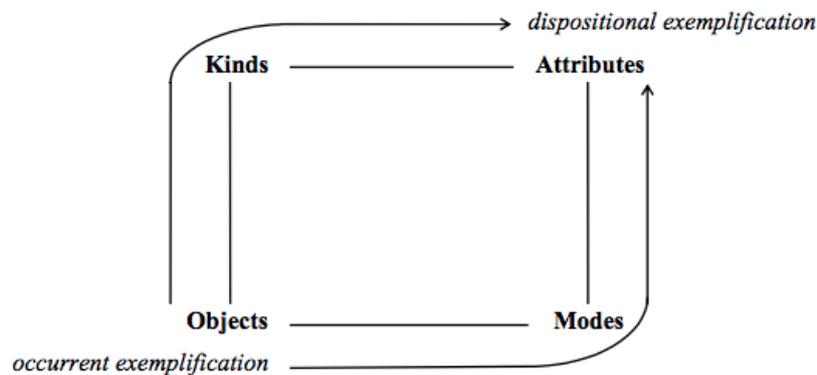


Figure 1.3 Ontological Square (Version 2)

Given this, there is thus a distinction between *dispositional* and *occurrent* states/relations/predicates that ground the exemplification of an attribute by a particular object.

Within the ontological framework of the four–category ontology, there are thus four fundamental ontological categories: objects, kinds, attributes and

³² In a predicative sense, one would communicate this state of affairs by simply saying that ‘the tomato *is red*’, which in the above schema, is: Dis[*t*, *R*] where ‘*t*’ stands for tomato and ‘*R*’ for the attribute of redness.

³³ In a predicative sense, one would communicate this state of affairs by simply saying that ‘the tomato *is redding*’, which in the above schema, is: Occ[*t*, *R*] where ‘*t*’ again stands for tomato and ‘*R*’ for the attribute of redness.

modes. These are defined by three ontological dependence relations: rigid existential dependence, non-rigid existential dependence and identity-dependence. And these categories are related to each other by three fundamental formal ontological relations: instantiation, characterisation and exemplification. The four-category ontology thus provides a clear ontological framework for assessing the nature and relationships of various types of entities. We will now turn our attention to utilising this framework within a Trinitarian context, which will ultimately help us to further elucidate the relationship between the Trinitarian persons and the one divine nature.

3. A Neo-Aristotelian Trinity: Phase-One

According to Monarchical Trinitarianism*, as noted earlier, there are three divine entities within the Trinity: the Father the Son, and the Spirit. However, we can now re-construe the nature of these entities within the ontological framework of the four-category ontology. We do this by stating that the Father, the Son and the Spirit are particular objects by each of them, firstly, being property bearers (i.e. each bearing the attribute of divinity) with determinate existence and identity conditions, and, secondly, through each them not being borne or possessed by any other entity. In light of the 'social strand' of Monarchical Trinitarianism*, we can also further construe these particular objects as being of a 'pure mental' nature, rather than a 'pure physical' nature. This means that they are each a 'pure mental' particular object—they are persons in a modern sense.

Focusing now on the divinity of each of the Trinitarian persons, we can also state that as particular objects, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, each necessarily instantiate a kind (or form), which we can term *Deity*. This kind (i.e. a kind of *being*) has its membership determined by certain distinctive existence and identity conditions that are determinable *a priori*.³⁴ The Father, the Son and the Spirit are thus each necessarily *deity-instances* (or *particularised deity-forms*).³⁵ The kind Deity is non-rigidly existentially dependent upon the existence of at least one of the Trinitarian persons existing—it is necessary that the kind Deity exists only if at least, for example, the Father exists. And each of the Trinitarian persons is rigidly existentially dependent upon the existence of the kind Deity—each of the Trinitarian persons necessarily exists only if the kind Deity exists. Now, Deity, as a kind, would be characterised by an attribute, which we can term the *divinity-attribute*. The divinity-attribute—everlasting omnipotence—would be

³⁴ These conditions could plausibly be that of *existing everlastingly* and being identified as an object that is *unlimited in power*.

³⁵ This fits nicely with Swinburne's (2016, 249–250) position that a divine person is a form. For brevity, however, I will no longer mention, but simply assume the further qualification that a kind is a form and that instances of kinds are particularised forms.

an essential ‘feature’, ‘characteristic’ or ‘aspect’ of the kind Deity. That is, it would be (in some sense) ‘possessed’ by it or ‘inhere’ within it. Thus, every entity within the kind Deity, that is every deity–instance, would simply *be* divine (i.e. essentially, everlastingly omnipotent).

Assuming immanent realism, the divinity–attribute as a (non–substantial) universal would be instantiated by at least *one* mode, which we can term a *divinity–mode*. And as a particular instance of the divinity–attribute, the existence of a divinity–mode would be rigidly existentially dependent upon the existence of the divinity–attribute—a divinity–mode necessarily exists only if the divinity–attribute exists. Conversely, the existence of the divinity–attribute would be non–rigidly existentially dependent on the existence of the divinity–mode—the divinity–attribute necessarily exists only if at least one divinity–mode exists as well. Additionally, a divinity–mode, as with all types of modes, would be a *particular way* a being is—a particular way in which its bearer would be characterised. Thus, a divinity–mode would exist as an entity that characterises its bearer by bestowing upon it a certain character, that of being divine (i.e. essentially, everlastingly omnipotent). Thus, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, as particular objects, are *each* characterised by a particular divinity–mode. That is, each of these divinity–modes exists as an essential feature, characteristic or aspect of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Specifically, divinity–modes directly bestow the character of divinity onto each of the Trinitarian persons, resulting in each of the persons being a particular *divine* person. Moreover, each of these divinity–modes would be identity–dependent on their bearer—it is *part of the essence* of a given divinity–mode to be the mode that it is (i.e. the mode of *that* specific bearer) in virtue of its relation to the Trinitarian person that it characterises.

Lastly, in this reconfiguration of Monarchical Trinitarianism* within the four–category ontology, the Father, the Son and the Spirit are taken to be in an *indirect* relationship of exemplification to the divinity–attribute—the divinity–attribute is (dispositionally and occurrently) exemplified by the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Firstly, the Father, the Son and the Spirit each *dispositionally* exemplify the divinity–attribute through instantiating the kind Deity which is, in turn, characterised by the divinity–attribute. Secondly, the Father, the Son and the Spirit each also *occurrently* exemplify the divinity–attribute through each of them being characterised by a divinity–mode that, in turn, instantiates the divinity–attribute. Thus, taking the Father as an example, we can now re–construe the Ontological Square as such:

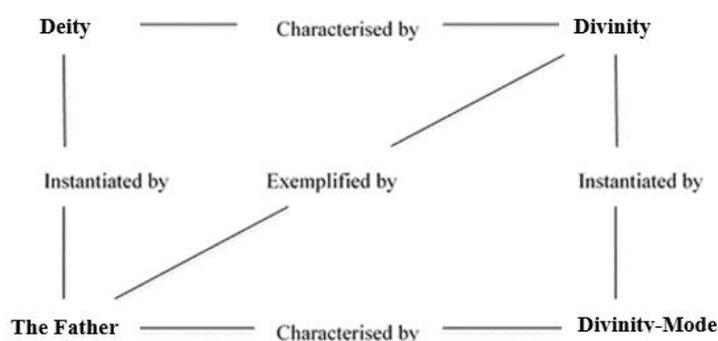


Figure 1.4 Ontological Square (Trinitarian Version 1)

Based on this categorisation of the Trinitarian persons, we can deal with the multiple–natures problem as such: at a ‘coarse–grained’ level, we take the *homoousios* of the persons to be defined as follows:

(H) the Father, the Son and the Spirit are *homoousios* =*df.* the Father, the Son and the Spirit each possess the one divine nature.

However, in modifying the ‘social strand’ of Monarchical Trinitarianism*, we can now posit that, rather than the relation of ‘possession’ in (H) being that of an instantiation relation, it is instead an *exemplification relation*,³⁶ which enables us to reconstrue (H) as such:

(H*) the Father, the Son and the Spirit are *homoousios* =*df.* the Father, the Son and the Spirit each exemplify the one divinity–attribute.

Unlike the *direct* relationship of instantiation that featured in the original construal of the ‘social strand’ of Monarchical Trinitarianism*, the indirect relationship of exemplification that features in (H*) does not negate the fact that there is only one nature within the Trinity. This is because, in a *direct* instantiation relationship, where the Trinitarian persons instantiate the one divinity–attribute, there would plausibly be *three* particular instantiations of this attribute: one particular instantiation for the Father, one for the Son and one for the Spirit. Yet, as the Trinitarian persons possess their *own* particular instance of the divinity–attribute, it is difficult to see *how* they do, in fact, possess *one* divine nature (i.e. are *homoousios*). Rather, it seems to be quite clear that there are three (particular) divine natures within the Trinity.

However, by utilising the four–category ontology, specifically that of the categories of substantial kinds and non–substantial attributes, and the *indirect*

³⁶ Where ‘*x* possesses *F*’ is, at a more ‘fine–grained’ level, restated as ‘*x* exemplifies *F*’ – with *F* being the one *divinity–attribute*.

relationship of exemplification, one can take there to be only *one* divine nature that is ‘possessed’ by each of the persons. This is due to the fact that within this framework there is only one divinity–attribute that is required to perform the role of *characterising* the kind Deity, which then *itself*, rather than the attribute, has multiple instantiations. Specifically, it is the kind Deity, rather than the divinity–attribute, that has particular objects as instances and is thus in a direct relationship to the persons of the Trinity. And, as there is *one* kind posited here (i.e. the kind Deity), plausibly there is only one divinity–attribute characterising that kind, which the persons are then, as *instances* of that kind, indirectly related to. Thus, rather than having three instances of the divinity–attribute, which would result in there being three (particular) natures within the Trinitarian life, we instead have three instances of the kind Deity. And as the kind Deity is characterised by the one divinity–attribute, we can plausibly count only one *universal* (propertied or attributive) nature that is equally shared by each of the persons of the Trinity. Thus, the persons are *homoousios*, that is they possess *one* divine nature, through their exemplification of it. There is thus no multiple–natures problem plaguing this construal of Monarchical Trinitarianism*.

However, there does seem to be a potentially problematic element of the ontological framework that has not been taken into account in our subsequent discussion of (H*), which is that of the Trinitarian persons’ *occurrent* exemplification of the divinity–attribute. That is, focusing again on the Ontological Square, we seem to have only described a *dispositional* movement around the Square (i.e. an instantiation of a kind that is characterised by an attribute), rather than an *occurrent* movement around it (i.e. a characterisation by a mode that instantiates an attribute):

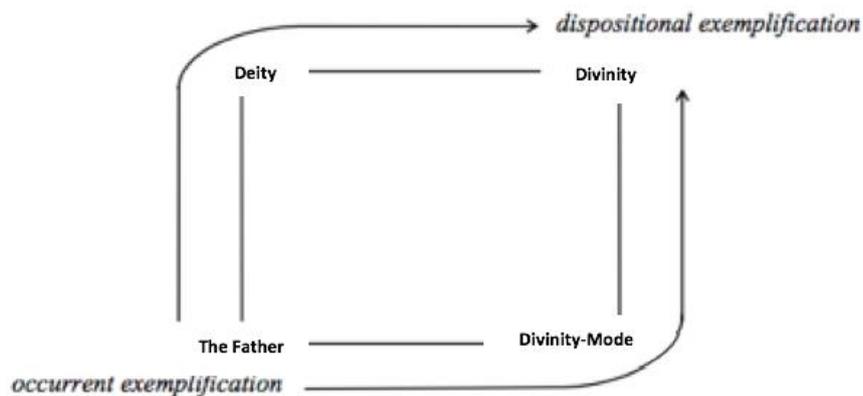


Figure 1.5 Ontological Square (Trinitarian Version 2)

The reason why this occurrent exemplification of the divinity–attribute appears to be problematic is due to the fact that this type of exemplification seemingly saddles us with the same problem that we started off with—it appears to be the

case that we still have multiple instantiations of the divinity–attribute. According to our categorisation within the four–category ontology above, the Trinitarian persons do not only dispositionally exemplify the divinity–attribute but also *occurently* exemplify it by each of them being characterised by a divinity–mode. That is:

- (iv) The Father is characterised by divinity–mode d_1
- (v) The Son is characterised by divinity–mode d_2
- (vi) The Spirit is characterised by divinity–mode d_3

with d_1 – d_3 themselves being *instances* of the divinity–attribute. Thus, in counting instances, we again have three particular instances of the divinity–attribute, which results in there being three particular natures within the Trinity. Categorising the Trinity within Lowe’s ontological framework as we have done above seems to provide us with what we want: the possession of one divine nature, which it does through the dispositional ‘aspect’ of exemplification. However, if taken in another way, it also saddles us with what we don’t want: three instances of the divinity–attribute, which it does through the occurrent ‘aspect’ of exemplification. So, we can now call this problematic dilemma presented to us here the *multiple–modes* problem, which is another version of the multiple–natures problem.³⁷ The question that remains is whether there is, in fact, a way out of this problem?

Well, one potential way out of this problem would be to simply negate the occurrent exemplification of the divinity–attribute by each of the Trinitarian persons. This would result in there being zero divinity–modes that individually characterise the persons of the Trinity, and thus there would not be multiple divinity–modes within the Trinitarian life. Yet, even though this is indeed a quick and easy way to deal with the problem, we cannot pursue this path, given that the four–category ontology is an *immanent realist* ontology. Thus, a divinity–mode must exist, in order for the divinity–attribute itself to exist.³⁸ Therefore, a different path out of this dilemma must be sought. This different path, which will be explored below, is that of focusing more intently on the ‘*monarchical strand*’ of Monarchical Trinitarianism*, which centres around the priority of the Father. That is, given that the Father is (ontologically) prior to the Son and the Spirit (as their ultimate source), the Son and Spirit derive their nature *from* the Father. It is by the Father communicating *his* divinity *to* the Son and the Spirit, which renders them as divine. Thus, the divinity of the Son and the Spirit is that of the *Father’s*,

³⁷ Why it is classed as another version of this problem is due to the fact that there still seems to be multiple natures in the form of multiple modes (of divinity) within the Trinity, which burdens us with the same issue as before.

³⁸ Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this objection.

which he possesses in the *here and now*. In other words, the Father possesses his divinity *occurrently*, which is clearly evident, due to the fact that *if* the Father did *not* possess his divinity in this manner, then he would not be able to give it, in the here and now, to the Son and the Spirit. Thus, the occurrent possession of divinity is necessary for the Father fulfilling his role of being the ultimate source of the Son and the Spirit within the Trinity. Yet, it is not a necessary requirement for the Son and the Spirit to also possess this divinity in the *exact same way*, given that they do not fulfil the role of being the ultimate source within the Trinity.

Taking this into account within the ontological framework provided by Lowe, we can therefore *negate* the (absolute or, at least, direct) occurrent exemplification of the divinity–attribute by the Son and the Spirit,³⁹ and solely *maintain*, firstly, the (absolute and direct) occurrent exemplification of the divinity–attribute by the Father alone and, secondly, the dispositional (or indirect occurrent) exemplification of this attribute by the other Trinitarian persons. This results in there being one divinity–mode and instantiation of the divinity–attribute within the Trinity, which is that of the Father’s. Importantly, however, the Son and the Spirit are also able to remain *homoousios* with the Father through being dispositionally (or (indirectly) occurrently) related to the divinity–attribute. In light of such considerations, we can conclude that the multiple–modes problem, like the multiple–natures problem, also fails to provide us with a real issue for our metaphysical elucidation of Monarchical Trinitarianism*. It is important to note, however, that this way of dealing with the multiple–modes problem is not an *ad hoc* move created to save this model of the Trinity from falsification. As questions can indeed be raised concerning the accuracy of our previous categorisation of the persons of the Trinity within the four–category ontology, where we assumed that the persons are, in fact, particular objects that are each *directly* and *properly* characterised by divinity–modes. We will now explore some solutions for these questions within Lowe’s neo–Aristotelian metaphysical framework of *serious essentialism*, which will further help us in our task of dealing with the multiple–modes problem.⁴⁰

4. A Neo–Aristotelian Trinity: Phase–Two

Essentialism is the metaphysical view that holds to a certain range of entities being meaningfully said to have essences and/or essential features. According to

³⁹ Absolute occurrent exemplification in the sense of an entity bearing this relation. Direct and indirect occurrent exemplification in the sense of an entity bearing this relation in a non–mediated or mediated manner. This will be further explained below.

⁴⁰ The term ‘serious essentialism’ will be used frequently as a placeholder name for Lowe’s non–modal conception of essence and the various conditions/dependence relations associated with it.

Lowe (2008), essentialism comes in two different forms: *serious* essentialism and *ersatz* essentialism. The ersatz form of essentialism, which is the more prevalent form found within contemporary thought, seeks to provide a *modal* characterisation of the notion of essence and has been defended by various 'possible world' theorists.⁴¹ In elucidating this modal characterisation of essentialism, these possible world theorists take the essence of an entity to be composed of the essential properties of that entity — the properties that the entity must possess in every possible world (in which it exists), or alternatively, properties that must be possessed by 'counterparts' of that entity in every possible world (in which that entity has counterparts) (Lowe, 2008). Additionally, these theorists typically claim that some, but not all of the entity's actual properties are essential to it in this sense — with the other properties possessed by the entity being non-essential properties (Lowe, 2008). Yet, despite the prevalence of this view, Lowe (2008, 34) takes this type of essentialism to be an *unserious* form of essentialism due to the fact that it, amongst other things,⁴² attempts to 'characterise essence in terms of antecedently assumed notions of possibility and necessity and thus—in my view—[it puts] the cart before the horse'. A defender of serious essentialism, *contra* the ersatz essentialism of the possible world theorists, thus seeks to follow Aristotle and, to a greater extent, John Locke, in construing an essence as "the very being of anything, whereby it is, what it is." (Locke, 1975: III, III, 15, quoted in: Lowe, 2008, 34) In other words, what the essence of some entity *x* is, is *what x is*, or *what it is to be x* (Lowe, 2008). An essence is thus the *whatness* of an entity and therefore constitutes its *identity*.⁴³ Hence, serious essentialism seeks to provide a *non-modal* characterisation of the notion of essence through providing a means for one to identify, in a perspicuous manner, *what* an entity is.

In addition to this, within this non-modal characterisation of essence, the essence of an entity comes in two different types: a *general* essence and an *individual* essence. What is central to this distinction is the fact that a given entity *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, as Lowe writes, if '*x* is something of kind *K*, then we may say that *x*'s general essence is what it is to be a *K*, while *x*'s individual essence is what it is to be the individual of *K* that *x* is, as opposed to any other individual of that kind' (Lowe, 2008, 35). For example, we can take

⁴¹ These 'possible world theorists' are individuals such as Saul A. Kripke (1980), Hilary Putnam (1975) and Alvin Plantinga (1974).

⁴² For an explanation of the other issues against this approach, see: (Lowe, 2008), and the influential work of Kit Fine (1994).

⁴³ Where the type of identity featured in this case is not that of the relation of identity, which is symbolised by the equals sign "=", and is the relation that everything necessarily bears to itself and nothing else.

Socrates to be an instance of the general kind Human (i.e. he is a human-instance), which results in Socrates' general essence being *what it is to be human*, and his individual essence being *what it is to be Socrates*, as opposed to any other human.

Importantly, however, this specific approach to essence provided by serious essentialism does not make the further move of *reifying* essences and thus taking an essence to be a further entity in addition to the entity that possesses it. Rather, entities have essences, but essences are not entities (i.e. an objectively real thing). Thus, as Lowe notes, an entity's essence "does not literally contain any entities as parts or constituents, since only entities can have other entities as parts." (Lowe, 2013, 195) The 'parts' that feature in an individual and general essence are parts of the *real definition* which expresses those essences. Thus, the notion of a real definition plays a central role in the approach to essence proposed by Lowe's serious essentialism. Lowe takes a real definition to be the "definition of a thing (*res*, or entity) in contradistinction to a verbal definition." (Lowe, 2012b, 935, parenthesis in text) That is, a statement of essence is a real definition, which specifies *what it is to be* a particular entity. As Lowe further writes:

a real definition of an Entity, E, is to be understood as a proposition which tells us, in the most perspicuous fashion, what E is, or, more broadly, since we do not want to restrict ourselves solely to the essences of actually existing things, what E is or would be. (Lowe, 2012b, 935)

Real definitions thus serve as explanatory principles and are (usually) formulated through a '<To be ___>' construction, such as '<To be X is to be Y>'. For example, a real definition of Gold takes the following form: '<To be Gold is to be a metal whose atomic constituents have the atomic number 79>'.⁴⁴ The *definiendum*—the entity that appears on the left side of the '<To be ___>' construction—is the entity to be defined, which in this case is the phrase 'Gold'. And the *definiens*—the entity that appears on the right side of the '<To be ___>' construction—performs the function of *uniquely identifying* and explaining the essential nature of the *definiendum*, which, in this example, is the phrase 'a metal whose atomic constituents have atomic number 79'. A statement that purports to express a real definition, in the sense just explained, is successful if, as Kathrin Koslicki points out, it "not only uniquely identifies and delineates the entity to be defined but also states what it is to be the entity in question, i.e. if it is explanatory of the essential nature of the *definiendum*." (Koslicki, 2012, 200) Thus, a real definition enables one to further understand *what it is* to be a certain kind of entity. That is to say that if the definition is successful, then it will express the *identity* of the specific object. The defining entity thus provides a *distinct way* of referring to the

⁴⁴ This example is provided by David Oderberg (2011, 87).

essence of the entity to be defined—with the entity on the right side of the ‘<To be ___>’ construction being *definitionally related* to the entity on the left side of the ‘<To be ___>’ construction—which results in the *definiens* providing one with further illumination about the *definiendum*. Given this sort of definitional relationship, the entities which feature within the real definition of another entity are said to be in a *constitutive relationship*. In the words of Koslicki (2012, 2013),⁴⁵ we can construe this constitutive relationship as one of *essential constituency*, which can be defined as follows:

(EC) Essential Constituency =*df.* An entity, *x*, is an essential constituent of an entity, *y*, just in case *x* is a constituent in a real definition of *y*.

The entities that fulfil the role of being the essential constituents of another entity pertain to (or feature within) the real definition of that specific entity and therefore contribute to defining the entity as it is. Taking this all into account within a Trinitarian context, we can construe the essence, real definitions and essential constitution of the Trinitarian persons as follows:

<u>Trinitarian General & Individual Essences</u>	<u>Trinitarian Real Definitions</u>	<u>Trinitarian Essential Constituents</u>
<p>(FATHER_{G&I}) <u>Kind of Entity:</u> Divine Person (i.e. an essentially, everlastingly omnipotent person).</p> <p><u>Particular Kind of Entity:</u> (i) Uncaused</p>	<p>(FATHER_{RD}) <u>Real Definition</u> <To be the Father, is to be the uncaused divine person>.</p>	<p>(FATHER_{EC}) <u>Essential Constituents:</u> No Essential Constituents</p>
<p>(SON_{G&I}) <u>Kind of Entity:</u></p>	<p>(SON_{RD}) <u>Real Definition</u></p>	<p>(SON_{EC}) <u>Essential Constituents:</u></p>

⁴⁵ Koslicki (2012, 2013) proposes the notion of essential constituency within the context of explicating some more ‘fine-grained’ notions of ontological dependence in the contemporary literature and adds another clause to (EC) that an *x* must also be a constituent of *y* itself. This additional clause will not be included within the notion of essential constituency employed in this article. Furthermore, Lowe himself does not utilise this notion in formulating his serious essentialism. However, the terminology is useful for referring to the entities that constitute the real definition of a given entity. Therefore, for this reason, this terminology will be utilised in the rest of this article.

<p>Divine Person (i.e. an essentially, everlastingly omnipotent person).</p> <p><u>Particular Kind of Entity:</u> (i) Caused to exist by the Father. (ii) The means by which the Father causes the Spirit to exist.</p>	<p><To be the Son, is to be the divine person who is caused to exist by <i>the Father</i> and the means by which the Father causes <i>the Spirit</i> to exist>.</p>	<p>The Father and the Spirit.</p>
<p>(SPIRIT_{G&I}) <u>Kind of Entity:</u> Divine Person (i.e. an essentially, everlastingly omnipotent person).</p> <p><u>Particular Kind of Entity:</u> (i) Caused to exist by the Father through the Son.</p>	<p>(SPIRIT_{RD}) <u>Real Definition</u> <To be the Spirit, is to be the divine person who is caused to exist by <i>the Father</i> through <i>the Son</i> >.</p>	<p>(SPIRIT_{EC}) <u>Essential Constituents:</u> The Father and the Son.</p>

Table 1.1 Trinitarian Essences, Real Definitions & Essential

In the Trinitarian real definitions posited by Monarchical Trinitarianism*,⁴⁶ the particular identities (i.e. individual essences) of the Son and the Spirit, as

⁴⁶ An adherent of pro-Nicene Trinitarianism could potentially raise the objection that the characterisation of the Father’s essence is incomplete (or, worse, it is potentially ‘Eunomian’), due to it only stating that he is essentially an uncaused divine person and *not* that he is essentially the uncaused *cause of the Son and the Spirit*—plausibly making him *the Father*. In short, within pro-Nicene Trinitarianism, the Father is essentially Father and not only essentially uncaused. Thus, according to this objection, we have not correctly captured the Father’s essence, which, if we had, it would be clear that the Son and the Spirit are essential constituents of the Father and thus the subsequent argument against the multiple-modes objection is incorrect. However, to deal with this objection one simply needs to further precisify the nature of an essence by focusing on a distinction that has been introduced by Kit Fine (1995, 57) into the contemporary metaphysical literature. This distinction is between a *constitutive* essence—the propositions that are true in virtue of the identity of a given entity—and a *consequential* essence—the propositions that are a logical consequence of the propositions that are true in virtue of the identity of a given entity. Now, plausibly, we can say that it is the constitutive essence of an entity that is the type of essence that is divided into an individual and a general essence, due to the consequential essence of an entity including certain propositions that are not related to the identity of that entity. Thus, the description of the Trinitarian essences featured above is solely that of the persons’ individual

expressed by (SON_{RD}) and (SPIRIT_{RD}), *include* that of each other *and* the Father. With the Father's particular identity, as expressed by (FATHER_{RD}), *not* including that of either the Son or the Spirit. Monarchical Trinitarianism* thus takes it to be the case that where certain *what-questions* are asked,⁴⁷ such as: what is it *to be* the Father?', 'what is it *to be* the Son?' and 'what is it *to be* the Spirit?', it would thus be the specific real definitions featured above (i.e. (FATHER_{RD}), (SON_{RD}) and (SPIRIT_{RD})) that supply the proper answers to these questions. That is, the correct answers for the second and third Trinitarian *what-questions* focused on the Son and the Spirit would thus include that of two of the other Trinitarian persons as essential constituents of it. Whilst, the answer to the Father's *what-question* would have no entity external to himself featuring as an essential constituent of it. By the Father being part of the real definitions that express the (individual) essences of the Son and the Spirit, the Father would be included within the *synchronic identity and existence conditions* of the Son and the Spirit—the conditions for an entity to be identified *as* the Son or the Spirit at a given time.⁴⁸ Taken this way, the Son and the Spirit would *not* be identified, and thus exist, *as* the Son and the Spirit, without the Father. The Father is *part of the essence* of each of the other Trinitarian persons by functioning in a way as the *primary* essential constituent of their real definitions,⁴⁹ which ultimately leads to an *individuation* of the Son and the Spirit's essence.

The question that now remains is: how does this unpacking and application of the notion of serious essentialism help us to tackle the multiple-modes problem? Well, we can begin to answer this question by returning to the nature of a mode

constitutive essences and their general *constitutive* essences. Therefore, why the Father is characterised as the uncaused divine person, rather than the uncaused cause of the Son and the Spirit, is not because the latter proposition is not essential to him—it is—however, it is simply because it is of the Father's *consequential essence*, rather than his constitutive essence. Specifically, due to *the Father's* possession of perfect goodness (which is part of his constitutive essence), it is a logical consequence that he would also cause the Son and the Spirit to exist—the proposition 'the Father is perfectly good' is true in virtue of the identity of the Father and the proposition 'the Father causes the existence of the Son and the Spirit' is a logical consequence of the former proposition. Thus, the Father *is* essentially Father, but Fatherhood is not of his *individual constitutive* essence; instead, it is solely of his consequential essence, and thus there is no problem in characterising the essence of the Father in the manner that has been done above.

⁴⁷ What-questions, as Sam Cowling notes, ask 'for the metaphysically significant features of an individual and are answered only if they explain what some individual really is' (Cowling, 2013, 4).

⁴⁸ More specifically, these conditions for the Son and the Spirit will include the Father *and* one of the other divine persons—the Father *and* the Spirit *for* the Son; the Father *and* the Son *for* the Spirit.

⁴⁹ With the Son and the Spirit serving as *secondary* essential constituents of each other's real definitions, through them also being included within each other's synchronic identity and existence conditions.

that we discussed within the four–category ontology. Modes, as previously noted, are instances of attributes (i.e. non–substantial universals/properties) and are a particular way that an object is. A distinctive characteristic of a mode is that of its *dependence profile*, which expresses the fact that a given mode does not only depend for its existence on the particular object that it characterises, in the manner of rigid existential dependence, but that it also depends on the object for its identity as well. A mode is thus an ontologically dependent entity that essentially depends for its existence and identity upon the object that it characterises. It is part of the essence of a particular mode that it exists and is identified as the particular mode that it is, only in reference to the particular object that it characterises (Lowe, 2006). Modes are thus essentially *identity–dependent* on their bearers, which, following Tahko and Lowe (2015, §4.2), can be construed more specifically as follows:

(ID) x depends for its identity upon y =_{df.} There is a two–place predicate ‘F’ such that it is part of the essence of y that y is related by F to x .

This specific account of identity–dependence (ID), centres around the fact of it being *part of the essence* of x that x depends for its identity upon y , in such a manner that which thing of its kind y is fixes (or at least helps to fix) which thing of its kind x is (Lowe, 1998). It is part of the essence of x that it is the entity that it is, in virtue of standing in the unique relationship of F (a function) that relates it to y , such that y fixes, or metaphysically determines, *which* entity x in fact is. In further clarifying the notion of ‘function’ here, Koslicki (2013) has highlighted the fact that this notion, as it occurs in (ID), should be understood with a *criterion of identity*. That is, this relation of identity–dependence is a direct consequence of the identity criteria that govern the kind which the item is related to as an instance (Lowe, 1998). Thus, for example, taking ‘ 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, we have a formal construal of this in a set–theoretic case:

(CI) $(\forall x)(\forall y) ((\Phi x \ \& \ \Phi y) \rightarrow (x = y \iff Rxy))$. (Koslicki, 2013, 171)

One instance of (CI) is provided by the Axiom of Extensionality, which functions as a criterion of identity for sets—where, 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 (Lowe, 1998). The set’s members determine the identity (or individuality) of the set, which is to say that they individuate the set (Tahko and Lowe, 2015). Or, in other words, *which* set a specific set in fact is, is *fixed* by which members the set has (Koslicki, 2013). Thus, as Koslicki helpfully notes, at a more general level:

for entities that exist in time, we are to construe (CI) for present purposes as yielding a synchronic criterion of identity or what may also be called a *principle of individuation*, i.e. a criterion that specifies what it takes for an entity to be the very entity that it is at a time, rather than a diachronic criterion of identity, i.e. a criterion that specifies what it takes for an entity to persist over time. (Koslicki, 2013, 53, emphasis in text)

Thus, taking this notion into account, a mode is an entity that depends for its identity on the *identity* of the particular object that it characterises. The identity of a particular object fixes the identity of a specific mode—*which* entity of its kind the particular object is, metaphysically determines *which* entity of its kind a specific mode is. The particular object thus acts as an *individuator* of the specific mode that characterises it. However, in the case of a mode, there is no reciprocal, or symmetric dependence, in that the identity of the particular object is not fixed by the relation that it essentially bears to the modes that characterise it. It is part of the essence of a mode that it is the mode *of* a specific object (and not of any other object) in virtue of being possessed by *that* specific object (Lowe, 2006). A mode’s identity and existence conditions are thus determined by the particular object that it is a mode of.

Returning back to our discussion of the multiple–modes problem, through our application of the notion of serious essentialism, we identified that the Father is the sole entity within the Trinity that does not have either of the two other Trinitarian persons being ‘included within’ his real definition as essential constituents. The Son and the Spirit thus do not feature in the Father’s synchronic identity and existence conditions.⁵⁰ But the Son and the Spirit do, in fact, have the Father (and each other) as essential constituents, and thus they also have him (them) as features of their synchronic identity and existence conditions. This distinction in the identity conditions of the Trinitarian persons has implications for the manner in which the divinity–modes that characterise each of the Trinitarian persons are identity–dependent upon them, as noted in the following table:

<u>Trinitarian Synchronic Identity Conditions</u> ⁵¹	<u>Trinitarian Divinity–Mode Characterisation</u>	<u>Trinitarian Divinity–Mode Identity–Dependence</u>
<u>(FATHER_{IC}) Identity Conditions</u>	<u>(FATHER–Mode_c) Mode Characterisation</u>	<u>(FATHER–Mode_{ID}) Mode Identity–Dependence</u>

⁵⁰ For brevity, we can call these conditions the ‘identity conditions’.

⁵¹ These conditions correspond to the real definitions/individual essence descriptions detailed above.

<p>If x is the Father, then y is the same person as x iff y is (i) the uncaused divine person</p>	<p>The Father is characterised by a divinity-mode.</p>	<p>The identity of the Father's divinity-mode is identity-dependent upon the Father.</p>
<p>(SON_{IC}) <u>Identity Conditions</u> If x is the Son, then y is the same person as x iff y is (i) the divine person caused to exist by the Father (ii) the means by which the Father causes the Spirit to exist.</p>	<p>(SON-Mod_{ec}) <u>Mode Characterisation</u> The Son is characterised by a divinity-mode.</p>	<p>(SON-Mod_{ed}) <u>Mode Identity-Dependence</u> The identity of the Son's divinity-mode is identity-dependent upon the Son <i>and the Father and the Spirit</i>.</p>
<p>(SPIRIT_{IC}) <u>Identity Conditions</u> If x is the Spirit, then y is the same person as x iff y is (i) the divine person caused to exist by the Father through the Son.</p>	<p>(SPIRIT-Mod_{ec}) <u>Mode Characterisation</u> The Spirit is characterised by a divinity-mode.</p>	<p>(SPIRIT-Mod_{ed}) <u>Mode Identity-Dependence</u> The identity of the Spirit's divinity-mode is identity-dependent upon the Spirit <i>and the Father and the Son</i>.</p>

Table 1.2 Trinitarian Divinity-Mode Characterisation & Dependence

So, what we see here is that *if* one were in fact to posit the existence of a divinity-mode that characterises *each* of the Trinitarian persons, as was previously done, then it seems to be the case that, according to (SON-MODE_{ID}) and (SPIRIT-MODE_{ID}), the Son and the Spirit's divinity-modes would also be identity-dependent upon them *and* each of the other Trinitarian persons who serve as their essential constituents. Focusing for example on the Son, the Father, who is the primary essential constituent of the Son, and the Spirit, who is the secondary essential constituent of the Son, would not just 'fix' (or metaphysically determine) the identity of their own divinity-modes, but also that of the identity of the Son's divinity-mode as well, which does seem to be problematic. One could try and go along with this, but then one would be faced with the difficult issue of the identity conditions of the Son and the Spirit's divinity-modes' being

indeterminate. That is, the question would be presented to one concerning *which* divinity-modes are each of them in fact of? Is a given divinity-mode the Son's, the Spirit's (or the Father's)?⁵² We would thus have no good ground to say that the identities of the modes are, in fact, *fixed* and *determined* in a certain or specific way (i.e. as the Son's mode or the Spirit's mode).⁵³ And, because of this, we would thus lack further grounds to assert an identity-dependence between the divinity-mode, and the identity of the particular object that they *must*, in fact, depend upon. Given this, the divinity-modes would lack, what Lowe terms a 'principle of individuation', which, as he writes, 'is a principle which tells us what is to count as *one* instance of a given kind' (Lowe, 1998, 74). Thus, implored by the need to hold to the identity-dependence of a mode, given the importance of this within the four-category ontology explicated above, one could 'bite the bullet' and, for example, take the Father and the Spirit to collectively be the individuators of the Son's divinity-mode. However, a further problem would need to be faced here, which is that of the fact that a mode is identity-dependent upon the particular object that it *characterises*. Thus, if the Father and the Spirit were collectively the individuators of the Son's divinity-mode, and thus his divinity-mode being identity-dependent upon him and them, then this mode would have to also not just be dependent upon the Son, the Father and the Spirit collectively, but also characterise them collectively as such:

(vii) The Son *and* the Father *and* the Spirit are *characterised by* divinity-mode d_2

And extending this to the Spirit, we would have the following being true as well:

(viii) The Spirit *and* the Father *and* the Son are *characterised by* divinity-mode d_3

However, in both of these cases, we are seemingly forced to transform a mode—a non-shareable, *particular* way that characterises a single particular object—into a universal—a shareable, universal way, which can characterise more than one particular object (or, more specifically, one particular kind). Therefore, in dealing with *this* issue, we are faced with the two options of either:

(Option A): negating the possession of divinity-modes by the Son and the Spirit

which will result in one not being presented with these problems, or,

⁵² With the question here concerning the Father being the 'additional' modes that stem from the Son and the Spirit and not his own individual divinity-mode.

⁵³ However, we would be able to do this for the Father's individual divinity-mode, but not for the ones that stem from the Son and the Spirit, as the Father 'fixes' the identity of his own divinity mode.

(Option B): retaining the possession of divinity–modes by the Son and the Spirit

which could potentially saddle one with the issue of the divinity–modes being universal–like entities that lack determinate identity conditions. At a *prima facie* level, (Option A) does seem to be more plausible, as if the Son and the Spirit are *essentially constituted* entities, then there clearly cannot be any divinity–modes that characterise them. That is, given that the Father is the *sole essentially unconstituted* entity in the Trinity, we can say that the Son and the Spirit are in fact *not* characterised by any divinity–modes (or any modes in general) at all. Instead, it is only the Father who is characterised by a divinity–mode, through his divinity–mode being solely identity dependent on him, in that the identity of the Father, and the Father alone, fixes (or metaphysically determines) which mode the mode that characterises him is. So Monarchical Trinitarianism*, as it is now being construed through (Option A), posits that within the Trinity there is only one divinity–mode: the Father’s, with the Son and the Spirit each not possessing a divinity–mode. This position, however, does not result in the Son and the Spirit lacking divinity or a relationship to the one divine nature (i.e. the divinity–attribute). As within the ontological framework of the four–category ontology, as noted previously, there are two *different* ways in which objects may be related to an attribute: the first by *instantiating kinds* that are characterised by the attributes, which is a dispositional state of affairs (expressed by dispositional predication). And, the second, by being *characterised by modes* which instantiate the attribute themselves, which is an occurrent state of affairs (expressed by occurrent predication). Now, what is being negated in Monarchical Trinitarianism*, under (Option A), is solely that of the obtaining of the second type of state of affairs: an occurrent state of affairs including the Son and the Spirit. Thus, what is important for us to secure the divinity of the persons, and their relationship to the divine nature, is that of each of the persons *exemplifying* divinity in at least one of the above ways. Which, more specifically, is that of the Father, the Son and the Spirit each being in some type of (indirect) relationship of exemplification to the divinity–attribute. Thus, in Monarchical Trinitarianism*, under (Option A), it is simply that of the divinity–attribute not being *occurrently* exemplified by the Son and the Spirit (and solely by the Father alone). There is no state of affairs where the Son and the Spirit each occurrently exemplifies divinity by being characterised by a divinity–mode that, in turn, instantiates the divinity–attribute.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In a predicative sense, the following would be true: $\sim\text{Occ}[s, D]$, where ‘ \sim ’ stands for ‘not’, ‘s’ stands for ‘the Son’ (who serves as a representative of the Son and the Spirit) and ‘D’ for the divinity–attribute.

However, what is maintained within this framework is that of the Father solely *occurently* exemplifying the divinity–attribute, and the Father, the Son and the Spirit each *dispositionally* exemplifying the same attribute.⁵⁵ There is thus a state of affairs where the Father occurently exemplifies divinity by being characterised by a divinity–mode that, in turn, instantiates the divinity–attribute. Moreover, there is also a state of affairs where the Father, the Son and the Spirit each dispositionally exemplify divinity, through instantiating the kind Deity, which is, in turn, characterised by the divinity–attribute.⁵⁶ Taking this into account, we can now turn our attention back to the Ontological Square, which will remain the same for the Father’s exemplification of the divinity–attribute (bottom, left), whilst we can now also provide an alternative Ontological Square (bottom, right) to express the relationship between the Son and the Spirit and the divinity–attribute (where the Son is representative of both the Son and the Spirit):

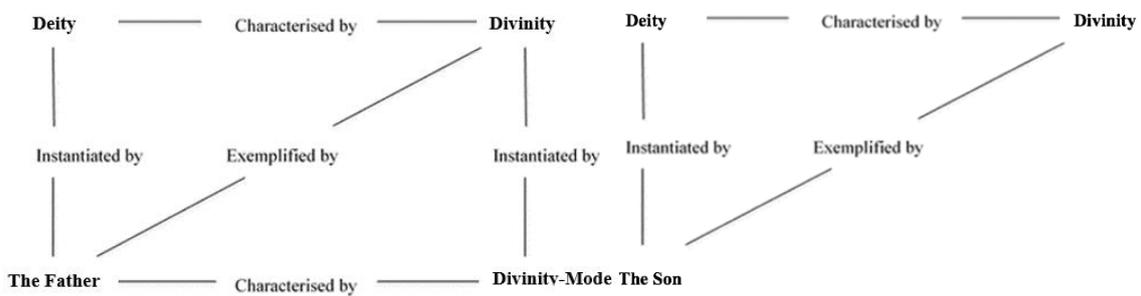


Figure 1.6 Ontological Square (Trinitarian Version 1) & (Trinitarian Version 1A)

As we can see in the alternative Ontological Square above, the framework of the four–category ontology, under (Option A), does not feature the category of a mode for the Son and the Spirit. The reason for this is because the Son and the Spirit are essentially constituted by the Father (and each other), which results in them not exemplifying the property of divinity in *both* a dispositional and occurent manner. Rather, each of the Trinitarian persons exemplifies the divinity–attribute *solely* in the sense of exemplifying the kind Deity. Whilst it is the Father alone who exemplifies the divinity–attribute in an occurent manner. Thus, under (Option A), this ontological framework, in conjunction with serious

⁵⁵ It’s important to emphasise here that dispositionality does not equate to potentiality, in that the Trinitarian persons only *potentially* exemplify the divinity–attribute. Rather, dispositionality, again, is simply a shorthand for the exemplification of an attribute, by instantiating a kind that is characterised by that attribute. The Persons truly and actually exemplify this attribute, though through this indirect, dispositional manner.

⁵⁶ In a predicative sense, the following would be true for both cases: Occ[*f*, D] and Dis[*s*, D], where ‘*f*’ stands for ‘the Father’, ‘*s*’ continues to stand for ‘the Son’ (who now serves as a representative of each of the Trinitarian persons), and ‘D’ continues to stand for the divinity–attribute

essentialism, provides a means for to affirm the exemplification of the divinity–attribute by the Trinitarian persons, whilst negating the Son and the Spirit’s possession of any modes of divinity. There is thus one mode of divinity in the Trinity, which is that of the Father’s. That said, even though this method for dealing with the multiple–modes problem is indeed intriguing, an issue that it faces is that of it creating some type of ontological distinction between the Trinitarian persons—the Father has something *outside* of his relational properties (i.e. a divinity–mode) which the Son and the Spirit do not have. This, however, would clearly be problematic for someone who holds to the traditional pro–Nicene position of the Trinitarian persons being distinguished from one another solely by their relational properties.⁵⁷

Thus, despite this being an interesting approach, one might prefer to take (Option B), which focuses on taking the divinity–modes to characterise more than one particular object. Understood this way, these modes lack determinate identity conditions and become universal–like entities, which seems to be clearly problematic within the ontological framework that we are operating within. Thus, in this case, an important question we now face is whether there is a way to take this option without having to incur the problems associated with it. That is, can a divinity–mode remain an ‘identity–determined’ mode, even though it characterises more than one particular object? In response to this question, Lowe (1998) thinks that this type of scenario could occur in cases involving the existence of numerically distinct *spatiotemporally coincident* objects.⁵⁸ A famous example of this type of object is that of a statue and the clay that *constitutes* it. In a case like this, one could say that the statue and the clay that constitutes it share, for example, the *same* weight–mode which characterises each of them—if the statue weighs 1 KG and the clay weighs 1 KG, then they don't together weigh 2 KG. Rather, there is *one and the same* weight–mode that characterises the statue *and* the clay.⁵⁹ This line of thought can be extended now to the Trinitarian case through focusing, not so much on the notion of material constitution, but rather on the serious essentialist notion of essential constituency introduced above. Within this framework, we can take the Son and the Spirit to be characterised by the *same* divinity–mode: the Father’s, by each of them ‘coinciding’ with him.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Cf. (Ayes, 2004, Ch.14); (Swinburne, 2018, 5).

⁵⁸ Lowe (1998) focuses on the case of coinciding spheres rather than the following example of a statue and the clay that constitutes it. However, due to the familiarity of the latter case in the contemporary literature, we will instead focus on this specific type of example.

⁵⁹ I am grateful to Professor Koslicki for making me aware of this example in private correspondence.

⁶⁰ Interestingly this accounts for the fact for why there is, for instance, no causal over–determination when the Trinitarian persons perform a given action together as there is *one power* (i.e. everlasting omnipotence) that is shared between each of them, which is simply that of the Father’s.

Thus, we can take the persons of the Trinity to be *essentially* (or *definitionally*) *coincident objects*. In other words, as was shown above, the Son and the Spirit have the Father (and each other) as *essential constituents*. And thus, the essence (or real definitions) of the Son and the Spirit each coincide with one another's *and* the Father's. However, as the Father lacks the other persons as essential constituents, he alone has a divinity–mode that *directly* characterises him, with the Son and the Spirit being characterised by this *same, numerically singular* divinity–mode. More specifically, by the Father being an essential constituent of the Son and the Spirit, they are *indirectly* characterised by the Father's *own* divinity–mode.⁶¹ In light of this, the Son and the Spirit can be taken to be entities that *occurrently* exemplify the divinity–attribute in an *indirect* manner through their characterisation by the divinity–mode being mediated through *the Father*. However, as pointed out previously, the Father *occurrently* exemplifies the divinity–attribute in a *direct* manner by him not having his character given to him in any mediated way. Thus, given this, we can provide a final alternative construal of the Ontological Square. Where, again, the Ontological Square will remain the same for the Father's exemplification of the divinity–attribute (bottom, left). Whilst in the alternative Ontological Square (bottom, right) we can now maintain, under (Option B), the (indirect) *occurrent* exemplification of the divinity attribute in the case of the Son and the Spirit who are each characterised by the Father's divinity–mode (below stated as F–Divinity–Mode):

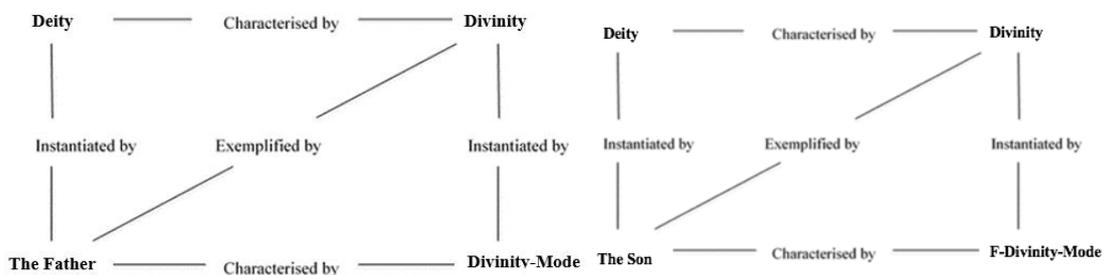


Figure 1.7 Ontological Square (Trinitarian Version 1) & (Trinitarian Version 1B)

In this case, it is important to note, however, that the problems that plagued (Option A) do not affect (Option B). As, firstly, there is no ontological distinction between the persons of the Trinity, but only a distinction in the *way* that the divinity–attribute is *occurrently* exemplified. That is, each of the persons of the Trinity *occurrently* exemplifies the divinity–attribute—the Father *directly* *occurrently* exemplifying it, whilst the Son and the Spirit *indirectly* *occurrently* exemplify it. Secondly, the divinity–mode that characterises the Son and the Spirit does indeed have determinate identity conditions through being ‘fixed’ (or

⁶¹ This is without, however, a reification of these essences.

metaphysically) determined by the Father alone. Thirdly, the fact that the Son and the Spirit share the Father's divinity-mode in this specific way does not make this mode into a universal. This is because this mode only *properly* (i.e. directly) characterises one particular object: the Father. The Son and the Spirit partake in it simply because of the *Father's* role as an essential constituent of them. In light of all of these considerations, we reach the position that there is solely one divinity-mode—a single-same divinity-mode—that (directly) characterises the Father and which also (indirectly) characterises the Son and the Spirit. Therefore, (Option B) provides a plausible and problem-free way forward that, *contra* the multiple-modes problem, does not allow a proliferation of divinity-modes (and thus natures) within the Trinity. Given all of this, we can now re-state the two conditions of Monarchical Trinitarianism* (with a modification made to the social strand (S)) as follows:

- (MT*₁) (S*) There are three relationally distinct persons (i.e. pure mental substances) within Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Spirit, each of whom (dispositionally and occurrently) exemplifies the one divine nature (i.e. the same divinity-attribute) and thus are each equally termed 'God' (in the predicative sense).
 (M) The one 'God' (in the nominal sense) is numerically identical to one of the entities: the Father, who is the sole ultimate source of the Son and the Spirit.

We can also illustrate the additional modification made here through another diagram that captures the main tenants detailed above (where the other terms and symbols are as before, with the addition now of 'EC' standing for 'essential constitution', and 'Ex' standing for 'exemplification (which now instantiates the relation)'): for the relation' replaces the relation)):

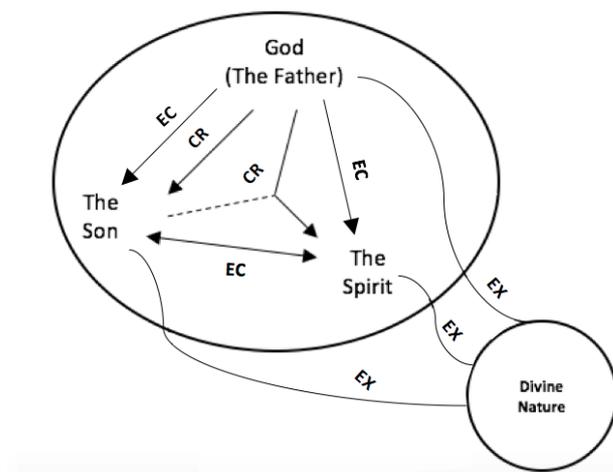


Figure 1.8 Monarchical Trinitarianism* (Modification)

Finally, assuming the modifications made above, we can now also state a re-construal of the definition of the *homoousion* of the persons (H*) as follows:

(H*₁) the Father, the Son and the Spirit are *homoousios* =*df.* the Father, the Son and the Spirit each dispositionally and (directly or indirectly) occurrently exemplify the one divinity-attribute.

Thus, taking (H*₁) into account, we can re-assert our previous conclusion that Monarchical Trinitarianism*, as further construed through the neo-Aristotelian ontological (and metaphysical) framework of Lowe, posits one divinity attribute, exemplified by the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The Trinitarian persons, as expressed by (H*₁), are indeed *homoousios*, and thus the 'multiple-natures' problem (in its original and multiple-mode variety) can indeed be peacefully laid to rest.

Conclusion

In this article, a metaphysical development was made to a specific Trinitarian model within the Greek-speaking pro-Nicene Trajectory: Monarchical Trinitarianism, which dealt with the underdevelopment problem that plagued the model. The development that was provided in the first section of this article, which was termed Monarchical Trinitarianism*, generated a specific problem: the 'multiple-natures' problem, which needed to be dealt with if this development of the model was to be ultimately accepted. This problem was addressed in the second and third section of this article by re-situating the model within the robust, neo-Aristotelian ontological framework provided by Jonathan Lowe: the four-category ontology. Doing this, however, generated a further problem: the 'multiple-modes' problem, which also needed to be dealt with if the metaphysical modifications made to Monarchical Trinitarianism were not going to strip it of its orthodox credentials. This problem was ultimately addressed in the fourth, and final section of this article, through an explication and application of Lowe's neo-Aristotelian metaphysical thesis: serious essentialism. A neo-Aristotelian construal of the Trinity thus provided a way for one to locate a metaphysically robust version of Monarchical Trinitarianism *within* the boundaries of pro-Nicene Trinitarianism.

Bibliography

- Ayres, Lewis. 2004. *Nicaea and its Legacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/0198755066.001.0001>.
- Barth, Karl. 2009. *Church Dogmatics*. 4 vols. New York: T&T Clark.
- Behr, John. 2004. *The Nicene Faith Part 1 & Part 2*. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Branson, Beau. n.d. 'The Neglected Doctrine of the Monarchy of the Father and the Analytic Debate About the Trinity.' In *Analytic Theology and the Tri-Personal God*, edited by Olivier Riaduel and Alejandro Pérez. Belgium: forthcoming.
- Coakley, Sarah. 1999. 'Persons' In the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion.' In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ and Gerald O'Collins SJ. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cowling, Sam. 2013. 'The modal view of essence.' *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43 (2): 248 – 266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00455091.2013.827395>.
- Davis, Stephen T. 2006. *Christian Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199284598.001.0001>.
- Fine, Kit. 1994. 'Essence and modality.' *Philosophical Perspectives*, 8: 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2214160>.
- Fine, Kit. 1995. 'Senses of essence.' In *Modality, Morality, and Belief. Essays in Honor of Ruth Barcan Marcus*, edited by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Diana Raffman, and Nicholas Asher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hasker, William. 2013. *Metaphysics And The Tri-Personal God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199681518.001.0001>.
- Hasker, William. 2019. 'The One Divine Nature.' *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology* 3 (2). <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v3i1.2893>.
- Koslicki, Kathrin. 2012. 'Varieties of ontological dependence.' In *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, edited by Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Koslicki, Kathrin. 2013. 'Ontological Dependence: An Opinionated Survey.' In *Varieties of Dependence: Ontological Dependence, Grounding, Supervenience, Response-Dependence*, edited by Miguel Hoeltje, Benjamin Schnieder and Alex Steinberg. Munich: Philosophia Verlag.
- Kripke, Saul A. 1980. *Naming And Necessity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Leftow, Brian. 1999. 'Anti Social Trinitarianism.' In *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ and Gerald O'Collins SJ. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil200421328>.

- Leftow, Brian. 2004. 'A Latin Trinity.' *Faith and Philosophy* 21 (3): 304–333.
- Leftow, Brian. 2007. 'Modes without Modalism.' In *Persons: Human and Divine*, edited by Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 1998. *The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity and Time*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2006. *The Four-Category Ontology: A Foundation for Natural Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2008. 'Two Notions of Being: Entity and Essence.' *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 62: 23–48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246108000568>.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2009. 'Modes of Exemplification.' In *Gustav Bergmann: Phenomenological Realism and Dialectical Ontology*, edited by Brian Langlet and Jean Maurice Monnoyer. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2012a. 'A neo-Aristotelian substance ontology: neither relational nor constituent.' In *Contemporary Aristotelian Metaphysics*, edited by Tuomas E. Tahko. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2012b. 'Essence and ontology.' In *Metaphysics: Aristotelian, Scholastic, Analytic*, edited by Lukáš Novák, Daniel D. Novotny, Prokop Sousedik and David Svoboda. Frankfurt: Ontos Verlag.
- Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2013. 'Neo-Aristotelian metaphysics: A brief exposition and defense.' In *Aristotle on Method and Metaphysics*, edited by Edward Feser. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137367907_10.
- Moreland, James P. and Craig, William Lane, 2003. *Philosophical Foundations For A Christian Worldview*. 1st ed. Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press.
- Mullins, R. T. 2020. 'Trinity, Subordination, and Heresy: A Reply to Mark Edwards', *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 4(2): 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v4i2.52323>.
- Oderberg, David. 2011. 'Essence and Properties.' *Erkenntnis* 75(1): 85–111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10670-011-9276-0>.
- Pawl, Timothy. 2020. 'Conciliar Trinitarianism, Divine Identity Claims, and Subordination.' *TheoLogica: An International Journal for Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology*, 4(2): 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.14428/thl.v4i2.23593>.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1974. *The Nature Of Necessity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 2000. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0195131932.001.0001>.
- Plantinga, Cornelius. 1988. 'The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity.' *Calvin Theological Journal*, 23: 37–53.
- Putnam, Hilary. 1975. *Mind, Language And Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511625251>.

- Swinburne, Richard. 1988. 'Could There Be More Than One God?.' *Faith and Philosophy*, 5(3) 225–241. <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil19885332>.
- Swinburne, Richard. 1994. *The Christian God*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198235127.001.0001>.
- Swinburne, Richard. 2016. *The Coherence of Theism*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198779698.001.0001>.
- Swinburne, Richard. 2018. 'The social theory of the Trinity.' *Religious Studies* 54(3): 419–437. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412518000203>.
- Tahko, Tuomas, Lowe, E. Jonathan. 2015. 'Ontological Dependence.' Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dependence-ontological/>.
- Tuggy, Dale. 2003. 'The unfinished business of Trinitarian theorising.' *Religious Studies* 39(2): 165–183. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034412503006437>.
- van Inwagen, Peter. 1995. 'And Yet They Are Not Three Gods But One God.' In *God, Knowledge & Mystery: Essays in Philosophical Theology*, edited by Peter van Inwagen. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501745324>.
- Wierenga, Edward. 2004. 'Trinity and Polytheism.' *Faith and Philosophy* 21(3): 281–294. <https://doi.org/10.5840/faithphil200421324>.