**RELATION(S)**

Aristotle’s four major categories of predicables are substance, quality, quantity, and relation. All of these raise interesting philosophical questions, but relations are especially problematic, because they are none of the other kinds, but bid fair to be unique. Although they seem to be neither substances nor attributes of the ordinary sort, there does not appear to be any obvious or intuitive account of what relations are, and accounts of relations tend to assimilate them either to substances or attributes like quantity or quality.

1. The first account of the nature of relations we might call the *subsistence* or “toothpick” view, famously criticized by Hume and Bradley. According to this view, relations are things existing discretely in their own right as something in addition to their *relata*, existing between them and connecting them together like a toothpick might bring together and connect the cheese, meat, and olives that make up an hors d’oeuvre. Chemical bonds are often depicted in visual models of atoms and molecules as relations in this sense – as little connectors that incorporate otherwise discrete and unrelated individuals into larger structures.

2. A second view, the *inherence* view, contends that (despite not corresponding to any perceivable quality of any thing) relational predicates name a special kind of inherent attribute that a thing acquires in virtue of how it stands to some other thing and thereby acquires some kind of creaturely perfection. (Sweeney and Renard attribute this view to Aquinas, and the attribution is fair.)[[1]](#footnote-1) Relations, then, are a kind of attribute of the same order as quantitative or qualitative ones but nevertheless distinct from these other classes of inherent attribute.

Of course, there are other views of the nature of relations. One, for example, treats relations as *entia rationis ratiocinate*, “beings of reason” that nevertheless have an extramental grounding in the way that things stand with regard to one another and thus *cum fundamentum re*, with an objective foundation in the non-relational attributes of the things themselves to which the relational predicate properly applies. These objective foundations are, in turn, capable of evoking and justifying objectively true judgments about how those things stand to one another, one that does not depend on either the existence or positing of any relational entity or attribute to which that relational predicate refers. This is, undoubtedly, an initially unattractive and seemingly unmotivated account of the nature of relations, one that would only recommend oneself to anyone (certainly not myself!) who regards abstemiousness to be the first virtue of ontology. Still, it is my hope that such a view will grow on the reader as the inconveniences and difficulties with these other, more intuitive positions become clear.

**External and Internal relations**: On the “toothpick” view of relations, we can distinguish “toothpick” or *external* relations from “logical” or *internal* relations. Thus, Hume regards causal relations as contingent external relations between events, whereas the relation between the center point of a circle and its circumference, or between 2 and 4 as “twice two” are given as examples of internal relations. Idealist critics of the “toothpick” view of causation, such as Brand Blanshard, insist that all real or genuine relations are internal relations and that everything is internally related to everything else in such a way that if any thing was different from the way it is in even the smallest detail, this difference would ramify throughout the entire realm of being so that every thing would be different from what it is in the world as it exists now. On this “supercoherence” view, every truth is necessary truth, every falsehood a necessary falsehood, and every causal relation a logical relation as well. (I suspect many proponents of so-called “4-Dimensionalism” are committed to a similar view.) My view is quite different from anything like this. Let me summarize it as follows:

**THESIS:** Relational predicates do not name relational properties and, in particular, do not refer to inherent attributes of things. There are distinct classes of relational predicates that, beyond sharing a common tri-partite structure, are so diverse as to require separate, non-overlapping analyses. “Relation” then, is equivocal rather than analogical and answers to distinct concepts in different contexts. However, in each case, the use of relational predicates to state facts about how things are related to each other, and thus to make true statements about the things thus related, is grounded in non-relational facts about those things by means of which they are properly said to be related to one another. This often requires, however, that the position of the individual making the judgment be factored in and the judgments be contextualized in order to be properly understood.

**THE FORMAL SIMILARITY** All relational predication shares a common formal structure: there is the *subject* to which the relational predicate is applied, the *term* to which the subject is said to be related and that (considered in itself) is a separately existing thing, and the *ontic ground* of the relation, the basis upon which the relation is said to be founded and in virtue of which subject and term are said to be related in some respect to each other. While this common structure is present in all cases of relational predication, the similarity ends there. Further, as I just noted, the fact that the individual making these judgments takes these judgments from the perspective of someone who is him- or herself located in space and time and so takes these judgments from a particular place at a particular moment in time.

**COMPARATIVE JUDGEMENT AND RELATIONAL PREDICATION** Every thing that exists shares similarities and differences to every other thing. As Hegel says somewhere, even things posited as sharing no predicates in common would share at least that one in common and so resemble each other so far forth. This means that comparability among objects is ubiquitous and judgments of comparison very common among human beings. Such judgments take note of the ways in which things are comparable to one another and find their ground in those similarities, differences, and degrees of similarity and difference we find in things.

When we make a comparative judgment, we bring things into relation to one another as a consequence of the inherent features they possess in virtue of which they are comparable. In this case, it is the action of the comparing mind that brings these things in relation to each other, so that those relations exist, not among the things themselves, but instead *as such* only in the mind that compares them. True, that they are comparable is a consequence of their inherent, non-relational attributes. It is in virtue of this that comparative judgments can be true or false and assert a fact about the ways in which things are comparable to one another.

More than this, our comparative judgments generally express themselves using relational predicates: X (the subject) is older, taller, larger or better than, more reliable than, better looking or better tasting than others, and so (e.g.) preferable to those others for certain purposes, and so on. These judgments are objective because they are about the ways in which things resemble and differ from one another and the ground of these resemblances and differences is founded in the inherent characteristics and attributes of the things being compared. We can admit all of this, however, without supposing that, in addition to the relating activity of the judging mind that, in addition, we need to posit some ontic component of things, relations or relational attributes, in order to account for any of this. In this case, the relatedness of these things, though grounded in their inherent non-relational attributes, is solely the product of the mind’s comparative activity and exhausted by it. These relations are thus solely in the mind as the products of its own activity without, however, making them merely imaginary or subjective in principle. Instead, these relations are *entia ratio ratiocinate cum fundatum in re*.

**Title-Terms and (Some) Relational Predicates** Title-terms are definite descriptions that are properly applied to individual things in virtue of certain facts about them. A certain individual man may, in addition to being by nature a self-conscious rational subject, also be a Ph.D., a philosophy professor, and Grand Knight of his local Knights of Columbus Council. All of these titles belong to him as a consequence of various facts about his attainments, choices, and the availability of these titles in his society. However, none of these qualify his nature or belong to him as inherent attributes. His failure to possess these titles or his loss of any of them would not materially affect who or what he is.

Many relational predicates also function as title terms. The oldest building in Europe, the tallest giraffe in the herd, the first Pope to travel by air, the last Holy Roman Emperor, etc. are definite descriptions that can have at most one referent, even if that person is unknown or his or her identity disputed. In the same way, Joshua, son of Nun, has that title in virtue of the generative activity of his father, Nun, who in turn acquires the title “Father” through having completed the same procreative act by which Joshua was generated. Nevertheless, Nun would have been the same person even if he had never engaged in procreative activity and never borne a son, so his status as a father does not qualify his being. Thus, “father” and “son” function as title terms that do not refer to an inherent attribute of either Nun or Joshua, even though their possession of those titles (and the responsibilities and perquisites attaching to the positions those titles confer on those that possess them) are grounded in Nun’s procreative activity – an objective fact about the world. In this case, too, the objectivity of such relational predicates does not require that we posit inherent relational attributes of the subject to which they are truthfully applied. Nor does it naturally suggest that there is some sort of *tertium quid* that connects Joshua and Nun – even after Nun dies it remains that he is the Father of Joshua and that Joshua is the son of Nun.

**Spatio-Temporal Relations** There can be no question that bodies in space and events in time have spatial and temporal relations to each other. More than this, these spatial and temporal relations are the ground for certain quantitative attributes of bodies and events, the hallmark of which is that they are mensurable by reference to one or another conventional metric. One city is twenty miles (32.2 km) from another, one event occurs twenty years after another in time – which twenty-year period depends on the calendar one is using. Nevertheless, distance in space between bodies and in time between events are objective, making all conventional metrics intertranslatable in principle – CE 2001-2021 roughly overlaps mid-1421 to mid-1441 AH.

Even though space and time are the ground for measurable distances between bodies and ordered events in time, space and time (being *continuous* quantities) lack any inherent quantitative attributes and possess no intrinsic metric. Thus, space and time do not have determinate dimensions in and of themselves. The traditional way of expressing this is to say that space and time are *potentially infinite* – i.e., of no determinate size or length considered in themselves, so that it does not belong by nature to space or time to be either actually finite or actually infinite *by nature*. By calling them *potentially* infinite we merely mean to say that, lacking any intrinsic metric, they also lack any intrinsic limit in principle.

Considered in themselves, (absolute) space and time are merely potentially existent as the transcendentally necessary condition for the existence of the actual world, the material things that compose it as we encounter them in lived experience, and the physical space and time posited by theoretical physics. They are ontologically prior to the space and time of the actual (‘physical”) universe but, so considered, are such that their essence-as-concept contains only extension-as-such and anisotropy as essential attributes. Rather, it is only bodies in space and events in time that, through actually existing as localized and mensurable in space and time, possess quantitative attributes.

Bodies exist in space by occupying a determinate volume of space at a particular location, which thereby becomes a *place* in space as a result of being occupied by that body. Distances in space are distances between places occupied by bodies and become actual as distances only through being occupied in this way. Events occur in time, whose sole intrinsic characteristic is anisotropic passage, by means of which those events are synchronically ordered in time. They are spread out over a period of time, the end-points of which are contextually moments of time that define the temporal limits of the segments or stretches of time those events, processes, and states-of-affairs occupy, becoming the temporal analogues of places in space.

By occupying a stretch of this synchronically ordered moments of times, things, events, and states-of-affairs exist in, through, and over contextually identified and conventionally measurable *lengths* of time. Using a conventional metric, we can identify and label moments of time by assigning times and dates to them, which then allows us to place each of these synchronically ordered events, processes, and states-of-affairs at moments contextually identified as discrete times, assign durations to them by assigning them beginnings and endpoints in time corresponding to contextually identified moments of time, periods of overlap in those durations among things, events, and states-of-affairs occurring over time, and so on.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Due to this, spatial and temporal relations as we apprehend them, while grounded in objective features of the things themselves, do not necessarily correspond to any inherent attributes of things, events, or states-of-affairs. Instead, the spatial relations between bodies are nothing more than measurable distances in space between the places they occupy and the temporal relations between events elapsed periods of time between the occurrence of the first and the occurrence of the second as measured according to some conventional metric. In turn, that metric assigns discrete moments to those occurrences and thus makes them quantifiable.

As for the endurance of things and states-of-affairs through time, conventional metrics are used to assign conventional dates to moments of time and to treat the elapsed interval between coming-to-be of something in time and its ceasing-to-be in time, which may be either coterminous or overlapping. Just as spatial relations are not between things but rather between places occupied by things, and temporal relations are not relations between events but rather between the moments at which those events occur, so too are the temporal intervals between the coming-to-be and passing-away of things or the beginning and the end of processes and states of affairs occurring in time that are successive (no matter how far the temporal distance between them), coterminous, or overlapping in time.

**Spatial and Temporal Judgment** Nothing is more common than for us to talk about objects in space and events, processes, and states-of-affairs happening in and occurring through time. More than this, we commonly talk about spatial and temporal relations between things, events, and states-of-affairs. Space (extension-as-such) is not in space nor is temporal passage a process occurring in time. Things are in space by occupying positions in space, events, processes, and states-of-affairs in time are subject to and ordered in time as it passes but time, though it has a uniform direction and passes (by default) at a uniform rate, possesses no intrinsic metric. Time as such has no measurable speed. Rather, it is events, processes, and states-of-affairs happening in time that occur at various speeds relative to a conventional metric measured by a device (like a clock) that it itself in time and subject to temporal passage as it operates in time. These devices, then, do not track time itself but rather the rate at which processes occurring in time take place as measured between arbitrarily selected points of comparison that function for us as moments of time by devices that are themselves in time and subject to temporal passage.

In the same way, the physical universe as a whole is a process going on in (absolute) space and time subject to the physical laws that obtain in that universe, such that the speed at which physical processes (including the operation of clocks) occur can be altered by gravity, the curvature of (physical) space, and so on. However, the fact that physical time (time as measured in the physical universe by material things that are themselves also physical objects) can go either faster or slower implies nothing about space and time as such. Just as the physical universe needs a (non-physical) container space in which to expand – regardless of how we characterize this expansion – it also requires a simple, uniform, continuous, and unchanging background against which successive events, diachronic processes, and ongoing states-of-affairs can occur and be organized in relation to each other. Change occurs in time, but time does not occur in time. Things change in time, but time does not change, it flows continuously without being in any way affected by what is going on or occurring in time itself.

This can be illustrated by reference to the spatio-temporal judgments that we make in the context of lived experience. Because the human body has bilateral symmetry and the sensory powers of equilibrioception and proprioception, left and right, front and back, top and bottom are inherent features of that body. No matter how I twist and turn, move around and through space, or are oriented to the space I inhabit, left is always left and right is always right, before, behind, side-by-side, upside down and right side up are always determined for each of us from the same first-person point of view. At the same time, my judgments of spatial relations between objects is mediated by the location of my body in space. Due to this, my apprehension of the spatial relations between objects is always taken from and mediated by that location, so that for different observers what is judged to be to the right and to the left among a pair of objects gives rise to different and contrary judgments depending on the relative positions of different observers. (If I am standing in front of a pair of objects, which object is on the right and which is on the left will be the opposite of the order of those objects for someone who, relative to me in relation to those objects, is standing behind them). Nevertheless, these contrary judgments do not give rise to any sort of paradox or contradiction and, when properly contextualized, are exactly what we should expect given the circumstances. Insofar as we inclined to attribute these relational predicates to things, they are thus, once again, *ratio ratiocinate cum fundatum in re*.

More than this, these relational predicates are not properly predicated of things directly, but instead directly of the places they occupy and so to things only derivatively. If two posts are next to each other (occupying the same horizontal and vertical plane at a distance we would measure as five feet from each other) it is really the places they occupy between which the relation obtains, whereas the things themselves are so related only in virtue of the places they occupy. Places, however, are not things. Considered in themselves, they are merely locations, i.e., potential places that are realized as such only by being occupied by bodies. Space, being a continuous quantity, has no inherent quantitative attributes. Once locations become places as a consequence of being occupied by things, the distance between them, being an objective, emergent feature of space, they become capable of being measured using a conventional metric.

In the same way, events in time occupy moments and stretches of time, in virtue of which time becomes subject to measurement using a conventional metric itself tied to something else occurring in time (like the rising and setting of the Sun, or the operation of a clock) that becomes the basis for dividing time into conventional “moments” against which the length of events, processes, and states-of-affairs can be measured and established. The operation of these measuring devices occurs in time as is subject to the temporal passage it tracks without, however, measuring anything intrinsic to time considered in itself. Instead, temporal intervals are simply emergent features of time in relation to the entities that exist in time, consisting of the time that elapses between the beginning- and end-points for of that sequence corresponding to the coming-into-being and passing-away of whatever endures for that period of time.

There is nothing about time itself that gives rise to or explains these temporal intervals, nothing about the moments at which things come to be or pass away that either contributes to or explains why those things, events, and states-of-affairs come to be or pass away. Moments are not inherent in time but, like places, only arise through being either the contextually-identified endpoints of a temporal sequence or artifactually by our dividing those intervals into equally-lengthy sub-intervals through the use of an conventional metric and devices calibrated to “keep time” through its mechanical operation, e.g., by ticking along at a steady rate designed to track those sub-intervals through its mechanical operation.

Absolute time passes without possessing any intrinsic metric and, through its anisotropy, creates the objective conditions for temporal change and succession in the things, events, and states-of-affairs that become ordered in time as successive, simultaneous, or overlapping in time. This is the basis in reality for the temporal ordering of events that makes that order and the moments and intervals we contextually construct for ourselves using conventional metrics possible and useful for us. They are therefore not merely conventional, but instead grounded in something real and external to the mind. Thus, spatial and temporal relations are, like the other relations we have seen, are *entia ratio ratiocinate cum fundamentum in re* – beings of reason grounded in and reflective of the real. Thus despite being objectively grounded in reality, spatial and temporal relations are not inherent in things after the manner of qualitative and quantitative attributes, like size or weight considered as the realized function of a body’s mass.

**Relational Predicates. Processes, and States-of-Affairs** Things (material substances) and events (more-or-less discrete occurrences in time) are not the only realities to which spatio-temporal predicates can be applied. Processes and states-of-affairs are complexes of things and events that create an ordered whole that performs some work, gives rise to some product, realizes a function, or achieves a goal as a consequence of the joint interaction of all the parts of that process or elements of that state-of-affairs. There is no strict distinction here; a process is something that we largely conceptualize diachronically whereas a state-of-affairs is conceptualized synchronically as a single, temporally extended complex of interrelated things and events had by that complex and occurring between two temporal endpoints. Thus, World War II – the state of war between the Allies and the Axis Powers – lasted for six years and one day; it began on September 1, 1939, with the German invasion of Poland and ended on September 2, 1945, with the signing of the articles of unconditional surrender by representatives of the Empire of Japan. Often, of course, these endpoints are left undefined or are left intentionally vague, as when we speak colloquially (and contextually) of “the present age” or “the current state of affairs.”

In a structured process or state of affairs, there are many external relations among the elements, parts, and moments that constitute the process or are components of a state of affairs. There are, for example, relations of inclusion of one moment in another, with longer and shorter ones, and of subordination of one part or element of a process to the whole. However, despite being contextualized in the process or as a part of a state-of-affairs, these relations remain external to the being of those things and events. They do not qualify them as or endow them with inherent qualitative or quantitative attributes. Relations of inclusion and subordination in larger processes or states-of-affairs do not affect either the being or the inherent attributes of those elements. Instead, it simply explains why and how those elements operate in accordance with their natures within the overall process or state of affairs to contribute to the production of a particular product, task, or end.

The flywheel functions in accordance with its nature only through incorporation in a larger complex of other entities that provide the conditions for its operation – this is both by design and by nature.. It is through incorporation in, e.g., an old-time pocket watch that the operation of the flywheel is subordinated to the overall function/purpose/end of the operation of the pocket watch, i.e., to tell time in accordance with a conventional metric. If instead that flywheel had been incorporated into another mechanism, e.g., a child’s wind-up toy, identically the same operation on its part would have subserved an entirely different function/purpose/end, e.g., that of the toy monkey that, when wound up, repetitively clashes a pair of cymbals. In that case, the structural relations of incorporation and subordination considered just as such, though real and grounded in something objectively existing, do not involve either the acquisition or loss of any inherent attributes in the flywheel or the wholes into which our hypothetical flywheel functions as a proper part. Such structural relations, then, like the other examples we have reviewed, fit comfortably into the category of *entia ratio ratiocinate cum fundamentum in re*. Similar remarks also hold for parts that are exclusively constituent parts, such as the individual bricks that make up a brick wall considered just as such.

**Causal Relatedness** The most widely accepted account of transeunt efficient causation regards the causal relation as a *tertium quid*, a third, distinct thing that subsists between and unites two events, the earlier of which is designated the cause and the latter of which is identified as the effect. On this view, the causal relation is supposed to be a “necessary connection” between two discrete events otherwise unrelated except by succession that is invoked to explain or account for observed regularities in lived experience. Although this does not entail that the this “necessary connection” is an ontologically distinct thing in addition to the two events it unites, the standard account descending from Hume seems to be committed to the view that, despite its supposed necessity, cause and effect are *discrete events* at best externally related, so that if the causal relation is anything at all, it must be something other than and additional to the two events it connects. This conception of the causal relation, which was still in the ascendent when I was young, is the primary impetus for the “toothpick” view of relations. The causal relation remains, along with relations between family members, the paradigm cases of what we call relations, so that the “toothpick” view remains the most natural way of conceiving of relations as real things.

As is well known, Hume exposed this conception of the causal relation, and *mutatis mutandis* the “toothpick” account of relations in general, to withering criticism in his *Treatise* and repeated his complaints in the *First Enquiry*. Yet so persuasive was Hume that, far from scotching the “toothpick” view, it soon became the only way that philosophers in the Anglophone tradition could even so much as conceive of efficient causation. It is a view to which both science and philosophy have clung, despite the seemingly insuperable difficulties that Hume raised against it, objections that have never been satisfactorily answered.

The traditional, Aristotelian account of causality does not contain any notion of “the causal relation.” Causality is not an external relation between discrete temporally ordered events, but rather an *interaction between material things* in virtue of which cause and effect, though distinct in being, become *internally* related to each other due to the *influxus physicus* flowing from the agent cause whose causal operation/influence becomes ingredient in the patient into which it flows. This influxus, in turn, actualizes a potency in the patient into which it flows that gives rise to a change in the patient, the acquisition of a new attribute, the loss of an old one, or both, a fact that is generally evident to sensory observation. This may happen without any discernible change in the cause, though Newton assures us that there is always an equal and opposite reaction occurring in the cause, at least when interactions between material things are concerned.

This interaction thus takes the form of a single, temporally extended event that is, at one and the same time, the cause producing the effect and the effect being produced in the patient by the operation of the cause. This influxus is the application of the causal power of the agent to the patient taking the form of *per se* causation – the active exercise of a causal power on the part of the cause that produces that effect, which production ceases once the agential activity that produces it is completed. This holds even where the effect is ongoing in time due to the nature of the patient being affected by the agent cause and the manner in which that cause affects it. (The foot that dents the metal wastebasket ceases making the dent when it stops kicking the wastebasket yet, due to the nature of the metal out of which the wastebasket is made, the dent remains.) Every transeunt causal sequence, of necessity, contains at least one moment of *per se* causation as one of its elements.

*Per se* causation between material things always involves a literal *influxus physicus* of some kind – the actual application of some sort of physical force to another material thing that either produces or initiates some sort of change in the thing to which that force is applied. In this case, we can say that this physical influx of force or power into the patient creates a real, internal relation between them – the cause physically influences the effect and is in turn physically influenced by the effect. (“For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”)

*Per se* causation between a spiritual substance and material thing never involves a real relation between that substance and the material thing that is its effect, even though there is a real relation going the other way, from the thing that is the effect of the exercise of that causality to the spiritual substance that is its cause. In the case of the relation between God and the physical universe in its origin and initial conditions and elements, that relation is of one of coming-to-be on the part of that universe. Space, time, the “singularity” and its immanent laws of nature all came into existence *ex nihilo* (from nothing pre-existing), through the divine *fiat.* In in this case, the potentiality for the existence of these transcendentally necessary conditions for the existence of the actual world pre-exists, not in some subject external to God capable of becoming these things or being made into them, but simply in relation to Divine Creative causality. In bringing that universe into existence, God concretely instantiated the Divine Ideas that pre-exist as part of the Divine Essence of God apprehended by Him as infinitely participable by creatures. Guided by His intellect, the Divine Will brings about, directly in the case of the initial state of the universe and indirectly, by means of secondary causes, each kind of thing, each individual of each kind, and each attribute of each individual.

Every material thing possesses both essence and existence, which are found in them without proper unity – essence is not the principle of existence nor is existence considered just in itself the principle of essence, despite the fact that both are necessary for any concrete thing to operate in accordance with its nature.[[3]](#footnote-3) The ontic unity of existence and essence in each created thing requires a continuous cause other than and outside of that material thing that makes that continuous operation possible. Having nothing internal to their natures to keep them in being, the ongoing persistence in being of each material thing, for as long as it persists in being, requires a *per se* cause. Divine Creative causality is thus at the same time divine conservation, so that a real relation of continuous, ongoing dependence on that causality, one without which that thing would lapse into the nothingness of non-being, obtains between God and the creature at every moment it persists in being.

More than this, the sort of causality that obtains between material things, though it does not involve the positing of a causal relation as a separate entity or thing in addition to the cause and the effect, is also mediated by a kind of *tertium quid*, which is the *influxus physicus* (as materially realized) itself. The application of the causal power of the cause to the patient by means of which it is affected and through which the effect is produced in that thing involves the transfer of whatever the ontic realization of that influx in the cause into the patient in which the affect is effected and thus becomes the effect in relation to the operation of the agent cause. The power pre-exists in the agent cause (at least kinetically) and begins to affect the patient from the moment it is applied to the patient and, through flowing into and becoming ingredient in it, initiates the production of the effect in that patient by actualizing one of its *potencies*, each of which is a liability to be changed by the operation of an external cause.

This means that, since all such causal sequences or processes are in principle interruptible and at best conditionally necessary, God could prevent the efficacy of the *influxus physicus* simply by preventing it from affecting the patient in the ordinary way.[[4]](#footnote-4) As such, for God to refrain from such interference is His *divine concurrence*, realized as His passive permission of the effect arising from the cause. This is nothing in addition to His divine conservation of that *influxus* whose efficacy it lay within his power to prevent but which, for good and sufficient reasons, He has chosen not so to prevent.

In all of this, God affects the created material thing without being affected in turn by the creature. Since the very being of the creature is wholly produced by the Divine Will without its antecedent cooperation, the creature contributes nothing either to its coming-to-be or its persistence in being. As such, it does not *interact* with God; all the activity is external to God, whose divine creative causality terminates in the created thing in the act of creating it without in any way being affected by it, since prior to creation it is not there. Further, being wholly dependent on God for its very being and in everything it does (at least as far as God’s passive permission goes), it has no power to affect God in any way.

Nor does the creation of the world result in any change in God. God is unlimited active power, wholly without passive power or potentiality of any kind. Insofar as creation is concerned, the potency involved is solely that of the created world of material things to exist as the object of divine creative causality. God has unlimited power, so no matter how much power He expends in creating and conserving the created world, He continues to possess just as much power as He had before and so is neither changed nor diminished in any way through his act of creation. Further, the greater the degree of one’s power, the less power one needs to expend relative to what one has available for the purpose of accomplishing that activity. Further, God’s acquiescence in His divine love, the motive for creation, does not involve any change of mind, despite being a free act from which He could have abstained. Since God is not in time, He does not move from a prior condition of indifference to action by an act of deliberation. Since His act of creation flows from supererogatory love, Divine creation is a gratuitous act so far forth. However, this makes it neither unmotivated nor contrary to the Divine Intellect as it structures the Divine Will.

Neither is there any “interaction” between the mind and the body involving an influxus physicus from either mind to body or body to mind. Descartes’ Galilean Physicalism (GP) leaves him with no alternative than to conceive of intellectual apprehension and free action as involving some sort of influxus from body to mind or mind to body. GP has become so ingrained in our worldview that, like Princess Elizabeth, we cannot conceive of any sort of causal relation between two substances that is not a bodily interaction or to be understood on the model of an interaction between two bodies. However, if one is prepared to reject GP in favor of an Aristotelian ontology of material things as form/matter compounds, the apparent mystery proves, in the end, to be merely a puzzle arising from a false picture based on a questionable but largely unquestioned presupposition of the GP ontology.

The human body is a material thing, a substance that possesses both existence and essence, the latter of which is realized in the developmental pattern encoded in our DNA – something of which Aristotle, Aquinas, and Descartes had no inkling. When we say that the soul is the form of the body, we do not (or should not) intend by this to indicate its form *qua* material thing, but instead its form *qua* living organism. The soul accomplishes this by being the proximate *per se* cause of the body’s persistence in being – the instrumental principle of conservation used by God as First Cause to preserve the body’s continuous existence and operation through time. To act as a sustaining cause in this way is to exercise active power/vertical causation rather than to enter the order of horizontal efficient causes occurring in space and time. The soul is a separate substance from the body, with its own existence and essence. At the same time, its only inherent activity/operation is as the proximate *per se* sustaining cause of the living body. The human body hence the human person and has life only as a consequence of the operation of the soul in sustaining it. This act of sustaining is a case of active causation, so that the soul does not depend on the body for its existence even though, apart from the body, it cannot exercise the essential activity that it continues to possess as an unactualized potency.

Despite being a timelessly eternal, immaterial substance the soul’s ongoing presence to the body in space and over time as its sustaining cause results in the soul becoming a mind – a conscious subject – due to the arising of an immaterial intentional field of awareness supervening on the body that tracks changes in the relation of the body to the soul’s conserving power. This is most evident to us in our awareness/apprehension of bodily sensations that accompany and track changes in the body as the object of the soul’s sustaining act. In a different way I have outlined elsewhere, perceptual contents also appear in this intentional field and represent external material things, thereby becoming the contents of perceptual experience. Since the soul’s sustaining act does not create what it knows, the contents of that intentional field are due to processes either occurring in the body or that begin external to the body on the surfaces of other material things and are mediated by physiological and neurological processes occurring in the body, while yet remaining something in addition to those processes. The body, not being alive or conscious considered in itself simply as a material thing, is purely passive in relation to those external, physical processes. However, the actual apprehension of those contents is the intellectual act of the soul, which reaches out to those immaterial contents and apprehends them in the form of information about material things that, like its sustaining act, is an instance of active rather than passive causality.

This process of acquiring information about the external world is really one of inFORMation, the intellect taking into oneself the substantial and accidental forms of material things existing in them as inherent structural features apprehended as the principles of the qualitative and quantitative attributes directly apprehended by the senses. All of these forms are themselves immaterial and such that the bodily processes that mediate them to us merely convey them to us as they exist in external material things, rather than receiving them into the body itself or constituting them by some process occurring within it. The substantial and accidental forms of things merely piggy-back on light-waves, states of the sensory organs, brain-states, etc., and are objective content solely for the soul *qua* immaterial intellect. This process of information thus occurs without any sort of influxus physicus from the body into the soul.

In the same way, the free choice of the will does not require an influxus physicus from the soul in the body taking the form of non-physical “energy” or some magic force that moves physical energy around in the brain or the CNS. The will acts as a permissive, rather than an active, cause of freely chosen human behavior. On the account of causality I accept, causal necessity is always only conditional necessity, so that it is metaphysically possible for the casually necessary and sufficient conditions for some thing, event, or state-of-affairs to occur or obtain without the projected outcome actually occurring, since something may intervene to interrupt that causal sequence so that it does not issue in its projected effect. Although nothing more is required for the truth of causal claims to be true than that those conditions have obtained and not been prevented from bringing about that effect, this outcome is not guaranteed by that fact alone. Causal necessity does not therefore guarantee the occurrence of the effect – it does so only on the supposition that nothing happens to prevent those standing conditions from operating in such a way as to secure their projectible outcome.

Where human behavior is concerned, we may identify the action-pattern, grounded in the CNS, with the whole complex of physically necessary and sufficient conditions for an occurrent action to arise. This will include, in most cases, some sort of spontaneously-arising felt motivation sufficient to carry the action through to completion. The soul, however, is not a physical thing or part of a physical thing and thus has the power to resist, in most cases, the felt impulse to act as we are motivated to act. As Aquinas avers, these impulses incline without necessitating: they are sufficient to win through to completion if I do not prevent them from doing so, but they do not move my will with an irresistible force. If I acquiesce in permitting that motivation to grab control of the machinery of the body and win through to the successful production of its intended act, then I freely choose to act as I am prompted by that impulse. If I do not acquiesce in that impulse, then it is sufficient for me to prevent that outcome simply by refraining from acting as that impulse inclines me to act, something that, in most cases, I can accomplish just by not doing the act to which it prompts me.

It is to be noted here that neither my acquiescing in that impulse not my refraining from acting as that impulse prompts me is a positive action on my part. Although resistance to a powerful inclination that continues to re-introduce itself into my conscious awareness despite its having been dismissed numerous times (such as the desire to smoke a cigarette) often feels to us like a titanic struggle, our resistance is still nothing more than a resolve not to do something, not a doing in its own right. To refrain in this way is simply to deny that action as *my* action: as something I, as a self-conscious rational agent, freely chose to do.

This does not require any influxus from the soul into the body or any other entry by the soul into the order of horizontal causes occurring in the body. Instead, the exercise of free will is simply a further feature of the soul’s single intrinsic operation, which is to serve as the proximate *per se* cause of the body’s persistence in being. When one refrains from acting as one is prompted by a spontaneously arising impulse, one is simply withdrawing one’s sustaining power from that action-pattern, something it needs in order to persist in being and proceed to full enactment.

There is thus no “interaction” between the soul and the body of the sort that occurs in the case of causality between material things, either in the information-acquiring process by means of which the soul comes to possess knowledge about the external world nor in the will’s production of intentional action through bodily behavior. By the same token, neither is there any interaction problem rising from the assumption that all interaction between substances has to be modeled on causal interaction between material things. However much our sinful natural bent may militate against this, rational free action is possible for us – it lies within our power to cultivate the virtues in order to live in accordance with our nature as rational beings rather than be merely the Humean slaves of impulse, fashion, and the vicissitudes of passion.

**Conclusions Concerning Relations** After having considered the various major examples of relational predication, we have arrived as no strong inclination to posit relations either as substantive entities in their own right or as subsistent attributes of things. In every case, the analysis of relational predicates as beings of reason with an ontological foundation in the non-relational attributes of things seems adequate to capture what we are trying to say without granting that relational predicates serve as the names of anything substantive in addition to the *relata* themselves. At the same time, this does not entail that relations are merely subjective or somehow mind-dependent in such a way that they exist only in and for the self-conscious rational subjects that apprehend and contemplate them. Relations are thus *entia ratio ratiocinate cum fundamentum in re*.

**Appendix – Are the Persons of the Trinity Relations?**

One of the main attractions of the view that relational predicates name relational attributes inhering in substances is theological rather than philosophical. Building on the views expressed by Augustine in Book V of his *De Trinitate*, Aquinas arrives by degrees at the view that the Persons of the Trinity are *subsistent relations*, i.e., relational attributes of God identical with the Divine Essence, Substance, and Nature while being distinct from each other only by relational opposition.[[5]](#footnote-5) According to what I call the Strong Unity Model of the Trinity, the Divine Persons are completely indistinct from one another except as far as they are distinct relational attributes of God. Although these relations are grounded in the timeless Divine Processions (filiation and spiration) that are characterize the Divine Essence and exist identically with that Essence inasmuch as they are substantive or subsistent, they nevertheless remain distinct by relational opposition due to those processions. Thus, the Father, who is unbegotten has the Divine Essence and Nature without having received it from another, whereas the Son receives the Divine Essence and Nature from the Father, and the Holy Spirit, who proceeds (on the Catholic view, anyway) from the Father and the Son as their mutual love for each other, receives that essence and nature from the other two persons. The Father is a principle without a principle, the Son has one principle, and the Holy Spirit has two principles.

Defenders of the SUM (mostly Thomists and other Scholastics) rail against the “modern” notion of personhood that treats subjectivity (distinct, individual self-consciousness) as essential to being a person. On their view, subjectivity and individual self-awareness are inessential to personhood. To the extent that the Divine Persons are conscious, they are so by identity with the Divine Essence that, being a spiritual substance, is intrinsically conscious. Although they generally stop short of asserting this, their view appears to be, or to entail, that there is only one self-conscious rational subject in God, i.e., God Himself or the Godhead. On that view, each of the Divine Persons is identical to (i.e., not distinct from) that single, self-conscious rational subject and so, in the “modern” sense, are jointly one Person – a single, self-conscious rational subject – not three such subjects.

On this view, there is nothing for the Divine Persons to be except inherent relational attributes of God. Although we have seen no reason to suppose that relations are inherent, substantive attributes of the relata to which the corresponding relational predicates are properly applied, this does not entail that the present case is not an exception to that analysis, despite the fact that we have identified such terms as “Father” and “Son” to be title terms rather than the names of inherent attributes in the human case. God, we might hold, is unique in this instance, as there is no other way for there to be relational opposition/non-identity in God except through God’s possessing inherent, subsisting relations in His Essence for which those terms to refer. Certainly, there is no evident contradiction in such a view, and I do not propose to attempt to infer one.

I would, however, like to propose an alternative that, while not compromising the core idea of the SUM, nevertheless allows a more robust notion of Divine Personhood, one that captures the sort of intuition that gives rise to Social Trinitarianism without lapsing into Tritheism. What follows, then, is a version of the Unity Model which stops short of affirming the psychological unity of the persons in the Godhead, which seems to require either that there is only one person in the modern sense in God or, if each of the Divine Persons is a modern person by identity with the Godhead, that there are four persons in God rather than three.

On my view, to say that there are three persons in God is to say that there are three self-conscious rational subjects that are ontologically coincident with the Godhead – the Divine Substance, Essence, and Nature considered as the ontological foundation for these three subjects. God is essentially personal – by nature such as to be a self-conscious rational subject – but tripersonal inasmuch as God knows and loves Himself in, as, and through those three persons, without being an additional self-conscious rational subject in His own right. The three persons result from the processions occurring timelessly within the Godhead by means of which God knows and loves Himself. The Father is God as knower, the Son God as known by God, and the Holy Spirit God as loved by God. God is personal by nature but not, after all, a single person but instead three such persons, and this so of necessity.

Corresponding to these three moments in the Divine acts of self-knowledge and self-love are three relationally distinct perspectives on the Divine Substance, Essence, and Nature arising within the Divine intentional field of conscious awareness, each of which encompasses its entire content from a unique but contrasting point of view. This content, of course, is just that Substance, Essence, and Nature as such and these three distinct yet complementary perspectives uniquely occupied by the Person corresponding to a distinct moment in the processions in the Godhead.

The Divine Persons, while self-conscious rational subjects, are not individual substances or souls. Instead, each is ontologically coincident with the entire Godhead – indistinct with regard to whatever is common to them in regard to the Divine substance, essence, or nature while at the same time admitting contrary, individuating relational predicates with regard to each other. In turn, these relational predicates are ontologically grounded in the internal relations that arise in the Godhead as a consequence of the two processions eternally occurring there, by means of which God is three persons: God as knower, God as known by God, and God as loved by God. God thus knows and loves Himself in, through, and as, three persons. While God is a personal being, personhood in the divine case is realized tripersonally rather than as a single person occupying its own incommunicable first-person point of view. God’s self-knowledge and self-love are realized in the Godhead as an overall perspective present in the Divine intentional field of conscious awareness whose content is shared by all three persons. This perspective then, is not another person in the Godhead distinct from them nor is it something that distinguishes the persons from one another. Rather, they share this unifying perspective that consciously realizes divine self-knowledge and self-love in the divine case from a third-person point of view made personal in each person by being apprehended from the distinct first-person point of view possessed and occupied by each.

Since there is no other criterion for the individuation of the divine persons beyond each occupying its own distinct perspective on their common substance, essence or nature, it follows that each person owes his incommunicable existence to this fact. While each Person as such has complete knowledge of what it would be like to be either of the other persons and perfectly understands what it would be like to occupy either of those perspectives, each can in fact only occupy and live its own perspective from the first-person point of view. A divine person has nothing to take with it by means of which it could survive an exchange of lived perspectives because, in each person’s case, the occupation of that unique perspective *is* the ontological basis for that person’s status as a distinct, unique self-conscious rational subject.

In short, persons are *subjects*, not *things* or *attributes of things*. In particular, they are not merely *properties* of things as Aristotle understands this notion, even though technically they qualify as such under that conception of “property.” To call the Divine Persons “properties” or even “relations” as though this is what it is and what it primarily means to be a Divine Person is at best demeaning and at worst misleading, just as if one were to define “human being” not as “rational” but instead by reference to Aristotelian properties such as “capable of laughter” or “capable of language use.”

Even if we call them subsistent relations, the Divine Persons are still far from being anything like persons, even on the minimal, Boethian account of persons as (to paraphrase) rational substantial individuals. Even Peter Geach, who seem to have accepted this view, found it mystifying, unhelpful, and something of a trial of faith. More than this, he had no patience for those who claim that the difficulty arises from the obscurity of the concept of person.[[6]](#footnote-6) The classical Scholastic/Thomistic account of the Divine Persons amounts to doing this because it characterizes the Divine Persons in a way that can only be at best accidentally connected to anything we are likely to understand as a person or even personal by nature. In that case, the “One God, Three Persons” doctrine becomes as abstract and largely irrelevant as its modernist critics within the Church take it to be – much ado about very little, even if not nothing. It is difficult to see this as the cash value of a doctrine it took three centuries of controversy and upheaval to forge.

The persons of the Trinity are internally related to one another by relations of origin, which we have already seen are not attributes of subjects but function like title-terms. The persons are distinct from one another, precisely as conscious subjects, due to their different, complementary but incommunicable lived first-person perspectives on the common Divine substance, essence, and nature with which they are ontologically coincident, a kind of unity distinct from Leibnizian identity and that permits the Persons to admit contrary predicates without dividing the substance, essence, or nature with which they are each ontologically coincident among them. Each person *qua* self-conscious rational subject knows which person he is in virtue of which lived perspective arising from those relations of origin that person uniquely occupies. Through their common knowledge of the acts of knowing and willing that give rise to their personal existence, each realizes the divine acts of Divine Self-Knowledge and Self-Love occurring in and as self-conscious rational subjects. It is just the case that, in God’s case, the realization of this self-knowledge and self-love requires that God be a community of three persons rather than merely a single person.

One sometimes get the impression from traditional theologians that the monarchy of the Father – the Father as “*mon arche*” or first principle of the Trinity – establishes the Father as somehow constituted independently of the Son and the Spirit so that, even if there had been no generation or spiration occurring in the Godhead, that the Father still would have existed just as he does without the other persons. Certainly, the Father is ontologically coincident with the Godhead in a different manner than the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Father is said to be unbegotten – this is intended to exclude the idea that the Father receives the Divine Substance, Essence, or Nature from another. At the same time, this does not mean that the Father *qua* person or *in propria persona* is nothing in addition to the Godhead. To the contrary, the Father *in propria persona*, “God as knower” exists only due to the fact that he eternally begets the Son that is both the object and the content of the Divine Act of Knowing. As such, the Father is something in addition to the Godhead, not simply identical with it, but rather ontologically coincident with it.

It is in the Father that God realizes the perfection of personhood as subjectivity, yet for the Father to be this requires, not merely that he generate the Son, but that the Son, as the perfect reflection of the Father – God as known by God – possesses all the perfections of the Father as well. This requires in turn that the Son also possess the perfection of personhood and so to be a person in his own right as well. More than this, since self-knowledge logically precedes self-love, Divine self-love - “God as loved by God” constitutes a further point of view on the internal life of the Godhead not uniquely occupied by either the Son or the Father. In that case, the Holy Spirit, as the substantial love between the Father and the Son, attains personhood through occupying that subjective point of view on the Godhead precisely as a subject aware of himself as that substantial love between Father and Son, in which he in turn participates.

If God is a Trinity, then this truth about God, like all truths about God, is a necessary truth. In that case, God could not have been just a single person, as Jews and Muslims suppose God to be. Despite everything that Socinians and Unitarians about the absurdity of the Trinity, when you think about it, it is very difficult to understand how God could be just a single person – a single conscious subject. Both self-knowledge and self-love seem to be impossible for such a being, so that the God of strict monotheism seems, on reflection, to be not just absurd, but simply impossible.

Both knowing and loving require mediation in God. Knowledge of anything presupposes a distinction between subject and object – between the Knower (i.e., God as knowing God) and what the Knower Knows (i.e., God as known by God). If God is to be a knowing subject, God’s act of self-apprehension must have an object and a content that is present in and to that subject as what that subject knows. More than this, if God is to know Himself, this object and content can be nothing other than God Himself. This means that both the object of God’s knowledge and the content of that Knowledge have to be God, while yet being distinct from the Subject that apprehends that content within the Divine Intentional field of Conscious Awareness. In that case, if God is to know Himself as a person, what He knows – the intentional content that He apprehends – has to be a person as well and, since subject and object are distinct in the knowing act, both the Knower and the Known must be persons, and different persons, from each other. To put it another way, in being constituted the object and content of the act of Divine Self-Knowledge, if it is to be a complete and exhaustive representation of God as knower (i.e., God as knowing God), must be a person just as that Knower is. That means that God’s “Inner Word” by which He knows Himself must be a self-conscious rational subject just as God as Knower is and so another Person, one distinct from that Knower.

At the same time, that Second Person can only be a person by being a self-conscious rational subject, and so a different Subject from the Father, one who receives the Divine Essence and Nature from that Knower in His very act of knowing, and knows Himself, not as the Knower whose Word He is, but instead as the object and content of that Knower’s knowing act. He thus knows Himself as God and, more particularly, as what he is – God as known by God. This constitutes a different perspective on the Divine Nature and Essence, one that reflects the manner in which God as known by God possesses that Nature and Essence. This, then, is the object and content of the knowing act of God as known by God – of that Nature and Essence as received from and reduplicating the Nature and Essence of God as Knower.

With regard to that Nature and Essence, the content and object of that Second Person’s will be substantively the same as that of God as Knowing God; only the mode of apprehending it will be perspectivally different from that of the First Person – God as knowing God. God as known by God thus knows Himself as the Word of God and as having received His Nature and Essence from God as Knowing God in His very act of self-knowing, which in turn is reflected in God as Known by God’s act of self-knowing. Each thus knows himself as God through his possession of the one divine Essence and Nature as apprehended in and through the Divine Intentional Field of Conscious Awareness. Each also knows this about the other as well.

In the same way, interpersonal love is always love between persons who are distinct subjects. The very notion of “self-love” tends by its very nature tends towards narcissism and (in the original sense of that term) autism – an obsessive concentration on the self and its concerns to exclusion of all else. Both Aristotle’s God, who is so self-absorbed as to be utterly indifferent to the world, which He did not create and cannot be bothered to know, and Calvin’s God, who is so jealous of His own prerogatives that He can neither love nor care about that world and the persons who inhabit it except as far as they reflect and promote His glory, are autistic in that sense. Love by its very nature values the Other and is driven to reach out to the Other, enter into community with the Other, seek the common good of Self and Other, and to take joy in the reciprocation of that love and its enjoyment in relationship. By sharing the Divine Essence and Nature and thus instantiating the highest in-principle expression of concrete being, God as Knowing God and God as Known by God properly and ineluctably love each other, for there is no one, even in principle, more worthy, more attractive, and more winsome than each is in relation to the other, precisely because both are God.

This, in turn, results in a third perspective on the Divine Essence and Nature arising within the Divine Intentional Field of Consciousness, i.e., God as Loved By God, one that cannot be uniquely occupied by either God as Knowing God or God as Known by God, since this perspective flows from the mutual love of each for the other that is the same in each. More than this, since this substantial love is ontologically coincident with the Divine Nature and Essence, it too is a third person in God, one that uniquely occupies the perspective of God as Loved by God and so knows itself as this Love that joins God as Knowing God and God as Known by God. It then participates with God as Knowing God and God as Known by God in that Love precisely by being that Love.

The Persons of the Trinity are distinct subjects by reason of their relationally distinct perspectives on their common Essence and Nature, each of which encompasses the entire Divine Intentional Field of Conscious Awareness from its own unique, first-person perspective as its object from the third-person point of view. At the same time, since these points of view are the consequence of the Divine Processions within the Divine Essence, the are nevertheless internally related to each other, so that each implies the other and is logically implicated in it, so that there is complete interpenetration of each in the other. What distinguishes the persons from one another is neither a difference in substance or real attribute, but instead simply the occupation by each of his unique and incommunicable first-person point of view as God knowing God, God as Known by God, and God as Loved by God – identified to us by tradition as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The community and communion of these three Divine Persons constitutes the inner life of God manifested to us in the economy of salvation.

If God is not a Trinity, then the only conception of God that remains to us, one usually thought to be inimical to the idea that God is a personal being, is that God is not a person, or personal by nature at all, but is instead (like the neo-Platonic God, Atman-as-Brahman, the Buddha-nature on at least some Idealistic versions of Buddhism, or the Absolute as conceived of by, e.g., Hegel and Schelling) is essentially *impersonal*. Proponents of this view, which even include some Christian theologians (notably, Paul Tillich) hurry to insist that impersonal does not mean “sub-personal.” Rather, this view exalts the Divine as somehow beyond being and personhood, serving as the “ground of being” and possessing a kind of undifferentiated internal unity that excludes all structure or order from within God. God’s self-knowledge and self-love and conceived of as not involving or requiring a self or selves at all. Instead, God is viewed as being so simple and transparent to itself that God lives in such a way as to not require any internal mediation at all. God is just a limitless field of mystical bliss without a subject, an object, occurrent thought, or even a distinct awareness of anything. By contrast, individual subjectivity is generally viewed as something imperfect and inferior, an illusion to be dispelled through the achievement of enlightenment and absorption without remainder into the Oversoul through some form of natural mysticism.

By contrast, Process Panentheism saves God’s individual subjectivity by making God a finite being for whom the existence of the world is an essential complement. On this Dualist account of God, He is the *anima mundi* who depends on the world and His relation to that world in order to achieve his own completion as a being since, not being “pure act,” like every other being in the world, God must strive to realize His consequent nature through work upon the world. This God is all too human and seemingly dependent on us to achieve His ends, even to the extent that He could be thwarted by sufficient human intransigence.

Whatever the merits of these sort of views, this is very different from the Theistic God familiar from mainstream Western Religion. Yet even some orthodox Thomists skirt this sort of view when they discuss God’s self-knowledge and self-love in these sorts of terms, insisting that God has a thorough-going, immediate, and comprehensive self-knowledge and loves Himself independently of being a Trinity of persons. If that is so, then the critics are right so far forth – the Trinity really is superfluous to the inner life of God and tells us nothing about how things stand with Him. In that case, semi-Modalist accounts of the Trinity, like Catherine LaCugna’s, that attempt to reduce the Trinity simply to God’s action in the economy of salvation and convert the traditional God into a “God for us” whose whole being is exhausted by His relation to us, may be the only way to retain the doctrine of the Trinity. In that case, attempts to show that traditional Trinitarianism remains relevant to Christians today may be a lost cause.

1. See Leo Sweeney, *A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1965, 193-195 and Louis Renard, *The Philosophy of Being*, Milwaukee, WI, Bruce Publishing, 1946, 249-256. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Thus we say that World War II began on September 1, 1939, contextually assigning the beginning of the War to a particular day. There is no reason to make this beginning point more precise. Indeed, we quickly generate Zenonian slippery-slope difficulties if we try to determine “exactly” (or even more exactly) when WWII began. Was it the moment the first German soldier crossed the Polish frontier animated by the intent to invade? And when precisely did that happen? Was it the moment his boot first broke the imaginary plane arising from the outermost point of the Polish border, itself merely a geopolitical boundary rather than anything concretely physical? How much of his boot needed to cross that boundary to constitute the beginning of the War? What if he had put his toe over the line and then pulled it back, allowing other soldiers to cross ahead of him? And so on. The difficulty here arises because time (like space) is a continuous quantity but the measurement of time by means of a conventional metric attempts to treat time as though it were a discrete quantity instead. To do this, though pragmatically unavoidable and indispensible, inevitably misrepresents both time, space, and the things, events, and states-of-affairs that occur in time and space and, by doing so, constitute the physical universe. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. I have argued this at length elsewhere, most recently in my *Cartesian Realism* (forthcoming). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Scholastic philosophers used this to explain the miraculous preservation of the three youths in the fiery furnace as related in Daniel 3:1-23. According to these thinkers, God withheld his cooperation with the causal power of the fire to burn so that the young men remained unscathed despite the heat generated by the fire, said to be so great that it incinerated the guards who had been placed there to prevent their escape. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. At least one Scholastic writer, Charles A. Hart, has suggested that this account of the persons as subsistent relations is a prime, though indirect, reason for affirming the inherence view of relations – see his Metaphysics for the Many, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1957, 170-171 in the publisher’s galley-formatted typescript. To show that this is not the case, I need to show how my alternate account of relations can be squared with the UM model of the Trinity, which I have elsewhere endorsed. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Peter Geach, *The Virtues*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)