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“Against Trinitarian Enthusiasm: The Approach of Relative Identity Logic to the Trinity”

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The theorizing about the doctrine of the Trinity by contemporary analytic philosophers of religion has recently been imbued with an air of enthusiastic excitement and self-confidence. Some of them claim to have conclusively solved the mystery (Bohn 2011). Others advocate (more modestly) to have worked out new trinitarian analogies silencing the objections commonly perceived to challenge the compatibility of monotheism with the distinct existence of three personal divine beings (Brower & Rea 2005; Moreland & Craig 2009; Leftow 2009; Rea 2009). Still others overturn perspectives on the burden of proof and charge trinitarian skeptics with being unable to provide sound arguments for the (alleged) conceptual flaws of the notion of the Trinity (Senor 2013). As a consequence, according to such theorists, traditional worries about identity, distinctness and number in the doctrine are due to a shallow understanding of the topic. Once such notions are addressed with an in-depth insight, reason suggests to dismiss any trouble.

My intuition is that, despite of the euphoria spreading from the new trinitarian approaches, there's room for saying something more in support to the embarrassment and puzzlement commonly related to the predication of God's onefoldness and threefoldness. Briefly, trinitarian enthusiasm fails to see how necessarily having eternal personal properties definitely conflicts with the possibility to instantiate personally the same divine substance. Moreover, since personal properties are traditionally thought of as originated by genealogical relations, and genealogical relations are asymmetric relations, one divine Person can't instantiate one and the same *being God* as another divine Person (e.g., God the Father can't instantiate one and the same *being God* as God the Son).

My working plan is the following. In the first section I will outline the doctrine of the Trinity as a basic set of propositions (T) adherents to Christianity are committed to. Although I will rely on current construals of the logical problem of the Trinity, I will complement such accounts in order to highlights pieces of theological constraints usually neglected in the debate. In the second section I will argue for the claim that the RI logic developed by P. van Inwagen (van Inwagen 1995) is the best conceptual apparatus to handle T. Notably, some scholars contend that RI logic doesn't help in trinitarian theorizing (Rea 2005; Tuggy 2003; Vohánka 2013). I will address their claims by showing how they miss the point. In light of the acquisitions of this section, the subsequent one will be devoted to the main reasons supporting the refutation of latin trinitarianism (LT), social trinitarianism (ST) and constitution trinitarianism (CT). In the fourth section, I will finally deliver a general argument for (weak) trinitarian skepticism. My view is that the argument provides substantive reasons in support to the common sense intuition that either God's

oneness and threeness aren't actually compatible or God's oneness and threeness aren't robustly construed.

1.

Mainstream Christianity is Nicene Christianity. That is, mainstream Christians assent to the creedal propositions normatively stated during the fourth century by the First Council of Nicea and the First Council of Constantinople. The collections of materials from both Councils open with a declaration about the content of Christian faith by the Fathers convened in assembly. Such declarations are called *Profession of Faith of the 318 Fathers* (Nicene Creed) and *Profession of Faith of the 150 Fathers* (Constantinopolitan Creed). During church history both texts have gone under revision. Such revisions include Latin and Armenian translations of the original Greek documents (with important theological supplements). At present the expression "Nicene Creed" is used as an umbrella word for one or the other among the original texts of the Profession of Faith and their revisions. However, in order to refine, purify, and modernize the original Creeds, other creedal statements appeared too. Among them, there are the Athanasian Creed (or *Quicumque vult*), the Apostolic Symbol, and the Symbol of Faith.

The creeds are normative texts. They establish in succinct statements what a believer should assent to in order to be counted as a Christian. As such, they are synopses of the Christian faith. It is then commonly assumed that creeds are the primal source of the doctrine of the Trinity that Christian believers confess. Notoriously, the creeds mostly overlap in content. Nonetheless, there are few but relevant differences among them. Such differences concern different understandings of the generation and the nature of the Holy

Spirit. Consequently, it is not theologically neutral to choose one or the other of these in order to assess what the doctrine of the Trinity is meant to be.

Any version of the creed explicitly asserts that Christians worship three Divine Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While it is not obvious from any of the texts (with the exception of the Athanasian Creed) that Christians assume monotheism, the council materials from the Council of Nicea and the Council of Constantinople clarify that the existence of a plurality of Divine Beings is to be understood in terms of monotheism.

The logical problem of the Trinity (LPT) concerns the formal consistency of monotheism, the instantiation of the divine nature by the divine Persons, and the actual distinctness of the divine Persons. As such LPT does not address each theological issue the creeds give voice to: it simply aims at developing an understanding of the notions of identity and distinctness by which identity and distinctness claims about the divine Persons don't conflict with the basic belief *that there is only one God*. It is therefore not necessary to take into consideration the different conceptions of the genealogical relations among the divine Persons in order to deal with LPT.

Basically, the doctrine of the Trinity is the conjunction of two beliefs: (a) *that there is only one God* and (b) *that each of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is God*, (Council of Constantinople, "Letter of the Bishops convened in Assembly in Constantinople to Pope Damasus and the Western Bishops"). Evidently, taken one at a time, neither (a) nor (b) need special comments. On the contrary, their conjunction raises more than mere perplexity: it seems *prima facie* definitely false. The church fathers in Constantinople answered such a difficulty by the statement that *the Divine Beings are one God, because each Person instantiates the same nature, the same power and the same divinity*. Particularly, they

have perfectly overlapping divine properties (e.g., *being one*, *being powerful* and *being divine*). That is, the divine Persons are identical as to their being God, enumerating how many Gods there are being a matter of how many divine natures are instantiated by the existence of the divine Persons. Personal distinctness doesn't realize different divine natures - the church fathers advocated. According to them, personal distinctness in God doesn't affect then the assumption of monotheism.

In light of these considerations, scholars agree (with irrelevant nuances) that "(a) & (b)" is to be unpacked as the conjunction of (a) with a number of identity and distinctness claims (Cartwright 1987; van Inwagen 1988; Rea 2003; Brower and Rea 2005; Rea 2009; Bohn 2011). By common consensus the following set of propositions (call the set T) is thought to express the doctrine of the Trinity:

- a) There is only one God;
- b) The Father is God;
- c) The Son is God;
- d) The Holy Spirit is God;
- e) The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct.

According to the classical theory of identity, T is formally contradictory. It results that:

- 1) For any x, y, z and j, if " $x=j \ \& \ y=j \ \& \ z=j$ ", then " $x=y \ \& \ y=z \ \& \ x=z$ " (from indiscernibility);
- 2) For any x and y, if  $x=y$ , then  $y=x$  (from simmetry);
- 3) God=Father (from (b));

4) God=Son (from (c));

5) God=Holy Spirit (from (d));

6) The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are identical (from (1)-(5)).

Evidently, *being identical* entails *being not (numerically) distinct*. Consequently:

7) The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are not distinct.

Conclusion follows:

8) T implies “(e) & not (e)”.

The deduction (1)-(8) from (a)-(e) gives formal expression to the common intuition that T is puzzling because three divine beings can't count as one God. That is, it is plain to assume that if x and y are F, where F stands for a count noun, and x is distinct from y, then x and y are not the same F. But if x and y are not the same F, there are then (at least) two Fs. Now, the church fathers in Constantinople claimed that (b), (c), and (d) means that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are consubstantial, i.e., they instantiate the same nature. Therefore, (b), (c), and (d) should be read as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit instantiate the same nature. Nonetheless, they are distinct. Consequently, they can't be the same God; that is, there are three Gods.

LPT consists in giving an interpretation of T which makes (a) consistent with (b)-(e). There are two main ways to understand the task. According to a maximally robust reading of the

notions of onefoldness and threefoldness, being onefold (i.e., being a unique individual) prevents a thing from being threefold (i.e., being constituted by three individuals). If this is the case, being one excludes being three; i.e., God can't be said to be both one and three beings. On the other hand, according to a sufficiently robust reading of the notions, being onefold (i.e., being an individual) doesn't entail being not threefold (i.e., being at a time the source of three different streams of phenomenal features). Evidently, a maximally robust reading of the notions of onefoldness and threefoldness rules out any possibility of answering LPT. The trinitarian theorist has then only the weak option at her disposal: showing that a sufficiently robust reading of onefoldness and threefoldness suffices to make sense of the doctrine of the Trinity (Senor 2013).

Contemporary trinitarian enthusiasm emerges from holding the belief that the one or the other among the new approaches to the Trinity manages these notions in such a sufficiently robust way as to dismantle the charge of incoherence.

Unfortunately, trinitarian enthusiasm seems groundless. Recent works by D.Tuggy provide interesting reasons in support of the claim that no theory on the marketplace accomplishes the task. The problem common to all is that, while they appear able to give interpretations of T by which the propositions (a)-(e) don't imply formal contradictions, their rendering of the notions of the identity and distinctness of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit doesn't capture the data of the revelation. Tuggy outstandingly makes the case for the different difficulties LT, ST and CT involve. Particularly, he argues that each of these solves LPT in reason of the following unpalatable reading of the relations between God (the onefoldness of the divine nature) and the Divine Persons (the threefold realization of the divine nature):

T<sub>1</sub>) personal distinctness is modal distinctness (Tuggy 2003);

T<sub>2</sub>) only the Trinity is properly God, God being distinct from any of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Tuggy 2003);

T<sub>3</sub>) the Trinity is materially constituted by three overlapping (but not mutually ontologically dependent) Divine Beings (Tuggy 2013).

Considerations against (T<sub>1</sub>), (T<sub>2</sub>), and (T<sub>3</sub>) are *ad hoc* arguments. They address the peculiar features of LT, ST, and CT, and establish which unreliable intuitions each approach is construed on. Consequently, they are particularly useful in setting the agenda of trinitarian theorizing. That is, trinitarian enthusiasm is reliable if and only if one between LT, ST, and CT is able to answer LPT without assuming the disjunction “(T<sub>1</sub>) ∨ (T<sub>2</sub>) ∨ (T<sub>3</sub>)”.

Tuggy’s core idea consists in the claim that no sufficiently robust understanding of the notions of onefoldness and threefoldness among the ones at the theorists’ disposal is suitable to express the data of revelation. My intuition is that a general reason accounts for this fruitful thesis: christian faith asks believers to assent to a maximally robust understanding of such notions. If this is the case, trinitarian skepticism can be developed as the claim that no trinitarian analogy answers consistently LPT since the data of revelation suppose a maximally robust understanding of the notion of onefoldness and threefoldness. As a consequence, Tuggy’s refutations of LT, ST, and CT should turn out to be particular cases of the general argument for trinitarian skepticism. That is to say, be ATS the general argument for trinitarian skepticism. It results that:



ATS → (not T<sub>1</sub>) & (not T<sub>2</sub>) & (not T<sub>3</sub>)

In order to give a formulation to ATS, I begin with listing some theological requirements any answer to LPT should embodied. Meeting such requirements is necessary because they determine which notions of identity and distinctness are at work in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Firstly, each Divine Person is identical to each others as to the instantiation of a single divine nature (IDENTICAL INSTANTIATION OF NATURE). God the Father begets God the Son. Creedal formulations explain that begetting here means that the Father transfers the whole of his nature to the Son; i.e., God the Son is of one substance with God the Father. While there aren't analogous declarations concerning the genealogical relation of God the Holy Spirit to God the Father (and eventually God the Son), the church fathers in Constantinople explicitly claimed that the Holy Spirit possesses the same single divine nature as the Father and the Son. Consequently, it seems reasonable to assume that, independently on the way God the Holy Spirit genealogically relates to the source of His own divinity, He possesses the divine nature as God the Father and God the Son do.

Secondly, christian monotheism is the claim that, notwithstanding the existence of three divine Persons, the divine nature is an universal actualized just once, because the three divine Persons are the same God (SINGULARITY OF DIVINE NATURE). That is, the divine nature is a set of properties each of the divine Persons instantiate completely. The history of trinitarian theology provides evidence for such a reading of the notion of monotheism (Cross 2002; Jacobs 2008).

Thirdly, according to very traditional interpretations of trinitarian claims, the divine

Persons are distinctly discernible just in terms of their genealogical relations (Bottarini 2006; Emery 2007; Rahner 1967). The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are properly God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit because each of them is simply and fully the whole of God. The distinctness of the divine Persons consists then in the fact that the actualization by the Father of the whole set of properties the divine nature is ontologically relates to the identical actualization by the Son and the Holy Spirit (the same for the relations between the Son and the other divine Persons and the Holy Spirit and the other divine Persons). If this is the case, the divine Persons have personal properties just in reason of the real subsistence of such relations. Consequently, a divine Person is the instantiation of the divine properties plus the ontological relation of such an instantiation to the others (DISTINCTNESS BY GENEALOGICAL RELATIONS).

Fourthly, the meaning of *ontologically relating* is *being metaphysically dependent on* (PERSONAL DEPENDENCE). According to the received view, if God exists, God necessary (eternally) exists. That is, whatever the divine Persons are, inasmuch as they are God, they enjoy necessary both the divine nature and their personal properties. Now, if their possession of personal properties consists in having a genealogical relation to the others, and such possession is necessary, each divine Person is necessary constituted by His relation to the others. That is, the Father can't be God the Father without the Son being God the Son and the Holy Spirit being God the Holy Spirit (the same for the Son and the Holy Spirit). Consequently, the Trinity of the divine Persons doesn't relate to God's agency *ad extra*: there's no difference in considering the trinitarian relations among the divine Persons *in se* and in the history of salvation. Notoriously, K.Rahner gives a widely accepted formulation to this claim by the *basic axiom of trinitarian theorizing* ("The immanent Trinity is the

economic Trinity, and viceversa", Rahner 1967).

Fifthly, all creeds mention that christians worship the Trinity of God. This is the central statement of christian faith, and there's no risk to overestimate its importance. What is worth noting here is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are clear devotional figures believers encounter in their own liturgical experience. That is, christian faith has three different focal points. Each of these has proper individuation features and fulfills peculiar religious needs. As a consequence it is natural to expect that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit exhibit evident identifying traits in the believer's everyday religious life. Creeds attest such an attitude by plainly individuating strong personal properties each Divine Person enjoys. The Father is the Maker of all things visible and invisible, and He is the source of the Godhead. The Son is the Only-begotten of the Father. He takes part in the world creating process as the mean the Father makes us of. Further, He incarnates for the purpose of the salvation of the human kind, and experiences as a man the birth from a poor family, a public religious ministry in Palestine, the death by crucifixion, and, finally, the resurrection from death. In the latter days He will come again to judge the living and the dead. The Holy Spirit proceeds either from the Father or the Father and the Son. He is the Lifegiver, and the voice who spoke by the Prophets. He takes also part in the Incarnation process, in someway operating the conception of Jesus. He refills (whatever refilling could mean) the Apostles in order to inspire them the theological understanding of the life and the dead of Jesus; and He leads them to found christian communities all over the world by giving the power to produce miracles and healings (LITURGICAL BOOSTING OF PERSONAL DISTINCTNESS).

2.

With all this in mind, I will now move to show that, under the theological constraints driving the interpretation of (a)-(e), RI logic is the most reliable instrument to engage with

T.

The basic intuition motivating the construal of a logic of relative identity is that identity and distinctness claims are not absolute but predicate relative. Consider the following case. Sir Ian McKellen plays the role of Gandalf in the Lord of the Ring Saga and the role of Magneto in the X-Men Saga. According to the classical theory of identity, this is to be expressed by the following propositions:

- 1) the actor who plays Gandalf=Ian McKellen;
- 2) the actor who plays Magneto=Ian McKellen;
- 3) the actor who plays Gandalf=the actor who plays Magneto.

Proposition (1) attests a referential relation between the actor who plays Gandalf and Ian McKellen; proposition (2) between the actor who plays Magneto and Ian McKellen. In reason of the identity of the referential relation between the actor who plays Gandalf and Ian McKellen in (1) and the actor who plays Magneto and Ian McKellen in (2), the identity sign in (3) is thought to be independent on any predicative context. Whatever the actor who plays Gandalf enjoys, the actor who plays Magneto enjoys too (e.g., if the actor who plays Gandalf is the recipient of six Laurence Olivier Awards then the actor who plays Magneto is the recipient of six Laurence Olivier Awards too).

Relative identity challenges the soundness of such an analysis, because it assumes that

sameness among referential relations is always stipulated in terms of one predicate. Consider again the propositions (1), (2), and (3). They assert that the actor who plays Gandalf, the actor who plays Magneto, and Ian McKellen are the same man. That is, the meaning of *the actor who plays Gandalf (Magneto) is identical to Ian McKellen* is that *the actor who plays Gandalf (Magneto) is the same man as Ian McKellen*; the meaning of *the actor who plays Gandalf is identical to the actor who plays Magneto* is that *the actor who plays Gandalf is the same man as the actor who plays Magneto*. If this is the case, it results that the identity sign in (1), (2), and (3) stands for *x is the same man as y*. The relative identity theorist asks: what, if any, warrant that sameness in a predicative context attests sameness across different predicative contexts? If the semantic interpretation of the identity sign in ordinary attributions of sameness and distinctness show that such attributions are context-dependent, what reasons justify the assumption that *no couple of predicate F and G satisfies the proposition "x is the same F as y, but x isn't the same G as y"*?

RI logic opposes the classical theory of identity in considering what metaphysical consequences could follow from a context-dependent analysis of identity and distinctness claims. Particularly, against the assumption that sameness is a transcontextual relation (i.e., indiscernibility in a given context implies indiscernibility in all contexts), the RI logician claims that indiscernibility is a matter of fact. Suppose *x is the same F as y*. According to the classical theory of identity, from being the same F, it follows that *P(x)* implies *P(y)*. That is to say, it is necessary to assume that F-ness dominates P-ness (whatever is the same F is the same P too). But, the RI logician demands reasons in support to the necessity of such an assumption: predicate dominance is throughout a matter of fact. Consequently, RI logic is a way to resist the temptation of assuming identity

claims on purely metaphysical grounds.

Van Inwagen's development of RI logic is a formal language constituted by:

- vocabulary: it doesn't include terms for identity, descriptions, demonstratives, names, and it contains predicates as *x is the same F as y*, usual sentential connectives, variables, the universal and existential quantifiers, and punctuation marks;
- formation rules;
- rules of inference: the rules of ordinary quantifier logic; *Symmetry* - for any x and y, if x is the same F as y, then y is the same F as x -; *Transitivity* - for any x, y, and z, if x is the same F as y, and y is the same F as z, then x is the same F as z).

This apparatus suffices to engage consistently with T. Consider the predicates *is the same being as* and *is the same Person as*. It results that trinitarian statements fall under the following general interpretation pattern for (a)-(e):

$\alpha$ ) There exists a x and x is God. Then, for any y, if y is God, y is the same being as x;

$\beta$ ) There exist a x, a y, and a z, and x is God, y is God, and z is God; but x is not the same Person as y, y is not the same Person as z, and x is not the same Person as z. Then, for any w, if w is God, w is the same Person as x, or w is the same Person as y, or w is the same Person as z;

$\gamma$ ) ( $\beta$ ), and for any x and y, if x is God, and y is God, then x is the same being as y.

Evidently, ( $\alpha$ )-( $\gamma$ ) doesn't imply any formal contradiction. Consequently, RI logic allows to

give a sound expressions to trinitarian propositions. Van Inwagen's move consists in translating proper names as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit into properties each of them enjoys:

God the Father  $=_{\text{def}}$   $x$  is the Father means that there exists a  $y$ , and  $x$  begets  $y$  and for any  $z$ , if  $z$  begets  $y$ , then  $z$  is the same Person as  $x$ ;

God the Son  $=_{\text{def}}$   $x$  is the Son means that there exists a  $y$ , and  $y$  begets  $x$  and for any  $z$ , if  $y$  begets  $z$ , then  $z$  is the same Person as  $x$ ;

God the Holy Spirit  $=_{\text{def}}$   $x$  is the Holy Spirit means that there exists a  $y$  and a  $z$ , and  $x$  proceeds from  $y$  (and eventually from  $z$  too) and for any  $w$ , if  $w$  proceeds from  $y$  (and eventually from  $z$  too), then  $w$  is the same Person as  $x$ .

Propositions (a)-(e) are then expressed as follows:

a') There exist a  $x$  and  $x$  is God; then for any  $y$ , if  $y$  is God,  $y$  is the same being as  $x$ ;

b') there exist a  $x$  and a  $y$ , and  $x$  is God; then  $x$  begets  $y$  and for any  $z$ , if  $z$  begets  $y$ ,  $z$  is the same Person as  $x$  ( $F(x)$ );

c') there exist a  $x$  and a  $y$ , and  $x$  is God; then  $y$  begets  $x$  and for any  $z$ , if  $y$  begets  $z$ ,  $z$  is the same Person as  $x$  ( $S(x)$ );

d') there exist a  $x$ , a  $y$ , and a  $z$ , and  $x$  is God; then  $x$  proceeds from  $y$  (and eventually from  $z$  too) and for any  $w$ , if  $w$  proceeds from  $y$  (and eventually from  $z$  too),  $w$  is the same Person as  $x$  ( $H(x)$ );

e') there exist a  $x$ , a  $y$  and a  $z$ , and  $x$  is God,  $y$  is God,  $z$  is God; then  $F(x)$  is not the same

Person as S(y) or H(z), G(y) is not the same Person as F(x) or H(z), H(z) is not the same Person as F(x) or S(y).

My claim is that RI logic is the most appropriate instrument to handle T. Indeed, classical trinitarian theorizing is a vigorous attempt to highlight the fact that the predicate *being the same God as* is not dominant on the predicate *being the same divine Person as*. In order to argue for my claim I will address two different tasks. Firstly, critics charge van Inwagen's RI logic with being unintelligible (Tuggy 2003, Rea 2005), false (Tuggy 2003) and unhelpful to make the point for the logical possibility of T (Vohánka 2013). I will then shortly defend RI logic. Secondly, I will show that the only way to do justice of the theological constraints listed at the end of the previous section is to deal with them in a RI logical setting.

As to the first task, M.Rea contends that the account of T by van Inwagen's RI logic supplies a solution to LPT just in case it is able to supplement the logical treatment of (a)-(e) with a clear story about how identity can be predicate relative. That is, RI logic gives an intelligible answer to LPT if and only if it can cast light on the way *being the same God as* doesn't dominate *being the same Person as*. Unless such a story is available, RI logic is simply a formal statement of trinitarian claims. Now, van Inwagen doesn't provide the trinitarian theorist with the required supplemental story. Conclusion follows: RI logic is to be dismissed as a solution to LPT. Particularly, in the absence of such a supplemental story, while RI logic succeeds to manage the data of revelation in a way that prevents T from generating formal contradictions, RI logic has a hard price to pay: distinctness claims could turn out to be numerical distinctness claims. If this is the case, RI logic solves LPT by assuming a veiled form of tritheism (which isn't obviously an orthodox way of facing the



trinitarian doctrine).

In my view the issue here is to identify what the data of revelation ask the christian to believe, and what requirements should be met in order to count a logical formulation of trinitarian statements as a solution to LPT. Suppose for a while that RI logic accommodates soundly the data of revelation, and consider what a solution to LPT should be. In a relevant respect, a solution to a problem is a complete explanation of it. As a consequence, strictly speaking, it is evident that RI logic doesn't solve LPT, because it doesn't say how it is possible that the predicate *being the same God as* doesn't dominate the predicate *being the same Person as*. It seems an uncontroversial principle of classical western ontology that different instantiations of the same nature involve numerical distinctness. Common sense shares such belief. And classical theism assumes that God is a Person (Swinburne 2004). Accordingly, *being the same God as* should no doubt dominate *being the same Person as*. But the question is: does all this matter to the evaluation of the RI logic's application to LPT? The answer is plainly negative. Van Inwagen explicitly asserts that what a system of RI logic for trinitarian theorizing should aim at isn't explaining the metaphysical possibility of the existence of one God in three Persons; rather, it should simply look for a sound formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity by which T doesn't generate formal contradictions. Rea grants that van Inwagen's RI logic accomplishes such a task. Therefore, it appears irrelevant whether the formulation is supplemented with a metaphysical explanation concerning predicative dominance. And once the predicative dominance of *being the same God as* over *being the same Person as* is rejected, tritheism is justifiably dismissed.

Evidently, the opponent of RI logic can argue along the following lines. *Right! You give a*

*formally consistent interpretation of T. But even if your proposal works from a logical viewpoint, it is unintelligible. It lacks any experiential grip. It isn't possible, in fact, to understand how relative identity could be true (Tuggy 2003). Therefore, it is nothing more than a refined restatement of trinitarian claims. It is abstruse, redundant, and definitely question begging. All true, I say. But I ask: should the trinitarian theorizing provide solutions to LPT? That is, does engaging consistently with T involve that LPT should be definitely answered?*

An ecumenical commonplace of trinitarian theology is the assumption that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery. Could christian believers fully understand the mystery? Evidently, no. Should they? Again, no. The contemplation of God is the culmination of the christian hope for the afterlife. The Trinity of God won't be a mystery for all those partaking in the joys of heaven. Unfortunately, due to this-worldly condition, no human being in the present state of affairs can attain a complete conceptual enjoyment of the trinitarian nature of God. And no human being ever had: neither the Apostles, the disciples, and the other individuals having had face to face experiences of Jesus. Such evidence notwithstanding, christians are asked to confess their faith in the full divinity, full identity to God and full personal distinctness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a consequence of the fact that the Trinity is a mystery that what trinitarian theorizing can achieve at best is a statement of the doctrine handling consistently the data of revelation. Does such an enterprise suffice in order to assent to the Trinity? Evidently, yes. I assent to Kepler's Laws. I understand what their contents mean, because I'm able to apply them for solving easy exercises contained in my old handbook of physics. Nonetheless, I have no intuition helping me to exactly clarify how it is that Kepler's Laws are true. I can't imagine the actual size of astronomical bodies, the actual distance among them, and, more importantly,

the relationship among them. My imaginative experiences are strongly approximate here, and, supposedly, doesn't provide a well established model for planetary motions. I learned, however, that Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation accounts for the reason why planets move. But I can't really conceptually enjoy what gravitation is. I can see its effects, I can't see gravitation. I can feel its effects (I feel resistance when I climb the stairs), but I can't feel gravitation. Further, I know that it is possible to describe these effects by measuring quantities involved in planetary motions. And I can use these measures for the purpose of calculation. But I can't grasp gravitation itself. Consequently, I can't really conceptually enjoy all that Kepler's Laws actually claim. Does the assent to Kepler's Law parallel the assent to the Trinity? To an important extent, yes. Both Kepler's Laws and the doctrine of the Trinity are (allegedly) consistent settlement of acquired data. Both Kepler's Laws and the doctrine of the Trinity aren't objects of full conceptual intuitions. What's needed in order to assent them then? Minimal rationality, i.e. consistency and accuracy in settling data. Does the RI logic treatment of trinitarian data is consistent (I will address accuracy shortly)? Yes, it is. The opponents grant this too. Conclusions follows: it is not necessary to supplement the RI logic's application to trinitarian theorizing. If RI logic accurately accommodates the data of revelation and captures how traditional trinitarian theorizing addressed and gave formulation to the doctrine to the Trinity, than RI logic is an instrument to reason into the mystery, i.e., to state the doctrine consistently.

Further criticisms come from V.Vohánka. As Rea, he concedes that the expression of the doctrine of the Trinity in RI logic is a consistent one. Differently from Rea and Tuggy, he concedes even more: Van Inwagen's treatment of T doesn't necessary require a supplemental story, because logical possibility doesn't involve strong intelligibility.

However, Vohánka claims, consistent formulation in RI logic doesn't imply that they are logically possible. Impossible propositions as *something is and isn't red* are formally consistent in sentential logic. Nonetheless, they appear logically impossible. Consequently, RI logic should strive for something more than mere formal consistency: it should prove that the doctrine of the Trinity is also logically possible.

Vohánka understands *logically possible* as *not entailing any explicitly self-contradictory proposition*, a proposition being explicitly self-contradictory when it states that something is and isn't so and so, or that something is and isn't such and such, or that something is and isn't in such and such relation, or that something does and doesn't exist. According to this understanding, van Inwagen development of RI logic doesn't provide any reason for the logical possibility of the doctrine of the Trinity, because formal consistency in RI logic or standard logic doesn't imply logical possibility, whereas sharing a form with something logically possible in RI logic doesn't warrant that (at least) some among the semantic interpretations of the form aren't logically self-contradictory. As regards to this, Vohánka observes that a typical case of self-contradictory interpretations of valid forms in RI logic concerns the treatment of the instantiation of specific and generic properties. Evidently, it is logically impossible that some things are of the same species but of different genus. Now, *being the same species as* and *being the same genus as* are two relative identity predicates. As for T, they can be used to handle in a formally consistent way propositions as *x is the same species of y, but is not the same genus of y*. As a consequence, the formal consistency of T doesn't exclude that T is not logically self-contradictory.

Now, Vohánka's counterexample hits the target. In reason of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$ , (a')-(e') can be given a formal translation in such a way that the form involved is shared by both logically

possible and impossible contents. I ask notwithstanding: isn't the doctrine of the Trinity an unique and unparalleled case? Isn't RI logic's application to LPT an use *sui generis*? Van Inwagen states very clearly that he believes RI logic to be useful only inside theology. It doesn't seem compelling then to refute RI logic's application to LPT in reason of the alleged falsity of general RI logic (Tuggy 2003). Even if RI logic were definitely rejected for application to ordinary contents, it could turn out to be the case that its application to the logically consistent formulation of the Trinity works. There's an evident reason for this claim. While the notion of logical possibility in terms of not entailing anything explicitly self-contradictory (probably) matters to all earthly things, it is not sure that transcendent objects (as God is thought to be) necessary fall under the rule of the one or the other among the standard developments of logic. I'm not claiming that dealing with the notion of God supposes the use of some exotic logic opposing the notion of logical possibility assumed by standard logic. Rather, I hold simply that it seems uncontroversial that what pertains to the notion of God could not parallel what pertains to earthly things, pace Leibnizians. Consequently, I'm not sure that the logical possibility of T should be evaluate unintelligible in reason of the logical impossibility of propositions sharing its very same form in RI logic.

After all, Vohánka just proves that a set of propositions, translated consistently in RI logic by the same form used to translate trinitarian claims, is evidently logically impossible. No doubt, it doesn't follow from this that the translation of T is logically impossible too. And the theological and non-theological views driving the semantic interpretation of the relevant form in RI logic suggest that the case of T doesn't actually parallel the case of specific and generic properties.

The RI logic's application to LPT then leads theorists to the starting point of the development of RI logic. Which reasons attest that identity is transcontextual? Which reasons demonstrate that the predicate *being the same God as* dominates the predicate *being the same Person as*? The RI logician will answer: it is sure that no logical reason succeeds in pursuing the task. All considered, this is a matter of fact throughout. There's an important outcome here: RI logic isn't an explanatory program for T. On the contrary, it is a way to engage with T without assuming that T generates formal contradictions. How making (a')-(e') logically possible then depends only on the way the Trinity of God actually is. Conclusion follows: it can be granted that van Inwagen's RI logic doesn't show that T is logically possible. Nonetheless, Vohánka's claim appears irrelevant: sharing the same form in RI logic with logical impossible contents doesn't prove that the translation of T is logically impossible either.

Consequently, the core problem with RI logic's application to LPT should consist simply in evaluating how accurately RI logic accommodates the data of revelation. I will now move to such a topic. Consider the five theological constraints of IDENTICAL INSTANTIATION OF NATURE, SINGULARITY OF DIVINE NATURE, DISTINCTNESS BY GENEALOGICAL RELATIONS, PERSONAL DEPENDENCE, and LITURGICAL BOOSTING OF PERSONAL DISTINCTNESS.

The first and second constraints specify the way *being God* is to be understood. By IDENTICAL INSTANTIATION OF NATURE christians are asked to believe that there's just one actualization of divine properties. Evidently, *being God* means *instantiating divine properties*. Suppose divine properties are being eternal, being necessary, being omnipotent, being omniscient, and the like. Then, christians should hold that there's just one way of enjoying eternity, necessity, omnipotence, omniscience, and the like. By SINGULARITY OF DIVINE

NATURE christians assent to a more peculiar belief. Divine nature is an universal (i.e. a collection of properties) necessary realized by one single being: whoever actualizes divine nature enjoys identically the whole collection of divine properties and nothing more.

Evidently, the conjunction of the first and second constraints implies that God's onefoldness is understood in a maximally robust way. That is, according the data of the revelation, the predicate *being God (being the same God as)* is dominant on the predicate *instantiating divine properties (being the same instantiation of divine properties as)*, because given that  $x$  and  $y$  are God, if  $x$  instantiates one among the divine properties, then  $y$  instantiates it too. Van Inwagen's RI logic expresses such a maximal robust reading of the two constraints by the assumption of  $(\alpha)$ .

The fourth and fifth constraints specify how *being a Person* should be meant to be. By PERSONAL DEPENDENCE christian should believe that Persons are constituted by mutual relationships. This claim is to be read in a very strong sense. Each of us is obviously constituted by our relationship to our relatives, our friends, and all relevant persons we encounter in our life. But no one of us is constituted by relations to others as strongly as divine Persons are, because while we are used to think ourselves to be contingent, divine Persons' existence is evidently necessary. That is, some of the persons I'm acquainted with may have never seen any of my children. Naturally, they know me, i.e., they know a person who does most of what he ordinary does in reason of the fact that he is what he is because he has a family so and so. Nonetheless, in some important respect, they have knowledge of me as ontologically independent on any person I'm actually related to. On the contrary, the divine Persons don't enjoy an analogous ontological independence. Seeing the Father is seeing the Son and the Holy Spirit too. To an important respect, their

relationship forms an indissoluble knot. However, such a knot is a connection among three clearly distinct beings. By LITURGICAL BOOSTING OF PERSONAL DISTINCTNESS christians reveal a very precise awareness of personal distinctness. The agency of the divine Persons show individual actualizations of divine properties. Each of them plays a different role in the history of salvation, does different things, and experiences different states of affairs.

The conjunction of the fourth and fifth constraints makes sense just in terms of a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God. That is, it seems that christians are committed to worship three inter-twinned but numerically distinct divine beings. Consequently, according to the data of revelation, the predicate *being a divine Person (being the same Person as)* dominates the predicate *instantiating personal properties (being the same instantiation of divine properties)* because given that  $x$  and  $y$  are the same divine Person, if  $x$  instantiates one among the personal properties, then  $y$  instantiates it too. Van Inwagen's RI logic assumes such a maximal robust reading of the two constraints by the assumption of ( $\beta$ ).

What is the dominance relation between *being God* and *being a divine Person*? Evidently, the data of revelation ask christians to believe that the former doesn't dominate the latter, however difficult such a task could be. According to the first, second, fourth, and fifth constraints the notion of God entails indeed that both God's onefoldness and threefoldness are to be read in a maximally robust sense. Onefoldness: all which is divine is identical. Threefoldness: all which is personal is distinct. Now, the doctrine of the Trinity is the claim that there are three divine Persons. That is, *all which is personal* means *all which is personally divine*. Consequently, the doctrine of the Trinity consists in the claim that the divine nature is the realm of identity, but, at least for a case, i.e. the personal actualization of the divine



nature, the actualization of identity allows for personal but not divine distinctness. There's no easy escape from the demanding cave of trinitarian theorizing.

Now, the third constraint specifies how *being a Person* relates to *being God*. By DISTINCTNESS BY GENEALOGICAL RELATIONS christians should believe that Persons differ only for the way their possession of the same divine nature relates to others. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit aren't distinct in reason of either their nature or the instantiation of their nature. Rather, they are distinct because of the relationship among them. The Father possesses the divine nature *causa sui*; the Son receives the divine nature from the Father; the Holy Spirit takes the divine nature from the Father (and eventually the Son). Therefore, according to the third constraint, each of them instantiates identically the same single nature (first and second constraints), but having such an instantiation a relationship to others, each of them is distinct and enjoys peculiarly the same stream of divine properties (fourth and fifth constraints). Van Inwagen's RI logic expresses the assumption of the third constraint by ( $\gamma$ ).

The source of the conflict among trinitarian claims stands here. DISTINCTNESS BY GENEALOGICAL RELATIONS assumes that a maximally robust reading of the uniqueness of both the divine nature and its instantiations can't be formally consistent with a maximally robust reading of the threefold personality of God unless christians are able to disentangle the way the divine nature is realized (*being God*) from the way the realizations of the divine nature relates among them (*being a Person*). Any other compatibilist reading of God's onefoldness and threefoldness clashes among different pieces of evidence.

Suppose personal distinctness relies on the different forms of agency the divine Persons are told to exercise by the credal statements. Then the notion of onefoldness couldn't be

read robustly, since (at least) the IDENTICAL INSTANTIATION OF NATURE is rejected. That is, x and y are two divine Persons. Accordingly, they instantiate identically the same single nature. Among the divine properties there's omnipotence. In reason of the dominance of *being God* over *instantiating divine properties*, whenever x and y exercise an agency, x and y should exercise the same agency. Nonetheless, the starting supposition assumes that personal distinctness relies on the evidence of distinct qua individually different agencies by the divine Persons. Therefore, distinct agencies shouldn't be dismissed. Conclusion follows: the divine Persons doesn't instantiate identically omnipotence. On the contrary, suppose the uniqueness of both the divine nature and its instantiation is seriously taken. Consider x and y being two divine Persons. Since *being a person* dominates *instantiating personal properties*, both of them instantiate a peculiar personal properties. Evidently, personal properties are divine personal properties for God. Consequently, because of the domination of *being God* over *instantiating divine properties*, if x and y are God, x and y instantiate identically divine properties. Personal properties should then be identically instantiated too. The conclusion is that personal distinctness vanishes. What attains to a Persons attains identically to all, and there's just a single Person here: God.

In light of these considerations the third constraint results to be the decisive reason in support of the RI logic's approach to LPT. The identity in the instantiation of a single nature definitely conflicts with strong personal distinctness because if divine Persons are to be distinguished in terms of their relationships, and such relations are asymmetric relations, then the divine Persons can't instantiate the same nature. Consider the begetting relation subsisting between the Father and the Son. Begetting is asymmetrical. If someone begets some other, than the other is not begetting, but begotten. According to the fourth

constraint the Father's begetting the Son is a necessary relation. According to the first constraint any divine being instantiates identically the same properties. Now, according to the second and third constraints *being the Father* means *instantiating the divine properties plus begetting the Son*; *being the Son* means *instantiating the divine properties plus being begotten by the Father*. Consequently, in reason of the necessary possession of contrary properties by the divine Persons, christians should be able to say at a time that *being the Father* is definitely different from *being the Son*, that *the Father is God* and *the Son is God*, and that there is only one God. The third constraint suggests a way to perform the task, i.e., resisting the temptation of considering the divine Persons like mere tokens of the type *divine beings*. Indeed, there's just one divine being, that is God. God instantiates the whole set of divine properties, and has a threefold relation to such an instantiation (begetting, being begotten, proceeding). This threefold instantiation is necessary. More interestingly, having a threefold relation to the instantiation of the divine nature it allows God somehow to exist as three divine Persons. How it is possible no one knows. What exactly means, no one knows. It's a mystery - christian theologians advocate. Anyway, He is each divine Persons. That is, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Consequently, whoever instantiates the unique divine nature, instantiates it identically. Nonetheless, God's threefold relation to His nature ontologically constitute Him as a Trinity of divine Persons. Since each of them is strongly distinct from the others, each of them actually exercises a different agency in the history of salvation, experiences a peculiar stream of awareness, and has individual features.

The key move here is to hold that the intension of the predicate *being God* doesn't overlap completely with the intension of the predicate *being a Person*. That is, such predicates point

at partially different things. The third constraint asserts exactly that if a Person is said to be God, what the proposition expresses is that there is an instantiation of divine properties; differently, if a divine Person is said to be a Person, what the proposition expresses is that there is a peculiar relation among the instantiations of the divine properties.

Now, there's an evident way to embody the deep core of these considerations into a formally consistent statement of the Trinity, i.e., assuming that *being God* doesn't dominate *being a divine Persons*. No intuition helps here. Common sense raises doubt indeed. Trinitarianism asks christians to understand *being God* and *being a Person* as intensionally differing and (at least in part) extensionally overlapping. But such a reading is a very unnatural one. Maximally robust understandings of God's threefoldness evidently suppose to read *prima facie* the predicates in terms of intensional overlapping and extensional difference.

Is this enough to reject the Trinity? I'm not sure: human logical skills appear to be suitable to this-worldly affairs. What is certain is that christians should confess the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine requires to understand God's onefoldness and threefoldness in a maximally robust way. Although RI logic can't provide clear intuitions accounting how it is possible that *being God* doesn't dominate *being a Person*, it complies with such a requirement comfortably, i.e. in a formally consistent way. Therefore, it can be the case that no christian results able to make intuitively compatible her understanding of the onefoldness of God with His threefoldness. But it seems the only right way to travel, any other trinitarian analogy being threatened by unsound reading of the notion of God's onefoldness and threefoldness.

3.

General arguments against LT, ST and CV follow from the assumption of the treatment of LPT by RI logic. I will now briefly state what the lines of argumentation are. LT is an explanatory project for the notion of the Trinity. Its starting point is the uniqueness of the divine nature. The proposal consists in accounting for the threefoldness of God in reason of the uniqueness of His nature. On the contrary, ST moves from the threefold personality of God to the uniqueness of His nature (Tuggy 2003; Moreland & Craig 2009; Leftow 2010; Bohn 2011). CT is the view that three distinct divine Persons share the same substratum by accidental sameness. Shortly, each Person is a unity of matter and form. Divine properties constitute matter. Form is the principle of personal individuation. The three divine Persons identically actualize the same nature by personally informing the onefold divinity (Rea 2009; Tuggy 2013). Finally, E.D.Bohn proposes a solution to LPT which doesn't fit into any of the preceding categories. He claims that identity is a one-many/many-one relation. Consequently, God's uniqueness and tripersonality are to be accounted for by the way the same substance is regarded. That is, God's reality can be conceptually divided into two different ways: considered as a whole it's simply God; considered as a multiplicity of Persons it's a Trinity (Bohn 2011).

My general claim is that neither of these solutions to LPT works because of the impossibility to give a maximally robust reading of the onefoldness and threefoldness of God outside the speculative province of RI logic.

Tuggy distinguishes two versions of LT, the popular and the refined (Tuggy 2003). The former is committed to the assumption of (T<sub>1</sub>), i.e., personal distinctness is modal distinctness. The latter (among which Tuggy unsoundly positions RI logic too) is refuted in

reason of *ad hoc* considerations. B.Leftow is the proponent of the most notable refined version of LT (Leftow 2009). My claim is that Leftow's refined LT collapses into popular LT because Leftow's main assumption is that God is one Person acting concurrently three different roles in the history of salvation. True: Leftow's approach allows attributing to the divine Persons three different streams of consciousness as personal distinctness entails. But such three different streams of consciousness are distinct just from the viewpoint of human beings. In God they are three simultaneous flows of actions produced by one single personal agency. Consequently, each of the divine Persons is a different mode of consciousness of the same divine Person, i.e. the only God. Conclusion follows: Leftow's LT assumes (T<sub>1</sub>).

Now, the general argument against LT runs as follows:

- 1) In order to be evaluated a sound theory, any theory handling T should meet the conjunction of the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from hypothesis);
- 2) The fourth and fifth theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing entails a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (from hypothesis);
- 3) Each version of LT assumes (T<sub>1</sub>);
- 4) (T<sub>1</sub>) isn't a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God;
- 5) LT doesn't assume a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (for (3) and (4));
- 6) LT doesn't meet at least one requirement by the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from (2) and (5));

7) LT isn't a sound theory handling T (from (1) and (6)).

Surprisingly enough, ST turns out to be unsound for the very same reason than LT. Since ST's starting point is the threefold distinctness of the divine Persons, it would be reasonable to expect that ST fails to meet the first and second theological constraints. Nonetheless, as Tuggy proves, it is an immediate consequence of ST's approach to LPT that only the Trinity is properly God, God being actually the community of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Consequently, if the Trinity alone is God, personal distinctness doesn't permit to state that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are God. It is then evident that (T<sub>2</sub>) can't do justice to a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God. It results that:

- 1) In order to be evaluated a sound theory, any theory handling T should meet the conjunction of the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from hypothesis);
- 2) The fourth and fifth theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing entails a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (from hypothesis);
- 3) Each version of ST assumes (T<sub>2</sub>);
- 4) (T<sub>2</sub>) isn't a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God;
- 5) ST doesn't assume a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (for (3) and (4));
- 6) ST doesn't meet at least one requirement by the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from (2) and (5));

7) ST isn't a sound theory handling T (from (1) and (6)).

As for LT and ST, also CT can give a consistent solution to LPT just setting aside maximally robust reading of God's threefoldness. Indeed, (T<sub>3</sub>) infringes directly upon the fourth constraint (CT assumes that the divine Persons aren't strongly dependent on each others) and the fifth constraint (CT assumes that the divine Persons are exactly identical inasmuch as they stand in a relation of accidental sameness without identity). Particularly, accidental sameness involves complete overlapping. Distinctness appears only if one of the materially composed beings sharing the same substratum ceases to impose its form on matter. That is, distinct beings enjoying accidental sameness are commonly discernible in terms of their different conditions of permanence. Conclusion follows: as long as the divine Persons share the same substratum, i.e., they are one God, they aren't actually distinct. On the contrary, suppose they are strongly discernible (as the fifth constraint requires). Then, they are no more in the relationship of accidental sameness.

Therefore:

- 1) In order to be evaluated a sound theory, any theory handling T should meet the conjunction of the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from hypothesis);
- 2) The fourth and fifth theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing entails a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (from hypothesis);
- 3) Each version of CT assumes (T<sub>3</sub>);
- 4) (T<sub>3</sub>) isn't a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God;



- 5) CT doesn't assume a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (for (3) and (4));
- 6) CT doesn't meet at least one requirement by the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from (2) and (5));
- 7) CT isn't a sound theory handling T (from (1) and (6)).

I now come to the last option for trinitarian theorizing (Bohn 2011). Bohn's proposal depends on the claim that identity is a one-many/many-one relation. Naturally such a claim is strongly controversial, but I don't intend to move criticism to the metaphysical point here; because, even if identity were as Bohn assumes it be, the application of the one-many/many-one notion of identity to LPT would remain unpalatable.

What's wrong is again the impossibility to accommodate the requirements by the fifth constraint. Evidently, concepts cut reality. As a consequence, the use of concepts renders reality according to different conceptual views. Bohn states with a dose of common sense that it is a matter of fact how much adequately concepts cut reality. While diverging concepts could apply to the same reality, just appropriate concepts express soundly the state of affairs they extend on. The divine reality is differently cut by the notions of onefoldness and threefoldness. But, since the data of revelation attest us that they are adequate to God's reality, then it is to be assumed that God is a Trinity of Persons. Bohn claims: suppose to regard God's reality in terms of onefoldness. God will appear as one being. On the contrary, suppose to regard God's reality in terms of threefoldness. God will now appear as three Persons.

The basic point in Bohn's solution is that *the identity with God of the Father, the Son, and the*

*Holy Spirit is to be understood collectively and not distributively* (B). Such a claim prevents from attributing distinct divinity to each of the Persons. That is, according to Bohn's solution each of the Persons isn't really God if regarded distinctly from the other. There's just a way then to make (B) theologically acceptable: to assume that the Persons are discernible, but actually not distinct. Consequently, (B) implies that the fifth constraint is to be dismissed.

The general argument against Bohn's view (BT) is then the following:

- 1) In order to be evaluated a sound theory, any theory handling T should meet the conjunction of the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from hypothesis);
- 2) The fourth and fifth theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing entails a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (from hypothesis);
- 3) Each version of BT assumes (B);
- 4) (B) isn't a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God;
- 5) BT doesn't assume a maximally robust reading of the threefoldness of God (for (3) and (4));
- 6) BT doesn't meet at least one requirement by the five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing (from (2) and (5));
- 7) BT isn't a sound theory handling T (from (1) and (6)).

4.

Trinitarian skepticism is the claim that, while the notion of the Trinity can be expressed in

a formally consistent way, human understanding is unable to grasp completely what the Trinity actually is. There are two possibilities of construing trinitarian skepticism. Weak trinitarian skepticism is the claim that human understanding is unable to grasp completely what the Trinity actually is *because of God's transcendence*. That is, the fact that human beings haven't the capability to fully understand God in this-worldly condition is due to a lack of cognitive, sensorial, and experiential skills suitable to enjoy Him. Consequently, from the assumption of weak trinitarian skepticism it follows that God can be a Trinity, and that human beings are perfectly entitled to worship the Trinity of God. The alternative construal of trinitarian skepticism, the strong one, infers metaphysical facts from epistemological evidence. It is the claim that, since human understanding is unable to grasp completely what the Trinity actually, God can't be a Trinity.

In my view, strong trinitarian skepticism is definitely irrational and I'm not willing to subscribe it (although in the past I felt sympathetic to such a position). On the contrary, what RI logic's application to LPT inclines to it is the assumption of weak trinitarian skepticism (I believe van Inwagen won't be at ease with the claim that his development of RI logic constitutes evidence in support of a form of moderate skepticism).

Indeed, ATS is to be spelled out as follows:

- 1) According to maximally robust reading of the notion of onefoldness and threefoldness, either a thing is onefold or threefold (from hypothesis);
- 2) The five theological constraints over trinitarian theorizing entails a maximally robust reading of both the onefoldness and threefoldness of God (from hypothesis);
- 3) Maximally robust onefoldness and maximally robust threefoldness aren't compatible in

the claim that God is one being in three Persons (from (1) and (2));

4) Human understanding is unable to grasp completely what the Trinity actually is (from (3)).

Now:

1) A theory soundly handling T expresses (a)-(e) accordingly to a maximally robust reading of both the onefoldness and threefoldness of God (from the five theological constraints);

2) RI logic soundly handles T (from hypothesis);

3) RI logic expresses (a)-(e) accordingly to a maximally robust reading of both the onefoldness and threefoldness of God (from (1) and (2));

4) RI logic expresses (a)-(e) by disentangling maximally robust God's onefoldness from maximally robust God's threefoldness (from hypothesis);

5) According to RI logic's application to LPT, maximally robust onefoldness and maximally robust threefoldness aren't compatible in the claim that God is one being in three Persons (from (3) and (4)).

There's an uncontroversial moral in all this story. RI logic provides a formally consistent account for the notion of the Trinity. Such account suffices for worshipping one single God and three divine Persons to the higher justifiable degree at disposal to human understanding. What lacks here to achieve better results is not cognitive in nature. It is experiential. The problem isn't indeed handling consistently T. Rather, it is grasping how it

is possible to be the case that a state of affairs reveals the compatibility of maximally robust onefoldness with maximally robust threefoldness.

Maybe, the apostle Paul pointed at such a problem when he claimed that human beings are in need of a spiritual nature in order to be commensurate with God: "So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body" (*1 Cor 15.42-15.44*).

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