

Some Trinitarian Formulas in St. Thomas

(This handout is to be destroyed after use. :-) And, remember, the Trinity is a mystery.)

First of all, note who the main interlocuters are: Augustine, Boethius, and Hilary, with the great Athanasius always lurking in the background.

A. *The Two Processions, each with an active and passive aspect (27):*

Procession #1 = Generation

Active: The divine essence (or nature) as expressing what it understands (or, the divine essence as speaking or generating) = the **Father**

Passive: The divine essence (or nature) as the expressed conception or Word (or, the divine essence as what is spoken or generated) = the **Son (the Word)**

Procession #2 = Spiration

Active: The divine essence (or nature) as expressing love for what it understands (**Father + Son**)

Passive: The divine essence (or nature) as the expressed Love or (as I like to say) what is sighed = the **Holy Spirit (the Love)** (or the **Sigh**)

B. *The Four Real Relations of Origin that are founded on the Processions (28):*

The divine essence as expressing what it understands = the **Paternity**

The divine essence as the expressed conception or Word = the **Filiation**

The divine essence as expressing its love for what it understands = the **Common (Active) Spiration**

The divine essence (or nature) as the expressed Love = the **Procession (Passive Spiration)**

C. *The Five Notions (according to (a) who you are from and (b) who's from you) (32):*

Innascibility -- belongs to the Father, who is from no one.

Paternity -- belongs to the Father, whom the Son is from.

Filiation -- belongs to the Son, who is from the Father.

Common Spiration -- belongs to the Father and the Son, whom the Holy Spirit is from.

Procession (Passive Spiration) -- belongs to the Holy Spirit, who is from the Father and the Son.

D. Four Properties (each peculiar to just one of the persons):

Innascibility -- not being from anyone; belongs to the Father.

Paternity -- speaking or generating; belongs to the Father

Filiation -- being spoken or generated; belongs to the Son

Procession (Passive Spiration) -- being sighed; belongs to the Holy Spirit

E. The nature, the relations, and the persons (28):

The relations are distinct as relations from one another; they are real relations.

But since there are no accidents in God, each of the relations is the same *esse* as the divine essence. See 28, 2.

F. The term ‘Person’ (29):

Boethius: “An individual substance with a rational nature”

Because the Latin term *substantia* can signify either (a) the essence (L. *essentia*, G. *οὐσία*) or (b) that which has (or underlies an essence), we in the West do not say that there are three ‘substances’ in God, since this might be thought to imply that there are three essences in God. It is only sense (b) that is (or should be) meant by Boethius’s definition. So instead we use the following terms as equivalent to ‘person’ in speaking of the Trinity.

ὑπόστασις (*hypostasis*) — general meaning: that which underlies accidents; in ‘divine hypostasis’ it means an individual “having” the divine essence.

subsistentia (*subsistent*) — general meaning: that which exists in itself and not (like an accident or a material substantial form) in another; in ‘divine subsistent’ it means that which exists in itself and not (like the essence) as shareable.

res naturae — general meaning: that which has a nature; in ‘divine thing with a nature’ it means that ‘in’ which the nature resides.

G. Main Heresies:

Tritheism (somewhat common today in so-called Social Trinitarianism)

Modalism (Sabellianism) (very common today, as when someone always substitutes “Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier” for “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”)

Arianism (very common today in non-Christian understandings of Jesus, and some Christian understandings).