McCabe on Aquinas on The Trinity

William Charlton

Much gratitude is due to Fr Herbert McCabe for his paper 'Aquinas on the Trinity' (*New Blackfriars* June 1999 pp. 268-83). Aquinas' teaching on this central mystery in *Summa Contra Gentiles* 4 (CG 4) and *Summa Theologiae, Prima Pars* (ST 1) combines philosophical ingenuity with fidelity to the words of Scripture in a way that is perennially inspiring. But theologians can continue drawing upon it only insofar as it does not depend on philosophical doctrines unacceptable to modern philosophers. To judge if there is such dependence we need to have it expounded in the language of modern philosophy. This task McCabe accomplishes admirably.

I think McCabe has stated the crucial part of Aquinas' argument correctly, but to preclude misunderstanding I shall start by restating it briefly in my own words. I hope he would agree that there is no substantial difference between my exposition and his. I shall then look at some of the philosophical presuppositions of the argument which might seem suspect today, and suggest that the most worrying lie not, as might at first be thought, in the philosophy of language or ontology, but in the philosophy of mind.

1

God, as a non-material, intellectual substance, has knowledge of himself; he knows that he exists and understands his own nature and his activities. This understanding of himself is a kind of action. It is not, like pushing, pulling or heating, a mode of causal action on something else. It 'remains', so to speak, 'within him'. But it involves one thing's arising out of or proceeding from another, what Aquinas calls a *processio*. There arises in God a concept of what he knows. Aquinas calls it (CG 4.11) an *intentio intellecta*. God stands to this *intentio intellecta* in a real relationship comparable to that of a father, and the *intentio* stands to him in a real relationship comparable to that of a son.

Besides the activity of self-knowing there is in God another sort of action which remains in the agent, an action of will (*actio voluntatis*, ST 1.27.3). 'Will' here means an inclination, *inclinatio*, in an intelligent being towards its proper operations and end (CG 4.19). Just as the activity of knowing and understanding involves a *processio*, so does that of the will.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

In the latter case, what arises or 'proceeds' is love (*amor*) of the object of rational desire. God is inclined, we may suppose, to the operation of self-knowledge, and has this as his proper end. So the action of his will involves the arising, the *processio*, of love for this operation and end. As he and his intentio stand to each other in real relationships, so do he and his *amor*. For the relationships stood in by God and his *intentio* we have the words 'fatherhood' and 'sonhood', *paternitas*, *filiatio*. We have no comparable words for the relationship of lover to love and love to lover. But since love moves the lover towards the beloved from inside, and what, in Aristotle's physiology, moves a limb from within the organism is 'connate spirit', *sumphuton pneuma*, the love that arises in God is called 'spirit', *pneuma*, *spiritus* (CG 4.19). Accordingly Aquinas feels able to call God's relationship to his love *spiratio*, 'breathing', and his love's relationship to him *processio*, 'coming out'.

Having argued that God has these two activities and that they involve the arisings of this *intentio* and this love, Aquinas proceeds to identify God as the origin of the *intentio* with God the Father, and the *intentio* with God the Son. Since the love arises in God *through* his understanding of himself and his intellectual activity, it proceeds, Aquinas thinks, from the Father and the Son together. He identifies the love with God the Holy Ghost, the Spirit, as we now call this Person, but does not identify any one person, either the Father or the Son, still less a third person distinct from both, as that in God that stands to this love in the relation of Breather or Spirator.

2

Some people today may feel antipathy to this account because it seems to make God Narcissistic. The idea of something eternally contemplating itself and taking delight in its own nature and self-knowledge fails to turn them on, and they may protest that it is completely irrelevant to everything religion is about. I am not here concerned with this kind of criticism. My question is whether Aquinas' strategy, such as it is, relies essentially on any philosophical doctrines a modern philosopher cannot accept.

McCabe gives space to his insistence that God's psychological attributes are not accidental to him but essential, and on his saying (ST 1.13.7) that God's relationship to creatures is not something real in God, though their relation to him is real in them. These points are connected with theses in the philosophy of language that were taken for granted in the thirteenth century but are now suspect. Aquinas thinks that in a sentence like 'Socrates is wise' or 'Mars is spherical' the predicate-expression ('wise', 'spherical', rather than 'is wise', 'is spherical')

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

signifies something the speaker asserts to be present in the object referred to by the grammatical subject-expression. He does not employ the notion of a polyadic predicate. A modern philosopher might take 'the son of' in 'Socrates is the son of Sophroniscus' to signify a relation that the speaker declares to be stood in by the ordered pair of objects signified by the two proper names 'Socrates' and 'Sophroniscus'. Aquinas takes it to signify a 'regard' (*respectus*, ST 1.28.1) to something else which the speaker declares to be had by the single object signified by the grammatical subject, 'Socrates'; though he is aware that if Socrates has this regard to Sophroniscus, Sophroniscus has a different regard, signified by 'the father of', to Socrates. This view of relational expressions shapes the way in which Aquinas distinguishes relations that are real from those that are purely nominal or notional. A relation or *respectus*, no less than an essential nature or non-essential characteristic, exists in a subject (ST1.28.2), but it may either be something real in a subject, or something merely attributed to a subject by a thinker comparing that subject to something. 'Same' signifies simply an order the mind finds a thing has to itself when it is thought of twice (ST 1.28 1 ad 2), and 'to the right of' something a perceiver attributes to a thing when looking at it from a certain standpoint (CG 4.14 7b), but 'heavy' signifies a tendency towards the Centre which is a real *inclinatio* in bodies that arise out of earth (ST 1.28 1). Aquinas holds that 'sees' in 'Socrates sees Theaetetus' signifies something real in Socrates, because it follows upon, *consequitur* (CG 4.14.7b), or is founded upon, *fundatur* (CG 4.24), an action in Socrates, seeing. On the other hand 'seen by' in 'Theaetetus is seen by Socrates' signifies nothing real in Theaetetus because Theaetetus is just the same when seen and when not seen.

Although modern philosophers do not deal either with one-place or with two-place predicate-expressions in this way I do not think that anything in Aquinas' teaching about the Trinity depends on anything indefensible in his teaching about relations. It is a little surprising to find that 'created' in 'God created light' signifies nothing real in God, because God is the same whether he creates light or not, whereas 'created by' in 'Light was created by God' signifies something real in light; but this has to do with Aquinas' theology of creation, not of the Trinity.

Aquinas says that the relations between Father, Son and Spirit are subsistent, *subsistens*, and that the fatherhood in God *is* God the Father (ST 1.29.4). McCabe evidently fears that a modern reader will strain at this, and it certainly sounds nonsensical to say that anything *is* a property it *has* ('God is his wisdom') or *is* a relationship in which it *stands* ('The Father *is* his paternity'). I agree with McCabe, however, that the point of these utterances is to deny that what is signified by 'wise' or 'father' when

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

applied to God is something distinct from God and 'inhering' *inhaerens* (ST 1.28 1 and 1.ad 1) in him or attached from outside (*extrinsecus affixae*, ST 1.28.2), and it is less necessary to insist on this denial if one does have the philosophy of language I attributed just now to Aquinas and his contemporaries.

3

What is crucial to Aquinas' teaching about the Trinity is not his philosophy of language or his theory of relations, but his philosophy of mind. His teaching about the Son depends on the theory that all intellectual thought (*intelligere, noein,*) involves the production of a kind of likeness of the thing thought of, distinct both from it and from the thinker. His teaching about the Spirit depends on the theory that wanting or appetition (*orexis, boulesis,*) involves arising of some kind of love distinct both from the wanter and from the object of appetition. McCabe says that 'difficulties begin' with the second point (p. 280). In fact they begin with the first.

Everyone recognises that there is intellectual thought, and has heard of things like horses and water. Only philosophers have heard of these likenesses Aquinas calls *intentiones intellectae*. And philosophers today are mistrustful of reasoning that starts from uncontroversial statements about familiar things and ends with amazing statements about things known only to philosophers. It is true that this mistrust is not shared by all philosophers today, and that some adhere to the belief (which goes back beyond Aquinas to the Greeks) that thought involves mental representations. But, and this is a further difficulty *ad hominem* to Aquinas, modern philosophers who believe this either explicitly offer a physicalist account of thought or are unconsciously committed to one. In this section I shall develop these difficulties.

First, what sort of reasoning have some of us learnt to mistrust? Consider the following:

1 A round saucer seen from the side appears elliptical.
2 So it presents an elliptical appearance.
3 So there is something which is an appearance, and elliptical, and presented by the saucer.
4 The saucer itself is not elliptical.
5 So the appearance is something different from the saucer.
6 And we don't really see the saucer, but only the appearance.

This argument is, of course, remote from anything in Aquinas. I give it only as an illustration. It shows how a startling philosophical paradox can be derived from a harmless remark one might make to someone trying to draw crockery, and how a spectacular new class of entities,

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

'appearances' or 'sense data', can be conjured out of an unobtrusive verb, 'to appear'. Now let us look at Aquinas' fullest, if not his latest, exposition of his theory about the Son, CG 4.11

'I call *intentio intellecta*,' he says, 'that which intellect conceives in itself of the thing understood, the *res intellecta*. In us this is neither the thing itself which is understood nor the substance itself of the intellect but a kind of likeness, *similitudo*, of the thing understood, conceived in the intellect, which the spoken words signify. Hence the *intentio* is called an "interior word" [In ST 1.27.1 he says 'which conception the word signifies']. . . . When a man understands himself, the interior word conceived is not the true man, having the natural way of being, the *esse naturale*, of a man, but just an understood man, *homo intellectus tantum*, as it were a kind of likeness of the true man.' He then reasons that if God has knowledge of himself there must be an *intentio intellecta* of himself in him, but this will not be distinct from the true thing. 'In God that which understands, the activity of understanding and the *intentio intellecta* are one and the same, *idem intelligens et intelligere et intentio intellecta*.' This *intentio* in God, however, though identical with the thing understood, is still a kind of likeness, an image (*imago*), of it.

The earlier part of this reasoning looks very like the following:

1 I know what a horse is.
2 So I have a concept of a horse.
3 So there is something which is a concept, and of a horse, and had by me.
4 My concept of a horse is not the same either as a true horse or as me.
5 So there is something which is different both from me and from a horse which is a kind of likeness of a horse.
6 And this likeness is what the word 'horse' signifies.

The final statement is obviously false. The word 'horse' signifies a horse, not a concept of a horse. If anything signifies the concept of a horse it is the phrase 'the concept of a horse'. If 'horse' cannot mean a horse except through signifying a kind of representation of a horse, how can it signify a representation of a horse except through signifying a representation of that representation? Perhaps it will be said that 'What is the meaning of "horse"?' is ambiguous. It could be asking 'What does this English word mean?' To that, the answer is 'A horse'. Or it could be asking 'What sort of entity stands to it in the relationship signified by the verb "mean"?', and then the answer is: 'A likeness of a horse.' But most philosophers today would think the second question misconceived. The meaning of a word, they would say, is not an entity standing to it in the fancy relation *being signified by*. That becomes clear when we recognise

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

that to ask what a word means, is to ask what difference it makes to what we say when we use it in constructing a sentence. In the slogan of the 1950s, 'Don't ask for the meaning; ask for the use.'

The statement 'My concept of a horse is distinct both from a horse and from me' is not false. But neither does it entitle us to analyse the statement 'I have a concept of a horse' as asserting that a relationship holds between me, a concept, and a universal nature, in the way in which we can analyse 'Socrates is between Simmias and Phaedo' as asserting that a relationship holds between three men. It is a statement comparable with 'A cat is distinct from a colour', which is true, but still does not license us to analyse 'My cat is black' as asserting that a relationship holds between an animal and a universal. Aquinas wants an *intentio intellecta* to be a real thing distinct from the intellect and produced by it. He can say that, if a concept is a kind of likeness. A picture is indeed a real thing distinct from the painter who produces it. But it is extremely hard to see why, when I think of a horse or know what a horse is, there has to be any kind of likeness in me at all.

A mental picture must be conceived as something like a naturalistic painting except that it is non-physical. A painting of a horse is a coloured expanse of some material like canvas or plaster, which affects the eyes of a beholder much as a real horse would. What part could anything like this play in thinking, except the part of thing thought about? Perhaps it will be suggested that a likeness of a horse in the mind *just is* a thought of a horse, or that forming such a likeness *is* thinking about horses. These suggestions are wild. A painted canvas is not aware of what is represented on it. When a tree is photographed it produces a kind of likeness of itself on the film, but it does not think of itself. No doubt when an artist paints a tree he is thinking; but we say he is thinking, not because he produces a likeness, but because he does so *on purpose, because* it is a likeness.

These considerations do not weigh heavily with modern philosophers who explain thought as a kind of representing. But they mostly want to give a physicalist account of thought. They identify it with physical processes in the nervous system which can be described for one reason or another as representations; perhaps because they are produced by a naturally selected mechanism, and help the organism to survive. Since the Christian God is non-material, and Aquinas, as McCabe observes, connects all thought with immateriality, Aquinas does not want likenesses like these. His *intentiones* must be purely mental likenesses. But pictures and statues are likenesses by virtue of having some of the physical properties of the things they represent. The notion of a purely mental representation is only doubtfully coherent. And even if it is defensible, part of the *ad hominem* objection remains.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

McCabe overlooks this danger. He says there are philosophers who 'think it a mistake to talk of understanding as an act, but we cannot pause here to argue with them' (p. 276). But he cannot afford to be so dismissive. For one objection to speaking of intellectual thought as a kind of action is precisely that it leads to physicalism. If we speak of it like this, we are modelling it on physical processes like burning or sprouting or flying. Certainly if we say that it is a kind of mental *representing*, we must model it on the physical processes of painting and sculpting. And why does that lead to physicalism? Because if we conceive thought on the model of physical processes, we shall find ourselves asking the same sort of questions about it as we ask about physical processes, and expecting similar sorts of answer. We shall ask *'How* do we think? *How* do people get to be conscious and understand things?' as we ask 'How does coal turn to flames? How do plants produce leaves? How do birds fly?' When we ask how a physical process occurs we are looking for an explanation in causal terms. We want to know *by what action of what upon what* the phenomenon we are explaining is produced. Birds fly by pressing on the air with their wings. Raindrops produce bands of colour by splitting light into different wave lengths. But any explanation of this form is physical. So if we seek such explanations for mental processes we shall never be satisfied till we have obtained a physicalist account. Wittgenstein puts it clearly:

> How does the philosophical problem about mental processes and about behaviourism arise? The first step is one that altogether escapes notice. We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided. Sometime perhaps we shall know more about them - we think. But that is just what commits us to a particular way of looking at the matter. For we have a definite concept of what it means to learn to know a process better. (The decisive movement in the conjuring trick has been made, and it was the very one we thought quite innocent.) (*Philosophical Investigations* 1.308)

4

Whether Aquinas falls into this trap as soon as he calls *intelligere* an *actio* might be debated; but when he moves from cognitive thinking to appetition his reliance on a physical model is explicit.

> 'Will stands in intellectual things as natural inclination in natural things, which is called "natural appetition". Natural inclination arises from this, that a natural thing has an affinity and agreement by virtue of its form, which we said [earlier in the chapter] was the principle of inclination, with that to which it is moved, as what is heavy has with the lower place [i.e. the Centre of the universe]. So from this also arises all inclination of

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

> will, that through intelligible form something is apprehended as agreeable or attaching (*conveniens vel adficiens*). But to be attached to anything is to love it. Therefore every inclination of will, as also of sensible appetite, has its origin from love. It is because we love something that we feel the lack of it if it is absent, rejoice when it is present, are sad when we are kept from it, hate and are angry with what keeps us from it. Thus what is loved is not only in the intellect of the lover, but in the will; but in different ways in each. It is in the intellect by virtue of the likeness of its form. But it is in the will as the end of a motion is in the proportionate motive principle through the proportionality and agreement it has to it. Just as in fire, because of its lightness, the upper place [the Periphery of the universe] is present by virtue of the proportionality and agreement it has to that place. (CG 4.19)

What Aquinas reckons a natural inclination in natural things, we should count as a fundamental physical force like gravity or electromagnetism. Aquinas recognises two such inclinations, the inclination of 'heavy' things, bodies that arise out of earth, to the Centre, and the inclination of 'light' things, that is, fire, to the Periphery. These correspond to our forces of attraction and repulsion. Aquinas thinks they will serve as a model for appetition because he ascribes them to the *forms* of earth and fire. Somewhat as we say that a bullet which hits a soldier had that soldier's name on it, he thinks that if fire tends to move towards the Periphery, not the Centre, fire must have in it something correlated with the Periphery, not the Centre, and this internal source of its movement is its form.

The idea that the basic materials of the world, earth, fire, air and water, have forms, and move without being acted upon because of these forms, goes back to early commentators on Aristotle; there is a lucid exposition of it in Alexander's *De Anima*, see especially 5.4-15. But I have argued on various occasions that it is not in Aristotle. For Aristotle, form is a source of change in what has it only insofar as the change is *for the sake* of some end, that is, teleologically explainable. A plant's growth is due to its form (according to Aristotle) insofar as it grows because growth is beneficial for it. The form of an animal is its soul, and an animal's movements are due to its soul insofar as they are purposive, insofar they take place in order that the animal may obtain some benefit or avoid some harm. But Aristotle does not think the movements of fire and earth can be explained in this way. To suppose they can is to suppose them alive (*Physics* 8 255a5-10), and hylozoism is dismissed as 'one of the more irrational', *paralogoteron* (*De Anima 1* 411a15), of philosophical positions. Earth and fire are cast by him for roles in a radically different kind of explanation. He holds that objects composed of

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

earth move towards the Centre independently of being acted upon by anything else, and objects containing fire move towards the Periphery independently of being acted upon by anything else. Earth and fire are sources of these natural movements not because of their forms, if basic materials have forms, but precisely *as the material* of the things moved. Aristotle would say 'The vase fell because it was composed of earth, not fire' (or 'The vase became hard in the oven because it was a vase of clay, not wax'). These explanations explain in a different way from 'Plants develop roots because they need them for obtaining nourishment' or 'Men build houses to obtain shelter'. An explanation in terms of matter explains a process not as the pursuit of some benefit to things of a certain form, but as inevitable for anything with such material constituents. It is what we should call 'causal'; and causal and teleological explanations are explanations in different senses of the word 'explanation'. (That is true, at least, for Aristotle, since he does not try to reduce teleological explanations to causal in the way some later philosophers do; for him the notion of *being for the sake of something* is primitive.)

If we take an Aristotelian view of phenomena like gravitational attraction and electromagnetic repulsion, they will clearly not do as models for 'will', purposive action or desire for what seems best. If God is non-material, there can be no 'inclination' in him analogous to the tendency of flames to rise or the tendency of stones to fall. Aquinas is not the only philosopher who has wanted a notion of inclination that will cover both purpose and the fundamental physical forces: see Spinoza, *Ethics* 2.13 and following lemmas, and Ryle's remarks about 'pioneers of psychological theory' in *Dilemmas*.[1]. It seems to me, however, that such a notion must be irredeemably incoherent. If we want to explain human behaviour and physical phenomena in the same way we must be either vitalists or physicalists.

This is not, however, the only difficulty in Aquinas' teaching on the Spirit. He sets up an analogy. Just as when God knows himself he is present in his intellect (ST 1.27.4), so when he loves himself he is present in his will as the beloved is present in the lover, *amatum in amante*, ST 1.27.3. And as the *intentio* is that by which the thing understood is present in the intellect or thinker, so love is that by which the beloved is present in the lover. The difference is that whereas the *intentio* is a likeness of the thing understood, love is not a likeness of the thing loved, but is present 'as inclining and somehow impelling from inside the lover towards the thing loved, *ut inclinans et quodammodo impellens intrinsecus amantem in rem amatam* (CG 4.19). The love comes out, *processit*, not as a likeness but as something impelling and moving (ST 1.27.4)

Once we drop the physical model of a force acting in a direction, it is

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

easier to see what this love is not than what it is. It is not the kind of friendly concern, the *philia* or *agape* that we have towards other persons and animals. We can love things it makes no sense to talk of benefiting, like muffins and metaphysical speculation. At one point in CG 4.19 Aquinas says *amare is quoddam velle*, 'loving is a kind of wanting', and the suggestion has been made that love is the particular kind of wanting we have for what seems beautiful. But Aquinas also says that love is the 'common root' of particular modes of desire like feeling the lack of something, delighting in it, hating (*desiderare, delectare, odire*), which seems inconsistent with its being itself such a mode.

Modern philosophers sometimes separate thought and feeling rather sharply, saying that the former but not the latter is representational or has intentional content. But Aquinas is in the tradition of Plato and Aristotle, and might allow that something can be both a kind of thought and a kind of feeling. I am inclined to think that what he here calls *amor* is no different from what we should call 'thinking good'. Things can be good in various ways: pleasant, enjoyable, useful, aesthetically beautiful, morally obligatory, or kind and beneficial to someone else. Aquinas says love is the source 'even of sensible appetition' (CG 4.19). Sensible appetition would cover 'feeling the lack of' shade and a cool drink on a hot day; and we feel that lack because we think they would be pleasant. The man in prison is 'kept from' his wife and children. He feels sad because he thinks it would be good to provide for them and make them happy. But thinking something good is not well construed on the model of thinking something spherical. If we say it is applying a concept of goodness, we have difficulty in giving a plausible account of that concept. We may do better to say that thinking something good and having it as a kind of objective, having it as something we act to obtain or refrain from acting lest we lose, are the same thing.

But if *amor* for something is thinking it good, or having it as a rational objective, it ceases to be distinct from activity that is loved. Aquinas can say that God, having knowledge of himself, judges his activity good and enjoyable, and because he judges it good, he is inclined towards it and has it as an end. But this judgement is not a kind of efficient cause of his inclination; rather it is a formal cause. That is, 'God is inclined to it because he thinks it good' is like 'George is heavier than me because he weighs twelve stone and I ten', not 'George is heavier than me because he eats more potatoes.' Consider a sweating hiker on a hot day. He sees is a river on the other side of the field, thinks the water would be pleasant to swim in, wants to swim and moves towards the water. But are these four distinct episodes, a piece of perceptual cognition, a piece of practical judgement, a desire, and a limb movement? Yes, if

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press

they are a causal chain, in which case we may hanker after a further link, an act of will between the desire and the limb movement. But we might suggest instead that the hiker is aware of the flowing water from the start as something pleasant to swim in, that this practical judgement is already 'sensible' desire, and that the desire is nothing different from the movement which is a fulfilment of it. I can think it would be good to do something without doing it, and even want to do it without doing it; but when I do something on purpose, because of something that makes doing it pleasant or otherwise good, then as Donald Davidson says, 'nothing seems to stand in the way of an Aristotelian identification of the action with a judgement of a certain kind.[2] In the case of God, what stops us identifying his love for his activity with his persistence in it?

McCabe quotes Victor White as saying it is 'one of the great strengths' of Aquinas teaching that the Spirit cannot be described 'as a "thing" that is formed' (p.281). But a weakness does not become a strength by being called one. Aquinas' theory of the Son is clear because his theory of knowledge delivers an entity between the knower and the thing known, a likeness of that thing. It may be a strength of his theory of appetition that it does not require a second such entity (though intelligent appetition does, of course, require cognition of its object). But then the argument about the Spirit lacks just what made the argument about the Son clear.

5

The tradition of seeking models for the Trinity in human cognition and desire goes back to Augustine and has been extremely fruitful from his day to the present. Since Aquinas's discussions in CG 4 and ST 1 are central to that tradition, future theologians will ignore them at their peril. But I have tried to show that they involve a dangerous use of physical models. The theory of the Son depends essentially on a representationalist theory of cognition, and the theory of the Spirit suffers from an obscurity which we are tempted to dispel by a theory of purposive action that construes practical judgement and rational appetition as causes. Representationalist theories of consciousness and causal theories of purpose have supporters today in the philosophical community, and theologians may think at first that this makes Aquinas' exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity particularly helpful: using it *contra gentiles* they can count on some philosophical common ground. But if I am right, this ground is a minefield which they should enter only with the greatest caution.

1 G. Ryle, *Dilemmas*, Cambridge 1954, p 56.
2 'Intending' (1978), reprinted in *Essays on Action and Events*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1982, p. 99.
3 John O'Neill read a draft of this paper and made a number of suggestions for which I am most grateful. I hope they have enabled me to make several points much clearer.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-2005.1999.tb01704.x Published online by Cambridge University Press