

Haecceities, individuation and the Trinity: a reply to Keith Yandell

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Abstract: In this paper I reply to Keith Yandell's recent charge that Anselmian theists cannot also be Trinitarians. Yandell's case turns on the contention that it is impossible to individuate Trinitarian members, if they exist necessarily. Since the ranks of Anselmian Trinitarians includes the likes of Alvin Plantinga, Robert Adams, and Thomas Flint, Yandell's claim is of considerable interest and import. I argue, by contrast, that Anselmians can appeal to what Plantinga calls an essence or haecceity – a property essentially unique to an object – to distinguish Trinitarian members. I go on to show that the main Yandellian objection to this individuation strategy is not successful.

Introduction

According to Keith Yandell, a *prima facie* case can be made for the thesis that 'if one is a Christian Trinitarian theist, then – given certain plausible claims – one should reject the view that God has logically necessary existence ... Trinitarians should, in all consistency, avoid Anselmianism'.¹ The proposition *God exists necessarily*, together with other (hopefully) obvious truths, allegedly entails the proposition *God is not a Trinity of persons*. In this paper, I shall attempt to show that the claims upon which Yandell's case is constructed are not in fact plausible. Indeed, the Anselmian Trinitarian can escape the charge of inconsistency by making use of a special sort of property – what Alvin Plantinga calls an essence or haecceity, a property without which a given object could not exist, but also such that nothing else could possibly have it.² Each Trinitarian member (though necessarily existent) has at least one haecceity, I argue, and is thus distinct from the other members of the Godhead. Moreover, what I take to be the main Yandellian complaint against using haecceities in this way is unsound, since it subtly confuses the connection between having a property *in a world* and having a property *simpliciter*.

What is Anselmian Trinitarianism?

You are an Anselmian monotheist, on Yandell's view, if you believe that:

(TA) God exists

expresses a necessary truth, that is to say, if you believe that (TA) is true and could not possibly be false. If you are also a Trinitarian, you will go on to affirm that (TA) entails each of the following:

(TB) The Father exists

(TC) The Son exists

and

(TD) The Holy Spirit exists

so that each of these propositions is itself necessarily true. Let's call the set of (TA), (TB), (TC), and (TD) the 'T-set'. An Anselmian Trinitarian believes each member of the T-set and, furthermore, believes that each member is a necessary truth. But she goes still further. For according to classical Trinitarian doctrine, the members of the Godhead are *distinct* persons; no two members of the Trinity are identical with one another. The Father is neither identical with the Son nor the Holy Spirit; and the Holy Spirit is not the same person as God the Son. Thus the Anselmian Trinitarian holds that (TB), (TC) and (TD) express *distinct* propositions. For, of course, if they expressed the same proposition, all Trinitarian distinctions would collapse.

Can we make Trinitarian distinctions?

Now what is supposed to be the problem here for the Anselmian Trinitarian? Why ought she to give up believing that (TA) is necessary given that she pays the same compliment to (TB)–(TD)? The problem, says Yandell, is that if you think each member of the T-set expresses a necessary truth, then you won't be able to provide an account of Trinitarian distinctions; indeed, your Anselmian views will commit you to the utter collapse of all such distinctions. But why should we think so? In the first place, could it not simply be a brute unexplained fact that there can be several distinct but indiscernible divine persons? Following an unendorsed suggestion of Swinburne, perhaps we could take it as a *surd* given that 'If there exists more than one divine individual, they could [still] have all their properties in common, and yet be different'.³

Unfortunately, this suggestion is fraught with difficulty. For one thing, it seems to fall prey to what Gale and Pruss call 'the taxi-cab objection': arbitrarily dismissing a request for explanation (like a passing cab) when it suits one's purposes.⁴

Surely if a given pair of Trinitarian members is said to be distinct, it is reasonable to ask: 'In virtue of what?' What is it, ontologically speaking, that grounds the distinction? An explanation is clearly in order here; there must be something true of the one member but not the other. Now of course requests for explanatory grounds can get out of hand. For example, they cannot go on forever; eventually we must come to an explanation-ender. But the point is that to refuse to set one's toe on the explanatory turf at all is nothing like an explanation-ender; it is an explanation-dismitter and a contextually inappropriate one at that.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Swinburne is compelled to invoke (on behalf of this view) what he calls an 'underlying thisness' – a *suppositum* or ultimate subject of predication – in order to distinguish between two indiscernible divine individuals. But in the present context this is fatal. For unless *supposita* are to be construed as bare particulars, it is reasonable to suppose that distinct *supposita* will possess distinct properties. At the very least, they will differ in their basic identity properties: for any *supposita* *a* and *b*, *a* will have the property *being identical with a* and *b* will not. After all, if *b* had *being identical with a*, it would be the very same thing as *a*, in which case it would lose all of its individuating powers. For surely, if *supposita* are to properly serve as individuators, distinct objects must have distinct underlying *supposita*. It is therefore far from obvious that there could be two or more distinct divine individuals, which nevertheless held all their properties in common.⁵

So it seems to me that Yandell is right: the Anselmian Trinitarian must provide some principled basis for distinguishing between Trinitarian members. Now for his part, Yandell sees only two criteria of individuation to which she might appeal in this connection: the Possible Existence Criterion and the Property Difference Criterion. And the problem, he says, is that neither of these is of any help. Let's see whether this is in fact true. The Possible Existence Criterion, on Yandell's reckoning, goes like this:

PEC For any objects *x* and *y*, *x* and *y* are distinct if and only if *x exists* does not mutually entail *y exists*.⁶

If this criterion is in order, God and the Eiffel Tower are distinct objects in virtue of the fact that the proposition *God exists* does not mutually entail the proposition *The Eiffel Tower exists*; for of course it is perfectly possible for God to exist even if the Eiffel Tower does not. PEC does a dandy job of distinguishing God from other non-divine, contingent objects. Unfortunately, on the Anselmian assumption that God is a logically necessary being, PEC fails miserably at distinguishing God from other necessarily existing objects. For example, the proposition *6 exists* mutually entails *God exists*; there is no possible world in which God exists but the number 6 does not.⁷ Hence God is identical with the number 6, and is thus himself a number. More to the point, however, if each member of the Trinity exists necessarily, then each member of the T-set expresses a necessary truth. Accordingly,

(TB), (TC), and (TD) are mutually entailing; in any world in which any one of these propositions is true (and this, of course, will be every world whatsoever, since they are true of necessity), they are all true. But then (given PEC) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are *not* distinct; they are identical. I think we can agree with Yandell's conclusion here: for the Anselmian theist, '*the possible existence criterion will not generate an account of Trinitarian distinctions*'.⁸

But perhaps all is not lost. Perhaps the Property Difference Criterion will succeed where PEC has failed. The intuition behind this second criterion is simplicity itself. Consider two red, round spots: Plato and Aristotle.⁹ And suppose, for the sake of argument, that there is something true of the one spot that isn't true of the other. Could anyone really believe that Plato and Aristotle are *one and the same* spot? How could they be *identical*, if there is a property exemplified by the one but not the other? Upon reflection, this doesn't seem the least bit plausible. Thus according to the Property Difference Criterion,

PDC For any objects x and y , x and y are distinct if and only if there is some property Q such that it is false that x has Q if and only if y has Q .¹⁰

What we aren't told here is whether the individuating property is contingent or necessary. That is to say, PDC is silent on the question of whether an object is to be individuated by way of its contingently held properties (i.e. the properties it has but could have lacked) or by those properties it possesses essentially (i.e. the properties without which it could not have existed). Yandell discusses both of these alternatives. In what follows, I shall only consider what he has to say about the individuating powers of an object's essential properties.

Of course, not every essential property of an object serves to distinguish it from its fellows. Everything, for example, has such trivially essential properties as *being coloured if blue*, *being even if identical with the number 6*, and perhaps even *existing*.¹¹ But these properties hardly distinguish one Trinitarian member from the next, if they are had by every object (and had essentially). Moreover, even the properties essential to being divine will be of no use here, since they too are held in common among members of the Godhead. Thus if the Anselmian theist has only trivially essential and deity essential properties at her disposal for purposes of individuation, she will be at an utter loss to generate any distinctions between Trinitarian members. For each member, of course, will possess the very same trivially essential and deity essential properties as the others, and so (by PDC) be one and the same object.

So this is not the way of true individuation. Fortunately, there are other individuating options available to the Anselmian Trinitarian. Apart from simply asserting that there are properties which necessarily distinguish Trinitarian members even if we do not know what they are, she might take her lead from the Nicene Creed and contend that Trinitarian individuation goes by way of having distinct

asymmetrical relational properties. For example, Swinburne proposes that we distinguish the three Persons 'in terms of how they are caused'.¹² The Father, who is uncaused, asymmetrically brings it about that the Son exists, and the first two Persons jointly and asymmetrically cause the Holy Spirit's existence. If this were a necessary and eternal truth about the Trinity, then we would have a principled basis for individuation.¹³

Yandell has a rejoinder. Asymmetrical relations such as *being begotten by* and *proceeding from* 'cannot hold between beings who necessarily have all of their monadic properties, and necessarily have them all in common'.¹⁴ This is because, as Yandell thinks, Trinitarian members necessarily share their monadic properties, so that any relational properties they possess will also be shared necessarily on what he takes to be the plausible assumption that an object's relational properties are 'built up' out of its monadic properties.

Now it seems to me that as a first step in avoiding this conclusion the Anselmian Trinitarian might consider adding to her ontological arsenal a special sort of property – a property that is essentially *unique* to a thing, that is, one such that without it a given object could not exist, but also such that nothing else could possibly have it. What she requires, in other words, is an 'essence' or 'haecceity'. Here is one recipe for cooking up a haecceity. Let P be any property Socrates and Socrates alone exemplifies – say, *being Plato's favourite student*. Then according to Plantinga, Socrates also has the world-indexed property *having P-in- α* (where ' α ' rigidly designates the world that is in fact actual). If this is right, *having P-in- α* is an essence of Socrates; for in every world in which Socrates exists, he is the happy possessor of this property. Furthermore, it isn't so much as possible for any other object to have this property. But then it immediately follows that *having P-in- α* individuates Socrates; his possession of this property is, as it were, his mark of distinction.

The theological cash value of world-indexed one-owner properties (WOPs) is considerable. If we can show that each member of the Trinity has its own WOP, we will have secured a principled basis for individuating Trinitarian members. And in fact this is not all that difficult to do; clearly, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each has at least one WOP not shared by the others. God the Son, for example, has *becoming incarnate in α* ; the Father and the Holy Spirit do not. The Holy Spirit has *being the one who descended upon Jesus at his baptism in α* ; the Father and the Son do not. And the Father exemplifies *speaking from heaven at Jesus' baptism in α* ; and of course the Holy Spirit and the Son do not. Thus each Trinitarian member exemplifies a world-indexed one-owner property the others don't. It therefore follows (given PDC) that the members of the Trinity are indeed metaphysically distinct even if necessarily existent.

Now Yandell is rather down on the individuating powers of haecceities, which he loosely characterizes as necessarily one-owner properties or sets of properties. 'While I am no enemy of haecceities', he says, 'I doubt that they will help us in our

current project ... [Indeed] neither in heaven nor on earth am I hopeful that individuation by haecceities will provide a satisfactory account of metaphysical identity'.¹⁵ But why not?

For one thing, it seems to me plainly false that every property I have is essential to me – that I could not be the person that I am were I to be able to learn names more quickly, or had I one less hair on my head, or were I to have specialized in political philosophy, or to have had a hair-trigger temper. Maximal haecceitism seems plainly false.¹⁶

Fair enough. But I can't think of a single contemporary metaphysician who insists that one's haecceity must include *all* of one's properties (contingent or otherwise). This obviously leads to severe difficulties in connection with free agency. For suppose H is Andrew Wiles's haecceity. Suppose further what is in fact true: that Wiles has the property of having solved Fermat's Last Theorem (F). Given maximal haecceitism, H includes F. Now since Wiles could not have existed without exemplifying H, and since H includes or entails F, Wiles could not have existed without exemplifying F. Thus Wiles could not have existed without solving Fermat's Last Theorem. But surely this is wrong. Surely Wiles could have shunned mathematics altogether, setting his sights instead on becoming a premier author of Harlequin Romance novels. No doubt some of us would consider a world in which Wiles spent his talents in this way impoverished in crucial axiological respects. Such a world, however, is nonetheless possible for all that. Maximal haecceitism, then, is maximally implausible; for it transforms all of one's properties into those of the essential variety.

At the other end of the metaphysical spectrum, says Yandell, lies self-identity haecceitism. On this view, 'the haecceity of Socrates is simply *being identical to Socrates*'.¹⁷ But this is problematic. For according to Yandell,

Anything's self-identity rides piggy-back on other properties that it has; the self-identity of my lap-top computer is something it possesses by virtue of possessing the property of being composed of computer parts, being fairly lightweight and small, and the like. For any item x and haecceity h, there is some set S of non-haecceity properties such that x has h only by virtue of x's having S.¹⁸

For ease of reference, let's refer to this as the Piggy-Back Objection. A brief word of explanation is in order. Consider Socrates' basic identity property (BIP): *being identical with Socrates*.¹⁹ Socrates has this BIP, so the argument goes, only by virtue of possessing some set of non-haecceity properties or non-BIPs. Now Yandell doesn't exactly tell us how membership in this set is to be defined. However, his lap-top-computer example suggests that the set of non-haecceity properties of an object is simply all of its contingently held non-BIPs (e.g. *being lightweight and small*). Herein lie the seeds of trouble. For let A stand for the conjunction of all Socrates' non-haecceity properties: *being a Greek philosopher, being wise, being Plato's teacher*, and the like. Couldn't I have exemplified A? I don't see why not. Plantinga has argued that Socrates could have *lacked* each of A's conjuncts.²⁰ Well,

if this is so, it doesn't seem much of a stretch to claim that I might well have *had* all of them.

Why does Yandell see this as a problem? His argument, so far as I understand it, goes as follows.²¹ The advocate of self-identity haecceitism begins with the idea that individuation proceeds by way of appeal to an object's BIP; the reason that I am distinct from Socrates is that I lack his BIP. So far so good. But Socrates' having the BIP that he does depends on his exemplifying each conjunct in A – the conjunction of his contingently held non-BIPs. Therefore, what really distinguishes Socrates and me is the fact that Socrates exemplifies A contingently, and I don't exemplify A at all. But I *could* have; I could have exemplified that set of properties which provides the metaphysical basis for exemplifying *being identical with Socrates*. But then assuming that Socrates and I hold all of our *other* properties in common, it seems to follow that

$$(1) \quad M (I = \text{Socrates})$$

where 'M' is the standard possibility operator. However, as Yandell argues,²² the identity of two objects entails the necessity of that identity. That is,

$$(2) \quad L (x)(y)[(x = y) \rightarrow L (x = y)].^{23}$$

Furthermore, (2) implies

$$(3) \quad L [(I = \text{Socrates}) \rightarrow L (I = \text{Socrates})].$$

And (1) and (3) jointly entail

$$(4) \quad M L (I = \text{Socrates})$$

which in the S5 modal system is equivalent to

$$(5) \quad L (I = \text{Socrates}).$$

And it is an easy step from (5) to

$$(6) \quad I = \text{Socrates}.$$

Moreover, this conclusion generalizes to any pair of objects. Thus we cannot distinguish Trinitarian members on the basis of their differing sets of contingent non-haecceity properties; in which case since these properties ground or give rise to their BIPs, individuation cannot proceed by way of showing that the members of the Trinity differ in this respect.

Now between maximal haecceitism and self-identity haecceitism, Yandell sees no principled stopping point. 'So I'm not sanguine', he concludes, 'about this route [of individuation] being successful'.²⁴ But surely this is hasty. There *is* a principled stopping point between these two extremes. The problem with maximal haecceitism is that it incorporates all of your properties into your essence; thus each property you have becomes essential to you. That is certainly one

extreme on the spectrum. The difficulty with self-identity haecceitism, on the other hand, is that it doesn't include enough of the right sort of properties in your essence. In his exposition of self-identity haecceitism, Yandell isn't clear just what (on this view) one's essence *does* include. I think it is safe to assume Socrates' essence or haecceity includes his trivially essential properties. Would it also include his contingent, non-haecceity properties? Well, if it did, that would almost place us right back in the maximal haecceitist camp. Could it be that trivial essential properties are the *only* type of properties constituting Socrates' haecceity? I certainly hope not; for if they were, the powers of haecceities to individuate objects would be nil. I am happy to report, however, that there is a way out for the self-identity haecceitist here. It is indeed true that the essence of an object entails or includes its essential properties; but it is false that the only properties essential to an object are trivial – that is, are such that everything has them essentially. For as we have already seen, if Socrates has a one-owner property P, then he will also possess the world-indexed one-owner property *having P-in- α* . Not only is it impossible for Socrates to exist without exemplifying this property, it is impossible for *anything else* to have it.

So with one slight modification to self-identity haecceitism – that is, by including WOPs in our concept of a haecceity – we have carved out a principled stopping point between the two extreme forms of haecceitism. (Let's refer to this mediating position as Plantingean haecceitism.) So the individuating powers of the basic identity property of an object aren't metaphysically rooted in either its trivially essential properties or the contingent, non-haecceity properties it displays; they are grounded in its world-indexed one-owner properties.

Now what might one who supported Yandell's position say at this point? Perhaps the most obvious response would be to 'piggy-back' on the Piggy-Back Objection itself. Just as an object cannot exemplify a BIP without also exemplifying a set of non-BIPs (which constitute it), so too Socrates' having any WOP must be metaphysically grounded in some one-or-more membered set of non-haecceity properties that he exemplifies, a set of properties he could easily have lacked. But if this is so, then none of Socrates' WOPs really individuates him. Stating the argument more explicitly, for any property P that only Socrates exemplifies

- (7) Necessarily: (Socrates has P-in- α) only if (Socrates has P);

But

- (8) It is contingent that Socrates has P.

Hence

- (9) It is contingent that Socrates has P-in- α .

Accordingly

- (10) The property *having P-in- α* does not individuate Socrates.

As I say, it seems to me that this is the way a proponent of Yandell's position might well argue against Plantingean haecceitism. Unfortunately, however, this argument is not logically valid; it subtly confuses the connection between having a world-indexed property and having a property *simpliciter*.

Perhaps we can see this by looking at a parallel case. Consider the following proposition:

- (11) George W. Bush is elected President in 2000.

Now while (11) is contingent, the proposition

- (12) George W. Bush is elected President in 2000 in α

or equivalently,

- (13) α includes *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000*

is not. Both (12) and (13) are necessary truths; for every world W , it is true in W that α includes *George W. Bush's being elected President in 2000*. But if so, comes the Yandellian rejoinder, why isn't it also true that

- (14) Necessarily: (α includes *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000*) only if George W. Bush is elected President in 2000?

And if this *is* true, surely we can go on to argue that

- (15) *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* is a contingent truth;

so

- (16) The proposition *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* could have been false.

Hence

- (17) α could have failed to include *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000*.

Now if (17) is true, Bush does not possess the world-indexed property *being elected in 2000 in α* in every world in which he exists. So the Plantingean haecceitist cannot accept (17); she must hold that a given world-indexed property is held essentially or not at all; otherwise, by extension, she cannot consistently maintain that WOPs properly individuate their bearers. For suppose WOPs are only held contingently by their bearers. Then, given Plantingean haecceitism, they are not included in the haecceity of any object, in which case (presumably) they have no individuating role to play.

But *can* (17) be denied? It certainly can provided that one is willing to deny one of the argument's premises. What are the candidates? Well, since (17) follows from (14) and (16), and (16) follows from (15), either (14) or (15) must be denied. It seems

to me that (15) is quite secure; so that leaves us with (14). At face value, this proposition appears quite plausible. But appearances can be deceiving; and in this case I believe that they are, for (14) is not true. The problem stems from the fact that although ‘ α ’ designates the world that happens to be actual, we aren’t given in (14) that α is actual; at best we can say that ‘ α ’ picks out a certain maximal possible state of affairs. But it is important to see that (14) doesn’t actually tell us that this state of affairs *is* actual.

One way of showing that (14) is false is by showing that the denial of its consequent does not entail the denial of its antecedent. It is indeed true that the proposition *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* could have been false. But it hardly follows from *that* that α could have failed to include this proposition. For what (16) tells us is just that

(16*) There is a world W such that *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* is false in W

which is only to assert the counterfactual: if W had been actual, then the proposition *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* would have been false. This is no doubt true. But it doesn’t imply that α would not have included *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* – that is, not unless $W = \alpha$, which I’m afraid we are not entitled to infer.²⁵ Thus (14) is false. However, there is a truth in the nearby modal bushes, namely

(14*) Necessarily: $[(\alpha \text{ is actual}) \ \& \ (\alpha \text{ includes } \textit{George W. Bush is elected President in 2000})] \rightarrow \textit{George W. Bush is elected President in 2000}$

which, in conjunction with (16), entails

(18) Possibly: $(\alpha \text{ is not actual}) \vee (\alpha \text{ does not include } \textit{George W. Bush is elected President in 2000})$.

And of course the Plantingean haecceitist will insist that since (12) and (13) are necessary truths, the right disjunct of (18) is a necessary falsehood. Accordingly, what follows from the fact that there is a world in which *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* is false is not that this proposition could have failed to be true in α , but merely

(19) Possibly: α is not actual

which is quite benign.

It might be objected that this argumentative move is question-begging, since it simply assumes that the right disjunct of (18) is impossible. Our imagined Yandellian critic would no doubt deny this. But the problem with this reply is that the only way the critic can deduce from (18) that its right disjunct is possible – that is, that (17) is true – is by first assuming that the left disjunct is necessarily false or impossible. She must assume, in other words, that it is impossible for any world

other than α to be actual; but if a possible world is a world that could have been actual, this implies that there is only one possible world, so that everything whatsoever is necessary. Surely this is a case in which the Spinozistic 'cure' is worse than the alleged Plantingean 'disease'.

But how is all of this relevant to the question of whether WOPs possess individuating powers? Well, the heart of the Yandell-style argument we have been examining is that WOPs are of no use here because for any property P unique to Socrates, Socrates could have lacked P and therefore also P-in- α . It should be clear by now that this is a cleverly masked non sequitur. What follows in this case is only that α could have been non-actual – a conclusion most congenial to Plantingean haecceitism, and so scarcely an objection to it.

But perhaps there is a deeper and more obvious problem with my proposal.²⁶ I say that *being incarnate in α* distinguishes the Son from the other members of the Trinity. But suppose that there is a world β indiscernible from α . Suppose further that in β it is the Father and not the Son who is incarnate. Surely this is a possibility. But if so, how can I claim that WOPs individuate? If the Father has *being incarnate in β* , the Son has *being incarnate in α* , and α and β are indiscernible, then isn't there still the unresolved problem of how to distinguish two other necessary beings: α and β ?

I find this complaint somewhat perplexing. The worlds α and β should not be indiscernible (that is, have all the same properties), since by hypothesis β includes a state of affairs that α does not: *the Father's being incarnate*. Further, there is nothing in what I have said that commits the Anselmian Trinitarian to the view that WOPs are the *only* things which serve as individuating powers. But setting that aside, I suppose the nub of the objection is that if I stick with WOPs as my sole individuating powers, then in saying that being incarnate in α distinguishes Father from Son, I must appeal to yet another WOP to distinguish α from β . And that commits me to a nasty infinite regress.

But won't this be true for any individuating power? Take Bergmann's bare particulars. On his view, 'A bare particular is a mere individuating power ... It does nothing else'.²⁷ Now were we to claim that indiscernible objects can be individuated in terms of their bare particulars, we would be operating on the assumption that the bare particulars in question are *distinct*, which raises the further question of how we are to account for this distinctness. The answer, presumably, will necessitate further appeals to bare particulars. The problem generalizes. For any sole individuating power X of an object, it appears that X must be individuated by other individuating powers of its kind. So the problem raised by the critic is not specific to individuation via WOPs; everyone who has a sole candidate for individuation must face it.²⁸ But I do not see that we get a peculiar problem for the position I have defended by raising a general metaphysical problem confronting any theory of individuation, and then triumphantly indicting Plantingean haecceitism for not having solved it.

By way of conclusion then: the Anselmian Trinitarian contends that each member of the Trinity enjoys a logically necessary existence. Despite this fact, she steadfastly maintains that this does not lead to the collapse of Trinitarian distinctions. By adopting the position of Plantingean haecceitism, she can make a principled appeal to world-indexed one-owner properties and infer, by way of the Property Difference Criterion, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are metaphysically distinct (though necessarily existent). Furthermore, perhaps the most potent blast against this conclusion²⁹ – an argument inspired by Keith Yandell – is not, after all, logically sound.³⁰

Notes

1. Keith Yandell 'Ontological arguments, metaphysical identity, and the Trinity', *Philosophia Christi*, 1 (1999), 83, 101. There is a similar suggestion in his 'The most brutal and inexcusable error in counting?: Trinity and consistency', *Religious Studies*, 30 (1994), 211–216.
2. See Alvin Plantinga *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 70. Plantinga distinguishes between *thisnesses*, on the one hand, and *essences* or *haecceities*, on the other. A thisness of an object is its basic identity property (e.g. *being identical with Quine*). A haecceity 'is a property that is or could have been a thisness'; 'Reply to Kit Fine', in James E. Tomberlin and Peter van Inwagen (eds) *Alvin Plantinga* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 335. Put in a slightly different way, a haecceity is either an exemplified essence (i.e. a thisness) or an unexemplified essence.
3. Richard Swinburne *The Christian God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 163–164.
4. See Richard M. Gale and Alexander R. Pruss, 'A new cosmological argument', *Religious Studies*, 35 (1999), 470.
5. It might be objected that my argument here turns on the fact that there really are basic identity properties; some philosophers find this objectionable. (See, for example, Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 35.) This is true but presently irrelevant. For the question Yandell raises is whether Trinitarian members can be individuated on the assumption that haecceities exist.
6. See Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 93. I have made some slight but inessential changes to Yandell's formulation of this criterion. In addition, it should be noted here that a proposition P mutually entails a proposition Q just in case, necessarily, P if and only if Q.
7. The concept of entailment in view here is *strict*, where a proposition P strictly entails a proposition Q if and only if it is impossible that P and not-Q.
8. Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 94.
9. This example is borrowed from J. P. Moreland. See his 'Theories of individuation: a reconsideration of bare particulars', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 79 (1998), 251.
10. See Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 93. Again, I have made some small changes to Yandell's formulation of this criterion.
11. See Plantinga *The Nature of Necessity*, 60–62.
12. Swinburne, *The Christian God*, 177.
13. An anonymous referee for this journal has suggested that even a *symmetrical* relational property might suffice here. For example, if each Trinitarian member necessarily stood in the *is-loved-by* relation to the others, this would imply that they were distinct provided that it was impossible for this relation to be reflexive. For my part, however, I cannot see any good reason to embrace this latter assumption; it seems to be neither a deliverance of Christian theology nor the product of Anselmian modal intuitions that a divine person cannot love himself.
14. Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 86.
15. *Ibid.*, 98, 100.
16. *Ibid.*, 98.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*

19. Bernard D. Katz defines a BIP as any property P such that (i) P is possibly exemplified by something, and (ii) P is necessarily such that for any objects x and y , if x and y both exemplify P, then $x = y$. See his insightful 'The identity of indiscernibles revisited', *Philosophical Studies*, 44 (1983), 40.
20. See Alvin Plantinga 'World and essence', *Philosophical Review*, 79 (1970), 466–473.
21. See Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 95.
22. *Ibid.*, 84.
23. I use 'L' for the necessity operator and ' \rightarrow ' for the material conditional. Yandell doesn't argue directly for (2), but rather a weaker principle: 'For any x and y , if x is metaphysically identical to y , then x is necessarily identical to y ' (*ibid.*). I have prefixed the necessity operator to his formulation of this principle, since without it the proof does not go through.
24. Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 98.
25. From the fact that ' $(\exists x)Fx$ ' we cannot validly conclude that 'Socrates is F'. Similarly, just because ' $(\exists w)(w$ is a possible world & *George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* is false in w)' it does not follow that '*George W. Bush is elected President in 2000* is false in α ', that is, that α doesn't include this proposition.
26. This was brought to my attention by an anonymous reader for this journal.
27. Gustav Bergmann *Realism* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 25.
28. Indeed, Yandell himself must face it. For he is not without his own candidate for sole individuator, namely, contingent one-owner properties. See Yandell 'Ontological arguments', 100.
29. I do not mean to suggest, of course, that there might not be *other* obstacles to embracing Plantingean haecceitism. My aim here has only been to remove one such impediment. For a discussion of the main objections to using Plantingean essences to individuate objects, see J. P. Moreland, 'Issues and options in individuation', *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 60 (2000), 44–49; for a critical response, see Paul Martin and Richard Davis, 'Essentially divided: a reply to J. P. Moreland' (not yet published).
30. Thanks to Kirk Durston, Bernard Katz, Elmar Kremer, Timothy Larsen, Paul Martin, Gregg Ten Elshoff, Greg Welty, and especially to the anonymous reader, for their helpful comments on this paper.