

# Response to Al-Warraq's 'Attack against the Trinity'<sup>1</sup>

The least initial deviation from the truth is multiplied later a thousand fold.

— *Aristotle*<sup>2</sup>

Now the catholic faith is that we worship One God  
in Trinity and Trinity in Unity,  
neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the substance.  
— *The Athanasian Creed*<sup>3</sup>

"*Holy, Holy, Holy* is the LORD Almighty;  
the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3

I and the Father are *one*. John 10:30

(Revision November 16, 2003)

## Introduction

In the early ninth century, Abu 'Isa Muhammad ibn Harun ibn Muhammad al-Warraq (d. 816?) wrote an Arabic treatise, *The Refutation of the creed of the three Christian sects (Radd 'ala al-Thalath Firaq min al-Nasara)*, which is a rational and philosophic attempt to refute the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Professor David Thomas has translated al-Warraq's Arabic work into two volumes. His first volume introduces al-Warraq in his historical context and then presents a scholarly translation of al-Warraq's refutation of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>4</sup> Professor Thomas' second volume provides considerable additional background material, followed by an English translation of al-Warraq's critique of the incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup> This article responds on the same rational and philosophic basis that al-Warraq's used in his refutation of the doctrine of the Trinity as it is translated in Professor Thomas's first volume.

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations are "Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press."

Al-Warraq, Muhammad ibn Harun, (d. 816?), *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abu 'Isa al-Warraq's 'Against the Trinity'*, (Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-thalath firaq min al-Nasara. Juz' 1. English), University of Cambridge Oriental Publications No. 45., Edited and Translated by David Thomas, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, England, 1992, pp. 218, ISBN 0-521-41244-7

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *On the Heavens*, In: *The Complete Works*, The Revised Oxford Translation, Bollingen Series, LXXI-2, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1984, 271 b9, p. 452.

<sup>3</sup> *The Athanasian Creed*.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Warraq, 'Against the Trinity', pp. 218.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Warraq, Muhammad ibn Harun, (d. 816?), *Early Muslim Polemic against Christianity: Abu 'Isa al-Warraq's 'Against the Incarnation'*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications No. 59., Edited and Translated by David Thomas, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, England, 2002, pp. 314, ISBN 0-521-81132-5

Abu 'Isa al-Warraq's "Against the Trinity" is the longest sustained attack on the Trinity to survive from the early centuries of Islam, and is a key work in the history of the relations between Islam and Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

What makes al-Warraq's refutation of the Trinity truly remarkable to Christians is that he used the same Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophic terminology that Christians use to describe the Trinity. This type of philosophic refutation is very rarely attempted by Muslim apologists, making al-Warraq's work a historic milestone. Additionally, al-Warraq understood aspects of the doctrine, so he wasn't misled by the silly notions of the Trinity (Allah, Jesus, and Mary) in the Qur'an. As a result, his refutation is more accurate than the straw man attacks of Imams who use Muhammad's misconceptions to ridicule the doctrine while humoring their uneducated Muslim congregations.

And behold! **Allah** will say: "O **Jesus** the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and **my mother as gods** in derogation of Allah?" He will say: "Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Thou I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. Al-Maida 5:116 Yusuf Ali's translation

**They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity:** for there is no god except One **Allah**. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. ... **Christ** the son of Mary was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. **His mother** was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how Allah doth make His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth! Al-Maida 5:73, 75. Yusuf Ali's translation [Emphasis added]

It is unfortunate that Sheikh Yahya Ibn 'Adi's (893-974) response to al-Warraq's attack has not been translated into English. His work, *Tabyn Ghalat Muhammad Ibn Harun*, exists in various manuscripts.<sup>7</sup> If Yahya's work were available to English readers, it would give us an insight into the philosophic and rational defense of the Trinity by a 10<sup>th</sup> century Arabic Christian scholar who lived in an Islamic milieu.

While al-Warraq's attack is refreshingly insightful, it suffers in several aspects.

1. Superficial understanding of the metaphysical terms.
2. Faulty understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.
3. Fallacious metaphysical reasoning.

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<sup>6</sup> Al-Warraq, 'Against the Trinity', dust jacket and book description.

<sup>7</sup> Al-Warraq, 'Against the Trinity', p. 51-53.

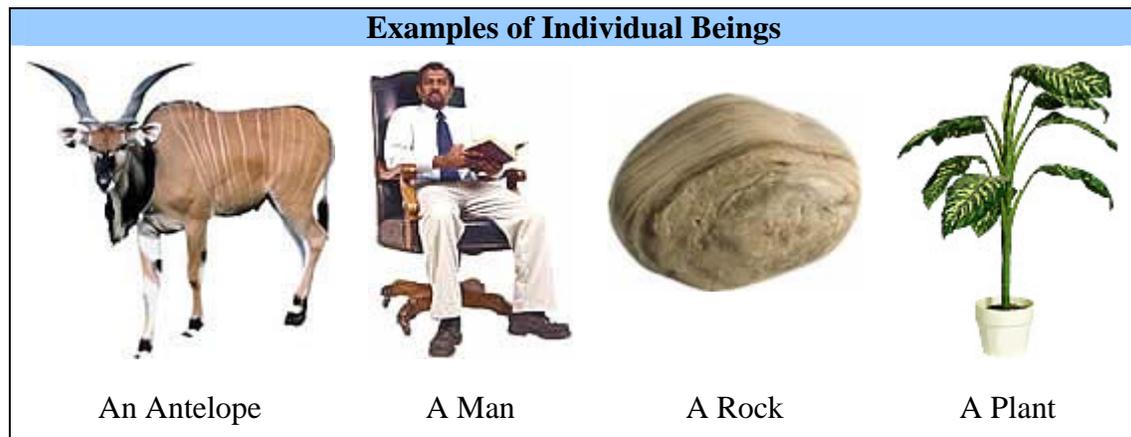
# Being and its principles

Before responding to al-Warraq's refutation of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is necessary to define some Aristotelian and Scholastic terms. The Christian creeds of the faith, such as the Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, and the Westminster Confession of Faith, use some of these terms to describe the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Christian theologians and philosophers, such as Athanasius, Augustine, Anselm, and Thomas Aquinas, used these terms in their treatises on the Trinity too. As will be shown later in this article, al-Warraq's attack is based largely upon a faulty understanding of these important metaphysical principles.

Aristotle wrote and Thomas Aquinas agreed that initial deviations from the truth are multiplied a thousand fold in the end.<sup>8</sup> This is why foundation terms need to be defined and understood before building upon them. As important as this need is, al-Warraq did not set forth the definitions of the metaphysical principles upon which he based his treatise. So, before al-Warraq's refutations are answered these important metaphysical terms must be defined and discussed.

## Being

Metaphysics is the science of being or reality. It is the broadest of all sciences because it deals with principles that apply to all beings or things. By contrast, chemistry, physics, and mathematics are sciences that deal with limited aspects of being, namely material beings in their *material* aspects. A being (L. *ens*, from verb, *esse*, to be) is a real existent thing. It exists in reality and not merely as an idea in our mind, such as the idea of a mythical unicorn. Beings are individual things that we experience with our five senses, such as rocks, plants, animals, and other human beings. Christians believe other beings exist that are not observable with our five senses, such as, angels and God. Everything that is not a being is non-being or no-thing, that is, it is non-existent in extra-mental reality.



<sup>8</sup> Bobik, Joseph, Aquinas On Being And Essence: A Translation and Interpretation, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 1965, ISBN: 0-268-00617-2, p. 1.

## Principles of being

A *principle of being* is not an existent thing *per se*, but it is a real aspect of a being. Essence, for example, is a *principle of being* and not a being in itself. It is not purely imaginary, because it has a basis in reality. For example, Fatima was a real human being who lived and existed in reality. Her essence was human-ness. Yet, her human-ness or essence could not have been separated from her being and exist as a separate being apart by itself as if it were its own subsistent entity. This lack of being of human-ness does not mean that it was not a real feature of her being. This is why it is said that the principles of being have a basis in reality, although they are not existent beings in their own right.

When we consider al-Warraq's attack upon the doctrine of the Trinity, the distinction between *beings* and *principles of being* must be kept in mind. Unless we keep this distinction in mind, his attacks will appear to have more success. Since this point is so vital, some quotations follow that emphasize this distinction. The following quotations note that metaphysical terms designate *principles of being* and not *beings, per se*.

This source we appropriately designate the thing's *essence* (Lat., *esse* to be; *essentia*, being), because it is the ultimate principle in the thing from which it derives whatever it possesses in the line of 'being' in any form.<sup>9</sup>

Essence, in the strict sense, is the ultimate intrinsic principle of the *properties* of an individual; it is that in the individual from which all its properties ultimately flow.<sup>10</sup>

When one is considering an individual, existing being, and its perfection and limitation, one is obviously not going to find two "things" composing that being (which would make it two beings, held together in some way). Rather, whatever composition there is must be a composition of "principles of being."<sup>11</sup>

A "principle of being" is something which goes to make up that being, but which cannot itself exist as a being. The most easily comprehended examples of this are "accidents" such as whiteness, warmth, and so forth. Whiteness cannot exist by itself as a being but only as a quality of some being which is white. Similarly, warmth cannot exist by itself as a being, but only as a characteristic of something which is warm.<sup>12</sup>

Potency and act are, therefore, metaphysical principles of being. They constitute finite beings, not as physical parts, but as ultimate intrinsic principles. They are not "things" in themselves, but principles of things, incapable (except in the unique

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<sup>9</sup> Bittle, Celestine N., *The Domain of Being: Ontology*, The Bruce Publishing Co, Milwaukee, WI, 1939 (3<sup>rd</sup> printing 1942), p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> Cotter, A.C., *ABC of Scholastic Philosophy*, The Weston College Press, Weston, Massachusetts, 1949, p. 378.

<sup>11</sup> McGlynn, James V., and P. Mary Farley, *A Metaphysics of Being and God*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, p. 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63n.

instance of pure act) of existing apart, yet truly distinct from one another, two truly distinct principles of being.<sup>13</sup>

Let us consider a being, for example, a person, present to us in immediate experience. What that person is (namely, this concrete human nature with all his accidental modifications) can be grasped in a series of concepts and is analyzable into the principles of matter and form, substance and accident. These principles are principles of an existent, but their immediate role is that of constituting the essence. These are the principles by which the being is what it is, is limited, is capable of change in various ways. But a being must *be* before it is determined, limited, modified, capable of changes. *To be*, as we have seen, is the ultimate actuality of all principles — essence and form among them. ... What then makes a thing to *be*? Precisely, the act of existing (*esse*), that real principle in the thing that corresponds to the “is” of judgment.<sup>14</sup>

Although there are other principles of being, the principles of being that will be discussed in this article are existence, quiddity, essence, nature, substance, accident, hypostasis, and person. Also, it should be noted that these principles are *co-principles* of being. Together, these principles helps us understand the nature and structure of a being as it exists in itself, or as a Scholastic would say, being *qua* being.

A Being	The Co-Principles Of Its Being	
 <b>Mr. Husain</b>	<b>Existence</b>	Exists
	<b>Essence</b>	Human-ness
	<b>Nature</b>	Thinks, eats, reads, sees
	<b>Substance</b>	Human
	<b>Accidents</b>	Brown-colored skin, seated, clothed, black-colored hair,
	<b>Hypostasis</b>	Subsistence
	<b>Person</b>	Intellectuality

## Existence

The first principle of being is existence. It is a feature common to all beings. All beings of reality *exist*. If a being lacks the principle of existence, it is a non-being, nothing, or non-existent. Yet, existence is not something that can be actually isolated from a being. It must be isolated by intellectual abstraction. If we know a being exists, we know intellectually that it has to have a principle of existence, otherwise it would not exist. For example, Mr. Husain is a human being, but Husain’s being cannot be divided into existence (*is-ness*) on one side and his essence (*human-ness*) on the opposite side. Although neither Husain’s existence nor his essence have independent being, yet we know Husain must have both of these principles of being to exist as a human being in reality. Otherwise, he could not exist and have the essence of human-

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>14</sup> Klubertanz, George P., Introduction to The Philosophy of Being, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Div. Meredith Publishing Co., New York, NY., 1963, p. 110.

ness. The sentence, “Husain is,” states that *is-ness* can be predicated of Husain who is a real existent in extra-mental reality.

Husain is		
Husain	=	being
is	=	existence

### Essence or Quiddity <sup>15</sup>

The next principle of being is essence or *quiddity* (L. *quidditas*). An essence relates to *what something is*. For example, a horse has the essence of horse-ness. Maryam has the essence of human-ness. An oak tree has the essence of tree-ness. An angel has the essence of angel-ness. Quiddity is a Latin term that answers the question “*Quid est?*” or “What is it?”<sup>16</sup> So, it is used in nearly the same sense as the Latin word, *essentia* (q.v.) or essence. It is a feature common to all beings. All beings have a quiddity or an essence. Essence answers the question, what type of being something is or what kind of thing it is. The answer may be a frog, a dog, a tree, a book, some paper, a house, a car, etc.

Although quiddity refers to essence, nature, person, hypostasis, and substance, they are conceptually different. Typically, essence is used with existence, substance with accidents, nature with operations, hypostasis with subsistence, and person with intellectuality. The meaning of these terms will become clearer as we proceed to describe them.

Essence (G. οὐσία, L. *essentia*) is the what-ness of a being with respect to existence. Everything that exists has an essence. For example, the sentence, “It is a human,” affirms that a being (It) exists (is) with the essence of human-ness. The essence of a being tells us the type or kind of being something is. It answers the question, “What is it?” This question has the underlying assumption that something exists and that knowledge of its essence is desired.

It is a man		
It	=	A being
is	=	existence
a man	=	essence

<sup>15</sup> Technically, essence is ‘*what something is*’ in reference to the being itself. Quiddity is ‘*what something is*’ as it is understood by the human mind. Thus, essence is a true principle of being, while quiddity is an intelligibility of the mind. Every being has an essence whether or not a human mind understands the essence.

<sup>16</sup> Muller, Richard A., *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 256, ISBN: 0-8010-6185-7

## First Substance and Existence

Substance (L. *substantia*) is defined as the principle by which a being exists in itself and not in another as a subject. In other words substance is the principle by which a being subsists (*subsistere*) as its own subject. Thus, every being of our experience must be a substance because every being is a subject of existence. The first concept of substance is *the subsistent subject* itself. Thus, Husain (*subject*) is a (first) substance, because he exists in himself and not in another as a subject. It should be noted here that Aristotle used substance in a difference sense.

Aristotle taught that substance was the principle of being that remained the same when a being experienced change. What changed were the nine accidental categories (*predicaments*) of its being, such as quality, quantity, relation, action, passion, place, time posture and habit. Aristotle's substance relates to the essence of a being or what is *predicated* of a being. Thomas Aquinas agreed with Aristotle's view of substance and change. However, Thomas Aquinas did not think that it accounted for the complete nature of being. He taught that existence was more basic than essence. Consequently, he believed that the more basic definition was that substance is the principle by which a being exists as its own subject. Simply put, there must be a principle of existence in the *subject* before there can be a principle of essence in the *predicate*.

Aristotle believed in the eternity of the world. So his mind was concerned with beings and how they could be modified in various ways while remaining the same essence. For example, a human being may change in many ways throughout its life history. Yet, the human essence remains the same throughout its life history. There may be physical changes, such as changes in weight and height, and non-physical changes, such as an increase in knowledge. Thomas Aquinas believed that the universe was created, so he was first concerned with the beings and their principle of *existence*. Only after beings exist, can we discuss the nature of their essence and accidental changes. For an extended discussion on this important point, see the *Chapter II: Being and Substance* in the book entitled, *Being and Some Philosophers*, by Professor Etienne Gilson.<sup>17</sup>

So, *existentially* every being has a principle of being by which it exists as its own subject.

*Substance* is that principle of being whose nature it is to be directly ordered to esse in itself (real definition).<sup>18</sup>

*Substance* is something existing by itself or in itself (ens per se, ens in se); the ontological *accident* is something existing in another (ens in alio).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Gilson, Etienne, *Being and Some Philosophers*, Second Edition, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Canada, 1952, p. 41-73.

<sup>18</sup> Klubertanz, George P., *Introduction to The Philosophy of Being*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Div. Meredith Publishing Co., New York, NY., 1963, p. 114.

<sup>19</sup> Cotter, A.C., *ABC of Scholastic Philosophy*, The Weston College Press, Weston, Massachusetts, 1949, p. 362.

*A substance is a being whose nature it is to exist in itself and not in another as in a subject.*<sup>20</sup>

That principle of being, which we find in real being, by which that real being is (exists) *in itself* and not in another and which can properly be said to be, is substance.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, God must be a substance, because God exists in Himself and not in another as a subject. Furthermore, God has no accidental properties that modify His substance. His substance is pure act or actuality without accidental properties.

## Second Substance and Essence

Secondarily, substance (L. *substantia*) is a subject that is modified by accidents. In this case, substance supports or stands under (*substare*) the accidental properties of a being. It was in this sense, as an essence, that Aristotle understood substance.

*Substance* is that principle of being which is modified or determine by accidents (nominal definition).<sup>22</sup>

The use of the term “substance” is, however, further complicated by the fact that it does not always refer to essence; it may refer to the whole being insofar as it is able to exist in itself and not in another (as opposed to accident, which cannot exist in itself, but must exist in another which is its subject). In this sense, substance has been called “first substance,” and substance as essence has been called “second substance.”<sup>23</sup>

The second sense of substance is the what-ness of a being with respect to the incidental properties of its being. For example, the sentence, “Husain is a tall human,” has the word, tall, which is an incidental property of the substance. In other words, it is not essential that a human being is tall to be human. There are short human beings too. Hence, the property of being tall is an incidental feature of humans. The technical metaphysical term for incidental property is ‘*accident*,’ which has nothing to do with an unfortunate occurrence.

We have seen in the second chapter that the properly real thing, or the being, is the entire thing which is. In our analysis of accidental change we found substance and accident, as principles of being, each in its own way. Are substance and accident to be considered beings in the same sense as the individuals of our experience? They do not present themselves this way. Moreover, we could not legitimately conclude that they are beings simply and properly, for our original evidence begins with a composite, its components cannot themselves be complete beings, on the score that “one” cannot at

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<sup>20</sup> Bittle, Celestine N., *The Domain of Being: Ontology*, The Bruce Publishing Co, Milwaukee, WI, 1939 (3<sup>rd</sup> printing 1942), p. 240.

<sup>21</sup> Klubertanz, George P., *Introduction to The Philosophy of Being*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Div. Meredith Publishing Co., New York, NY., 1963, p. 249-250.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 114.

<sup>23</sup> McGlynn, James V., and P. Mary Farley, *A Metaphysics of Being and God*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, p. 76.

the same time be “two.” It is therefore impossible that a principle of being should itself be *something* which is.

Nevertheless, if substance and accident are the principles of the real, they must also be real themselves in the real thing, since the real is not made up of unrealities. How then are they real? Since substance and its accidents together make up the whole real thing — and the whole real thing is that which properly is — they themselves are real with a many-to-one analogy. The “many” are the constitutive principles of substance and accident, and the “one” is the whole made up of them. This analogy of the constitutive principles to the whole composite which they make up we can call briefly the “analogy of composition.”<sup>24</sup>

For example, the substance of a particular person may have the accidental properties of being tall, heavy, strong, and brown. Another person may be short, thin, weak, and white. While the accidental properties of human beings vary greatly, they have a common underlying substance (*substare*) of human-ness. The accident of whiteness does not inform us about the substance of a being. For example, diverse substance can have white-colored surfaces. There are white buildings, cars, humans, clouds and articles of clothing, but the underlying substance of each thing is very different.

**Accidens:** *accident*; viz., an incidental property of a thing. Thus, an accident is a reality which is conjoined to a thing and which can be withdrawn from the thing without substantial alteration; or, in other words, an accident is a real property contingently predicated of a thing.<sup>25</sup>

## Divine Substance

The divine substance subsists *in* itself and *by* itself. It is true that the substance of creatures subsist *in* themselves. However, the substance of creatures does not subsist *because of* or *by* itself. Rather, God is the ultimate cause of the subsistence of the substance of creatures. Furthermore, the divine substance has no accidents that determine or limit His substance. His substance is unlimited and perfectly actualized. Lastly, divine substance is not an ethereal or heavenly substance of which spiritual beings are composed. It is a *principle* of the being of God.

**Ens a se:** *being from itself*; i.e., self-existent, necessary, noncontingent being, i.e., God. *Ens a se* is thus distinguished from all other *ens* or *entia ab alio*, beings from another.<sup>26</sup>

## Material Substance

In the physical sciences, a *material substance* has a totally different meaning from a *metaphysical substance*. A material substance, such as an iron rod, is itself a

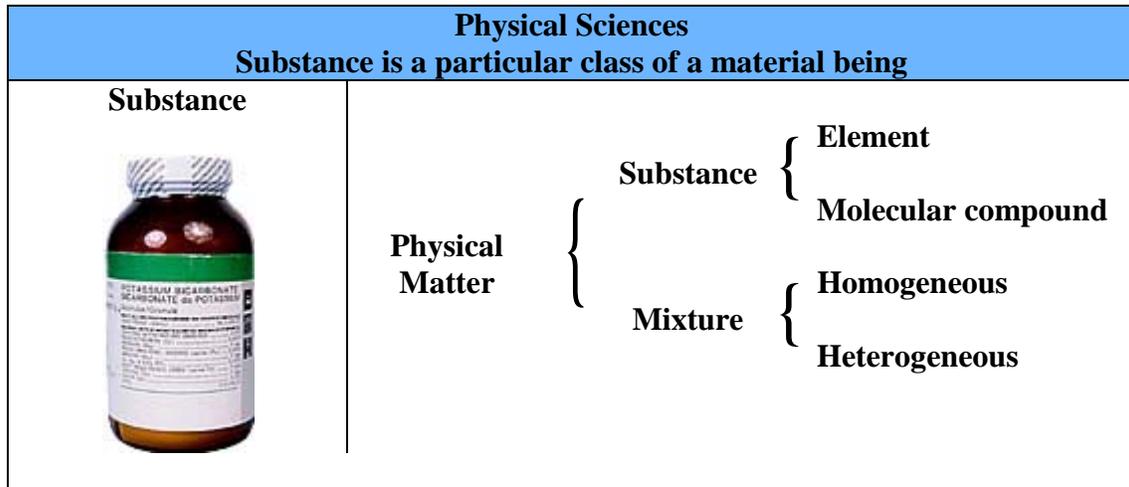
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<sup>24</sup> Klubertanz, George P., Introduction to The Philosophy of Being, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Div. Meredith Publishing Co., New York, NY., 1963, p. 96-97.

<sup>25</sup> Muller, Richard A., Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 103.

*being*. It exists independently as a material object. By contrast, a metaphysical substance is *a principle of being* and not a being, *per se*. The physical sciences divide physical matter into two kinds of matter: a substance or a mixture. Atomic elements and molecular compounds are substances. A mixture is a collection of substances mixed together. Examples of mixtures are saltwater, sandstone, air, oil, and milk.



Since material substances are beings, the principles of being apply to them too. But, it is vitally important not to confuse the term, substance, as it is used in the material sciences with the metaphysical term substance. They are not synonymous terms.

## Consubstantial

Consubstantial (G. ὁμοούσιος, *homoousios*) is a term that signifies the same substance. When it has reference to God, it means the *identical* or the *self-same* substance. It is true that two different people are the same substance, because they have the same *kind* of substance. However, they are not *identically* the *self-same* substance, because they are two different beings. When the persons of the Trinity are said to be consubstantially God, it means they are identically the self-same substance of God. There is only one divine substance.

Accordingly, to be of the same essence with God means, in theological terminology, to possess the self-same essence which God possesses, the unity of essence being not generic but of identity. When the Son is declared to be homoousios with the Father, it is meant that He is a distinct self of the self-same essence with the Father.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Hall, Francis J., *The Trinity*, In: Dogmatic Theology, Vol. IV, Longmans, Green and Co., New York, NY, 1923, p. 204.

## Nature

Nature (G. φύσις, L. *natura*) is the what-ness of a being with respect to its operations or activities. It is not an accidental feature that human beings, eat, grow, see, hear, and have rational thoughts. These operations flow from an inner nature. And, these operations help us answer the question, “What kind of being is it?” These operations indicate the very nature of the being itself. For example, the sentence, “He is thinking,” has the word, ‘thinking’ which is an operation of the rational order. Thus, human nature has the potentiality for intellectual thought.

He is thinking		
He	=	a being
is	=	existence
thinking	=	nature

## Hypostasis

Hypostasis (Gr., ὑπόστασις, L. *suppositum*). In Latin it is called *suppositum*. There is no equivalent term in English, although the word ‘*supposit*’ is employed at times.<sup>28</sup> Hypostasis is the principle of the being’s individual self-subsistence. A hypostasis is an individual, concrete, subsistent, existing in itself. This principle of being relates to the fact that each being has everything it needs for its own individual subsistence. If something were lacking, the being could not exist or subsist.

## Person

A person (G. πρόσωπον, *prosopon*, L. *persona*) is a being with intellectuality; or, to put it another way, a person is an *intellectual* hypostasis. Thus, humans, angels and God are persons, because they are intellectual beings.

It cannot be *materiality*. The spirits and God are not material beings, though man has a material body. It cannot be *life*. Plants and animals possess life, but they are not ‘persons.’ It cannot be *simplicity of nature*. God and spirits are simple in nature, while man is a compound of body and soul; yet all are ‘persons.’ It cannot be *immortality*. God and spirits are immortal in their essence, while man is mortal. It cannot be *infinite perfection*. God is infinitely perfect, but the spirits and man are entirely finite. It cannot be *substance* or *essence* or *nature* or *subsistence*. All individual beings, from inorganic bodies up to and including God, possess these degrees of reality. Then what is it?

The only discoverable element which is distinctive of God, spirits, and man and which is lacking in all beings below the level of man, is *intellectuality*.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Bittle, Celestine N., *The Domain of Being: Ontology*, The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, WI, 1939, 3<sup>rd</sup> printing, 1942, p. 265-266.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 269.

The term person answers the question, “Who is it?” While the term substance and essence answers the question, “What is it?” Every human being is a different ‘who’, but humans are all the same ‘what.’ Husain, Yahya, Fatimah, and Maryam are all a different ‘who,’ even though they are the same ‘what’ or substance. Thus, we can logically ask the two questions, “What is God?” and “Who is God?”

There are aspects of God that are not His intellectuality. For example, as noted in the quotation above, life as life is not in itself intellectuality, because we know that both plants and animals are living substances without intellects. Therefore, personhood is not a life-principle, *per se*. However, life in God relates to what God is in His blest essence. Therefore, God is a living substance; and, as a result, the personhood of God must be living too.

As mentioned above, *nature* is the principle of a being’s operations, actions, or activities. Every intellectual hypostasis exists as a person. So, when we express our statements about the actions of a person, we apply the actions of the whole being to the person.

*Actions belong to the hypostasis or person.* The ‘nature’ of a being is the principle of all its actions. But the nature of an individual, concrete being, as it actually exists in the universe, is always a hypostasis and, if it is intellectual, a person. This fact is clearly expressed in our judgments and statements about things. We seldom refer actions to faculties or parts from which they proceed immediately, but to the ultimate possessor of the nature. We say ‘I see, I hear, I digest, I think, I drive the car,’ although it is the eyes that see, and the ears that hear, and the stomach that digest, and the intellect that thinks, and the hands that hold the steering wheel. Actions are thus attributed to the hypostasis or person. The hypostasis or person is the principle *which* (*principium quod*) performs the action, while the nature is the ultimate principle *by means of which* (*principium quo*) the hypostasis or person performs the action.<sup>30</sup>

As has been noted in the quotation above, we apply the actions of a human being to the human person, the ego or self. In the case of human beings, mental states and functions are accidents and not the substance, *per se*. For example, *self-consciousness* is a state of awareness that comes and goes. It is not continuously subsisting; therefore, self-consciousness is only property of a person. In human beings, the Ego, the Self, or the ‘I’ is the person because it continues in our life history and memory. We express this idea in our common speech when we make statements like these, “When I was in college 5 years ago, I studied chemistry.” “Next month, I plan to vacation in Egypt.” “Right now, I would like a cup of tea.” Although we change in accidental ways through the years, we recognize that we are the self-same person or ‘I’ throughout the years.

These mental states and functions are phenomena, accidents; as such they must inhere in an *Ego*, and this Ego is the ultimate reality within us, identical and permanent

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<sup>30</sup> Bittle, Celestine N., *The Domain of Being: Ontology*, The Bruce Publishing Co, Milwaukee, WI, 1939 (3<sup>rd</sup> printing 1942), p. 271.

amid all changes. The Ego is, therefore, a *subsisting substance*, existing in itself and not in another as in a subject.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, self-consciousness is a *function* which is *possessed* by the *Ego*. The function is a passing mental state, the Ego remains. Hence, the Ego is an intellectual hypostasis. ‘Intellectuality’ is the specific difference between man, spirit, God, and the lower forms of brute, plant, and inorganic body. A ‘person,’ therefore, is an *intellectual hypostasis*.<sup>32</sup>

We are self-aware of the permanence of our foundational ego throughout our life history. We are aware that, although we have experienced various things, we are the same ‘I’ that we were two weeks ago. *Thus, we have a direct consciousness of one intellectual subsisting hypostasis, namely, our own intellectual hypostasis*. It is not just an abstract concept.

I am conscious not only of my present internal experiences: thoughts, feelings, desires etc., but also of *my Ego* of which they are modifications and in which they inhere. Moreover, my memory assures me that *my same Ego* had other or similar modifications in the past. Therefore the existence of some substances is not a mere inference (as Locke thought), but is *perceived immediately* in and with the facts of consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

## The Personhood of God

Human personhood is very limited in comparison with divine personhood. The human mind has both intellect and will. The function of the intellect is to know the truth, and the purpose of the will is to love the good. A human baby is born without intellectual knowledge or love of the good. It starts life as a blank slate, *tabula raza*, and it is only a potential knower and a potential lover. At this early age it has not had the opportunity to obtain knowledge or to learn and love the good. Yet, it does have a mind or an ego that has the ability gradually to learn, in a finite manner, many truths and love many good things. But, truth and love are not subsistent in a human’s person. They are accidental to it. By contrast, an ego is essential to a human’s person, and a baby is born possessing it naturally. It does nothing to obtain a self, like it must do to obtain knowledge. So, a human ego is a substantial principle while truth and love are *not* substantial principles of a human hypostasis. They are metaphysical accidents of a human ego or intellectual hypostasis.

Human Personhood		
Accidental	Knowledge	Loves
Substantial	Mind	

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>33</sup> Cotter, A.C., *ABC of Scholastic Philosophy*, The Weston College Press, Weston, Massachusetts, 1949, p. 367.

It is difficult to understand the divine personhood, because the objects of the divine intellect and will are not accidental properties, rather they are subsistent in the divine mind in a manner similar to the subsistence of the ego of a human person. God is all-knowing and all-known as well as all-loving and all-beloved. They are aspects of His divine *personhood*, because knowing truth (intellect) and loving the good (will) are aspects of an intellectual mind. So, whatever we understand about the personhood of God, it must account for the fact that ego, knowledge, and love are subsistent in the personhood of God, *i.e.*, they are not accidental to His divine personhood.

Divine Personhood		
Substantial	Knowledge	Love
Substantial	Mind	

Furthermore, the primary aspect of God’s knowledge is His own infinite self-knowledge. God’s omniscience is more than His knowledge of this finite creation. In fact, God learned nothing in the act of creating this universe. The creation of the universe did not change God’s knowledge, because God is immutable as well as all-knowing. God knows His own power, wisdom, and being infinitely. As a result, He knows Himself as well as the possible worlds He could bring into existence, if He were to will their existence.

God infinitely knows Himself, so He is both the Knower and the Known. Also, God loves Himself, so He is both the Lover and the Beloved. What pertains to the intellectual nature of God relates to the personhood of God, because the defining element of personhood is intellectuality. The ego, intellect, and will are all subsisting aspects of divine personhood. In the case of God, truth and love are not accidental to God’s personhood, as they are in human personhood. In stead they are each subsisting aspects of divine personhood. Thus, there must be more than one hypostasis in the personhood of God because the subsisting Ego does not alone account for the subsisting truth and subsisting love within the personhood of the one God.

But as there are two things (*duo quaedam*), the mind and the love of it, when it loves itself; so there are two things, the mind and the knowledge of it, when it knows itself, Therefore the mind itself, and the love of it, and the knowledge of it, are three things (*tria quaedam*), and these three are one; and when they are perfect they are equal.<sup>34</sup>

We take from the doctrine previously laid down that God understands and loves Himself; likewise, that understanding and willing in Him are not something distinct from His essence. Since God understands Himself, and since all that is understood is in

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine, Chapter 4. The Three are one, and also equal, viz, the Mind itself, and the Love, and the Knowledge of it. That the same three exists substantially, and are predicated relatively. That the same three are inseparable. That the same three are not joined and commingled like parts, but that they are of one essence, and are relatives. In: Book IX of On the Trinity, Vol. III, St. Augustin: On the Holy Trinity, Doctrinal Treatises, Moral Treatises, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Edited by P. Schaff, W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, Reprinted 1988, p. 127.

the person who understands, God must be in Himself as the object understood is in the person understanding.<sup>35</sup>

As the object known is in the knower to the extent that it is known, so the beloved must be in the lover, as loved. The lover is, in some way, moved by the beloved with a certain interior impulse. Therefore, since a mover is in contact with the object moved, the beloved must be intrinsic to the lover. But God, just as He understands Himself, must likewise love Himself; for good, as apprehended, is in itself lovable. Consequently God is in Himself as beloved in lover.<sup>36</sup>

God has no need to go outside Himself to find a perfectly intelligible object. In His own infinite being there is an infinity to be known which is infinitely knowable. In Himself He is Pure Act with no potency at any level and hence no limitation to His activity. His operation of knowing is therefore infinite. It might be said that since God's being is pure being. He is infinitely intelligible and infinitely intelligent. Hence, once again, we see that His knowledge is perfect knowledge.<sup>37</sup>

In God love can only be infinite loving affirmation. He not only loves, but He is love. He who is His own being is His own love. He is Himself an act of conscious affirmation; He affirms His own being, embracing it in total affirmation of being by being. The human mind stumbles in the light which is darkness when it tries to understand anything more of what it means to say that God is love. Lover and loved are one in a love which is infinite, open, self-possessed, personal, subsistent love.

If in God love is infinite, its primary object must also be infinite: infinitely lovable, infinite goodness. Otherwise there would be no proportion between the love and its primary object. But since God alone is infinite, the primary object of His love can only be His own being. This means that not only is there goodness in God — not only is He good — but He must be subsistent goodness.<sup>38</sup>

What is the nature of a being whose personhood is a subsisting Ego, a subsisting Truth, and a subsisting Love? First, truth is not something discovered by God outside of Himself. Truth is God's own knowledge of Himself. Since knowledge relates to intellectuality, it relates to the personhood of God, *i.e.*, it relates to *who* God is. It is not accidental to God's personhood, because it subsists in God. A proper understanding of the personhood of God must account for the eternal and simultaneously subsisting ego, truth, and love. It is here that reason reaches its limit.

In Christian theology, the divine foundational ego is the person of the Father who eternally generates the subsisting Truth or the Word. God knows Himself intellectually and loves Himself in a personal and eternal manner. This subsisting Love is the Spirit that proceeds from both the Father and the Word.

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<sup>35</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, NH, 1993, 37, p. 36.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

<sup>37</sup> McGlynn, James V., and P. Mary Farley, *A Metaphysics of Being and God*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, p. 258-259.

<sup>38</sup> McGlynn, James V., and P. Mary Farley, *A Metaphysics of Being and God*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, p. 283.

Al-Warraq offers no rational basis for the nature of the divine intellectual subsistence of God. How does truth (the object of the divine Intellect) and love of the good (the object of the divine will) subsistent in the personhood of God? Did al-Warraq believe that truth and love were merely accidental to the divine Mind? Does the divine Ego have to look to the 'Preserved Heavenly Tablet' to obtain truth? Are Allah and the 'Preserved Tablet' both eternal and uncreated beings? Would this not make the 'Preserved Heavenly Tablet' Allah's partner? Isn't the will of Allah arbitrary and unintelligible without infinite Love subsisting in God? However, if the divine will were to love the good infinitely, then we would know that the will of God must be perfect, holy, rational, just, and loving. What ontological basis does al-Warraq have to demonstrate logically that the freedom of Allah's will is not purely arbitrary, but that it is governed by an unchanging, infinite, and eternal Love?

## Logical Fallacies

### Category Fallacy

A category fallacy is an error in reasoning based upon confusion of logical categories. For example, the question, "What is the taste of blue?" confuses the categories of vision and taste. Blue color is not a flavor sensed by the human eye, because the eye is not a gustatory sensory apparatus. Blue things may taste very differently from one another.

For example, a human being is, metaphysically speaking, one substance, namely, a human substance. The fact that a human being is *one* substance does not preclude the possibility that a human being can have *ten* fingers. The reason for this possibility is that substance and fingers are different categories. So accepting the premise that a human being is one substance does not afford information about the number of fingers on the hands of a human being. Likewise *one* triangle does not preclude it from have *three* sides and *three* angles, because triangle-ness, sided-ness and angle-ness are logically different categories.

In the Refutation of the Trinity, Al-Warraq repetitiously presented arguments that, in the end, can be reduced to a single argument. For example, he offered multitudinous arguments allegedly showing contradictions between the *one* substance (*what* God is) and the *three* hypostases (*who* God is). However, because the metaphysical principles of substance and intellectual hypostasis are different logical categories, he failed to prove his alleged contradictions. And, restating a fallacious argument a thousand different ways does not remove its fallacious foundation.

### Amphiboly Fallacy

An amphiboly fallacy is an error in reasoning based upon the use of the same term that can be used in two different ways. For example, a *bank* can be the side of a river (the *bank* of the Nile River) or a financial institution (the *bank* exchanges

currency). The term substance can be used to designate a *being* or a *principle of being*. A being is a real existent, whereas, a principle of being is a metaphysical principle discovered by the intellect as it investigates the abstract principles of being itself.

The Christian doctrine of the Trinity uses the terms substance and person in its creeds. These terms are metaphysical principles that are used to describe the being of the one God in His substance (*what*) and personhood (*who*).

At times, Al-Warraq used the term substance as if it were the *being* of God and not as a *principle of the being* of God. In the physical sciences, a gold ingot is a metallic substance with a particular atomic weight. In this case, substance is used in the sense of the being itself. In the case of a *material substance*, the physical and chemical properties are identical through out the substance. The thermal coefficient of expansion, melting point, electrical conductivity, density, and chemical properties must be the same through out the gold. If these physical and chemical properties vary in a gold-colored ingot, then the ingot must be a mixture and not a substance.

So, if a person were to claim that the ingot was pure gold, but that it had three different thermal coefficients of expansions, a physicist would know that something was wrong, because one chemical substance can only have one thermal coefficient of expansion. Either the ingot was not pure gold or the claimant was in error about the various thermal coefficients of expansion.

Al-Warraq argued that since the substance of God is one and undifferentiated, there could not be multiple hypostases in God. This would be true if God's substance itself were a being rather than one of the principles of being. However, metaphysically, a being is understood by several principles. Metaphysically, the substance answers the question, "What is it?" So, *what* is the God? The answer is that God is One, Eternal, Immutable, Living, Uncaused, Infinite, Immense, Ineffable, Perfect, etc. Next, *who* is God? The answer is that God is three intellectual subsisting hypostases: the foundational Ego, the generated Truth, and the proceeding Love. The substance and personhood apply to the same Being; therefore, the persons of God are all equally and indistinguishably Eternal, Immutable, Living, Infinite, Perfect, etc. *It is impossible to divide the one substance based upon the personhood of God.*

## Al-Warraq's Refutation of the Trinity

Since al-Warraq's Refutation is divided into 150 different sections, the section numbers will be used as points of reference for the reader. The main arguments of al-Warraq's Refutation will be given a response. Often a single response is sufficient to cover several sections of the Refutation. Table 1 shows the order of al-Warraq's Refutation. First, al-Warraq begins by setting forth, as he understands them, the teaching of three sects of Christianity. At section 16 he begins his actual Refutation of the Christian creeds.

## The Refutation of the Trinity

The first part of the Refutation of the three Christian sects.<sup>39</sup>

(Al-Radd 'Ala Al-Tathlith, Al-Juz' Al-Awwal Min  
Kitab Al-Radd 'Ala Al-Thalath Firaq Min Al-Nasara)

<i>Section</i>		<i>Page</i>
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**Table 1.**

<sup>39</sup> Al-Warraaq, 'Against the Trinity', p. 67.

## Sections 1-15: The teachings of the Christian sects

In the beginning al-Warraq set forth the teachings of the three sects of Christians: the Jacobites, Nestorians, and Melkites. He presented the doctrine of the Trinity first before turning to the doctrine of the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In section 13, he stated the basic tenets of Trinitarian doctrine. In this introductory section, he did not define the key metaphysical terms that are foundational to his refutation of the Christian doctrinal claims.

- 13 ... And the claims they set down and agree upon are: The eternal Divinity is one substance comprehending three hypostases, the Father who is generating and not generated, the Son who is generated and not generating, and the Spirit which pours forth from them both;....

## Sections 16-69: The question of the relationship between the substance and hypostases

In this section, al-Warraq attempted to discredit the doctrine of the Trinity by showing alleged contradictions based upon the one substance and three hypostases. Since substance and intellectual hypostasis are different categories, there is no *prima facie* contradiction between one substance and three hypostases. His argumentation fails because he did not properly understand the metaphysical terms of his premises. Several responses to his arguments are given to show why his arguments failed to make his case.

### **Refutation 16:**

*One substance identical with the hypostases*

- 16 The Nestorians and Jacobites should be asked: Tell us about the one substance which you claim is eternal, is it differentiated? They will say: No, for they do not apply differentiation or number to it when referring to one substance. Say to them: Tell us about the hypostases, are they differentiated? They will say: Yes, for according to them differentiation and number apply when referring to the hypostases (by number they mean the Trinity). Say to them: Then if you claim that the substance is the hypostases you are claiming that what is differentiated is what is not, which is contradictory.

## Response 16:

In paragraph 16, al-Warraq's refutation assumed that, if there were no differentiation in substance, then there can be no differentiation in hypostases or persons.

1. Al-Warraq commits a category mistake, because metaphysical substance is one principle of being while a hypostasis (or person) is another principle of being. For example, in a classroom of young students, there is one substance (human-ness), but there are multiple hypostases (persons). Furthermore, the human-ness of the students cannot be differentiated metaphysically on the basis of substance, because each student is equally of human substance. Although they cannot be differentiated substantially on the basis of their human-ness, they can be differentiated on the basis of their hypostases or personhood as well as many other principles of being. Thus, al-Warraq's argument is fallacious and fails to show a contradiction.

A human being is only one substance, namely, human. A human being is not composed of two substances, such as the substance of a human and the substance of a non-human creature like a horse. Yet, the fact that a human being is one in its substance does not preclude other types of differentiation within its being. For example, a human has bones, eyes, hair, fingers, and a heart that are all equally human substance.

2. Emilio Platti has done a critical Arabic edition of *Tabyn Ghalat Muhammad Ibn Harun* by Yahya ibn Adi. In an article entitled, "Yahya B. Adi and his refutation of al-Warraq's treatise on the Trinity in relation to his other works" Professor E. Platti stated that Yahya did not confuse divine substance with the hypostases. In fact, he denied emphatically that the divine substance is the hypostases. Yet, they must be the same principle if al-Warraq's argument were to show a logical contradiction.

"From the first paragraphs, Yahya b. Adi disagrees with Abu Isa al-Warraq, who assumes that "the Jacobites and the Nestorians claim that the Eternal is one substance, three hypostases, that the three hypostases are the substance, while the substance is the three hypostases": No, the substance is not the hypostases!"<sup>40</sup>

3. Christians claim the divine substance is one and that it cannot be differentiated on the basis of substantiality. God is completely a divine substance without a non-divine substance. God is not composed of two or more substances. However, the fact that God is one divine substance does not inform us about the personhood of God, except that it must be divine too. Likewise, a human being's substance is human-ness. A human's arms, legs, eyes, hair, heart, brain, ego, etc are all human substance. To be otherwise, would be to claim that a human being is both human and non-human. This would be a contradiction.

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<sup>40</sup> Platti, Emilio, Yahya B. Adi and his refutation of al-Warraq's treatise on the Trinity in relation to his other works, In: *Christian Arabic Apologetics During The Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, Edited by: Samir, S. K., and J. S. Nielsen, E.J. Brill, Leiden, Netherlands, 1994, p. 182.

4. Al-Warraq stated correctly that Christians claim that the hypostases are differentiated and that number applies to them (*i.e.* Trinity).
5. However, he was in error when he stated that Christians “claim that the substance is the hypostases.” If this were true, then the two terms would be synonymous. But, the terms are not synonymous. Hence, al-Warraq’s assertion fails to show there is a logical contradiction. Metaphysical substance is not the same principle as personhood.
6. Al-Warraq ignored the Athanasian Creed that warns against confounding the Persons and dividing the divine substance. He was aware of Arian controversy and mentioned it in Section 13. He should have probed more deeply into the metaphysical distinctions between substance and hypostasis. Secondly, he should have expected that the personhood of God would be more complex to understand than the personhood of a human being. While the ego of a human being is an intellectual hypostasis, the truth and love of the mind are accidental to it. By contrast, there is nothing accidental in God; consequently, truth and love must subsist in the personhood of God too.

**Refutation 17-18:**

- 17 If they say that the hypostases are differentiated as individuals and as properties though not in substantiality, say: The argument against you stands as long as you claim that they are differentiated in any way and the one substance is not. Further, you claim that the substance is the hypostases, and so you claim that what is differentiated is not. And this is contradictory.
- 18 Then say to them: You claim that they are differentiated as individuals or as properties though not in substantiality. But are not the properties, according to you, the substance? They will say: Yes, so say to them: Then that in which they are differentiated is that in which they are not. This is the most patent contradiction.

**Response 17-18:**

1. Christians say that the hypostases are differentiated as individuals but not in substantiality. Al-Warraq’s argued after this fashion. Granting there is only one elephant substance in the world, there must be only one elephant hypostasis in the world. Yet, we know this is a false conclusion, because, even though there is only one elephant substance, there are many different elephant hypostases.

If an elephant were not substantially elephant, it would have to be some other kind of animal and not an elephant. Among elephants there is no difference in metaphysical substance. Yet, each elephant is a unique and different hypostasis. Likewise, al-Warraq’s logic would conclude, from the fact there is only one human

substance in the universe, there can be only one human person. Yet, we know there are billions of persons who are all substantially identical. The individuation of human substance arises because of personhood as well as other metaphysical principles.

2. Al-Warraq asked, “But are not the properties, according to you, the substance?” He thinks the Christian answer would be, “yes.” But, the correct answer is, “No.” The substance and the hypostasis are not the same principles of being. They are different principles that apply to the being of the one God. So, there isn’t a ‘most patent contraction.’ Rather, it is evidence of his ignorance of classical metaphysics.

### **Refutation 19:**

- 19 Say to them: Tell us about the differentiation between the hypostases. Is this due to the substance or to something else? If they say: It is due to the substance, then they have claimed that the substance is differentiated. And if they say: It is due to something else, then they have claimed that the hypostases are other than the substance. But this is opposed to their views.

### **Response 19:**

1. Al-Warraq’s raised the question as to the basis for the differentiation of the hypostases. He queried. “Is this due to the substance or to something else?” If it were due to the substance, he would have a valid argument. But, it is not due to the principle of substance. Rather, the basis of differentiation is due to the divine Being’s principle of intellectual hypostasis.
2. The being of God is what exists in reality. Existence, quiddity, essence, nature, substance, accident, relation, hypostasis and personhood are all *co-principles of being*. If God were completely defined by substance, then there would be no basis for the differentiation of hypostases. But, God is not completely defined by substance, so there is a basis for the differentiation of hypostases.
3. Apparently, Al-Warraq thought the philosophic term substance was a real subsisting being like its use in the physical sciences. For example, in chemistry, a 100% silver bar is a physical substance or being. It is an undifferentiated physical substance, because all the silver atoms are identical. The material substance of the silver bar has no possibility of internal differentiation, because, in the physical sciences, substance is a term denoting a being, not principle of a being.

But a metaphysical principle is not a being, *per se*. If a metaphysical substance were a being, then what was not substance would be non-substance or non-being. Hence, a hypostasis would be non-existent. But, this is not true of a metaphysical principle of being. The principles of existence, essence, substance, etc

are all co-principles of being, and one principle of being does not negate, as al-Warraq's argument must assume, the other principles of being.

**Refutation 23:** Three hypostases identical with the substance

- 23 Say to them: Tell us about the hypostases. Are they differentiated because they are substance or because of another cause? If they say: Because they are substance, they impose differentiation upon the substance. And if they say: Because of another cause, they affirm a cause other than the substance and hypostases, which is opposed to their views.

**Response 23:**

Al-Warraq asks, "Are they differentiated because they are substance?" From a Christian perspective, the answer to al-Warraq's question is clearly, No! They are differentiated by another cause. The cause is the differentiation required for divine knowledge and love to subsist in the personhood of God. As noted above, a person is an intellectual or rational hypostasis. **There must be differentiation in the divine intellectual hypostases! If al-Warraq's arguments were to succeed against differentiation, he would have proven that Allah's personhood lacked the differentiation necessary for the subsistence of divine knowledge and divine love.**

An intellect is ordered to knowing the truth. A will is ordered loving the good. A person is a *knower* and the truth is the *known*. Clearly there is a differentiation between the knower and the known. This internal differentiation between knower and known must exist simultaneously for intellectual knowledge to exist within any intellectual hypostasis. A knower without the known is not a knower. This is al-Warraq's contradiction. **Al-Warraq has no solution to this differentiation in Allah, because his whole argument is against it. Consequently, if Al-Warraq were correct, he would have proven logically that Allah is as unknowing as a stone, a blasphemous conclusion. This is one of the fatal flaws of the Islamic view of Allah.**

**Refutation 24:**

- 24 And if they say: They are neither differentiated because they are substance nor for any other cause, but their actual beings are differentiated, we say: The first point relevant to this is that you have identified the differentiated beings with the one substance which is not differentiated. And this is clear contradiction.

**Response 24:**

The cause is not the differentiation of the substance or being but the necessary nature of the personhood of the one God. Only persons possess knowledge and love in the intellectual order. It is true that many animals have an instinctive attraction and care

towards their own kind, but it is not based upon their own intellectual powers. Animal instincts were placed within an animal's nature by the creative power and wisdom of God.

The existence of love requires simultaneously a lover as well as an object of love, the beloved. Consequently, for God to love eternally and infinitely requires an eternal and infinite object of love. Without an eternal and infinite object of love, God's love would be temporal and finite. But, God's love is eternal and infinite, because the object of His love is His own eternal and infinite being.

The highest love is an act of devotion between persons which requires more than one person in the personhood of God. **If al-Warraq were correct in his deduction, he has destroyed the logical possibility of infinite love, eternally subsisting in the personhood of Allah.**

#### **Refutation 66:**

- 66 Although their teaching that the substance is other than the hypostases but is not numerically a fourth to them is astonishing, it is no more astonishing than their teaching, and that of Jacobites and Nestorians, that the Father is divine, the Son is divine and the Spirit is divine, though they do not say three Divinities but one Divinity. They say that each one of them is Lord, though do not say they are three Lords but one Lord.

#### **Response 66:**

Why did al-Warraq find it so astonishing that the principle substance can be distinguished from the principle of hypostasis? Even a child knows the difference between the questions "*What is it?*" and "*Who is it?*" They are easily distinguished in everyday speech without the all confusion that al-Warraq afforded his readers. If some one responded to the *first* question and answered, "It is a human being." And someone else answered the *second* question and said, "It is Husain." Imagine the absurdity of someone arguing that the answers cannot designate the same being. Likewise, it is just as absurd to confuse the substance of God (*what*) with the personhood of God (*who*).

Since al-Warraq did not understand metaphysics, even though he spoke the vocabulary, he does not see how the substance and the hypostasis can both possess the same property. For example, Husain is a living person. Therefore, his human substance is living and his person (intellectual hypostasis) is living too. Yet, there are not *two* livings in the one being of Husain. Husain lives just *one* life.

The same is true in the Trinity. God's substance is divine, and the persons of God are divine. So, there is only one divine, because there is nothing to distinguishing the divinity of the one God. The divines are absolutely identical in divinity. This is true of God's eternity, infinity, immutability, immensity, divinity, life, etc., too. However,

an intellectual being has mind, intellect, and will, which are distinguishable from one another, and they should not be confused with what applies to the whole divine substance.

## Sections 70-125: The question of the substance as one and the hypostases as three

### Refutation 70:

70 The three sects should be asked: Tell us about the one substance. Why are its hypostases differentiated so that one is Father, the other Son and the third Spirit, although the substance, according to you, is one in substantiality, eternal and undifferentiated in its being, not composed of distinct classes?

### Response 70:

Al-Warraaq asked a more sensible question. How can the one undifferentiated substance have three differentiated hypostases?

1. God is one in being and one in substance.
2. Every being must be substantially one, because substance is defined as the principle of being by which a being exists in itself as its own subject. Otherwise, if there were two substances, there must be two different beings joined together in some fashion. Substance is “the principle of being, which we find in real being, by which that real being is (exists) in itself and not in another.”<sup>41</sup>
3. Intellectuality is a co-principle of being along with the other principles of being (existence, essence, substance, hypostasis, subsistence) in a being who is a person. The human ego is the only subsisting entity of *human* personhood, because the objects of its intellect and will are accidental to human intellectuality. By contrast, the objects of the intellect and will of the *divine* personhood subsist within its personhood. God knows Himself and loves Himself in the fullness of His own blest being. His Truth and Love are both eternally subsistent. Hence, there has to be more than one subsistent in the personhood of the one eternal God.
4. Each subsistent of the personhood of God is intrinsic and not extrinsic to God’s being. “Moreover, since God comprehends everything in His intellect by a single act of intuition and similarly loves everything by a single act of His will, there cannot be several words or several loves in God.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Klubertanz, George P., Introduction to The Philosophy of Being, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Div. Meredith Publishing Co., New York, NY., 1963, p. 249-250.

<sup>42</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, NH, 1993, 56, p. 51.

5. The answer to al-Warraq's question is that divine personhood is more complex than human personhood. The objects of the divine intellect and will are also subsistent too.

**Refutation 75:**

75 Say to them: Tell us about your claim that they are uniform in substantiality. Do you mean by this that they are uniform because of themselves or because of a cause which is other than them, or not because of themselves or any cause?

**Response 75:**

By definition every individual being is metaphysically uniform in substantiality. In fact, this is one of the most elementary principles of metaphysics. If there were more than one substance, then there has to be more than one being. *Metaphysically*, human beings are one *principle* of substance. *Physically*, humans are a *material* substance. *Chemically*, each human body consists of many *elements* and *molecular* substances. This is because metaphysics, physics, and chemistry define substance differently. Metaphysically, God is entirely divine substance without any non-divine substance. Therefore, the substantiality of God is uniform because of the metaphysical principle of substance itself. Each individual being is one metaphysical substance otherwise there are more than one being.

In a metaphysical sense, being is understood by several co-principles of being. Beings who are persons are intellectual hypostases. In the case of the divine personhood, more than one hypostasis is required to account for the totality of His divine personhood.

**Refutation 89:**

89 They should be questioned about another matter and together asked: Among the attributes of eternity, lordship, power, divinity, is the Father entitled to any that the Son is not? If they say: Yes, they abandon what is known in their teaching and they impose upon the Son a certain degree of deficiency, contingency, weakness and limitation in the perfection which they attribute to the Father.

**Response 89:**

The answer to al-Warraq's question is, 'No'. The substantial attributes of God, such as Eternal, Immutable, Living, Uncaused, Infinite, Immense, Ineffable, Perfect, etc., describe the Father, Son, and Spirit equally. The reason for this is that the persons

of the Trinity are all indistinguishable in the attributes of substance. Therefore, they must be all co-equal as Eternal, Immutable, Living, Uncaused, Infinite, Immense, Ineffable, Perfect, etc. However, the Father, Son, and Spirit are distinguishable by the nature of divine intellectuality. Al-Warraq was only superficially acquainted with metaphysics and Christian theology, so his critiques fall short of their mark.

### **Refutation 90:**

- 90 And if they claim that the Father is not entitled to any of these things to which the Son is not also, we say: Then why is the Father Father and not Son rather than being Son and not Father, and why is the Son Son and not Father rather than being Father and not Son, if the one has no superiority over the other in eternity, divinity or power? The same applies to the Spirit: Why does it pour forth rather than being the one that effects this, and why is it Spirit rather than Speech or Father? And why is the Son Son rather than Spirit? And why is the Father generative rather than being generated? If they claim that each of these three has a property through which it is entitled to the attribute it alone enjoys, they postulate three properties in addition to the hypostases, so that there will be six eternal things.

### **Response 90:**

Al-Warraq inquired, if there is no difference in substantiality, then why is the Father the Father and not the Son? Why is the Father generative and not generated? Why is the Son not progenitor rather than generated? Why does the Spirit proceed and not otherwise?

Al-Warraq is ignorant of the basic rationale for the doctrine of the Trinity. First of all, as it has been stated many times, a person is metaphysically defined as an intellectual hypostasis or subsistent. Secondly, the divine personhood is more complex than human personhood. In a human being, the ego is subsistent, while its knowledge and love are relationally accidental. In the personhood of God, the ego, knowledge, and love are all intrinsic and relationally subsistent.

### *Knowledge*

We need to probe more deeply in the operation of the human intellect and see how the intellect causes abstract ideas to arise from the neuronal data of the sensory organs. This is a very brief outline, so the reader is advised to read additional material on human psychology, particularly Scholastic psychology.<sup>43</sup> Firstly, a human being is

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<sup>43</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *A Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, Translated by: Robert Pasnau, Yale University Press, New Haven, CN, 1999, pp. 450.

Bittle, Celestine N., *The Whole Man: Psychology*, The Bruce Publishing Co, Milwaukee, WI, 1945 (7th printing 1950), pp. 687.

born with an intellect. Secondly, the intellect receives a myriad of sensory data from the exterior world. Thirdly, the intellect produces abstract concepts from these sensory inputs. These abstractions are called mental ideas or representative words. The intellect is not just a passive power of the mind. Rather, it takes the sensory data and actively abstracts the essence from the sensory data of the exterior object and generates a *word* to designate the object's essence. The intellect then possesses an interior *word* that substitutes representatively for the exterior object.

Creation			Human Knowledge		
Creature	Properties		Five Senses	Intellect	
	Color Sound Odor Flavor Surface	→	Seeing Hearing Smelling Tasting Touching	Abstract	→  Mental Words

While the data of human knowledge arises first from the sensory impression of the external objects, God's knowledge is not dependent upon the creation. His knowledge is uncreated and eternally subsisting in His personhood. His knowledge is the knowledge of His own blest being and effects that He could cause by His wisdom and power. God knows Himself, and in knowing Himself He knows His own infinite power and wisdom. God spoke the worlds into existence, and His creation show forth His glory.

Creation	'Be'	God's Knowledge
Creature	←	Word

As discussed above, the infinite and eternal God knows Himself infinitely and eternally. God is both the Knower and the Known, and they both subsist within His being eternally. While humans are receptive of knowledge, God is the uncreated source of all true knowledge. Human knowledge is accidental, changing, temporal, and finite, but divine knowledge is subsisting, immutable, eternal, and infinite.

The divine intellect produces a single concept or idea, the Word (John 1:1), who perfectly expresses the infinite being of God (Hebrews 1:2-3). By contrast, human knowledge lacks this unity and requires many diverse words (Arabic, al-kalaam). The unity of God knowledge is so perfect that one infinite Word (Arabic, al-Kalima) encapsulates all of divine knowledge. This unity is lacking in the Qur'an because it uses the *Words* (الكلام) of God rather than the *Word* (الكلمة) of God.

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Gardeil, H.D., Introduction to the Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, III. Psychology, Translated by John A. Otto, B. Herder Book Co., St. Louis, MO, 1956, pp. 303.

Klubertanz, George, P., The Philosophy of Human Nature, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, NY, 1953, pp. 444.

The Intellect and the Word are the same substance, essence, and nature as God; therefore, *paternity* and *filiation* are appropriate terms to designate that the relationship between the divine intellect and its divine intellection. The same is true in the order of nature between a father and a son. So, the terms Father and Son are appropriate to denote the relationship between the intellect and its intellection because they are identical in essence, nature, and substance.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. John 1:1-2 (NAS)

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NAS)

And in God, the persons of the Trinity are the same nature, essence, and substance. By contrast, an artist may produce a picture, but the picture does not possess the same nature, essence, or substance as the artist. The nature, essence and substance of the artist are human. But, the substance of the painting itself is non-human. It is perhaps pigments, oil and cloth. So, it is inappropriate to use paternity and filiation to describe the relationship between an artist and his painting. Also, since human thoughts are accidental to the human substance, paternity and filiation are not suitable terms to designate the relationship between the substantial human intellect and its accidental intellection.

### *Love*

We discover a difference between the relationship of the intellect and knowledge and the relationship between the will and love. The task of the intellect is finished when its knowledge conforms to the intelligibility of the object. Knowledge is an intellectual apprehension or possession of truth. By contrast, intellectual love is an appetite or desire towards its object. For example, there is a difference between knowing someone and loving someone. Knowing someone is to possess an intellectual representation of the person in the mind. Loving someone is to be drawn towards the other person, and love is not satisfied until it obtains its beloved and manifests its love toward its beloved. Love is not merely an intellectual representation of an object. However, knowledge of the object is necessary for love, because an unknown person cannot be a beloved. The divine will loves intelligently.

In God, the divine will is drawn eternally and infinitely in love to its object, God Himself. This procession of love in God is termed the Holy Spirit. It is a spiration from both the Knower and the Known in one eternal and consubstantial Love. God knows Himself in the person of the Word and loves Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit who eternally proceeds in infinite love from both the Father and the Son.

There cannot be more than three persons in God. For the divine persons cannot be multiplied by a division of their substance, but solely by the relation of some procession; and not by any sort of procession, but only by such as does not have its term in something outside of God. If the relation had something external as its term, this would not possess the divine nature, and so could not be a divine person or hypostasis.

But procession in God that does not terminate outside of God, must be either according to the operation of the intellect, whereby the Word proceeds, or according to the operation of the will, whereby love proceeds, as is clear from our exposition. Therefore no divine person can proceed unless He proceeds as the Word, whom we call the Son, or as love, whom we call the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, since God comprehends everything in His intellect by a single act of intuition and similarly loves everything by a single act of His will, there cannot be several words or several loves in God. If, then, the Son proceeds as Word, and if the Holy Spirit proceeds as love, there cannot be several Sons or several Holy Spirits in God.<sup>44</sup>

### *Openness*

God is infinite in all aspects of His blest and eternal being. To be finite means to be limited and to be infinite means to be unlimited. Since God is omniscient and omnibenevolent, He is unlimited in His knowledge of Himself, and there is no aspect of His being that His knowledge does not know or of His being that His love does not love infinitely. This divine *openness* illuminates the being of God with infinite Light and Love.

God's knowledge in all its perfection, His absolute openness and unrestricted consciousness, can be understood first of all as it is in Himself, apart from any relation to creatures. We can speak of absolute openness and unrestricted consciousness because, being infinite, God is open to the knowledge of all being and actually knows all being since He is the source of it.<sup>45</sup>

### **Refutation 106:**

106 One of the Trinitarian theologians has presented arguments in support of the substance and hypostases, of the fact that the object of his worship is eternally living by Life and speaking by Speech, and that Life and Speech are two properties which confer perfection upon his substance, by saying: We find all things necessarily included within two divisions, substance and accident. An accident does not perform actions and cannot do so, while a substance is that from which actions come; so we assert that the Eternal One is a substance. We find that substances are divided into two groups, living and dead: choice and discernment do not come from what is dead but they do come from the living; so we assert that he is living. Then we see that among those able to speak are angels and human beings, whereas those unable to speak are animals, birds and wild beasts. We find that those able to speak are characterized by

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<sup>44</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, NH, 1993, 56, p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> McGlyn, James V., and P. Mary Farley, *A Metaphysics of Being and God*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1966, p. 258.

knowledge and wisdom and those unable to speak are not; thus those able to speak have superiority over those unable to, so we assert that he is speaking.

...

He [Trinitarian] says: We find those who are capable of generation and those who are not, and so consider those capable of generation superior; thus we judge that he is a progenitor. Hence he is a substance, living, speaking, begetting, one in his substance and three in his Life, Speech and Begetting. There are many among them who favour this argument and demonstration.

...

[al-Warraq] If it is specified by Life because it is substance then it necessarily follows that every substance must be specified by Life as its property perfecting its substance. Thus inanimate objects must be specified by Life as a property perfecting their substances, and so must stones. But if this substance is specified by Life through a cause which is other than its substance, then the statement and proof you set out are false since an eternal cause is established besides the substance, other than it and the hypostases.

### **Response 106:**

Apparently, some ancient Christians likened the Trinity to Life, Speech and carnal Begetting. On the surface, this Trinitarian analogy seems strange and inappropriate. *Life* does not entail intellectuality, because most living things are non-intellectual beings. *Speech* is a physical vocalization used for communication between beings. In the Greek language, *rhema* (ῥῆμα) is the audibly expressed or written word,<sup>46</sup> while *logos* (λόγος) is the intellectual word as known by the mind itself. For example, the intellectual idea of a cow, as a large domestic quadruped, is a universally known idea, but the audible expression of this idea varies according to each language. The audible word is in English *cow*, in Spanish *vaca*, in German *kuh*, in Arabic *hawwaf*, and in Urdu *gaae*. So, *audible speech* is not appropriate to use in place of *logos*, which is an intellectual word providing a person with his own interior knowledge. Finally, carnal *Begetting* is misleading, because sexual reproduction is common to both plants and animals. Begetting in God must relate to intellectuality, if it is to relate to the personhood of God.

However, al-Warraq gave the rationale for this ancient analogy of the Trinity. He wrote that these Christians stated that life gives choice and discernment (*will*), speech is characterized knowledge and wisdom (*intellect*), and begetting indicates a progenitor (*father*). So, if the analogy were stripped of its material aspects, it shows an

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<sup>46</sup> Vine, W.E., *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers*, Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, NJ, 1940, (16<sup>th</sup> impression), p. 230.

underlying understanding of the Trinity. A function of the will is choice, and the will should choose the good and shun the evil, because it ought to love the good and to hate the evil. In God there is infinite and perfect goodness, so the divine will loves God with an infinite love. This aspect of the analogy points to the *Holy Spirit*. The speech in its knowledge and wisdom would indicate the *Son*, and the progenitor is a clear reference to the *Father*.

More strange is al-Warraq's understanding of causality, because he thought that an effect must be like its cause in every aspect. So, he argued that if the substance of God were life, then everything that God created had to be alive. Since stones were not alive, he reasoned that the Christian view of the substantiality of divine life was erroneous. Why he held such an untenable view of causality is difficult to understand. When an artist (the cause) paints a picture (the effect), the picture (the effect) does not have the identical substance of the artist's being. Instead, an artist paints the image on the canvas (the effect) to conform to the mental conception (the real cause) in his mind. Likewise, God created the universe in accordance with His mind and purpose. So, there is a correlation between the cause and the resultant effect without a correspondence to His entire substance. Furthermore, if al-Warraq's view of causality were correct, then the Infinite God could cause only another Infinite God. Since this is logically impossible, al-Warraq's view would entail that it is impossible for God to create anything!

#### **Refutation 108:**

108 Ask them: Must the eternal substance have always been eternal because it is a substance or because of eternity as its property? If it is eternal because it is a substance then every substance must be eternal. But if it is eternal because of a property of eternity then the properties have been increased by one more, and the hypostases by one more; this is opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity and necessitates four hypostases.

#### **Response 108:**

Al-Warraq thought that he had the Christians on the horns of a dilemma. If they were to claim that God's eternity was due to His substance, then it followed that every creature had to be eternal too. On the other hand, if they were to claim that the eternity was due to a property, then it followed that the hypostases had to be more than three.

Firstly, the principles of causality do not suggest that an effect must be like its cause in every respect. If this were the case, then the universe would be indistinguishable from God. Al-Warraq's view of causality logically leads to pantheism!

Secondly, the substance and its accidents define a being. However, there are no accidental properties in God. Therefore, every aspect of the divine Being is substantial, including the hypostases. God does not have any non-substantial properties. If God were composed of substance and accidental properties, then God would be a composed being, and only creatures are composed beings. Al-Warraq's argumentation results in the blasphemous consequence that God is merely a creature!

**Refutation 113:**

113 If they say: God is really divine because of a contingent being which is subject to him, meaning that he is divine only because of the occurrence of a subject being — I have seen numbers of their theologians espousing this, employing and defending it ...

**Response 113:**

As al-Warraq's accusation stands, this ancient Christian claim would be false. The divinity of God does not depend upon a contingent being! Far be this evil thought from our minds! There are many designations of God that have no dependence upon contingent beings. Without respect to contingent beings, God is eternally Uncaused, Immense, Immutable, Eternal, One, Infinite, Life, Wisdom, Love, Joy, etc. However, there are names of God that express a relationship to contingent beings. For example, the Merciful One is a name of God that results from His relationship to contingent beings. There is no requirement of mercy in God towards His perfect and holy Being. On the other hand, ignorant and sinful creatures desperately need the mercy of God every moment of the day. Other names of God that relate to contingent beings are First Cause, Providence, Justice, and Creator.

**Sections 126-150: The question of the different characteristics of the hypostases**

**Refutation 126:**

126 They should be questioned with regard to another issue, and asked: Tell us about the Father, does he know he is Father? If they say: Yes, we continue: Similarly the Son, does he know he is Son? And if they say: Yes, we ask: Similarly the Spirit, does it know it is Spirit? And if they say: Yes, we ask: then is each of them knowing in itself alone? They must say: Yes, in accordance with their own principles, and because there is none among the hypostases who knows he is Father except the Father, nor any who knows he is Son except the Son, nor any that knows it is Spirit except Spirit.

Ask them: Is each of them powerful in itself alone? If they deny this they should be asked about the difference between knowing and being powerful. If they assent to it and make the

two terms equivalent, we reply: Then is it possible for each of them to have created the world alone? If they assent to this they depart from their principles, and they can never know whether each of them created part of the world without its companion or whether each of them possessed a world which it has created alone.

### **Response 126:**

Al-Warraq asked, “Does the Father know he is Father?” Of course, the Christian answer would be yes! Al-Warraq continued and inquired, “Does the Father know he is Father alone?” Al-Warraq thinks the answer *must* be yes, and he proceeds to draw the logical implications of this response. However, the Christian response to the second question would be no! The Father does not know he is Father alone! This second question is utterly nonsensical.

Suppose someone were to ask the question, “Does Mr. Husain know that he is married?” Since Mr. Husain is married to Maryam and he is an above-average intelligent person, the answer is obviously yes. However, does Mr. Husain know he is married *alone* without respect to Maryam? The answer has to be no, because ‘married’ is by definition a word denoting a relationship between two persons. When one of the persons is removed from the relationship, the word denoting this relationship is no longer appropriate. Mr. Husain *alone* is Mr. Husain the bachelor. Al-Warraq’s question makes as much sense as this question, “Does a husband know he is a bachelor?”

Does the Father know he is Father alone? Does the Father know he is Father alone without a Son? Certainly, the Father does not know he is Father without the Son. By definition the term Father entails the term Son. Father is a term of relationship that requires at a minimum two persons. It would be accurate to say that the Father knows he is Father *by means* of his Son. As described above, in the personhood of God, there is both a subsisting Knower and a subsisting Known. It would be irrational to posit a Knower without Knowledge. Al-Warraq’s logic is irrational even in human terms.

The three persons of the Trinity are subsisting intellectual relationships within the one God. The persons are not three individual beings in the one being of God. This would be a contradiction, since *one* being is not *three* beings. If this were the case, then there would be four divine beings and their substances would not be consubstantial. However, the persons are intrinsic intellectual and subsisting relations in the one divine substance.

Since distinction in the Godhead is accounted for by relations that are not accidental but are subsistent, and since among beings subsisting in an intellectual nature personal distinction is discerned, it necessarily follows that personal distinction in God is constituted by the relations in question.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Aquinas, Thomas, *Light of Faith: The Compendium of Theology*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, NH, 1993, 55, p. 50-51.

Since, however, the persons in God are distinguished solely by relations, and distinction among the divine persons is manifested by the notions, the notions must in some sense pertain to relationship.<sup>48</sup>

Since the persons are subsisting relations, they are mutually dependent relationships. Thus, the Father knows he is Father *by means of* the Son. The Son knows he is Son *by means of* the Father. The Spirit is love *by means of* the Father and the Son. The Father loves the Son *by means of* the Spirit. The Son loves the Father *by means of* the Spirit. The Spirit knows it is the Spirit *by means of* the Father and the Son. Thus, it is appropriate to say that intrinsically God knowingly *loves* and lovingly *knows* Himself infinitely, eternally, and openly in His Light and Love.

### **Refutation 129:**

129 Some of them have claimed that the Son is Knowledge. Say to them: Is he Knowledge to the Father and not to himself and the Spirit, or Knowledge to the Father and to himself and the Spirit? If they claim that he is Knowledge to the Father and not to himself or the Spirit, say to them: Then do the Son and Spirit know anything or not? ...

If they claim that the two hypostases do know, ask them: Do they know through themselves or through an additional knowledge? If they say: Through themselves, we reply: Then why, according to this logic, do you deny that the Father knows through himself and not through a knowledge which is other than him or through a knowledge which is his Son? ...

Say to them also: If the Father's knowledge is the Father's Son then the Son's knowledge must be the Son's son, which means that the Son must have a son. Likewise, the Spirit's knowledge will be the Spirit's son, so that the Spirit will have another son. But, if the knowledge of each of these two is not its son then similarly the Father's knowledge cannot be his Son.

...

### **Response 129:**

It is true that Holy Scripture states the Word is the Son (John 1:14); and, in this sense, the Son is Knowledge. Yet, this knowledge must be the knowledge of the Father and the Spirit, since it is the knowledge of the one substance of the Almighty. So, the answer to al-Warraq's first query is that the Father and the Spirit know by means of the Son, and the Son knows himself by means of the Father. Christians do not claim that the Son and Spirit lack this Knowledge. Consequently, the logical difficulties posed by al-Warraq don't apply to the understanding of the Trinity.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

Further, Christians claim that the two hypostases (the Son and the Spirit) know this Knowledge too. So, al-Warraq's query in the second paragraph does need an answer. Here again al-Warraq puts forth a dilemma. Do the Son and Spirit know through themselves or through an additional knowledge? The answers are:

1. The Son and Spirit don't know through themselves alone.
2. The Son knows by means of the Father and the Spirit knows by means of the Father and the Son. They don't know themselves through some additional knowledge beyond the Son. This must be the case, since this Word is infinite and fully expresses the being of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). There cannot be additional knowledge, because infinite knowledge encompasses all knowledge.
3. A Father necessitates a Son, because a person is not a Father without having a Son. If a person knows he is a Father, he knows he must have a Son. Likewise a Son cannot be a Son without a Father. A Son knows he is a Son because of his Father.

Al-Warraq continues. Since Christians grant that the Father's knowledge is the Son, then they must claim that the Son's knowledge must be a son too. This is a ridiculous conclusion for a couple reasons. *Firstly*, for example, does al-Warraq think that a young boy cannot know that he is a son until he becomes a father of yet another son? A boy knows he is a son when he knows he has a father. Likewise, the Son knows he is Son because of his Father. *Secondly*, the divine knowledge knows itself through the intellect. This is necessarily true of the divine mind because the intellect, truth, and love are all relationally subsistent and not accidental to God. *Thirdly*, if the Son were to need a son to know, then this son would need another son to know etc. This results in an infinite regress where there is no son who has knowledge without yet another son. Since an infinite regress is impossible, it would not be possible for any son to have any knowledge. However, there is no need for an infinite regress, because a Son's knowledge is through the Father (John 14:7-11). Thus, God is a God of knowledge (1 Samuel 2:3)

### **Refutation 132:**

- 132 Inquiry should be made of them about another issue. Say to them: Tell us about the substance of the Father. Is it a progenerative substance or not? ...

If they claim that the substance of the Father is not a progenerative substance, we say: Then he must have produced offspring without his substance. This is different from their Christianity and necessitates either that the offspring should be contingent or the assertion of another eternal substance different from the Father.

**Response 132:**

Firstly, the Father is not progenitive because He causes another *substance* called His Son. He is progenitive because He generates a *subsistent intellection*, the Word, who is identically the self-same substance as Himself. Even the human mind does not generate new neurons for every new thought that it thinks. The intellect thinking is one thinking substance. The intellect and its thought are not two different substances.

Al-Warraq seems clueless regarding the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. It is true that carnal begetting requires the genetic substance from both the man and woman to produce an offspring. And, if there were not a contribution from the substance of the father, a child would not be generated. However, carnal begetting is common to animals who are not persons. So, it has nothing to do with personhood, intellection, and an intellectual hypostasis.

The knowledge and love of the human intellect are *contingent* and *accidental* to a human mind. But, divine knowledge and love are *necessary* and *consubstantial* to the intellectuality of God.

**Refutation 135:**

135 And if generation like that of human beings is shown to be impossible for him for this or any other reason because human processes do not appertain to him and are inadmissible for him, then the generation like that of the sun, from fire and from the reason must be impossible for him.

**Response 135:**

Since Christians hold that sexual reproduction is impossible for a non-corporeal being, then al-Warraq insists there cannot be any human likeness to deity, including reason. Of course, if God could have no likeness to reason, then, according to al-Warraq's logic, God must be most unlike reason, i.e., most similar to non-reason and irrationality. Also, it would follow too that God must have no correspondence to all other human likenesses, all because God lacks the physical organs for sexual reproduction! This would remove knowledge, love, justice, kindness, mercy, and existence itself from deity.

Christians have used the example of the sun as an example of the Trinity. It is just an illustration that may be misunderstood. There is a sun from which proceeds light and heat. The sun is likened to the Father who is the unbegotten source. The light is likened to the illumination of knowledge or the Son. The heat is likened to the warmth of love or the Spirit. As with most illustrations they are not meant to illustrate more than a couple of elementary thoughts. If these ideas are missed, the whole point of the

illustration is missed. Al-Warraq missed the whole point and tried to deduce something from the composite and contingent nature of the sun to further his argument.

**Refutation 137:**

137 If they say: We are comparing him with what he resembles, they are openly introducing anthropomorphism — though there is no concern to avoid this in their faith. And in comparing him with any created thing they cannot maintain that the thing with which he is compared is his creation, nor can they deny that he has a resemblance to his creation.

**Response 137:**

As a Muslim, al-Warraq was antithetical towards any anthropomorphic reference to God. In the Qur'an, Ikhlas 112 states "there is none like unto Him." The Sura reads as follows: —

1. Say: He is Allah, the One and Only;
2. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;
3. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten;
4. And there is none like unto Him.

When the last ayah is taken in its literal sense, it removes all possible knowledge of Allah, leaving humanity in the dark agnosticism. Every contingent creature is a being. Since Allah must not be like creatures, Allah must not be a being, because to be a being is to be like a creature. Is Allah non-being? This would be the upshot of the logic of al-Warraq.

In fairness to the Qur'an, it uses anthropomorphic language through out its pages. It describes Allah in terms of Knower, Hearer, Seer, Watchful, etc. There is an apparent internal contradiction between the Qur'an's anthropomorphic language and the statement there is nothing like Allah. This dichotomy has caused angst among Muslim literalists.

In a sense al-Warraq has a bi-polar disorder. This bipolarity is manifest whenever a Muslim claims *there is none like unto Allah*, and then proceeds and uses the words of the Qur'an to indicate the likeness of Allah. For example, Allah is All-Hearing and All-Knowing but hearing and knowing have a likeness to creatures! If there were no creatures that heard or knew, we would not be able to assign significance to the words All-Hearing and All-Knowing. If there were nothing like unto Allah, then humans would have no vocabulary to express the attributes of Allah. We would have to deny that Allah is intellectual, because human beings are intellectual. We would have to assume that Allah a non-intellectual being?

So if they believe as ye believe, they are indeed on the right path; but if they turn back, it is they who are in schism; but God will suffice thee as against them, and He is the **All-Hearing**, the **All-Knowing**. Sura 2:137

"But construct an Ark under Our **eyes** and Our inspiration, and address Me no (further) on behalf of those who are in sin: for they are about to be overwhelmed (in the Flood)." Sura 11:37

Verily those who plight their fealty to thee do no less than plight their fealty to Allah: **the Hand of Allah** is over their hands: then any one who violates his oath, does so to the harm of his own soul, and any one who fulfils what he has covenanted with Allah,- Allah will soon grant him a great Reward. Sura 48:10 [Emphasis added]

All our ideas and concepts come ultimately from studying the contingent beings of nature. All theological language has a dependence upon this initial source too. *Eternal* is a negative word that means *not temporal*. So, unless a person knew the positive meaning of time or temporality, the person would not understand what its negation meant. *Infinite* means *non-finite*. Again, without the positive idea of finite (limited) we would have no idea what its negation meant. The positive human words give significance to negative theological words like eternal and infinite.

If a letter, syllable, or word has no correlation or likeness to a creature, then its meaning is purely nonsensical. The headings of several Suras have various letters (*Alif, Ha, Lam, Mim, Nun, Ra, Sad, Sin, Ta* etc.) that are called the "Abbreviated Letters." These alphabetical incantations have no likeness to a creature, so they are meaningless symbols. Yusuf Ali suggests that they possess a mystical or hidden meaning. If this were true, then it is non-cognitive and beyond the human intellect to discover. Muhammad al-Hilali claims they are one of the miracles of the Qur'an! An amazing miracle indeed! If the ALM (الم) of al-Baqarah (سورة البقرة) were a miracle, it is a belief based upon an irrational blind faith. Except for the "Abbreviated Letters," the words of the Qur'an are dependent upon their likeness to creatures for their intelligibility.

Certain Suras have certain initials prefixed to them, which are called the "Abbreviated Letters". A number of conjectures have been made as to their meaning. Opinions are divided as to the exact meaning of each particular letter or combination of letters, but it is agreed that they have a mystic meaning.<sup>49</sup>

1. *Alif-Lam-Mim*. [These letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'an and none but Allah (Alone) knows their meanings.]<sup>50</sup>

Al-Warraq was aware that Christians were not adverse to anthropomorphic words if their finite limitations were negated from their meanings. When this negation is done, many words are really meaningful. For example, perfect, good, love, beautiful, merciful, just, and peace are positive words that describe the attributes of God. King David wrote that creation declares the glory of God. This would not be true if God were

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<sup>49</sup> Ali, Yusuf A., *The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., Elmhurst, NY, U.S. Edition, 1987, p. 118.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Hilali, Muhammad. Taqi-ud-Din and M. M. Khan, *The Noble Qur'an in the English Language*, Darussalam Publishers and Distributors, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1996, p.11.

wholly unrelated to the creation. Since the Creator is the cause of the universe, there has to be some correlation between the mind (cause) of the Creator and His creation (effect). This is a fixed law of causality. If this were false, then God does not know His creation. The fact that God knows the creation infinitely and we know the creation finitely is proof that we share finitely a common knowledge with God.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat. Psalms 19:1-6 (NIV)

When an artist paints a picture, the picture manifests the imagination of the artist's mind. If there were no correlation between the painting and the artist's imagination, then the painting would be disjunctive and disordered. Primates and other animals have been used to apply paint to a canvas, but the result is never a beautiful mountain scene. These brute animals are not an adequate cause to effect a mountain scene. The cause has to be equal or superior to its effect. So, when we discover the wonders of the creation, we know that the mind of God has to be even more wonderful in wisdom and power. If this causality were denied, then, in effect, the glory of the Creator is denied. Blessedly, Christians adore the Creator of the Universe in His infinite power, love, and wisdom. May it ever be so!

Since the Qur'an uses anthropomorphism, it seems that al-Warraq's criticism would fall upon it too. Does he know the features of the face of Allah? He might reply that the Qur'an uses the word face, but that it tells us nothing about Allah Himself. If the word is not informative, then the word could just as well have been scrambled into any other combination of letters. This process would reduce the wording of the entire Qur'an to pure nonsense; but, of course, then it would be true that it would have no likeness to the intelligible creation, proving after all that al-Warraq and Muslim literalists were correct.

Yusuf Ali has a footnote for Sura 112:3, "He begetteth not, nor is He begotten," where he wrote the following: —

This is to negate the Christian idea of the godhead, "the Father", "the only-begotten Son" etc.<sup>51</sup>

The Christian idea of the godhead is that God is the *progenitor* of His own Word or Knowledge. Apparently, the Qur'an and Islam teach that God has neither intellect nor knowledge! It is a blasphemous assertion! Christian theology teaches that God is an intellectual hypostasis with a subsistent Self who is consubstantial with His subsisting Knowledge and eternal Love.

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<sup>51</sup> Ali, Yusuf A., The Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary, Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, Inc., Elmhurst, NY, U.S. Edition, 1987, p. 1806, footnote 6299.

When Muhammad heard the word *begetting*, his mind did not rise above a carnal sexual act. Perhaps this is not surprising, since he lacked the time to study theological matters. He was occupied with administration, capturing merchant caravans, preaching, and satisfying the sexual passions of his harem. Also, the pagan Arabian believed that Allah begat carnally daughters some whose names were Lat, 'Uzza, and Manat. So, it seems that Muhammad transferred unwittingly this pagan idea of carnal begetting to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Have ye seen Lat, and 'Uzza,  
And another, the third (goddess), Manat?  
What! for you the male sex, and for Him, the female? <sup>52</sup>  
Behold, such would be indeed a division most unfair! Najm 53:19-22

However, such silly nonsense is hardly excusable for Yusuf Ali and other Islamic scholars who have had time and opportunity to study Christian theology over the last fourteen hundred years.

## Conclusion

It is hoped that the Response to al-Warraq's Refutation is helpful to both Christians and Muslims who are sincerely seeking the straight Path to the true knowledge of God as revealed by His divinely taught Prophets and His eternal Son, the blessed Savior of sinners, who died upon Calvary's cross, who rose from the grave, and who is now alive in heaven.

Furthermore, it should challenge Muslims to provide a rational and philosophic basis for the following:—

1. Are the Knower and the Known both subsisting in the being of God?
2. Are the Lover and the Beloved both subsisting in the being of God?
3. In what ways is the personhood of Allah different from human personhood?
4. Does Allah have a Will and an Intellect?
5. Does an intellectual hypostasis of Allah know and love Himself? If so, how?
6. Is the knowledge of Himself only known in the 'Preserved Heavenly Tablet?
7. Is Allah the source (progenitor) of the knowledge of His intellect?
8. Or is the creation the source (progenitor) of Allah's knowledge of His intellect?
9. Or is there some other source (progenitor) of Allah's knowledge of His intellect?

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<sup>52</sup> The pagan Arabians practiced female infanticide. Muhammad mocked their idea that Allah would have female offspring while they would have male offspring. It would appear that the pagan Arabians were more favored than the Allah himself!

# Suggested Reading

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