THE HEYTHROP JOURNAL

HeyJ 00 (2020), pp. 1–15

ELUCIDATING DIVINE IDENTITY

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This article aims to provide a philosophical elucidation of the concept of divine identity proposed by Richard Bauckham. To achieve this end, an original interpretation of the concept is formulated within the neo-Aristotelian essentialism of Kit Fine, which will ultimately enable the notion to be elucidated in a clear and consistent manner and free it from the shackles of ambiguity which has seemingly held it at bay.

INTRODUCTION

Recent historical scholarship has shown that the conceptualisation of monotheism, found within the Second Temple period, was not associated with any type of numerical or quantitative oneness, but was solely a *qualitative* concept focused on a difference between the unique features of Israel's God and all other types of reality.[1] For the Second Temple Jews, Israel's God was one God *because* of his identifiable uniqueness and thus a prominent way that this conception of monotheism has been articulated, within the contemporary literature, has been through the notion of 'divine identity' provided by Richard Bauckham. However, this notion of divine identity, despite its influence,[2] is plagued by an ambiguity issue which has most recently been highlighted by Dale Tuggy. This article thus aims to provide a means for one to further elucidate and disambiguate the notion of divine identity, through reconstruing the *type* of identity featured in the notion within a neo-Aristotelian essentialist framework which will ultimately allow it to serve its purpose of providing a plausible interpretation of Second Temple Jewish monotheism.

Thus, the plan of the article is as follows: in the next section ('The Character of Divine Identity') I further explain the central features of the notion of divine identity. In the subsequent section ('Neo-Aristotelian Essentialism'), I unpack the neo-Aristotelian essentialism of Kit Fine, and in following section ('Essential Divine Identity'), I situate the notion of divine identity within this essentialist framework which will ultimately provide a means to consistently explicate the notion. After this section, there will be a concluding section ('Conclusion') which will summarise the above results and conclude the article.

THE CHARACTER OF DIVINE IDENTITY

Richard Bauckham, in his magisterial work *Jesus and the God of Israel*, has argued that the concept of 'transcendent' uniqueness, rather than that of the ontological concept of (divine)

nature, is more appropriately taken as the principal category for understanding Second Temple Jewish monotheism.[3] That is, as Bauckham notes, for 'Jewish monotheistic belief what was important was *who* the one God is, rather than what divinity is'.[4] Thus, for Bauckham, the essential element of Second Temple Jewish monotheism is not the denial of the existence of any other 'gods', instead, it is the unique identity of God (i.e. the divine identity) that places him in a wholly different category than any other supernatural being that can be referred to as 'god'.[5] Central to this 'divine identity', according to Bauckham, is the possibility of God being identified by features within the two fundamental categories of (a) and (b):

(a) God in his relationship to Israel

(b) God in his relation to reality.

The identifiable features within category (a) are (a_1) and (a_2):

(a_1) God has a name, Yahweh, setting him apart from all other 'gods'.

(a_2) Yahweh is the God who brought Israel out of Egypt.

Features (a_1) and (a_2) expressed the fact that the one God of Second Temple Jewish belief was in a covenantal relationship with Israel. The monotheism of Second Temple Judaism emphasised the fact that the one God had a *unique* name, Yahweh, and a *unique* relationship to his chosen people Israel. However, what was especially important for the Jews of the Second Temple period, for identifying the transcendent uniqueness of Yahweh, were features that distinguished him from his relationship to reality as a whole.[6] That is, category (b) is distinguished from category (a) based on the characterisation of the *divine identity* in reference to God's unique relationship with the *whole of reality*, rather than his covenantal relationship with Israel. The identifiable features within category (b) are (b_1), (b_2) and (b_3):

(b_1) Yahweh is the sole creator of all things.

(b_2) Yahweh is the sovereign ruler of all things

(b_3) Yahweh is the only being worthy of worship.[7]

Features (b_1) – (b_3), according to Bauckham, are the features in which the Second Temple Jews focused on when they wished to identify God as unique in comparison to all other reality.[8] These three identifying features (henceforth, attributes) characterised God's relationship to the whole of reality, and together were the most precise way, within this period, for one answering the questions: What distinguishes Yahweh, the only true God, from all other reality? What does Yahweh's uniqueness consist of?

These identifying attributes thus established a clear and absolute distinction between God and all other reality. That is, firstly, for (b_1), God is the sole creator of all things; he creates all things outside of himself. God is seen as the sole actor in his creative activity (Isaiah 44:23-24). It is God alone who brought all other beings into reality, without assistance or him acting through an intermediary agent. God is alone the creator of all things, and no other being takes part in this activity.[9] Secondly, for (b_2), God is the sole sovereign ruler over all things; all other things, including beings worshipped as 'gods' by non-Jews, are subject to him, in that he reigns supreme over all things outside of himself.[10] All reality, outside of God, is thus in 'strict' subordination as servants to him; there are no co-rulers with God.

Lastly, for (b_3), God is the only being worthy of worship, which is that of there being a recognition that worship was the appropriate response to a being who had the unique identifying attributes of (b_1) and (b_2). Thus, as God was the sole being who possesses these attributes, *he* is the only being worthy of worship. This prescription to worship God alone is thus grounded upon an acknowledgement of God's transcendent uniqueness and identity as sole creator and ruler (i.e. (b_1) and (b_2)),[11] God's unique identity and the exclusive worship of God was correlated with, and reinforced by, each other. Thus, in answering the question of why the Jews would not worship any other being than the one God one would simply point to the fact that they were created by him, and are subject to him, with any good that comes to them, ultimately finding its source in God.

In Second Temple Jewish thought, these attributes thus enabled one to define the uniqueness of God and marked God out from all the reality. Yahweh, the God of Israel, was worthy of worship *because* he is the sole creator and ruler of all reality. These unique identifying attributes (hereafter, UI-attributes) were thus the means of distinguishing God from all else and serve as a way for one to define the uniqueness (and thus oneness) of the God worshipped by Jews within the Second Temple period.

Now, given *this* conception of monotheism, Bauckham sees a further important implication for Christian belief, that of Jesus of Nazareth exemplifying these *same* UI-attributes (i.e. him sharing in the creatorship, rule and worship of the one God) which indicated, according to Bauckham, that Jesus was 'included within the identity' of God, ultimately resulting in the highest possible Christology. However, questions can be raised here concerning what exactly the nature of this 'identity' is which enable Jesus to be included within it? Dale Tuggy, in his article 'On Bauckham's Bargain', has noted that it seems on the one hand, that the notion of divine identity expresses the relation of numerical identity and thus that of Jesus being numerically identical with God.[12] Hence, the action of the New Testament authors 'including Jesus in the identity of God' is simply an abstract way of one stating that Jesus possesses some features which the authors assume that only God, Yahweh, can possess (i.e. sole creatorship, rulership and worship worthiness). This is problematic however, as it quite clear that Jesus and God have differed in their attributes, and thus by Leibniz's Law (which is plausibly a fundamental principle associated with the relation of numerical identity) Jesus and God cannot be taken to be numerically identical.[13]

Although, against this interpretation, certain aspects of Bauckham's construal of the notion, according to Tuggy, suggest that the divine identity relation is not, in fact, to be taken as a relation of numerical identity, but rather as a mereological relation, which results in God being a mereological whole that has, at least, two proper parts: the Father and the Son.[14] This, however, is also problematic, as it is quite plausible that Christians would be hesitant to accept that membership of the Godhead requires that one be 'part' in a mereological manner of it, given the traditional construal of the Godhead as metaphysically simple (i.e. it lacking parts). Nevertheless, Bauckham's language, as Tuggy notes, suggests both of these interpretations of the notion. Yet, both of these claims are indeed incompatible with each other,[15] and thus Tuggy sees that Bauckham, in defining the notion of 'divine identity', is in fact employing a 'consistent, carefully calibrated ambiguity',[16] which seemingly bankrupts the notion of any utility value.

Thus, the question that is now presented to us is if there is a way to further explicate the notion in a manner that will enable one not to be led down the problematic path detailed above. I believe that there is, through re-interpreting the notion in light of a central concept within the field of contemporary analytic metaphysics, that of essence, which has been re-introduced into the literature (in a non-modal format) by Kit Fine. This concept will now be detailed in the next

section, which will provide a means for one to further elucidate the notion of divine identity and ultimately increase its utility value.

NEO-ARISTOTELIAN ESSENTIALISM

Essentialism is roughly the metaphysical view that objects have essential and accidental properties.[17] Within an essentialist framework, philosophers generally hold to a certain range of entities being meaningfully said to have natures, essences and/or essential features, independently of how these entities are described or conceptualised.[18] The primary way in which essences (or natures) have been characterised, in contemporary work on essentialism within the field of analytic metaphysics, is through a *modal characterisation*. This modal characterisation takes essence to be a modal notion, and thus essential truths are a subset of the modal truths.[19] Primarily, the modal characterisation takes two approaches to essence, as noted by Jonathan Livingstone-Banks in his article 'In defence of modal essentialism',[20] where the first is the categorical approach:

> (Categorical) An object *a* is essentially F *iff a* is necessarily F.

And, the second is the conditional approach:

> (Conditional) An object *a* is essentially F *iff a* is necessarily F if *a* exists.

With the distinguishing factor between the approaches being the additional conditional clause in (Conditional). Despite this distinction, however, the central notion underlying the modal characterisation of (Categorical) and (Conditional) is that of essentialist claims needing to be defined in terms of *metaphysical necessity*. That is, a property is essential to an object if it *must* possess it in order for it to exist. This was the common approach towards essence within the mid to late 20th century.[21] However, through the pioneering work of Kit Fine,[22] the tide of opinion has begun to change. The primary method that Fine followed in showing the failings of the modal characterisation was through emphasising the fact that essentialist claims are intuitively tied to *what an entity is* and thus the modal characterisation of essences fails to provide a notion that is, in fact, co-extensional with this intuitive view.[23]

In forwarding this argument, Fine adduces various cases that serve as counterexamples to the modal characterisation account.[24] Within these cases, we see that there are indeed situations in which there are true necessitation claims concerning an object, without, however, there also being true essentialist claims about it. And thus, because of this, the modal characterisation of essence fails to provide sufficient conditions for an account of essence (even though it might provide some necessary conditions for it).[25] Given this, Fine sees that within an intuitively correct account of essence, there is an expression of an *asymmetry* between the notion of essence and necessity, in such a manner that this asymmetry cannot be accounted for by the modal characterisation account.[26] Therefore, as noted previously, there is no co-extensionality between essence and necessity, as the latter fails to explain the former.

More specifically, Fine is highlighting the fact that the modal characterisation account commits one to accept certain predications that say nothing about *what it is to be* the entity in question. And thus, according to Fine,[27] as essentialist predications intuitively *should* do this, the properties expressed by these predications that are in fact irrelevant to the nature of a given entity, can in no way be *essential* to it. In short, one cannot thus reduce essence to any modal notion. Therefore, given this, Fine believes that one must instead proceed to detail the nature of essence through an alternative, *non-modal* approach, focused on the further notion of a *real*

definition. This non-modal, 'neo-Aristotelian' account of essence provided by Fine,[28] centres on assessing the theoretical role that the notion of essence serves in providing answers to certain metaphysical questions concerning *what* the essence of an entity (i.e. what X is, or what it is to be X). Fine thus characterises this explanatory aspect of his account as such:

> [T]he traditional assimilation of essence to definition is better suited to the task of explaining what essence is. It may not provide us with an analysis of the concept, but it does provide us with a good model of how the concept works.[29]

Thus, the types of questions which Fine's account sought to answer, as Sam Cowling notes in his article 'The modal view of essence', can be termed *what-questions* (e.g. 'What is Socrates?') which 'ask for the metaphysically significant features of an individual and are answered only if they explain what some individual really is'.[30] Fine thus identifies essences with specific *definitions* that supply the proper answers to what-questions.[31] That is, Fine holds to the position that an essential proposition about (or property of) an individual should provide a correct, if at least partial, answer to what-questions such as 'What is Socrates?', 'What is man?' or 'What is God?'

Given this, one issue had with the modal characterisation of essence, as noted previously, is that of it permitting irrelevant propositions (or properties) to be taken as essential propositions about (or properties of) individuals. Which ultimately results in it failing to provide a satisfactory answer to a what-question, and thus this approach is deemed as being inadequate in providing an account of essence. Consequently, Fine sees a *definitional* characterisation of essence as being needed for this task, as the essence of an entity are those propositions (or properties) that are part of the entity's 'definition' and thus this approach enables only *relevant* propositions (or properties) to be included within the essence of an individual.[32] Fine's focus in providing a non - modal definitional account of essence, is thus that of stating *what it is to be* a certain thing. At an analytical level, which has partially been alluded to above, this type of essence is construable in two ways, in terms of:

(i) true propositions concerning the entity in question
(ii) properties essentially possessed by the entity in question

Thus, for (i), Fine suggests that we take the essence of a given entity x to be defined as such:

> (Essence$_1$) The essence of $x =_{df}$ the collection of all propositions that are true in virtue of the nature of x.

Importantly, Fine sees that the 'true in virtue of the nature of' locution signifies an unanalysed relation between a proposition and an entity. Where a proposition bears this relation to an entity when that proposition is true because of that entity being the entity that it is. That is the entity has the nature that it has.[33] However, alternatively, for (ii), Fine also suggests that the essence of a given entity x be defined as such:

> (Essence$_2$) The essence of $x =_{df}$ the collection of the essential properties of x.

Where a given property is part of the collection of the properties that are possessed essentially by an entity, due to it being of the entity's *nature* to possess that property. Now, Fine leaves it open whether one is to assume the proposition-based characterisation of (Essence$_1$) or the property-based characterisation of (Essence$_2$).[34] And thus, Fine takes an essence, at a general level, to be either the collection of propositions, that are true in virtue of the nature of the particular entity

whose essence it is, or the collection (or plurality) of properties that are essentially possessed by that entity. One can characterise essence in either way, or with Fine, assume both.[35]

Nevertheless, whatever starting point is taken, the central element of the non-modal construal of essence, as noted above, is that of essence acting as a *definition* of the entity in question, as Fine notes, 'my overall position is the reverse of the usual one. It sees real definition rather than *de re* modality as central to our understanding of the concept'.[36] And, as he further writes, that 'just as we may define a word, or say what it means, so we may define an object, or say what it is'.[37] Essence is thus taken by Fine to be ontologically equivalent to a linguistic definition in that, in a similar manner to the latter, which states what a certain term means, an essence, acting as a *real definition* of an entity, states what that object is. Thus, for Fine, a statement of essence is a real definition, through it specifying what it is to be that certain entity.[38] It *reveals* and *explains* the essence of an entity (without being a distinct entity from that essence).

Now, how a real definition is (usually) formulated is through a '<To be>' construction, such as '<To be X is to be Y>'. Thus, for example, an accurate real definition of Gold would be the following: '<To be Gold is to be a metal whose atomic constituents have atomic number 79>'.[39] Where the *definiendum*, that is the entity that appears on the left side of the '<To be>' construction, is the entity to be defined, which in this case is the phrase 'Gold'. And the *definiens*, that is the entity that appears on the right side of the '<To be>' construction, performs the function of *uniquely identifying* and explaining the essential nature of the *definiendum*, which, in this example, is the phrase 'a metal whose atomic constituents have atomic number 79'.

A statement that purports to express a real definition, in the sense delineated above, is indeed successful, as Katherin Koslicki helpfully writes in her article 'Varieties of ontological dependence', if it 'not only uniquely identifies and delineates the entity to be defined, but also states what it is to be the entity in question i.e. if it is explanatory of the essential nature of the *definiendum*'.[40] Thus, a real definition enables one to further understand *what it is* to be a certain kind of entity. Where if the definition is successful, it will then express the *identity* of the specific object. The defining entity thus provides a *distinct way* of referring to the essence of the entity to be defined, which it is related to. With the entity on the right side of the '<To be>' construction being definitionally related to the entity on the left side of the '<To be>' construction. And thus, the *definiens* provides one with further illumination about the *definiendum*.

Real definitions thus act in a manner as explanatory principles, in that they tell us, in the most perspicuous manner, *what the entity is*. Fine thus sees such collection of propositions (or essential properties), that are true (or had) in virtue of the nature of an entity, as a real definition of the entity in question. These propositions (or properties) are thus definitive of that specific entity. Furthermore, how entities feature within the essence of another entity is through them being in a *constitutive relationship with the real definition of that entity*. Thus, in adopting a term proposed by Koslicki in a different setting,[41] we can say that the entities that pertain to (i.e. feature within) the essence of another entity are *essential constituents* of that entity.

Where we define essential constituency as such:

> (EC) Essential Constituency $=_{df}$. An entity, x, is an essential constituent of an entity, y, just in case x is a constituent in a real definition of y.[42]

This notion of essential constituency will indeed be helpful in enabling us to achieve our clarificatory task below. However, prior to showing this, and off of the general view of essence provided by Fine, a further precisification of this view is made by him in attempting to deal with a pertinent issue against his account, which is that of it being saddled with the arbitrariness problem that was faced by the modal characterisation account.[43] This is that, focusing on (Essence_1), we can see that given the fact that within Fine's account, essential

predication is closed under logical closure, and thus it is the case that whenever a proposition is true of an entity, suchas

(iii) <Socrates is a human>

then it also a logical consequence that further propositions such as:

(iv) <Socrates is human or a mountain> or

(v) <Socrates is a human or not a human>

would also be true of that entity. One will thus potentially be forced to include arbitrary propositions (or properties) in the essences of objects that are seemingly unrelated to what it is to be that certain thing. Thus, one will be presented with the issues faced by the modal characterisation of essence. Therefore, for these types of propositions to not to be included within the essence of objects, according to Fine, a distinction needs to be made between the *constitutive essence* (i.e. essence 'narrowly construed') of an entity and the *consequential essence* (i.e. essence 'widely construed') of an entity.[44] Now in defining the constitutive essence of an object *x* we are to construe it as such:

(Constitutive) The constitutive essence of $x =_{df}$ The set of all propositions that are not derived, under logical closure, by some more basic propositions in the essence of the *x*.

Therefore, a proposition is part of the constitutive essence of an entity simply if that proposition is not true in virtue of it being a logical consequence of some more basic essential propositions that are part of the essence of that entity. Where something is a logical consequence of something else if it is a logical truth concerning that entity that it has the former thing (or the former thing is true of it) whenever it has the latter thing (or the latter thing is true of it).[45] Thus, for example, it is part of the constitutive essence of Socrates' singleton set that it includes Socrates as a member. Similarly, it is part of the constitutive essence of Socrates that he is a man. Within this approach, propositions within the constitutive essence of an object are thus the most basic propositions of that entity's essence. They have a *direct bearing* on what it is to be that specific entity, in that they are directly definitive of that entity and pertain to its nature.[46] Conversely, in defining the consequentialist essence of *x,* we are to construe it as such:

(Consequential) The consequential essence of $x =_{df}$ The set of all propositions that are derived, under logical closure, by the more basic propositions within the constitutive essence of *x*.

Thus, a proposition belongs to the consequential essence of an entity if that proposition is true in virtue of it being a logical consequence of some more basic essential propositions that are part of the essence of that entity. So, for example, it is part of the consequential essence of Socrates' singleton that it contains some member or another. And in the same vein, it is part of the consequential essence of Socrates that he is a man or a mountain, or that everything is either coloured or not. Propositions, such as these, are thus part of the consequential essence of an entity because they are a consequence of an entity's more basic essential propositions and, specifically for the latter example, they are logically implied by any other proposition. These propositions are only definitive of the entity through their connection to other, more basic propositions and thus they do not directly pertain to its nature.

So, we see, according to Fine, that there are parts (i.e. propositions) of an entities essence that are basic, through contributing in a *direct manner* to the definition of that entity. These are

essential constituents that are *true in virtue of the nature* of the entity in question, and are thus found within the constitutive essence of it. Furthermore, there are also parts (i.e. propositions) of an entity's essence that are more *derivative* through them not contributing in a direct manner to the definition of the entity. Thus, these propositions are logically implied by the propositions that are true in virtue of the nature of the entity in question. Which results in them being found in the consequential essence of the individual and thus are not part of the entities constitutive essence.

In sum, by maintaining this distinction between a constitutive and consequential essence, and taking as *basic* the former type of essence, and defining the latter in terms of it by means of logical closure, the problematic closure propositions of (iii) – (v) (and others) do not feature in the (constitutive) essence of an entity. And thus, one is not saddled with the issues faced by the modal characterisation of essence.[47]

Taking this all into account, from our unpacking of the non-modal (neo-Aristotelian) conception of essence provided by Fine, we can now finally turn our attention towards the task of consistently explicating the notion of divine identity.

ESSENTIAL DIVINE IDENTITY

In elucidating the notion of 'divine identity,' we take the type of identity featured in the notion to *not* be the *relation* of (numerical) identity (symbolised by the equals sign '='), which everything necessarily bears to itself and nothing else (and which was the primary reading of the notion noted above), but rather identity in the sense of *essence*. Identity is taken in the sense of 'what X is, what it is to be X', which more fully is that of (Essence_1): the collection of propositions that are true in virtue of the nature of an entity or (Essence_2): the collection of essential properties of the entity. This collection expresses *what a thing is*, or *which thing, of a certain kind, a thing is*, and is most perspicuously revealed by a real definition.

Furthermore, as was also previously noted, essence (in the form of (Essence_1) and (Essence_2)), according to Fine, may be either constitutive or consequential. Where, firstly, as stated in (Constitutive), the constitutive essence of an entity is the collection of propositions (or properties) that are not true (or had) in virtue of being a logical consequence of some more basic essential propositions (or properties); they have a direct bearing on *what* an entity is. And, secondly, as stated in (Consequential), the consequential essence of an entity is the collection of propositions (or properties) that are a logical consequence of propositions (or properties) belonging to the constitutive essence that entity. So, taking this notion of essence into account, and now solely focusing on the first type of essence: constitutive essence, we can formulate an alternative construal of the notion of divine identity as follows:

(DI_1) Divine Identity $=_{\text{df}}$. The constitutive essence of God, as stated by a real definition.

Now, in fleshing out this definition of divine identity, we firstly take God to be (numerically identical to) the Father. The Father is just the one God, yet he is part of a Trinity composed of three divine persons; the Father, the Son and the Spirit.[48] Secondly, we see that the constitutive essence (i.e. what God is) is the collection of propositions (or properties) that are true (or had) in virtue of God's nature. That is, God's constitutive essence are a collection of propositions (or essential properties) that are tied to him by an (unanalysed) locution (i.e. the 'true in virtue of the nature of' locution). Thus, in further specifying (DI) by unpacking the meaning of the notion of a 'constitutive essence', we can state it as such:

(DI_1*) Divine Identity $=_{df}$. The collection of propositions (or essential properties) that are true (or had) in virtue of the nature of God.

These propositions (or properties), being constitutive of God, are not had in virtue of being a logical consequence of some more basic essential propositions (or properties); they have a direct bearing on *what* God is. Thus, for example, the proposition

(vi) <God is omnipotent> (or the property of *being omnipotent*)

would plausibly be part of the constitutive essence of God, whereas the proposition

(vii) <God is omnipotent or evil> (or the property of *being omnipotent or evil*)

would not be part of the constitutive essence of God, but would instead be part of the consequential essence of him. As the collection of propositions (or properties) that are true (or had) in virtue of the nature of God, express what it is *to be God*, as opposed to any other entity, and these propositions (or properties) would not be true (or had) in virtue of the nature of any other entity, but solely by the nature of God. Furthermore, as previously explained, real definitions are collections of propositions (or essential properties) that reveal the essence of a given object (whilst still being identical to that essence). That is, the real definition of God, embedded in the '<To be>' construction, that reveals his constitutive essence, takes into account *what it is to be* the entity that he is, which is primarily that of being a person of a certain *type*, namely an identifiably unique person the sole creator, ruler and being (entity) worthy of worship. This real definition of God can plausibly be stated as such:

(GOD_1) <To be God is to be a particular object that has the unique identifying attributes of (b_1) being the sole creator (b_2) being the sole ruler and (b_3) being the only being entity worthy of worship, as essential constituents>.

Thus, we see here that this real definition has God as the entity to be defined (i.e., the *definiendum*), together with the nounphrases 'a particular object that has the unique identifying attributes of (b_1) being the sole creator, (b_2) being the sole ruler and (b_3) being the only being worthy of worship, as essential constituents', standing for the entities (i.e. propositions) in terms of which the entity God is to be defined (i.e., the *definiens*). These two expressions are connected by a relational term which stands for the definitional relation that holds between the *definiendum* and the *definiens* in this real definition. There is thus a definitional relationship, between God and the entities that define him (i.e. 'the UI-attributes'). That is, we see here that as God is, for example, an instance of the kind Deity, God's essence is *what it is to be* that specific deity, as opposed to some other type of entity (viz. a particular 'divine' object, rather than a mere particular object). Thus, the above statement, that purports to be a real definition of God, *uniquely identifies* and delineates God, by stating *what it is to be* God. It is explanatory of the essence of the *definiendum*, his constitutive essence, through the *definiens* presenting a distinct way of referring to this essence.

Given this real definition of the (constitutive) essence of God, one cannot understand what it is to be God without taking into account what type of entity he is, which is grounded upon his essential constituents. Now one can ask how the UI-attributes of God are included within the constitutive essence of God so as to serve as essential constituents of him? We can answer this question through applying (EC) within our specific context.

(EC_1) Inclusion of UI-attributes: The attributes of being the sole creator, sole ruler and the only being worthy of worship are essential constituents of God in the sense that these attributes are constituents in a real definition of God.

That is, the three UI-attributes are each a constituent in the above real definition of God that expresses what God *is*, in that one cannot understand *what* God is without understanding the real definition of him as containing these UI-attributes. Thus, for one to propose a real definition of God's (constitutive) essence (i.e. what it is to be God, as opposed to some other entity), the entity in which God is in a definitional relationship with, that is the UI-attributes of 'being the sole creator, sole ruler and only being worthy of worship', would need to be taken into account. These attributes 'constitute' the essence of God, by being the entities *in virtue* of which he is the entity that he is (i.e. a deity/divine being), rather than any other entity (i.e. non-deity/divine being) which would indeed lack these attributes.

We thus have a further precisification of what the notion of divine identity *means*; the constitutive essence of God, which includes a definitional relation between God and his UI-attributes that serve as constituents of this real definition. We can thus further detail the meaning behind the notion of divine identity (DI) as such:

> (DI_2) Divine Identity $=_{df}$. The constitutive essence of God, as stated by a real definition, that has the UI-attributes (i.e. being the sole creator, being the sole ruler and being the only being worthy of worship) as constituents.[49]

This is a more 'fine-grained' construal of the divine identity of God, which provides a framework for us to work towards fully explicating the notion at hand. To achieve this end; however, we will need to further *define* God in light of his relationship to the person of Jesus, or, in Bauckham's phraseology, we need to 'include Jesus in the divine identity'. That is, in the present context, we need to take the constitutive essence of God to include the person of Jesus *as a constituent*. With the specific type of constituent that he is, as with the UI-attributes, being that of an essential constituent.

Prior to doing this however, a pertinent objection can be raised here concerning the question of how Jesus, a contingent entity who came into existence at a specific point in time (i.e. 4-6 CE) could be part of the essence of God, a necessary and eternal being, who would thus be essentially constituted in the manner that he is prior to the temporal beginning of Jesus?

To answer this objection, we can take it to be the case that at a more precise level it is not Jesus *per se* who is an essential constituent of God, but, instead, it is the entity *who became incarnate in the person of Jesus*, which we can designate as 'the Son'. And by the Son being numerically identical to the person of Jesus, as the former is included within the constitutive essence of God (which we can also take to be the case given that the eternal begetting of the Son by God constitutes him as *the Father*), so is the latter to be included as well. Thus, from this basis, in understanding how the person of Jesus is included within the constitutive essence of God (so as to serve as an essential constituent of him) we can again apply (EC) within our specific context as such:

> (EC_2) Inclusion of Jesus: Jesus is an essential constituent of God in the sense that he is a constituent in a real definition of God.

According to the (EC_1) above, and now (EC_2), the constitutive essence of God *involves* the UI-attributes and the person of Jesus as constituents, in the sense that the UI-attributes *and* the person Jesus, are each *part of what God is, or what it is to be God*. In short, they help to identify God *as God*.[50] That is, they directly pertain to his nature, through these attributes *and* the person of Jesus being constituents of God's real definition. Previously, we constructed a real definition of God in the form of (GOD_1) which included what God essentially is; the sole creator, sole ruler and only being worthy of worship. Thus, in taking this definition into account, what it means to 'include Jesus within the divine identity', is that of one simply *expanding* the real definition of God (which *is* his essence (and identity)) so as to include Jesus within it. This is done as such:

> (GOD_2) <To be is to be God a particular object that has the unique identifying attributes of (b_1) being the sole creator, (b_2) being the sole ruler, (b_3) being the only being worthy of worship and the person of Jesus (i.e. the incarnate Son), as essential constituents>.

It is important to emphasise, however, that the entity who became incarnate in the person of Jesus, that is the Son, has always been an essential constituent of God. However, due to Jesus, in the minds of the New Testament authors, having exhibited the UI-attributes of God, there is a *recognition* that it is *the person of Jesus* (and no other entity) that is the entity who is part of what it is to be God (i.e. the constitutive essence of God). The inclusion of Jesus in the identity of God is thus a temporal recognition of a fact concerning the incarnate state of the Son (who is an individual that has always been (and will always be) definitionally related to God).

Now, in distinction from Bauckham's previous interpretations of the notion of divine identity, this construal of the notion is thus not to be taken as an identity *relation*, or any type of mereological relation. Rather, there is simply a relation of essential constitution and identity in the sense of the real definition (i.e. constitutive essence) of God. Thus, the problems that are presented to a proponent of the identity and mereological interpretations are not presented to an adherent of the current proposal. As, firstly, there is no transgressing of Leibniz' Law (which was raised against the identity interpretation) and, secondly, the only 'parts' posited are those of the constitutive essence (and real definition) of God which is to be held in distinction from God himself (with a more robust construal of the 'parts' of God being an issue that was raised against the mereological interpretation).

Given this, by proceeding with the current proposal, we see that there is great intimacy between the person of Jesus, on the one hand, and God, on the other hand, who's constitutive essence the former is an essential constituent of. Thus, divine identity, construed as God's constitutive essence*, includes* Jesus within it, in that we can take Jesus (along with the UI-attributes) to be constituents of a definition of what and who God is. In other words, God would not be (or, more specifically, he would not be defined as) the entity that he is *if* Jesus (and his attributes) were not included within his essence. One cannot understand *what it is to be God* without taking into account these attributes *and* understanding what (and who) Jesus is as well.

Therefore, for one to propose a real definition of God's constitutive essence (i.e. what it is to be God, as opposed to some other divine entity), and to provide an answer to a 'what-question' (e.g. what is God?) these UI-attributes, and, most importantly, Jesus, would be constituents of this real definition, and fundamental to a correct answer to this question. Thus, taking this into account, we can illustrate this inclusion of Jesus 'in the identity of God' through Figure 1 below (where the identity (i.e. constitutive essence) and real definition in question is that of God's):

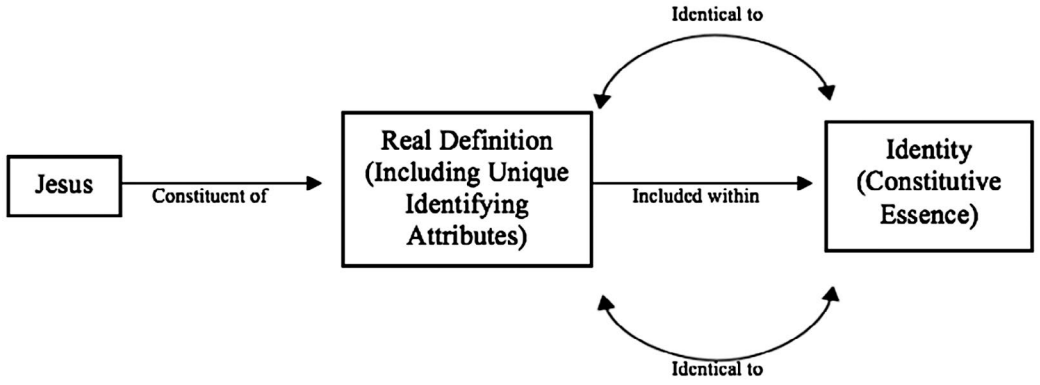

Figure 1. Inclusion within the divine identity

With this position mapped out here, we have an explanation (of a metaphysical nature) for what (and who) God is and why God is God (or why God possesses the constitutive essence that he does). It is in virtue of the UI-attributes *and* Jesus serving as essential constituents of God, that God *is* God. In short, God is what (and who) he is *in virtue* of his UI-attributes and Jesus. Jesus is thus integral to the 'identity' of God. And therefore, off of this basis, we can provide our final construal of the notion of divine identity as such:

> (DI_3) Divine Identity $=_{df}$. The constitutive essence of God, as stated by a real definition, that has the UI-attributes (i.e. being the sole creator, being the sole ruler and being the only being worthy of worship), and the person of Jesus (i.e. the incarnate Son), as constituents.[51]

In (DI_3) we thus have a way of expressing the uniqueness inherent within Second Temple Jewish monotheism through re-construing the notion of divine identity as that of God's constitutive essence, which is revealed by a real definition that includes the UI-attributes of God and the person of Jesus as essential constituents. Thus, this approach, rather than being incoherent or ambiguous, is seen to simply be grounded upon the definitional approach of constitutive essence, provided by Fine, which allows us to clearly 'define' God as being the particular, and thus unique, entity that is essentially constituted in a specific way; a way that includes the UI-attributes and the person of Jesus. By assuming the account proposed here (i.e. (D_3)) we see that these attributes and the person of Jesus, are constitutive of what (and who) God is, that is his 'identity' (i.e. constitutive essence). They, the UI-attributes and the person of Jesus, through fulfilling this role, directly bear on him, and no other entity, outside of God, possesses this 'identity' (with these essential constituents) and is, therefore, defined in *this* specific way. God is thus 'transcendently unique'.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the notion of 'divine identity' has been consistently explicated and elucidated by taking the 'identity' of God to be that of constitutive essence (and real definition) rather than that of identity in the relational or mereological sense (i.e. numerical identity and a part/whole relation). Thus, the issues raised by Tuggy against Bauckham's interpretation of the notion do not feature in the account proposed here. Instead, this account provides us with a way to further clarify the meaning behind the notion of 'divine identity' and the fact of Jesus being 'included within the identity of God' which, construed in *this* sense, can serve its end of being a plausible notion of Second Temple Jewish monotheism and the highest possible Christology.

Notes

1 Aside from Richard Bauckham, *Jesus And The God Of Israel: God Crucified And Other Essays On The New Testament's Christology Of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), whose work is the focus of this article, this historical scholarship also includes individuals (and works) such as Michael Heiser, 'Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible', *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18/1 (2008): pp. 1-30, Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion To Jesus In Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), N.T. Wright, *The New Testament And The People Of God* (London: SPCK, 1992) and Pinchas Lapide, *Jewish Monotheism And Christian Trinitarian Doctrine: A Dialogue By Pinchas Lapide And Jürgen Moltmann. Translated by Leonard Swidler* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981). This shift in focus from a *quantitative* conception of monotheism (as strict numerical identity) to that of a *qualitative* conception, is based in part on the historical developments that took place within the Second Temple period, centred around controversies such as the 'Two Powers Heresy', which allowed for

certain divisions to exist within the Godhead. This specific historical development (and controversy) within Second-Temple Judaism complements the approach focused on here; however, given the philosophical focus of this article, a further explication of this development will not be taken up in this particular study. For this, see Peter Schafer, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002). I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this specific development to my attention.

2 Bauckham himself notes this influence in writing about his earlier work in which this concept was introduced, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), that 'For a small book it seems to have made a large impact' Bauckham, *Jesus*, ix.

3 The notion of a nature that Bauckham rejects here is that of the collection of the divine properties that usually serve to secure monotheism and not that of the notion of essence which will feature below.

4 Bauckham, *Jesus*, 2.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 See James McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism In Its Jewish Context* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2009) pp. 1-22.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Dale Tuggy, 'On Bauckham's Bargain', *Theology Today* 70/2 (2013): pp. 128-143.

13 The strict identity relation (=) has the following formal characteristics:

(1) Reflexivity: $x=x$.
(2) Symmetry if $x=y$, $\rightarrow y=x$.
(3) Transitivity if $x=y$ and $y=z$, $\rightarrow x=z$. Importantly, the strict identity relation obeys the following law:
(4) Leibniz's Law: $x=y \rightarrow (F)(Fx \leftrightarrow Fy)$.

14 Tuggy, 'Bargain'.

15 In that, keeping the difficult notion of composition as identity to the side, a whole is not numerically identical to each of its parts.

16 Tuggy, 'Bargain', 7.

17 Sonia Roca-Royes, 'Essential Properties and Individual Essences', *Philosophy Compass* 6/1 (2011): pp. 65-77.

18 Ibid. Cf. Teresa Robertson & Philip Atkins, 'Essential Vs. Accidental Properties', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. October 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/essential-accidental.

19 See Katherin Koslicki, 'Essence and Identity', in: Mircea Dumitru (eds.) *Metaphysics, Meaning and Modality: Themes from Kit Fine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) pp. 113-140.

20 Jonathan Livingstone-Banks, 'In defence of modal essentialism', *Inquiry* 60/8 (2017): pp. 816-838.

21 Found prominently in the work of Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), Hilary Putnam, *Mind, Language And Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) and Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974).

22 Kit Fine, 'Essence and Modality: The Second Philosophical Perspectives Lecture', *Philosophical Perspectives* 8/1 (1994a): pp. 1-16; 'Senses of Essence', in: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, Dianna Raffman & Nicholas Asher (eds.) *Modality, Morality and Belief. Essays in Honor of Ruth Barcan Marcus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 53-73; 'Ontological Dependence', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 95/1 (1995): pp. 269-290.

23 Livingstone-Banks, 'In defence'.

24 The most famous of these cases, which serves as a counterexample, centres on Socrates and the singleton set {Socrates} that contains him. For a detailed unpacking of this counterexample and other similar counterexamples, see: Fine, 'Essence'.

25 That is, Fine, 'Essence' focuses on contesting the *sufficiency* of the modal characterisation and not its necessity (which he, in fact, agrees with) due to the key differences between the notion of necessity and essence.

26 Fine, 'Essence'.

27 Ibid.

28 'Neo-Aristotelian' as Fine, 'Essence' sees his approach as stemming from that of Aristotle's (with certain modifications).
29 Fine, 'Essence', 3.
30 Sam Cowling, 'The modal view of essence', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 43/2 (2013): pp. 248-266 (here p. 251).
31 Ibid.
32 Fine, 'Ontological'.
33 Fine interchanges between 'nature' and 'identity' without any alteration in meaning.
34 Fine, 'Ontological'.
35 This section will take the path assumed by Fine and utilise both conceptions of essence. For an argument, however, in favour of the proposition-based characterisation, over the property-based characterisation, see: Livingston-Banks, 'In defence'.
36 Fine, 'Essence', 3.
37 Ibid, 2.
38 Thus, Fine's neo-Aristotelian account of essence is to be distinguished from Jonathan Lowe's approach, found in his article 'Two Notions of Being: Entity and Essence', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement*, 62/1 pp. 186-213 (here p. 200). (2008): pp. 23-48, which does not *identify* essence with real definition.
39 This example comes from David Oderberg, 'Essence and Properties', *Erkenntnis* 75/1 (2011): pp. 85-111.
40 Katherin Koslicki, 'Varieties of ontological dependence' in: Fabrice Correia & Benjamin Schnieder (eds.) *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp. 186-213 (here p. 200).
41 Koslicki, 'Varieties', proposes the notion of essential constituency within the context of ontological dependence and adds another clause to (EC) that an *x* must also be a constituent of *y* itself.
42 The nature of the 'constitution relation' is left undefined here, as with Fine's usage of the term.
43 Fine, 'Senses of Essence', has proposed a *plurality of kinds* of essence, in addition to the distinction between constitutive and consequential essence. Firstly, mediate and immediate, (i.e. whether, or not, essential truths of the essence of one entity are part of the essence of another entity). Secondly, reflexive and non-reflexive essence (i.e. whether, or not, an entity can be part of its own essence). And, thirdly, reciprocal and non-reciprocal essence (i.e. whether, or not, two, or more entities, may mutually part of each other's essence).
44 Fine, 'Ontological'.
45 Fine, 'Senses'.
46 Fine, 'Ontological'.
47 However, Fine has noticed an issue related to this which is that of it, in fact, being problematic to draw the boundary between constitutive and consequential essence, and specifically how it should be decided upon. As Fine asks 'how and where are we to draw the line between what is basic to the essence and what is derived?' Fine, 'Ontological Dependence', 277. For Fine's earlier proposal for dealing with this issue, see: Fine, 'Ontological Dependence', and for his more recent attempt, see: Kit Fine, 'Guide to Ground' in: Fabrice Correia & Benjamin Schnieder (eds.) *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 37-80; 'Unified Foundations for Essence and Ground', *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1/2 (2015): pp. 296-311, where he focuses on utilising the notion of ground to clarify the constitutive/consequential distinction. Also, for an analysis of Fine's earlier proposal, see: Koslicki, 'Varieties' and Livingston-Banks, 'In defence'. And for a critique of Fine's recent proposal, see: Eileen S. Nutting, Ben Caplan & Chris Tillman, 'Constitutive essence and partial grounding', *Inquiry* 61/2 (2017): pp. 137-161.
48 Bauckham, *Jesus*, takes God to be either the Father or the Trinity. However, for the current proposal, we will stick to the former.
49 Stated more precisely as the following:

> (DI_2*) Divine Identity = The collection of propositions (or essential properties) that are true (or had) in virtue of the nature of God, as stated by a real definition, that has the UI-attributes (i.e. being the sole creator, being the sole ruler and being the only being worthy of worship) as constituents.

50 More specifically, it includes the *attribute* (*property*) of being the entity that has Jesus as an essential constituent. However, for ease of writing, I will state that includes the person of Jesus, even though I am solely referring to the attribute just stated.
51 Stated, again, more precisely as the following:

(DI_3*) Divine Identity = The collection of propositions (or essential properties) that are true (or had) in virtue of the nature of God, as stated by a real definition, that has the UI-attributes (i.e. being the sole creator, being the sole ruler and being the only being worthy of worship), and the person of Jesus (i.e. the incarnate Son), as constituents.