

# The Contradictory God Thesis and Non-Dialetheic Mystical Contradictory Theism<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Claims that a given concept of God is contradictory have been a driving force in the debate over the concept of God and the rationality of theistic belief. Under the assumption that contradictory concepts are philosophically untenable, when faced with the charge that a given concept of God is contradictory, the standard move among philosophers and theologians has been to try to explain away the contradiction and show that the concept of God in question is consistent. This has to do, of course, with the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC).

Another option, which has recently generated interest among logicians and analytic philosophers of religion, is to reject such a move as unnecessary and defend what might be called the contradictory God thesis (Göcke 2016, 2019) (Anderson 2017) (Cotnoir 2018) (Maharaj 2018, pp. 51-71) (Beall 2019, 2021) (da Costa; Béziau 2020) (Ahsan 2022). To be sure, something close to that can be found in philosophers such as Pseudo-Dionysius, Thomas Aquinas and Nicolaus de Cusa (Göcke 2016, pp. 189-192). However, it is only recently that this approach has gained momentum, certainly driven by the contemporary advance of dialetheism and glut theoretic approaches in general, and paraconsistent logic. Needless to say, a standard move among defenders of the contradictory God thesis is to challenge the LNC.

The argumentation, however, is seldomly framed in conceptual terms. Instead, it is mostly framed in ontological terms, as God being a contradictory entity. For example, in the beginning of his paper “Christ – A Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology”, Jc Beall states that his goal is to defend the hypothesis that “Christ appears to be contradictory because Christ is contradictory (i.e., some predicate is both true and false of Christ, and hence some logical contradiction is true of Christ).” (Beall 2019, p 401), arguing later that “there are entities—admittedly strange and rare—that (arguably) instantiate or exemplify or have both of the given complementary properties [... and ...] In the end, when the truth is laid bare, Christ may be the unique contradictory being in reality” (Beall 2019, p 417-418). The same is true for other authors.<sup>2</sup> From this perspective, the contradictory God thesis is the thesis that God is a contradictory object.

This has consequences. Despite undeniable connections, philosophical reflection on the concept of God and philosophical reflection on the existence of God must be distinguished from each other. As Huw P. Owen (1971, p. 3) aptly states:

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<sup>2</sup> Benedikt Göcke (2016) argues for the thesis that God is a “paraconsistent entity,” according to him an entity that is not “subject to the law of contradiction” (Göcke 2016, p. 179). In their short (and unfinished) attempt to answer the question which names their paper—“Is God Paraconsistent?”—, Newton da Costa and Jean-Yves Béziau (2020, p. 323) use the term “paraconsistent entity” to mean an entity *t* that is such that, for a given property *P*, “the two propositions ‘*t* is *P*’ and ‘*t* is not *P*’ are true, for a given paraconsistent negation corresponding to the ‘not’ of the second proposition.” In his turn, Aaron Cotnoir (2018) examines within the context of the paradoxes of omnipotence and omniscience what he calls dialetheic theism, the view that God has conflicting properties such as being omnipotent and not being omnipotent.

One must distinguish between the grounds for believing in God’s existence and the grounds for preferring one concept of God to another. Once again, there is overlapping. [...] My task is not to answer the question: “What grounds (if any) are there for supposing that God exists?” But it falls within my province to attempt an answer to the question: “What grounds (if any) are there for preferring one concept of God to another?”

In the case of contradictory concepts of God, the question might be: what grounds are there for preferring consistent concepts of God to contradictory concepts of God? Or: what grounds are there for rejecting a contradictory concept of God as philosophically untenable? By framing things in ontological terms, this view of the contradictory God thesis does not do justice to the aforementioned distinction, being therefore, it seems, poorly suited to addressing these questions.

Given that many religious traditions present seemingly contradictory descriptions of God, it is natural for the debate surrounding the contradictory God thesis to engage with living theologies (Anderson 2017) (Maharaj 2018) (Beall 2019, 2021) (Ahsan 2022). A number of Indian religious traditions that align themselves with Vedānta present contradictory descriptions of the ultimate reality, called Brahman. One notable example comes from the Bhedābheda Vedānta tradition, which asserts that Brahman is both different (bheda) and non-different (abheda) from the world and individual selves. While most Bhedābheda Vedānta thinkers attempt to rationalize its key claim and explain away the contradiction, asserting, for example, that the ultimate reality is different from the world and individual selves in a certain sense, but non-different from them in a different sense, Jīva Gosvāmī (16<sup>th</sup> Century), a lead theologian of the Caitanya (15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> Century) Vaiṣṇava school, seems to accept the contradiction, adding that it is inconceivable (acintya). He named his school Acintya Bhedābheda. Jīva assigns a strong personal character to the ultimate reality, allowing one to say that his concept of ultimate reality is, ultimately, a concept of God. Thus, Jīva defends that God is, in the same relevant sense, different and non-different from the world and individual selves, adding that this is inconceivable.

My goal in this paper is to provide a conceptual assessment of the discussion surrounding the contradictory God thesis. To achieve this, I will make use of a general and hopefully non-controversial meta-theory of concepts (Section 2) and adopt a semantic approach rather than a metaphysical one. This approach will be evident in my account of dialetheism, contradictions, and the LNC (Section 3). In addition, I will also pursue the desideratum of operating within a logical-conceptual framework as close as possible to the framework within which the analytic philosophy of religion debate regarding the concept of God takes place, which is broadly in line with what we call classical logic.<sup>3</sup> Within this framework, I will address the following questions (Sections 4-5): What are the different ways we can understand the contradictory God thesis? What grounds are there for rejecting a contradictory concept of God? What standard moves are available to defend oneself from such criticisms and how do they relate to the LNC? What challenges do they present?

As a secondary goal, the paper aims to introduce a novel defense of the contradictory God thesis emerging from a specific interpretation of Jīva’s theology that avoids the need to challenge the LNC. I term this approach ‘non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism.’ To achieve this, I will address the following questions (Section 6-8): What kind of contradictory God thesis and defense to it is present in Jīva’s theology? How does this relate to Jīva’s use of the term “acintya” and the LCN? Can Jīva’s contradictory theology offer any new insights into the discussion of the contradictory God thesis?

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<sup>3</sup> Because of that, throughout the paper I will make use of a few logical principles: specifically, contraposition (for any two propositions  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , “if  $\alpha$  then  $\beta$ ” entails “if  $\neg\beta$  then  $\neg\alpha$ ”) and an inferential version of modal axiom T that says that the truth of  $\alpha$  entails the possibility of  $\alpha$ .

## 2. Concepts

Despite disagreement among theorists of concepts about what concepts are, they all agree that concepts are such that objects might fall under them. They also agree that concepts might be described or represented through language, so that some relation between an object falling under a concept and the representation of that concept in language holds.

Take for example the so-called classical theory of concepts. Rooted in ideas of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Locke, the classical theory takes definitions as the appropriate way to represent or characterize concepts. According to this view, the concept of bachelor, for example, would be characterized as an (1) unmarried (2) adult (3) male (4) human being; or, perhaps more formally, as the unsaturated proposition “ $x$  is an unmarried adult male human being.”, where  $x$  is a variable. If an object  $o$  falls under the concept of bachelor, then it is true that  $o$  is an unmarried adult male human being; and if it is true that  $o$  is an unmarried adult male human being, then  $o$  falls under the concept of bachelor. More formally we would have as follows. Let  $d_o$  be a constant whose denotation is  $o$ . Iff  $o$  falls under the concept of bachelor, then replacing  $x$  with  $d_o$  in “ $x$  is an unmarried adult male human being.” results in a true proposition; and if replacing  $x$  with  $d_o$  in “ $x$  is an unmarried adult male human being.” results in a true proposition, then  $o$  falls under the concept of bachelor.

Generalizing on this, assuming that a concept  $c$  might be represented or characterized as an unsaturated proposition  $\alpha$  which has  $x$  as its only free variable, for any object  $o$ , the following two conditions are met:

(C1) If  $o$  falls under  $c$ , then  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is true.

(C2) If  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is true, then  $o$  falls under  $c$ .

, where  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is the proposition resulting from the replacement of  $x$  by  $d_o$  in  $\alpha$ .  $\alpha$  is what I will call the characterization of  $c$ .  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is an instantiation, the  $o$ -instantiation of  $\alpha$ .

The two following corollaries of C1 and C2 (RLT follows from C1, and LRT follows from C2) are particularly relevant:

(RLT) *Reality-Language Thesis*: If there is an object  $o$  that falls under concept  $c$ , then there is a true instantiation (the  $o$ -instantiation) of the characterization of  $c$ .

(LRT) *Language-Reality Thesis*: If there is a true  $o$ -instantiation of the characterization of concept  $c$ , then there is an object  $o$  that falls under  $c$ .

Note that these theses, as presented, remain neutral with respect to both realist and nominalist views of concepts. They are also neutral regarding any particular conception of truth—whether deflationist, semantic, correspondentist, coherentist, constructivist, or otherwise. Additionally, they are ontologically weak, as they approach reality in terms of objects falling under concepts, thus not committing to any specific way reality might be structured.

It is also important to note that the reference to the classical theory of concepts here is purely illustrative. Although contemporary analytic philosophy of religion often relies on a view similar to the classical theory (Silvestre 2022, p. 733), the account of concepts I have presented does not depend on it. It is in fact a quite general and commonsensical view on concepts. Its basic assumptions—that concepts are such that objects might fall under them, and that concepts might be represented through language so that some relation between an object falling under a concept and the representation of that concept in language holds—are shared by several theories of concepts, including prototype theory, proxytype theory, and exemplar theory, among others.<sup>4</sup>

The only controversial assumption I make is that there exists a unique characterization of a concept. I do not attempt to argue that this holds universally for all concepts, as I do not believe it does. Instead, I just point out that as far as the contemporary philosophical debate on the concept of God is

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<sup>4</sup> See (Margolis; Laurence 2019) and (Murphy 2002), for example.

concerned, it is at the very least a methodological assumption that a given concept of God can be univocally characterized. When philosophers describe and argue for and against a particular concept of God, they tacitly assume that this concept of God can be intelligibly and univocally described through language, which is most often done by listing and semantically elaborating the attributes that God supposedly possesses.

### 3. Dialetheism, Contradictions and the Law of Non-Contradiction

As far as contradictions and the LNC are concerned, I will not here try to get into the debate over what is the best way to characterize them. This would be far beyond the scope of the paper. However, in order to minimally attain my goal, I have to rely on some characterization of contradictions, and on some formulation of the LNC. Although some justification is presented for my choices, given the depth of the debate over the appropriate way to represent contradictions and the LNC and the scope of this paper, some degree of arbitrariness seems inevitable.

Having said that, here is my account of the notion of contradiction:

An *explicit contradiction* is a proposition of the form  $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$ , where  $\alpha$  is itself a proposition. A *contradiction* is either an explicit contradiction or any proposition that entails an explicit contradiction.

This is a syntactic definition. From it, along with the account of concepts given in the previous section, I define a contradictory concept as follows:

A concept is *contradictory* iff its characterization is a contradiction.

As far as the LNC is concerned, I will consider three formulations: a semantic formulation, a modal-semantic formulation, and an inferential formulation. Here they are:

(W-LNC) *Weak Law of Non-Contradiction*: There is no proposition  $\alpha$  such that  $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$  is true, or, equivalently, there are no true explicit contradictions. By contraposition, it follows that there are no true contradictions.

(S-LNC) *Strong Law of Non-Contradiction*: There cannot be a proposition  $\alpha$  such that  $\alpha \wedge \neg \alpha$  is true, or, equivalently, there cannot be true explicit contradictions. By contraposition, it follows that there cannot be true contradictions.

(PE) *Principle of Explosion*: If  $\alpha$  is a contradiction, then for any proposition  $\beta$ ,  $\alpha$  entails  $\beta$ .

Some comments about these definitions are in order. Let me start with the LNC. First, from a general viewpoint, the LNC forbids contradictions. Despite the fact that there are, of course, different forms of ‘forbidding,’ semantic ways of forbidding seem to have a special place among known formulations of the LNC.<sup>5</sup> PE, also known as *ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet*, is an inferential formulation of the LNC. To the extent that trivial theories (propositions or sets of propositions from which everything follows) are to be avoided, it inferentially forbids contradictions. Despite this, and despite many authors seeing PE as a formulation of the LNC (Beall 2019, p. 427) (Restall 2004, p. 75), its inferential aspect seems to place it in a special category, one which is not always seen as a formulation of the LNC.

This can be seen in regard to the relation between the LNC on one hand, and dialetheism and paraconsistency on the other. Although dialetheism is seen as a position that in some sense goes against the LNC, the rejection of PE is traditionally seen as implying paraconsistency, not dialetheism. A

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<sup>5</sup> Aristotle’s classical account of the LNC is perhaps the best exemplar: “... the most indisputable of all beliefs is that contradictory statements are not at the same time true.” (Aristotle c.350 bc). There are at least two main ways of semantically forbidding contradictions: with or without modality. While Aristotle’s formulation is an exemplar of the latter (as it is W-LNC), Arthur Prior’s is an exemplar of the former (as it is S-LNC): “The law of contradiction asserts that a statement and its direct denial cannot be true together (‘not both p and not-p’) ...” (Prior 1967, p. 461).

*paraconsistent entailment relation* is one that does not satisfy PE. On the other hand, dialetheism is traditionally understood as the thesis that there are true contradictions (Priest 1993, p. 35) (Priest 1998, p. 416), thus denying W-LNC. Less predominantly, it is seen as the thesis that there can be true contradictions (Grim 2004, p. 50) (Mares 2004, p. 269), thus denying S-LNC. I will call the first form of dialetheism *strong dialetheism*, and the second one *weak dialetheism*.

At this point, three clarifications are necessary. First, some authors may take issue with my use of the term “dialetheism” here; they might prefer the expression “glut-theoretic accounts” to describe approaches that accept the existence of true contradictions, or truth-value ‘gluts.’ This preference stems mainly from the association of dialetheism with Graham Priest’s argument from ‘semantic closure,’ which challenges the necessity of metalanguages.<sup>6</sup> While this is true, it is also true that the term has been and continues to be used more broadly as a synonym for glut-theoretic accounts. For this reason, I will continue to use “dialetheism” in this broader sense, treating the thesis it refers to as independent of any specific argument that may be presented in its defense.

Secondly, when I say, for example, that strong dialetheism denies W-LNC—the position that it is not the case that *there are true contradictions*—, I simply mean that strong dialetheism holds that *there are true contradictions*<sup>7</sup> (which does not necessarily entail a rejection of W-LNC.)<sup>8</sup> Thirdly, as I am prioritizing a semantic analysis, unless noted otherwise, any reference to dialetheism here pertains to what I call metaphysically neutral dialetheism. To explain what this means, it will be useful to refer to Edwin Mares’ (2004) famous distinction between semantic and metaphysical dialetheism.

While metaphysical dialetheism is the view that “there are things in the world that are actually inconsistent”, semantic dialetheism is the view that “there are no inconsistencies in things [...] inconsistencies arise (or may arise) because of the relationship between language and the world” (Mares 2004, p. 256) (as in the case of partially defined predicates.) Suppose that we define a contradictory object as follows (assuming a realist position where attribute possession is actual):

An object  $o$  is *contradictory* iff, for some attribute  $P$ ,  $o$  possesses  $P$  and  $o$  does not possess  $P$ .

Additionally, consider the following ontological versions of W-LNC and S-LNC:

( $W_O$ -LNC) *Weak Ontological Law of Non-Contradiction*: There are no contradictory objects.

( $S_O$ -LNC) *Strong Ontological Law of Non-Contradiction*: There cannot be contradictory objects.

In their strong versions, while metaphysical dialetheism denies both W-LNC and  $W_O$ -LNC, semantic dialetheism denies W-LNC but holds  $W_O$ -LNC. But there is a third view, one which remains agnostic regarding the existence of contradictory objects. I call it *metaphysically neutral dialetheism*. In its strong version, metaphysically neutral dialetheism denies W-LNC but is neutral with respect to  $W_O$ -LNC, neither denying nor holding it.

For my definition of contradiction, as I said, it is a syntactic characterization, which is a quite common way to define contradictions.<sup>9</sup> A partial argument for such a syntactic characterization is that many semantic definitions trivialize the debate over the validity of the LNC (Grim 2004, p. 56). Nevertheless, syntactic definitions might also do the same if, for example, indexicals are allowed (Grim

<sup>6</sup> See (Beall 2022), for instance.

<sup>7</sup> More generally, I straightforwardly interpret denial as follows: to deny  $\alpha$  is equivalent to holding that it is not the case that  $\alpha$ ; and conversely, to deny “it is not the case that  $\alpha$ ” is equivalent to holding  $\alpha$ .

<sup>8</sup> In Beall’s (2009) dialethic theory of transparent truth, for example, the schema of formulas  $\neg(\phi \wedge \neg\phi)$  is valid, which is another way to state W-LNC. Nevertheless, as a kind of dialetheism, it posits that there are propositions  $\alpha$  such that  $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$  is true (making  $\alpha \wedge \neg\alpha$  itself a dialetheia). Beall’s dialetheism thus denies but does not reject W-LNC.

<sup>9</sup> W. V. O. Quine (1959, p. 9), for example, says that to “deny a statement is to affirm another statement, known as the negation or contradictory of the first.” Susan Haack (1978, p. 244) defines contradictions as statements of the form “A and not A”; Graeme Forbes (1994, p. 102) says that “two formulae are explicitly contradictory if and only if one is of the form  $q$  and the other of the form  $\sim q$ , that is, if one is the negation of the other.”

2004, p. 57). In order to avoid this, I require  $\alpha$  to be a ‘genuine proposition’, in the sense of a proposition whose semantic aspects are fixed for good (Grim 2004, p. 57).

Finally, something might be said about the logical symbols present in these definitions. While the conjunction symbol  $\wedge$  is relatively unproblematic, the different ways to understand the negation symbol  $\neg$  might be a problem for my account of contradictions. After all, paraconsistent logics might also be characterized in terms of a special kind negation (Béziau 2002). I will thus say that the negation symbol  $\neg$  in my definition refers to any unary operator that has enough properties to be called a negation, however vague this might be.<sup>10</sup> I will use a similar approach for the entailment relation present in my definition of contradiction and in PE. When I use the term “entails,” I refer to any relation that possesses sufficient properties to be considered an entailment relation, however vague that may be; consequently, it is not restricted to what is typically understood as logical consequence.

#### 4. The Contradictory God Thesis

The contradictory God thesis can be understood in different ways. From a somewhat strong perspective, it can be understood as follows:

(S-CGT) *Strong Contradictory God Thesis*: It is true (or probably true, or more probable than not) that God exists and God falls under a contradictory concept.

(ST-CGT) *Strongest Contradictory God Thesis*: It is true (or probably true, or more probable than not) that God, a contradictory object falling under a contradictory concept, exists.

Assuming that language accurately reflects the attributes found in reality, on the assumption of the following stronger version of the thesis that says that if there is a true  $o$ -instantiation of the characterization of concept  $c$ , then there is an object  $o$  that falls under  $c$  (LRT):

(S-LRT) *Strong Language-Reality Thesis*: If there is an object  $o$  that falls under  $c$ , then there is an object (namely  $o$ ) whose attribute possession corresponds exactly to what is expressed in an instantiation (the  $o$ -instantiation) of the characterization of concept  $c$ ,

S-CGT entails ST-CGT.

S-CGT and ST-CGT pose several challenges. One notable issue, already mentioned in the introduction, is that by framing the discussion in ontological terms, they fail to adequately distinguish between the philosophical reflection on the concept of God and the philosophical reflection on the existence of God. Because of that, demonstrating the reasonableness of these theses essentially amounts to demonstrating the reasonableness of the thesis that there exists an object that falls under a contradictory concept of God.

Given this, it may be necessary to consider what appears to be the weakest version of the contradictory God thesis:

(W-CGT) *Weak Contradictory God Thesis*: A (given) contradictory concept of God is philosophically tenable.

Unlike S-CGT, W-CGT is, for obvious reasons, suitable for the type of analysis referred to above. Nevertheless, there might be a significant relation between S-CGT and W-CGT. Supposing that the tenability of demonstrating that it is true (or probably true, or more probable than not) that there exists an object that falls under a concept  $c$  is sufficient for  $c$  to be the philosophically tenable, the tenability of demonstrating S-CGT entails W-CGT.

From the conjunction of S-CGT and W-CGT, we get a broader contradictory God thesis:

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<sup>10</sup> For a proposal of a list of such properties, see (Béziau 2002, p. 302).

(G-CGT) *Grand Contradictory God Thesis*: It is true (or probably true, or more probable than not) that God, a contradictory object falling under a contradictory concept, exists, and such contradictory concept of God is philosophically tenable.

Due to space limitations and the centrality of S-CGT and W-CGT, I will focus my analysis on them, neglecting ST-CGT, G-CGT, and any other possible formulation of the contradictory God thesis.

Before finishing this section, it should be pointed out that I do not intend to provide here anything even remotely close to an explanation of what is (or should be) a philosophically tenable concept. For my purposes, it suffices to take contradictory concepts (such as the concepts of square circle, married bachelor and four-sided triangle) as uncontroversial extensions of this ‘conceptual philosophical untenability.’ In fact, the expression “philosophically untenable” itself is not important. I could have used other terms such “indefensible”, “implausible”, “inadequate”, “unfruitful” or even “meaningless” without any harm to the conclusions I will reach here. What is important to me is that contradictory concepts are traditionally seen as belonging to a special and highly problematic category of concepts.

## 5. Defending the Contradictory God Thesis

The LNC is recognizably the main obstacle for the contradictory God thesis. But why is this so? As far as the conceptual framework I am using here is concerned, this might be answered as follows.

Let  $c$  be a contradictory concept. According to RLT, if there is an object  $o$  that falls under  $c$ , then there is a true instantiation (the  $o$ -instantiation) of the characterization of  $c$ . But the characterization of  $c$ , like any of its instantiations, is a contradiction. W-LNC states that there is no true contradiction. Therefore, it is not the case that there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ . By contraposition, it follows that there is no object that falls under  $c$ . Things are worse when S-LNC is considered. According to S-LNC, there cannot be true contradictions, from which it follows that there cannot be a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ . By contraposition on the following modal version of the thesis that says that if there is an object  $o$  that falls under concept  $c$ , then there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$  (RLT):

(M-RLT) *Modal Reality-Language Thesis*: If there can be an object  $o$  that falls under concept  $c$ , then there can be a true instantiation (the  $o$ -instantiation) of the characterization of  $c$ ,<sup>11</sup>

it follows that there cannot be an object that falls under  $c$ . If we accept that knowing *a priori* that there is (or there can be) no object that falls under concept  $c$  is enough to reject  $c$  as philosophically untenable, then it follows that contradictory concepts in general, and contradictory concepts of God in particular, are philosophically untenable. I call this the *empty extension argument*.

As far as PE is concerned, one might argue that for a concept  $c$  to be philosophically tenable, it must be possible to reason coherently about its characterization. According to PE, everything follows from a contradiction; in particular, everything follows from the characterization of a contradictory concept (which itself is a contradiction). But if a proposition  $\alpha$  is such that everything follows from it, coherent reasoning about  $\alpha$  is practically impossible. Reasoning about  $\alpha$  requires the ability to distinguish between propositions that follow from  $\alpha$  and those that do not, and to identify those propositions that are not (or cannot be) true if  $\alpha$  is true. If everything follows from  $\alpha$ , all this is unachievable. Therefore, coherent reasoning about the characterization of a contradictory concept is not possible. Consequently, contradictory concepts are philosophically untenable. I call this the *coherence argument*.

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<sup>11</sup> The derivation from RLT to M-RLT is only valid if we consider RLT to be axiomatically or tautologically true. This is because it needs the necessitation rule, which works only if the premise holds the status of an axiom or tautology.

It is therefore natural for the defender of the contradictory God thesis to challenge and in some way reject the LNC. Of course, she does not need to sustain a general rejection of the LNC. All she needs to do is reject LNC with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, or to a class of contradictory concepts of God, or to a particular contradictory concept of God.

For my purposes here, rejecting, for example, S-LNC with respect to concept  $c$  means holding that S-LNC does not apply to instantiations of the characterization of  $c$ , although it still applies in all other cases. In other words, it means holding the following restricted form of S-LNC: for all propositions  $\alpha$ ,  $\alpha$  cannot be a true contradiction, except in the case  $\alpha$  is an instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ ; in those cases,  $\alpha$  can be a true contradiction.

Within this conceptually circumscribed approach to rejecting the LNC, I call the rejection of W-LNC (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, or to a class of contradictory concepts of God, or to a particular contradictory concept of God) *strong dialetheic theism*, the rejection of S-LNC (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) *weak dialetheic theism*, and the rejection of PE, the thesis that says that a contradiction entails anything, (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) *paraconsistent theism*. As rejecting PE (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) seems to commit one to the thesis below:

(PGT) *Paraconsistent God Thesis*: The entailment relation underlying (reasoning about) a given contradictory concept of God is paraconsistent,

I will take *paraconsistent theism* as the rejection of PE (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) combined with holding PGT.

At this point, it is important to emphasize that I am adopting an (perhaps idealized) approach to reasoning that posits the existence of a specific entailment relation underlying any kind of reasoning. In particular, there is a specific entailment relation underlying (reasoning about) a given concept of God. As such, all these theisms necessitate some form of logical revisionism. From both proof-theoretical and semantic perspectives, one will need to revise the logic underlying a given concept of God, which, in the context of the analytic philosophy of religion debate regarding the concept of God, is broadly in line with what we call classical logic.<sup>12</sup>

It is also important to note that I am using the word “theism” in an unusual way. First the theisms mentioned above represent in fact distinct types of defenses<sup>13</sup> of the contradictory God thesis. Second, the term “theism” here encompasses different degrees of theistic commitment. For instance, a weak dialetheic theist does not need to be a theist in the traditional sense of someone who believes in the existence of an object that falls under a concept of God. But she is a theist in the (much weaker) sense of someone who believes that there might be an object that falls under a (contradictory) concept of God. Finally, it should be recalled that, as I am prioritizing a semantic analysis, these forms of dialetheic theism are metaphysically neutral. It should be clear, however, that there are metaphysical and semantic versions of both strong and weak dialetheic theism.<sup>14</sup>

From the coherence argument it is clear that the defender of W-CGT—the weak version of the contradictory God thesis that says that a (given) contradictory concept of God is philosophically tenable—needs to be a paraconsistent theist. For the stronger version of the contradictory God thesis

<sup>12</sup> See that this does not preclude the possibility that the standard reasoning used in analytic philosophy of religion be non-monotonic. In this case, however, the underlying monotonic logic for this non-monotonic entailment relation would be classical.

<sup>13</sup> Perhaps the term “proto-defense” would be more adequate, as what these kinds of theism do is just to suggest a general move that will still require some sort of argumentation (one will have to argue, for example, why rejecting S-LNC is a philosophically tenable move.)

<sup>14</sup> For example, a defense of the strongest contradictory God thesis (ST-CGT, which says that it is true, or probably true, or more probable than not, that God, a contradictory object falling under a contradictory concept, exists) will require, at the very least, what might be called metaphysical strong dialetheic theism, which is the rejection of both W-LNC (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) and the thesis that there are no contradictory objects (W<sub>0</sub>-LNC).

that says that it is true (or probably true, or more probable than not) that God exists and God falls under a contradictory concept (S-CGT), from a strictest point of view, its defender might not be a paraconsistent theist. While S-CGT is an ontological thesis, PE and PGT are about the inferential aspect of language. However, in order to be able to even articulate a defense of S-CGT, its defender has to guarantee, it seems, the coherence of the contradictory concept of God in question. How one will argue for the existence of an object that falls under a concept  $c$  if one cannot coherently reason about  $c$ ? Therefore, it seems the defender of S-CGT has to reject PE (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) and hold PGT.

From the empty extension argument, it is clear that the defender of W-CGT needs to be a strong as well as a weak dialethic theist. The same is true for the defender of S-CGT. W-LCN obviously threatens S-CGT; if it applies unrestrictedly, then there is no object that falls under a contradictory concept of God  $c$ . S-LNC threatens S-CGT as well, as it entails W-LCN.

It then seems that the only move available to the defender of the contradictory God thesis, both in its weak and strong forms, is paraconsistent strong dialethic theism, or simply *paraconsistent dialethic theism* (as strong dialethic theism entails weak dialethic theism).

There is however a serious problem: when used as a defense of W-CGT, paraconsistent dialethic theism conflates W-CGT with S-CGT. Rejecting W-LNC with respect to a contradictory concept of God  $c$  means holding the following restricted form of W-LNC: for all propositions  $\alpha$ ,  $\alpha$  is not a true contradiction, except in the case  $\alpha$  is an instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ ; in those cases,  $\alpha$  is a true contradiction. Thus, rejecting W-LNC with respect to  $c$  entails holding that there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ . But according to LRT, if there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ , then there is an object that falls under  $c$ . Therefore, rejecting W-LNC with respect to  $c$  entails that there is an object that falls under  $c$ ; in other words, it entails that God exists and God falls under a contradictory concept. This is S-CGT.

This is problematic because, as we saw, one of the reasons for distinguishing W-CGT from S-CGT is the need to conceptually separate the philosophical reflection on the existence of God from the philosophical reflection on the concept of God. Moreover, even within the context of the former debate, the question of whether God exists must remain subject to philosophical scrutiny. Paraconsistent dialethic theism (purportedly a defense) trivializes the debate about the existence of God, resulting in a ridiculously cheap victory for the advocate of the strong contradictory God thesis and for theism in general. I call this the *conflating-triviality problem* of paraconsistent dialethic theism.

## 6. Jīva Gosvāmī's Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta

As a Vedāntic theory, Bhedābheda resides between the Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara (8th Century)—the view that ultimate reality, which is seen as impersonal, encompasses everything and is identical with everything—and the Dvaita Vedānta of Madhva (13th Century)—the view that ultimate reality, which is equated with a personal God, is radically distinct from individual selves and the world. Despite appearances to the contrary, the consensus among scholars is that Bhedābheda Vedānta thinkers follow the traditional approach of holding the LNC and explaining away the contradiction present in their key claim (that Brahman is different and non-different from the world and individual selves.) (Nicholson 2010, pp. 40;35).

Jīva Gosvāmī seems to be a notable exception to this. The standard interpretation of Jīva's theology is that it involves an actual contradiction (Kapoor 1962) (Gupta 2007) (Nicholson 2010, p. 35) (Taneja 2022) (Uskokov 2022). Jīva's categorization is better understood as a dichotomy between God and his śakti (usually translated as power, potency and energy), the latter encompassing, among other things, the world and individual selves. Thus, according to this dominant interpretation, to Jīva, śaktiman (the possessor of śakti, i.e. God) and his śakti are inconceivably (acintya) different and non-

different from each other with the word “different” having the same direct, standard meaning in both conjuncts.<sup>15</sup>

One of the distinguishing features of Jīva’s school is its use of the word “acintya”, which is usually thought as reconciling (in some odd sense, we might say) the two main (conflicting) Vedānta positions on the relation between Brahman on one hand and the world and individual selves on the other.<sup>16</sup> Oddly enough, the expression “acintya bhedābheda” appears only twice in Jīva’s works. In his *Sarva-saṁvādinī*—a commentary on the first four volumes of his masterpiece, the *ṣaṭ-sandarbhā*—, while commenting on *Paramātmā-sandarbhā* 77, Jīva reviews a couple of positions regarding the issue of difference and non-difference and states his own view as being one of *acintya bhedābheda*, inconceivable difference and non-difference. A bit later he says that his acceptance of *acintya bhedābheda* is due to the fact that God’s several kinds of śakti are *acintya*.

It is common to understand Jīva’s use of “acintya” more or less according to its standard meaning, which is inconceivable, surpassing thought. O. B. L. Kapoor (1962, p. 153) translates “acintya” as “incomprehensible”. Edward Dimock (1989, p. 162) translates it as “logically inconceivable.” Elsewhere he translates it as “incomprehensible” (Dimock 1963, p. 110) and “unknowable by cognition, beyond or aside from reason” (Dimock 1991, p. 524). Ravi Gupta (2007, p. 45) as well as Aleksandar Uskokov (2022, p. 708) translate “acintya” as “inconceivable.” Leena Taneja (2022, p.14) translates it as “inconceivable, beyond the power of comprehension.”

Let BaB be the proposition “God and his śakti are different and non-different from each other.” Assuming this dominant interpretation according to which, for Jīva, God and his śakti are different and non-different from each other, with the word “different” having the same meaning in both conjuncts, BaB is a contradiction. In other words, assuming that “*x* is non-different from *y*” is equivalent to “it is not the case that *x* is different from *y*”, where the sense of “different” is fixed, and letting  $\beta$  be the proposition “God is different from his śakti.”, BaB is equivalent to  $\beta \wedge \neg \beta$ . If we additionally assume the apparent consensus that “acintya” in Jīva means “inconceivable,” Jīva’s basic claim is that BaB, a contradiction, is inconceivable.

Does this—the claim that BaB, a contradiction, is inconceivable—have any significant implication? The standard answer seems to be “no.” Assuming that Jīva believed that contradictions in general are inconceivable, by redundantly asserting that BaB is *acintya*, he was perhaps just highlighting that he was dealing with an actual contradiction, not an apparent one that could be resolved through some semantic maneuver. Furthermore, since Jīva’s claim that BaB is *acintya* seems to entail the claim that BaB is true, Jīva’s theology requires the rejection of W-LNC with respect to his concept of God. It is thus a type of strong dialethic theism (perhaps paraconsistent dialethic theism.) The authors mentioned above would probably agree with that.<sup>17</sup>

I want to offer an alternative interpretation here, one that takes the concept of *acintya* seriously into consideration and, in an important sense, follows from Jīva’s claim that BaB—a contradiction—is *acintya*.

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<sup>15</sup> Ravi Gupta (2007, p. 45-46), for example, writes as follows (the italics are mine): “The relationship between Bhagavan and his energies is *bhedābheda*, simultaneous difference and non-difference. [...] This, of course, is inconceivable to the human mind, and so the relation of *bhedābheda* is called *acintya*, inconceivable [...] Now, this derivation of *acintya* rests on an important assumption [...] that all scriptural statements about Brahman—those affirming difference and those affirming non-difference—must be given equal weight and taken in their direct sense. Even the contradictions arising from reasoning about the nature of Brahman [...] are dependent on scripture, for it is scripture that tells us that Brahman must have all these opposing qualities.”

<sup>16</sup> See (Taneja 2022, p. 15) and (Nicholson 2010, p. 35), for example.

<sup>17</sup> For example, when commenting on the distinctions between *acintya* and *anirvacanīya* (indescribable), as used in Advaita Vedānta, O. B. L. Kapoor (1962, p. 157) mentions the LNC under its synonymous term, “Law of Contradiction”: “The concept of *Anirvacanīya* is born out of respect for the Law of Contradiction. We refuse to describe an object and call it *Anirvacanīya* when it seems to violate this law. The concept of *acintya* is born out of respect for scriptural authority, which ignores the law of contradiction.”

## 7. Acintya Bhedābheda Vedānta and the LNC

There are some passages in Jīva's Sandarbhas that relate the terms "acintya" and "śakti" on one hand and the term "tarka"—which means, amongst other things, logic, reasoning or rational inquiry—on the other.

For example, in his Sarva-saṁvādinī commentary on Bhagavat-sandarbha 8, Jīva, arguing for the thesis that Brahman has internal differences, mentions some medical substances that are indescribable (anirvacanīya) supposedly because of their possessing contradictory qualities (mitho-virodha-guṇa). He then quotes a verse from Mahābhārata (which appears at several points in his sandarbhas<sup>18</sup>) that says that inconceivable (acintya) states (bhāvā) are not to be added or linked to logic (tarka).<sup>19</sup> "Tarka" here appears in the instrumental case ("tarkeṇa"), which conveys the idea of logic or reasoning as an instrument or tool. In simpler terms, the verse states that inconceivable states are beyond the scope of logic; they should not be added to the category of things that can be handled by logic. Jīva then says that, similarly, because of its inconceivable nature (acintyasvabhāva), the ultimate reality (tattva) is like a (mutually) contradictory dharma (mitho-virodhi-dharmavad).<sup>20</sup> Thus, not only are acintya states beyond logic, but Brahman, who has an inconceivable and contradictory nature, is also beyond logic.

About "śakti", also in the Sarva-saṁvādinī commentary on Bhagavat-sandarbha 8, Jīva says that God's śakti is dustarka, which can be translated as "difficult to grasp by logic."<sup>21</sup> A stronger claim is made in Paramātmā-sandarbha 58. As part of an argument against Advaita Vedānta and in support of the claim that God possesses inconceivable (acintya) kinds of śakti, Jīva quotes a verse from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa stating that the lord of individual selves (ātmeśvara) has thousands of [kinds of] śakti that are "atarkya,"<sup>22</sup> a term often translated as "incomprehensible," but which also means "surpassing thought" or "surpassing logical reasoning." Thus, we encounter a similar idea of God's śakti being beyond logic.

It seems reasonable to take these passages as entailing that, for Jīva, both acintya states and God's śakti are beyond logic. From this it follows that propositions expressing acintya states and propositions expressing, say, key aspects of God's śakti are beyond logic.<sup>23</sup>

Here is a possible way to understand this. I propose, as working hypotheses, first, that Jīva's theology is compatible with the idea that there are (semantically loaded) principles governing logical reasoning that determine the space of logical possibilities within which propositions can be true. Second, I propose that claims such as " $\alpha$  is beyond logic" and " $\alpha$  is not to be added to the category of propositions that can be handled by logic" mean that  $\alpha$  is not compatible with those basic logical

<sup>18</sup> As, for example, in Tattva-sandarbha 11, Paramātmā-sandarbha 57 and the Sarva-saṁvādinī commentary on Bhagavat-sandarbha 8.

<sup>19</sup> acintyāḥ khalu ye bhāvā na tāṁs tarkeṇa yojayet.

<sup>20</sup> tasmāt tadvad acintyasvabhāvatayā mithovirodhidharmavad eva tat tattvam ity ucyatām.

<sup>21</sup> yatrāsambhava-sambhāvayitrī dustarkā svābhāvīkī śaktir nāsti tatraiva tad-aṅgikāropapatteḥ gauravāpatteś ca.

<sup>22</sup> ātmeśvaro'tarkyasahasraśaktir.

<sup>23</sup> A perhaps standard way to understand this is within the context of Jīva's argumentation for the superiority of testimony (śabda) over inference (anumāna) as sources of knowledge (pramāṇa). Propositions expressing acintya states and key aspects of Bhagavan's śakti are beyond logic in the sense that they can only be grasped or known through scripture or the words of a guru or saintly people. For example, in his Sarva-saṁvādinī commentary on Paramātmā-sandarbha 57, Jīva says that acintya-śakti is understood through śāstra, not through logic (drśyate cāpi maṇi-mantra-mahaśudhi-prabhṛtīnām tarkālabhyaṁ śāstraika-gamyam acintya-śaktitvam). However, this view appears to be somewhat limited. Firstly, it weakens the inconceivability of acintya propositions to a degree where they no longer seem truly inconceivable. What is inconceivable about something that can be known only through testimony (probably accompanied by the required faith)? Secondly, this view does not address the unique status of contradictions like BaB as acintya. Does a contradiction like BaB become less problematic simply because it is 'known' through śabda? Finally, logic or reasoning alone cannot establish factual conclusions. A starting point is required, which in Jīva's epistemology would be derived from either śabda or pratyakṣa (empirical knowledge). It seems thus that there must be more to the claim that propositions expressing acintya states and key aspects of Bhagavan's śakti are beyond logic.

principles. Consequently, considering the space of logical possibilities determined by these logical principles,  $\alpha$  is (logically) impossible and therefore cannot be true.

From this it follows, first, that (1) if  $\alpha$  is *acintya* then  $\alpha$  is logically impossible, where  $\alpha$  is a proposition.<sup>24</sup> Second, (2) if  $\alpha$  expresses a key aspect of God's *śakti*, then  $\alpha$  is logically impossible. This has important consequences. As *BaB* is *acintya* or inconceivable, it follows from (1) that *BaB* is logically impossible. The same conclusion is obtained from (2). As *BaB* is a proposition expressing a key aspect of God's *śakti*, namely that it is different and non-different from him, from (2) it follows that *BaB* is logically impossible.

We thus have established, through two different routes, the conclusion that a specific contradiction, namely *BaB*, is logically impossible. As *BaB* is perhaps the most important contradiction of *Jīva's* theological system, it is a small step from that to conclude that, in this alternative interpretation of *Jīva's* theology, all contradictions are logically impossible. In other words, all contradictions  $\alpha$  are such that  $\alpha$  cannot be true. This of course is the strong law of non-contradiction (S-LNC).

Before concluding this section, it is important to clarify the meaning of the expression "working hypotheses". It would be reckless, to say the least, to claim that *Jīva* explicitly endorsed or would have endorsed these hypotheses. Specifically, one might object that the first hypothesis is at odds with how scholastic Indian thinkers generally understood logic and logical reasoning. Due to space constraints that limit a more detailed exploration of these points, I will approach my reconstruction of *Jīva's* theology as a 'free reconstruction,' in the sense of a reconstruction whose validity is contingent upon the truth of some (possibly historically and exegetically unjustified) hypotheses. Therefore, all subsequent claims should be interpreted in the form: "If these working hypotheses are true, then ..."

## 8. Non-dialethic Mystical Contradictory Theism

The conclusion that *Jīva's* theology requires S-LNC has important consequences. As might be expected, *Jīva's* concept of God is contradictory. Letting  $B(x)$  be the proposition " $x$  is different from  $x$ 's *śakti*.", the characterization of *Jīva's* concept of God entails  $B(x) \wedge \neg B(x)$ . If S-LNC applies unrestrictedly, then there cannot be a true instantiation of the characterization of *Jīva's* concept of God. From this it follows that there is no true instantiation of the characterization of *Jīva's* concept of God. But at the very least, *Jīva's* theology adheres to the strong contradictory God thesis (S-CGT), according to which it is true that God exists and God falls under a contradictory concept. In other words, there is an object that falls under *Jīva's* concept of God. This creates a situation where there is no true instantiation of the characterization of concept  $c$ , but there is an object  $o$  that falls under  $c$ , which is a counterexample of RLT, the reality-language thesis according to which if there is an object  $o$  that falls under concept  $c$ , then there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ . To uphold S-LNC and still maintain that there is an object that falls under a contradictory concept requires one to reject RLT.

This is particularly relevant because the empty extension argument needs RLT to conclude that a given contradictory concept of God is philosophically untenable. If we reject RLT, S-LNC can no longer be used against either S-CGT or W-CGT, the weak contradictory God thesis according to which a (given) contradictory concept of God is philosophically tenable. The same applies to the weak version of the LNC (W-LNC) according to which there are no true contradictions.

We are thus facing a new kind of defense of W-CGT and S-CGT, which is to reject RLT and hold S-LNC. Notice that the rejection of RLT entails a rejection of C1, the thesis that if object  $o$  falls under a concept  $c$ , then  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is true, where  $\alpha$  is the characterization of  $c$  and  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is the proposition

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<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting that despite the fact that, in my reconstruction, inconceivability entails logical impossibility, the same relation does not hold with regards to metaphysical impossibility. Although *BaB* is *acintya* and therefore logically impossible, as there is an object that falls under *Jīva's* concept of God, *BaB* is metaphysically possible. Contrary then to the traditional nested model for possibility (according to which metaphysical possibility entails logical possibility), we have a situation where  $\alpha$  is metaphysically possible but not logically possible.

resulting from the replacement of  $x$  by  $d_o$  in  $\alpha$  ( $d_o$  is a constant whose denotation is  $o$ ). I call the rejection of RLT (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) combined with holding S-LNC *non-dialetheic mystical theism*.

Non-dialetheic mystical theism thus holds restricted versions of RLT and C1 which do not apply to instantiations of the characterization of contradictory concepts of God in general, or a class of contradictory concepts of God, etc. For example, as far as C1 is concerned, we would have as follows: if  $o$  falls under  $c$ , then  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is true, except in the case  $c$  is a contradictory concept of God, or belongs to a class of contradictory concepts of God, etc. I use the word “mystical” loosely to denote something that does not conform to the usual way we think language relates to reality.

According to the alternative interpretation I am presenting here, Jīva’s theology is a type non-dialetheic mystical theism. As it adheres to S-CGT, it is additionally a type of *non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism*. As a defensive move, non-dialetheic mystical theism is applicable to both S-CGT and W-CGT. This is important because in itself non-dialetheic mystical theism is not contradictory. But as it rejects RLT, it might accommodate contradictory theologies, thus protecting them from the empty extension argument.

As non-dialetheic mystical theism holds S-LNC and, consequently, W-LNC, one might raise the following objection. Suppose that  $c$  is a contradictory concept of God and  $\alpha$ , an unsaturated proposition with  $x$  as its only free variable, is the characterization of  $c$ . As  $\alpha$  is a contradiction, according to W-LNC,  $\alpha$  is not true (or false, in plain terms), as it is  $\exists x\alpha$ . As  $\exists x\alpha$  asserts that God (as accounted for by  $c$ ) does exist, it seems that the debate on the existence of a contradictory God is conclusively settled: there is no contradictory God.

The problem with this objection is that it forgets to take the rejection of RLT into account. The argument basically goes from the falsity of  $\exists x\alpha$  to the conclusion that there is no object that falls under  $c$ . But that  $\exists x\alpha$  is false is the same as that it is not the case that there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ . The argument thus goes from the “It is not the case that there is a true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ .” to “there is no object that falls under  $c$ .” But this is RLT in its contrapositive form, which does not apply to  $c$  in non-dialetheic mystical theism.

Despite this, there is still a problem:  $\exists x\alpha$ , the proposition that God exists, is *a priori* false. Thus, a non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theology is aprioristically false. This problem of course resonates in my reconstruction of Jīva’s theology, as in it, Jīva’s claim that God exists is also *a priori* false. One might justly complain: What is the use of a theory of God which we know *a priori* to be false?

Once again, this problem should be understood within the context of RLT. The rejection of RLT (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.) creates a gap between language and reality. Considering the contrapositive form of RLT, from the fact that  $\exists x\alpha$  is false one can no longer conclude that there is no object  $o$  that falls under  $c$ . This means that, from an ontological viewpoint, the falsity of a complete account of God is empty: nothing about reality can be concluded from it. Therefore, the fact that a theory of God is false is not as problematic as one might think.

But still, it seems that this turns a non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theology into a kind of reverse-apophatic theology, where false discourse about God is empty. And yet, the loss is bigger than that. The gap between language and reality is not confined to RLT. Even if LRT—the language-reality thesis according to which if there is a true  $o$ -instantiation of the characterization of concept  $c$ , then there is an object  $o$  that falls under  $c$ —remains unrestrictedly valid, it can never be used to conclude, for example, that God exists in reality. As  $c$  is a contradictory concept, there is no true instantiation of the characterization of  $c$ . Thus, we have a situation where language has no ontological implication whatsoever about the existence of God or the nonexistence of God. In terms of a contradictory concept of God  $c$ , there is a full gap between language and reality. On one hand, false discourse about God is ontologically empty; on the other, true discourse about God is logically impossible.

In response to this, I point out that when we refer to  $\alpha$  in RLT and LRT (and in C1 and C2, the reverse of C1 according to which if  $o$  falls under  $c$ , then  $\alpha[x|d_o]$  is true) as the characterization of concept  $c$ , we assume that  $\alpha$  is complete in the sense that it encompasses all relevant aspects of  $c$ . For example, when we state that the proposition “ $x$  is an unmarried adult male human being” characterizes the concept of bachelor, we assume that this proposition covers all pertinent aspects of that concept. The same applies to Jīva’s concept of God.

Let  $j$  be Jīva’s concept of God and  $\alpha$  its characterization. Assuming a classical, definitional approach to concepts,  $\alpha$  could be something like that:  $P_1(x) \wedge P_2(x) \wedge \dots \wedge P_n(x) \wedge B(x) \wedge \neg B(x)$ , where  $P_1, \dots, P_n$  are  $n$  unary predicates and  $B(x)$ , again, means “ $x$  is different from  $x$ ’s śakti.” As we rejected RLT with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc., RLT and C1 do not apply to  $\alpha$ . But they still apply to  $P_1, \dots, P_n, B$  and their corresponding concepts. Suppose that  $P_1(x)$ , meaning “ $x$  is subject to death and decay.”, is the characterization of the concept of mortal being. As RLT and C1 apply to such a concept, from the falsity of the proposition “God is mortal.”, where “God” is used as a proper name, by contraposition on C1 we conclude that  $o$  does not fall under the concept of mortal being, where  $o$  is the object referred to by “God”. Therefore, negative discourse about God is still possible.

Suppose in addition that  $P_2(x)$ , meaning “ $x$  is a conscious entity capable of experiencing emotions and engaging in relationships with other conscious entities.”, is the characterization of the concept of personhood. From the truth of the proposition “God is a person.” we conclude, using C2, that  $o$  falls under the concept of personhood. Therefore, positive discourse about God is also possible.

Thus, the criticism—that false discourse about God is ontologically empty and true discourse about God is logically impossible—applies only to complete accounts of God, not to incomplete ones. But how about  $B(x)$  and  $\neg B(x)$ ? As S-LNC holds, if  $B(x)$  is true, then  $\neg B(x)$  is false, and vice-versa. Thus, although both  $\beta$  and  $\neg\beta$  are part of Jīva’s theology, we are not able to state the truth of both in a single discourse ( $\beta$  is the proposition “God is different from his śakti.”). But we might be able to do that in multiple separated, but complementary discourses. Jīva seems to acknowledge this when, in his *Sarva-saṁvādinī* commentary on *Paramātmā-sandarbhā* 77, he recognizes the legitimacy of discourses leading to both  $\beta$  and  $\neg\beta$  (before stating his view as being one of *acintya bhedābheda*.)

Let  $\Gamma$  be a theory or set of propositions. An extension of  $\Gamma$  is a maximally consistent set of propositions entailed by  $\Gamma$ . While a consistent theory has only one extension, an inconsistent theory has more than one extension. If  $\Gamma$  contains  $\beta \wedge \neg\beta$ , which is an instantiation of  $j$ , then  $\Gamma$  will have at least two extensions: one containing  $\beta$  and everything else that follows from  $\Gamma$  and is consistent with  $\beta$ , and another containing  $\neg\beta$  and everything else that follows from  $\Gamma$  and is consistent with  $\neg\beta$ . If we take these extensions as separated but complementary discourses about the same concept  $j$ , we then have two (enlarged) theories of God with full ontological implications, conjointly entailing, through C2, that there is an object that falls under  $j$ : while the first extension entails that  $o$  falls under the concept of being different from one’s śakti, the second one entails that  $o$  falls under the concept of being non-different from one’s śakti. I call this the *multiple extension approach*.<sup>25</sup>

This corollary of non-dialethic mystical contradictory theism—that we cannot properly talk about God as a whole—can also be understood from the perspective of Jīva’s theology. The claim that the nature of God or the ultimate reality (*tattva*) is *acintya* or inconceivable<sup>26</sup> suggests that we cannot fully conceive the entirety of God’s nature, or that we cannot properly handle a complete account of God.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> This might be seen as a non-formal statement of the approach that Raymond Reiter (1980) uses in his *Default Logic* to accommodate contradictory conclusions arising from the use of his nonmonotonic logic; he employs a fixed-point definition of extensions.

<sup>26</sup> *tasmāt tadvad acintyasavhāvatayā mithovirodhidharmavad eva tat tattvam ity ucyatām.* (*Sarva-saṁvādinī* on *Bhagavat-sandarbhā* 8).

<sup>27</sup> The same applies to the claim that God’s śakti are *acintya*. Jīva’s concept of (God’s) śakti is also contradictory. Letting  $S(x)$  mean “God is different from God’s  $x$ .”, the characterization of the concept concept of śakti entails  $S(x) \wedge \neg S(x)$ .

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, I wish to address two questions: Firstly, how does non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism relate to dialetheic theism in general? And secondly, concerning W-CGT, is non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism a viable alternative to paraconsistent dialetheic theism?

For the first question, non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism does not reject S-LNC (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.), thus standing in opposition to dialetheic theism (hence “non-dialetheic”). But there is more to be said about that. In non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism, there is an object that falls under a contradictory concept of God. However, there are stronger forms of contradictory theologies, specifically those that entail that God is a contradictory object, aligning thus with ST-CGT. Adopting a semantic approach, I aimed to sidestep whether Jīva’s theology explicitly endorses ST-CGT, the thesis that it is true (or probably true, or more probable than not) that God, a contradictory object falling under a contradictory concept, exists. Claiming only that it adheres to S-CGT is compatible with both the assertion that God is a contradictory object and the assertion that God is not a contradictory object. Clearly, there are three levels at play here.

First, there is the semantic level where the talk about concepts and truth and falsity of instantiations of characterizations of concepts takes place. Second, there is an ontological level where objects either fall under concepts or do not. Third, there is a stronger ontological level where objects possess or do not possess properties. Semantic and metaphysical dialetheism address all three levels. For instance, (strong) semantic dialetheic theism rejects W-LNC (with respect to contradictory concepts of God in general, etc.), thereby asserting that there is an object that falls under a contradictory concept of God (this follows from C2), while maintaining that God is not a contradictory object (it retains  $W_0$ -LNC, according to which there are no contradictory objects). In a sense, non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism can be seen as reversing semantic dialetheic theism. It unrestrictedly holds W-LNC but maintains that there is an object that falls under a contradictory concept of God. However, it operates solely on the first two levels. Being metaphysically neutral, it does not address the ontological nature of God.

As far as the second question is concerned, firstly, insofar as non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism does not face the conflating-triviality problem—it neither entails the existence nor the non-existence of an object that falls under a contradictory concept of God—it appears to be a viable alternative to paraconsistent dialetheic theism. It is true that non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism renders any contradictory theology false. But as we have seen, this carries no ontological implications.

However, non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism is not paraconsistent: it does not reject PE. One might then object that it is subject to the coherence argument: in non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism, contradictory concepts of God are incoherent and thus philosophically untenable. But rejecting PE is not the only solution to this problem. A multiple extension approach, which non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism can accommodate, also resolves the issue. Let  $c$  be a contradictory concept and  $\alpha$  its characterization. By requiring that the contradictory components of  $c$  be segregated into different extensions, a multiple extension approach achieves the minimum requirement for coherence, which involves distinguishing propositions that logically follow from  $\alpha$  from those that do not, and identifying propositions that are not (or cannot be) true in the case  $\alpha$  is true. The need of such an approach is a consequence of the corollary of non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism that one cannot properly talk about God as a whole, or have a truth discourse about a complete description of God.

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Therefore, RLT and C1 should not apply to it as well. Consequently, everything that has been said about Jīva’s concept of God applies to Jīva’s concept of śakti. Therefore, Jīva’s concept of śakti cannot be properly addressed as a whole, which might be seen as a consequence of Jīva’s claim that God’s śakti are inconceivable.

Secondly, non-dialetheic mystical contradictory theism not only does not require rejecting PE, but also aligns with all other classical logical principles. On the proof-theoretical side at least, it is (potentially) fully classical and non-contradictory, which appears to be an advantage over paraconsistent dialetheic theism, as it requires no revisionism.

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