

ARE REDUPLICATIVE QUA-OPERATORS SUPERFLUOUS?

ERIC YANG
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

Abstract. Reduplicative approaches to the incarnation attempt to avoid the charge of incoherence by employing a qua-operator that operates on an entire assertion. The main objection to this approach is that it still yields a contradiction. Recently, two new reduplicative approaches have been offered that purport to avoid contradiction, one that offers a novel analysis of negative predications and the other which prevents conjoining divine and human predicates into a meaningful sentence. In this paper, I argue that these newer approaches either fail to provide a distinctive solution or do not show whether the model is genuinely possible.

I. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the incarnation in Christian theology maintains that Christ was both divine and human. A divine being must be omniscient¹, but it is unclear whether a human being must be limited in knowledge, i.e. not omniscient. For example, Thomas V. Morris suggests that being limited in knowledge may not be essential for being human but is only a common property of human beings, and hence it is possible for a human being to be omniscient (1986, 63–64). Nevertheless, it is customary to ascribe Christ as being limited in knowledge because Scripture appears to teach that he was so (in passages such as Luke 2:52 or Matthew 24:36). But then it appears that we must believe that Christ was both omniscient and not omniscient, which appears to be impossible. Similar attributions could be made with other pairs of divine and human properties, such as omnipotence and having limited power, immutability and mutability, being uncreated and being created, being incorporeal and being corporeal, etc. So one project for those interested in Christology is to provide a coherent account of the incarnation where no such contradiction is entailed.² Following Cross (2009), we will call this the ‘Fundamental Problem’ of Christology.

While several solutions to solving the Fundamental Problem have been offered³, historically venerable approaches made use of a *qua*-operator. A more nuanced interpretation of Christological predications is required, such that Christ is omniscient *qua* divine, and Christ is not omniscient *qua* human — or in more familiar language, Christ is omniscient in virtue of being divine, and Christ is not omniscient in virtue of being human. As we’ll see, there are several ways such statements can be interpreted, but the reduplicative approach claims that the ‘*qua*’ operates on the entire statement. Many reject this solution because of its failure to resolve the Fundamental Problem. However, there have been recent attempts to

1 This will, no doubt, be rejected by those who endorse a kenotic Christology, for kenoticism maintains that Christ divested himself of omniscience while remaining divine. Recently, Eric Yang, “Kenoticism and essential divine properties”, *Religious Studies* 56, no. 3 (2020) provides a kenotic account where Christ can remain essentially omniscient even while divesting himself of the property of being omniscient.

2 Though there are some who argue that a coherent Christology can involve a contradiction since there are some true contradictions (A. J. Cotnoir, “Theism and Dialetheism”, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 96, no. 3 (2018), Jc Beall, “Christ — A Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology”, *Journal of Analytic Theology* 7, (2019), 400-433), which requires employing non-standard logic (e.g., paraconsistent logic).

3 See Richard Cross, “Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology”, in *The Incarnation*, ed. Thomas Flint and Michael Rea (Oxford Univ. Press, 2009) for a survey of several main responses.

revive the reduplicative approach. One strategy is to reinterpret negative predications, and the other is to constrain the conjoining of contradictory claims.

In this paper, I argue that the first strategy smuggles other solutions into the response — which shows that the reduplicative approach offers no distinctive solution to the Fundamental Problem. I then argue that the second strategy does not show that the proposed model is genuinely possible, at least not without relying on another approach to addressing the Fundamental Problem. Since both strategies rely on other solutions to resolving the Fundamental Problem, the employment of reduplicative *qua*-operators does none of the theoretical heavy-lifting. Thus, proponents of these recent reduplicative approaches should either abandon relying on *qua*-operators to avoid the Fundamental Problem (and explicitly accept the underlying solution) or regard such operators as a non-fundamental part of their account.

II. QUA-OPERATORS AND REDUPLICATION

Take the following statement: S is F *qua*-D. It is an open question on what the ‘*qua*’ is operating. There appear to be four options⁴:

(Subject) S-*qua*-D is F.

(Predicate) S is F-*qua*-D.

(Copula) S is-*qua*-D F.

(Assertion) *Qua*-D: S is F.

While the reduplicative approach is sometimes understood as meaning any account that employs a *qua*-operator, the narrower understanding of reduplication is to interpret such statements only as Assertion. Interpreted as Assertion, the function of the *qua*-operator is to provide an explanation for why S is F, which is why it is natural to understand the reduplicative *qua* in terms of locutions such as ‘in virtue of’ or ‘because of.’ For example, the statement ‘Christ is omniscient *qua*-divine’ understood reduplicatively is naturally interpreted as claiming that in virtue of being divine, Christ is omniscient. But as Marilyn Adams has pointed out, “*Qua*-propositions reduplicatively construed are of no help with the [Fundamental] Problem in Christology...because ‘x *qua* G is F’ entails ‘x is F’” (Adams 2006, 130). If that is correct, then the claims that *qua*-being divine, Christ is omniscient and *qua*-being human, Christ is not-omniscient entail that Christ is omniscient and not-omniscient, which leads back to the original problem.

To make this more perspicuous, it would help to lay out the truth conditions for reduplicative *qua*-statements. Here is one proposal following Gorman (2014, 88) (with slight modification in notation):

‘*Qua* D: S is F’ is true iff

(i) S is D,

(ii) S is F, and

(iii) S’s being D makes it be the case that S is F.

Now Gorman has recognized a concern for this construal insofar as it is too strong, for we might say “in virtue of being human, Christ walked in Jerusalem” since divine beings that are immaterial do not walk (ibid., 89). But then Christ’s being human makes it the case that Christ walked in Jerusalem, which is problematic since it is contingent that Christ walked in Jerusalem; being human does not suffice for walking in Jerusalem. In light of this worry, Gorman modifies the last condition as

(iii*) S’s being D makes it possible for S to be F.

⁴ See Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: a Philosophical Essay* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), § 6 for further discussion as well as criticism of each of these options.

This modification avoids the worry for (iii) given that it does not claim that Christ's humanity suffices for his walking in Jerusalem; it only makes it possible that he walk in Jerusalem.

Nevertheless, (iii*) is still unsatisfactory since it loses the explanatory link between the predication (being F) and the qua-property (being D), for something can make another thing possible without explaining why it is so.

I suspect that a better analysis can be provided if we modify the last condition as

(iii**) S's being D grounds S's being F.

The grounding relation is usually construed as a metaphysical explanatory relation and so maintains the explanatory link (captured in the locutions 'in virtue of' and 'because').⁵ Of course Gorman's worry over (iii) may return if a grounding fact necessitates the grounded fact. However, some have argued against grounding necessitarianism (Skiles 2015). That said, if grounding facts do necessitate, then we can restrict 'being F' to apply only to non-contingent properties.⁶

We now turn to negative predications. With the revision of (iii) in mind, here is a natural interpretation of such statements:

'Qua H: S is not-F' is true iff

- (a) S is H,
- (b) S is not-F,
- (c) S's being H grounds S's being not-F.

Given (ii) in positive predications and (b) in negative predications, it should now be clear why the Fundamental Problem is not resolved. From the statements "qua being divine: Christ is omniscient" and "qua being human: Christ is not omniscient", it follows that Christ is omniscient (from (ii)) and that Christ is not omniscient (from (b)), and hence the contradiction is not avoided.

III. REVIVING REDUPLICATION: STRATEGY ONE

III.1 Reinterpret Negative Predications

Recently, several philosophers have attempted to revive the reduplicative strategy, arguing that the Fundamental Problem can be solved and contradiction avoided. The first strategy can be found in Gorman (2014), where the reduplicative approach is offered as an alternative to other solutions to the Fundamental problem such as appealing to relative identity, mereological notions, or restrictivist approaches such as kenoticism (*ibid.*, 87). Rather than adopting the standard truth conditions for negative predications stated above, Gorman reinterprets them as follows (*ibid.*, 91):

'Qua H: S is not-F' is true iff

- (a*) S is H, and
- (b*) it is not the case that S is F is grounded in S's being H.

According to Gorman, the original interpretation employed the negation with a narrow scope, whereas the modified interpretation construes the statement with a wide scope. What makes true the statement 'Christ is not omniscient qua being human' is the fact that Christ is human and Christ's being human

⁵ For some seminal works on grounding, see Kit Fine, "Essence and Modality: The Second Philosophical Perspectives Lecture", *Philosophical Perspectives* 8 (1994) and Jonathan Schaffer, "On What Grounds What", in *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, ed. David J. Chalmers, David Manley and Ryan Wasserman (Oxford Univ. Press, 2009).

⁶ While I am sympathetic with the claim that there is a unitary grounding relation, some have argued that there is no "big-G" grounding relation but rather a plurality of relations employed. If one holds to the non-unitary view, then plug in whatever "small-G" grounding relation (e.g., dependence, constitution, realization, supervenience, etc.) that is apt.

does not ground the fact that Christ is omniscient. Under this interpretation, it does not claim that Christ is not omniscient *simpliciter*, only that Christ is not omniscient in virtue of his human nature. As Gorman explains, Christ's being human doesn't *prevent* him from being omniscient; rather, Christ's being human *fails to provide* for his being omniscient (ibid.). Since Christ has more than one nature, the claim "Christ is unchangeable qua divine" doesn't guarantee that Christ is unchangeable *simpliciter* since he may (and in fact did) have a nature that is changeable (viz, his human nature). For positive predications, it follows that Christ had those attributes *simpliciter* (given the truth conditions for such statements), but the same cannot be said for negative predications.⁷ Thus, the claims that "Christ is unchangeable qua divine" and "Christ is changeable qua human" do not entail that Christ is both unchangeable and changeable. It does follow that Christ is changeable, but the complementary cannot be so attributed, and hence contradiction is avoided.

III.2 No Distinctive Solution

While this modified reduplicative approach that reinterprets negative predications avoids contradiction, the main problem is that it collapses into a restrictivist approach to Christology, though Gorman offered his solution as a distinct strategy from other solutions including the restrictivist approach. According to Cross (2009, 463–466), a restrictivist approach either denies that all of the typical properties associated with divinity are essential for being divine or denies that all of the typical properties associated with humanity are essential for being human. Kenotic Christology counts as a restrictivist view that takes the former approach, such that the property of being omniscient is not essential for being divine (what kenotic theorists usually claim is that some other property, such as being *omniscient-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise*, is what is essential for being divine), and hence Christ should be regarded as divine even though he is not omniscient while incarnate (Davis 2006, ch. 10).⁸ More generally, a restrictivist approach will take a pair of incompatible predications (e.g., immutability/mutability, omniscient/limited-in-knowledge, immaterial/material, etc.) and deny attributing one from each pair to Christ.

To see how the revised reduplicative approach reduces to a restrictivist approach, consider the following cases:

Case 1: Take the following two statements: 'Christ qua D is omniscient' and 'Christ qua H is not omniscient.' The latter will be construed as claiming that Christ is H and that it is not the case that Christ being H grounds Christ being omniscient. Hence, it is never truly predicated of Christ that he has limited knowledge.

Case 2: Take the following two statements: 'Christ qua D is unchangeable' and 'Christ qua H is changeable.' The former will be construed as claiming that Christ is D and that it is not the case that Christ being D grounds Christ being changeable. Hence, it is never truly predicated of Christ that he is unchangeable.

It should be evident by the reinterpretation that one of the properties typically associated with divinity or humanity will not be ascribed to Christ — Christ will have only one attribute from the pair. Thus, the

7 Alexander R. Pruss, "Nested Modes, 'Qua' and the Incarnation", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6, no. 2 (2014) interprets negative predications in a similar way but with a different approach to Christology. While Pruss employs a *qua*-operator, his account is not understood as Assertion but as Subject (i.e., S-qua-D is F). And Pruss' view incorporates a nested mode ontology, where essences (or essential properties) are the only immediate modes of individuals, and accidents (or accidental properties) are immediate modes of essences and remote modes of individuals. Now according to Pruss, the negative claim 'S does not know p' is true iff S has no essence that has the mode of knowing p. Similar to Gorman's view, this interpretation leaves open the possibility that S has an essence that does have that mode — thus, the negative predication does not entail that S does not know p *simpliciter*. Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: a Philosophical Essay* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2016) also makes a similar move with regards to shifting the negation, though he rejects reduplicative approaches and the other ways of employing the *qua*-operator.

8 Or at least not omniscient in his earthly life, since some kenotic theorists, such as Davis (ibid.), claim that Christ reacquired those divine properties in his glorification. Other kenotic theorists, such as C. S. Evans, "The Self-Emptying of Love: Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology", in *The Incarnation*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall SJ and Gerald O'Collins SJ (Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), claim that the divestiture of divine properties is permanent.

revised reduplicative approach solves the Fundamental Problem by employing the restrictivist approach, and hence it does not advance a distinctive way to resolve the problem.

Moreover, the reduplicative approach is incomplete, and depending on how one adds to the account evinces how this modified version of the reduplicative approach is dependent on other solutions to the Fundamental Problem. First, we can ask the following question: can we attribute being unchangeable to Christ (not unchangeable qua-D or qua-H, but unchangeable full stop)? This seems like a perfectly reasonable question to ask. If the answer is ‘no,’ then the answer is clearly restrictivist. But if the answer is ‘yes,’ then more must be said. What is it that has that property? Perhaps we might say that the divine nature has that property. Then how should we construe a divine nature? It is standard to treat natures as either concrete or abstract (Plantinga 1999). Treating natures concretely and answering the above question in the affirmative would yield an account that follows a mereological approach to Christology (Stump 2002, Leftow 2002) or something much like it. Treating natures abstractly and answering the question in the affirmative would yield an account that follows a two-minds approach (Morris 1986) or something much like it. So even answering the question in the affirmative, the revised reduplicative approach appears to rely upon some other account to solve the Fundamental Problem.

We can also ask whether the pre-incarnate Christ was unchangeable. It would be strange to answer in the negative (though doing so would be restrictivist). If the answer is in the affirmative, then we can ask what happened to that property after the incarnation? Is there still something that has that property? If yes, it appears to require appealing to something like a mereological or two-minds approach, or something along those lines. If no, then the view becomes a version of kenotic Christology, since there was a divine being that was unchangeable and then is no longer unchangeable. So anyway of filling out the theory to make for a complete answer relies upon a non-reduplicative approach to the Fundamental Problem.

To be clear, the problem I am raising is not the worry that the reduplicative approach asserts that some of the attributes are not possessed by Christ *simpliciter*—after all, the proponent of the reduplicative approach can interpret conciliar pronouncements as implicitly employing the qua-operator. Even granting that, the problem is that we do not have a qua-approach that substantively differs from other views of the incarnation such as the restrictivist approach, and so it fails to provide us with a genuinely alternative solution.⁹

Perhaps someone may object and claim that the reduplicative approach is trying to offer a way in which one of these other solutions is supposed to work. I offer two replies. First, reduplicative views are often offered as an alternative to other solution, and even Gorman offers his view in a way that makes it appear that it is an alternative to other solutions that use relative identity, a mereological framework, or a restrictivist approach (2014, 87). However, some may want to use some of these solutions as a way of spelling out the reduplicative approach. If so, then proponents of the reduplicative approach should specify that their view is not a competitor to other solutions.

Suppose Gorman concedes and suggests that the reduplicative approach is not a distinctive solution but utilizes the resources of another approach such as restrictivism to solve the Fundamental Problem. Nevertheless, we have reason to prefer a standard restrictivist solution over Gorman’s new reduplicative approach insofar as the former is ideologically simpler. The ideology of a theory includes logical or theoretical primitives (as opposed to a theory’s ontology which is concerned with the objects such a theory claims as existing). The reduplicative approach will be more ideologically complex given that it employs qua-operators, whereas standard restrictivist theories can get the same result (i.e., avoid contradiction) without such employment. And some have argued for the claim that ideologically simpler theories are more likely to be

⁹ Another response to my worry might be to claim that concerning the negative predications, there is no such property *simpliciter*. That is, there is no property of being unchangeable *full stop*. Hence, the view is not restrictionist since there is no property to be possessed by God. But such a theory seems to be a strange theory of properties, one that needs to defend why such properties *full stop* do not exist. Under most theories that accept the existence of properties, no case has been made for denying the existence of such properties. So if the reduplicative approach adopts such a position, then it appears as merely an ad hoc response to the worry raised here.

true than less ideologically simple theories (all other things being equal).¹⁰ Since the reduplicative approach of the sort that Gorman advances relies on restrictivism (or some other solution), there is no added benefit in opting for the reduplicative approach, and hence one should instead embrace the standard restrictivist approach (or whatever other solution that the reduplicative approach utilizes) and give up on the superfluous employment of qua-operators.

IV. REVISING REDUPLICATION: STRATEGY TWO

IV.1 'According to' Operators

Reinterpreting negative predications has not been the only attempt to revive the reduplicative approach to the Fundamental Problem. Another recent attempt at reviving reduplication by Beall & Henderson (2019) provides an account that prevents conjoining predicates that would form a problematic pair into a single meaningful statement. According to their view, 'qua D' should not be understood as an explanatory operator — that is, it should not be interpreted through expressions such as “in virtue of” or “because of.” Instead, the qua-operator functions as an “according to” operator, analogous to fictional operators. For example, when one utters the statement ‘Sherlock Holmes lives on 221B Baker St.’, it is natural to interpret that statement as implicitly employing a fictional operator: according to the fiction, Sherlock Holmes lives on 221B Baker St. (which operates over the entire assertion ‘Sherlock Holmes lives on 221B Baker St.’). But one need not use the “according to” operator for only fictions — it may work for any story, including true stories.

Similarly, when one claims that ‘Christ is omnipotent’ or ‘Christ is limited in power,’ such statements can be interpreted as implicitly employing the “according to” operator:

(Qua-D) According to the divine story: Christ is omnipotent.

(Qua-H) According to the human story: Christ is not omnipotent.

All predications of Christ, then, will fall under either the divine story or the human story. But the statements in Qua-D and Qua-H do not entail that Christ is omnipotent and not omnipotent, and hence no contradiction follows. While there are two separate stories, Beall and Henderson insist that there is “the one and only Christ in each of the two apparently incompatible stories” (2019, 160).

Even though there is a single individual in both stories, the employment of the operators prevents combining both stories — as Beall and Henderson put it, the stories are non-“unionizable” into a master story — which is why it does not follow that Christ is omnipotent and not omnipotent.¹¹ Their account

¹⁰ For example, see Theodore Sider, “Against Parthood”, in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, Volume 8*, ed. Karen Bennett and Dean W. Zimmerman (Oxford Univ. Press, 2013).

¹¹ G. H. Labooy, “Stepped characterisation: a metaphysical defence of qua-propositions in Christology”, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 86, no. 1 (2019) offers a similar proposal that can be regarded as a non-unionizing approach. Under this view, characterization will either be straightforward or stepped. To take an example, suppose we claim that qua-being human, Christ was born. Labooy claims that being human straightforwardly characterizes Christ, and being born straightforwardly characterizes being human. Being born, however, does not straightforwardly characterize Christ, though it does step-characterize Christ in virtue of the fact that it straightforwardly characterizes humanity, which straightforwardly characterizes Christ. More generally, divine properties straightforwardly characterize Christ’s divinity, and human properties straightforwardly characterize Christ’s humanity, but neither the divine properties nor the human properties straightforwardly characterize Christ. So statements such as ‘Qua D, S is F’ is understood such that D straightforwardly characterizes S, but F only step-characterizes S. Thus, we cannot say ‘S is F’ simpliciter. Moreover, Labooy claims that “stepped and straightforward characterization should *not* merge into one univocal concept (2019, 12 typescript), and so we cannot make a valid inference from stepped-characterizations to predications simpliciter. So we can’t assert that “Christ is omnipotent and not omnipotent”, but we can assert that “Christ’s divinity is omnipotent” and “Christ’s humanity is not omnipotent.” Similar to Beall and Henderson’s account, there is a non-unionizability, but in Labooy’s account, it is not the non-unionizability of stories but the non-unionizability of stepped characterizations that straightforwardly characterize two distinct straightforward characterizations of Christ. The worries raised against Beall & Henderson’s version can be suitably modified to show that similar problems arise for Labooy’s view.

does, however, allow for some predications *simpliciter*, as long as such predications are true in both stories (Beall and Henderson 2019, 163). That is, if according to the H-story, S is F and according to the D-story, S is F, then a “release” inference is permitted, and therefore it is true that S is F (full stop).

Let us call this account a ‘non-unionizing (redundant) approach.’ While the non-unionizing approach does prevent the assertion of a contradiction, I argue that the approach does not show how it is possible for there to be a single individual in two compatible stories, at least not without relying on another approach to addressing the Fundamental Problem.

IV.2 Awkward Hermeneutics

But before going into that, let me first raise an initial concern, which is that such an account requires an awkward hermeneutical take on certain Scriptural passages, which may demotivate the non-unionizing approach. Although several examples can be given, let us focus on two passages. First, take John 1:14, that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Let’s suppose that certain Biblical passages are clearly employing (albeit implicitly) the “according to the divine story” operator or the “according to the human story” operator. But having to bring in such a mechanism complicates our interpretation, for the divine story will mention the Word that was with God and is God (John 1:1), who is full of grace and truth, but the human story is about becoming flesh. How do both operators divide up this passage? The interpretation becomes awkward if one has to interpret the verse along only one of the stories, but it has a fairly comprehensible interpretation if there is a unionizable story (to use Beall and Henderson’s term). Similar remarks can be said about Philippians 2:5–8, where some remarks clearly belong to the divine story (e.g., “in the form of God”) and others that clearly belong to the human story (e.g., “taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men”, “being found in human form”). To suggest there are two stories needlessly complicates how we should interpret the passage. Moreover, the plain interpretation appears to regard it as a single story, and the passage is much more comprehensible if interpreted as such.

So a non-unionizing approach requires an awkward hermeneutics, whereas a unionizable story can interpret the passage without such complications. To be clear, I am not taking these passages as proof-texts that the non-unionizing approach fails. Although the interpretations may be awkward, sometimes less than plain interpretations are acceptable (just as classical theists will sometimes take what may be regarded as putatively non-plain interpretations of God changing his mind, *contra* the open theist). But adopting a view that avoids hermeneutical awkwardness would be a point in favor of that view. Furthermore, the plain interpretation contains conjoined predications or unionizable stories, and so the non-unionizing approach has some explaining and interpreting to do.

IV.3 Mysterious Possibility

But let us now turn to the main worry for this approach. The problem arises from the claim that there is one and the same person in two incompatible stories. Beall and Henderson do not argue for the claim but merely assert that it is “the one and only Christ” in both stories. But why should we think that is the case? It seems much more plausible to assume that if we have two incompatible stories, then we do not have the same person.

Suppose that we have two incompatible stories. For example, suppose I am telling you about some object O and I say that according to story A, O is a square and according to story B, O is a circle. A and B are clearly incompatible stories and there appears to be no way they can be unionized without entailing a contradiction. Now I could insist that O in story A is identical to O in story B, but one may reasonably worry whether that is even possible. It seems much more plausible to claim that O in story A is not identical to O in story B, and it seems reasonable to demand the one who insists on their identity to give some account of how that is possible.

But Beall and Henderson merely assert that Christ is in both the divine story and the human story, and they offer no account of how it is possible to have one and the same individual in two incompatible stories. Of course they might claim that the doctrine of the incarnation and the Creeds demand that there

is a single individual, viz. Christ. Or they might claim that when we read the Gospel narratives, we are reading a story of a single individual. But that seems plausible only if we assume that there is a master story (that we may be unaware of) or that there is a way (in principle) to harmonize or combine the narratives.¹² But if we carve the narratives into two incompatible stories (the divine story and the human story — and the previous section worried about how it could even be so carved), we are left wondering how it is that there can be one and the same person in both stories.¹³ Beall and Henderson appear to be aware of this concern, and they claim that

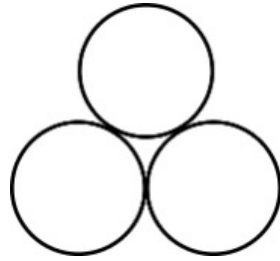
this may be the mark at which orthodoxy points to the ineffability of the hypostatic union of the two apparently contrary natures. It is a part of orthodox Christology that the hypostatic union is a mystery; thus, any good model of Christ's exemplification of the nature can only be illuminating up to a point... however, the account leaves mysterious just how the hypostatic union happens (Beall and Henderson 2019, 168–169).

Indeed, no one should deny that the incarnation is a mystery, and one should not expect to dispel all the mystery that surrounds Christ's dual nature. But some positions respect the mystery surrounding the incarnation while still attempting to provide an intelligible and coherent account of a single person with two natures. Take for example one version of a mereological concretist approach to the incarnation, where Christ is a single person whose natures are proper parts of the one person. Under this theory, the divine attributes are possessed by the divine proper part and the human attributes are possessed by the human proper part. And this model dispels the alleged contradiction by claiming that different proper parts are the literal bearers of the incompatible properties. For example, we can understand how it is that I have a scar and don't have a scar by explaining that I have a scar on my right hand but do not have a scar on my left hand. Similarly, one can claim that the divine proper part is omnipotent whereas the human proper part is not omnipotent. Of course there are several worries that can be raised for this proposal, and there is still quite a bit of mystery involved — but the view goes some way in showing that the account is logically possible.

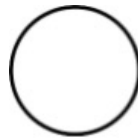
But Beall and Henderson's view seems to fall under an approach to Christian doctrine that can be called 'mysterianism' (Tuggy 2003, 2011), which (broadly speaking) claims that a case cannot be made for the logical consistency of some doctrine given that the doctrine contains content that is not adequately intelligible or understandable. To make this case, compare the non-unionizing approach with Stephen T. Davis' version of social trinitarianism, *Perichoretic Monotheism* (2006, ch. 4). As a version of social trinitarianism, Davis claims that there are three distinct persons, each of which is divine. But he claims that it does not follow that there are three Gods. The reason the inference to the latter claim is blocked is because of the claim that the three divine persons bear the relation of *perichoresis* to each other — that is, that they mutually interpenetrate or fully indwell each other. The three different persons can be illustrated geometrically as three non-overlapping circles:

¹² There appears to be some room for a master story, especially since Beall and Henderson permit some instances of unionizable stories. When it is the case that S is F according to the divine story and S is F according to the human story, then it is true that S is F *full stop*. So the stories can be combined when there is agreement and no contradiction. But the inference rules do not allow for unionizable stories when there would be a contradiction if they were unionized. However, no explanation is offered for these inference rules, and they do not seem intuitive or self-evident.

¹³ Note that this is not the same as wondering how there can be one person with two natures. There are several ways of trying to spell that out (two-minds view, kenoticism, mereological concretism, etc.). But asking how there can be one person in two incompatible stories is a separate question.



But by *perichoresis*, the three divine persons interpenetrate each other or are fully contained by each other. Following the geometric example, Davis represents the three circles as overlapping so as to “contain” each other (i.e., three circles circumscribing the same region), as pictured below:



And Davis insists that in the case of the Godhead, the same thing is simultaneously in both of the states represented in the two diagrams. Now one might reasonably claim that nothing can be in both states simultaneously, but Davis claims that *perichoresis* allows that it can be so. Nothing in Davis’ account goes any way toward explaining how something can be in two incompatible states, and hence Davis admits that in the end his account appeals to mystery in order to be regarded as logically possible.¹⁴

Now I am not repudiating mysterian views, but it should be noted that mysterian views are an alternative way of addressing the logical problem of the Trinity from other notable approaches such as Latin or constitution Trinitarianism, for even though the latter views embrace some mystery, they do try to offer an account that goes some way in explaining how the proposal is logically possible.

With regard to the Fundamental Problem of the incarnation, there are solutions that attempt to explain how the central claims of the incarnation can be logically possible even while retaining much of the mystery, such as mereology-based solutions or Morris’ (1986) two-minds view. The intelligible or understandable content is based on the logic of parthood or the psychology of multiple conscious perspectives.¹⁵ However, the non-unionizable approach does not offer a substantive explanation in the way that these other solutions do to the Fundamental Problem. Moreover, it appears very similar to Davis’ Perichoretic Monotheism, for while it provides a mechanism that prevents a certain logical inference (such that one cannot deduce “S is F and not-F” from “according to the D-Story: S is F and according to the H-story: S is not-F”), no substantive explanation is provided to bolster the acceptability of such an inference rule.

So Beall and Henderson’s claim that their “account leaves mysterious just how the hypostatic union happens” (2019, 169) is not the run of the mill mystery that all approaches to the incarnation have to deal with but rather appears to fit the bill for a mysterian approach to the incarnation. But then we get a similar worry to the one raised against Gorman’s reduplicative strategy — that is, the view collapses into another approach, one that does not have the same ideological cost. If one takes a straightforward mysterian approach, there is no need to appeal to qua-operators construed as “according to” operators. That is, one can maintain that there is a single story with two incompatible predications, and it is a mystery how that is possible (no intelligible or understandable content can be provided to show how it is possible). Given this ideologically simpler approach, the straightforward mysterian approach is preferable to the

¹⁴ Davis, in correspondence, has admitted that his brand of social Trinitarianism should be counted as mysterian in the way that Tuggy defines (and more specifically, as a negative mysterian view).

¹⁵ In Beall, “Christ — A Contradiction”, Beall’s contradictory Christology offers a non-mysterian approach given that it advances a system of paraconsistent logic that is intelligible and understandable (even if contentious).

non-unionizable approach that relies on a mysterian-based maneuver in order to assert that there can be one and the same Christ in two incompatible stories.

V. CONCLUSION

Reinterpreting negative predications does not help the reduplicative approach because it relies upon other approaches to the incarnation that do not need to make use of a reduplicative qua-operator. The non-unionizing reduplicative approach ensures that no contradiction will be asserted, but either we are left wondering whether such an account is genuinely possible or it relies upon a mysterian approach. So both of the recent reduplicative strategies solve the Fundamental Problem by utilizing other approaches, but both reduplicative strategies involve an extra ideological commitment given its employment of qua-operators.

In criticizing both views, we suggested that the ideologically simpler view should be preferred (other things being equal), and hence we should favor the underlying approach that these recent attempts rely on over the reduplicative strategy given that the same solution is reached without the qua-operators. However, that conclusion is a bit hasty, for it depends on whether the qua-operators are considered fundamental or not. Now if the qua-operators in these proposals are fundamental, then reduplicative approaches are not as ideologically simple as the approaches they rely on and thus should be rejected in favor of the underlying solution (restrictivism or mysterianism or what have you). However, if the qua-operators are not fundamental, then proponents of reduplicative approaches should be explicit with regards to what aspect of their theory is doing the work of resolving the Fundamental Problem, for it is not the qua-operator as such that resolves the worry.

Given that these recent attempts at reviving reduplicative approaches do not offer a distinctive solution, proponents of the reduplicative solution should explicitly state how they are construing the qua-operator (as fundamental or non-fundamental), thereby revealing whether their strategy is to be rejected in favor of a more ideologically simpler solution or merely offers another way of dressing up an already extant solution to the Fundamental Problem of the incarnation.¹⁶

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Marilyn McCord. 2006. *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Beall, Jc 2019. "Christ — A Contradiction: A Defense of Contradictory Christology", *Journal of Analytic Theology* no. 7: 400–433.
- Beall, Jc and Jared Henderson. 2019. "A Neglected QUA solution to the Fundamental Problem of Christology", *Faith and Philosophy* 36, no. 2: 157–72. doi:10.5840/faithphil201957124.
- Cotnoir, A. J. 2018. "Theism and Dialetheism". *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 96, no. 3: 592–609. doi:10.1080/00048402.2017.1384846.
- Cross, Richard. 2009. "Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Theology". In *The Incarnation*, edited by Thomas Flint and Michael Rea. Oxford Univ. Press.
- Davis, Stephen T. 2006. *Christian Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Evans, C. Stephen. 2002. "The Self-Emptying of Love: Some Thoughts on Kenotic Christology." In *The Incarnation*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 246–272. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Fine, Kit. 1994. "Essence and Modality: The Second Philosophical Perspectives Lecture". *Philosophical Perspectives* no. 8: 1. doi:10.2307/2214160.

¹⁶ Many thanks to Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Rubio, Thomas Senior, Chris Tomaszewski, and two anonymous reviewers for helpful feedback on an earlier draft.

- Gorman, Michael. 2014. "Christological Consistency and the Reduplicative Qua", *Journal of Analytic Theology* 2, 86–100.
- Labooy, G. H. 2019. "Stepped characterisation: a metaphysical defence of qua-propositions in Christology". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 86, no. 1: 25–38. doi:10.1007/s11153-019-09698-y.
- Leftow, Brian. 2002. "A Timeless God Incarnate." In *The Incarnation*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 273–299. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Morris, Thomas V. 1986. *The Logic of God Incarnate*. Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press.
- Pawl, Timothy. 2016. *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1999. "On Heresy, Mind, and Truth", *Faith and Philosophy* 16: 182–193.
- Pruss, Alexander. 2014. "Nested Modes, 'Qua' and the Incarnation", *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 6, 65–80. doi:10.24204/ejpr.v6i2.178.
- Schaffer, Jonathan. 2009. "On What Grounds What." In *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, edited by David Manley, David Chalmers, and Ryan Wasserman, 347–383. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Sider, Theodore. 2013. "Against Parthood." In *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics: Vol. 8*, edited by Karen Bennett and Dean Zimmerman, 237–93. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Skiles, Alexander. 2015. "Against Grounding Necessitarianism", *Erkenntnis* 80: 717–751.
- Stump, Eleonore. 2002. "Aquinas' Metaphysics of Incarnation." In *The Incarnation*, edited by Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, 197–220. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Tuggy, Dale. 2003. "The Unfinished Business of Trinitarian Theorizing", *Religious Studies* 39: 165–183. doi:10.1017/S0034412503006437.
- Tuggy, Dale. 2011. "On Positive Mysterianism", *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 69: 205–226. doi:10.1007/s11153-010-9237-6.
- Yang, Eric. 2020. "Kenoticism and essential divine properties". *Religious Studies* 56, no. 3: 409–18. doi:10.1017/S0034412518000860.

