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The Logic of the Incarnation

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Abstract:
I argue that by distinguishing and employing the intuitive notions of essence and fundamentality we can see that the incarnation, as stated in the Chalcedonian Creed, is a logically coherent scenario.

The problem of the incarnation is that, supposedly, there once was a person who was both fully human and fully divine, at the same time, in the same place. But humanity entails being limited in certain ways, which is ruled out by divinity, and divinity entails not being limited in certain ways, which is ruled out by humanity. So, how can one and the same person have ever been fully human and fully divine?

The problem of the incarnation is just a particular case of a more general metaphysical problem: how can there be cases of some possible concrete object *x* and two seemingly mutually exclusive intrinsic properties F and G, such that *x* has both F and G in a world *w* at a time *t*? Substitute the person Jesus Christ for *x*, *being divine* for F, *being human* for G, the actual world for *w*, some time in the past for *t*, and we have the particular problem of the incarnation in Christianity. But then from a purely theoretical standpoint we should first abstract away from the particular problem of the incarnation and search for an answer to the more general metaphysical problem, independent of any particular instance of it. The more cases a theory can handle, the better it is.

In what follows, I first suggest a strategy for solving the more general metaphysical problem by moving from mere truth to a mixture of essential and fundamental truths (section 1). I then show how this strategy solves the problem of the incarnation in particular (section 2). I end by replying to some anticipated objections before briefly distinguishing my account of the incarnation from some other types of account (section 3).

I assume throughout that we strive for coherency without violating classical logic.

1. The Strategy

Here is a logically perspicuous statement of the general metaphysical problem of which the incarnation is a particular instance:

1. $\forall x \forall y \, (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
2. $\forall x \, (Fx \rightarrow \sim Gx)$
3. Fa
4. Gb
5. $a=b$

where $\Phi[x/y]$ means we substitute the free y in Φ for one or more occurrences of the free x in Φ.

Lemma 1. Any set of propositions of the form 1–5 is mutually inconsistent.

Proof: by 2, we instantiate: $Fa \rightarrow \sim Ga$. By 3, it then follows that $\sim Ga$. By 1 and 5, it follows that $\sim Gb$, which directly contradicts 4. *Q.E.D.*

Note that the metaphysical problem is not an *immediate* formal contradiction. That is, the question is not how something can be both F and ~F. That I take it is just straight forwardly impossible. The question is rather how something can be both F and G, if being F entails something that is formally inconsistent with being G.

But then the easy solution is to deny premise 2 for the properties F and G at hand. In the case of the incarnation, this means denying that being human entails not being divine. This can perhaps best be done by denying that being human entails that one is limited in certain ways that being divine entails one is not. In short: one needs to argue that being human is compatible with being divine, and vice versa.

But, arguably, this is not the best solution. There is no reason to think premise 2 is false in all cases of the general problem. So, theoretically speaking, the solution suffers from insufficient generality.

But denying premise 1 amounts to denying the classical logic of identity, and as far as I can see, that results in more confusion than clarification. And premises 3–5 are just the scheme for the particular cases we try to understand, so denying any of 3–5 amounts to simply denying that there are any such cases. But then, on pain of violating classical logic, there is no premise left to deny. What else can be done?

We can broaden our theoretical framework, rather than violate classical logic. The framework I suggest includes two notions of some controversy, but the controversy nowadays mostly concerns *how* to understand them, not *whether* we can understand them. I will therefore not defend the overall legitimacy of these two notions, but rather explicate some seemingly necessary conditions for how to understand them.

The first notion needed is that of an *essence*. This notion can and has been understood in various ways, but what seems common to most such ways is that the notion of an essence is a modal notion: the essential properties of x are the properties that x as the thing it is cannot exist without. In terms of possible worlds, we might loosely say that E_x is the essence of x just in case x instantiates E_x in all possible worlds in which x exists. But this must in the end be just loose talk because it provides the wrong kind of essence. For example, the number 7, which presumably is a necessarily existing thing, necessarily has the property of being the successor of 6, which presumably is also a necessarily existing thing, but then the property of being such that 7 is the successor of 6 is part of my essence, which is wrong, at least on any intuitive understanding of the term.[1] Essence is a modal, but *hyperintensional* notion.

The second notion needed is that of *fundamentality*. This notion too can and has been understood in various ways, but what seems common to most such ways is that the notion of fundamentality is a categorical (non-modal) notion: the fundamental properties of x are the properties of x (partly) in virtue of which all other properties of x are instantiated, but themselves not instantiated in virtue of any other properties of x.[2] We can say that one property F of x is a *more* fundamental property of x than another property G of x, if x instantiate G (partly) in virtue of x instantiating F. But, ultimately, we want (I take it) to be able to talk of *the* absolute most fundamental properties of x, the properties of x that are not instantiated in virtue of any other properties of x. So, by 'fundamental' I henceforth mean the latter absolute notion.[3]

Note that while the notion of an essence is modal (involving metaphysical possibility), the notion of fundamentality is categorical (non-modal). The two notions need therefore not be necessarily co-extensional notions. Neither is any one of them necessarily co-extensional with the notion of just having a property *simpliciter*, or what we might call a *mere* truth about something. That these notions are not necessarily co-extensional is crucial for the solution that follows. So, let

me give a plausible example of each one of the four kinds of cases that supports this point.[4] First, I can sit, but sitting is neither an essential nor a fundamental property of mine. Second, I am a biological being, which is an essential property of mine, but not, I take it, a fundamental property of mine. Biological properties are, plausibly, reducible to other properties. Third, negative charge is both an essential property of electrons (i.e. part of what it is to be an electron) and a fundamental property of electrons (i.e. not had in virtue of anything else about them). Fourth, I am mereologically composed of some particles, and being composed of *those very particles* is a fundamental property of me, but not an essential property of me. I could have been composed of a (slightly) different collection of particles.

In other words, we have the following matrix showing non-co-extensionality of our mere, essential and fundamental truth (note: it's not too hard to come up with other cases, if you find any one of them controversial):

	Fundamental truth:	**Non-fundamental truth:**
Essential truth:	Electron x is negatively charged	I am a biological being
Non-essential truth:	I am composed of *these* particles	I am sitting

With the overlapping, but non-co-extensional notions of essence and fundamentality onboard, we must view the general problem we started out with in a new, more sophisticated light. We can no longer just consider whether something instantiates a property or not, but must now consider *how* it instantiates it. That is, we can no longer just consider whether x is F, since that led us into paradox, but must consider whether x is essentially F as well as whether x is fundamentally F.

Let's treat e and f as predicational modifiers, and write 'Fx' whenever x is merely F, 'eFx' whenever x is essentially F, and 'fFx' whenever x is fundamentally x. We might loosely think of e and f as being analogous (but nothing but analogous) to adverbial modifiers: just as x can be F, but also be F essentially and be F fundamentally, so x can, for example, walk, but also walk slowly, walk funnily, etc. Or we might loosely think of e and f as being analogous (but nothing but analogous) to adjectival modifiers: just as x can be F, but also be essentially F and be fundamentally F, so x can, for example, be red, but also be dark red, homogenously red, etc. But as we will see shortly, these analogies might in the end be just loose analogies, limited in central ways.

More should of course be said about these two notions of essence and fundamentality, but let's for now simply take some such notions for granted, and see what happens to the general metaphysical problem we started out with. The above set of propositions 1–5 is a scheme of which we now must consider the cases of essential and fundamental truth. Here is the case of essential truth:

6. $\forall x \forall y\ (x{=}y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
7. $\forall x\ (eFx \rightarrow {\sim}eGx)$
8. eFa
9. eGb
10. $a{=}b$

Lemma 2. Just as 1–5, 6–10 is likewise mutually inconsistent.

Proof: by 7, we instantiate: $eFa \rightarrow {\sim}eGa$. By 8, it then follows that ${\sim}eGa$. By 6 and 10, it follows that ${\sim}eGb$, which directly contradicts 9. *Q.E.D.*

And the same goes for the case of fundamentality: just substitute f for e in the above proof.

But what if, as we have already seen, the cases of essential truth and fundamental truth can cut across each other? Then the above proofs can be blocked, and the paradox resolved.

Here is such a case:

11. $\forall x \forall y\ (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
12. $\forall x\ (e\mathrm{F}x \rightarrow {\sim}e\mathrm{G}x)$
13. $f\mathrm{F}a$
14. $e\mathrm{G}b$
15. $a=b$

The set of propositions 11–15 is not mutually inconsistent like 1–5 and 6–10. By 12, we can instantiate: $e\mathrm{F}a \rightarrow {\sim}e\mathrm{G}a$, but we then have nothing by virtue of which we can discharge the consequent (by Modus Ponens), which is needed to derive the contradiction. It does not help to, by 12, instead instantiate: $e\mathrm{F}b \rightarrow {\sim}e\mathrm{G}b$, and then by 14 discharge the negation of the antecedent (by Modus Tollens); the result doesn't contradict 13, by 11 and 15.

Here is a (admittedly somewhat tendentious) model showing formal consistency: we let our domain D consist of a certain statue and the clay it is made of, we let 'F' be *atomistic* (in the historical sense of a mereological simple) and we let 'G' be *statue-shaped*. Then, plausibly, whatever is essentially atomistic in D (the clay) is not essentially statue-shaped (because the clay is essentially atomistic, but could also have been scattered across the floor), so 12 is satisfied. Letting '*a*' denote the clay and '*b*' denote the statue, we also get that 13 is satisfied: the clay is fundamentally atomistic (according to completed physics, it is composed of mereological simples we might assume). Proposition 14 is also satisfied because the statue is essentially statue-shaped (the statue could not have been scattered across the floor). Finally, at least according to many *live* metaphysical theories (hence the somewhat tendentious part of the model), for example, counterpart theory (*Lewis*, 1986), or the theory of occasional identity (*Gallois*, 1998), proposition 15 can be satisfied as well: the statue is nothing but the clay (statue=clay). So, at least if any of the two latter theories are consistent, 11–15 is established as a mutually consistent set of propositions.

If one is unconvinced by the viability of the metaphysical theories the model rested on, one should feel free to try to come up with a better model. But in any case the type of contradiction that we derived in the cases 1–5 and 6–10 is blocked in the case of 11–15 due to the formal inability to discharge the consequent or the negation of the antecedent in any relevant instance of 12.

But the acute reader will have noticed that there still is a formal problem. Walking does not entail walking slowly, and being red does not entail being dark red, but obviously walking slowly entails walking, and being dark red entails being red. So, one might think, likewise being F does not entail being essentially/fundamentally F, but obviously being essentially/fundamentally F entails being F. So, we have to accept, among others, the following two additional claims:

16. $\forall x\ (e\mathrm{G}x \rightarrow \mathrm{G}x)$
17. $\forall x\ (f\mathrm{F}x \rightarrow \mathrm{F}x)$

By instantiations of 16 and 17, we get: $e\mathrm{G}b \rightarrow \mathrm{G}b$ and $f\mathrm{F}a \rightarrow \mathrm{F}a$, which from 14 and 13 entails: $\mathrm{G}b$ and $\mathrm{F}a$. By 11, it then follows that $\mathrm{G}a$ and $\mathrm{F}b$. But then we are back at our initial problem: one and the same thing is both F and G, so from 2 we then get our initial contradiction just as we did to begin with!

But by inspecting the matrix I gave earlier showing that mere, essential and fundamental truth are non-co-extensional, I believe it is pretty clear what should go: at face value, 16 and 17 are false. The matrix shows that there is no entailment from mere truth to neither essential or fundamental truth, nor an entailment from essential truth to fundamental truth, nor an entailment from fundamental truth to essential truth. So why believe there are entailments from essential and fundamental truth to mere truth?

One reason is by the analogy with adverbial and adjectival modifiers. Walking slowly entails walking, and being dark red entails being red, so, by analogy, being essentially/fundamentally F entails being F. But mere analogy is too weak. We are asking for a reason to believe the analogy is that strong.

Another reason is intuition. It just seems pretty clear that being essentially/fundamentally F entails being F; after all, how can anything be essentially/fundamentally F *without* being F? But the

intuition is too weak. I can explain it away, so it carries no justificatory weight. The intuition is something like this: being essentially/fundamentally F is *factive*, so being essentially/fundamentally F must entail being F. But all the factivity we need is given already by the tautological fact that being essentially/fundamentally F entails being essentially/fundamentally F. In other words, assume *a* is essentially/fundamentally F. Then *a* is F *because a* is essentially/fundamentally F. So, if *a* is essentially/fundamentally F, there is no *additional*, or *separate* fact of *a* being F. When we truly say that *a* is F (in the case considered), we really express the fact that *a* is essentially/fundamentally F.[5]

So, 16 and 17 are either expressing tautologies of the form $\forall x\ (e\mathrm{G}x \rightarrow e\mathrm{G}x)$ and $\forall x\ (f\mathrm{G}x \rightarrow f\mathrm{G}x)$, respectively, or they are false. As shown by the matrix above, we can make sense of cases of mere truth that are neither essential nor fundamental truth (e.g. that I am sitting). But we cannot make sense of an essential/fundamental truth that is also such a case of mere truth. An essential/fundamental truth is an essential/fundamental truth, not some other truth in addition to that.

So, in short, here is my suggestion for a strategy in terms of which we can search for a solution to particular cases of our general metaphysical problem. We have the initial scheme:

1. $\forall x \forall y\ (x{=}y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
2. $\forall x\ (\mathrm{F}x \rightarrow {\sim}\mathrm{G}x)$
3. $\mathrm{F}a$
4. $\mathrm{G}b$
5. $a{=}b$

As is, this scheme (just like 6–10) is inconsistent. So, for any instance of it, we must, on pain of paradox, ask ourselves whether we can "modify" away the paradox by the help of *e* and *f*. Since *e* and *f* can cut across each other, the formal paradox can be blocked by modifying one of the predicates (and hopefully its corresponding property) with *e* and the other with *f*. In this way, and (it seems) only in this way, one blocks the road to paradox without violating classical logic. There is of course no guarantee that all instances of the general problem can be thus made formally consistent. But we now have a general strategy by which we can consider it case by case. In short: move from operating with just truth to a mixture of essential and fundamental truth.

Interestingly, the problem of the incarnation is a particular case that yields to this strategy.

2. The Incarnation

According to the Chalcedonian Creed, which I will here take to represent Christian Orthodoxy, there is one and the same person being

> truly God and truly man… one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures… the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person.

Accepting that being human rules out being divine, the Chalcedonian Creed presents us with an instance of the general metaphysical problem we started out with. Here is the instance of our schema for this particular problem:

18. $\forall x \forall y\ (x{=}y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
19. $\forall x\ (\mathrm{H}x \rightarrow {\sim}\mathrm{D}x)$
20. $\mathrm{H}j$
21. $\mathrm{D}s$
22. $j{=}s$

where H is *being human*, D is *being divine*, j is *Jesus*, and s is *the Son* of the Trinity (God = the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit[6]).

Lemma 3. As is, 18–22 are mutually inconsistent.

Proof: by 19, we get: Hj → ~Dj. By 20, we then get that ~Dj. By 18, 21 and 22, we get that Dj. Contradiction. *Q.E.D.*

But the Chalcedonian Creed takes no stand on whether the two natures in question are both essential natures, both fundamental natures, both neither essential nor fundamental, or one of each. So, by our above strategy, we modify the predicates in various ways by *e* and *f*, and thus get consistent versions of 18–22. Consider this case:

23. $\quad \forall x \forall y\ (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
24. $\quad \forall x\ (f\mathrm{H}x \rightarrow \sim f\mathrm{D}x)$
25. $\quad e\mathrm{Hj}$
26. $\quad e\mathrm{Ds}$
27. $\quad \mathrm{j=s}$

By 24, we get: *f*Hj → ~*f*Dj and *f*Hs → ~*f*Ds, but from neither one of those two instances can we discharge the consequent or the denial of the antecedent by the help of 25 or 26, which is needed to derive a formal contradiction. Or, consider this case:

28. $\quad \forall x \forall y\ (x=y \rightarrow (\Phi[x/y] \leftrightarrow \Phi[y/x]))$
29. $\quad \forall x\ (e\mathrm{H}x \rightarrow \sim e\mathrm{D}x)$
30. $\quad f\mathrm{Hj}$
31. $\quad f\mathrm{Ds}$
32. $\quad \mathrm{j=s}$

From 29, we get: *e*Hj → ~*e*Dj and *e*Hs → ~*e*Ds, but, again, from neither one of those two instances can we discharge the consequent or the denial of the antecedent by the help of 30 or 31, which is needed to derive a formal contradiction.

So, by such modifications, we simply don't get the same contradiction as we did in the unmodified case of 18–22. So, by the modification strategy, the incarnation leads to no contradiction, even if we accept that humanity excludes divinity (within one and the same way of truth). So, by accepting essential and fundamental modifications of truth, Christian orthodoxy is a logically consistent doctrine (at least along the axis of the incarnation).

But there is another problem. It seems Christianity is, in fact, committed to the following set of propositions:[7]

i. $\quad e\mathrm{Hj}$
ii. $\quad e\mathrm{Ds}$
iii. $\quad \sim e\mathrm{Hs}$
iv. $\quad \sim e\mathrm{Dj}$
v. $\quad f\mathrm{Dj}$
vi. $\quad f\mathrm{Ds}$
vii. $\quad \sim f\mathrm{Hs}$
viii. $\quad \sim f\mathrm{Hj}$

I take it, for a Christian, that ii, iii, vi and vii are obvious. In defense of proposition i: if Jesus was not essentially human, he could have been something non-human. But just like I could not have been non-human and still be what I am, so Jesus could not have been non-human and still be what he was. Or so it seems to me, when I think of people as something biological. In defense of iv: Jesus could have been a completely ordinary human being, witnessed by the seemingly perfectly coherent scenario that Christians are wrong about the historical Jesus of Nazareth being divine. It is not incoherent to imagine him as an interesting, but ordinary fisherman, the human son of an even more ordinary carpenter. In defense of v: Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, which is the Son, which is fundamentally divine, so by Leibniz's Law, Jesus is fundamentally divine too. Finally, in defense of viii: by vii, the Son is not fundamentally human, but the Son is identical with Jesus, so, by Leibniz's Law, Jesus is not fundamentally human either.[8]

Lemma 4. By virtue of Leibniz's Law (LL, or proposition 18/23/28 above) and i–iv, we get four new contradictions on our hands.

Proof 1: i+LL entails *e*Hs, which contradicts iii. *Q.E.D.*

Proof 2: ii+LL entails *e*Dj, which contradicts iv. *Q.E.D.*

Proof 3: iii+LL entails ~*e*Hj, which contradicts i. *Q.E.D.*

Proof 4: iv+LL entails ~*e*Ds, which contradicts ii. *Q.E.D.*

No similar contradiction results from combining either one of v–viii with LL. This is no accident. Note the structure: propositions i–iv deal with essential truths; propositions v–viii deal with fundamental truths. Essence is *modal*; fundamentality is *categorical*. The contradictions are derived from combining LL with i–iv, which deals with essential truths, which are modal truths; but not from combining LL with v–viii, which deals with fundamental truths, which are categorical truths. Conclusion: essential, but not fundamental truths fail to be closed under LL. So, the last four paradoxes are traditional paradoxes from applications of LL to instantiations of modal properties!

This is an interesting result. The last four paradoxes are of the same kind as, for example, the paradox of the statue and the clay. Let *Statue* be a statue made from some clay; call it *Clay*. Assume that Statue = Clay. Statue, but not Clay has the property of being essentially statue-shaped. So, by LL, we get that Statue ≠ Clay, contradicting our initial assumption. Likewise, assume Jesus = Son. Jesus, but not Son has the property of being essentially human. So, by LL, we get that Jesus ≠ Son, contradicting our initial assumption.

The natural response is thus to solve the four paradoxes above in the very same way we solve the other traditional paradoxes with respect to the combination of modal properties and LL. As such, it is not a pressing problem for Christianity in particular, but a general problem for everyone. We are all companions in guilt at this point.

This is of course not the place to defend my favorite solution to the traditional paradoxes, but let me just briefly mention it: *counterpart theory*.[9] Counterpart theory is the theory according to which no object exists in more than one possible world. In other words, there is no trans-world identity. So, for example, object *a* exists in one and only one possible world *w*. The modal truth at *w* that *a* could have been F, even though *a* is not in fact F at *w*, is true because there is another possible world *w** containing some *b* numerically distinct from *a*, but which resembles *a* in the relevant respects picked out in the context at hand, and *b* is F in *w**. In short: any way *a* could have been is represented by other things similar to *a* in other possible worlds in fact being that way in those worlds.

A result of counterpart theory is that the essential properties of things is not fixed once and for all, but differs a bit from context to context, depending on how one conceptualizes the thing one is talking about. So, for example, when we focus on Jesus as a human being, we (might, if we are somewhat scientifically oriented in that context) focus on him as a biological being, and as such he is not essentially divine, or non-biological. In such a context, i and iv are true. But when we focus on Jesus as the Son of the Trinity, we naturally think of him as being necessarily divine, and as such he is not essentially biological, or non-divine. In such a context, ii and iii are true. Nonetheless, in both contexts of focus, Jesus = the Son, the one and only person that, according to Christianity, has sometime in the past, walked around in the one and only actual world.

According to counterpart theory, claims of essence are thus not "deep" metaphysical claims, but rather contextually variant claims, the truth of which depends on which properties we focus on. Nothing similar is going on with claims of fundamentality. The fundamental properties of a thing are fixed once and for all, independent of all contexts, and independent of which properties we focus on. Claims of fundamentality are thus "deep" metaphysical claims: they are claims about what a thing is *really* like, behind all appearances and more and less pragmatically appropriate ways of speaking of it in our ordinary day-to-day life.

Conclusion: propositions i–iv are contextually variant, but propositions v–viii are not. The four paradoxes above arose because we treated i–iv as not being thus contextually variant. At least

so goes my favorite solution to such traditional modal paradoxes, and hence to the above modal paradoxes of the incarnation in particular. But the reader should feel free to come up with his own alternative. It is in any case not Christianity's problem in particular.

3. Objections, Replies and Distinctions

Before I consider some objections to my solution to the problem of the incarnation in particular, let me be clear on what I have *not* done. I have not defended the general distinctions between mere truth, essential truth and fundamental truth. I simply claimed that there are some such distinctions, and that these distinctions, whatever they are more exactly, or whichever names we ought to give to them, helps resolve the general metaphysical problem, of which the problem of the incarnation is a particular instance. I have also, in my mind, not fully defended the assumption that the three notions fail to be co-extensional, but simply claimed with the support of an intuitive case that they are not.

I have not defended counterpart theory as a solution to the incarnation. I simply showed how to employ it in solving the last four paradoxes I raised, but there might be other solutions that in the end turn out to be better. In any case, these paradoxes turned out not to be peculiarities of Christian doctrines in particular, so we are all companions in guilt on this point.

I have not, of course, argued that the incarnation, or any other instance of our more general problem, has actually happened. I was intentionally abstract and non-committal. I am only interested in showing a way for an instance of our general problem, and the incarnation in particular, to be a logically consistent scenario, and so without violating classical logic. I believe we at present have no way to prove the truth of any of the central Christian doctrines, but there are ways of proving their classical logical consistency, which have been my present interest.

With these caveats onboard, let me now reply to a few anticipated objections. First, one might object that since, on the above account, we have ~fHj (i.e. claim viii above), we really have that Jesus is not fully human, which violates the Chalcedonian Creed. But the reply should be obvious by now: ~fHj does not entail ~eHj; and essential truth is full truth in any reasonable sense of 'full truth.' So, Jesus is fully human by being essentially human, not by being fundamentally human (which he is not). Likewise, by the above claims (i.e. iii and vii) we have that ~fHs and ~eHs, so one might object that the son is not human. But again, ~fHs and ~eHs do not entail ~Hs; and mere truth is full truth in any reasonable sense of 'full truth' (for example, it is fully true that I am sitting right now). So, the son is fully human by being merely human, not by being either essentially or fundamentally human (which he is not).

Second, one might object that we still have a paradox when it comes to mere truth, witnessed by 18–22, so there is, in one sense, still a paradox within Christian doctrine. *Reply*: as long as we stay exclusively within one of mere, essential or fundamental truth, I have granted that at least one of the premises must go, witnessed by the paradoxical 1–5 and 6–10. In the particular case of 18–22, 19 is obviously what must go: being human doesn't entail not being divine precisely because something can be essentially human, but fundamentally divine. This is no acceptance of the "easy" solution rejected at the outset, according to which being human and being divine are not mutually exclusive. On my account, they are mutually exclusive within one of the truths, but not across them.

Third, one might object that the modifiers *e* and *f* only modify our predications, not the real properties of the world. And then, when we consider the real properties that are instantiated in the world, our initial paradox comes back with full force. But this objection is not taking my proposal seriously. Rather, it is simply restating the initial paradox in exclusive terms of fundamental truth, i.e. propositions 6–10, with *f* in place for *e*. But my proposal explicitly granted the inconsistency of 6–10 with *f* in place for *e*. The whole point of my proposal is to show that one must *mix* essential truth and fundamental truth such that the paradox goes away. It is therefore no objection to my

proposal to simply insist that there is a paradox in the case in which one is *not* thus mixing the truths.

Fourth, one might object that while I invoke different "categories" of truth, Christianity only operates with one notion of truth, so I have simply changed the subject rather than solved the problem. *Reply*: I am not invoking different *categories* of truth. Rather, I am invoking three different *ways of instantiating a property*, namely merely, essentially and fundamentally.[10] In whichever of those three ways a property is instantiated, it is true—in the one and only sense of 'true'—that it is instantiated in that way. So, when I speak of three different truths, I really mean the one and only truth of three different ways of instantiating a property. And note: Christianity should be no enemy of such talk. Consider: "We are all fundamentally creatures of God" and "Humans are essentially searching creatures." Compare: "Jesus of Nazareth is essentially a human being" and "Jesus of Nazareth is fundamentally God."

Let me end by briefly distinguishing my account of the incarnation from some other types of account.[11] First of all, my account is not a version of *Kenoticism*, the view according to which the Son ceases to be divine while being human. The main worry for this type of account is that he is not fully divine, which violates the Chalcedonian Creed. On my account, the Son is always fundamentally divine, so he is always fully divine.[12]

Second, my account is not a version of *Compositionalism*, the view according to which Jesus is a composite such that one of its proper parts is divine and another of its proper parts is human. The main worry for this type of account is that he is not fully human and fully divine, but only partly each, which violates the Chalcedonian Creed. On my account, the whole person is fully (fundamentally) divine, and fully (essentially) human.[13]

Third, my account is thus also no version of *Nestorianism*, the view according to which Jesus was really two people, one human and one divine. On my account, Jesus was one person who was fundamentally divine, but essentially human.[14]

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Notes

1. Cf. Fine (1994).
2. On fundamentality, see Fine (2001), Schaffer (2009), Rosen (2010), and Sider (2011). I understand the *fundamental* properties and relations to be those in virtue of which all other properties and relations hold, but

which themselves hold in virtue of no other properties and relations; I understand *grounding* to be the relation between the fundamental and the non-fundamental properties and relations; and I understand the *perfectly natural* properties and relations to be the properties and relations that perfectly "carve nature by its joints", or make for perfect intrinsic similarity among things. Naturalness might also come in degrees. On grounding, see Schaffer (2009). On naturalness, see Lewis (1983; 1986:59–69).

3. Schaffer (2009) accepts that there must be an absolute fundamental level in virtue of which all other properties are instantiated, but Rosen (2010) accepts that there might be infinite descent, no absolute fundamental level, only more and more fundamental levels, *ad infinitum*. My solution in this paper is compatible with both views, but I henceforth talk as if there is an absolute bottom level to fundamentality.

4. By 'co-extensional' I henceforth mean *necessarily* co-extensional.

5. I believe the same can be said of the adverbial and adjectival modifiers, and thus preserve a better analogy with *e* and *f*: assume *a* is walking slowly. Then *a* is walking *because a* is walking slowly; that *a* walks is here no separate fact from the fact that *a* walks slowly. The same goes for being dark red entailing being red.

6. On the problem of the Trinity, see Bohn (2011).

7. Note that i–viii supports 23–27 as being the correct case of modification over 28–32.

8. Fundamentality, but, as we will see shortly, not essentiality, is closed under LL.

9. There is a well-known analogous temporal problem of identity in the vicinity here. My favorite solution to the temporal problem is *perdurantism*, or temporal parts theory, according to which objects are sums of temporal as well as spatial parts. On both counterpart theory and perdurantism, see Lewis (1986). There is of course no present need to commit to Lewis's notion of possible worlds being concrete. For more on persistence in general, see Sider (2001).

10. The nominalist might here interpret me as invoking three different ways of *predication* instead, namely merely, essentially and fundamentally. My solution still goes through.

11. For a nice taxonomy of the different types of views, see Hill's introduction to Marmodoro & Hill (2011).

12. For a defense of Kenoticism, see Forrest (2000).

13. For a critical discussion of Compositionalism, see Le Poidevin (2009).

14. Thanks to Ben Caplan for discussion and comments.