The Incarnation: divine embodiment and the divided mind

ROBIN LE POIDEVIN

1. 'And was made man'

The central doctrine of traditional Christianity, the doctrine of the Incarnation, is that the Second Person of the Trinity lived a human existence on Earth as Jesus Christ for a finite period. In the words of the Nicene Creed, the Son is him

> who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

The idea was developed in 451 by the Council of Chalcedon, who insisted, in the course of an extended statement on the doctrine, that in Jesus Christ two natures, one wholly human, the other wholly divine, combined in a single person:

> we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and body, of one substance with the Father as touching the godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood, *like us in all things apart from sin*; begotten of the Father before the ages as touching the Godhead, the same in the last days, for us and for our salvation, born from the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos* [the God-bearer], as touching the manhood, one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way abolished because of the union, but rather the characteristic property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one subsistence, not as if Christ were parted or divided into two persons,

doi:10.1017/S1358246111000129 ©The Royal Institute of Philosophy and the contributors 2011

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Word, Lord, Jesus Christ;[1]

The divine, in other words, became embodied, and that embodiment took a human form. But *can* the divine be embodied? The Chalcedonian definition, as it is often called, highlights a fundamental paradox at the heart of the doctrine of the Incarnation: the idea of an individual that is at once both limited in power and understanding (by virtue of being in a human body) and unlimited (by virtue of being divine). The intellectual challenge to us as the inheritors of Christian tradition is to articulate in detail what would have to be the case in order for the Chalcedonian statement to be true.

For many philosophers, and theologians, that is just the *wrong approach*. The fact, they say, that the doctrine, literally construed, is transparently self-contradictory gives us the clearest indication that we should understand it as a metaphor, or see it as expressive of our feelings towards the man Jesus. Here, for instance, is John Hick's comment:

> orthodoxy insisted upon the two natures, human and divine, coinhering in the one historical Jesus Christ. But orthodoxy has never been able to give this idea any content. It remains a form of words without any assignable meaning. For to say, without explanation, that the historical Jesus of Nazareth was also God is as devoid of meaning as to say that this circle drawn with a pencil on paper is also a square…It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that the real point and value of the incarnational doctrine is not indicative but expressive, not to assert a metaphysical fact but to express a valuation and evoke an attitude.[2]

Perhaps this is right, and it is better to talk, as John Robinson does, of Jesus as 'the human face of God' Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (London: SCM Press, 1973) much as we might describe Lenin as the acceptable face of communism. But, to make a historical point, since the Chalcedonian statement was intended to distinguish orthodoxy from heresy, on which much depended, it is most unlikely that it was intended by the Council of 451 simply as a metaphor, or an expression of a valuation, or a means of evoking an attitude. And to make a theological point, only by *really* being made man could

[1] J. Stevenson, *Creeds, Councils and Controversies: Documents illustrating the early history of the church 373–561*, rev. W. H. C. Frend (London: SPCK, 1989), 35–3

[2] Hick, 'Jesus and the World Religious', in Hick (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 178

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

God enter into a uniquely close relationship with us. Finally, to make a philosophical point, an examination of the coherence of the doctrine, literally construed, is prior in the order of inquiry to the question of whether we should construe the doctrine non-literally. The surface contradiction may hide a deeper truth.

From now on, then, we shall set aside the metaphorical approach, and take an unapologetically literal view of the Chalcedonian statement. That is not to say that it requires no interpretation. It may be that we have to recognise differences between the way we are embodied and the way the Son can be embodied. So it is perhaps better to talk, not so much of a 'literal' view of the Chalcedonian statement, one that allows no reinterpretation, but rather a 'realist' one: one, that is, that takes it to be an attempt to articulate, though not necessarily in wholly transparent terms, how things actually are.[3]

We will look at two accounts of embodiment, both of them plausible in ordinary (or at least non-divine) contexts, and ask of each whether it offers a suitable model for divine embodiment, while at the same time doing justice to Christ's human nature. The answer

[3] In an illuminating essay ('What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not? Some Reflections on the Status and Meaning of the Chalcedonian Definition', in Davis, Kendall and O'Collins (eds.) *The Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 143–63), Sarah Coakley outlines three approaches to an understanding of Chalcedon to be found in the literature, and finding them all wanting in some respect, proposes a fourth. The first interpretation takes the definition to lay down the terms in which the Incarnation is to be described, but makes no ontological claims. A second takes the definition to be metaphorical. Both of these Coakley finds implausible. The third approach is one found in analytic philosophical treatments of the Incarnation, typified by Brown (*The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985) and Morris (*The Logic of God Incarnate* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1986). In these, the Chalcedonian statement is taken to be, or intended to be, a literally true description of the Incarnation. Coakley applauds the recognition in this approach that the statement does intend to be truly descriptive of an actual state of affairs, but points out that 'literal' has additional connotations that may not appropriately represent the intentions of those who originally constructed the statement. Her own proposal is that Chalcedon, in her words, 'sets a 'boundary' on what can, and cannot, be said, by first ruling out three aberrant interpretations of Christ…second, providing an abstract rule of language for distinguishing duality and unity in Christ [i.e. two natures but one person], and third, presenting a 'riddle' of negatives by means of which a greater (though undefined) reality may be intimated'. (Coakley 'What Does Chalcedon Solve and What Does it Not?', 161.)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

in each case, I suggest, is 'no'. The situation is not improved, it turns out, by what is otherwise a promising approach to the dual nature, namely the 'divided mind' hypothesis, according to which Christ's mind exhibited two parallel streams of consciousness. Where this inquiry leads us, I suggest, is to the *kenotic* approach to the Incarnation: the Son gave up (at least some of) the characteristics of divinity in order to become incarnate.

2. Two accounts of embodiment

'Veiled in flesh the Godhead see', says the Christmas hymn. But if the suggestion is that the divine is *merely* veiled in human flesh, this runs counter to the thinking enshrined in the Chalcedonian statement: the Son did not merely take on the *form* of a man, but was, in the words of the statement, 'truly man, the same consisting of a reasonable soul and body…like us in all things apart from sin.' There must be an intimate connection between the divine person and the human body, one that is not adequately captured by the concept of simple containment. For containment hardly captures our own relation to our bodies. As Descartes puts it:

> Nature…teaches me by these feelings of pain, hunger, thirst, etc., that I am not only lodged in my body, like a pilot in his ship, but, besides, that I am joined to it very closely and indeed so compounded and intermingled with my body, that I form, as it were, a single whole with it. (Meditation VI)

So what is it to form 'a single whole' with one's body?

The first of the two accounts of embodiment we will consider is distinctly unCartesian, in that it rejects the idea that the mental and the physical are two distinct ontological categories. Recent orthodoxy in the philosophy of mind ('recent' here meaning within the last 50 years) has favoured a physicalist approach: the mind is a physical entity, just as the body is; or, if we prefer not to reify talk of 'the mind', mental events are identical to physical processes in the brain. This at once distances us from the metaphor of the pilot and his ship, for the pilot is not (in any literal sense) part of the ship: he is merely in it. Physicalism shows us how the mind and the body are indeed one. This, then, looks like a promising account of embodiment: a person is embodied if all the states of that person (including all the mental states, indeed *especially* the mental states) are states of a body. We will, perhaps, need to restrict this to intrinsic states, that is, states of the person that are logically independent of any other object. A person may be the focus of a revolution,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

for example, but it would at the very least be odd to consider this as a state of the body. Here then is our first account of embodiment:

> *The physical realisation account*: a person *P* is embodied in body *B* if and only if all the (intrinsic) states of *P* are wholly realised by (intrinsic) states of *B*

The second account is ontologically neutral: that is, it does not make any assumptions about whether the mental and the physical constitute a single ontological category or two. It defines the embodiment relation in terms of causal connections of certain kinds. This account is articulated by Jonathan Harrison, who defines embodiment in terms of five conditions:[4]

(i) effects on *B* are felt by *P*
(ii) *P* feels the inside of *B*
(iii) *P* can move *B* directly
(iv) *P*'s perception of the environment is spatially centered on *B*
(v) *P*'s thoughts and feelings are affected by *B*'s state

Richard Swinburne, in discussing Harrison's conditions, expresses some doubts about (v), remarking that although it may well be true that we are typically affected by *B*'s state, this is not obviously part of what is meant by embodiment.[5] And indeed, it seems plausible that some at least of what happens in or to our bodies need have no conscious consequences, a consideration that extends to (i) and (ii). But we do have knowledge of some of the states of our bodies that is denied to anyone else, in that it is direct, not inferred from behaviour. And (iii) and (iv) are both clearly central to our feeling of being embodied. (iv) contains two ideas: that the body is the mediator of perceptual knowledge of the world, and that that knowledge is presented in a spatially perspectival way, as a result of the body's location in space. Disparate though these criteria might seem, the key idea is *causal connection* rather than realisation, which means that *P* need not be identified with *B*.

Given that each of the criteria is logically independent of the others, it is possible for a person-body pair to satisfy some of these criteria but not others. (Indeed, as Harrison also points out, we could contemplate the possibility of a person satisfying each criterion in relation to a *different* body.) What should we say of such a case? That the person in

[4] 'The Embodiment of Mind, or What Use is Having a Body?', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* **74** (1973–4), 33–55.

[5] Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 103.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

question is only partially embodied, that embodiment, as Harrison puts it, admits of degrees. This then paves the way to the idea of a person being embodied to zero degree – i.e. not being embodied at all.

Our second account of embodiment, then, is this:

> *The causal account*: *P* is embodied in *B* if and only if (a) *P* has direct knowledge of some of *B*'s states; (b) *P* is able to move *B* directly, as a result of *P*'s intentions; (c) *P*'s perceptual knowledge of the world is mediated by *B*; (d) *P*'s perception of the environment is spatially centred on *B*.

Given that mere spatial containment is not an adequate account, for reasons we have already considered, the physical realisation and causal accounts have a reasonable claim to be exhaustive as ways of capturing embodiment. They are not, however, exclusive. Indeed, if physicalism is correct, human beings, in ordinary circumstances, fulfill the criteria of both accounts. Only when conditions are unusual do they come into conflict, a fact amusingly explored in Daniel Dennett's *tour-de-force* 'Where am I?' Here he tells the (fictional!) story of being persuaded by Pentagon officials to undergo an operation in which his brain is removed but connected via radio links to the rest of his body, so as to enable him to undertake a mission exposing to him to an unusual form of radiation that is harmless to most body cells but damaging to brain tissue. By leaving his brain behind in the laboratory (but still in control of his body) he avoids the dangers that would otherwise have ensued. The operation is a success. But where is he?

> When I came out of anesthesia, I opened my eyes, looked around, and asked the inevitable, the traditional, the lamentably hackneyed post-operative question: "Where am I?" The nurse smiled down at me. "You're in Houston", she said, and I reflected that this still had a good chance of being the truth one way or another…"I gather the operation was a success", I said, "I want to go see my brain." They led me (I was a bit dizzy and unsteady) down a long corridor and into the life-support lab. A cheer went up from the assembled support team, and I responded with what I hoped was a jaunty salute. Still feeling lightheaded, I was helped over to the life-support vat. I peered through the glass. There, floating in which looked like ginger-ale, was undeniably a human brain, though it was almost covered with printed circuit chips, plastic tubules, electrodes and other paraphernalia. "Is that mine?" I asked. "Hit the output transmitter switch there on the side of the vat and see

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> for yourself", the project director replied. I moved the switch to OFF, and immediately slumped, groggy and nauseated, into the arms of the technicians, one of whom kindly restored the switch to its ON position. While I recovered my equilibrium and composure, I thought to myself: "Well, here I am, sitting on a folding chair, staring through a piece of plate glass at my own brain… But wait," I said to myself, "shouldn't I have thought, 'Here I am, suspended in a bubbling fluid, being stared at by my own eyes'?" I tried to think this latter thought. I tried to project it into the tank, offering it hopefully to my brain, but I failed to carry off the exercise with any conviction. I tried again. "Here am *I*, Daniel Dennett, suspended in a bubbling fluid, being stared at by my own eyes." No, it just didn't work. Most puzzling and confusing. Being a philosopher of firm physicalist conviction, I believed unswervingly that the tokening of my thoughts was occurring somewhere in my brain: yet, when I thought "Here I am," where the thought occurred to me was *here*, outside the vat, where I, Dennett, was standing staring at my brain.[6]

On the physical realisation account, the answer to Dennett's question 'Where am I?' is that I am wherever my brain is, since it is my brain whose states realise the aspects I most closely identify with myself. But in Dennett's story, this is not where the hero locates himself. He locates himself exactly where the immediate sensory input is coming from, right next to the things he can see and touch. It is that experience that is captured by the causal account.

Since they can give different results in cases like this, it is natural ask which of the two accounts is the correct one. But this, arguably, is not an appropriate question. Once we have specified where the body that I directly control is located, and also where the states that realise *my* states (especially my mental states) are located, there is no further question where *I* am located. As Dennett's story shows, we might feel some conflict, but it is not a conflict that is resolved by any metaphysical considerations. There is a sense in which I am located *here*, and also another in which I am located *there*. What is important is that satisfying the criteria of either account would justify talk of embodiment.

So let us turn now to the question of whether they can be applied to the case of divinity.

[6] Dennett 'Where Am I?', in *Brainstorms* (Harvester Press, 1978), 311–12

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

3. Divine embodiment and omnipresence

Consider the physical realisation account: can we account of the Son's embodiment in Christ's human body in these terms? Admittedly, it is the anti-physicalist Cartesian conception that is more readily identified with theological orthodoxy, for the existence of the Word predated the taking on of flesh: it had, as it were, a pre-physical existence. This dualistic picture of the mind and body as distinct categories of being is not, however, forced on us either by the Scriptures or the Creeds. The Chalcedonian definition talks of 'a reasonable soul and body', but does not specify the relation between them. Hud Hudson has proposed that a physicalist outlook is suggested by the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.[7] Why, unless our mental lives were essentially bound to a physical form, should the raising of the dead require bodily resurrection?

As an account of the embodiment of a divine being, however, the physical realisation account seems to be a complete non-starter, for it is just not plausible that the states of an omniscient and omnipotent person should wholly be realised by the physical states of a finite – indeed very limited – body. Anything recognisable as a human body will have finite capacities for action, and limited mechanisms for deriving and storing knowledge of the world.

Does this mean that we cannot understand the Incarnation unless we accept a dualistic picture in which mind and body belong to completely different ontological categories? This does not follow at all. We could certainly suppose the divine mind of Christ to be realised in *some* physical form, it is just that the boundaries of this physical form would not precisely coincide with those of any human body.

What of the causal account? This immediately looks more promising: a divine being could certainly directly control a human body, and be able, when they desired to do so, to perceive the world via the sense organs of that body. Note that this does not imply the restriction of all knowledge of the world to that obtained via the body, just knowledge of a sensory kind (or more specifically of a kind characterised by the five human sense modalities). But difficulties soon emerge over the 'direct control' component of the account. An omnipotent being will not only be able to bring about any logically possible state of affairs, but will also be able

[7] Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); cf. P. F. Strawson, *Individuals* (London: Methuen, 1959), 116.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to do so directly, without the mediation of any other object. But then this would imply that such a being satisfies the first criterion, at least, of the causal account, in respect of every object in the cosmos.

This ability directly to control every object in the cosmos is what, for Aquinas, underlies the doctrine of divine omnipresence.[8] Does it justify the, possibly stronger, view that God is actually embodied in the cosmos? Swinburne suggests that it justifies what he calls limited embodiment, but full embodiment would entail the satisfaction of other conditions. One way in which we could strengthen the account is to drop the modal character of criterion (b) – *P* is *able* to move *B* directly – and replace it with the condition that *P* does in fact move *B* directly. In this way, we can combine the Thomistic conception of omnipresence with the idea of the divine becoming embodied in a particular human body.

4. Two minds or one?

So far, then, we have been able to use the causal account to make sense of the embodiment of the divine in a limited human body. But this is not yet to make sense of the Incarnation, as it is understood by Christian tradition. The Chalcedonian statement insists that Christ has a dual nature, human and divine, and that the humanity is not merely confined to his body. To be 'perfect in manhood', humanity must also extend to the mind of Christ. And now we have the central mystery of the Incarnation: how can a mind be both human and divine without somehow mixing or, in the words of Chalcedon, 'confusing' those natures? How can one and the same mind be omniscient and limited in knowledge? And if we can make sense of that, can we do so in such as way as not to disturb our understanding of what it is for the divine to be embodied?

One way of making sense of the dual nature is to view the mind of Christ as composite, having divine and human parts. We are familiar with the idea of a composite object having contradictory properties as a result of having different parts with those properties. A coin may have a representation of the Queen's head on one side and a representation of Britannia on the other; a Zebra's hide may be black in some parts and white in others, and so on. Thus the human part of Christ's mind is limited in knowledge and the divine part omniscient.

[8] Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Vol. II (Blackfriars edition) Ia.8.3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Though parts of the same mind (in some sense yet to be explained), they are, necessarily, very independent of each other. The human mind has no access to most of the contents of the divine mind. And the knowledge available to the divine mind is obtainable without the mediation of the human mind, with the possible exception of perceptual knowledge. Equally, the human mind can acquire beliefs about the world without the mediation of the divine mind. There is also a moral difference: though Christ is 'without sin', his human mind is subject to temptation in a way that his divine mind is not.[9]

This division of the mind of Christ into two parts, however, though allowing us to make sense of his dual nature, obscures our understanding of divine embodiment. For it now looks as if only the human part satisfies the criteria of the causal account of embodiment, for it is the limited human mind that actually directly controls Christ's body, even though the divine mind could do so. It is human, not divine, decisions that determine Christ's actions. The voice that is heard in the prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, for example, and the cry of dereliction from the cross, is very recognisably a human voice.[10] And although the divine mind may have a spatial perspective on the world that is centred on Christ's body, it does so only in a way that is mediated by the human mind. The divine mind has access to that perspective only because the human mind does. The conclusion must be that on the composite model, only Christ's human mind is embodied, not the divine mind. So, given the dual nature, the Incarnation appears not to be the paradigm example we took it to be of divine embodiment.

But there is another model of the dual nature that seems to avoid this problem, and that is the 'divided mind' account proposed by

[9] The composite view has been articulated and defended both by Eleonore Stump ('Aquinas' Metaphysics of the Incarnation', in Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins (eds.) *The Incarnation*, 197–218) and by Brian Leftow ('A Timeless God Incarnate', in Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins (eds.) *The Incarnation*, 273–99). Both find the roots of this view in Aquinas.

[10] According to St Matthew's narrative:

> And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (26.39)
>
> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? That is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (27: 46)

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Thomas Morris and Richard Swinburne.[11,12] There are cases where consciousness appears to be divided, or dissociated. Swinburne offers self-deception as an example.[13] I persuade myself that *p* even in the face of conflicting evidence, because it is important to me that *p* be true (that cherished scientific hypothesis has been vindicated, my novel is brilliant, Hermione loves me, etc.) while still recognising that *p* is, of course, false. Somehow I have managed to compartmentalise these beliefs, so that they do not come into conflict. Morris offers lucid dreaming as another instance.[14] You are quite convinced that you are in the middle of a castle, in the dark corridors of which some nameless horror is roaming, while being aware at the same time that this is really a dream. A more dramatic instance, also mentioned by Morris, is provided by multiple personality disorder (or dissociated personality syndrome), in which one body appears to contain utterly different personalities that emerge at different times: Here is Jonathan Glover's description:

> Some people seem to be possessed at different times by different personalities. These 'personalities' can vary in voice, mannerisms and handwriting. They can call themselves by different names. One may be left-handed when others are not. In an American case, one personality spoke with an English accent and knew Arabic, while another knew Serbo-Croat and spoke English with a Yugoslav accent. And, notably, each of them has a very different general style. One thirty-nine-year-old woman had six of these personalities, including Mary, 'a nun who preached sacrifice', and Deborah, a 'screaming lady who recounted the many traumatic incidences of sexual molestation and perverse rituals at the hands of the patient's aunt and grandmother'.[15]

[11] See Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate*, 103–7; Swinburne, 'Could God Become Man?', 64–6; *The Christian God*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), ch. 9. cf. Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Incarnation: collected essays in Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 31, 68.

[12] Whereas I have talked of 'accounts' of embodiment, I have followed writers such as David Brown in talking of 'models' of Christ's nature. The implication, I take it, is that any theory we come up with concerning the divine must at best be an approximation.

[13] Swinburne, 'Could God Become Man?', in Godfrey Vesey (ed.) *The Philosophy in Christianity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 64–5.

[14] Morris, *The Logic of God Incarnate*, 104–5.

[15] Glover, I: *The Philosophy and Psychology of Personal Identity* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989), 1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

One mind, then, can contain parallel streams of consciousness. What, given this dissociation, justifies us in talking of a single mind? According to Swinburne, the unity stems from the fact that the streams of consciousness arise from a single set of cognitive powers. It is this principle of unity that distinguishes the divided mind model from the composite model: the human and divine minds are not *parts* of Christ's mind, but different expressions of the same set of powers. So either the whole mind is embodied, or none of it is: there is no room for the thought that only one part (the human part) is embodied. This allows the divided mind model to avoid an awkward consequence for the composite model, which is that, if only a part of Christ's mind is embodied, then Christ, *qua* embodied individual, is not a person

So far, then, it appears that we can combine the causal account of embodiment with the divided mind model of Christ's dual nature to explain how a person who is both human and divine can be wholly embodied. But a difficulty remains.

The introduction of the notion of cognitive powers should prompt us to revisit the question of what it is to be embodied. What would it be for the *cognitive powers themselves* to be embodied? Here the physical realisation account seems more immediately applicable than the causal account: a set of cognitive powers is embodied in B if and only if they are realised by states of B. Our cognitive powers, for instance, are realised by states of our brains. But the cognitive powers of an omniscient being far outstrip anything that could be realised by a human brain. So, at best, the cognitive powers of Christ can only be partially be realised by states of Christ's brain: it is just the human powers that are so realised. The divine powers are realised by something else entirely. Conceding this, however, undermines the notion that we have a single set of cognitive powers here. Rather, we have *two* sets: a set of human powers, realised by brain states, and a set of divine powers, not so realised. Perhaps we could think of these two sets as forming a larger whole, but this then looks indistinguishable from the composite account, in which the human and divine aspects of Christ's consciousness are simply parts of a whole.

Swinburne himself rejects physicalism in favour of interactionist dualism, so this is not a route he would be led down. But then what account would he give of the embodiment of cognitive powers? Again, it is the causal link between those powers and the states of a body that underlies our ordinary talk of embodiment: those powers are expressed through the actions of the body, including utterances which express beliefs. And, conversely, the powers of acquiring

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

knowledge are constrained by the capacities of the body. However, in Christ's case, the link is only partial: his cognitive powers are only partially expressed through his body. That ought to mean, then, that the person of Christ is only *partially embodied*, though not in the sense that only a part of Christ's person is embodied. Defenders of the divided mind view do not typically think of Christ's person as composite. But as Harrison's discussion shows, it is possible to be partially embodied in a different sense: as satisfying some of the criteria of embodiment but not others. And I think we can identify a third sense of partial embodiment, that of having powers *only a part of the range of which* is constrained by, and expressed through, that body. The full range of those powers goes well beyond what could be expressed through, and constrained by, a human body. And the part of the range that transcends those limitations is precisely what distinguishes the divine from the human mind. So the divided mind model has not, after all, allowed us to explain how the divine nature of Christ is embodied, but only how the human nature is embodied. That conclusion is reinforced by further considerations about the different perspectives that the human and divine minds must have, to which we now turn.

5. Perspectival knowledge

Consider the following conundrum: the Son satisfies one of conditions of embodiment (as set out by the causal account) by being directly aware of states of Christ's body. But the Father, being omniscient, also directly knows the states of Christ's body: it would be a limitation on his omniscience if any aspect of his knowledge had to be mediated, or inferential. So either we say that the Father partially satisfies the requirements for embodiment in Christ, or this particular condition is irrelevant to embodiment. Either conclusion seems uncomfortable.

There is, however, this difference: although both the Son and the Father know the states of Christ's body, only the Son entertains those contents in the first person (in the form of 'I' beliefs). The Son, that is, has a unique perspective on Christ's experiences. Both the Son and the Father can know that Christ is suffering on the cross, and know this directly, but only the Son can express that knowledge by saying, or thinking, '*I* am suffering on the cross'. The Father has to think '*He* is suffering on the cross'. The difference between first-person and third-person knowledge is one of perspective rather than content, so the fact that the Father's knowledge that Christ is suffering is not expressed by the thought 'I am not suffering' does

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

not undermine the Father's omniscience, if omniscience is a matter of knowing all true propositions.

Sometimes, however, a change in perspective *can* be a gain in knowledge. John Perry tells the story of pushing a trolley around a supermarket and noticing that there was a trail of sugar on the floor.[16] He thought 'someone is making a mess', and set off with his trolley in pursuit. The sugar trail soon became two sugar trails. Eventually, Perry realised that the sugar was leaking out of a bag in *his* trolley, and experienced a sudden change of perspective, from 'he or she is making a mess' to '*I* am making a mess'. This is a gain in knowledge, and not simply a perspectival shift. Some knowledge, it seems, has to be entertained perspectivally. If you are making a mess, you can only know this if you can express the knowledge by thinking 'I am making a mess'. Christ can only know he is suffering if he is able to frame his knowledge by the thought 'I am suffering'. Does that mean there is something that the Father cannot know? No, just that the Father can only express that same knowledge by thinking 'He is suffering'. Christ's divine mind is embodied in Christ's body because that mind can have the thought 'I am suffering' as a direct response to the experiences of Christ's body. To reflect this, we should amend the first clause of the causal account of embodiment in the following way:

> *P* is embodied in *B* if and only if (a) *P* has direct knowledge of some of *B*'s states, *and* entertains that knowledge in the form of first person beliefs…

And we should add to this account a further clause (or an elaboration of criterion (b)), that *P*'s beliefs concerning the states of *P*'s body and the contents of *P*'s mind can be expressed by *B*'s first-person communicative acts.

Unfortunately, this move, which distinguishes between the Father and the Son, also drives a wedge between the human and divine minds of Christ, for there are thoughts that only Christ's *human* mind can have, as a result of its lack of omniscience. Thoughts like 'It is possible for me to sin', and 'I do not know whether I will be crucified'. The divine mind cannot have these thoughts, because, being omniscient and therefore knowing that its own nature includes moral perfection, it knows that Christ cannot sin. It also knows, being omniscient, that Christ will be crucified. So the human mind has thoughts that the divine mind cannot have (since the divine mind cannot have false beliefs or entertain doubt). But the divine mind knows the contents of Christ's human mind: it knows that the human mind is

[16] Perry, 'The Problem of the Essential Indexical', *Nous*, **13** 3–21.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

thinking 'It is possible for me to sin', and 'I do not know whether I will be crucified'. So how will it express those thoughts? It cannot express them in the first person, because the divine mind knows those beliefs to be false. Nor can they be expressed impersonally ('Christ thinks it is possible for Christ to sin'), for, as we noted before, some knowledge, to be complete, has to be entertained perspectivally: it must intimate whether it is *me* that is in such and such a state. It seems that the divine mind can only think '*He* thinks it possible that he will sin', and '*He* does not know that he will be crucified'. The divine mind, in other words, is compelled to take a third-person perspective on those thoughts, so distancing it from the subject of those thoughts. But Christ, as human, cannot be both 'I' and 'He' from the perspective of the divine mind: that would involve a contradiction.

Perhaps there is another possibility. The divine mind could think 'There is a part of my (i.e. Christ's) mind, a level of consciousness, in which the thought 'It is possible for me to sin' is being entertained.' But this is far from the divine mind acknowledging a belief as its own – it simply locates it at some sub-personal level, much as we might, in cases of perceptual illusion where we recognise the illusory nature of the experience, locate the illusory belief at some sub-personal level.

What this shows is that the dissociation between Christ's human mind and divine mind is sufficiently radical that the divine mind, although aware of the human mind's beliefs, will not acknowledge some of those beliefs as its own, but think of them in third-personal terms. These thoughts, of course, will not be expressed through Christ's body, putting another obstacle in the way of understanding how Christ's divine mind can be embodied.

6. An alternative model: kenosis

It is time to consider a completely different model of the relation between Christ's human and divine natures. On this alternative model, the Son gives up certain, if not most, of the divine attributes in order to share our condition, and become incarnate in Jesus Christ. He completely ceases to be omniscient and omnipotent. This process is referred to as *kenosis*, or emptying, hence the name the 'kenotic model' for this view. The notion of kenosis has its origins in certain passages in the New Testament, especially one verse from Paul's letter to the Philippians:

> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. (2:5–8)

The idea, however, was only developed in the nineteenth century, by theologians such as Charles Gore, who made it the subject of his 1891 Bampton Lectures at Oxford.[17]

What are the objections to the kenotic model? First, that it is unorthodox; second, that it undermines Christ's claim to divinity.

Perhaps the main stumbling block to accepting the kenotic view as orthodox is that it seems to be explicitly ruled out by Chalcedon's insistence that Christ's exhibiting divine and human properties must be 'without change'. Thomas Morris takes this line. David Brown, whilst recognising a conflict, suggests that the phase is only of secondary importance. The essence of the Chalcedonian definition is an identity claim: that a single person was both human and divine. The phrase 'without change', in Brown's words, 'earned its place not in its own right but because the Fathers at the Council believed that [it] was the only way of preserving the divine nature; for them divinity was taken necessarily to imply immutability'.[18] But what is so valuable about immutability? Perhaps the capacity to change, to give up his exalted status, for love of humanity, is a measure of the Son's moral perfection. What matters is that the Son does not change in the crucial respect: he does not cease to be a divine being.

Or does he? The second objection seems hard to resist. After all, if the Son gave up the characteristic properties of divinity, how could he continue to be divine? It is true that the connection between divinity and the 'omni-properties' (omniscience, omnipotence, etc.) cannot be severed entirely. An individual who at no stage in their existence exhibited *any* of the traditional set of divine properties would have a weak claim to divinity. But Christ's claim to divinity lies in his divine origins. A being who had all the omni-properties, but voluntarily gave them up, would not thereby cease to be divine, anymore than a human being, who began life in the way normal for our species would not cease to be human, however limited an existence

[17] Gore, *The Incarnation of the Son of God* (London: John Murray, 1891). The kenotic model is defended at length in Brown (*The Divine Trinity* (London: Duckworth, 1985)). For recent discussion see Peter Forrest's 'The Incarnation: a philosophical case for kenosis' (*Religious Studies* **36** (2000), 127–40), and Stephen C. Evans' *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-emptying of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[18] Brown, *The Divine Trinity*, 227.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press

he subsequently lived – perhaps without the characteristic, in the sense of typical, attributes of humanity. And the Son need not have given up all his divine properties. His moral perfection remains: Christ is without sin.

At first sight, the divided mind model seems to have the advantage over the kenotic model, but actually both involve a dissociation between human and divine minds. On the divided mind model it is *synchronic*: the human and divine streams are contemporaneous. On the kenotic model, in contrast, it is *diachronic*: the divine mind evolves into the human mind. It is not immediately obvious that synchronic dissociation gives Christ a firmer claim to divinity than diachronic dissociation. For it is part of the divided mind model that Christ's actions are causally insulated from his divine mind. In fact, the considerations of the previous sections give us reason to think that it is the kenotic account that has the advantage. The essence of the doctrine of the Incarnation is that a divine being became embodied. The divided mind model, as we have seen, is not able, ultimately, to explain this, in that the divine mind does not satisfy all, or even any, of the criteria of embodiment. In contrast, if we allow that divine status is not lost with the temporary and voluntary loss of omniscience and omnipotence, then a divine being can become fully embodied in a human body. The kenotic model, I submit, offers the way to a better understanding of divine embodiment than does the hypothesis of the divided mind. For given kenosis, we can see how the whole of the Son's mind can express itself through, and be informed by means of, the body of Christ.

University of Leeds

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1358246111000129 Published online by Cambridge University Press