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# God, Gluts and Gaps: Examining an Islamic Traditionalist Case for a Contradictory Theology

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In this paper, I examine the deep theological faultline generated by divergent understandings of the divine attributes (*ṣifāt*) among two early antagonistic Muslim groups – the traditionalists (mainly Ḥanbalites) and the scholastic rationalists (*mutakallimūn*). I attempt to defend the traditionalist stance of literally accepting on the one hand physical qualities and actions described about God and on the other transcendent descriptions about Him by framing it as an exceptional contradiction to be embraced. I then argue using the paraconsistent logical system of First Degree Entailment (FDE) as expounded by philosopher and logician Jc Beall that accepting such a contradiction regarding any number of predicates about God have no logical impediments. Hence, the traditionalist stance (at least) cannot be accused of being incoherent. I will use as a case-study the discussion over the divine attribute of speech (*kalām*). Finally, I respond to some criticisms against such a proposal and offer some concluding remarks on the wider implications this proposal of a contradictory or glut-theoretic model would have on Muslim theology in general.

What you say is absurd,’ I expostulated. ‘You proclaim that non-existence is the only reality. You pretend that this black hole which you worship exists. You are trying to persuade me that the nonexistent exists. But this is a contradiction: and, however hot the flames of Hell may become, I will never so degrade my logical being as to accept a contradiction.

Bertrand Russell recounting Andrei Bumbrowski’s dream, *The Metaphysician’s Nightmare: Retro Me Satanas*.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

At present, and to the best of my knowledge, there is virtually no substantive study in English on paraconsistent logic as developed over the last quarter of a century applied to specific controversies in Islamic philosophy and theology. A notable exception is a recent article by Behnam Zolghadr<sup>2</sup> and a forthcoming doctoral dissertation by Abbas Ahsan.<sup>3</sup> My aim here is not to present a historiography of the literature nor to diagnose the reasons why that is the case as both these issues and more will be part of larger forthcoming project. What I intend to do in this article is to take a deep dive and tentatively explore how an inconsistency-tolerant or contradiction-validating system of logic (whether we call that approach ‘dialethic theology’, ‘dialethic theism’, ‘glutty/gappy theology’ or ‘glut-theoretic’ theology – I will refer to it as ‘contradictory theology’) can be a helpful or attractive avenue to pursue in attempting to understand one of the most central theological topics in Muslim theology – the divine attributes. This article is the first to incorporate

<sup>1</sup> *Edgar and Dennon 2009*, 74.

<sup>2</sup> See *Zolghadr 2018*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ahsan 2019*.

the logical analysis of a major contemporary proponent of such a theology into Islamic philosophical and theological studies. The attitude of this article is ambivalent between a *pragmatic* adoption of a contradictory theology and a *confessional* adoption of it. The former attitude is governed by problem-solving aims, that is the theological usefulness of the endeavour as an undertaking in itself whereas the latter attitude is invested with real belief-related significance, meaning this kind of contradictory theology is the true and proper account.

## 2. The Traditionalists

Central to Muslim belief and practice is God. Agreement among Muslims on God's centrality is absolute. However, how best to understand God (which includes His nature, motivations, actions and interaction with the world) was a point of deep disagreement within the early few centuries of Islam that continues to the present day. The details of that disagreement will not be spelled out here because my aim in this paper is not doxography but logical and theological analysis.<sup>4</sup> Of interest for the purposes of my analysis in this paper is one Muslim approach or theological orientation partisan to this disagreement known as the 'traditionalist' school (sometimes referred to by 'traditionalists', 'literalists,' or 'scripturalists' although they can refer to different groups with differing tendencies).<sup>5</sup> Often, though not exclusively, the traditionalists were identified with the Ḥanbalites – adherents of the ideas and legal-theological principles of a 3rd H/9th century CE Baghdadi jurist and theologian by the name of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), which constituted one of the four major sunnī orthodox legal Schools (*madhāhib*).<sup>6</sup> More specifically of interest is their general stance towards understanding divine attributes or descriptions about God as found in the two primary revelatory sources of Islam – the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. Before explaining that, it is worth mentioning that the traditionalist held a family of assumptions and doctrines that include the following: (i) God is best informed about His own self, (ii) the Prophet Muhammad alone is the best informant about God, (iii) the Companions of the Prophet and the earliest generations are the normative interpretive community for Muslims, (iv) scripture is to be read and understood without any form of interpretive distortion, (v) reason is subordinate to scripture and (vi) the transmitted tradition constitutes a closed corpus for any theological inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

One of the defining doctrines of these traditionalists is their literalism point (iv).<sup>8</sup> Statements contained in verses of the Qur'ān or recorded oral reports from the Prophet Muḥammad that ascribe to God physical characteristics or qualities (let us designate such ascriptions with the letter *F*) must be taken according to the surface meaning of the words (*ẓāhir*)<sup>9</sup> along with a filtering criterion.<sup>10</sup> So for any *F* about God, *F* must be accepted (and understood) according to its surface meaning which must not involve: (i) interpreting

<sup>4</sup> For surveys on the early and formative periods of theological developments within Islam, see Watt 1985 and Watt 1998; Van Ess 2016–2018; Jackson 2009, 27–45 and the relevant entries in Schmidtke 2016, parts I and II.

<sup>5</sup> On these terms and the overall traditionalist approach, refer to Abrahamov 1998, 1–31 and Abrahamov 2016, 263–79.

<sup>6</sup> On Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, see Ibn al-Jawzī 2017, 1–326 and Melchert 2012, especially ch.4. For creeds attributed to him, see Melchert 2018. On the development of Hanbalism, see Hurvitz 2002, 71–112.

<sup>7</sup> Abrahamov 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Gleaves 2012, 63–84.

<sup>9</sup> On this term, see Gleaves' discussion in 2012, 146–74; although see Osman's critical assessment of how *ẓāhirism* has been misunderstood in 2014, 171–224.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from Ibn Taymiyya 2000, 6–7.

*F* allegorically<sup>11</sup> (ii) negating *F* in any way<sup>12</sup> (iii) distorting the sense or meaning of *F*,<sup>13</sup> (iv) affirming *F* univocally with God and humans<sup>14</sup>, (v) likening God's *F*-ness with human *F*-ness<sup>15</sup> and (vi) avoiding investigation into the modality of *F*.<sup>16</sup> This literalism plus filtering criterion (i)-(vi) meant that if the scriptural sources stated God for example has a 'face' (*wajh*, 55:27), 'hand' (*yad*, 48:10) and 'eyes' (*ayun*, 11:37), or that He 'moves' (*wa jā'a rabbuka*, 89:22), 'sits' (*istawā*, 25:59), 'speaks' (*kallama*, *qāla*, 4:164; 2:30), 'descends' (*yanzilu*) and 'laughs' (*ḍaḥika*), then God really does have these qualities and He really does do these actions. He means what He says. To think or believe otherwise, in their view, is to abandon the contents of revelation and deny of God any self-description – both outcomes considered heretical. Therefore, traditionalists due to their literalism and filtering conditions held an absolute equivalency between the set of statements about God's physical and descriptive qualities with statements about His attributes of transcendence and perfections.<sup>17</sup> The Persian ḥadīth specialist and compiler of one of the six canonical collections of Prophetic traditions Abū ʿĪsa al-Tirmidhī (d. 279/892) captures the general theological attitude of the traditionalists. It is worth quoting in full:

It has been said by more than one person from the people of knowledge about this narration and other narrations that resemble it regarding the divine attributes and the descent of our Lord to the lowest heaven every night that they affirm these narrations, have belief in them, neither conjecturing over them nor asking about their modality (*wa lā yuqāl kayf*). The likes of this has been related from Mālik [b.] Anas, Sufyān Ibn ʿUyayna and ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Mubārak, who all said about such narrations: 'Leave them as they are, without asking how.' Such is the saying of the people of knowledge from the People of the Sunna (*ahl al-sunna wa' l jamā'a*). However, the Jahmites<sup>18</sup> oppose these narrations claiming that affirming them is tantamount to likening God to creation (*tashbīh*). However, God has mentioned in various places in His Book, the attributes of hand, hearing and seeing, but the Jahmites figuratively interpret (*ta'awwalat*) these verses; explaining them in a way other than how they were explained by the people of knowledge. They argue, for example, that God did not create Adam with His own hand; rather, they say that the word 'hand' here means '[God's] power' (*quwwa*). Ishāq ibn Ibrāhīm [al-Rāhawayh] said: likening God to creation occurs if one says, 'hand like a hand', or 'similar to a hand', or 'hearing like a hearing', or 'similar to a hearing'; this then is *tashbīh*. However, if what one says is what God has said like hand, hearing and

<sup>11</sup> A manoeuvre known as 'ta'wīl' which has a number of meanings but in this theological context, refers to departing from a literal (*ḥaqīqī*) sense of a text to a non-literal or figurative sense (*majāzī*) based on a justifiable clue (*qarīna*) whether rational (*aqlīyya*), lexical (*lafẓīyya*), contextual (*naṣṣīyya*) or circumstantial (*ḥālīyya*). See *Abdul-Raof 2010*, 102–110. For a critical attitude towards this method of a generalised figurative interpretation adopted by rationalist theologians for divine attributes, see Ibn Taymiyya's *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyya* in *Ibn Taymiyya 2005*, and its discussion in *Ovadia 2018*, 44–52. On Ibn Taymiyya's hermeneutics, refer to *Suleiman 2019*, 145–227.

<sup>12</sup> Meaning denying the literal ascription of *F* to God.

<sup>13</sup> Referred to as 'taḥrīf' (distortion).

<sup>14</sup> Referred to as 'tashbīh'. On this notion and its contrary 'tanzīh' (transcendence), see the entry by *Shah 2018*.

<sup>15</sup> Referring to 'tamthīl'.

<sup>16</sup> Which is termed as 'kayfiyya' (literally, the 'how-ness'). For a detailed analysis on the doctrine of affirming God's attributes and actions without applying any modality (*bi-lā kayf*), refer to *Holtzman 2019*, ch. 4 and 5 and *Kars 2019*, 195–292.

<sup>17</sup> The traditionalist position may be termed what Ronald S. Hendel has called 'transcendent anthropomorphism' where scriptural references are not to immanent conceptions of the divine but transcendent references like God's seated on the throne or presiding over the angelic host. See *1997*, 205–28. See as well *William 2009*, 19–44 and Hamori's typology of anthropomorphisms in *2008*, 28–34.

<sup>18</sup> Those derogatorily accused of following the theologian Jahm b. Ṣafwān (d. 128/746) who lived during the later Umayyad period and deemed the arch heretic by traditionalists; see *Van Ess 2018*, 2:556–72.

seeing and no modality is asked nor saying phrases like ‘similar to hearing’, or ‘not like hearing’ – then it is not *tashbīh*. God said in His Book: *there is nothing like Him, and He is the all-Hearing, the all-Seeing* (Q. 42:11).<sup>19</sup>

### 2.1. The Rationalists

Opponents of this literalist theology came from a more ‘rationalist’ orientation.<sup>20</sup> The adherents of this approach were more optimistic about the powers of human reason giving it epistemic primacy and hence sought to circumscribe the understanding of God’s physical descriptions and qualities contained within the revelatory sources based on axioms of rational thought (like logic) as well as the assumption of an atomist (physicalist) metaphysics. They pushed back on a dogmatically literal mode of understanding revelation and proffered one guided by what reason mainly determined the theological possibilities to be. A key attack of the rationalists against the traditionalists included the metaphysical absurdities and contradictions allegedly arising out of literally understanding references to God’s qualities and actions. If God is held unequivocally as being transcendent, immutable, changeless, infinite, timeless and eternal then to literally state that He descends, sits, speaks or expresses emotions (in reality) would be to negate these attributes because it would entail God being temporal, finite, mutable and passable – in short, it would lead to anthropomorphising God (*tashbīh*) and making Him corporeal (*tajsīm*).<sup>21</sup> Either way, it would be an assault on divine Unity and Oneness (*tawḥīd*) – Islam’s foundational doctrine. Let me state the problem more simply with two examples in order to make the issue clearer:

Example 1:

- (1) God is changeless.
- (2) God changes (according to scripture).
- (3) Therefore, God is both changeless and changes.

Example 2:

- (1\*) God is timeless.
- (2\*) God acts in time (according to scripture).

<sup>19</sup> *Al-Tirmidhī* 1997, 166, no. 622:

وقد قال غير واحد من أهل العلم في هذا الحديث وما يشبه هذا من الروايات من الصفات ونزول الرب تبارك وتعالى كل ليلة إلى السماء الدنيا قالوا قد تثبت الروايات في هذا ويؤمن بها ولا يُتَوَهَّم ولا يقال كيف. هكذا روي عن مالك و سفيان بن عيينة و عبد الله بن المبارك أنهم قالوا في هذه الأحاديث أمرها بلا كيف وهكذا قول أهل العلم من أهل السنة والجماعة وأما الجهمية فأنكرت هذه الروايات وقالوا هذا تشبيه وقد ذكر الله عز وجل في غير موضع من كتابه اليد والسمع والبصر فتأولت الجهمية هذه الآيات ففسروها على غير ما فسر أهل العلم وقالوا إن الله لم يخلق آدم بيده وقالوا إن معنى اليد ههنا القوة وقال إسحق بن إبراهيم [راهويه] إنما يكون التشبيه إذا قال يد كيد أو مثل يد أو سمع كسمع أو مثل سمع فإذا قال سمع كسمع أو مثل سمع فهذا التشبيه وأما إذا قال كما قال الله تعالى يد وسمع وبصر ولا يقول كيف ولا يقول مثل سمع ولا كسمع فهذا لا يكون تشبيها وهو كما قال الله تعالى في كتابه : ليس كمثل شيء وهو السميع البصير.

Although on this literalism of al-Tirmidhī, see comments and a discussion in *Brown* 2019, 172–4.

<sup>20</sup> On this term, see *Abrahamov* 1998, 32–51. The rationalists I specifically have in mind for my analysis here are the Mutazilites, Ashārites and Mātūrīdites known as the ‘Mutakallimūn’ (scholastics, speculative theologians) and not the Islamic philosophers (*falāsifa*). For a survey of the divine attributes according to the *mutakallimūn*, see *Suleiman* 2019, 40–97 and *Van Ess* 2018, 4:403–494.

<sup>21</sup> I have of course hugely simplified the discussion by omitting the metaphysical complexities underpinning it due to space. On some of the relevant metaphysics with further references, see *Wolfson* 1976, 112–234. On this topic of anthropomorphism and the different theological stances interacting with it, see *Abrahamov* 1996, 1–18 and *Shah* 2012, 399–652.

(3\*) Therefore, God is both timeless and temporal.

In both examples, we have a case of  $p \wedge \neg p$  (i.e. affirming about God two contradictory propositions). The rationalist's manoeuvre would be to reject premises (2) and (2\*) while affirming premises (1) and (1\*) thereby denying (3) and (3\*), primarily because of their commitment to the metaphysical principle that God cannot be a substrate of contingent changes or events (*maḥall li'l-ḥawādith*) and affirming actions and qualities would entail attributing such changes to Him. How then can the traditionalist justify arguments of the sort I have presented? In other words, how can the traditionalist's stance of affirming statements like (3) and (3\*) – the contradictory conclusions – be upheld? Here I want to draw on the logical works of philosopher and logician Jc Beall in recently defending what he has called 'Contradictory Christology' (see § 3.4) where the doctrine of Christ as both fully divine and fully human is embraced as an essentially positive and paradigmatic contradiction based on a rejection of what he describes as the 'dogma of mainstream logic' and an endorsement of a system of 'paraconsistent' or sub-classical logic in the form of 'first-degree-entailment' (FDE).<sup>22</sup> I take up his account of FDE (in § 3.1–3) and apply his rigorous logical insights to one particular controversy within Islamic theological discussions, which is that of God's attribute of speech (*kalām Allāh*) being both temporal and eternal (see § 4). I want to broadly argue following Beall's general exposition how Muslim traditionalist theologians can affirm inconsistent or contradictory references about God that would have no *logical* impediments and so need not be abandoned on accusations of irrationality or absolute falsity and may in fact be, when applied to the case of God's attribute of speech being both temporal and eternal, an attractive option that remains (rather surprisingly perhaps) more faithful to the statements of the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and views of the early righteous predecessors (*al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*).<sup>23</sup> Although on this proposal, an implication would be that contradiction<sup>24</sup> would reside at the heart of theology itself (because it would define the very way we would understand God and His self-descriptions), it would nevertheless be firmly based on theological precedence, cogent arguments and use of (a system of) logic in order to justify traditionalist theological postulates.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the main motivation for adopting FDE for a contradictory Islamic theology (as will become clearer below) is that it brings down the logical barriers to literally accepting statements on the one hand about God being utterly unlike creation and on the other those about affirming His temporal activities in the fullest sense without their negation.

### 3. Logical Background

In this section, I begin first with what logicians call the 'principle of explosion' the denial of which has allowed for alternative systems of logic to enter. I then give a basic outline of FDE according to philosopher and logician Jc Beall as one of those alternative or sub-classical systems of logic, followed by his motivations for adopting it and then his reasons for why it is attractive for helping to address difficulties arising out of paradoxical claims about Christ.

<sup>22</sup> See *Belnap Jr 1977*.

<sup>23</sup> Referring specifically to the first three generations of Muslims praised by the Prophet Muḥammad and considered to have the truest understanding of the Islamic faith. A venerated adherence to these generations was popularised by the Ḥanabalite scholar of Syria, Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328). See volume 5 of his 'Compendium of Legal Edicts' (*al-Majmū al-Fatāwā*), *Ibn Taymiyya 2008*.

<sup>24</sup> As would paradox and inconsistency.

<sup>25</sup> For examples on how theology (like philosophy) is a field 'saturated with self-contradiction', see *Kars 2019*, 129–95.

### 3.1. The Principle of Explosion

According to classical logic<sup>26</sup> which is the prevailing logical orthodoxy, from contradictory premises  $A \wedge \neg A$  any arbitrary conclusion  $B$  logically follows. In Latin, this is called *ex contradictione sequitur quodlibet* [ECSQ], ‘from a contradiction, anything follows’. We can symbolise ECSQ as

$$A \wedge \neg A \models B.$$

which reads ‘that a contradiction is true, logically entails any proposition’. This is known more dramatically as the ‘principle of explosion’ (PE) because by admitting a contradiction as valid, we ‘explode’ as it were, the coherency or consistency of the system we are using because we could now infer anything.<sup>27</sup> We can demonstrate PE via a *proof-theoretic* argument according to the steps set out by American Philosopher and logician C. I. Lewis (1883–1964).<sup>28</sup> Let  $A$  stand for ‘all broccolis are green’. If we suppose that  $A$  and its negation are true, we can derive any conclusion  $B$  like ‘Torak exists’.<sup>29</sup>

1. All broccolis are green and not green.
2. All broccolis are green.
3. All broccolis are not green.
4. Either all broccolis are green or Torak exists.
5. Torak exists.

Or:

1.  $A \wedge \neg A$   
assumption
2.  $A$   
from (1) by conjunction elimination
3.  $\neg A$   
from (1) by conjunction elimination
4.  $A \vee B$   
from (2) by disjunction introduction
5.  $B$   
from (3) and (4) by disjunctive syllogism

The above symbolised argument reads: from the conjunction ‘all broccolis are green and not green’ (1), we can infer each disjunct ‘all broccolis are green’ (2) as well as the direct negation ‘all broccolis are not green’ (3). From ‘all broccolis are green’ (2), we can infer by introducing a disjunction ‘either all broccolis are green or Torak exists’ (4) and from ‘all broccolis are not green’ (3) as well as ‘either all broccolis are green or Torak exists’ (4) we can infer that ‘Torak exists’ (5). PE is a thesis about logical consequence and hence is closely related to or appeals to the Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC) which states that  $\neg(p \wedge \neg p)$  or ‘no proposition can be both true and not true’ qualified with ‘in the same sense and at the same time’ and the Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM) which states that  $(p \vee \neg p)$  or ‘either a proposition is true or its negation is true’. In other words, there can be no

<sup>26</sup> Referring to the standard and widely used logic within the western tradition that took on a specific form, style and presentation after the 18th and 19th centuries with philosophers like Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Alfred N. Whitehead, Ludwig Wittgenstein and others. It has influenced analytic philosophy, the type that defines much of Anglo-American philosophy until now.

<sup>27</sup> For an assessment on Ibn Sinā’s semantic argument for the defence of LNC and explosion, namely how accepting true contradictions (dialetheism) on his view entails anything to be true (trivialism), see *Zolghadr 2019*, 2–10.

<sup>28</sup> *Yaqub 2013*, 358.

<sup>29</sup> Torak is the 3rd of the seven gods from David Eddings’ fictional fantasy epic ‘The Belgariad’ in *Eddings 1982–84*.

truth-value ‘gluts’ (something being both true *and* false)<sup>30</sup> nor truth-value ‘gaps’ (something being *neither* true *nor* false). The proponents of classical logic argue that without LNC (and LEM), all statements become meaningless.<sup>31</sup> In particular, the denial of LNC they argue also leads to ‘trivialism’, the view where for any circumstance, everything holds or: there are only true propositions.<sup>32</sup> However, this orthodoxy of classical logic has been challenged by logicians from the early and mid-twentieth century who had devised a family of alternative logical systems to account for some instances of possible contradictions. That is to say, they have proposed deductive systems that are *non-explosive*. Hence, ECSQ would be invalid:  $\neg (A \wedge \neg A) \vdash B$ . These systems where explosion is not a consequence are called ‘paraconsistent’ logics (PL). In short, *paraconsistency* is an account of deduction in which contradictory statements, sentences or propositions do not entail the truth of arbitrary statements, sentences or propositions. Two broad definitions of paraconsistent logic can be given as follows:<sup>33</sup>

(D1) A logic is paraconsistent iff: it is not the case that for all sentences  $A, B$  that  $A, \neg A \vdash B$  (read as: given any sentence  $A$ , affirming both  $A$  and its negation does not lead to affirming anything).

(D2) A logic is paraconsistent iff: there are some sentences  $A, B$  such that  $\vdash A$  and  $\vdash \neg A$ , but not  $\vdash B$  (read as: given some sentence  $A$ , inferring  $A$  and its negation does not entail affirming anything).

D1 defines paraconsistent logic in terms of a direct negation of PE/ECSQ and D2 – although encompassing D1 – makes the additional claim that contradictions are real, but their affirmation does not necessarily entail explosion. I cannot, however, survey the different types of PL, their overlapping features nor chart its historical development because it is not within the scope of this paper<sup>34</sup>; I want to move instead to Beall’s views on the role and scope of logic, his account of FDE as the desirable iteration of paraconsistent logic and the possible advantages FDE offers for dealing with inconsistent theological statements.

### 3.2. The Role of Logic

According to Beall, *consequence* or *entailment* is the chief topic of logic.<sup>35</sup> In short: what follows from what. More particularly, given a specific language,  $L$  and a set of sentences  $\langle A_1 \dots, A_n \rangle$ , in order for us to determine whether some other sentence  $B$  of  $L$  logically follows from  $\langle A_1 \dots, A_n \rangle$ , we have to show how the truth of the latter *guarantees* the truth of the former. Another way of putting it is whether there can be any case where  $\langle A_1 \dots, A_n \rangle$  are all true and  $B$  false. Putting it in an even shorter way: ‘logical entailment

<sup>30</sup> The view that there are true contradictions is now commonly referred with the neologism ‘dialetheism’ where for any sentence  $A$ , both it and its negation  $\neg A$  are true. This would entail denial of LNC. The proposal I am suggesting for the Muslim traditionalist theologian, therefore, falls in the category of *dialetheic theism*, the position where those who believe in the traditional conception of God also accept inconsistencies, paradoxes and contradictions as true or possible. For more on this, see *Cotnoir 2017*. On dialetheism in general, see *Priest et al 2018*. Beall does not use the term dialetheism preferring instead ‘glut theory’ or ‘glutty’ and ‘gap theory’ or ‘gappy’. I follow Beall in adopting these terms but use dialetheism on some occasions because of their use in the logical literature. I shall point that out where I do so.

<sup>31</sup> *Hospers 1959*, 123–58. For engaging essays on challenging and defending LNC, see *Priest et al 2004*.

<sup>32</sup> Trivialism asserts that  $\forall pTp$  which reads ‘for any proposition  $p$ ,  $p$  is true’, and this means that on trivialism, its truth predicate is always applied:  $p \leftrightarrow Tp$ , which reads ‘a proposition iff a true proposition’. See *Priest et al. 2006*, 56–71 for a discussion and critique of trivialism.

<sup>33</sup> From *Weber 2015*.

<sup>34</sup> For that see *Priest et al 2008* and see the survey and references in *Priest et al 2018*. Cf. as well *Carnielli and Coniglio 2016*, 1–28.

<sup>35</sup> For one work on the notion of logical consequence, refer to *McKeon 2010*.

is absence of counterexample'.<sup>36</sup> By 'case' is meant any *possibility* permitted by logic even if empirically or physically it may not be possible. Beall explains:

While there is ongoing debate about which possibilities are logical possibilities (i.e. recognized by logic's entailment relation) one matter is settled: logic plays its universal, foundational role in our theories by recognizing the widest space of possibilities. In physical theory, the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey physical laws. In arithmetic the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the laws of arithmetic. In theology the space of possibilities is restricted to those (logical) possibilities that obey the truths about God.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of logical consequence is most evident in argumentation where a conclusion (thesis) of an argument derived from a set of claims (premises) is investigated in order to assess whether there is a relation of support between both. In other words, to examine whether specific premises entail the conclusion. If an argument generates this entailment, it is called a logically *valid* argument. Of course, the premises may not actually be true; if they were, the argument would be called *sound*. The requirement is only that the conclusion be entailed by the premises – given a particular case – and as long as there are no counterexamples.<sup>38</sup>

Beall argues that logic is a universal canon of consequence relations and topic-neutral in nature. In any given model or theory that we construct (whether in arithmetic and epistemology or for our purposes theology), in order to complete it, we delineate the specific entailment relations or consequences that arise from the set of finite claims within that model or theory. It is logic that determines the parameters of what those entailments or consequences are. Beall says:

Logic is a very special consequence (entailment, closure) relation. Logic is the common core of all (closed) theories; it is at the bottom of all of the (extra-logical, theory-specific) consequence relations of our true theories. While the theory-specific consequence relation for our theory of knowledge is different from the consequence relation for our theory of arithmetic (or necessity, or God) the two consequence relations share a common elementary core: namely, logic. Logic itself does not say anything peculiar about knowledge claims, arithmetical claims, modal claims or theological claims; logic ignores the specific subject matter of those sorts of claims (be it knowledge, arithmetic, modality or God) and treats them as it treats claims about any subject matter whatsoever. In this way, logic is said to be 'universal' and 'topic-neutral'.<sup>39</sup>

What makes logic extendable, universalizable and so foundational to all models and theories (including discourse) is its focus on form rather than content. In other words, logic is not about anything substantive in particular; it can be applicable to anything we are reasoning about because it is variable, invariant and schematic.<sup>40</sup> What enables it to be topic-neutral like this is the 'logical constants' or 'logical vocabulary' (the sentential connectives, identity predicate and quantifiers). Beall writes that 'logical consequence –

<sup>36</sup> Beall 2019b, 406.

<sup>37</sup> Beall 2019b, 406.

<sup>38</sup> On argumentation theory, refer to Van Eemeren and Henkemans 2017, 79–95.

<sup>39</sup> Beall 2019b, 405.

<sup>40</sup> On logic and topic-neutrality see MacFarlane 2017 §§ 4–5. On specifically the formal nature of logic, refer to Dutilh Novaes 2011, 303–32.

logical entailment – is a so-called formal relation: it looks only at certain “forms” of sentences, namely, the ones individuated in terms of the logical vocabulary.’ He continues, ‘logic recognizes only a limited list of sentence forms [. . .] and it classifies entailments only in terms of the limited list of forms’ and that is why

logic treats all atomic claims on par: logic itself sees no difference *in logically relevant content* between “God is good” and “Hogwarts is fictional”; such a difference – and the resulting difference in entailments – arises only in extra-logical, theory-specific consequence relations.<sup>41</sup>

Logic for Beall operates with the same role, function and target within theology as well, namely to ‘deliver the logical consequences of the claims’ about a ‘theory of God’.<sup>42</sup> If we fail to determine all the entailment relations from the cumulative postulates or truths we admit or posit about our model or theory of God (or indeed overlook or neglect them), our model or theory about God would be incomplete. Beall hence concludes that ‘without a consequence (closure) relation our theories remain inadequate; they fail to contain truths that are entailed by the given set of truths. Inasmuch as theorists, and theologians in particular, aim to give as complete a theory of the target phenomenon as possible, the reliance of a consequence relation for our theory is required.’<sup>43</sup> A point Beall insists on is that the logical possibilities or cases determined by classical logic is truncated and so a logic that expands the cases or possibilities – a non-classical or sub-classical one – is more correct. Beall’s extended vindication of such a sub-classical logic will not be rehearsed here.<sup>44</sup> Rather, only a concise account of his preferred system of First-Degree-Entailment (FDE) will be given and to this I now turn.

### 3.3. Formal Structure of FDE<sup>45</sup>

In this section, I restrict Beall’s account of FDE to a basic presentation relevant only for the theological subject-matter I will examine in § 4. Leaving aside for now the details of Beall’s motivations for FDE (I briefly discuss that below in § 3.4), he tells us that there are salient options for broadening our logic from the complete and consistent cases of classical logic were every sentence is either true or false and no sentence is both true and false. What this means is not rejecting classical logic *per se* but departing from its account (theory) of logical consequence by embracing one that is both *paracomplete* and *paraconsistent*. FDE is such a system that is both paracomplete and paraconsistent. The fragments of the formal structure of this system is sketched below in parts (a)-(d) based on a model-theoretic approach interpreting the underlying formal or informal (natural) dimensions of a language utilising set-theoretic tools and structures.<sup>46</sup>

#### (a) Definition of paracomplete and paraconsistent logical systems:

The classical logic model admits of only those cases that are complete and consistent. We can define the classical cases as follows:

(D3) A logical system is complete =<sup>def</sup>: iff for any sentence  $A$  in a language  $L$ , either  $c \models_1 A$  or  $c \models_0 A$  (reads as: all sentences in a language must be either true or false but never both).

<sup>41</sup> Beall 2019b, 405–406. Author’s emphasis.

<sup>42</sup> Beall 2019b, 407.

<sup>43</sup> Beall 2019b, 404.

<sup>44</sup> One can read a defence of it in Beall 2009 or see more generally in Beall 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Based on Beall 2019b, 407–414; Beall and Logan 2017b, 173–223 and Priest et al 2008, 142–87.

<sup>46</sup> I will assume the reader is familiar with the formal structure of classical logic and so I avoid making direct comparisons with it and FDE; but where it is necessary, I make the relevant comparisons. For a textbook on classical (and non-classical) logic, refer to Beall and Logan 2017b, 3–172.

(D4) A logical system is consistent = <sup>def.</sup>: iff there is no sentence  $A$  in a language  $L$  such that both  $c \models_1 A$  and  $c \models_0 A$  (reads as: no sentence in a language can be both true and false).

On the classical model, a contradiction – whether *logical* or *formal* – would be sentences of the form

$$\dagger A \wedge \neg A$$

where because the truth operator ‘ $\dagger$ ’ is logically redundant, we can write instead

$$A \wedge \neg A$$

or even more simply as ‘ $A$ ’. However, on FDE, the possible cases extend beyond the classical ones to include some! $A$  because it is both paracomplete and paraconsistent:

(D5) A logical system is paracomplete = <sup>def.</sup>: for any case  $c$  and for some sentence  $A$ ,  $c \not\models_1 A$  and  $c \not\models_0 A$  (which reads: given some case  $c$  and some sentence  $A$ , it is false that sentence  $A$  is true in  $c$  and it false that sentence  $A$  is not true in  $c$ ; hence  $A$  is neither true nor false).

(D6) A logical system is paraconsistent = <sup>def.</sup>: for some case  $c$  and for some sentence  $A$ ,  $c \models_1 A$  and  $c \models_0 A$  (which reads: given some case  $c$  and some sentence  $A$ ,  $A$  is true in  $c$  and  $A$  is not true in  $c$ ; hence  $A$  is both true and false).

Beall explains that on FDE, contradictions within a specific theory do not entail explosion ‘but they remain true and false’, and ‘being as such is sufficient for the truth of the corresponding contradiction! $A$ .’ Spelling out the claim further, he writes

if you’re true, then so too is an application of logic’s truth operator to you; but if you’re false, then an application of the dual of logic’s truth operator – namely, its falsity operator (viz., logical negation) – is true; and, finally, the logical conjunction of those two truths is thereby true too. But since the given true conjunction has false conjuncts, the conjunction itself is false too.<sup>47</sup>

Therefore, on FDE, a logically explosive sentence is any sentence that logically entails all sentences in the language of the theory. Hence, contradictions are not logically explosive, though they could well be explosive according to some theory’s consequence relations. But, as I will elaborate a little below and in § 3.5, Beall does not admit of contradictions as contagious, infecting all and any true theory.

### (b) Syntax of FDE:

The basic syntax of FDE consists of *ingredients* and *sentences*. The ingredients are:

1. a basic set of atomic sentences  $A_t$  containing lowercase letters ‘ $p$ ’, ‘ $q$ ’ and ‘ $r$ ’ with or without the numerical subscripts ( $p_{22}$ ,  $q_{22}$ ,  $r_{22}$  ...),
2. a set  $C$  of basic connectives such as unary connectives ‘ $\dagger$ ’ (‘it is true that ...’/nullation) and ‘ $\neg$ ’ (‘it is false that ...’/negation) and binary connectives ‘ $\wedge$ ’ (‘and’/conjunction) and ‘ $\vee$ ’ (‘or’/disjunction) as well as ‘ $=$ ’ (‘identical to’/identity),
3. a set  $P$  of punctuation marks such as right and left parenthesis (‘ $($ ’ and ‘ $)$ ’),
4. a set  $\Pi$  of predicates ‘ $P$ ’, ‘ $Q$ ’, ‘ $R$ ’ with or without numerical subscripts that take one name ( $Pa$ ,  $Qb$ ,  $Rc$ ),
5. a set of names with lowercase letters with or without numerical subscripts.

<sup>47</sup> Beall 2019b, 573.

6. Two quantifiers: ‘ $\forall$ ’ (‘everything is’/universal) and ‘ $\exists$ ’ (‘at least one thing is’/existential).

Ingredients 1, 4 and 5 are *extralogical* expressions, ingredients 2 and 6 are *logical* expressions and ingredient 3 is an *alogical* expression. The sentences of the FDE syntax are:

- (i) Everything in the set of all atomic sentences  $At$  is a sentence.
- (ii) Molecular sentences (compounds): If  $A$  and  $B$  are sentences of a language, then so too are  $\dagger A$ ,  $\neg A$ ,  $(A \wedge B)$  and  $(A \vee B)$ .
- (iii) Nothing else is considered a sentence unless it follows (i) and (ii).

**(c) Semantics of FDE:**

FDE is an extensional four-valued logic. The set  $V = \{t, f, b, n\}$  are the semantic values where  $t$  = true only,  $f$  = false only,  $b$  = both (glutty) and  $n$  = neither (gappy). If the set of all atomic sentences is  $At$  and  $c$  is any case of  $At$  into  $V$ , then for any atomic sentence  $A$ ,

- 1.  $c(A) = t$ ,
- 2.  $c(A) = f$ ,
- 3.  $c(A) = b$ ,
- 4.  $c(A) = n$ .

Because FDE does not recognise the connection between something being *untrue* with it being *false*, in other words  $c \not\models_1 A$  (‘ $A$  is untrue in  $c$ ’)  $\neq c \models_0 A$  (‘ $A$  is false in  $c$ ’), there are less constraints on the semantic status of atomic sentences.<sup>48</sup> This allows possibilities for *gaps* (sentences falling between true and false) and *gluts* (sentences being both true and false). In FDE, the constraint conditions of atomic sentences are as follows: for any sentence  $A$  and any case  $c$ , exactly one of the following obtains:

- 1.  $c \models_1 A$  and  $c \not\models_0 A$  (which reads:  $A$  is true in  $c$  and not false in  $c$ ).
- 2.  $c \not\models_1 A$  and  $c \models_0 A$  (which reads:  $A$  is untrue in  $c$  and is false in  $c$ ).
- 3.  $c \not\models_1 A$  and  $c \not\models_0 A$  (which reads:  $A$  is untrue in  $c$  and not false in  $c$ ).
- 4.  $c \models_1 A$  and  $c \models_0 A$  (which reads:  $A$  is true in  $c$  and is false in  $c$ ).

FDE being a paracomplete and paraconsistent system means that the completeness and consistency constraints of classical logic are dropped. Completeness on classical logic is guaranteed by *exhaustion* and consistency is ensured by *exclusion*:

Exhaustion: given any case  $c$ , any predicate  $\Pi$  and any object  $x \langle x_1 \dots, x_n \rangle$  from the domain  $D$  of  $c$ ,  $x$  is either from the extension of  $\Pi$   $[\varepsilon_+]$  or the antiextension  $[\varepsilon_-]$  of  $\Pi$ .

Exclusion: given any case  $c$ , any predicate  $\Pi$  and any object  $x \langle x_1 \dots, x_n \rangle$  from the domain  $D$  of  $c$ ,  $x$  is not a member of both the extension of  $\Pi$  or the antiextension of  $\Pi$ .

<sup>48</sup> On paraconsistent logics, negation (something syntactical) is not to be conflated with contradiction (something semantical); a move made in modern logic and has been embedded ever since. Hence, on PL systems, negation is not a contradiction-forming functor; negation and contradiction are separate notions.

Table 1. Consistency and completeness requirements.

Exhaustion: For any $x \in D$ , $x$ is at least one of $\varepsilon_+$ , $\varepsilon_-$ $\prod \prod$	Exclusion: For any $x \in D$ , $x$ is no more than one of $\varepsilon_+$ , $\varepsilon_-$ $\prod \prod$	Logical Theory
Yes	Yes	Classical
No	No	FDE

Beall explains both terms:

On the so-called classical account, logic imposes both exhaustion and exclusion. Logic, on that account, is exhaustive: it recognizes no possibility in which an object fails to be in either the extension or antiextension of a predicate – no possibility in which a predicate fails to be either at least true of the object or at least false of the object. (This rules out the logical possibility of ‘truth-value gaps’, where a sentence is neither true nor false for some reason – a sort of indeterminacy of semantic value.) Moreover, logic, on the ‘classical’ account, is exclusive: it recognizes no possibility in which an object falls into both the extension and antiextension of a predicate – no possibility in which a predicate is both true and false of an object. (This rules out the logical possibility of ‘truth-value gluts’, where a sentence is both true and false for some reason – a sort of overdeterminacy of semantic value.)

Thus, on FDE, because completeness and consistency constraints are overly strict, neither exhaustion nor exclusion are imposed on predicates. There is the possibility that a predicate may be neither true nor false of an object or may be both true and false of an object. The tables below set out the above (Table 1 and 2): Given the above for atomic sentences, the truth conditions for molecular sentences can be schematised: for any sentence  $A$  and  $B$  and any case  $c$ , at least one of the following obtains (or does not obtain):

$\wedge$	Conjunction:	$c \models_1 A \wedge B$ iff $c \models_1 A$ and $c \models_1 B$ (read as: $A$ and $B$ are at least true in $c$ if and only if both $A$ and $B$ are true in $c$ ).
	Conjunction:	$c \models_0 A \wedge B$ iff $c \models_0 A$ or $c \models_0 B$ (read as: $A$ and $B$ are at least false in $c$ if and only if either $A$ is false or $B$ is false in $c$ ).
$\vee$	Disjunction:	$c \models_1 A \vee B$ iff $c \models_1 A$ or $c \models_1 B$ (read as: either $A$ or $B$ is at least true in $c$ if and only if either $A$ or $B$ are true in $c$ ).
	Disjunction:	$c \models_0 A \wedge B$ iff $c \models_0 A$ and $c \models_0 B$ (read as: either $A$ or $B$ is at least false in $c$ if and only if both $A$ and $B$ are false in $c$ ).
$\neg$	Negation:	$c \models_1 \neg A$ iff $c \models_0 A$ (read as: $A$ is at least true in $c$ if and only if $A$ is at least false in $c$ ).
	Negation:	$c \models_0 \neg A$ iff $c \models_1 A$ (read as: $A$ is at least false in $c$ if and only if $A$ is at least true in $c$ ).
$\dagger$	Nullation:	$v \models_1 \dagger A$ iff $v \models_1 A$ (read as: $A$ is true in $v$ if and only if $A$ is true in $v$ ).
	Nullation:	$v \models_0 \dagger A$ iff $v \models_0 A$ (read as: $A$ is false in $v$ if and only if $A$ is false in $v$ ).

The table below sets out the truth conditions of the logical connectives  $\neg$ ,  $\wedge$  and  $\vee$  respectively (Table 3):

#### (d) Logical Consequence on FDE:

Given this account of FDE, that is the syntactic, semantic and truth-conditional explanation, the logical consequence relations can be delineated. As already mentioned in §3.2,

the consequence relation is a relation that holds between a set of sentences  $X$  and a specific sentence  $A$  (meaning ascertaining what conclusions follow from what premises). Beall defines logical consequence on FDE as:

$X \vdash A$  (read as:  $X$  logically entails  $A$  or equivalently:  $A$  is a logical consequence of  $X$  iff there is no model in which everything in  $X$  is at least true but  $A$  is not even at least true).

Table 2. Predicate constraints.

Logical Theory	Extension/anti-extension constraints
Classical	Exclusion, Exhaustion
FDE	Neither

Table 3. Truth conditions of logical connectives.

$x$	$y$	$\neg x$	$(x \wedge y)$	$(x \vee y)$
t	t	f	t	t
t	b		b	t
t	n		n	t
t	f		f	t
b	t	b	b	t
b	b		b	b
b	n		f	t
b	f		f	b
n	t	n	n	t
n	b		f	t
n	n		n	n
n	f		f	n
f	t	t	f	t
f	b		f	b
f	n		f	n
f	f		f	f

On FDE, much of the inference rules from classical logic are retained including the De Morgan interactions:

- $\neg(A \wedge B) \dashv\vdash \neg A \vee \neg B$  (read as: the negation of a conjunction is equivalent to the disjunction in which each there is negation of each disjunct).
- $\neg(A \vee B) \dashv\vdash \neg A \wedge \neg B$  (read as: the negation of a disjunction is equivalent to the conjunction in which there is negation of each conjunct).
- $\neg \neg A \dashv\vdash \dagger A \dashv\vdash A$  (read as: if it is not the case that something is not true, then it is equivalent to something being true).<sup>49</sup>

However, at least five inference rules are denied and they are:

Rejection of LNC and LEM – which are based on the assumption of a two-valued logic – follows from rejecting PE/ECSQ. In addition, once explosion is taken as valid, there are

<sup>49</sup> Beall 2019b, 413.

1. The Law of Non-Contradiction (LNC)	$\neg (p \wedge \neg p)$
2. The Law of the Excluded Middle (LEM)	$(p \vee \neg p)$
3. Disjunctive Syllogism (DS)	$P \vee Q, \neg P \vdash Q$
4. Modus Ponens (MP)	$P \rightarrow Q, P \vdash Q$
5. Modus Tollens (MT)	$P \rightarrow Q, \neg Q \vdash \neg P$

also certain inference rules that are forfeited. One of those inference rules is DS because DS along with Simplification and Addition are required to derive FE/ECSQ as already demonstrated above in §2.1. The invalidity of MP and MT have a precedence in modern logic and cannot be discussed here. Denial of these inference rules is one of the inevitable trade-offs that arises from adopting a logic of FDE.<sup>50</sup>

What we have then on FDE is the wider possibility of cases beyond the bi-valence of classical logic. If FDE is a valid logical system, then *logically*, there would be no hindrance in there possibly being glutty and gappy sentences. Hence, logic (as defined on FDE) would be silent on whether a person adopts a glutty (contradictory) theory or not (or in our case, a glut-theoretic theology). Hence, in the case to be examined below, adopting this more expansive set of possibilities may help the traditionalist's claim that the very Qur'an that is eternal and uncreated as a divine attribute is also the same Qur'an that interacted in space-time during its emergence in the revelatory period.

### 3.4. Motivations and Merits for FDE

Until very recently, Beall was a 'conservative glut theorist'. What this means is that he believes in 'a true falsehood, a truth whose negation is also true'. However, he qualifies his position by saying 'while I am a glut theorist, I am a very conservative one: the gluts do not go beyond the peculiar paradoxical phenomena involving "true" or other so-called semantic vocabulary'.<sup>51</sup> Beall wants to accept some instances where contradictions seem very plausible within a language or its fragment but restricts it primarily to the semantic domain and not to the 'normative and non-semantic realm'.<sup>52</sup> Hence, he is not a diehard *metaphysical dialetheist*.<sup>53</sup> There are motivations he has extensively written about underpinning a glut theoretic logic and in this section I will briefly build to that. He discusses in various places what type of logic is a meritorious one or exhibits satisfactory virtues. One virtue of a logical system or theory that philosophers and scientists consider a virtue is logical *strength* (precision, informativity, simplicity, elegance, soundness, etc). However, adherents of sub-classical logic like Beall, although acknowledging this, adopt a more radical view which is that logical strength really is a logical *vice* and logical *weakness* instead is to be counted as a virtue because weaker logics allow for a better range of possibilities beyond the mere bivalence of LNC and LEM. He writes, branding 'weakness' with 'depth':

Logic, on this 'deeper' picture, still affords a natural treatment of the paradoxes. The 'solutions' afforded by standard (though lopsided) subclassical logics carry over to FDE. The logic is weak (or 'deep') enough to accommodate standard

<sup>50</sup> See Beall's short comments on the invalidity of DS, MP and MT in [2019b](#), 466–69. Cf. as well Beall's articles on this [2013a](#); [2013b](#) and [2018](#).

<sup>51</sup> [Beall 2017c](#), 199. Beall also refers to his position as 'deflated dialetheism' where gluts are merely semantic, see [2009](#), 6.

<sup>52</sup> [Beall 2017c](#), 199.

<sup>53</sup> Meaning someone who believes that contradictions are real entities. On this term and its counterpart *semantic dialetheism* (which I briefly discuss in § 4), see [Mares 2004](#), 264–75. Cf. Beall's correspondence theory of truth that assumes actual entities or 'facts' that exemplify inconsistent predicates in [2000](#), 264–68.

paradoxical notions (e.g. truth, exemplification, etc.). By diving deeper than the standard lopsided subclassical levels we do not lose the options for naturally resolving paradoxes; we have more options—treating some of them as ‘gappy phenomena’ and some ‘glutty phenomena’ versus trying to squeeze them all into one category or the other, regardless of how unnatural the fit appears.<sup>54</sup>

Reiterating this virtue of weakness, he says that sub-classical logics do not

force unique, strange phenomena into the cramped confines of classical-logic possibilities. While logic itself is silent on whether theorists *should* entertain a contradictory (glutty) theory of a given phenomenon – or, similarly, a gappy one, or an entirely ‘classical-logic’ theory – logic itself, contrary to the standard account, doesn’t rule it out. And in the face of extraordinary or strikingly bizarre phenomena it is a good thing to have a very wide space of possibilities to work with in constructing a true theory of the rare entity.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Beall is not a classical logic rejectionist nor is he it seems strictly within the project of *classical recapture* where classical logic is practically used except in exceptional cases or domains where it is argued it fails to apply. In fact, in places he hints at the default status of classical logic with weaker logics invoked to deal with ‘abnormal’ (by which he means paradoxical) cases. He states that ‘classical logic is “right” (in some sense) for the broad array of “normal” cases’ but when it comes to ‘various “abnormal” (e.g. paradoxical) phenomena’ a slightly weaker logic is required. In short, the thought is that ‘classical logic is the default logic, and the weaker logic kicks into gear when necessary.’<sup>56</sup> To put it in a more detailed way, sub-classical logics like FDE are better resourced to deal with paradoxical phenomena because they have the advantage of not only accepting ‘all classical-logic models as genuine models (as representations of possibilities that logic recognizes)’ but ‘*expands* the space of models to recognize ones that go beyond the narrow confines of the classical-logic space.’ What this implies is ‘if there is a classical-logic counterexample to an argument, then there is an FDE counterexample too – since FDE’s spaces of models includes the narrower classical-logic ones. But the converse fails’. Thus, FDE ‘recognizes more possibilities (more genuine models) than the classical-logic perspective allows, and so recognizes more candidate counterexamples than classical logic recognizes.’<sup>57</sup> The point Beall arrives at is that paradox is one of the key drivers for adopting a sub-classical or weaker logic like FDE. He explains the reason in his characteristically vivid prose:

There are some phenomena that wear gluttony on their face, and some that wear gappiness on their face; they just appear, *prima facie*, to be glutty or gappy. Obvious witness: liar sentences appear to be strangely twisted phenomena that are ‘overdetermined’ or otherwise glutty – ‘I am not true’, etc. They simply look that way; that’s why they pop out as hard, contradictory paradoxes. On the other hand, truth-tellers (or other forms of apparent ‘indeterminacy’) appear to be ‘underdetermined’ or otherwise gappy – ‘I am true’. They simply look that way; that’s why they pop out as hard but non-contradictory paradoxes.<sup>58</sup>

According to Beall, then, two reasons at least motivate us to broaden our logical theory: (1) indeterminacy (‘underdeterminacy’) within fragments of a language that generate instances

<sup>54</sup> Beall 2017a, 13.

<sup>55</sup> Beall 2019b, 414.

<sup>56</sup> Beall 2011, 326–27. Author’s italics. See as well Beall 2004, 213–15.

<sup>57</sup> Beall 2019b, 411.

<sup>58</sup> Beall 2018.

of vagueness, imprecision and ambiguity appearing to suggest that some sentences are neither true nor false and (2) overdeterminacy within fragments of a language that appear to suggest that some sentences have more than one truth-value, meaning they can be both true and false. An example of (1) is the infamous ‘sorites paradoxes’ (also known as ‘little-by-little’ arguments)<sup>59</sup> where vagueness in specific lexical items (nouns, predicates) like ‘tall’, ‘heap’ or ‘bald’ for example give rise to a seemingly false conclusion from valid premises because of the indeterminate application of the lexical item.<sup>60</sup> Below is a statement of sorites paradox (SP) in a common conditional argument form with ‘*F*’ as the gradable adjective or soritical predicate:

(SP) if some object *x* is *F* and there is another object *y* such that *x* is just a little bit more *F* than *y*, then *y* is *F*.

A logical form of the paradox can be given as follows, where *H* is the soritical predicate ‘is not a heap’:

$$\begin{aligned} &Ha_1 \\ &Ha_1 \rightarrow Ha_2 \\ &Ha_2 \rightarrow Ha_3 \\ &Ha_3 \rightarrow Ha_4 \\ &\dots \\ &Ha_i \\ &Ha_i \rightarrow Ha_{i+1} \\ &\exists j (\neg Ha_j) \end{aligned}$$

The argument premises are: one grain of wheat does not make a heap. If one grain of wheat does not make a heap, then two grains of wheat do not make a heap either. If two grains of wheat do not make a heap, then three grains of wheat do not make a heap. If three grains of wheat do not make a heap, then four grains of wheat do not make a heap either and so on until we reach *i* grains of wheat that do not make a heap, where *i* is an arbitrarily large number. If *i* grains of wheat do not make a heap, then *i* + 1 grains of wheat do not either. The conclusion from these premises is that an arbitrarily large number of grains do not form a heap. But this conclusion cannot be right because we do observe many grains *j* that form a heap. Thus, we appear to have a paradox.<sup>61</sup>

An example of (2) includes the notorious ‘Liar Paradox’<sup>62</sup> which involves arriving at an inconsistent conclusion or contradiction by reasoning about a self-referential ‘liar sentence’. Take for example the following starred sentence:

\* The starred sentence on this page is false.

<sup>59</sup> From the Greek ‘σφοδός’ meaning ‘heap’. The original version of this paradox is said to have been one among seven (including the Liar Paradox mentioned below) formulated by Eubulides of Miletus (fl. 4th century BC), a student of Euclid.

<sup>60</sup> For various responses to the sorites paradox, see the collection of essays in *Oms and Zardini 2019*, especially the introduction, 3–20 and *Lukowski 2011*, 131–70. On competing theories of vagueness, see *Raffman 2014*, 7–12). Cf. as well *Beall and Colyvan 2001a*, 401–408.

<sup>61</sup> Interestingly, the sorites paradox was not taken up with any seriousness among medieval logicians of Arabic philosophy. At least, as far as the sources suggest.

<sup>62</sup> On a straightforward outline of this paradox in contemporary philosophy of logic and language, see *Dowden 2016*. See as well the essays in *Beall 2003* and *Beall 2007b*. On Beall’s examination of the paradox, see *Beall 2017c; 2007a; Beall and Colyvan 2001b; 2001c; Beall and Bueno 2002; Beall 2006*. Finally, for more on the liar paradox (*al-jadhr al-asamm*) within medieval Arabic logic, refer to the analyses by *Alwishah and Sanson 2009; Spade 1973* and *Miller 1989*, 173–82.

Is the starred sentence true? On the one hand, if it is true (T), then what it states is the case, namely that it is false. So, if the starred sentence is true, then it is false. On the other hand, if the starred sentence is false (F), then it states something true (because it says that it is false). Hence, if the starred sentence is false, then it is true. What this seems to imply is that the starred sentence is T iff F. What we seem to have then is case where a sentence is both true and false – exhibiting contradictory predicates. Such a sentence would require an inconsistent case. Beall's conclusion is that the logical consequence relation on fragments of our language that contain such inconsistent or paradoxical sentences is inadequately modelled by classical logic because it admits no inconsistent cases. This is a good reason, therefore, for broadening our logical theory that enables embracing such inconsistent cases.

### 3.5. *Contradictory Christology*

The central controversy that engaged the Church was Christ's role and nature. The Church demarcated what it considered to be the orthodox understanding against a backdrop of heresy by drawing out the embedded biblical implications of his person. Two sets of controversies ran parallel to each other deeply dividing theological opinion. One set of controversies consisted of how best to explain Christ's deity in relation to the Father within the triune formulation. Disputes in this category are typically referred to as the trinitarian controversies. The other set of disputes focused on Christ as incarnate and this centred on how both his divinity and humanity is supposed to be explained.<sup>63</sup> Richard Cross aptly states the problem where the

fundamental philosophical problem specific to the doctrine is this: how is it that one and the same thing could be both divine (and thus, on the face of it, necessary, and necessarily omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, immutable, impassible, and impeccable) and human (and thus, on the face of it, have the complements of all these properties).<sup>64</sup>

Beall insists that the perplexing doctrine of Christ being both divine and human – living for example a fully enriched human life with all the temporal modalities like suffering as well as possessing the divine attributes of God – is best explicated by exactly what 'orthodoxy seems to imply: the having of two contradictory natures, the one divine and the other human'.<sup>65</sup> Christ's two 'contradictory natures' – where 'Christ is mutable; Christ is not mutable. It is true that Christ is mutable; it is false that Christ is mutable' is in fact that, a contradiction, and is to be taken as such because that is the most charitable way to understand how the conciliar fathers conceived of or accepted that doctrine.<sup>66</sup> This is the core of what Beall calls a *Contradictory Christology* (CC) and an approach equally viable as any other.<sup>67</sup> He explains CC:

On the Christology being proposed Christ plays the foundational role of both having the features required to fully experience suffering as we experience it while at the exact same time being worthy of worship and incapable – not capable – of such suffering or imperfect understanding of such suffering. The contradiction of Christ, on the proposed Christology, is not there because the Conciliar-text authors were sloppy; it's there because Christ's foundational role in Christianity

<sup>63</sup> For a helpful survey of Christ's human and divine nature, see *Collins 2005*, 229–61.

<sup>64</sup> *Cross 2011*, 453.

<sup>65</sup> *Beall 2019b*, 415.

<sup>66</sup> *Beall 2019b*, 418.

<sup>67</sup> *Beall 2019a*.

requires something contradictory – and thereby something extraordinary, unique and awesome.<sup>68</sup>

Christ's metaphysical exceptionalism and uniqueness encapsulated in a contradictory article of creed is not to be explained away nor qualified in any way but accepted as the ultimate and paradigmatic case of contradiction; 'jarring but in some ways mysterious'.<sup>69</sup> To accept this, he concludes, is not in any way to commit to something illogical because logic itself does not exclude such a possibility on the FDE account explained. The key claims of Beall's proposed CC include the following:

1. Christ is a metaphysically real contradictory being (hence at least one contradictory entity exists).
2. Christ has two complementary natures (fully divine and fully human).
3. Christ's contradictory nature is functional (it serves an end and purpose in the Christian worldview).
4. CC has no true explosive sentences.
5. CC is not a trivial Christology (it is not the case that anything goes).
6. The observable contradiction of Christ is a fact.

Beall is aware that the term 'contradictory' in describing his proposed Christological view may seem an unfortunate choice for a word but in the absence of any other, he retains it. I too shall retain its use in the sense Beall conceives of it and has explained it when applying it to the Islamic traditionalist position. This will be analysed in the next and penultimate section.

#### 4. God's Eternal Speech

In the previous section, I sketched Beall's account of a non-classical or sub-classical logic called FDE and his application of it to the case of Christ's dual nature – divine and incarnate. This section will appropriate those logical insights and apply it to a specific controversy within Islamic theology, that of God's speech (*kalām*) represented by the Qur'ān and whether the very same Qur'ān as divine speech is both eternal and temporal. If logic does not rule out embracing the possibility of this seemingly contradictory claim, then this opens up a line of defence for the traditionalist who wants to uphold the same divine attribute exemplified manifest in inconsistent ways. Let me now turn to this proposed defence.

In Muslim theology, there is an absolute denial of incarnation. Nothing divine became human. However, Harry Wolfson advanced the claim that a parallel idea – what he called 'inlibration' and 'embookment' – took place within 3rd H/9th CE century arguing that Christological controversies formed the backdrop for its inception.<sup>70</sup> Thus, Muslim belief, he argued, rested on the idea that the 'word was made book' just like Christianity rested on the idea of 'the word made flesh'. Wolfson's claim has been critically reevaluated by specialists in Islamic studies and the Qur'ān. They argue that God's 'word' – the pre-eternal Qur'ān – although the ultimate theophany, actually refers to *kalām* (speech) and not the singular *kalima* (word) and therefore eliminates 'the idea that this theophany is a divine hypostasis'.<sup>71</sup> In addition, the Qur'ān as revelation developing over a period of time emphasised orality, memory and articulation – all non-written forms – rather than graphical

<sup>68</sup> Beall 2019b, 416.

<sup>69</sup> Beall 2019b, 418.

<sup>70</sup> For the discussion, see Wolfson 1976, 244–63.

<sup>71</sup> Winter 2004, 51.

representation like letters or the materials and paraphernalia of writing.<sup>72</sup> Finally, contrary to Christian practice, no liturgy of the Qur'ān takes place in for example Mosques during the congregational prayers; there is no sense of a communion with God through the event of recitation (*qirā'a*) but no less 'sonically gives presence' to the divine.<sup>73</sup> Even if Wolfson's desired parallel with incarnation or logos-theology is arguably misplaced, the crux of the problem still remained, polemically dividing Muslim theologians: how can the Qur'ān, God's eternal and undifferentiated attribute of speech, be equivalent to the revealed, finite and temporal Qur'ān? Put formally, where  $a$  = the Qur'ān,  $F$  = the unary predicate 'is eternal' and  $T$  = the unary predicate 'is temporal', how could it be that

$$Fa \wedge Ta.$$

which is an inconsistent set of statements about God's attribute of speech – it is both eternal and temporal – and on the classical account of logic, such a case would not be possible because of the exclusion constraint on predicates  $\delta(a) \notin \varepsilon_+ \cap \varepsilon_-$  already explained above (see §§ 3.2–3).

Regarding the ontology of the Qur'ān, in the simplified account I shall give here,<sup>74</sup> four broad theological views emerged and for each I give a name.

1. The 'naïve' or 'literal' view: is that of the traditionalists who held that the Qur'ān that is in bound form and human possession 'is the very same Qur'ān that was revealed from God on the tongue of Gabriel and then to Muḥammad; neither changed nor altered'.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, the Qur'ān that is eternal in Gods essence, composed of letters and sounds, is identical to the Qur'ān that is temporal.<sup>76</sup>
2. The 'creation' view: attributable to the Mutazilites in general, is that God's speech is an uttered production or speech act of God, separate, created and temporal, and not an eternal entitative attribute subsisting in His essence. Hence, the Qur'ān is something created (*makhlūq*).<sup>77</sup>
3. The 'facsimile' view: espoused originally by Ibn Kullāb and followed in that by most of the Ash'arites and Māturīdites who argued that God's speech is of two types: (1) an internal speech (*kalām nafsī*) which is an entitative attribute subsisting in God's essence that is formless, undifferentiated and non-composite and (2) expressed speech (*kalām lafẓī*) which is embodied in temporal codes, mediums and languages. The Qur'ān that is revealed is an expression, quotation, representation and correspondence of the eternal speech of God.<sup>78</sup> Thus, God's expressed or uttered speech manifested in the graphics, sounds, letters, words and sequencing is created but His internal speech is not.
4. The 'process' view: which asserts that God's speech is neither eternal subsisting in His essence (denial of the naïve and facsimile view) nor something created external to Him (denial of the creation view); rather it is something originated (*ḥādith*) in His essence that subsequently becomes eternal. This view and similar versions are attributed to the Karrāmītes.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>72</sup> See *Neuwirth 2019*, 89–95.

<sup>73</sup> *Shaw 2019*, 105–112.

<sup>74</sup> For a recent survey of the entire controversy, see *Spevack 2019*, 45–65 as well as *Andani 2019*, 192–366.

<sup>75</sup> Aḥmad b. Sinān al-Wasīfī (d. 871/257) quoted in *Ḍiyā' al-Dīn al-Maqdisī 1989*, 31–32, no. 16. see also *Wolfson 1976*, 251–55 and 257–63.

<sup>76</sup> *Spevack 2019*, 58, 61–3.

<sup>77</sup> *Wolfson 1976*, 263–78; *Sweetman 1976*, 278–402 and *Farahat 2019*, 96–127.

<sup>78</sup> *Wolfson 1976*, 248–51.

<sup>79</sup> *Wolfson 1976*, 291–303.

I mentioned previously how the traditionalist position on divine attributes is to broadly understand them literally along with a filtering criterion (§ 2). The same applies to God's attribute of speech. Traditionalists fully upheld that God speaks with letters, sounds and a voice and that His eternal words (those very letters and sounds) were revealed into the world of time and tense via a created agent (angel Gabriel) to a created recipient (Prophet Muḥammad). God's will and power can enact His speech to be temporal with all the entailments of that temporality like being audible. For the traditionalist who embraces a logic of FDE then, what does it take for her claim to be true, namely that the Qur'ān can be, or *is* rather, both eternal and temporal without positing it as a bifurcated entity like on the facsimile view? Two general responses can be offered: (1) affirm that God's attribute of speech is metaphysically inconsistent, meaning it is both eternal and temporal or (2) affirm that inconsistency arises in how we represent our understanding of God's attribute of speech through the language we use. In the case of (1), this would mean that God's attributes – properties described about Him or that He possesses – are actually contradictory. Accepting this would further mean bleeding back inconsistency into God's nature. God, then, would be the kind of being Beall is upholding in CC – a contradictory being. Of course, on the FDE account, affirming statements like 'The Qur'ān is eternal and temporal' would not be logically contradictory; nothing in logic would prevent them being the case (or not). It would then remain to determine whether or not there are any extra-logical reasons for affirming such a metaphysical being; that is to say, whether anything in the theology itself specifically warrants embracing the inconsistency. As I have alluded to already, the scriptural references to God's temporal activities and various qualities are too numerous to be dismissed as allegorical (see as well my comments below in the objections [§ 4]). Also, the earliest believing communities (*al-salaf*) – sanctioned as religiously authoritative by the Prophet – upheld all descriptions about God as they appear in scripture without applying rationalist hermeneutics. In the case of (2), this might be seen as a more modest option out of both. Here, inconsistency is attributed not to God Himself, as that 'would be to project onto him a feature of human representations' which is a 'particularly pernicious kind of error'; rather, the inconsistency is a feature of our 'underlying intellectual or linguistic limitations. Hence, on (2), our best 'descriptions of God in language requires inconsistency, but we need not think that these inconsistencies are univocal and literally accurate descriptions of the metaphysical characteristics of God'.<sup>80</sup>

On the analysis above, the affirmation of God's speech being eternal as His attribute and the Qur'ān literally (actually) being this speech cannot be an accusation against the traditionalist being incoherent or speaking irrationally about God. The traditionalist is not a contradictory-seeking theologian; she does not have a gluttony for glut as it were. Rather, contradiction is here motivated because the demands of scripture and the nature of language seem to entail it. Of course, if the denial of LNC results in an absurdity then this approach of a traditionalist contradictory theology and this view about divine attributes would be false; but we have already seen how a conjunction of a proposition and its logical negation does not necessarily entail any arbitrary proposition:  $A \wedge \neg A \neq B$ . Justifying the position in the end is not because contradictions are a norm, but quite the contrary; it is in the rare cases of contradictions that motivate embracing it and the divine attributes, on this example, appears to be one such rare case.

## 5. Addressing Some Objections

There are a few objections that can be raised against this approach I have just detailed of positioning contradiction at the centre of theology. Let me address three that I think

<sup>80</sup> *Cotnoir 2017*, 16.

are important for the Islamic context: one that is methodological and two theological. The objections I consider are those mainly from the rationalist theological camp and so my answers are directed towards them. I have omitted replying to the specific logical objections to FDE as a desirable version of paraconsistent logic as Beall has adequately responded to them in his works; so I defer the reader to those responses rather than rehearse them here.<sup>81</sup> The first objection is that the use of logic may be seen by some (ultra)traditionalists as entirely antithetical to the very approach of traditionalism.<sup>82</sup> Although I do not want to digress to a vindication of logic as understood and used by medieval Muslim philosophers and scholastics or indeed contemporary philosophers of religion, I do want to say in short that this objection is misplaced. I do not assume here a metaphysically significant notion of logic attributable (arguably) to for example someone like Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). I need only hold logic as a (revisable and flexible) tool for conceptual analysis and application to theological reflection. Indeed, the traditionalist methodology of reading religious texts varied historically producing a discernible spectrum with some veering into more identifiably advanced hermeneutics and rationalist posturing while others were less hermeneutically robust and critically developed. Therefore, anxieties about logic serving to strengthen doctrine need not be of concern. It can be seen as another approach on that broad spectrum of traditionalist approaches.<sup>83</sup>

The second objection is that embracing a contradictory theological approach to divine attributes would be an unnecessarily drastic step when a non-drastic one is already available. Scriptural descriptions about God that compromise His transcendence or suggest any form of contingency, finiteness or anthropomorphism (like movement, direction, location, etc.) become the relevant rationale<sup>84</sup> that justify a non-literal interpretation as long as it is based on valid stylistic and rhetorical conventions of the Arabic language. For example, when God refers to qualities like *hands* (5:64) or *face* (55:26–27), they can be read as an allusion to ‘generosity’ and ‘essence’ respectively because that is how the Arabs have construed such words.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, when God mentions actions like *sitting* (20:5), *coming* (89:21–22) or *companionship* (20:46), they can be understood metaphorically to mean ‘sovereignty’, ‘power’ or ‘dominance’ and ‘protection’ or ‘help’ respectively.<sup>86</sup> Again, such readings have embedded linguistic precedence within the classical Arabic usage. Thus, semantic reference here of the words are primarily symbolic or expressive and not literal or representational. The words therefore *symbolise* divine attributes and actions. This kind of interpretation already touched on in § 2.1 had formed one identifiable part of the overall rationalist hermeneutical methodology to the divine attributes early in the formative period of Islamic theology.<sup>87</sup> One problem with the approach, however, is that it denies God of any self-referentiality. If God claims *F* for Himself, the rationalists interpret that (away) to be  $\neg F$ . This kind of interpretive posturing is anti-realist and non-cognitivist in that what God states about Himself is held to be expressive rather than representational.

<sup>81</sup> See Beall 2019b, 418–33 and 434–577 for specific replies to technical objections raised by theologians and philosophers.

<sup>82</sup> On the traditionalist rejection of logic, refer to Hallaq 1993; Ali 2008a and 2008b and the discussion in Hernandez 2017, 63–100 with the relevant literature.

<sup>83</sup> For a case-study on how traditionalism and its theological principles were variously defended by traditionalists, see the account by Holtzman and Ovadia 2019, 224–69 and Holtzman, 2010, 165–200.

<sup>84</sup> Or the relevant contextual clue (*qarīna*) that warrants the departure from a literal to a figurative reading of the texts containing these references to God’s qualities and actions.

<sup>85</sup> Ullah 2017, 134–35, 138.

<sup>86</sup> Ullah 2017, 131, 135–37. For an extensive survey of the Muslim figurative interpretations given to various qualities and actions of God in both the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth, refer to Swartz 2002, 139–281.

<sup>87</sup> Such a view may be termed ‘figurative anthropomorphism’ where scriptural expressions about ‘God’s body parts [. . .] are symbolic imagery’, see Hamori 2008, 33.

What this effectively implies is that references to God's qualities and actions are not really existing features of a reality but an imaginative use of words for some rhetorical, stylistic or other purpose. In this way, statements of the form 'God is *F*' or 'God does *F*' is religious language that does not entail an ontological commitment to a religious-metaphysical subject matter. This, the traditionalist may argue, is contrary to the way the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* understood religious language about God. Their attitude was condemnatory of anyone who denied God whatever He directly and ostensibly affirmed of Himself that was authentically established to be the case.<sup>88</sup> Hence, understanding God's qualities and actions in a figurative way is an approach that appears to stand outside of the transmitted Islamic authoritative tradition.

The third possible objection is that the proposed approach of a contradictory theology amounts to a muddled if not incoherent theology. Situating contradiction at the heart of a theology – especially the doctrine on God – is to make it nonsensical, an aggregate of an inconsistent set of beliefs and doctrines; that is, one set suggesting the direct opposite to another set. This surely ought not to be the desideratum of any theology or religious belief system. The first response to this objection is that a contradictory theology is not a position where anything goes, an open meadow where contradictions reside in abundance to be plucked. Contradictions are rare and are exceptions. The proposal here is not in any way that contradictions are infectious or contagious within theology – they are not 'dangerously promiscuous' to borrow from theologian Thomas McCall.<sup>89</sup> It is an investigation into where there is theological warrant for something not impeded by a system of logic. A second response to this objection is that the charge of irrationality is misdirected if indeed it is the case that there are no logical impediments to holding on to a position that embraces inconsistency. In addition, the assumption that on a theoretical level, absolute consistency is a fundamental concept of rationality is just that, an assumption. It is arguable that our pre-theoretical behaviour, meaning on the level of how we actually reason in non-trivial ways, inconsistency has never been a serious problem because our reasoning allows for or copes with inconsistent premises even though on classical logic, this is not an accurate reflection of human rationality. A third response is that a contradictory theology cannot exclusively be charged with incoherence or confusing and muddled doctrines because even the rationalist position arguably has incoherent (and, problematically for them of course) contradictory doctrines. To go back to the example of divine speech, I mentioned above in the discussion (§ 4) how the Asharites and Māturīdites upheld God's speech being an attribute that is eternal and internal to Him in a non-composite and undifferentiated way (the doctrine of *kalām nafsi*). Yet, in attempting to explain how it is that God's speech can be variegated (meaning to take the form of different categories like imperatives, prohibitions, vocatives and so on), some Asharite theologians for example argued that God's internal undifferentiated speech is actually differentiated and composite. As an attribute subsisting in God's essence, His speech is undifferentiated but in relation to created objects that are external to God's essence (*taalluqāt, mutaallaqāt*), it takes on various forms such as linguistic categories. In response to the Mutazilite charge of why all of God's attributes like will (*irāda*), power (*qudra*), knowledge (*ilm*) and so on are likewise not explained in the same way, some of the Asharites responded as related by the Egyptian Asharite polymath Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233) that

<sup>88</sup> See Ibn Qudāma's arguments against this rationalist approach to divine attributes 1962.

<sup>89</sup> McCall, in *Beall* 2019b, 478.

some of our associates retreated to the view that God's speech that subsists in His essence is of five differentiated attributes and they are commands, prohibitions, informative, interrogative and vocative.<sup>90</sup>

An undifferentiated attribute in God's essence that is also differentiated is an instance of a direct contradiction. In fact, on the one hand, al-Āmidī found this response 'questionable' and on the other, he found in general any attempt to explain the doctrine of God's internal speech thoroughly perplexing and beyond his ability to give cogent answers to the objections.<sup>91</sup> Ibn Taymiyya vehemently criticised this doctrine, not least because of this and many other problematic entailments.<sup>92</sup> Many other theological doctrines espoused by the rationalists are also susceptible to charges of inconsistency, paradox or contradiction.<sup>93</sup> Moving away from the rubrics of classical (and Aristotelian-Stoic) logic would allow for this kind of inconsistent discourse. Ironically, then, it would suit the rationalist well to adopt a weaker, non-classical logic in order to account for the paradoxical framing of some of their doctrines.

## 6. Conclusion and Implications for Islamic Theology

I have outlined one possible way Muslim traditionalist theologians can accept inconsistent statements about God's qualities and actions based on adopting a subclassical logic like FDE as expounded by Jc Beall. I examined an application of FDE to a controversial issue in Islamic theology, that of God's attribute of speech – the Qur'ān – and how statements about it being both eternal and temporal in the Muslim scriptural references ought not to be rejected but embraced as a contradiction. Doing this would not be something illogical or incoherent as logic itself would not rule it out. What deeper implications adopting this approach would have on doing Islamic theology and indeed conceptualising it is yet to be teased out and more research is needed for that. I will make only three brief concluding points on this. First, arguably, the logical application of FDE or any system of paraconsistent logic can be extended to other theological discussions about divine attributes. One discussion is Abū 'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's (d. 324/935) paradoxical dictum borrowed from Ibn Kullāb (d. c. 240/853–4) that God's attributes are neither identical to nor other than Him, what Wolfson dubbed as the 'Kullābite formula'.<sup>94</sup> Another discussion is the theory of 'states' (*aḥwāl*) introduced by the Mu'tazilite Abū Hāshim al-Jubbā'ī (d. 321/933) in order to uphold God's Oneness and attributes. They are assigned an intermediary (or quasi) ontological status, neither existent nor non-existent.<sup>95</sup> A third discussion is the approach of the early Ismā'īlīs – labelled 'esotericists' (*bāṭiniyya*) by Muslim doxographers – who employed a double negation (*salibatān*) when it came to God's attributes that resulted in a self-cancelling apophatic theology that removed God from any discursive discourse.<sup>96</sup> Hence, what explanatory power a paraconsistent model would have on these awaits a more detailed analysis.

Second, adopting a paraconsistent logic would mean departing from the broadly Aristotelian, Farābīan and Avicennan logic that was adopted and subsequently entrenched within Islamic theology and philosophy. A break from that will not be clean or easy. What revisions or reappraisals will need to be made on for example the doctrines enumerated

<sup>90</sup> Al-Āmidī 2004, 1:400.

<sup>91</sup> Al-Āmidī 2004, 1:400.

<sup>92</sup> See Ibn Taymiyya 1999 and Mustafa 2016, 34–145.

<sup>93</sup> See the conclusion below in § 6.

<sup>94</sup> Wolfson 1976, 208–210. See as well Gimaret 1990, 277–79. Cf. Spannaus 2019, 149–62.

<sup>95</sup> On this notion and its impact, see Thiele 2019, 365–84. Cf. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's analysis in his *al-Muḥaṣṣal*, Al-Rāzī 1980, 60–64 and Zolghadr 2019, 4–5.

<sup>96</sup> For more on this, see Kars 2019, 23–72.

in standard creedal (*aqā'id*) works is a something that would need examination. In addition, because Islamic pedagogy and learning is significantly tradition-bound, a shift to a paraconsistent logic may be seen as subversive in how it unravels that tradition.

Finally, embracing inconsistency as a core theological reality will require reassessing our understanding of the metaphysical character of God and how that spills over into other theological doctrines – especially ethical and spiritual ones. For example, how would a paraconsistent Muslim address a serious moral issue like the problem of evil and suffering. As shown poignantly by Weber, there are some serious challenges to address if we formulate a theodicy with paraconsistency as its approach.<sup>97</sup> Another example would be how a paraconsistent Muslim will redefine her religious relationship with essentially a metaphysically inconsistent being needs to be further examined – especially in cases of trust, divine promises and even threats and sanctions. A whole cognitive reconfiguration would be required within one's broader spirituality.

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<sup>97</sup> See Weber 2018 and Weber 2007.

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### Appendix. List of Symbols

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$\neg$	= negation
$\perp$	= contradiction
$\iff$	= 'if and only if'
$\wedge$	= 'and'
$\vee$	= 'or'
$\forall$	= 'all'

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$\exists$	= 'some'
$\supseteq$	= entails
$\dashv$	= logically equivalent to
$\dagger$	= 'is true' (nullation)
$=$	= equal to
$\Pi$	= a predicate
$\rightarrow$	= 'if ... then'

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