The Unity of Christ and the Historical Jesus: Aquinas and Locke on Personal Identity[1]

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Abstract

Albert Schweitzer wrote that, at Chalcedon, the "doctrine of the two natures dissolved the unity of the Person, and thereby cut off the last possibility of a return to the historical Jesus." In this article, I argue that a likely cause of this pervasive perception of Chalcedon is the reflexive deployment by modern thinkers of a Lockean concept of personhood grounded in consciousness. I suggest, by way of contrast, that Thomas Aquinas's substantial account of personhood provides greater space for historical approaches to Jesus by protecting the finite integrity of Christ's human nature and the unity of his personhood. I conclude by highlighting an implication of this discussion for the role of metaphysics in theological reflection.

Keywords: Christology, Historical Jesus, Personal Identity, Substance, Consciousness

In his influential book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* Albert Schweitzer wrote that, at Chalcedon, the "doctrine of the two natures dissolved the unity of the Person, and thereby cut off the last possibility of a return to the historical Jesus."[2] He continued, "That the historic Jesus is something different from the Jesus Christ of the doctrine of the Two Natures seems to us now self-evident. We can, at the present day, scarcely imagine the long agony in which the historical view of the life

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[2] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, 3rd ed. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954 [1906]), 3.

of Jesus came to birth."[3] Schweitzer is not alone in his sense that the dogmatic confession of Christ's two natures is incompatible with historical inquiry into the figure of Jesus of Nazareth.[4] And it was not only the historical Jesus scholars who rejected the possibility of speaking of Jesus as a historical person with two 'natures', for many theologians then and now have argued similarly.[5] While we cannot here address all of the reasons these scholars feel compelled to wander so far afield from conciliar orthodoxy, I want to discuss the role played by changing perceptions of the unity of Christ occasioned by new philosophical concepts of personhood.

Recent scholarship has noted a marked tendency in modern Christological reflection toward Nestorianism: a conception of the Incarnation as the accidental union of a human person with a divine person.[6] This tendency underwrites a persistent dualism that frequently leads scholars into conceptual gridlocks, confronting them with insurmountable dichotomies that drive them to reject basic elements of classical theism, such as divine simplicity, impassibility, and so on.[7] This tendency is acutely manifest among historical Jesus scholars,[8] and their discussions of traditional Christological concepts belie a common assumption that the Christian tradition endorses a

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[3] Ibid., 4. "He was still, like Lazarus of old, bound hand and foot with the grave-clothes . . . of the dogma of the Dual Natures" (Ibid.).

[4] "Chalcedon, I think, always smelled a bit like a confidence trick, celebrating in Tertullian-like fashion the absurdity of what is believed" (N. T. Wright, "Jesus and the Identity of God," *Ex auditu* 14 [1998]: 46). See also, David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, (London: SCM Press, 1973 [1835]) §146 (pp. 409–14), §151 (pp. 437–40); William Wrede, "The Task and Methods of 'New Testament Theology,'" in *The Nature of New Testament Theology,* ed. R. Morgan (Naperville: Allenson, 1973 [1897]), 68–116, at 69; Adolf von Harnack, *What is Christianity?,* trans. Thomas Baily Saunders (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1957 [1900]), 204; Ernst Troeltsch, "The Dogmatics of the History-of-Religions School," in *Religion and History,* ed. J. Adams and W. Bense (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991 [1913]), 87–108; Rudolph Bultmann, "The Christological Confession of the World Council of Churches," in *Essays: Philosophical and Theological,* trans. James C. G. Greig (London: SCM Press, 1955), 273–90, esp. 287; Edward Schillebeeckx, *Interim Report on the books 'Jesus' and 'Christ'* (London: SCM Press, 1980), esp. 140–43; Idem., *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology* (London: Collins, 1979), 656 (cf. Klaas Runia, *The Present-Day Christological Debate* [Leicester: Intervarsity Press, 1984], 53–58); Paul Hollenbach, "The Historical Jesus Question in North America Today," *BTB* 19 (1989): 11-22, at 19-20; Geza Vermes, *Christian Beginnings: From Nazareth to Nicaea (AD 30–325)* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 234; A. N. Wilson, *Jesus* [London: Sinclair Stevenson, 1992], xiii; Dale C. Allison Jr., *The Historical Christ and the Theological Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 82–85. See discussion in Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 72–5.

[5] "[The Chalcedonian Formula] remains a form of words without 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 pencil on paper is also a square" (John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions" in *The Myth of God Incarnate,* Ed. John Hick [London: SCM Press, 1977], 167–85, at 178). In particular, many proponents of Christologies 'from below,' including spirit Christology, consciousness Christology, and kenotic Christology, have sought alternatives to Chalcedon.

[6] See esp., Aaron Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016); Thomas Joseph White, *The Incarnate Lord: A Thomistic Study in Christology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

[7] See an example of this kind of discussion in Allison, *Historical Christ,* 82–85.

[8] See Austin Stevenson, "The Self-Understanding of Jesus: A Metaphysical Reading of Historical Jesus Studies," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 72 (2019): 291–307.

Christology in which a divine nature is united to the human person of Jesus.[9] By way of contrast, Aaron Riches, citing 1 Corinthians 8:6, rightly notes that the unity of Christ is traditionally maintained by affirming that "the human nature of Jesus exists only as subsisting in the divine Son such that, in the Son, the human Jesus and the Lord God are 'one and the same' (*unus et idem*)."[10] In other words, there is no human person in Christ; the human nature of Jesus only exists insofar as it is united to the divine person of the Word.[11]

The Chalcedonian definition confesses that Christ is truly God and truly man, and that the distinction of natures is not taken away by the hypostatic union, "but rather the property of each nature [is] preserved, and concur[s] in one Person [πρόσωπον] and one *hypostasis* [ὑπόστασιν], not parted or divided into two persons [πρόσωπα], but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ."[12] The Greek terms used to describe the oneness of Christ, *prosopon* and *hypostasis,* are typically translated into Latin as *persona*, and English as 'person'. However, 'person' has come to have a different meaning in contemporary thought than it did for the church fathers, and this confusion has led not a few theologians and historians astray in their understanding of Chalcedon. Without attempting a detailed genealogical account of the philosophical influences on specific theologians, I want to discuss an idea that seems to have been 'in the air', so to speak, by the eighteenth century and remains highly influential today. This is an account of personhood grounded in consciousness and memory: an approach originally proposed by the English philosopher John Locke (1632–1704). Taking Thomas Aquinas as a prominent representative of the classical Christological tradition, in the second part of the article I will contrast Locke's account with Aquinas's substantial account of personhood and draw out the

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[9] While Edward Schillebeeckx is aware that this is not the case for the Chalcedonian tradition, he argues explicitly in favor of it: "*Anhypostasis*, as privation or loss of the human person, must therefore be denied, of course, in Jesus" (*Jesus*, 656–7). Certain advocates of *kenotic* Christology also defend this approach: "No real meaning could be attached to a human 'nature' which is not simply one aspect of the concrete life of a human person" (H. R. Mackintosh, *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912], 207). It has become standard to use the terms *anhypostasis – enhypostasis* to refer to the lack of a human hypostasis in Christ (*anhypostasis*) and the uniting of his human nature to the divine hypostasis (*enhypostasis*), even though that is not quite what they meant in patristic usage. See discussion in F. LeRon Shults in "A Dubious Christological Formula: From Leontius of Byzantium to Karl Barth," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996): 431–46; Benjamin Gleede, *The Development of the Term* ἐνυπόστατος *from Origen to John of Damascus* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[10] Riches, *Ecce Homo*, 3. This is because *unus* is founded on *esse* (Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, edited by Pierre Mandonnet [Paris: Lethielleux, 1929], bk. III, d. 6, q. 2, a. 2).

[11] "Although [Christ's] human nature is a certain individual in the genus of substance, nonetheless, because it does not exist separately through itself, but rather in something more perfect, namely, in the person of the Word of God, it follows that it would not have its own personhood. And thus the union was made in the person" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae,* trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1924), III, q. 2, a. 2 *ad 2* [Henceforth *ST*]). See *ST* III, q. 4. a. 2; *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2.

[12] *The Creeds of Christendom,* vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1877), 62.

Christological implications of these two approaches. I will conclude by highlighting one implication of this discussion for the role of metaphysics in theological reflection.

The Lockean Account of Personal Identity

Around the middle of the seventeenth century, the question of personal identity began to shift away from ontology toward a more subjective approach, no longer understood as something inscribed in things themselves, it was now thought of as arising from our concepts or ideas of things. Alongside this shift, the idea of personhood began to serve a different purpose philosophically. For Boethius, a person was a particular type of substance—"an individual substance of a rational nature"—and, as such, answered ontological questions related to individuation.[13] However, virtually all of the prominent English philosophers in the seventeenth century were nominalists, and nominalists do not need to account for individuation.[14] As a result, they began to consider personhood by asking what preserves personal identity across time and change. This took various forms, from the corpuscular philosophy of Hobbes who approached it in terms of the identity of bodies, to the Cartesians who were interested in what preserves the identity of the soul. This overall change in perspective initiated a theological debate at the time about the Trinity, between substantialists and Cartesians, and a related discussion about the continuity of personal identity after death.[15]

When Locke published his chapter on identity in the second edition of his *Essay concerning Human Understanding* in 1694, he forged a new direction for this conversation, arguing that personal identity across time is a function of continuity of consciousness, rather than substance-identity. "For the same consciousness being preserv'd," he wrote, "whether in the same or different

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[13] Boethius, *Contra Eutychen* in *Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy,* ed. Jeffrey Henderson, trans. H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester, LCL 74 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), III.5-4 (p. 85). Put simply, a metaphysical realist must account for the individuation of individual substances of a genus, whereas a nominalist assumes that all substances exist as individuals and must account instead for how our mind creates genus descriptions of individuals.

[14] Udo Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject: Self-consciousness and personal identity from Descartes to Hume* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)*,* 72. "Nominalism (or the view that everything that exists is individual) reigned supreme in the English-speaking world. At least, all of the seventeenth-century English philosophers who are still well known today—Bacon, Hobbes, Locke—adopted some form of nominalism" (Ibid., 23).

[15] In the 1690's, William Sherlock and Robert South had a debate centered on the Trinity in which South defended a version of Boethius's definition of personhood, while Sherlock advanced a Cartesian approach in which he attempted to account for individuation (note: *not* diachronic personal identity) in terms of consciousness. South, *Animadversions upon Dr. Sherlock's Book, Entitled A Vindication of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity* (1693); Idem., *Tritheism Charged upon Dr. Sherlock's New Notion of the Trinity* (1695); Sherlock, *A Defence of Dr. Sherlock's Notion of a Trinity in Unity* (1694); Idem., *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity* (1690). See commentary in Udo Thiel, "The Trinity and Human Personal Identity," in M. A. Stewart (ed.), *English Philosophy in the Age of Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 217–43l; Wedeking "Locke on Personal Identity and the Trinity Controversy of the 1690s," *Dialogue* 29 (1990), 163–88.

Substances, the personal Identity is preserv'd."[16] Locke's account is about diachronic personal identity, *not* synchronic individuation—he argues that bare existence is sufficient to account for individuation[17]—and it remains a leading approach in the literature, despite centuries of critical response.[18] Locke distinguishes between three abstract ideas under which we can consider human subjects: soul, man, and person.[19] 'Soul' refers to the thinking substance, and Locke remains agnostic about its immateriality; though, notably, many subsequent thinkers pick up his approach because of its compatibility with a materialist philosophy of mind.[20] 'Man' essentially refers to the human body, though the exact referent of these terms will depend one's broader anthropology.[21] The importance of the concept of 'Person', in this triad, is that it indicates the aspect of a human subject with respect to which it can be judged from a legal or moral perspective.[22] The question of personal identity is the ground of law and morality. Whom can we hold accountable for their actions? Not the 'Soul' or the 'Man', but the 'Person', a concept which Locke grounds in a relatively novel concept of consciousness.[23]

In the English-speaking world, the first philosopher to use the term 'consciousness' with a particular technical meaning was the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth (1617–1688). Drawing on Neo-Platonic sources, he used the term to indicate an awareness of one's own

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[16] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* ed. Peter Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), II.xxvii.13. Note that, on the one hand, Locke's approach is external and conceptual, while, on the other hand, it has to do with direct, internal, preconceptual phenomena. This is a tension in his thought that leads to multiple diverse approaches after him: the romantics emphasizing the internal immediacy to self, while more analytic strands of thought focus on the external, ethical and legal questions.

[17] See early critical discussion in Henry Lee, *Anti-Skepticism: Or, Notes upon each Chapter of Mr. Lock's Essay concerning Humane Understanding. With an Explication of all the Particulars of which he treats, and in the same Order* (London: 1702), 121–2. See Thiel, *Early Modern Subject,* 163.

[18] Contemporary advocates of the Lockean account include John Perry, David Lewis, Sydney Shoemaker, and Derek Parfit. "Locke's discussion of personal identity is central to the current debate over persons and their persistence conditions. Nevertheless, there are many different versions of Locke's view that contemporary metaphysicians take themselves to be embracing or rejecting. . . This highlights just how difficult it is to determine what Locke's view on persons and their persistence conditions amounts to, despite how clear its importance is" ("Locke on Personal Identity," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed February 17, 2020, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/locke-personal-identity). Cf. Brinkmann, "Consciousness, Self-Consciousness, and the Modern Self," *History of the Human Sciences*, 18 (2005): 27–48; Michael Ayers, *Locke*, vol. 2 (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 281.

[19] Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.15.

[20] Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.25.

[21] Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.8. See also ibid., II.i.11, and II.xxvii.21.

[22] Locke, *Essay*, II.xxvii.26, II.xxviii.30. In a sense, Locke is here in continuity with a long tradition. The old Roman concept of *personae* was considered alongside *res* (things) as objects of law. *Personae* are beings with rights and duties who are held responsible for their actions. In this context, the term is primarily social and juridical. Compare his approach with Suarez, who adopts Boethius's definition in his *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (1597) but emphasizes the moral aspect of personality (not unlike the old Roman conception) and raises the question of diachronic identity.

[23] See discussion in Antonia LoLordo, "Persons in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century British Philosophy" in *Persons: A History*, ed. Antonia LoLordo (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 154–81.

thoughts and actions, and in his usage it is closely related to the more widely-used concept of conscience: *conscience* is the term for moral judgments of the self, based on internal *conscious* reflection.[24] Consciousness thus refers to that piece of the conscience that precedes moral judgment and enables reflection. Notably, Cudworth only ascribes to consciousness a role in knowledge, and he holds that personal identity is secured by the immaterial substance of the soul.[25] Locke takes up this concept of consciousness, which is distinct from two closely related notions: reflection and memory. Reflection occurs when our mental acts become objects of observation: it is a higher-order mental act directed toward other mental acts.[26] Memory is the way our consciousness relates to the past: it is the avenue for acts of thinking linked to the past, to which consciousness attends, and it is through this relation to past experiences that personal identity is preserved over time. Consciousness, on the other hand, is understood as a presence of the mind to itself, an immediate awareness that attends all acts of thinking but is not itself a distinct or higher-order act of thinking.[27] For Locke, consciousness does not account for the individuation of substances; it presupposes a thinking substance and adds a particular abstract idea under which it is to be considered.[28] While conscious memory can span gaps of unconsciousness, loss of memory can mean that I am still the same 'Man' as before, but no longer the same 'Person', and in this way personhood floats entirely free of substance.[29]

Locke's approach was developed in various ways by Leibniz and Wolff, attacked by Hume, and re-established on different grounds by Kant.[30] Its influence is also perceptible in the reflection

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[24] See, e.g., Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678), 159–60.

[25] Ibid., 751.

[26] Locke, *Essay,* II.i.8.

[27] This is important for avoiding Leibniz's critique of an eternal regress: "it is impossible," writes Leibniz, "that we should always reflect explicitly on all our thoughts; for if we did, the mind would reflect on each reflection, ad infinitum, without ever being able to move on to a new thought" (Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding,* trans. Remnant and Bennett [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981], p. 118).

[28] "Consciousness presupposes a thinking substance (or man) as the agent who performs acts of consciousness and those thoughts and actions to which consciousness relates; consciousness does not bring about the identity of the human subject as soul or man" (Thiel, *Early Modern Subject,* 122).

[29] Locke affirms the reverse is also the case, "That if the same consciousness . . . can be transferr'd from one thinking Substance to another, it will be possible, that two thinking Substances may make but one Person" (Locke, *Essay,* 2.xxvii.13). For further discussion of Locke's approach, see e.g., Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *Naturalization of the Soul: Self and personal identity in the eighteenth century* (London: Routledge, 2000), esp. 12–29; Idem., *The Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Matthew Stuart, *Locke's Metaphysics,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20013), 340–80.

[30] "For Kant personality is constituted by free activity; for Renouvier by thinking and willing, for Ravaisson by the act of the will directed by reason. According to this way of thinking, personality denotes not a reality of the order of substance, but rather a 'value', a prize to be attained and striven for by high endeavour" (Ferrier, *Incarnation,* 81).

on *das Gefühl* ('feeling' or 'sentiment') in the German Romantic movement.[31] Schleiermacher (1768–1834) transformed this broader Romantic concept into the distinctive notion of the "feeling of absolute dependence," which stood at the foundation of his dogmatic project.[32] By grounding dogma in religious consciousness, he established an alternative basis for theological speech that was broadly empirical and descriptive. Further, because he developed a Christology out of human subjectivity, Schleiermacher has been referred to as the "father of consciousness Christology."[33] While Schleiermacher is directly influenced far more by Kant than Locke, the concept of personal identity grounded in consciousness stands at the heart of his Christological project and appears to contribute to his rejection of Chalcedon.

In his mature work, *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher interrogates the Chalcedonian approach, asking: "how, then, is the unity of a person's life to endure with the duality of natures without one yielding to the other . . . or, without the two natures blending into each other?"[34] He believed that the starting point of Chalcedon inevitably results in either Eutychianism or one of the twin errors of Apollinarianism and Nestorianism. Furthermore, he opposed the dyothelitism[35] of the Christian tradition, concluding that "if Christ has two wills, then the unity of the person is no more than apparent."[36] This led Schleiermacher to reconceive divine transcendence and human existence, as well as the unity of the two in Christ, in a radically new fashion. For him, Christ brings the divine to full expression within history through his perfect god-consciousness—that is, his arrival at a complete consciousness of the self as dependent on God. This is not a divine consciousness in Christ, but a human consciousness fully aware of its dependence on the divine; Jesus calls himself the Son "insofar as the Father is in him, but not insofar as something divine,

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[31] "It is clear . . . that the increasing ubiquity of the language of feeling suggests that there is a perceived need to emphasize the immediacy by which we relate to our own self and personal identity—but again there is a variety of meanings that attach to the notion of immediacy. The inner experience expressed in terms of an immediate feeling can be thought of as denoting a direct inner awareness of perceptions, but it can also refer to memory as our capacity to bring to consciousness past experiences, or even to an awareness of the existence of our self as a subject of experience" (Thiel, *Early Modern Subject,* 432).

[32] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, trans. Paul T. Nimmo, 2 vols., T&T Clark Cornerstones (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), §4.3, pg. 23. Alister McGrath notes, "There is every indication that Schleiermacher, though not himself a Romantic, developed an approach to theology which struck a deep chord of sympathy within this new and influential school of thought" (*The Making of Modern German Christology: From the Enlightenment to Pannenberg* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986], 19).

[33] George Vass, *A Pattern of Doctrines 1: God and Christ*, vol. 3, *Understanding Karl Rahner* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1996), 193n78.

[34] Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, §96.1, pg. 585.

[35] Greek for 'two wills', *dyothelitism* became the official orthodox position at the Third Council of Constantinople in AD 681.

[36] *Christian Faith*, §96.1, pg. 586.

which is called Son, dwells in him as a man."[37] A number of more recent theologians have followed a similar trajectory, and scholars such as Karl Rahner,[38] Jacques Dupuis, Jon Sobrino, and, in a different sense, N. T. Wright and Hans Urs von Balthasar, have sought to ground the unity of Christ in a form of consciousness, thus interpreting the personal union of God and man in the Incarnation through the medium of Christ's human spiritual operations.[39] Even scholars not intending to develop a 'consciousness Christology' often intuitively assume that the confession of one 'person' amounts to, or is reducible to, positing one consciousness in Christ. Keith Ward stands as a representative example. In his book, *Christ and the Cosmos*, he states erroneously that "in what was to become Patristic orthodoxy, it was asserted that the human consciousness of Jesus was identical with the divine consciousness of the eternal Logos."[40] Ward reflexively interprets the patristic language of hypostatic union *in terms of consciousness,* and he is not alone in this.[41]

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[37] Schleiermacher, *Life of Jesus,* 100. Schleiermacher's alternative answer to the question of divine and human coexistence in Christ relies on his conception of the fundamental compatibility of divinity and perfect humanity: that the perfection of human nature is to express the divine. For this reason, Schleiermacher avers, we can posit a real existence of God in Christ insofar as Jesus' humanity fully expresses the divine, and it does so through the gradual development of Jesus' God-consciousness. Schleiermacher maintains that Scripture compels us to "consider the human nature of Christ . . . not to be animated of and by his human nature itself but simply as it is taken up in a shared participation in an activity directed by what is divine in Christ" (*Christian Faith* §97.3, pg. 601). Note that his approach is framed in terms of the *expression* of God in a way that calls into question whether it also involves the true personal *presence* of God, in Christ.

[38] "After all, it is easy to see that such a Hypostatic Union cannot be conceived as a merely ontic connection between two realities conceived of as things, but that—as the absolute perfection of the finite spirit as such—it must of absolute necessity imply a … 'Christology of consciousness'; in other words, it will then be easily seen that only in such a subjective, unique union of the human consciousness of Jesus with the Logos—which is of the most radical nearness, uniqueness and finality—is the Hypostatic Union really present in its fullest being" (Karl Rahner, "Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ," *Theological Investigations* V, trans. K.-H. Kruger [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966] 193–215 at 203–5).

[39] See discussion of Rahner, Dupuis, and Sobrino on this score in White, *Incarnate Lord,* 111. Wright and von Balthasar rely on concepts of vocation- or mission-consciousness. See Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Vol. 3, Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ, trans. G. Harrison (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1987), 149–79; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 653.

[40] Keith Ward, *Christ and the Cosmos: A Reformulation of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 37.

[41] To offer three more instances of this pervasive tendency, David Bentley Hart writes of "the so-called enhypostatic union: the doctrine, that is, that there is but one person in Jesus, that he is not an amalgamation of two distinct centers of consciousness in extrinsic association, and that this one person, who possesses at once a wholly divine and a wholly human nature, is none other than the hypostasis, the divine Person, of the eternal son" (*That All Shall Be Saved* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2019], 189). Lionel Wickham maintains that Cyril of Alexandria "meant to preserve a unity of consciousness in Christ" ("The Ignorance of Christ: A Problem for the Ancient Theology," in *Christian Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity: Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, ed. L. R. Wickham and C. P. Bammel, [New York: Brill, 1993], 224). Herbert Relton praises Leontius of Byzantium for anticipating the 'modern understanding' that consciousness gives substantial existence to intellectual natures, and that "the Ego of the God-Man was the divine unlimited Logos" (*A Study in Christology* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917], 225).

It is worth noting that scholars occasionally assume the opposite as well, which is equally inaccurate: "The Council of Constantinople in 680 CE drew out the consequences of this assertion, affirming that in Christ there are two centers of consciousness" (Marilyn McCord Adams, *What Sort of Human Nature? Medieval Philosophy and the Systematics of Christology*, The Aquinas Lecture, 1999 [Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1999], 8). I agree with Adams that this is a likely implication of the position of Constantinople III, but the council itself does not include any

The fact that our theological terms do not necessarily align with the meaning they have acquired within our broader culture is a perennial issue in Christological reflection. In his 1960 book, *L'Incarnation*, Francis Ferrier wrote of the term 'person' that "It may be true that certain philosophers use these terms in the context of their philosophical systems, but when the Church uses them in her official definitions she does not necessarily use them in the specialized senses in which a particular school of philosophers habitually uses them."[42] In the sixth century, Leontius of Byzantium argued similarly: "What is at issue for us is not a matter of phrasing, but the manner in which the whole mystery of Christ exists. So we cannot make judgments or decisions here simply on the basis of this or that expression, or of certain phrases, but on the basis of its fundamental principles."[43] What we are after is the judgment at the heart of the Christological tradition, not simply its terminology. While this should be obvious to theologians, it is not always so.[44]

The Thomist Account of Personal Identity

By way of contrast, Thomas Aquinas offers a substantial account of personhood, citing Boethius's definition: "an individual substance of a rational nature."[45] Michael Gorman helpfully unpacks

discussion of consciousness. It proclaims "two natural volitions or wills in him and two natural principles of action" ("Constantinople III, 680–681" in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* vol. 1, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. [Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990], 128). Even some English translations of Aquinas have anachronistically rendered terms like *considerationem* as 'consciousness': "Christ is always engaged in the act of thinking according to His uncreated knowledge. But, since the two activities belong to Him by reason of two natures, this actual consciousness does not therefore exclude the added consciousness of created knowledge" (Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate,* trans. James V. McGlynn, S.J. [Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953], q. 20, a. 1 *ad 6*). To the contrary, Aquinas explains that "*Considerationem* signifies the act of the intellect in considering the truth about something" (*ST* II-II, q. 52, a. 4 *resp.*). See Roy J. Deferrari, Inviolata M. Barry, and Ignatius McGuiness, *A Lexicon of Saint Thomas Aquinas Based on the Summa Theologica and Selected Passages of His Other Works* (Baltimore, MD: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), s.v. 'consideratio' (p. 216).

42 Francis Ferrier, *What Is the Incarnation?,* trans. Edward Sillem (NY: Hawthorn Books, 1962), 78.

43 *Deprehensio et Triumphus super Nestorianos* 42 (PG 86:1380 B). Translation from Brian Daley, "'A Richer Union': Leontius of Byzantium and the Relationship of Human and Divine in Christ," *Studia Patristica* 24 (1993): 246.

44 For examples of theologians who have made note of this problem in relation to personhood, see Joseph Pohle, *The Divine Trinity: A Dogmatic Treatise* (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1911), 224–27; Francis Ferrier, *What Is the Incarnation?,* trans. Edward Sillem (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1962), 78; C. J. F. Williams, "A Programme for Christology," *Religious Studies* 3 (1968): 513–24 at 517; Richard Sturch, *The Word and the Christ: An Essay in Analytic Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 269–74; Gilles Mongeau, "The Human and Divine Knowing of the Incarnate Word," *The Josephinum Journal of Theology* 12 (2005): 34; Timothy Pawl, *In Defense of Conciliar Christology: A Philosophical Essay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 218ff; Trevor Hart, *In Him Was Life: The Person and Work of Christ* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 98–99. Despite their efforts, the reflexive deployment of a Lockean concept of personhood remains an influential and widespread issue in contemporary Christological reflection.

45 Scott M. Williams has recently argued that, while Aquinas did cite Boethius, he did not accept his definition on its own terms, but interpreted it in line with later interpreters who criticized Boethius's approach, especially Gilbert of Poitiers, William of Auxerre and Richard of St. Victor ("Persons in Patristic and Medieval Christian Theology," in *Persons: A History,* ed. Antonia LoLordo [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019], 52–84, at 66). Joseph W. Koterski also argues that Aquinas finds the Boethian definition lacking and that he corrects it in *ST* III, q. 16, a. 2 *ad 2* ("Boethius and the Theological Origins of the Concept of Person," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 78 [2004]: 203-224).

Aquinas's understanding of substance follows: "substances are all *individuals*; they all *subsist* [meaning they exist through themselves and not in another]; they all *stand under* non-subsisting beings [such as accidents];[46] [and] they are all *unified* [unlike a pile of sand, they are just one thing]."[47] 'Person' adds to this concept of substance a determinate nature: 'rational'.[48] A substance with a rational nature has dominion over their actions, not simply acting like others, but acting for themselves, and this is why they have a special name over other substances: person.[49] Aquinas's approach, therefore, denies Locke's distinction between substance, man, and person. The 'man' is the same as the 'person' for a realist because consciousness is conceived of as a power of the substance and thus accidental to it. A substantial account of personhood, which grounds both synchronic individuation and diachronic identity, cannot be reduced to accidents.[50] If we are only discussing our ideas or 'naming' of things, then we can parse out such accidental features and make them constitutive of our concepts, but that will only *replace* our understanding of things themselves if we are skeptical about knowledge of essences, which we have good reason not to be.[51] As Henry Felton (1679–1740), an early critic of Locke, noted, we may distinguish between the idea of soul, man, and person in our minds, but they are not separate in things themselves.[52] Delimiting our understanding of the human person to a concept of consciousness is tremendously reductive,[53]

However, it seems that Michael Gorman is right to say that, *pace* Koterski, "in this place (and others) Aquinas means to explicate Boethius's meaning rather than correct it" (*Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* [Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017], 36). Whether Aquinas's explication is indebted to those interpreters highlighted by Williams is hard to say, though Aquinas's emphasis on subsistence points in this direction.

[46] Aristotle distinguished between essential and accidental properties of a substance. Accidents include quantity, quality, relation, habitus, time, location, situation, action, and passion. *Aristotle: Categories and De Interpretatione*, ed. and trans. Ackrill, J. L. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 1b25–2a4. See Aquinas's discussion in *ST* I-II, q. 49, a. 2.

[47] Gorman, *Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 16. Aquinas notes that the designation of *individual* signifies that this is a first substance, not a second substance, the latter of which means something like 'nature' in Aristotle's usage (*ST* I, q. 29, a. 1 *ad 2*). Cf. Koterski, "Concept of Person," 203-224.

[48] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia,* in *Quaestiones Disputatae,* vol. 2 (Marietti edition, 1949), q. 9, a. 1 *resp.*

[49] *ST,* I, q. 29, a. 1 *resp.*

[50] This gives us good reason to affirm, for example, that a dementia patient is the same person they were before.

[51] See, e.g., Etienne Gilson, *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge*, trans. Mark A. Wauck (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983 [1939]).

[52] Henry Felton, *The Resurrection of the same Numerical Body, and its Reunion to the same Soul; Asserted in a Sermon preached before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's on Easter-Monday, 1725. In which Mr. Lock's Notions of Personality and Identity are confuted. And the Author of the Naked Gospel is answered* (1725), 67. See Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de potentia,* q. 9, a. 2 *ad 2*. This is not to say that a person is ontologically identical with their soul, which is hylomorphically distinguished as the formal cause of their substantial existence. But neither is the person separable from their soul in reality.

[53] "The problem is that, ontologically speaking, any process of human consciousness—while it truly exists or has being—cannot be said to be all that a person is, for it is only an 'accidental' characteristic of a substantial human being, albeit a quite important characteristic" (White, *Incarnate Lord*, 42).

something of which Locke was well aware.[54] Personhood is not simply one of various ideas we can apply to a substance in terms of its psychological powers. Rather, it signifies a particular substance "as it is in its completeness (*in suo complemento*):"[55] it refers to a subject of active existence in its entirety.[56] That is not to say that human subjectivity is therefore unimportant to Aquinas,[57] but it is insufficient to account fully for the nature of personhood.[58]

In the *tertia pars,* Aquinas writes that "to the hypostasis alone are attributed the operations and the natural properties, and whatever belongs to the nature in the concrete [*in concreto*]."[59] The person is not reducible to the operations of its nature. This is why the Christian tradition is able coherently to attribute two wills to Christ, why Aquinas attributes two 'knowledges,' and why theologians such as Bernard Lonergan extrapolate from that to two consciousnesses.[60] Insofar as these are properties of the natures, they are not *constitutive* of the hypostasis, but are *attributed* to it,

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[54] Recall that Locke limits the concept by distinguishing it from the man and soul—meaning that he recognizes that his new conception of personhood is not sufficient to account for a human in its entirety. Also note that it grounds only diachronic identity and thus assumes synchronic individuation by some other means (namely, existence).

[55] *ST* III, q. 2, a. 3 *ad 2*. "Hence the suppositum is taken to be a whole which has the nature as its formal part to perfect it" (*ST* III, q. 2, a. 2 *resp.*).

[56] See *ST* III, q. 2, a. 2. Aquinas notes that *esse* cannot be recognized without a corresponding suppositum (and vice versa). "Now if there were two supposita in Christ, then each suppositum would have its own principle of being. And thus there would be a two-fold being in Christ simply" (Thomas Aquinas, *De unione Verbi incarnati,* trans. Roger W. Nutt [Leuven: Peeters, 2015]*,* a. 4 *resp.*).

[57] It is often assumed that the 'turn to the subject' is a distinctly modern development beginning with Descartes, and that pre-modern thinkers fail to grasp that human minds are self-knowing. In reality, Aquinas had a sophisticated theory of human self-knowledge and a robust conception of the human person as a self-aware agent. See Therese Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Alain de Libera, "When did the Modern Subject Emerge?" *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 82 [2008]: 181–220.

[58] Jean Galot, without discussing Locke, argues that, because it is through consciousness that we perceive ourselves as persons, it is tempting to confuse our perception of personhood with personhood itself. "The person is the subject and object of consciousness, but he is not consciousness itself. Becoming conscious of oneself is an activity which, although emanating from the person and redirected to the person, belongs to the realm of nature" (*La Personne du Christ* [Duculot, 1969]. English Translation: *The person of Christ. A Theological Insight,* trans. M. Angeline Bouchard [Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1981], 45).

[59] *ST* III, q. 2, a. 3 *resp*. Note that Aquinas uses 'concrete' here not in the typical contemporary sense (wherein 'concrete' denotes something not abstract), but in the scholastic sense (wherein concrete terms refer to the person of Christ, while abstract terms refer to one of the natures). In another example of the latter usage, Aquinas writes "Although human nature was not assumed in the concrete [*in concreto*], as if the suppositum were presupposed to the assumption, nevertheless it is assumed in an individual, since it is assumed so as to be in an individual" (*ST* III.4.4 *ad 3*). See extended discussion in Pawl, *Conciliar Christology*, 34–38.

[60] "We shall then conclude that Christ is one subject, ontologically of two natures and psychologically of two consciousnesses" (Bernard Lonergan, *The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ*, trans. Michael G. Shields, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, vol. 7 [London: University of Toronto Press, 2002], 7). See also, e.g., Jean Galot, *La Conscience de Jésus* (Paris: Lethielleux, 1971). Andrew Ter Ern Loke critiques two-consciousness models of the incarnation on the grounds that they result in Nestorianism. Without defending his conflation of consciousness with personhood, he states simply that "there are good grounds for agreeing with scholars who think that each discrete range of consciousness would be a person" (Andrew Ter Ern Loke, *A Kryptic Model of the Incarnation* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014], 49). This assumption plays an outsized role in the overall logic of his proposal. It is also the basis of his critique of Simon Gaine (Loke, "*Did the Saviour See the Father? Christ, Salvation and the Vision of God.* By Simon Francis Gaine," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 68 [April 2017]: 465–468).

through the communication of idioms. And, therefore, "the human nature in Christ," writes Aquinas, "cannot be called a hypostasis or suppositum . . . but the complete being with which it concurs is said to be a hypostasis or suppositum."[61] In order to grasp the central judgment inscribed in classical accounts of Christ's personhood—that is, the affirmation of the substantial, personal presence of God in Christ—we cannot reduce the predicate in view to a power of one or both natures, because it would render the union accidental.[62]

In fact, the mistake of many who have rejected the Chalcedonian approach is to assume that the fathers were interested in discussing the action of two natures, whereas what is in view is the assumption of a human nature by a divine person. Aquinas notes in an objection that "to act befits a person, not a nature [*agere convenit personae, non naturae*]," so that while he is clear that "the principle of the assumption belongs to the divine nature itself," he also maintains that "the term of the assumption belongs not to the Nature in itself, but by reason of the Person."[63] The divine nature is, of course, inseparable from the divine person, no less so in the Incarnation than from all eternity,[64] but that does not mean that Christology is about parsing out which bits of Jesus' appearance, words, or actions are the result of his divine 'nature' and which are from his humanity. Rather, Chalcedonian Christology preserves the ancient Jewish confession of the invisibility of God: "no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20; cf. 1 Tm 6:16, Jn 1:18), which means that the incarnation is not about transforming the divine nature to make it available to our senses.[65] Every*thing* we perceive in Christ is created and human,[66] but it is a human nature taken up and transformed by the active existence of the divine person of the Word. As Rowan Williams writes, this is

> an act of being which 'enacts' its personal distinctiveness by comprehensively shaping the finite actions of a human subject in such a way that the real and concrete distinctiveness

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[61] *ST* III, q. 2, a. 3 *ad 2.*

[62] So White argues: "'Jesus is one with God/the Logos only insofar as he is remarkably conscious of God' can readily be interpreted as 'Jesus is a subject distinct from God/the Logos with whom he is united in virtue of his consciousness of God/the Logos.' The second idea follows logically from the first once we realistically concede that a human being is not his or her consciousness, but is an entity who possesses human consciousness" (White, *Incarnate Lord,* 112).

[63] *ST* III, q. 3, a. 2 *resp.*

[64] "Although in God Nature and Person are not really distinct, yet they have distinct meanings, as was said above, inasmuch as person signifies after the manner of something subsisting [*per modum subsistentis*]. And because human nature is united to the Word, so that the Word subsists in it, and not so that His Nature receives therefrom any addition or change, it follows that the union of human nature to the Word of God took place in the person, and not in the nature" (*ST* III, q. 2, a. 2 *ad 1*).

[65] Ian McFarland puts this in stark terms: "although the one *whom* we see in Jesus is none other than the Son of God, *what* we see in Jesus is simply and exhaustively human flesh and blood" (*The Word Made Flesh: A Theology of the Incarnation* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019], 8).

[66] As Aquinas notes elsewhere, "no created likeness is sufficient to represent the Divine essence" (*ST* I, q. 56, a. 3 *resp.*).

of that subject cannot be spoken of without reference to the Word. Finite agency becomes a real communication of more than it is (abstractly considered) in itself.[67]

Unity at the level of *hypostasis* and act of being are both far grander claims than can be grasped by the concept of consciousness. The transcendent mystery of the divine hypostasis, constituted through subsistent relations, giving a specificity to the eternal act of being of the Word (proceeding from the Father in the eternal unity of the triune Godhead), hypostatically united to a human nature in the incarnation, is otherwise reduced to a strikingly mundane conception of a pre-cognitive awareness of mental acts.

In the context of Christology, it may be that 'person' is not always the most helpful term. Aquinas notes that subsistence in a rational nature is of high dignity, and that the divine nature exceeds all others. Therefore, "the name *person* pre-eminently belongs [*maxime competit*] to God," though it applies to God in a more excellent way than to creatures.[68] In particular, in God the name *person* signifies a relation, as Aquinas understands the three divine persons as subsistent relations of origin.[69] In creatures, by contrast, without denying relationality as integral to personhood, *person* signifies subsistence absolutely.[70] In other words, we might say that in God, *person* signifies the subsistence of a relation, while in humans, *person* signifies (relational) subsistence. Aquinas is aware that, in certain contexts, the term 'person' causes confusion because it refers to a substance by reference to the intellectual powers of its nature. For this reason, he often prefers the term supposit (*suppositum*), which is a more general term that signifies an individual substance existing in itself.[71] This term is useful because it refers to a subsistent individual without reference to rationality, which makes it more easily distinguishable from 'nature'. "Hence the suppositum is taken to be a whole which has the nature as its formal part to perfect it; and consequently in such as are composed of matter and form the nature is not predicated of the suppositum, for we do not say that this man is his manhood."[72] In a

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[67] Rowan Williams, *Christ the Heart of Creation* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 26.

[68] *ST* I, q. 29, a. 3 *ad 2*. See *ST* I, q. 13, a. 2.

[69] So, Aquinas maintains that, in a sense, *person* (when applied to God) "signifies relation directly (*in recto*), and the essence indirectly (*in obliquo*); not, however, the relation as such, but as expressed by way of a hypostasis." See detailed discussion about the roles of 'relation' and 'origin' in this account, as well as the connection between this understanding and the Boethian definition, in Deryck Chalenor Barson, *A Divine Person in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (PhD Diss.: Westminster Theological Seminary, 2019).

[70] Aquinas notes in an objection, which he upholds, that "person in men and angels does not signify relation, but something absolute" (*ST* I, q. 29, a. 4 *obj. 4*).

[71] *ST* III, q. 2, a. 2 *resp.*

[72] *ST* III, q. 2, a. 2 *resp.* This is so because there is much more to this man than his manhood (i.e., his rational animality), including accidents (whiteness, tallness, etc.) and designated matter (the particular matter that makes up his body). This is not the case in God, however, because his supposit and nature are not truly distinct (there is nothing more to God than his divinity): so we *could* say that God the Son is his divinity, *as it is received from the Father*.

contemporary context, it may well be that *supposit* is a better Christological term, at least pedagogically, because it is free from the associations with consciousness that modernity has bequeathed to personhood.

Thinking of personhood in terms of consciousness leads us to think of God and humanity in a competitive paradigm and encourages us to conceive of the unity of Christ by way of the addition of predicates, as if divinity plus humanity *adds up* to something.[73] By placing divinity and humanity on the same plane, it sets up a quantitative paradigm between them where elements of one can be added to elements the other. There is an Apollinarian caste to this,[74] where we look to replace a feature of Jesus' humanity with a feature of his 'divinity': in this case not necessarily the whole mind, but the consciousness. This goes hand in hand with a conception of the incarnation as a divine nature being united with the human supposit of Jesus. In this way, Jesus' 'divinity' is accounted for by the addition of certain divine predicates to a pre-existing human person. Conceiving of personhood in terms of consciousness led Schweitzer et al. to understand classical Christology as a form of Nestorianism that rendered Christ a ghostly ahistorical figure, a schizophrenically divided jumble of divinity and humanity, far removed from the first-century Jewish man named Jesus of Nazareth. It was this approach they felt compelled to abandon.

Contrary to this whole picture, Aquinas argues that there is no human 'person' in Christ, but that his human nature is hypostatically united to the divine person of the 'Word'. It is not personhood itself that his humanity lacks, but a person *other than the Word*.[75] In other words, there is no finite act of being in virtue of which Christ is who he is, but the act of being of the Word is the sole ground of Jesus of Nazareth's active agency.[76] While the hypostatic union brings about, by the work of the Spirit, certain perfections of Jesus' human nature,[77] it in no way involves the

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[73] This could only be the case if there were a quantitative difference between humanity and divinity.

[74] Apollinarianism has become known as the claim that in the Incarnation the Logos replaced the human mind (νοῦς) of Jesus. See the extant fragments of Appolinarius' writings in *Appolinarius von Laodicea und seine Schule: Texte und Untersuchungen,* ed. Hans Lietzmann (Tübingen: Möhr, 1904). See cautionary comments about judging Appolinarius himself in John Behr, *The Case against Diodore and Theodore: Texts and Their Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 9–10. Cf. Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, trans. John Bowden (London: Mowbray, 1965), 329–40.

[75] To paraphrase Eric Mascall: "It does not mean that the manhood lacks a human soul, or a human will, or any other component of human nature; the 'person' which it declares to be absent is not a psychological or physical entity, but a metaphysical one . . . the human nature does not lack a person, but only a person other than the Word . . . In one sense, therefore, it is as personal as it could be, and in fact more personal . . . than any other human nature that has ever existed." E. L. Mascall, *Via Media: An Essay in Theological Synthesis* (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1956), 103.

[76] *ST* III, q. 4. a. 2 *resp.* See Corey Barnes, "Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas on Person, Hypostasis and Hypostatic Union," *The Thomist* 72 (2008): 107–46. Therefore, the human nature of Christ did not exist before it was assumed by the Word (*ScG* IV.43). Alfred J. Freddoso compares Aquinas's position on this point with Scotus and Ockham in "Human Nature, Potency, and the Incarnation," *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (1986): 27-53.

[77] *ST* III, q. 7.

addition of divine predicates to the humanity of Christ, nor the transformation of his human nature into something else.[78] Rather, as Williams articulates, it is an affirmation that the active presence of the Word "makes the humanity what it is, in the sense that it makes it to be the *way* it actively is (not in the sense that it makes it to be the *sort* of thing it is)."[79] Aquinas understands this in instrumental terms: Christ's humanity is the instrument of his divinity.[80] As a result of Aquinas's metaphysical distinction between essence and existence in creatures, he is able to attribute a single act of being (*esse*) to Christ, which just is the *esse* of the eternal Word. According to Thomas, God's essence is existence itself, while creatures are composed of essence and existence, and they receive existence by participation.[81] In Christ, the human essence is united to the eternal existence of God in a personal union with the Word—that is, the *esse* of God *as it is received from the Father*—thereby securing the unity of Christ's personhood without recourse to predicates of essence, such as consciousness.[82] This allows us to affirm that anything said of the historical Jesus is attributed to none other than the Word of God, not because divine predicates adhered to his individuated human nature, but because the Word is the sole ground of his personal identity.[83]

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[78] In his book on the work of Karl Barth, Adam Neder makes a similar point: "The flesh of Jesus Christ has not received the Word of God as one of its predicates" (Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009], 6).

[79] Williams, *Christ the Heart*, 25. In the act of creation, the divine Word made humanity to be the sort of thing it is; in the incarnation it does not corrupt the finite integrity of its creation.

[80] *ST* III, q. 19, a. 1 *resp*. Aquinas writes that "the humanity of Christ is the instrument of the Godhead—not, indeed, an inanimate instrument, which nowise acts, but is merely acted upon; but an instrument animated by a rational soul, which is so acted upon as to act" (*ST* III, q. 7, a.1 *ad 3*). Unlike an inanimate instrument (an axe, for example) Jesus' humanity is a conjoined instrument (analogous to how the body is the instrument of the soul), such that its action is not distinct from the action of the principal agent (the Word), even while it retains its proper operation through its own form (*De unione verbi,* a. 5 *ad 5; ST* III, q. 19, a. 1 *ad 2*). The operation of the human nature is subordinate to and moved by the divine operation, and it is moved in such a way that its actions remain unified under a fully human will that acts freely. This plurality of operations, each proper to its own principle, is not incompatible with the unity of the person, because "operation is an effect of the person by reason of a form or nature" (*ST* III, q. 19, a. 1 *ad 4*). And, as such, both operations concur in one action "inasmuch as one nature acts in union with the other" (*ST* III, q. 19, a. 11 *ad 5*). In other words, the action is *theandric*.

[81] On essence/*esse* composition in creatures see *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4 and discussion in John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington D. C: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 132–76. On the theme of Participation in Aquinas's thought, see esp. Andrew Davison, *Participation in God: A Study in Christian Doctrine and Metaphysics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

[82] *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2. "Now being pertains both to the nature and to the hypostasis; to the hypostasis as to that which has being—and to the nature as to that whereby it has being [*esse*]. . . Since therefore the human nature is joined to the Son of God hypostatically or personally . . . and not accidentally, it follows that no new personal being [*esse*] comes to him according to his human nature" (Ibid.). See Gorman, *Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union,* 101–25; Riches, *Ecce Homo*, 155–76; Williams, *Christ the Heart*, 26–35. For a discussion of the Trinitarian processions and missions as related to the doctrine of the Incarnation, see Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press*,* 2017).

[83] "The Word of God took to himself a complete and perfect human nature, and yet there was no human person in Christ 'with rights and responsibilities that could not be shifted on to someone else's shoulders', for all the actions Christ did as man lay on the shoulders, not of a mere man, but on the Person of the Word (cf. Matt. 16. 14-16)" (Ferrier, *Incarnation*, 83).

Conclusion

This discussion illustrates the importance of metaphysics for theological reflection by highlighting how our ideas about individuation and the knowledge of essences transform our theology.[84] If we cannot speak of things in themselves, then we will render properly ontological dogmatic judgments in terms of empirical phenomena, as Schleiermacher does.[85] In Christology, if we can no longer talk about substances and natures, then we are left with psychological descriptions of what it must have felt like to be God incarnate. Ironically, such metaphysical skepticism often leaves us with a perniciously speculative form of theology. As Eric Mascall noted in 1956:

> I am convinced that the early Church was right in seeing the problem of the Incarnation as primarily a metaphysical one. I am frankly amazed to find how often the problem of the Incarnation is taken as simply the problem of describing the mental life and consciousness of the Incarnate Lord, for this problem seems to me to be strictly insoluble. If I am asked what I conceive to be the metaphysical relation between the human and the divine in Christ, I can at least make some sort of attempt at an answer; but if I am asked to say what I believe it feels like to be God incarnate I can only reply that I have not the slightest idea and I should not expect have it.[86]

Whether or not Neo-Lockean accounts of personhood in terms of consciousness are adequate to serve as phenomenological descriptions of personal identity and provide sufficient grounds for ethics and law—something we have good reason to question[87]—we must recognize that this emphasis stems from a broader metaphysic. While discussions of consciousness expand our range of idioms for treating philosophical and theological questions, there is no reason to allow such subjective approaches to *substitute* for substantial accounts of personhood, not least in Christology. In other words, psychological, phenomenological, and historical approaches to philosophical and theological questions are, at times, valuable and appropriate, but they do not carry within themselves sufficient grounds to reject an attendant consideration of ontology. Furthermore, a substantial account of the unity of Christ provides greater space for historical approaches to Jesus

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[84] For a discussion of the role of nominalism in modern historicism, see Frederick C. Beiser, *The German Historicist Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 5–6.

[85] I am not arguing that nominalism inevitably leads to the approaches outlined here, as counterexamples in late medieval thought are readily available. Rather, I am suggesting that the overall nominalist caste of modern thought has led to a state of affairs where a dominant approach, and many people's automatic impulse, is to reject knowledge of essences and interpret personhood in terms of empirical phenomena. Nominalism, as a metaphysic that points its adherents away from asking certain metaphysical questions, thus contributes to an uncritical tendency in this direction while also concealing the fact that it does so..

[86] Mascall, *Via Media*, 118.

[87] See critical discussion in, e.g., Antony Flew, "Locke and the Problem of Personal Identity" in *Locke and Berkeley: A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. C. B. Martin and D. M. Armstrong (Garden City: Doubleday, 1968), 155–78; J. L. Mackie, *Problems from Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 155–73; Bernard Williams, "Personal Identity and Individuation" in *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 1-18.

than non-Chalcedonian Christologies based in consciousness because it protects the finite integrity of Christ's human nature and his personal unity.