

## A Theory of the Incarnation and Subsistence

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This essay puts forward a theory of how God can become man that has advantages beyond the theological goal of showing how the Incarnation can occur. This theory offers a solution to the philosophical problem of how a substantial nature can be simultaneously a kind of efficient cause and a kind of material cause of its necessary accidents. In doing so, the theory offers an account of the notion of subsistence that is genuinely philosophical, while traditional accounts can leave you suspecting that subsistence is a philosophical fifth wheel imported from theology strictly for theological purposes.

To show how a substance's causing of its necessary accidents is related to subsistence and to the Incarnation, I will present a preliminary, incomplete version of the theory of the Incarnation in Section 1. That version will give rise to difficulties. The subsequent presentation of the complete theory will show how those difficulties are overcome by an understanding of subsistence as what allows a substance to be the efficient cause of its necessary accidents. Finally, I will raise difficulties against the theory and show how they can be overcome. The appendices contain later thoughts, which I have not yet integrated into the text, on issues discussed here.

### 1. A Preliminary Version of the Theory

At a minimum, the doctrine that Christ unites two natures in one person means this: The human actions of Christ, for example, his thoughts and decisions, are personal acts of God. Christ's acts are not just caused by God as their first cause, the way the acts of any created person are caused by God. Christ's acts are caused by God without the intermediary of a created person as their secondary cause. The doctrine of the Incarnation is not occasionalism. Christ's acts emerge from operative potencies belonging to a created substance; there is genuine causality in Christ the human being. But that causality does not belong to a created person, since there is no created person in Christ. Christ's acts are direct acts of God, and since acts of intellect and will are what are meant by "personal" acts, Christ's acts are direct personal acts of God. When Christ looks at us, speaks to us and touches us, it is God alone looking at us, speaking to us and touching us; God alone is the person from whom these acts come. To gain some understanding of the Incarnation, therefore, I propose to examine the relation between human acts and human personality.

Actions are of the concrete existent (the suppositum), not just of the concrete existent's powers. Peter's thoughts and decisions are acts of Peter, not just acts of Peter's intellect and will. "Of," here, expresses efficient causality. Peter is the principal efficient cause of his thoughts and decisions; Peter's intellect and will are, in effect, instrumental causes through which Peter produces these acts.

A necessary condition for Peter's being the cause of his thoughts and decisions is that he be the cause of his intellect and will. Peter's powers, which are accidents, somehow emerge from Peter's humanity, his substance. Peter is able to produce thoughts and decisions because his substance has the powers of intellect and will as necessary accidents, "properties," in the technical sense of the term. These accidents belong to Peter's substance necessarily because his substance causes the existence of these accidents. Consequently, it is Peter, rather than Peter's intellect and will, who thinks and decides.

But what if God created an individual human substance and miraculously prevented the

substance from producing its powers? How could God do this? Perhaps simply by His directly causing the powers to exist in the substance, instead of causing the powers to exist through the secondary causality of the created substance. Let us call the individual human substance in whom these would accidents exist "J." If J does not cause the existence of his powers, the acts of those powers are not of J, in the sense that "of" has when we say that actions are of the concrete existent. In that sense, J's thoughts and decisions are acts of God. God is the concrete existent acting through J's intellect and will, because there is no created secondary cause intermediate between God and the existence of J's intellect and will.

On the other hand, J is a complete human being. By hypothesis, J lacks none of the accidents necessary to a human being; those properties not caused by J's substance are caused by God. Nor is anything lacking in J's substance. It might appear that J's substance does not do something that created human substances normally do, because J does not cause his properties. But the action of an efficient cause is not something in the efficient cause. Action is in the effect, being the effect's relation of dependence on its cause. This principle is exemplified from the highest example of efficient causality, creation, to the lowest, transitive action. Transitive action is a change existing in the patient, not the agent, of the action. The agent, as such, does not undergo change, although it may need to undergo a change to be put into the state in which the change can emerge from it and may undergo other changes as the result of the interaction of causes. Likewise, to say a substance causes its properties is not to say the substance does anything other than be what it is; it is to say that, because the substance is what it is, its properties necessarily emerge from it.

The reason that J's substance does not cause his properties is not that J's substance is deficient. The reason is that the properties already exist; J's potency for receiving the properties is already fulfilled; there is no room left for the production of properties that would be dependent on J's substance. But it does not follow that J's substance is a useless appendage to J's accidents. J's accidents still depend on J's substance for their existence, because they need J's substance as their material cause, the subject in which they reside.

And J's substance is "useful" in a far more important sense. Since J's substance is the necessary subject for the existence of J's powers, J's substance is a subject in which personal acts of God exist; J's substance is a place where God acts personally. The acts of J's intellect and will are of God and God alone as their principal efficient cause. Therefore, J's thoughts and decisions are personal acts of God and not acts of any human person. J's acts are "of" J as of the material cause in which they have existence, but they are not "of" J as of the efficient cause from which they have existence. Thus, God uses J's substance as a necessary condition for the existence of God's own personal, though human, acts. God acts personally through human accidents, but he also acts personally through a human substance insofar as the substance is a necessary cause of the accidents.

But does God's direct causing of J's properties constitutes a sufficient union between the divine nature and J's substantial nature for there to be only one person in J. On the hypothesis presented, there are two acts of existence in J, the finite existence of J's substance and God's existence. Hence there seem to be two "concrete existents," although J's acts are acts of only of one of those concrete existents as of an efficient, and therefore personal, cause.

To the extent that I have so far presented this theory, I do not believe it sufficient to account for J being one person. For one thing, it can seem to put the union between God and man at the level of accidents, not of substance. For another thing, it is not easy to see how the basic

premise of the theory, that God causes J's properties without the secondary causality of J's substance, can be true. How does God go about willing that J's properties be efficiently caused by God alone and not also by J's substance? There has to be some difference between the case in which God wills that J's substance produce his accidents and the case in which He wills to produce them by Himself. But the difference cannot be in God, since God cannot change. Therefore the difference must be in J, that is, in J's substance or his accidents. And any such difference would prevent J from being fully human, since J would differ from other human beings in that respect.

For example, someone might want to hold that J's properties have a different relation of dependence than do the properties of other men because the term of that relation, God, is different from the term of the relation of dependence in other men. I will argue below (Section 4) that having different terms would not differentiate the natures of the relations themselves. But for the moment, assume that these relations are differentiated by their terms. If so, that would solve the problem of God having something to will in directly causing J's properties that differs from what He wills in causing the properties of other men. But that problem would be solved only by making one characteristic of J's properties differ from all other men's. J would not be fully human.

In spite of such difficulties, I believe the basic theory, with some necessary additions, can succeed. God can unite divine and human natures in one person by suspending the human substance's natural causality of its properties and by directly causing those properties Himself. The reason why it is not clear how God can replace the human causality with divine and how doing so requires there to be only one person in J is that the metaphysical conditions necessary for a substance to cause its properties are not clear. A better understanding of those conditions will fill in the blanks of this theory of the Incarnation.

First, however, a caveat about the truth that Christ is not a human person. To deny that Christ has a human personality is not to deny Him any of the perfection in human personality. So if (but only if) we define a human person as a person with a human nature, we could say Jesus is a human person. This is not as shocking as it might appear to be; it only expresses something we must believe about Jesus: He has every perfection that we have as persons, but he also has more than that, not less, since his personality is identical with the divine nature. Likewise, his divine nature has every perfection that the human intellect has, but infinitely more. The only things that belong to us as human persons that he lacks are the restrictions, the limitations, on the perfection of personality in us, not the perfection of personality itself. In this sense and only in this sense, being a divine person would not make Christ less of a human person, less human with respect to perfection that human personality contains, than we are. Whatever there is of perfection in any created mode of being exists in God without the limitations that affect that perfection in the creature. Therefore, Christ has all there is of perfection in human personality. For Him not to be a human person is not to lack any of the perfection of human personality; it is to have all of that perfection and more. (I think the importance of this point may be more psychological than theological. When we hear that Christ is not a human person, it is possible to incorrectly think of this individual human being, Jesus, as some sort of freak, at least as compared to a "normal" human being. For when we encounter a normal human being, we encounter a human person because we encounter, not just an individual of human nature, but a person with human nature. But an encounter with Christ is in every way like an encounter with other human persons as far as the perfection of being a person with a human nature is concerned.)

## 2. The Problem of How Necessary Accidents Are Caused

The very idea of a substance being the cause of its properties faces a formidable difficulty. The type of causality I am speaking about is, of course, efficient causality (and whenever I speak of causality with no qualification, I will mean efficient causality). A substance is in a certain way the agent that brings its properties into existence. The qualification "in a certain way" is necessary because the substance is also "in a certain way" the receiver, the material cause, of its properties. And it seems impossible for something to be both the efficient cause and the material cause of the same effect. The reason why things require efficient causes is that passive potencies do not actualize themselves. Their actualization results from something other than themselves being in such a state that their potency cannot remain in potency while the other thing is what it is. That other thing is the efficient cause. If the efficient cause is the same thing as the material cause, the material cause both is and is not what it is. How then can a substance be both the efficient cause and the material cause of its properties?

A similar difficulty arises in the case of life, where mover and moved are the same thing. There, the problem is solved by distinguishing parts within the living thing. By means of some of its parts, the living thing causes changes in other parts. For example, nerve impulses cause contractions in muscles, and contractions in muscles cause blood to flow and bones to move. Similarly, to make any sense whatsoever out of a substance's being both the active and the receptive cause of its accidents, we must find some distinction between realities by means of which the substance can produce, on the one hand, and receive, on the other, the same accident.

Possible candidates for such distinct realities are the substance and its act of existence. Since existence is an act distinct from the substance, perhaps existence is the act through which the substance receives its accidents. I do not believe this solution is philosophically correct, however. And even if it were acceptable philosophically, it would not help us solve the theological problem of the union of two natures in one divine person.

We are investigating the theological possibility of God's miraculously suspending the normal process by which a substance's properties are caused and directly causing them Himself. If God does this, there must be some difference between what exists when He wills that a substance's properties be produced in the normal way and what exists when He causes them directly. If a substance's act of existing is that from which its accidents emerge, then God could suspend the normal way the properties are caused in one of two ways. He could give the substance a different kind of act of existing. But since differences between finite acts of existing derive from the potencies that receive them, essences, God would also have to give Christ a different kind of essence, and Christ would not be fully human. Or, God would have to refrain from giving the substance an act of existing. The difference between Christ and other human beings would be that God does not give Christ's human nature a created, limited act of existing. The divine act of existing would produce Christ's properties directly, because the divine act of existing would be the only act of existing Christ has.

Some have tried to explain the Incarnation by Christ's not having a created act of existing. But the existence exhibited by Christ on the human level is what we mean by "limited existence." And the reason for postulating a real distinction between existence and essence to begin with is to explain the kind of limited existence exhibited by Christ. The real distinction between essence and existence may not be a datum of experience, but the fact that Christ's hands, head, heart, and the hairs on his head have a limited existence is a datum of experience. Does it accomplish anything to explain that datum by existence's being limited by essence and then reject that

explanation when we need to do so for theological purposes?

The reply will be that possession of an existence distinct from God's is a condition naturally necessary for there to be a limited essence, while the Incarnation is a miracle that calls for a supernatural explanation. But if essence is distinct from existence, essence is nothing, nonbeing, without existence. If a limited essence is saved from nonbeing by union with the divine existence, how does that union come about? The essence cannot be an act that fulfills a potency in God's existence. Can God's existence be the act that fulfills the potency of essence? Essence's potency limits existence by being a capacity for existing this way and not that. That capacity cannot be fulfilled by essence's receiving only a part of the simple divine existence; essence must receive the whole divine existence. And then essence would no longer be a capacity for this mode of existence as opposed to that but for the infinite fullness of existence.

Also, if God can make a limited being exist by His own existence, a form of pantheism becomes at least a possibility. Instead of creating a universe of beings with their own acts of existing, God could create (whatever "create" would mean in this case) a universe of beings with no existence of their own, beings that exist by sharing His act of existing. If He can do that, how do we know He has not done it? On the hypothesis that Christ does not have a created act of existing, we would know it only by faith, since having a limited nature is not evidence that a being has a limited existence. (According to Aquinas, that Jesus is a divine supposit, divine person, cannot mean that there is no created existence in Christ and the divine existence takes the place of the created existence. "Divine existence cannot belong to any quiddity that is not existence itself." SCG. I, 27,2 [and see I, 22-26].)

In any case, the theory I am proposing does not require us to deny Christ a created act of existing. Therefore, this theory should be of interest to those who agree with me that the Incarnation cannot occur that way.

There are also philosophical difficulties with the idea that existence is the act by which the accidents of a substance are produced. The analogy with life led us to look for distinct realities through which a substance's accidents are produced, on the one hand, and received, on the other. (In this case "analogy" just refers to a comparison; it does not have the technical sense of a way in which words can have meaning other than univocally or equivocally.) But to say that a living thing produces change by means of a part distinct from the part by which it undergoes change is to say that the living thing produces change by the instrumentality of the producing part. The living thing itself is the principal cause; for the part acts only as a member of the living thing. The comparison with an instrumental cause, however, is inappropriate for the act of existing. The supremacy of the act of existing rules out its being comparable to a tool employed by a superior; rather, existence is comparable to the energy belonging to a principal cause as principal, that is, an energy that is not just an instrument of the principal cause but is the state of act that makes the principal cause the principal cause, the energy by which the principal cause uses, and even makes, its instruments.

By reason of the supremacy of the act of existing, any form of causality presupposes the existence of the cause. A being can be a cause only to the extent that it exists, and to cause is to bestow existence, or some condition necessary for existence, on the effect. Still, it is the existent that is the cause, properly speaking, not its act of existing. Why does one effect rather than another occur? Because its cause is what it is. Because existent A is what it is, A will produce effect B rather than some other effect. Both the essence and the existence of A are required for the production of effect B. But the existence of A contributes to the production of the B by being

the existence of the thing that is cause of B. Likewise, a part of a living thing produces a change in the thing because of what the part is.

So pointing out that properties emerge from a substance because the substance exists does not solve the problem of how the existent substance can be both efficient and material cause of its properties. Why does a substance have certain properties and not others? Because a substance of that nature produces those accidents and not others. That is, those accidents come into existence as a result of the substance's being what it is. To cause its properties, a substance must have something distinct from both its existence and its potency for its accidents by means of which it produces its accidents. What could this be? Of course, the kind of efficient causality we are looking for is only virtual efficient causality, since there is not an absolute distinction between agent (the essence that produces its properties) and patient (the essence receives its properties). But the fact that a substance's causing of its properties is virtual efficient causality does not solve the problem. Wherever there is something that is only virtually X, there must be something that is formally Y. The theory of virtual presence can only work if there is something formally present that is identical with that which is virtually present. What is it that is formally present if it is neither essence nor the act of existence? (See Appendix I for further reasons why existence cannot be the formal act by which the essence is the virtual efficient cause of its properties.)

### 3. How a Substance Can Be the Cause of its Properties

In fact, the history of the doctrine of the Incarnation contains a concept that can provide the missing element, even though that concept has never been applied, so far as I know, to the question of how a substance can cause its properties. The revelation of the Incarnation implies that there is more to being a human person than being an individual with a human nature and human existence. To express what a person is, theologians used the Greek term hypostasis and the Latin term suppositum. A person is a suppositum with a rational nature. But revelation implies that the individual nature and existence of Peter are not enough to make Peter a suppositum; something more is required. To express the additional factor revelation requires, some theologians have used the Latin verb subsistere, to subsist. Peter is a suppositum because, in addition to having an individual human nature and existence, he subsists or has subsistence.

But what is it to subsist? Theology does not have to give an account of what it is that revelation implies is necessary for the existence of a person. But that has not stopped Christian philosophers from trying to give an account of subsistence. Of course, the words "subsistence" and "subsistent" are used in many different contexts. We speak of God as subsistent being and goodness, of the human soul as subsistent, of what would hold if, per impossibile, there were a subsistent whiteness, and so on. Here I am concerned only with what subsistence can mean in the context of explaining why there is only one subsistent in Christ. In many contexts, subsistence can mean the existence of a substance. That concept of subsistence, however, could explain the Incarnation only by denying that Christ's humanity has a created act of existence. And for the reasons given above, I do not believe denying a created act of existence in Christ can help us explain either the Incarnation or how God could be the direct cause of a created nature's properties. On my view, a substance causes its properties by being what it is, since "what it is" is something with subsistence, a subsistent.

In discussing the metaphysical structure of the concrete existent, many thinkers have identified subsistence with a mode or state affecting the individual substantial nature yet distinct from both the individual nature and its act of existing. This factor would be a way the substantial

nature relates to its act of existing. Therefore, the factor could not be classified as an accidental essence. It is ontologically prior to a substance's accidents, since a substance's relation to its substantial act of existence is ontologically prior to its accidental ways of existing. In effect, subsistence would be situated "between" a substance and its act of existence; subsistence would be on the side of substance facing substance's actuation by existence, not on the side of substance facing substance's actuation by accidents.

But what would be the function of such a mode or state distinct from both essence and existence? Again, although it is not strictly necessary for theology to answer this question, their perfectly valid desire for understanding has led Christian thinkers to look for a philosophical justification for postulating a factor distinct from both the essence and existence. I do not consider any of their justifications successful as they stand, but one of the modern justifications offers the possibility of solving the problem of how a substance causes its properties. In doing so, it offers the possibility of understanding the Incarnation by God's, rather than Christ's human nature's, being the direct cause of the operative potencies through which Christ acts. In other words, understanding how a substance causes its properties can give us a philosophical justification for postulating subsistence as a factor distinct from essence and existence and at the same time an understanding of how the union of two natures in one person is possible in Christ.

A factor situated between a substance and its act of existing is exactly the kind of thing that could solve the problem of how a substance's properties are caused. If substance possessed a mode distinct from itself and from its existence, this mode could be that through which the substance is the cause of its accidents. That is, the cause of the accidents would be the subsistent, the substance with subsistence, while subsistence would be that through which the subsistent causes the accidents. Subsistence would not be the cause of the accidents in the strictest sense anymore than a part of a living would be the cause of the living thing's changes, strictly speaking. The living thing is the cause of its changes by means of its parts; likewise the subsisting substance, the substance with subsistence, is the cause of the substance's accidents by means of the subsistence.

A clearer way to express the situation would be that subsistence puts the substance in a state, a state of existence, in which the properties are able to emerge from the substance. Without that state, the properties could not emerge from the substance; with that state, they do emerge from the substance. Or we can say that subsistence is the state because of which the accidents emerge from the substance. Subsistence is the state of existence in which the substantial existence overflows, spills over, into accidental existence. And to be in this state, substance needs to possess a factor really distinct from itself and from its substantial existence. Saying that subsistence is the factor that puts substance in this state is equivalent to saying that subsistence is this state; for there is no real distinction between a substance having that factor and being in that state. (For more on the comparison between a substance's causing its accidents both materially and formally and the distinct parts in living causality, see Section 7.)

Another way of expressing this situation comes from the modern discussion of subsistence I alluded to above. You might ask whether the history of the term "subsistence" gives any justification for the way I am using it to solve the problem of properties. Granted that many others have identified a state called subsistence distinct from both essence and existence, do any of the other descriptions of this state make it eligible for the job I am giving it? Not expressly, but unless another description of subsistence contradicts, directly or by logical implication, the description I have given, the other descriptions do in fact make subsistence eligible to solve the

problem of properties. And one recent description of subsistence even uses language that can express how subsistence can solve that problem.

In the fifth edition of The Degrees of Knowledge, Jacques Maritain proposed a new explanation of subsistence as a distinct factor in the concrete existent. He notes that there is a distinction between exercised act and received act. For example, since accidents do not exist in themselves, they receive existence only by being ways in which a substance, which does exist in itself, has an existence over and above its being a substance. This difference can be expressed by saying that accidents receive existence without exercising it; it is the substance that exercises the existence that its accidents receive.

But Maritain extends the distinction between received act and exercised act to substantial existence as well. He says that essence is a not principle quod, a principle that exists, but a principle quo, a principle by which an existent is what it is. Of course, in denying that essence is that which exists, Maritain is not denying the reality of essence; he is saying that essence only has existence as the principle by which that which exists is what it is. And that is why Maritain applies the distinction between received act and exercised act to the existence of a substantial nature. Essence can be said to receive existence, because, when the thing that essence makes to be what it is exists, essence exists. But essence cannot be said to exercise existence, because essence is not that which exists but only a principle by which something exists. Maritain concludes that in order for there to be a quod that exists, essence must be put into a state in which it exercises existence, not just receives existence. And since essence cannot exercise existence on its own, something really distinct from the essence must put it into the state such that, when it receives existence, it also exercises existence. That which exists, the quod, is the union of essence and the factor putting the essence into the state of exercising existence. The state of exercising existence is subsistence. In the Incarnation, Christ's human nature receives existence but does not exercise it, because God does not give the nature a created subsistence. As a result, there is no human suppositum in Christ.

I do not find Maritain's reason for saying that essence is a principle quo, not a quod, satisfactory.<sup>1</sup> But the inadequacy of one argument for distinguishing the reception of existence from the exercise of existence does not mean the distinction is false. Another way to approach the distinction is this. If being the efficient cause of its properties requires a substance to possess a mode distinct from the substance and its existence, the substance's causing of its properties requires something more than its mere reception of existence. Yet this something more cannot itself be an accident since it precedes the existence of the necessary accidents. Nor can it be an additional substantial characteristic, a feature or note added to the definition expressing the essence; such a note would change the nature of the substance. The only possibility left is that this something more is a way in which the substance relates to its existence, a way of relating to existence distinct from the reception of existence.

Maritain relies on "exercise"'s connotation of efficient causality to contrast essence's exercise of existence with its reception of existence, a kind of material causality. In that sense, the "exercise" of existence seems a very apt way to describe a way of relating to existence that enables a substance to be the efficient cause of its properties. Subsistence is the state of not just being actualized by existence but of being a quasi-"agent" of the existence. Subsistence makes the essence the quasi-agent of existence not in the sense of making the essence a quasi-efficient cause of itself but in the sense that subsistence makes the existence that the individual nature has passively received the quasi-energy of the essence, the quasi-energy by which the essence acts

(first virtually, then formally) to accomplish goals. The best way to understand the virtual efficient causality is to identify it with the exercise of existence as something really distinct both from existence itself and from the essence's reception of existence (the essence's being actuated by existence as a passive potency is actuated); the exercise of existence is what the virtual efficient causality of the properties is formally.

Using "exercise"'s connotation of efficient causality, however, to describe the contrast between essence's receiving existence and causing its properties could seem inappropriate because a substance is not the efficient cause of all its accidents even though it exercises existence for all of them. So "exercise of existence" does not necessarily imply efficient as opposed to material causality. But sometimes "the order of exercise" in the sense of efficient causality is contrasted, not to material causality, as in the case of accident's receiving existence, but to "the order of specification." An essence is cause of its properties in the order of specification because the nature of the essence determines the nature of the accidents that it must, of necessity, possess. Determining their nature, however, is not the same as giving them existence. Specification is "extrinsic" formal causality; the giving of existence is efficient causality (where the qualifier "extrinsic" would be redundant, since all efficient causes are extrinsic to their effects). Whenever an essence is a cause of its accidents in the order of specification, it is also a cause of them in the order of exercise, where "exercise" connotes efficient as opposed to formal causality. (But here connoting efficient rather than formal causality is the same as connoting essence's efficient causality rather than its material causality of its properties.)

But the reason essence is the specifying cause of its properties is identical to the reason it is the material cause of its existence. It is a material cause for existence by being this potentiality for existing, this way of having existence, as opposed to that, and it is a specifying cause for this set of properties as opposed to that by being this potentiality for existing, this way of having existence, as opposed to that. Since essence's formal causing of its properties in the order of specification is in contrast to its efficient causing of properties in the order of exercise and since essence is specifying cause of its properties by being material cause of its existence, it is entirely appropriate to use "exercise"'s connotation of efficient causality to describe the relation to existence that allows essence to be an efficient cause in contrast to its receiving existence, which allows it to be a specifying/material cause. Opposing essence's role as cause of its properties in the order of exercise to its role as their cause in the order of specification amounts to opposing essence's role as a cause of properties in the order of exercise to essence's role as material cause relative to its existence. So it is entirely appropriate to describe the state that (formally) makes essence the (virtual) efficient cause of its properties the exercise of existence in contrast to the reception of existence.

In using "exercise"'s connotation of efficient causality to describe the state of existence that enables a substance to be an efficient cause, we are describing the state from its effect. For to call something a cause is to describe it by its effect's relation to it, specifically, by the fact that something has a relation of dependence on it. Here, the effect is the existence of the substance's properties, and so this state enables the substance to exercise the existence of its properties, and those properties include the powers and acts through which a substance is an efficient cause, a cause in the order of exercise, in the formal (as opposed to virtual) sense. By analogy (here in the technical sense) of attribution, we can name the state of existence that has that effect the state of exercising substantial existence. (For more on what it means to say an essence exercises

existence, see Appendix III.)

Of course, the problem with justifying the distinction of subsistence from both essence and existence that Maritain was trying to solve was not anything new. His was a creative attempt to improve on the previous unsatisfactory justifications.<sup>2</sup> I submit that on my interpretation, we have a more plausible reason than has previously been offered for postulating a way relating to existence distinct from a nature's reception of existence. An individual essence is a passive potency relative to existence; but the individual essence is analogous to an operative potency relative to its properties. The analogy between essence and operative potency can help us see how a state other than the reception of existence enables a substance to cause its properties.

Any operative potency that is not always producing an effect is also a passive potency relative to other causes that move it from not being in a state in which its effects emerge from it to being in that state. If a faculty was already in a sufficient state of act for its effects to emerge from it, the effects would already be emerging (assuming any external conditions needed be the effects are also present). If a faculty is not now producing its act, it is not now in the state from which its act emerges. By this act, I mean effect produced by the operative potency; that effect is distinct from the state of the operative potency — also a state of act, of course — from which the effect emerges. The principle of efficient causality requires that a faculty not move itself from the state in which its effect does not emerge to the state in which its effect does emerge; otherwise the faculty would move itself from potency to act. The faculty must be put into the state from which its effect emerges by another cause. For example, the faculty of sight is acted on by light in order to produce an act of vision, the agent intellect activates the potential intellect, the intellectual grasp of an object elicits an act from the will, and the will is acted on by grace in order to produce a meritorious choice.

Consequently, there are four things to consider in a faculty's production of its act: the faculty's existence, the faculty's nature (what it is), the act it acquires in addition to its existence in order for its effect to emerge, and the effect. As a state of exercising existence that is distinct from both a substance's existence and the substance, subsistence is analogous to the third element in this scheme and the substance itself is analogous to the second element, the faculty itself. In addition to existing and being what it is, a substance must have subsistence in order for its properties to emerge from it. (For more on a substance's need for a factor in addition to essence and existence to be an efficient cause, see Appendices I and IV.)

We need some form of real distinction in order for a substance to be both a kind of efficient cause and a kind of material cause of its properties, and the comparison of substance with operative potency helps us see how a way of relating to existence brought about by a factor distinct from essence and existence fills that need. Just as an operative potency can require an actualization other than its existence in order to produce its effect, a substance may require to be in a state other than the reception of existence in order to cause its properties. Furthermore, a distinct factor enabling a substance to cause its properties cannot itself be an accident; so it must be something on the side of substantial existence, not accidental existence. What many theorists have called "subsistence" is exactly such a factor.

And there is one more point of contact between my view of subsistence as a distinct factor and some traditional theories. Where matter, the principle of individuation, bestows incommunicability in the order of essence, subsistence has sometimes been said to bestow incommunicability in the order of existence. That is, subsistence would make it impossible for an essence to share an existence belonging to another essence. The absence of subsistence in Christ's

human nature would allow His human nature to communicate with the divine existence, thus allowing divine existence to share a nature that also has a finite existence.

Theologically, this view of subsistence could be put forward as an unproven hypothesis, just as mine could be, since we do not have to demonstrate theological hypotheses. But is there any evidence for it? Is there any philosophical reason for believing a form of incommunicability or uniqueness other than that caused by matter is needed? Perhaps the most important kind of evidence comes from our experience of ourselves as persons. We associate a kind of uniqueness with being a person that seems opposed to the kind explained by matter. Matter accounts for numerical individuation. Numerical individuation is the minimal possible form of uniqueness because it leaves the individuals the same in all respects other than being numerically distinct. For example, the individuals referred to in sayings like "two peas in a pod" or "chips off the same block," are numerically distinct, yet the point of these sayings is that the numerically distinct individuals are not distinct but the same in all important respects. That kind of uniqueness, material uniqueness, does not seem adequate to account for the unique value we attribute to every person. We do not think our own value as persons is constituted by being another pea in the pod or chip off the block. On the contrary, we think that every person has a unique value despite the fact that, as material individuals, we share so many characteristics in common.

Our experience of the unique value of persons derives from the person's capacities for possessing the perfection of all being in knowledge, for self-awareness, and for free acts. Each element of our experience of personal uniqueness exceeds the capacity of matter and of material forms; knowledge, self-awareness, and free choice are immaterial acts. Therefore material incommunicability, although a necessary condition for personal uniqueness in persons who belong to one species,<sup>3</sup> does not account for the unique value we associate with persons.

But if matter causes incommunicability relative to essence, because matter is potency relative to essence, then essence itself, an immaterial essence in the case of persons, should cause incommunicability relative to existence, because essence is potency relative to existence. So no factor in addition to substantial essence would seem to be required as the cause of incommunicability relative to the act of all acts. Is there any philosophical evidence that a ground of incommunicability in respect to existence other than essence itself is needed? The acts of knowledge, self-awareness, and choice that express our personal uniqueness emerge from the properties of a person's substance. If to be the cause of its properties the substance needs a factor distinct from existence or essence, it needs a factor distinct from existence or essence to ground the incommunicability we associate with the value of persons. Subsistence in my sense is the ground of the data on which our belief in personal, and opposed to material, uniqueness is based. (For more on subsistence as a necessary ground, in addition to essence and matter, of incommunicability with respect to existence, see Appendix III.)

Many questions remain about the relation of subsistence in my sense to such problems as the suppositum, the person, and the Trinity. The best way to answer those questions is in the course of applying this analysis of subsistence and how properties are caused to the Incarnation.

#### 4. How the Incarnation Can Occur

The Incarnation could take place by God's (1) not giving Christ's human nature the factor necessary for it to cause its properties and (2) Himself causing the properties to exist in Christ's nature with no created intermediary (virtual) cause at the substantial level. Christ would have a complete human substantial nature with a full complement of human accidents; He would be a true man. By denying causality to the substance, we do not change the substance one iota. The

causation of the accidents resides in the accidents, not the substance; it is their relation of dependence on and emergence from an efficient cause.

That relation has a different term in Christ than it does in us. In Christ, the relation terminates in the divine nature; in us, it terminates in human nature and existence. But there is no reason to think that the nature of the term of a relation, beyond being what it must be in order to be the term of this relation, enters into the nature of the relation. (My Causal Realism, p 326, shows that agents of different natures can produce effects of the same nature.) Four is related to two by the relation of double whether the things so related are apples, oranges, angels, or divine relations. To be the term of a property's relation of dependence on an efficient cause, something must possess sufficient actuality that, in its presence, the potency of a substance for this property cannot remain unfulfilled. But a property, and its relation of dependence, is indifferent to whether that actuality is finite or infinite.

And Christ would be true God. Where the human being Christ exists, a person with a human nature exists; and that person is a divine person, God. When we encounter Christ, we are encountering a concrete existent performing personal acts of thinking, willing, and communicating through the powers residing in a human nature and so a person performing those acts in a human nature. And the only personal source of those acts is God. So, when we encounter Christ, we encounter a person, and that person is God. Only one concrete existent performs those personal acts, and that concrete existent is God. To put it another way, where Christ exists, a person with a human nature, human operative potencies and human acts exists. But the person that exists and acts in Christ's human nature is God, since God causes these personal acts without the intermediary of a created person. When Christ looks at us, speaks to us and touches us, a person is looking at us, speaking to us and touching us, and that person is God. It is God looking at us, speaking to us and touching us since Christ's individual human nature is not the efficient cause of these acts; only God is. When any other human being looks at us, speaks to us or touches us, it is not God doing these things. God is the primary cause of any other person's acts. But he causes those personal acts through creatures that not only produce their own powers and acts as a secondary principal causes but, when they are free causes, have a primary causal responsibility, through the ability of their wills to freely refrain from acting, for whether or not those acts are the ones God wanted to create in them. (For more on the difference between Christ's acts and other created acts, see Appendix II).

The person that exists when Christ exists is not a human person, since the human substance lacks a way of relating to its substantial existence necessary for there to be a human person. For if subsistence makes a substance the cause of its actions and actiones sunt suppositorum, subsistence makes the substance a suppositum. In other words, Christ's individual human nature lacks the way of being a concrete existent required for it to be the agent that acts through its properties.

But is this what the doctrine of the Incarnation means by a "suppositum"? The suppositum is the concrete existent, and is not Christ's humanity a concrete existent, on the current hypothesis, since it is an individual nature that receives its own substantial act of existing? In some sense of the phrase, Christ's humanity and its act of existing do constitute a "concrete existent." But the current hypothesis is also that the man Christ lacks a way of relating to His substantial existence that is ordinarily part of what it is for a substance to be a concrete existent. The man Christ is not a complete concrete existent in the strictest sense of that phrase; Christ's existing humanity lacks the fullness of the what it means to be a concrete existent. This

fact alone is sufficient to place the burden of proof on anyone making the historical claim that "suppositum" in the doctrine of the Incarnation does not require that a person have subsistence in my sense, as if the absence of that subsistence would not mean the absence of a human suppositum. In going to the trouble of asserting the strong claim of only one suppositum in Christ, surely the Church means to use "suppositum" in the strongest and most inclusive sense, the fullest sense, not in some weaker or less inclusive sense. So if something required by the stronger sense is missing, a human suppositum in the sense of the doctrine of the Incarnation is missing.

And there is more. On my view, subsistence is not just something ordinarily included in what we call a concrete existent. Subsistence is something naturally necessary for the existence of a substance, since a substance cannot exist without its necessary accidents. The only way for a substance to have existence without having subsistence would be by the miraculous action of God. Therefore, it follows from my theory that subsistence is naturally necessary for an individual human nature to be a concrete existent, a suppositum. In denying that Christ is a human suppositum could the doctrine of the Incarnation mean anything less by "suppositum" than whatever a suppositum is in its natural, as opposed to miraculous, occurrence, including whatever is naturally necessary for there to be a suppositum? (And since the doctrine was formulated well before the question of essence's distinction from its existence arose, it is unlikely in the extreme that the framers of the doctrine were concerned about whether a miraculous union of Christ's humanity with an act of existing could be considered a concrete existent in some weaker sense than the sense that includes whatever is naturally necessary for a concrete existent.)

One more thing. Not only is subsistence in my sense naturally necessary for the existence of a substance, but subsistence in my sense is necessary for the existence of a substance under all circumstances. A substance cannot exist without its necessary accidents.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, when God miraculously gives a substance existence without giving it a human subsistence, subsistence still must be present, since the divine act of existence must be present to cause those accidents without which the substance cannot exist. And the divine act of existence is identical with the divine subsistence, because perfections that are distinct in creatures are identical in God. (I will discuss the question of predicating subsistence in this sense of God in Section 6 and Appendix V.) In other words, subsistence in my sense is always and everywhere necessary for the occurrence of a concrete existent, even in the weaker sense of that phrase in which Christ's created nature and existence, considered in abstraction from their union with God, constitute a concrete existent. For when a created subsistence is lacking, a divine subsistence must take its place. In Christ, therefore, a concrete existent in the weak sense, a limited essence united with a limited act of existing, is able to occur only because it subsists through divine subsistence. So even if the doctrine of the Incarnation takes "suppositum" in the weak sense, there would not be a suppositum in that sense in the man Christ without the divine subsistence, since Christ could not exist without the divine subsistence.

In sum, even if my theory of subsistence as a way an individual substance relates to its act of existing were incorrect for other reasons, it is still the case that subsistence so conceived would make a substance a suppositum in a sense consistent, at the least, with the doctrine of the Incarnation.

Does my theory make God act through Christ's accidents but not through His substantial nature? No, because Christ's substantial nature is the subject necessary for the existence of His accidents; accidents can exist only by existing in a substance. God is the efficient cause of Christ's powers, but Christ's substance remains their necessary material cause. God's direct

causing of the powers does not change the fact that an accident is only a being-of its substance and not a being by itself. When we say Christ's accidents come to exist, it is more correct to say that Christ's substance comes to exist in these accidental ways. By acting through Christ's powers, God is acting through what are nothing more than beings-of Christ's substance, acting through modes of being whose whole nature is to be ways in which Christ's substance exists. Christ's acts are not efficiently caused by His substance, but they are from His substance as from that in which His powers reside and from that which it is the whole nature of the powers to be beings-of and actualizations-of. Thus, in creating Christ's substantial nature, God is creating the place where He, God, will act personally. By denying that nature subsistence and by causing its powers directly, God is taking that nature to Himself; He is appropriating it as His own personal nature and own personal instrument. ("Instrumental cause" is said in opposition to "principal cause." If there is no secondary principal cause of Christ's acts, God is the only principal cause, and any other cause is instrumental relative to his principal causality. For more on Christ acting through his human substantial nature, not just through his accidents, see Appendix II.)

Words like "place where God acts" and "instrument" may make this position sound like Nestorianism. However, Nestorius taught that God dwelled in a human person and used a human person as His instrument. The present theory denies that there is a human person in Christ. What God dwells in and uses as His instrument is a complete human nature that does not constitute a human person. Hence, Christ's nature, powers, and acts are not just instruments of God; they are personal instruments of God, means through which a principal personal cause, God, acts directly without the intermediary of a created principal cause. (In the case of Peter's acts, there are two concrete existents that the acts can be said to be "of" in the sense that these existents are principal causes of the actions, Peter and God. God is the primary principal cause of the actions, and Peter is their secondary principal cause. In the case of Christ's acts, however, there is only one concrete existent that can be said to be the principal cause of the acts, God.) But Christ still has genuine created causality, though causality exercised by the creator; for Christ's actions are genuine created actions and, as accidents, exist only as beings-of, beings whose whole existence is that of residing in and perfecting, a genuine created substantial nature.

Nor is the union between the man, Christ, and God only on the level of human accidents. The man lacks, not something of His substantial nature, but something on the level of substantial existence, namely, a way of relating to that existence. And what the divine existence does for the man is provide for something missing that belongs to the substantial level, namely, a state of act sufficient to enable the accidents to come into existence. Since it is the cause of accidental existence, such a state of act is substantial, not accidental. Furthermore, since the accidents that come about because of the divine existence are necessary accidents, what the divine existence does for the man is to fulfill potencies of the substance without which the substance cannot exist.

But if this theory does not make the Incarnation an accidental union relative to the human nature, does it make the Incarnation an accidental union relative to the divine nature, so that the human nature would not truly be a personal nature of God? On the contrary, not only does it not make the human nature only accidentally conjoined to the divine nature but one of the virtues of this theory is that it shows how the human nature can be the personal nature of just one member of the Trinity. That is, this theory provides an understanding of how the Son of God alone became man. Since there are three supposita in God, there must be a difference between God's willing that the Son become man and His willing that the Father or Spirit or all three become man. But the difference, again, cannot be in God Himself; the difference must be in the effect

that God's wills to create. What God created when He created the man Christ, must differ from what he would have created if it were not the Son and the Son alone that became man.

What could the difference be? On any theory of the Incarnation, we should look for the difference in the personal acts that God causes to exist in Christ. If there is a difference between those acts being acts of the Son of God and beings acts of any other person or of all three, the difference must be in the acts themselves. That is, God wills that it be the Son alone who personally acts through Christ's human nature by willing to create acts that could only be acts of the Son. For example, only the Son can say through a human nature both that the Father sends Him and that He and the Father both send the Spirit.

A necessary condition for created acts such as these being personal acts of the second person of the Trinity, a condition in addition to God's directly causing the powers from which these acts emerge, is that they emerge from Christ's human powers without any defect. A created person could produce statements like Christ's, and God would be the primary cause of the positive ontological content of those acts. But a created person could produce such statements only as a result of a prior defect, a lacuna, in his intellect or will; for he would either be lying (according to 2 Thessalonians the Anti-Messiah will claim to be God) or delusional. If the originating defect was only physical (as opposed to moral), God would be the ultimate per accidens cause of the lacuna, along with being the ultimate per se cause of the positive content of the acts. If the originating lacuna was moral, God would not even be its per accidens cause, but He would still be the primary cause of the positive content of the acts.

Perhaps it is possible for a human act of Christ to be physically (as opposed to morally) defective by reason of a prior lacuna in His intellect (certainly not by reason of a moral lacuna in His will). If so, God would still be the only principal cause of the positive content of the act. But if God is the only principal cause of a human act with no defect and that act affirms the identity of the person acting with the Son and only with the Son, that act must be a personal act of the Son alone. Thus, God wills that the human acts of Christ be acts of the Son alone by willing to cause acts that (1) do not have a created intermediary cause — something that would be true no matter which divine person became man, (2) would be acts of the Son alone if they emerge from Christ's human powers without defect, and (3) do emerge without defect. That is what it is for God to decide that the Son alone become man, since what distinguishes that decision from its alternatives must reside in nature of that which it knowingly causes, the humanity of Christ and its acts, not in the absolutely simple nature of the cause, God. (For more on how only the Son became man, see Appendix V.)

God can become man because the acts of a man can be acts whose direct cause is a divine subsistent and not a human subsistent. One divine subsistent can become man because the acts of a man can be personal acts whose direct cause can be one divine person only. If they were not the personal acts of one divine subsistent alone, they could emerge from the created human powers only by way of defect. For God to will that such acts emerge from the created powers without defect is to will that a single divine subsistent be the personal cause of those acts. In other words, if a statement such as "There are three persons in God, and I am the second person" comes undefectively from a human intellect, the statement must be true. And if it is true, God must have decided from all eternity that one and only one divine person be its personal cause. God could not will to directly cause the making of such a statement without willing that only one divine person be the cause. But if the divine nature, with respect to which all three persons of the Trinity are one, is the cause of Christ's human acts, how can only one divine subsistent be the personal cause

of Christ's human acts? The divine nature is the direct cause of Christ's human acts because one divine subsistent, Who is identical with same nature that the other persons are identical with, is the direct cause of Christ's human acts. And a fortiori, if Christ's human nature is united to one member of the Trinity as a nature through which that member causes acts that are its personal acts, Christ's human nature is united to the divine essence personally and not just accidentally. (For more on how only one divine person can be the direct cause of Christ's human acts, see Appendix V.)

(I do not deny that other theories of subsistence can account for the union of the Son with man in this way, namely, by the fact that the acts of Christ could only be personal acts of the Son. But any theory will do it less directly to the extent that the theory deals less directly with the question of a human substance's being the cause of its acts. For example, if subsistence were not the state of existence required for the substance to cause its properties, a substance could be the cause of its properties and still lack subsistence. The properties would be caused by a human substance but not by a human person. And God could still will that the man be united with the Son by willing that the acts caused by the substance be acts that could only belong to the second person of the Trinity. However, God would cause those acts through the intermediary causality of a created substance, though not through the intermediary causality of a created person.)

But after all of the above, is it true that "This man is God"? That depends on what we mean by "this man." If we mean this individual human nature, or this human nature together with its created act of existence, taken in abstraction from their union with any other reality including God, of course this man is not God. But if we mean the concrete existent that has this human nature, where "concrete existent" means something having all that is necessary for an individual substance to exist, this man is God; for God's existence supplies the subsistence without which an individual substance cannot exist. Or, if we mean by "this man" the agent immediately acting through this existing, individual human nature, and hence the agent to whom this existing, individual human nature belongs as its personal nature, this man is God. And the last way of putting it can be rephrased as follows: If we mean by "this man" the person who has this human nature as the nature through which he personally acts, this man is God. Again, when Christ looks at us, speaks to us and touches us, it is God alone looking at us, speaking to us and touching us. God is the only principal cause from which these acts come; so God alone is the person from whom these personal acts come.

## 6. Applications to the Trinity

Abstracting for the moment from its application to the Incarnation, what does this theory of subsistence, and the concept of personality based on it, have to do with God and the persons of the Trinity? As I have already said, "subsistence" as the name of the factor enabling a substance to be a cause need not be what we mean by subsistence when we are speaking of God as subsistent being or intelligence. Still, "subsistence" in our sense does name a pure perfection that must be found in God. That subsistence in this sense is a pure perfection is evident from the fact that something is an efficient cause by reason of actuality, not potentiality. Also, this perfection is necessary for the existence of that kind of pure perfection that is a person. A person is a substance who is able to perform activities of the rational kind; therefore, a person is a substance that is able to be an agent. On the other hand, the descriptions I have given of this pure perfection are all taken from its effect, from what happens as a result of a substance's having it. This creates a difficulty in expressing what the corresponding perfection in God is, since God is at a step even further removed (in a logical sense, and the difficulty concerns that mixed perfection, the human

mode of knowing, which is the only place where logic exists) from the effect that is the source of the description and since God need not produce effects. But our inability to directly describe a perfection of God does not imply that God lacks the perfection. In fact, God has innumerable perfections for which we do not have names.<sup>5</sup> It remains the case that the perfection I have designated "subsistence" exists in God, and in Him, unlike in us, it is identical with His existence.

And if describing a particular perfection in God is beyond the limits of natural knowledge, that does not prevent revelation from coming to our aid. In fact, the doctrine of the Trinity can contribute to our understanding of how subsistence in this sense is found in God, and this theory of subsistence can contribute to our understanding of what we are asserting in the doctrine of the Trinity.

In God, personal acts of knowledge and love do not imply causal emanation, the emanation of an effect from something really distinct from the effect. In creatures, personal acts do imply causal emanation from powers and from the substance to which the powers belong, both of which are really distinct from these acts. But in both creatures and God, personal acts involve relations to really distinct terms, since God's personal acts involve relations to terms that are really distinct from one another. To be real, a procession must be from one reality to another, and God's knowledge and love of Himself involve Persons really distinguished from one another as opposite terms of relations of procession, that is, as the source of a procession, that from which a procession is, is distinguished from the goal of a procession, that to which a procession is. (The processions in God involve relations in the general sense, since procession is from one term to an opposite term. Thus, if we knew that one person proceeded from another in God but did not yet know that the persons were relations, we would still know that the persons were opposite terms of relations of proceeding-from and proceeding-to.)

If the theory of subsistence as so far presented is correct, opposite terms of relations of causal emanation in creatures are analogous (here in the technical sense<sup>6</sup>) to opposite terms of relations of procession in God. Subsistence in creatures is what enables a substance to be the term of created relations of causal emanation. Likewise, the distinct terms of relations of procession in God so terminate those relations by being subsistents. For there to be causal relations of emergence of which a substance is the term, the substance must subsist. For acts of knowledge and love in God to involve relations of procession-from and -to, there must be subsistents that are terms of those relations; what is proceeded from and what is proceeded to must be characterized by subsistence, the same perfection a created substance must have to be the term-from-which of its personal acts' relations of emanation.

And when the Son becomes man, that which is the term-toward-which of the relation of paternity in God is also that which is the term-from which of relations of causal emanation in Christ's properties and their acts. That which is the term-toward-which of the relation of paternity by being a subsistent is the term-from-which of relations of causal emanation by the same subsistence.<sup>7</sup> (For more on the sameness between the Son and the subsistence in Christ, see Appendix V.)

Finally, subsistence in my sense is a way a substance relates to its act of existing, and each of the persons in God is a way of relating to the divine act of existing. In fact, what constitutes the plurality of persons in God are distinct ways of relating to the divine act of existing. For what constitutes the plurality of persons are distinct ways of relating to each other, and the term of each of these relations is something identical with the divine act of existing. A

substance's way of relating to its act of existing is a way of relating to something really distinct from the substance, and that way of relating is also distinct from the substance. In God, a way of relating to His act of existing is a way of relating to Himself, and the way of relating is also God Himself. And that is what is to be expected, since subsistence in God cannot be really distinct from God.

But even in God, subsistence involves, as it does in creatures, some real distinction between that which relates and that which is related to. A way God relates to Himself can be a real, as opposed to a merely cognitional, relation, only if the relation has a term really distinct from itself. But such a term must be God Himself, since God cannot be really related to creatures; He can only be related to Himself. How can this be if the relation, for example, fatherhood, from which this term is supposed to be distinct, is also identical with God? If the relation, fatherhood, is identical with God, how can it have a term, the Son, really distinct from itself if the Son is also God?

Any relation requires a corresponding relation be predicable of the first relation's term. If A is similar to B, B is similar to A; if A is larger than B, B is smaller than A. Sometimes the corresponding relation can be a merely cognitional relation, a being of reason; for example, the relation known-by-A is a being of reason attributable to B since the relation knowing-B is a reality existing in A. But this kind of being of reason must be founded on some real distinction between a real relation, its term, or, in the case of creatures, its subject. No such foundation can occur in God. Since what provides the term for one relation must be something of which another relation is predicable, what provides the really distinct term a divine relation needs to be a real relation must be another real relation. A way God relates to Himself can be a real relatedness if and only if the corresponding relation predicable of the first relation's term is another way God relates to Himself by a real relatedness. The first way of relating to Himself can be real only if it has a really distinct term, and only another real relatedness can provide that term. Therefore, there can be one real relatedness in God if and only if there is another real relatedness different from the first in God.

The divine relations are not really distinct from the divine nature but are really distinct from one another as mutually required for each other's real identity with the divine nature: For the divine nature to be identical with fatherhood, it must also be identical with sonhood, just as a road cannot be a road going north without being identical with a road going south at the same time, even though the direction north to south is a relation really distinct from the direction south to north. For fatherhood to be a way God relates to Himself, Sonhood must also be a way God relates to Himself; The relation, sonhood, provides the term for the relation, fatherhood, and vice versa.

But the divine existence cannot be really related to anything but itself, so each of these forms of relatedness has for its correlative opposite something identical with the divine existence. Each opposite form of relatedness must be identical with the same divine existence. They can be identical with the same thing while being different from each other, because each is a way the thing relates to itself, a way of relating to itself that requires the thing also to be identical with a different way of relating to itself, another way of relating that provides the term for the first way.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, wherever it occurs, subsistence is a way a thing relates to its own act of existing and at the same time a way it relates to a term really distinct from itself. Two more crucial points: Wherever it occurs, subsistence also enables the subsistent to share existence with another, either the same existence shared with another person, in God, or another existence shared with a

substance's effects, in creatures. (For more on why subsistence is necessary for a substance to share existence with its effects, see Appendices III and VI.) And subsistence is what enables a person to be a term of relations characterizing personal acts of knowledge and love, relations of causal emanation in creatures and relations of procession in God. (For, more on persons as terms of relations of knowledge and love, see Appendix III.)

Once again, therefore, the theory of subsistence I have proposed is consistent with revelation, this time with the revelation of a Trinity of subsistents in God.

#### 7. A Philosophical Difficulty: Can Subsistence Explain a Substance's Properties

I now wish to discuss two problems with this theory. This section will discuss a philosophical problem with the concept of subsistence I have proposed. The next section will discuss a theological problem with the application of this concept of subsistence to the Incarnation.

The comparison with living causality led to explaining a substance's causing of its properties by postulating subsistence as a factor possessed by substance though really distinct from it. But does not the comparison with life also require a factor really distinct from substance by means of which the substance receives the effects that subsistence enables it to produce? For the self-motion of living things is explained by one part of a living thing causing a change in other part. But it is the whole substance that is in potency to its properties. Or at least, in the case of angels and human substantial forms, it is the whole essence or whole substantial form that receives the intellect and will (it makes no sense to say that an angel or human soul receives the intellect in one part of itself and the will in another).

This objection can be answered. However, the reply will appear to create another difficulty. Dealing with that difficulty will require me to make more precise the sense in which a substance's need for subsistence is comparable to a power's need for an actuation disposing it to produce its effects. I will give the reply and then deal with the difficulty.

The problem of the whole substance being both the material and efficient cause of its properties by is solved by the fact that the emanation of properties from a substance is more analogous (in the sense of a comparison) to a living thing's causing of an immanent action than to its causing of a transitive action. A transitive action is identical with a change occurring to something that is a passive potency for the change; therefore, transitive action resides in something really distinct from the active potency that causes the change. When a power goes from not causing an immanent action to causing it, there is also a change. I am not referring here to the change that puts the power in the state of act from which the immanent action can emerge, I am referring to the emergence of the immanent action itself. But though the coming into existence of the immanent action is a change, the action existing as a result of that coming into existence is not a change; that is, the immanent action itself is not a change undergone by anything. If it were, it would reside in a passive potency distinct from the faculty that causes the action. Instead, an immanent action resides in and perfects the active potency that causes the action, as acts of knowledge perfect the intellect. A substance's properties perfect and fulfill it the way immanent action perfects and fulfills the power that causes it. A substance, in other words, is analogous to a power that causes immanent action, not transitive action. This constitutes a qualification on the earlier statement that a substance is the material cause of its properties. The way a power possesses its immanent action can be called virtual material causality. That is, an immanent action's perfection of a power accomplishes all that a form's perfection of a passive potency accomplishes, but the immanent action accomplishes it in a

higher way. An immanent action accomplishes it by relating to the faculty it perfects as to the ontologically prior actuality from which it emerges. (In the actuation of a passive potency, the form received does not have a relation of dependence on the potency in any sense other than having a dependence on a material cause. In the actuation of a potency for immanent action, the new form existing in the potency has a relation of emergence from the potency as from an efficient cause at the same time that it, the new form, resides in the potency.)

Likewise, the properties' perfection of their substance accomplishes all that a form's perfection of a passive potency accomplishes, but properties accomplish this by perfecting the ontologically prior actuality from which they emerge, their substance, analogously (technical sense) to the way an immanent action perfects its power.<sup>9</sup> An essence's production of its properties does everything that the actuation of a passive potency would do, but it accomplishes everything that a passive actuation would analogously to the way the inherence of an immanent action in its faculty does. By calling the actuation of the potency for properties analogous to a formal activation of an active potency, as opposed to a activation of a passive potency, I am not denying that the efficient causality is only virtually efficient causality, as opposed to "formal" efficient causality. I am saying that the properties reside in the essence analogously to the way that the immanent action resides in the power from which it emerges. We can say that an essence's efficient causing of its properties is more like virtual immanent efficient causality than virtual transitive efficient causality, and that the inherence of the properties in the essence is more like the inherence of an immanent act in an active potency than like the inherence of a transitively received act in a passive potency.

Now the difficulty with this reply. Making the substance's material causality only virtual may appear to undercut my whole theory of subsistence by eliminating the need for a factor distinct from the substance through which the substance causes its properties. Why can't the properties just emerge from the substance itself the way an immanent action emerges from its power, with no distinction between that which causes the act and that which is perfected by the act?

Because an immanent action does not just emerge from its power, at least not an immanent action that exists as a result of a change. A faculty that is not always causing an immanent action needs to receive an actuation from an external agent in order to go from potentially causing the immanent action to actually causing it (as the agent intellect activates the potential intellect and as the intellectual grasp of an object elicits an act from the will). We saw above that there are four elements in the causing of an action that is not always emerging from its power, not just the existence of the power, the nature of the power, and the effect of the power, but also an actualization a power receives from something other than itself in order to go from being in the state in which the action does not emerge from it to the state in which the action does emerge.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, a substance needs a factor in addition to its existence and its nature in order to be in the state from which its properties emerge. That is where subsistence fits into the comparison with immanent action.

Since the material causality of a substance relative to its properties is only virtual material causality in the same way that an active power is a virtual material cause relative to immanent actions, we do not need two factors, subsistence and something else, prior to the properties and really distinct from the essence and the existence for an essence to be both the efficient and material cause of its accidents. We only need something comparable to the prior actuation a power needs in order to both produce and be the virtual material cause of an immanent action.

Both the efficient and material causality, though completely real, are virtual, that is, contained under something higher. And the ways they are each contained under something higher makes that which terminates the accidents' relation of dependence on an efficient cause comparable to the prior actuation of the power, and that which terminates the accident's relation of dependence on a material cause comparable to the power in which the immanent action resides.

One might object that a prior actualization of a power is required only for an immanent action whose existence results from change, since the power must first change from the state in which the action does not emerge to the state in which it does. What if there is an immanent action, say of an angel or separated soul, whose existence is permanent, just as a property's existence is permanent? For such an action, why would a state of act in addition to the existence and nature of the power be necessary?

This objection can be answered on several levels. In the first place, the most the objection could show is that I have not proven that the conditions for a property to emerge from a substance are analogous to the conditions for an immanent action that results from change, rather than for a permanent immanent action (assuming that such a permanent action can exist and cannot be shown, by some other argument, to require an additional causal factor). But I am not trying to prove anything at the moment; I am only trying to present a reasonable hypothesis showing why a philosophical objection is not conclusive and how a datum of revelation can be true. The hypothesis is suggested by the fact that the relation of the human substance to its properties and the relation of an operative power to its action are analogous in that each relation is that of an efficient cause to its effect. And in at least one important case, the existence of an operative power does not constitute a sufficient condition for the emergence of the effect. That makes the hypothesis that an additional factor is required for the emergence of a substance's properties reasonable in the following sense. We know that such a factor is actually required in some cases; therefore it is possible for such a factor to be required in others, as far as we know.

In the second place, the objection assumes that there are immanent actions that do not come into existence through change. And we have no knowledge that such immanent actions exist or can exist. If there is a power that, to produce its effect, does not need an actualization beyond existing and being what it is, that power is the intellect of an angel or a separated soul.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Aquinas argues that the substantial essence of the angel or the separated soul is a form (a "species") putting their intellects in act because, by being united with an immaterial essence, their intellects are united with something intelligible in act. And because their intellects cannot not be united with this form, their intellects cannot not be in act. However, Aquinas concludes from this that a separated intelligence is always in act only with respect to habitual knowledge; he explicitly states (I-I, 58, 1) that a separated intelligence is not always actually considering what it knows habitually and that, therefore, the separated intelligence is sometimes in potency with respect to specific acts of consideration. So even Aquinas held that a separated intelligence's immanent acts of knowledge result from change.

But this is no proof that there cannot be immanent actions whose existence does not result from change. So, in the third place, let us assume that a separated intelligence can produce an act of knowledge without a change. The objection, again, is that this assumption nullifies the comparison between subsistence as something that enables a substance to produce its properties and a prior actuation enabling a power to produce its effects; for a power with a permanent effect would not need an additional actuation to produce the effect, as far as we know. In fact, however, answering this objection will enable me to make the comparison more precise.

If an immaterial being's intellect is always in the act of knowing, the reason is that the intellect is always united to the being's substance, and that substance is intelligible in act. The union of an accident with a substance is the same as the existence of the accident. Therefore, the current assumption is that the existence of an immaterial being's intellect is sufficient for that intellect to produce its effect. But it is not just the union of the intellect with substance that enables the intellect to be always producing an effect; it is the union of the intellect with a substance of a certain kind, an immaterial substance. In all other cases, a power's existence in its substance is not sufficient for the power to produce its effect; further actualization is needed. So it is not the union with substance as such that would permit a permanent immanent action, but only the union with a substance possessing a characteristic that not all substances possess. And since the union of substance and accident is identical with the existence of the accident, it is not existence as such that enables the intellect to produce an immanent act without change but the fact that the intellect's existence is of the immaterial kind.

Looking now at a substance's production of its properties, the parallel would be this: It is not just existence that enables a substance to produce its properties; it is existence under a certain condition. Existence as such does not permit the substance to produce its properties but existence to which the substance has a certain way of relating. The substance's union with existence, as such, does not permit the production of the properties, but only a union with existence characterized by a certain way of relating to existence that it is possible (miraculously) for a substance not to have. So where a power would need a certain kind of existence, immaterial existence, in order to produce an action without change, a substance needs a certain "kind" of existence, that is, needs to relate to existence in a certain way, in order to produce its properties.

But a substance needs the addition of a distinct factor in order to have existence in that certain way, while substance does not require the addition of a distinct factor in order to be the kind of substance, an immaterial substance, that could cause immanent action without change. Yes, but in order to permit that kind of immanent action, substance must lack a distinct factor substance is capable of having, matter. The point of the comparison is that a substance that causes its properties must not just have existence but have it in a certain way. And in order for there to be a more than logical difference between having something and having it in a certain way, some factor really distinct from the others must either be present or be absent. Any way you look at it, what permits immanent action without change is not the power's existence, its union with the substance, as such but the fact that the substance exists in a certain condition (the condition of lacking a factor substance is capable of having). Likewise, what permits the emergence of a substance's properties need not be the substance's existence as such but the fact that the substance exists in a certain condition (the condition of possessing a factor the substance is capable — miraculously — of not possessing).

However, I do not need to claim that the comparison is perfect, any more than I need to claim that the comparison constitutes a proof of my thesis. But something, some X, is needed in addition to the individual nature, its existence, and its accidents to make a human being a suppositum and person in the sense in which revelation says Christ is not a human suppositum and person. What could such an X be? Well, what would such an X do? It would explain why, when we act, God is causing human acts through the intermediary of a created person. And the absence of X would explain why, when Christ acts, God is not causing human acts through the intermediary of a created person. Whatever else X may do, it must explain that much at least.

How could X explain that? A created substance is the cause of its acts, not just because

its powers reside in it, but because its powers emerge from it as from an agent. That is, a substance's relation to its powers is like the powers' relation to their acts. But it usually happens, and for all we know it always and necessarily happens, that a power's existence is not sufficient for its effects to emerge from it; a further actualization is needed. And if that does not always happen, that fact must be accounted for by the presence or absence of a factor really distinct from the factors present in the other cases. Either way, the relation of a power to its effects requires something more than the existence of a power, considered just as such. Perhaps the same is true of the relation of a substance to its powers. In other words, it may be that X is needed to enable a substance to cause its properties.

If so, X is a factor necessary for the existence of a suppositum and person. For a concrete existent cannot exist without its properties, nor does a substance efficiently cause the effects that emerge from the properties, unless the substance is the efficient cause of the properties. If the human nature of Christ does not have its own X, Christ is not a human suppositum or person.

What, then, is X? X cannot be one of the features making a substantial essence what it is. Nor can X be an accident, because it enables the emergence of accidents. Since it is possessed by essence prior to the existence of accidents and since it enables the essence to be a virtual efficient cause, the most reasonable hypothesis is that X is a way of relating to the act that any cause directly or indirectly communicates, the act of existing. X is a way a substance relates to its act of existing, a way that enables a substance to share existence with its accidents and with the further effects it produces by means of its accidents. X is a way of existing necessary for a substance to be a term of relations of causal emanation and for there to be diverse relations in God; for there cannot be relations of procession without diverse terms proceeded-from and -to, and X is necessary for terms proceeded-from and -to to exist in God (see Section 6 and Appendix IV, and for more on what the state that enables a substance to be the virtual efficient cause of its properties must be formally, see Appendix IV.)

#### 8. A Theological Difficulty: Human Self-Consciousness in Christ

A final problem concerns Christ's human self-awareness. We know the existence of our soul by knowing its acts. But on this theory of the Incarnation, Christ's acts are not acts of His soul the way our acts are acts of our souls. Therefore, must not Christ's human self-awareness differ from ours, with the consequence that He is not fully human?

I believe this problem is solvable. But discussing how it can be solved is complicated by the fact that accurately describing our self-awareness is extraordinarily difficult, as the history of epistemology abundantly shows. Just when we think we have an unassailable description of what reflection on our conscious states shows us, we find ourselves unwittingly committed to skepticism, idealism, solipsism, punctiform phenomenalism, or some other cul-de-sac. In explaining how the problem of Christ's human self-awareness can be solved, I will presuppose Aquinas's analysis of our self-awareness, an analysis I agree with at least to the extent that I presuppose it here.<sup>12</sup> I will attempt to minimize the epistemological subtlety and complexity in order to say just enough to show that my theory of the Incarnation gives Christ a sufficiently human self-awareness.

Note, first, that we are not talking about Christ's universal, scientific knowledge of the human soul. To the extent that we are able to acquire such knowledge, His knowledge would be the same as ours, though going far beyond it. For scientific knowledge of the human soul informs us about the cause naturally necessary for the existence human conscious acts. Neither our scientific knowledge nor Christ's deals with the possibility of or the conditions for the miraculous

causing of human acts. If Christ had philosophical knowledge of human conscious acts and their causes, He knew as we can that acts of intellect and will require an immaterial substantial form as their natural efficient and material cause; if he thought otherwise, His philosophical judgments would be in error.

Instead of scientific knowledge, our problem concerns a human being's singular knowledge of his own soul. If we know our soul from its acts and Christ's soul is not the cause of His acts, can Christ have the same kind of human self-awareness that we have? Yes, because our singular knowledge of the soul from reflection on our acts does not tell us the nature of the soul, scientific knowledge alone can do that; our singular knowledge of the soul only tells us the existence of something in us that is the source of our conscious acts. Our singular knowledge does not tell us what this something is; for example, our singular knowledge does not tell us that this something is a substantial form, much less what a substantial form is. The only thing we know about this something by reflection is that it exists and is the source of our conscious acts. The rest of what we learn about this something results from reasoning and so belongs to our scientific knowledge, even though in most of us this reasoning may exist in a very rudimentary state.

Our everyday self-awareness is probably a mixture of our singular knowledge and rudimentary scientific knowledge, like our spontaneous reasoning that we are specifically distinct from animals, that intellectual knowledge differs specifically from sense knowledge, that intelligence can understand the natures of things, that intelligence differs from will, that we have freedom of choice, that the nature of human beings calls for them to be treated as ends, not as means, and so on. The fact that our everyday awareness is so mixed, makes it difficult to think about our singular knowledge in isolation from our scientific. But that is what we must do in comparing Christ's singular knowledge to ours. The temptation will always be to think that we know more by our singular knowledge of the source of our acts than we really do.<sup>13</sup> If we can resist that temptation, we can see that Christ's singular self-knowledge is the same as ours. (Of course, I am referring to the self-knowledge Christ possesses by his natural powers. His supernatural self-knowledge is not at issue here, since it is unlike our natural self-knowledge by hypothesis.)

Like us, Christ has singular knowledge of the existence of something within him as the efficient cause of His human acts, and he is capable of having scientific knowledge that the natural (as opposed to miraculous) source of such acts is an immaterial substantial form. The something that is the efficient cause of Christ's human acts is not a soul; it is Christ's divinity. But Christ's singular human self-consciousness does not tell Him that. Christ's singular human self-consciousness tells Him the same thing our self-consciousness tells us, namely, that something exists within us by which we are the source of our acts; and Christ's scientific knowledge of human acts tells Him the same things about their source under natural conditions that our scientific knowledge tells us. If he also knows that in his case the something that is the source of his human acts is not a soul but his divinity, that knowledge is supernatural, not natural, and that knowledge would include everything that our natural knowledge includes even though it includes more.

Furthermore, both we and Christ have singular knowledge of the existence of our soul to the extent that we know the existence of our substance (whatever its not further known nature may be) as something in which our acts and powers reside, that is, as the material cause of our acts and powers. Hence, we and Christ have knowledge of the existence of something in us

whose nature, whatever else it may be, makes it capable of having such powers and acts existing in it. In short, our reflexive self-awareness and Christ's yield the same pre-scientific understanding of the soul. (We might even be able to go further. Perhaps Christ's singular self-awareness reveals the existence of something whose nature makes it capable of efficiently causing the powers and acts we are aware of existing in us. Even though his substantial form does not actually efficiently cause his powers and acts, perhaps by knowing [1] that those powers and acts exist in us as accidents and [2] that, therefore, they exist in something whose nature makes it capable of having such accidents, he also knows [3] that they exist in something whose nature has the ability to produce them because, since they are active accidents, that in which they reside must have a capacity for them that is active, not just passive. But just by natural knowledge Christ would not know that it is not actually active in this case. He would know, as we do, that something is active in us whose nature therefore makes it able to produce these accidents, and he would know that the nature in us in which the known powers and acts reside materially is also a nature that has the ability to be active with respect to producing these accidents.)

We can ask whether, in addition, Christ had knowledge, from whatever source, of the miraculous nature of the causing of His active powers. That is a valid and interesting question, but not one whose answer need affect Christ's natural, human self-awareness. For by hypothesis, that question asks, not what pertains to Christ as a human being like us, but what pertains to Him as a human being miraculously united to God.<sup>14</sup>

Another important consideration is that reflection on our conscious acts gives us whatever pre-scientific understanding we have of ourselves as human persons. Since Christ is not a human person, it might seem that there should be a difference between what His reflexive self-awareness shows Him and what our reflexive self-awareness shows us. If so, however, we could not object to a theory of the Incarnation because it implied Christ's human self-awareness was not like ours in all respects. Without ruling out this possibility, I believe it unlikely for the following reason. Just as the content of our pre-scientific knowledge of what will turn out, after scientific analysis, to be our soul is confined to the fact that something exists by which we are the material and efficient causes of our acts, our pre-scientific knowledge of ourselves as persons is confined to the fact that we are agents performing these rational acts (which is all that "person" can mean at that stage). And Christ has that same human, pre-scientific consciousness of Himself as a person.

Are we pre-scientifically aware of ourselves as specifically human persons, so that we have an awareness Christ cannot share? If so, again, one could not criticize a theory of the Incarnation for differentiating between Christ's self-awareness and ours in this respect, since Christ is not a human person. But what does it mean to be aware of ourselves as specifically human persons at the singular, pre-scientific level? It means, at most, to be aware of the existence of a person having a human nature. Nothing prevents Christ from sharing that awareness, since Christ is a person Who has a human nature. But what does "having a human nature" mean at this level of awareness? It can only mean having a nature capable of producing the conscious acts we are made aware of by reflection; for it is through awareness of these acts that we become aware of the existence of ourselves as persons, that is, as agents of such acts, and that we become aware of what human nature is, namely, a set of characteristics, as yet not further known, that enables things to be agents of such acts. Of course, in Christ the nature that produces those acts is the divine nature, but Christ's natural human consciousness of Himself as a person does not tell Him that it is the divine nature that produces those acts.

Further, we and Christ are aware of ourselves as persons in whom those acts reside. Therefore we are both aware of ourselves as having a nature capable of being the material cause of those acts. And the nature Christ is thus aware of Himself as having is the same nature we are aware of ourselves as having, not the divine nature, but human nature. (And as I said above, perhaps we can go beyond this to saying that Christ and we share an awareness of the soul as having a nature capable of being, even if not actually being in Christ's case, the efficient cause of those acts.)

Appendix I: Why the Act of Existing Is Not That by Which Essences Cause Their Properties

This appendix has later thoughts on why the act of existing cannot be the factor distinct from essence that enables essence to be the efficient cause of its properties.

There is a problem about a substance causing its own properties. Something distinct from essence must be the source of the essence's causing of its properties; otherwise the essence would be the cause of an effect and the receiver of the effect in the same way at the same time. A thing can be a cause of its own actualization only to the extent that an act that is caused efficiently by one part of the thing is received by another part of the thing. The question is can the essence's existence be that factor distinct from the essence itself that allows the efficient cause of the accidents to be somehow really distinct from the material cause? Can the formal factor that is identified with the virtual efficient causality of the properties be the substance's act of existing?

The answer is no for the following reason. Existence is a necessary condition for the essence to produce its accidents, certainly. But existence is just as much a necessary condition for the essence to receive the accidents that it produces. So existence cannot be that which distinguishes the essence as efficient cause from the essence as material cause. For a virtual causal transaction to take place the existence of a virtual material cause is just as necessary as the existence of a virtual efficient cause. But there must be some real distinction between what makes something both a virtual efficient and virtual material cause for this comparison with formal efficient and material causality to work. And if simple existence were what makes the essence a virtual efficient cause, we couldn't explain the difference of the way existence is necessary for their to be a virtual material cause from the way it is necessary for there to be a virtual efficient cause.

An accident's transcendental relation of dependence is the same regardless of what the term of the relation is. But the term must at least be something subsistent. It is not enough for the term to be a mere existent. Being an existent makes the substance eligible to be a material cause of something. But to be the efficient cause of something requires more than what is required to be a material cause. For something to be an efficient cause as opposed to a material cause, the form or act to be communicated must belong to the efficient cause in some way, must be in the efficient cause in some way, and in some way that it does not belong to the material cause. And since existence makes essence to be a material cause, existence must also belong to it, be in it, in some way other than merely the way that makes it a material cause.

Also, the efficient cause as such is a correlative of the material cause. It needs a material cause in order to be an efficient cause. That is, it needs a material cause somehow distinct from itself in order to be an efficient cause. So existence must belong to the efficient cause but in some correlative opposite way to the way it belongs to the material cause in order for the material cause to be a material cause. In addition to receiving existence, the existing essence must "do" something else: It must exercise the existence it has received.

[Also, in every being except God, action is distinct both from the essence of the agent and from the act of existing of the agent. So the virtual action by which an existing substance produces its properties should not be formally identical with either the essence or the existence of the substance.

Also, in the case of “formal” efficient causality existence is not considered to be the efficient cause. The thing that exists is considered to be the efficient cause, and should be so considered. So in looking for virtual efficient causality, we are looking for something that is comparable to things rather than the existence of things.

An efficient cause must produce an effect in another. If existence produces the necessary accidents in the essence, existence has become the efficient cause, not the essence; we have really made existence into a thing distinct from essence as from another thing. For that is what we do when we imagine the existence as a (virtual) agent. The act of existence can’t be the cause of our accidents, because it is the thing that exists that is a cause. That is true of all cases and kinds of causality. So it must be the individual substantial essence that produces its properties.]

There is another reason why existence cannot be formally identical with the production of properties that is very pertinent to the Incarnation. Existence is received by essence. So if existence, not subsistence, was the act with which the essence’s production of properties is formally identical, those properties would be produced by something the essence receives and, therefore, not produced by an act exercised by the essence. But if they are not produced by an act exercised by the essence, the essence would not be producing its properties. The cause of the essence’s existence, God, would be producing the essence’s properties; God would be the direct and sole cause, as opposed to causing them through the secondary causality of the substance.

Would the potency to exercise existence have to be really distinct from the potency to receive existence; for one of the potencies can be fulfilled without the other's being fulfilled? Maybe it’s just that merely receiving existence leaves a reservoir a potency unfulfilled in the essence. As a matter of fact, receiving existence does leave a reservoir of potency unfulfilled in the essence. When essence receives existence, its passive potency for existence is fulfilled, but its passive potency for accidents is not yet fulfilled. So receiving existence does leave a reservoir of potency to be fulfilled, a reservoir of passive potency. But the essence also has (or is) a (virtual) active potency for (virtually) efficiently causing the existence of its accidents, for causing the fulfillment of its passive potency, and its active potency for causing accidents is not fulfilled just by its receiving existence. For the potency for exercising existence is analogous to an active potency, while the potency for receiving existence is a passive potency. Receiving existence would be analogous (technical sense) to the fulfillment of a passive potency. Exercising existence would be analogous to the fulfillment of an active potency (see Sections 3 and 7.)

Efficient causality as such (virtual or formal) is always a relation inhering in the effect, not in the cause; it is the effect’s dependence on its efficient cause. So when I say that an essence’s state of exercising existence is virtually identical with its causing of its accidents, strictly speaking I should say that an essence’s exercising existence is identical with the formality that allows the essence to be the term of the accidents’ virtual relation of dependence on an efficient cause (or of the accident’s relation of virtual dependence on an efficient cause.) The relation of dependence on an efficient cause must be only virtual — though real — because it has the same term as does the accidents’ relation of dependence on a material cause (which likewise must be only virtual, though real).

(If I am right, then perhaps subsistence can take the place of physical premotion, and we

can do away with physical premotion. For premotion is supposedly something over and above bare creation, something that is needed to explain the fact that creatures act.) A good analogy to the essence's exercise of existence, as something distinct from either existence or essence, making the essence the virtual cause of the properties: Consider two billiard balls at rest at a distance from one another. Modern science lets us know they are acting on each other by producing gravitational and electro-magnetic fields. But visibly we have no reason to say they are having any causal influence on each other. Now assume one of them, A, is put in motion and hits the other, B. The motion in A is something over and above what A is that enables A to have an effect on B. And the motion does not just "enable" A to have an effect on B, but when A hits B, A's motion IS A's exercise of causality on B. But without that motion, A would not have the effect on B. Likewise, without a state of exercising existence, as something over and above the essence itself and its existence, the essence would not be the virtual cause of its properties.

When any body is in motion, it is "acting" on its environment, i.e., its environment is undergoing changes because the body is what it is, something in motion. Subsistence is like the motion, only at the level of substance. Like the motion, it is something over and above the thing's existence and essence which enables the thing to produce effects by being what it is, something that exercises existence; only this time the effects are within the thing — they are its properties — not outside the thing, as in the case of motion.

Maybe all physical efficient causality requires an actuation, like the motion of a billiard ball, over and above physical agents being what they are. When moving ball A hits stationary ball B, ball B acts on ball A. But ball B is able to act on ball A only because ball A is in motion. Similarly, maybe all created efficient causality requires an essence to be actuated in a way other than the simple reception of existence.

#### Appendix II: Christ's Created Acts and Other Creatures' Acts

This appendix has later thoughts on the contrast between the way Christ's acts are God's acts and other created acts are God's acts.

If subsistence is required for a substance to produce its necessary accidents, it would take a miracle for God to produce the necessary accidents without the substance's subsistence. Then the acts of the substance would be acts of God but not the acts of a secondary created supposit. The dog barks. We can say that barking is the action of the dog and of God. It is an action of God because everything is an effect of God. So we need to find a way of putting words together with the goal of correctly distinguishing the way the dog's barking is an action of the dog and an action of God.

Barking belongs to the dog as to a unique created supposit. The barking is an action of the dog because the dog's substantial nature produces its properties, its necessary accidents. The barking of the dog is not an action of God in the same way that it is an action of the dog. Can we say that Christ's actions are actions of God in the same way the dog's barking is an action of the dog? At the very least we can put it negatively. The barking and Christ's actions are actions of God. But they are not both actions of a created individual nature or a created supposit the way the dog's actions are the actions of a created individual nature and a created supposit. Christ's substantial human nature does not produce his necessary accidents, his properties. God produces them directly. In doing so, to put it positively, God causes Christ's existing individual human nature to stand to him, God, in exactly the same relationship that the Son of God stands to the Father (see Section 6 and Appendix V).

But we do not have to say the last word on the difference between the barking's being the

dog's action and God's action. We only have to say enough to be able to use that distinction in dealing with whatever problem we have to deal with at the time. In this case, the problem is to illuminate how Christ's actions are the action of God but not of an individual human nature where "of" refers to the way an action is of a supposit.

Perhaps we can say that Christ's individual substantial nature *\*is\** the efficient cause of his accidents, but it is so because the Son exercises his existence in Christ's nature. We want to say that Christ's actions are not actions of God in the same way that other created actions are actions of God. Christ's created actions are not actions of God in the sense that they are effects of God's creating a created supposit who exercises its own existence by being the efficient cause of its own properties. God is not the cause of Christ's actions by causing a created supposit to be the secondary efficient cause of its accidents. God is the cause of Christ's actions by creating those actions in Christ without a created supposit as a secondary efficient cause.

But Christ is still a secondary cause in Christ in an important sense. Christ's will does not act on its own apart from its existence in Christ's human nature, apart from its existence as a perfection of Christ's human nature. In that sense we can say that Christ's individual human nature is genuinely a secondary cause; as the material cause supporting the existence of Christ's accidents, it acts when Christ's will acts, since Christ's accidents are perfections belonging to it, Christ's acts exist only as beings-of his human substantial nature, though they are not efficiently produced by it. (We can even say that the existing individual substantial nature in Christ exercises the existence of the accidental natures, though not the existence of the substantial nature.) But the individual substantial nature does not act as the supposit, as a created supposit to which this action uniquely belongs. Christ's individual human nature is not the incommunicable source of the action; Christ's human nature communicates with the second person of the Blessed Trinity's subsistence when Christ acts.

And a necessary accident's relation of dependence will always terminate in the created act of existence in the sense that the created act of existence is necessary for there to be a material cause of the necessary accident. Maybe that is sufficient to satisfy the intuition that the accident's relation of dependence must terminate in the created existence in some way or other.

#### Appendix III: Incommunicability Regarding Existence (Rather than Essence)

This appendix has later thoughts on subsistence as a necessary ground of incommunicability, in addition to essence and matter, with respect to existence.

Calling subsistence that by which the existing essence becomes the efficient cause of its accidents describes it by the relation (transcendental) of the accidents to it, but those relations are external to subsistence, since the relation of any effect to its efficient cause is a relation of the effect to something external from it. But how should we describe subsistence itself as a relation of the essence to the substantial existence? What further characteristics does it have?

The best way to approach this question is to investigate the primary analogue of a subsistent: the person. There we will find the exercise, as opposed to mere reception, of existence in its purest form. We can understand the other members of the analogical set, the secondary analogates, by the ways they both approach and fall short of subsistence in its pure state. Each person is supposed to have a unique ethical value, that is, an irreplaceable value. In a classic comparison, consider the workers in an office, on the one hand, and the members of a nuclear family around a dinner table, on the other. The value of a worker as such is generally a replaceable value. Someone else can type as well, design as well, write as well, etc. This is functional value. If someone else can perform the function as well as you, they can replace you

with no loss of value. When a family member is lost, however, a value is lost that can never be replaced. This is personal value. We can acquire a new spouse or have another child. But this is not replacing the value lost in the sense of acquiring something else that has the same value. The new spouse or child will have their own unique value that must forever be different from the value of the person that was lost. Functional value is replaceable; personal value is not.

What is the source of the unique value of the person? The dignity of human nature is obviously an essential condition of that value. But the fact that each human person shares a common nature with all others does not mean that the value of the person is something that he or she has in common with others; each person has a unique value not subject to multiplication. The nature shared commonly by all human persons is made unique in each individual by the causality of matter as a principle of limitation and restriction. But as the cause that makes possible the multiplication of the common nature, and hence our common value as human beings, matter cannot be the source of the unique value of the person as such. Matter causes its kind of uniqueness by the fact that it is purely potential and so has no value of its own beyond that of being the source of the multiplication of common value.

Personality must imply a kind of uniqueness, of incommunicability, other than the incommunicability that derives from matter; matter is a condition for that kind of incommunicability but not the source of it. Every person is an end-in-itself. Persons put into exercise their status as an end-in-themselves in acts of will by which they select their own ends, the ends for the sake of which their other activities exist (see my "Natural Obligation"). Non-personal agents act for the sake of ends that they do not determine for themselves but are determined for them by nature and so by the causes that gave them their natures. Our ends are the values for the accomplishment of which we exist. Every person acts for the sake of ends that are uniquely their own ends, since they determine those ends to be their own by acts ultimately traceable to no cause other than themselves. So the values for the sake of which persons exist are uniquely their own, unlike the values for the sake of which everything else exists.

The source of the irreplaceable value of every person, therefore, is whatever is the source of our ability to cause acts that direct us to ends that are uniquely our own. As a result of our having that ability, other intelligent beings are ethically obligated to so choose that their acts treat us as ends-in-ourselves, because intelligent beings are obligated to so choose that what we are in their chosen system of values is what we are in reality, beings directed to ends that we will give ourselves, not to ends that they direct us to. (This reference to other intelligent beings reminds us that the will is not the only faculty associated with the value of each person. In fact, intelligence is ultimately a higher faculty, since acts of will are not ends-in-themselves but means to ends that are fulfillments of other faculties, especially the intellect. I am using free choice to illustrate how the value of each person is unique for the sake of clarity and brevity.)

Beings that can cause the free choice of their own ends each have a value that is unique and incommunicable to any other being. That value does not derive from matter but from the existence of a nature endowed with the faculty of free choice. Beings of such a nature are the virtual efficient causes of that faculty by their subsistence, the exercise of their acts of existence. So subsistence is the source of (or is what constitutes) the uniqueness and incommunicability of the value of each person. The exercise of existence is the ultimate source of our free acts since it is the ultimate source of the faculty by which we perform free acts.

We can oppose exercising existence to merely receiving it as ways of owning existence. Any act received by a passive potency is possessed by the potency as its own. But through

subsistence the individual essences of persons are elevated above the state of merely having existence as a possession to a different and supreme kind of ownership, the state of controlling their existence, grasping it in the sense of dominating over it; they hold it in their own hands. For by subsistence persons are the source of acts by which they grasp their existence as their own for the sake of doing what they want with it. That is how we can describe the positive content of the relation between an individual essence and its existence that we are calling subsistence.

Persons are the primary analogates of subsistents and so the analogates of which the analogue, subsistent, is reduplicatively or non-restrictedly affirmable. Non-free beings are the secondary analogates and so the analogates of which the paragenus is restrictedly or non-reduplicatively affirmable. Non-free beings cannot direct themselves to ends of their own selection and so do not dominate over their existence in the fully affirmable way. Still by virtually producing their own faculties they become the suppositives of actions by which they fulfill the potencies left unfulfilled by their substantial existence and by which they share existence with other things, their effects (by providing existence to their accidents and/or necessary conditions for substantial existence to other things). So they possess their existence in a more than merely passive sense of possession. They have existence as something they communicate to others and "use" to perfect themselves; for exercising their existence, producing faculties by which they will perfect themselves or other things, amounts to using their actuation by existence to achieve their ends, not merely passively receiving actuation by existence.

The theory of the Incarnation presented here asks the question what more than existence must an individual substantial nature have to be a suppositum in the sense of "actiones sunt suppositorum." A correct answer would be that it needs something that makes it incommunicable with respect to existence in a way that being an individual essence, even one individuated by matter, does not. For the responsibility for free choices, and the value that responsibility implies for the maker of free choices, is incommunicable even if sharing a certain common essence is a necessary condition for that responsibility and value. And the source of that kind of incommunicability must be whatever it is that makes free beings ultimate efficient causes of responsibility-endowed and value-manifesting free acts. But they are ultimate efficient causes of their choices because they are efficient causes of the properties through which they make choices. So what makes them efficient causes of their properties is what gives them the kind of incommunicability that transcends that of essence and matter. And whatever it is that makes persons the efficient cause of their properties is an analogate of an analogue that is what makes all created substances efficient causes of their properties, an analogate present in persons in a higher state (see Maritain's "Spontaneity and Independence," which implies a scale of ways of instantiating this analogue). So the something more than existence that an individual substance needs is a kind of incommunicability, that of being a principal cause of their own actions, that all created substances share and that in its highest state is the source of the incommunicably absolute value of each person (absolute because the unique value of each person is that of being an end-in-itself, or as Aquinas puts it, of being that for sake of which all other things exist).

On p. 111 of the Christian intellect and the mystery of being, Sikora says that subjectivity (subsistence), in one meaning of the word, is that incommunicable root in the being of the unique exercise of existence and activity which are proper to this being and to no other. Quoting Sikora on page 113: "existence is not merely added to essence; it is exercised as the act of the essence." So subsistence is an act of the essence. "Of" indicates here that the essence somehow "dominates" over existence by owning the existence, making the existence its own, in an active

way. The essence does not dominate over existence as a principal cause dominates over an instrumental cause, but as owning the existence in a way that makes the existence the energy, the state of act, by which the essence produces its properties. Or, subsistence makes essence the “channel” through which existence flows into the essence’s properties, and through the properties flows into external effects; by subsisting, the essence “channels” the existence as the energy that produces the essence’s properties, channels existence to its properties and to the external effects the substance produces by means of its properties. As the specifying cause of its properties the essence “controls” and directs the energy of existence, but it would not have the existence as an energy to be controlled unless, in addition to receiving existence, it was in a state of exercising existence. It would not have existence as an energy that it controls as specifying cause unless it had existence as an energy it exercises as efficient cause. “Possessing” existence does not mean just receiving it but grasping it, holding onto it, holding it in one's hand. Think of the way Maritain describes persons as holding themselves in their hands; persons are defined as being subsistents of a rational nature.

Accidents receive but do not exercise existence. That is, they do not possess their existence, own it, in any sense of dominating over it or controlling it. They do not have that kind of relation to their existence.

#### Appendix IV: What the Virtual Efficient Causality is Formally

This appendix has later thoughts on the connection between the nature of relation, the nature of subsistence in creatures, and the relations in God.

At the end of the day, we still want to know what subsistence is in creatures if it is not the same as the existence or essence of creatures. We still want to know what the exercise of existence is in creatures if it is really distinct from the existence and essence of creatures. Call it a "mode" just for the sake of having a name; calling at that does not add any intelligibility. And it might seem that there is nowhere in Thomism’s catalogue of real distinctions where the distinction between receiving existence and exercising existence can find a home. But there is one such place that deserves inspecting because it would directly tie the question of creaturely subsistence to the Incarnation and the Trinity in the same stroke.

Relatedness has a unique place in the catalogue of ways of existing. There are beings of reason that correspond to ways of really existing; there are substances of reason, quantities of reason, etc. But in all cases other than relations, what is non-genuine about a being of reason is precisely the mode of real being to which it corresponds. A substance of reason is deficient precisely with respect to substantiality; it lacks that kind of conceptual content (an object of concept, an objective concept, a ratio, an intelligibility in the sense of something intrinsically extramental that becomes an intellected object by means of a concept in the psychological sense of the word) that makes a real substance a substance, namely, existence in itself or existence that is not in another existent. A quantity of reason, for example, an imaginary number, is deficient precisely with respect to satisfying the objective concept of quantity; as a quantity, the square root of negative one is contradictory. But a relation of reason, though not a real existent, either substantial or accidental, is not lacking in genuine relatedness. Not only does what is expressed by the concept, being-known, contain what is expressed by the concept of relatedness, a way of standing in opposition to a term distinct from itself (here, the thing that knows), a kind of relatedness is all that the object of concept, being-known, contains. Being-known is not a genuine addition or modification to anything’s way of really existing (to what anything is as a real existent, to what anything is in its real existence). But to accurately describe something as being-

known, is to accurately objectify one real thing by means of a concept whose content does not lack the characteristic of being a certain way of standing in opposition to another thing but consists in such a characteristic.

To be a genuine formal (as opposed to transcendental or material) relation, therefore, an object of concept does not have to be an accident existing in substance. Relations of reason are genuinely formal relations but are not accidents existing in substances. Of course, relations of reason are also not real beings. But could there be a kind of relatedness that was not the accident of a substance but was a real being? (We do not need to debate here whether there really are relations in the sense of accidents; they are not the kind of real relations that the theology of the Trinity relies on.)

Since the nature of relatedness does not require inherence in an otherwise potential subject, a substance, we can consider the possibility of relations existing in an infinite state. Potency is the ontological principle of limitation; so the intrinsic nature of relatedness does not require that all instances of relatedness be finite. There might be some kinds of genuine formal relatedness that, like pure absolute perfections such as knowledge, love and beauty, can exist in an infinite state. Theology tells us that there are relations that are infinite because, like absolute pure perfections, they are identical with the divine nature, but unlike absolute perfections, are ways the divine nature relates to itself by genuine formal relations.

The divine nature cannot stand in “opposition” to itself as if to something really distinct from the divine nature. If there are relations identical with the divine nature, the divine nature stands in opposition to itself by providing relative terms (*relata*) distinct from corresponding relative terms, where each term is identical with the divine nature. The terms of the divine relations are identical with the divine nature because each term is itself a relation identical with the divine nature; divine relations are really distinct from one another as things mutually required for each other’s real identity with the divine nature. For the divine nature to be identical with fatherhood, it must also be identical with sonhood, just as a road cannot be a road going north without at the same time being identical with a road going south, even though the direction north to south is a relation really distinct from the direction south to north. So what provides the term for one divine relation must be another relation. The relation, sonhood, provides the term for the relation, fatherhood, and vice versa. Since each term is a relation identical with the divine nature, the terms are ways the divine nature stands in opposition to itself, the only thing it can have a genuine relation to (if God had formal relations to creatures, a change or cessation of existence in a creature could require a change in God).

I believe the philosophical arguments showing the distinction of the state of exercising existence from either the essence or its existence also show that this state is a kind of formal relation (not a transcendental or material relation) though not an accident of a substance. Exercising of existence is, *prima facie*, a way an essence relates to its existence. But it cannot be a transcendental relation identical with the essence itself (or perhaps with the existence itself). If it were, essence would not require anything distinct from the existence as that by which it is the efficient cause, and we could not get beyond the problem of how the same essence can be both the efficient and material cause of its accidents. (Again, it is not enough just to dub the essence’s causing of its accidents “virtual”; something can be virtually one thing only because it is formally something else.) And the exercise of existence lacks two conditions necessary for a real relation to be an accident. First, although it perfects a potency of the substantial essence, the potency is on the side of the essence facing substantial existence not facing the substance’s accidental

perfections, because all a substance's accidents presuppose the exercise of existence as that which allows the substance to be their efficient cause. Second, the term of this relation, the essence's existence, is not itself a thing, substantial or accidental; it is a principle of a thing. (For what we can say about this kind of relatedness positively as opposed to simply negating other ways of being a relation, see Appendix III.)

So the argument showing the real distinction of subsistence from both essence and existence gives us reason to posit the reality of a kind of genuinely formal relatedness that is neither an accident of a substance nor a perfection existing, in the case of creatures, in an infinite state. The exercise of existence is an essence's way of relating to existence, where "relating" refers to a formal (as opposed to transcendental or material way of relating) that is not a predicamental relation (a relation activating a potency of a substance on the side of accidents).

We might call subsistence a "proto-relation" attaching to the essence pre-accidentally by actualizing a pre-accidental potency of the essence. Proto-relation means that it is not in the category of relation, nor is it what is ordinarily understood as a transcendental (material) relation, but is a third analogate distinguished from both of the previous two. (Still, it is a genuine relation in the sense in which the relations in the Trinity are genuine but not predicamental. First, there is [1] the analogical set of transcendental [material] and formal relations. Then there is [2] the analogical set of formal [i.e., "genuine"] relations whose analogates are predicamental and non-predicamental formal relations. Then there is [3] the analogical set of non-predicamental formal relations whose analogates are merely conceptual and real non-predicamental formal relations. Then there is [4] the analogical set of real non-predicamental formal relations whose analogates are the Trinitarian relations and these proto-relations. Or, starting with the second set, there is [2a] the analogical set of formal relations that are non-real [merely cognitional] and real. Then there is [3a] the analogical set of real formal relations that are predicamental and non-predicamental. Then there is [4a] the analogical set of non-predicamental, real, formal relations that are the Trinitarian relations and proto-relations.)

The relation of receiving existence on the part of essence would be somehow really distinct from the relation of exercising existence on the part of essence. Receiving existence would be a transcendental relation, exercising existence would be a proto-relation. That which receives existence and that which exercises existence would be the same in subject, just as the road to and from Rome is the same in subject. But the modalities of receiving existence and exercising existence on the part of that subject would be really distinct as transcendental relations are really distinct from formal relations, respectively.

#### Appendix V: How Only One Divine Person Became Human

This appendix has later thoughts on how only one divine person can be the direct cause of Christ's human acts.

This analysis may justify these further statements about subsistence. A created essence exercises existence. The divine essence exercises its existence. There is no "real" distinction in God between existing and exercising existence, because his existence is not a received existence. But the real distinction between relations in the Trinity corresponds to the real distinction between exercising and having existence in us. So in us is that distinction a participation in what the Trinity is, as the non-relative (non-formally, though still transcendentially or "materially" relative — in Causal Realism I justify calling transcendental relations material as opposed to "formal" relations) perfections belonging to created essences are participations in non-relative perfections that are what God's essence is?

Perhaps for theological purposes all we need to say about subsistence, the exercise of existence, is this: It is directly analogous (technical sense) not to any of the other divine perfections, as opposed to the divine relations. Rather it is directly analogous to the divine relations by Maritain's super-analogy of faith. Or perhaps we can say that the distinction between existence and the exercise of existence (or essence and the exercise of existence) in creatures is not analogous to the way God's other perfection's become distinct in creatures so much as it is analogous to the way God's relations are distinct from each other in God.

Perhaps it would help to understand subsistence in creatures, conceived as an essence's exercise of existence, as a non-accidental kind of relation. We know from Aquinas's argument that non-accidental relations are possible. Subsistence would be a relation residing in the essence but not an accidental relation. For it would be on the side of essence that faces the substantial existence not on the side of essence that faces accidents. So created subsistence would be a relation of an essence to its existence, a non-accidental relation of an essence to its existence.

One advantage of conceiving subsistence this way is that it might tell us why only one of the persons in God can subsist in a created nature. That is, why only one of the persons in God can substitute for the exercise of existence in a created nature. For since created subsistence is formally a relation, God's substitute exercise of existence might have to be formally a relation, or be done by a formal relation. If so, only one person each time could exercise existence in a created essence.

There is a meaning of divine "subsistence" in which subsistence is common to each of the three persons, communicable to each of the three persons, because it is identical with the divine essence and existence. But perhaps to replace our subsistence, we need an incommunicable kind of subsistence, we need "subsistence" in the sense in which each divine relation is incommunicable to the others (or each person is so incommunicable, because one of the relations, spiration, is communicable to the Father and the Son). In exercising existence, an essence makes existence its own in a dynamic way. **The Son exercises the divine existence as his own, as his possession.** He "makes" the divine essence (i.e., existence) his own; he possesses the divine essence (existence) as his own. He owns the divine essence in an incommunicable way unique to himself; so do the Father and the Spirit.

As identical with the divine nature, the Son is identical with the subsistence that is identical with the divine nature and so is communicable to the other persons, though not to any other being. As a unique way of being identical with the divine nature, the Son is a unique, incommunicable way of being identical with the subsistence that is identical with the divine nature. In depriving the creature of the exercise of existence and instead causing the properties directly himself, God is supplying for the lack of a created form of incommunicability. But the divine nature is shared communicably by each of the divine relations. Maybe the kind of incommunicability that God is replacing in creatures can only be replaced by the kind of incommunicability that is proper to the persons as distinct from one another rather than as communicating in the divine nature. (Whatever that kind of incommunicability is, maybe that is precisely what makes the incommunicability that is associated with the value of each unique, irreplaceable person, whether created or uncreated, differ from the kind of incommunicability that derives from matter.)

Again, the question is whether this is all we need to say for theological purposes. And one of the theological purposes served by making subsistence and its distinction from essence or existence analogous (technical sense) to distinctions of relations from one another in God would

be that it could explain how only one person of the Trinity became man. He became man by substituting for what would ordinarily be created subsistence. And since created subsistence is analogous to the divine relations, only one of the divine relations could become man at one time, according to which one God chose.

By depriving Jesus of the human exercise of existence and causing Jesus' properties directly, perhaps God has to associate Jesus with one of the distinct subsistences in Him, because it is necessary that Jesus, as for any being, be associated with some relation of subsistence. As a result, Jesus relates to the Father exactly as the second person does, where "exactly" does not refer to specific or generic identity, but individual identity; Jesus has the same relation to the Father that constitutes God's Son God's Son. This PERSON, this source of activity, this originator of diffusion of being, has a relation to the Father that is the same relation to the Father that the Son is, i.e., the same relation to the Father that is the diffuser of being that is the Son. The relation of this diffuser of being, Jesus, to the Father is the relation that constitutes the Son the Son, the relation that is the Son. (On the connection between the Trinity and diffusion of being, see Appendix VI.)

This man Jesus, this individual human nature united with an act of existing, has the SAME relation to the Father that the Son of God has; Jesus is IN the same relation to the Father that the Son is in. Now the Son's relation is not really distinct from the divine nature. So this man Jesus also has the divine nature. But it is not the fact that the Son's nature verifies the notion of "nature" that enables Jesus to have the same relation to the Father that the Son has. It is the fact that the Son's relation to the Father verifies the notion of "relation." Or, is it the fact that the Son's relation verifies the notion of "subsistence"? But it verifies the notion of subsistence because it is a relation; for it is by being a relation of filiation that the Son terminates the Father's relation of Fatherhood.

Sikora says that subjectivity, in one meaning of the word, is that \*incommunicable\* root in the being of the unique exercise of existence and activity which are proper to this being and to no other. So proper to the Son, not the Father or Spirit, and so incommunicable from the Son to the Father and the Spirit; hence "subsistence" as incommunicability is tied to the relation that constitutes the Son in its character as a relation, not in its character as an essence or an existence, since the latter are shared with the Father and Spirit. So subsistence, the subsistence proper to the Son, is tied to the essence and existence of God only as a consequence of the relation's character of being identical with the essence and existence. Because this relation that constitutes the Son is identical with the essence and existence of God, as a consequence and only as a consequence of that is the relation that substitutes for human subsistence tied to the essence and existence of God.

Perhaps God could not substitute for human subsistence if God were an existence and/or an essence that was not identical with a formal relation. Why? Because human subsistence is a formal relation (does its job by being a formal relation and only by being a formal relation). This would definitely provide a cash value for saying that God cannot substitute for human subsistence qua his act of existence or qua the divine nature but only qua relation, even though by having that relation the human nature of Christ is united to the divine existence and nature in one person, since that relation is identical with the divine existence and nature. The "qua" would not be mere verbiage. God's act of existence cannot be received by a finite essence as its, the finite essence's, act of existence, as the act by which the finite essence exists. But an existing finite essence can have its properties directly caused in it by God and not have a human form of

subsistence, as distinct from it and its existence, caused in it by God. If so and if that direct causing of accidents must come from one of the distinct relations that are identical with the divine essence, human nature becomes united with the divine existence and essence only by sharing in a subsistence that is identical with one of the divine relations and incommunicable to the other divine relations.

So one person would exercise existence in and through human nature as well as in and through the divine nature, and by doing so the person would dwell in, occupy, inhabit, possess the human nature as its own as well as dwelling in, occupying, inhabiting, possessing the divine nature as its own. The human nature would be directly associated with a divine person in this way, but only as a result of its association with an incommunicable divine relation would the human nature also be associated with the divine existence and nature. And in Christ, the Son truly saves us through his human nature, saves us by the fact of possessing a human nature as a nature through which he personally acts.

In directly causing Christ's properties, God is exercising his own existence in the nature, the individual human nature, of Christ. By exercising his own existence in that nature, God is supplying for the lack of a created exercise of existence in that nature. Perhaps God cannot do this simply by uniting the human nature to his divine nature, since all created effects are, by the fact of being created, united with the divine nature in the sense that the divine nature is present wherever any created effect is present. So he can only supply for a lack of created subsistence by directly uniting the human nature, not with the divine nature as nature, but with the divine nature as identical with a relation distinct from other divine relations.

(God cannot exist in a finite nature in the sense of being the existence of a finite nature — see the quotation from Aquinas above; but he can exercise existence in a finite nature. God cannot share his existence with a creature's essence, but he can share his exercise of existence with a creature's essence. God's existence cannot be the existence received by a created essence; it can be the existence that is exercised in a created essence. Can it be the existence that a created essence exercises; can God's existence be exercised by, not just in, a created essence? No, it can only be that which exercises existence in a created essence. Can we say he exercises the existence, the created existence, of the finite nature of Jesus?)

Christ's actions are incommunicably the actions of the second person of the Trinity, not the other two. In this they are unlike any other created actions, which are actions "of" the Father and Spirit in the same way that they are actions of the Son. Must Christ's human actions still be created by the Father and the Spirit, since they are created by the divine nature and the Father and Spirit share the divine nature? If so, the way that those actions are actions of the Son alone must be subordinate to the way that they are actions of God. Maybe this is why Paul calls the incarnation a "humbling" for the Son. The Son is agreeing to play second fiddle to the Trinity as a whole, or to the divine nature as such, since in addition to sharing the divine nature and so being the source of Christ's human actions qua being God, he is also their source in a sense secondary to the way the divine nature is the source. (So can we say that Christ's human actions have a secondary cause, say that there is a secondary cause in Christ but not a created secondary cause? See Appendix II.)

#### Appendix VI: Subsistence and Being's "Diffusiveness of Itself"

This appendix has later thoughts on why subsistence, as something distinct from essence and existence, is necessary for a substance to share existence with effects.

As the state by which we virtually produce our causal faculties on the accidental level,

our subsistence is a participation in the Trinity's property of being diffusive of itself. (A participation in that dimension of God's characteristic of being diffusive of himself that is realized in the Trinity.) In the sense of efficient causality, "The good is diffusive of itself" is not a property of all being. But if we are thinking of the Trinity, rather than of God's freedom in creating, maybe being diffusive of itself is a property of all being. But it would be a necessary property of created being only because of the presence in creatures of a value really distinct from essence and existence. Likewise, it would be a necessary property of God only because of the presence of the divine relations as really distinct from one another.

Perhaps all beings must have the ability to be diffusive of their being, as God is, but like God, they do not diffuse their being to other beings of necessity, that is, just by existing. Maybe to actually be diffusive of their being, they need to participate in the dimension of God's being diffusive of himself that is necessary for God, not contingent. That dimension is his diffusion of himself in the Trinity, and the created participation in that dimension is created subsistence. Participating in being's diffusiveness of itself would then be necessary for creatures, but the reason would be that they cannot exist without their properties, which are really distinct from them since properties are accidents, and short of a miracle they have to cause their properties (and the properties are themselves mainly active and passive causal dispositions; even extensive quantity is a disposition for being divided). So creatures would have to diffuse their being to "others" at least in the sense of diffusing it to their properties. God would have to embody being's diffusiveness of itself because his essence diffuses itself in the divine relations, which are really distinct from each other as relations. (And in both cases diffusiveness is linked to subsistence as incommunicability with respect to existence.)

In us being would be necessarily diffusive of itself because of something really distinct from essence or existence. In God being would be necessarily diffusive of itself because of relations really distinct from one another but not from the divine nature. But in both cases, subsistence and diffusion of being, relations and real distinction would be inextricably linked. To be able to be diffusive of their being, creatures would have to participate in divine subsistence by having a genuine, formal relation to their existence, a relation really distinct from their existence and essence, that amounts a participation in the way divine persons are distinct as kinds of relatedness to the divine essence/existence. (Reason reveals that there are two elements distinct in us, essence and existence, that are not distinct in God. In addition, revelation might reveal — or at least logically require — that there is a third element distinct in us, subsistence, which corresponds to something also in God and not distinct from His essence, the divine relations. If I am right, however, reason can confirm that there is this third element, really distinct from essence and existence, in us. Also, revelation reveals that there is something in God corresponding to this third element in us, relations not really distinct from the divine nature but really distinct from one another as mutually required for each other's real identity with the divine nature: for the divine nature to be identical with a relation of fatherhood, it must also be identical with a relation of sonhood.)

All creatures share this characteristic of diffusiveness of their being, but one creature, Jesus, has that characteristic because He shares a subsistence belonging to God. To share this subsistence is to share (to participate in, to have) a relation to a term, a specific relation to a specific term, the Father. That relation, identical with the divine essence, is shared by Jesus (is possessed, exercised by Jesus). So Jesus's humanity has the same relation to the Father that the Son has. The other divine relations are not true of Jesus. What terminates Jesus's accidents'

relations of emanation from the agent, Jesus, is the same thing that terminates the Father's relation of generating the Son. ( In the Father-Son relations, an essence utters itself to itself and so generates relations that are each other's term; in the creature an essence produces its properties and so becomes the term of their relation of dependence on a virtual efficient cause).

Maybe only a pure act of existence can be identical with its own subsistence. Relations in God are not just identical with the essence, they are identical with a pure act of existence. Maybe where there is a distinction between existence and essence it is impossible for the existence to be its own subsistence, because all the existence can do is to be received by something other than itself, to actualize something other than itself, the essence. Such an existence cannot be a subsistence (maybe because existence "actualizes" something other than itself by way of actualizing a passive potency, so that more is needed for it to actualize something in an active sense, i.e., in the sense in which an active potency is actualized before it can produce its effect. See Sections 3 and 7.) In other words maybe there cannot be a distinction between existence and subsistence in God, but there must be such a distinction in us. In God there is no difference between having and exercising existence. That is, no difference between a pure facticity and a pressure exerted relative to another for another, no difference between self-identity and a breaking forth, a blossoming, in *relation* to others.

Perhaps subsistence is an ability to relate to others, where to relate does not mean just to have a static relation to others, like being double the size of something, but to have a dynamic relation to something. The difference is that a static relation like being the double of something can change and cease to exist without any change occurring to the subject of the relation or without the subject doing anything. We might also call it a passive relation vs. an active relation. In God, of course, subsistence is identical with a dynamic relation to another, since the relation is one of generating or processing, a dynamic relation to another that is at the same time a way of relating to itself. So notice this connection between the problem of the Trinity and my approach to subsistence in Christ. The problem of the Trinity is how can something be at the same time identical with itself and not identical with itself. The problem in creatures is how can an efficient cause be identical with a material cause.

(Since created persons are non-identical with their natures, we can speak of a person occupying a nature, dwelling in a nature, inhabiting a nature. [Still, the nature is what the person is, since subsistence does not add to the features belonging to the essence; it only adds a way for an essence with those features relates to its existence.] Likewise, the persons of the Trinity each occupy the same divine nature, the whole divine nature. How can distinct persons inhabit the whole of the divine nature, and each have that solitary nature as its nature, at the same time? By being different ways of occupying the whole divine nature. The whole surface is red, is smooth, is cold. How can distinct realities such as color, texture and temperature occupy the whole of the same surface? By being different ways of occupying it. How can gravitational force and electro-magnetic force each occupy the whole of the same universe? By being different ways of occupying it. But the Father and the Son each inhabit the whole of the Godhead because the Father's way of dwelling in it requires that the Son also dwell in it in his way. The Father and Son are also each identical with the whole of that nature, but each has his own way of being identical with it, as what expresses itself to itself and what is expressed by the expression of itself to itself, respectively. And the Father's way of being identical requires the existence of the Son's way.)

In creatures, the exercise of existence is a real formal relation of the essence to the

existence and at the same time a transcendental relation (and so identical with the state of subsistence itself) to the accidents that emerge from the essence because of it.

Notes

1. Maritain attempts to justify the assertion that essence is a principle quo, not a quod, by saying that this is how the concept of essence is originally formed. However, it is not valid to argue solely from the way the concept of something is formed to what the thing so conceived is outside of our concepts. And must the concept of essence originate as the concept of that by which an existent is what it is rather than as the concept of what it is that exists? Not according to Maritain's own detailed discussion of essence in An Introduction to Philosophy. Of course, if we are talking about essence with the universality that affects it as an object of concept, and further if we are thinking of this object conceived abstractly (humanity) rather than concretely (man), then essence relates to that which exists as if it were a principle quo, in particular, a form (the forma totius). But when we are talking about what receives existence outside the mind, we are not talking about the universal essence; we are talking about the individual essence, for example, Christ's humanity. Why should we call the individual essence a principle quo and not the quod that unites with the act of existence? That is, why should we not call the existing individual essence the "existent," defined as that which, having received existence, exists? But then Maritain's grounds for distinguishing the reception of existence from its exercise disappear.

It is equally legitimate, of course, to call the whole constituted by the union of essence and existence the "existent," that which has existence. (Phrases like "A has F" can express the relation of A to something distinct from itself: "Peter has cancer"; "Essence has existence." But they need not express the relation of A to something distinct from itself: "A baseball team has nine members"; "An existent has essence and existence.") Thus, a "being" or "existent" can mean either an individual essence that has existence or the union of essence with existence. Looking at the existent the latter way, we can call both essence and existence principles quo relative to the whole constituted by their union. Essence is that by which the existent has characteristics making it what it is; existence is that by which the existent exists. But the redundancy of the latter expression shows that what is expressed by calling the union of essence and existence that which exists is equivalent to what is expressed calling the individual essence which receives existence that which exists. These different ways of looking at and expressing what exists cannot make any difference to what it is that is looked at and expressed.

2. Though most of the previous justifications are unsatisfactory for the same reason as Maritain's. Their arguments that essence cannot be the suppositum apply to the universal essence but not the individual essence with existence (see n. 1).

3. But only in persons who belong to one species. Angels are individuals but are not individuated by matter.

4. If properties emerge from a substance, properties are necessary in the sense that the substance cannot exist without the properties coming into being. But if it is possible for a substance to miraculously not cause its properties, in what sense are the properties necessary? Properties are the necessary means by which a substance fulfills the finalities inscribed in its nature. God cannot create a substance without creating, in one way or another, its properties, because He would be creating a useless substance, one with finalities whose fulfillment was impossible.

5. As Maritain has reminded us in some of the most profound pages ever written by a philosopher, Approches sans entraves, pp 302-317; English, pp. 252-263.
6. Specifically, in the sense of what Maritain called the "superanalogy of faith." The Degrees of Knowledge, pp. 241-244 (Phelan/Scribners edition).
7. Keep in mind that the Son is the term of the relation of paternity, not of the relation of filiation; the Son is the relation of filiation. The term of the relation of paternity, the Father, is the relation of filiation, the Son, just as the term of the relation of filiation, the Son, is the relation of paternity, the Father. The Father is the Father-of the Son, and the Son is the Son-of the Father.
8. Another way of putting this conclusion is that if there is a real relatedness in God, transitivity of identity does not apply between the relatedness and God. For there can be a real relatedness identical with God if and only if there is another real relatedness identical with God. So if the assumption of one real relatedness in God is not contradictory, which is what Aquinas shows by the arguing that the nature of relatedness does not require inherence in a receiving subject, the failure of transitivity of identity in God is not contradictory, since the failure of transitivity follows from that (non-contradictory) assumption. The temptation is to argue that the failure of transitivity proves that assumption of a real relatedness in God is contradictory. On the contrary, to argue from transitivity of identity to the contradictoriness of that assumption begs the question. Since the limitation on transitivity follows from that assumption, transitivity only holds where that assumption is not true. I do not claim that this argument shows that one cannot prove the contradictoriness of the Trinity (the Godelian theological method discussed in Section 1), only that one cannot prove the contradictoriness of the Trinity from the failure of transitivity of identity.
9. When God causes the properties directly, is their inherence in the substance virtual or formal material causality? Perhaps formal, because the substance is not in the state of existence that enables the properties to emerge from it by efficient causality. But if so, this "formal" presence of material causality would imply no difference between Christ and us with respect to Christ's humanity. As we do, Christ possesses a complete human nature actualized by a complete set of necessary accidents. And as in us, Christ's human nature is analogous to an active potency for producing his properties, not just a passive potency, though it is not now the actual producer of his properties. The only difference making the presence of material causality "formal" would be the absence of a factor distinct from the substance or its accidents, subsistence. When present, that factor brings about virtual material causality because it brings it about that a property's relation of dependence on an efficient cause has the substance in which the property exists for its term. But what the term of that relation is does not affect the nature of the relation of dependence, of the accident or of the substance. Christ's substance's role as actively producing the accidents would be gone, but that role is nothing real in the substance. For substance to "have" that role is for it to happen to be what its accidents have as the term of their relation of dependence on an efficient cause. Christ's human substance would be of the same nature as ours, as would his accidents. His accidents would still be transcendental relations of dependence on their efficient and material causes. But his accidents' relation of inhering in the substance as in their material cause would not be "absorbed" into the higher formality of dependence on their

efficient cause by the fact that they perfect, not just that in which they reside, but that from which they emerge. Although they do not perfect the very active potency from which they emerge, the divine nature, they still perfect Christ's human nature, but they only perfect it as that in which they reside, not as that from which they emerge. But in the case where that from which they emerge is the same as that in which they reside, there is no real distinction between emerging from it and residing in it; likewise, for an immanent action to emerge from its source is the same as to reside in its source. Virtual presence is real presence. When material causality is virtually present, it is really present, though in a different state because all there is of reality (actuality) in it is included in the existence of something with more actuality. When that greater actuality is present, as in us, material causality is just as really present as when the greater actuality is absent, as it is in Christ. Christ's human nature lacks the "greater actuality" of exercising its own existence (as so of being the suppositum of its own actions), rather than just receiving it; of course, by having its properties caused directly by God, Christ's human nature is united with an exerciser of existence (a suppositum) with infinitely greater actuality than it would have if it exercised its own existence.

10. The source from which the power receives the prior actualization need not belong to a being other than the being to which the power belongs. One part of a living thing can put another part into a state of act. For example, the existence of a sensory cognition can provide the prior actualization necessary for a sense appetite to go from not producing to producing an immanent action like sensory desire; that is, a desire for a particular sensed object can emerge as a result of the sensory cognition of the object.

11. Not the free will of an angel or soul, since a free choice requires a change from not making this choice to making it.

12. I am not implying that I do disagree with it in other respects, but I do not wish to enter historical disputes about the interpretation of Aquinas.

13. Simon has similar things to say about sense knowledge in the first paragraph of "An Essay on Sensation."

14. On the other hand, it is possible for a particular theory of that miraculous union to unintentionally eliminate something that pertains to Christ's humanity; that is the accusation the current objection makes against my theory.