

## Further ideas for "A Theory of the Incarnation" and on The Trinity

xxx Incarnation, Inc, HU, Hypostatic Union, Properties, subsistence, April 25, 2000

The following remarks concern material in two sets of files, the files entitled "Inc" and those entitled "Properties". These deal with the topics of the incarnation and hypostatic union, on one hand, and the question of how a substance causes its properties, on the other hand. The idea is that the concept of exercising existence as opposed to receiving existence can help us solve both problems. A substance's causing of its properties is virtual efficient causality. But wherever there is something that is only virtual, there must be something corresponding that exists in a formal sense. My argument is that the best way to understand virtual efficient causality is to identify it with the exercise of existence, the exercise of existence is what virtual efficient causality is formally.

But there are two questions. In the case of the incarnation, I propose the hypothesis that any created substance needs a distinct factor called the exercise of existence in order to be an efficient cause. The problem is why aren't existence and essence together enough for a created substance to be a cause. The first part of the answer is that in order to be an efficient cause the substance must first cause its own necessary accidents, its properties. But this leads to the second problem.

Why cannot the formal factor that we identified with the virtual efficient causality be the existence itself of the substance.? We can say first that in the case of formal efficient causality the existence of the cause is not considered to be the cause. The thing that exists is considered to be the cause, and should be considered to be the cause. So in looking for virtual efficient causality, we are looking for something that is comparable to things rather than the existence of things. We might even say that we are looking for something comparable to a substance's properties, rather than its existence. For it is through its properties that a substance exercises formal efficient causality.

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. 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 since existence makes it to be a material cause, existence must belong to it, be in it, in some way other than merely the way that makes it a material cause.

Something distinct from essence must be the source of the causing of accidents; otherwise, the essence would be because of an effect and the receiver of an 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 in 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?

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 the virtual efficient and material causes for this comparison 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 between the ways existence is necessary for their to be a virtual material cause and a virtual efficient cause.

.And 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.

Existence is received by essence. So if existence, not subsistence, was the essence's production of its necessary accidents, those accidents 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 would not be producing its necessary accidents. The cause of the essence's existence would be producing the essence's necessary accidents, would be the cause of the essence's necessary accidents.

If I am right, then subsistence takes the place of physical premotion. Premotion is supposedly something over and above bare creation, something over and above bare creation needed to explain the fact that creatures act. But subsistence is at a deeper level.

When a body is in motion, it is "acting" on its environment, i.e., its environment is undergoing changes because the body in motion is what it is. 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; only this time the effects are within the thing, its necessary accidents, not outside the thing, as in the case of motion.

I call the exercise of existence "subsistence". maybe we can just say that subsistence is a relation of the substance to its existence, or I should say is analogous to a relation of the substance to its existence. This would also put subsistence solidly on the side of substance rather than accident. The word analogous is used in the non-technical sense rather than in the sense of parageneric. Making subsistence analogous to a relation would also tie the doctrine of subsistence in creatures to the doctrine of the Trinity.

Perhaps it would help to understand subsistence, 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.

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 would 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.

So created subsistence would be a relation of an essence to its existence, a non-accidental relation of an essence to its existence.

In the Father-Son relation, an essence utters itself to itself. An 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 in the Trinity corresponds to the 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 materially, relative) perfections belonging to essence are participations in what the non-relative perfections that are what God is?

Trinity and HU - AA

6-14-91

We can share in the Trinity! Subsistence is a participation in the Trinity's property of being diffusive of itself. I.e., In the sense of efficient causality, "The good is diffusive of itself" is not a property of all being, or at least not self-evidently so, or it is a property of all being only because of a value distinct from essence and existence.

All beings must have this property, but one being, Jesus, has it 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 true of Jesus, is shared, possessed, exercised by, Jesus. 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.

The good is diffusive of itself because of a property distinct from essence or existence in us. Reason reveals that there are two elements distinct in us, essence and existence, that are not distinct in God. Revelation reveals 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.

By depriving Jesus of that property and causing his necessary accidents directly, 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 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 Jesus's relation to the Father is the Son's relation to the Father. Jesus's created existence and essence do not relate to the Father as the Son does. But this PERSON, this source of activity, this originator of diffusion of being, has the same relation to the Father as the Son, i.e., as that 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, that is the Son.

HU - AA 5-31-99

This man Jesus 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 has. 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, it is 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.

Since the son cannot have a real relation to creatures but the son really becomes man, while the Father and the Spirit do not, Jesus's human nature must have a real relation to the Son that other human natures do not. But this "real relation" might consist just in the absence of subsistence, which is really present in all other human natures.

If subsistence is necessary for a substance to produce its necessary accidents, it would require 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. Would these be acts produced with no subsistence whatsoever? Not if created subsistence is a participation in a perfection found in God, e.g., relations in the trinity. See Maritain on how his theory of subsistence ties in with subsistence in the Trinity.

If created subsistence is a participation in a perfection shared by all three persons, how can one person be the cause of those acts? Perhaps they can be the acts of one person by, for instance, being statements about his relation to other persons that only one person could make.

Or it might even be possible to say that there are two kinds of created existence, two kinds of created acts of existence. One kind includes the exercise of existence by its identity with itself, not by any addition. The other kind does not include the exercise of existence. So what we are suggesting, hypothesizing, is that it is possible for God to give a created essence an existence which is not identical with the exercise of existence. Is that possible? Why not? The hypothesis simply means that God

himself has to supply the needed subsistence by directly causing the accidents of the substance, that is, the properties, the necessary accidents of the substance. Since subsistence would still precede the existence of accidents, it would still be on the side of substance rather than of accidents. And this solution would leave Jesus's human nature completely intact, completely untouched.

So maybe the problem with the incarnation is not that we lack a logically possible theological explanation, but rather that we have several logically possible explanations but we do not know which one to choose.

To be received by is not to be exercised by. "By" refers to a different kind of causality in each case. Existence is exercised by essence. In exercising existence, essence is an efficient cause; in receiving existence, it is a material cause. So "by" expresses different causal relations (think Trinity).

Existence actualizes the potency of essence in one way; accidents actualize the potency of essence in another way. Existence actualizes essence in one direction. Accidents actualize essence in another direction. Of course, I am talking about substantial essence. It is by receiving existence that essence is actualized in one way; by receiving existence, a potency of essence is actualized in one way. By exercising existence, a potency of essence is actualized in another way, by the production of the essence's accidents. The exercise of existence is not itself an accident, but actualizes accidents.

We are here are talking about to different relations (think Trinity). Actualizing accidents corresponds to God's uttering his nature to himself. God utters what he is to himself. A created nature exercises its existence by producing accidents. God does not actualize the nature, as accidents do, but he utters it to himself, utters it so perfectly that he can love himself as if in another, as if loving another, where "as if" does not mean that the Trinity is not real, it means the opposite, so perfectly that he can contemplate himself in another; another what? Another exerciser of existence, another who corresponds to the accident-producing exercise of existence in the creature, which does not occur in God.

As the divine relations are relations generated by God's knowledge and love of himself, an essence's causing of its power's, for example, the powers of knowledge and love, is a "proto-relation" of the essence to its existence, the proto-relation of exercising the existence not just receiving it.

In ordinary created causality, God causes an effect through the causality of a creature that is a cause because the creature is exercising its own created existence when the causality takes place. In Christ, God wills that there is no created cause of the accidents of Christ, because there is no created cause exercising its own existence and therefore becoming a cause of the accidents.

Or 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. God cannot share his existence with a creature's essence, but he can share his exercise of existence with a creature's essence.

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 of creatures. We still want to know what the exercise of existence is in creatures if it is really distinct from the existence of creatures. Call it a "mode" just for the sake of having a name; calling at that does not add any intelligibility.

But perhaps for theological purposes all we need to say about subsistence, the exercise of existence, is this. It is directly analogous (technical use here) not to any of the 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 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.

This might mean, for instance, that subsistence is 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 material (transcendental) relation, but is a third analogate distinguished from either 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 an analogical set of



material and formal relations. Then there is an analogical set of formal ("genuine") relations whose analogates are predicamental and non-predicamental formal relations. Then there is an analogical set of non-predicamental formal relations whose analogates are logical and real non-predicamental formal relations. Then there is an analogical set of these real non-predicamental formal relations whose analogates are the Trinitarian relations and these proto-relations.)

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 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 would become man at one time, according to which one God chose.

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. 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. Receiving existence would be a transcendental relation, exercising existence would be a proto-relation.

The potency to exercise existence would then 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. Or may be just 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. For it leaves the essence's potency for accidents, necessary accidents, unfulfilled. The exercise of substantial existence precedes the existence of a necessary accidents as the existence of the cause precedes the existence of the effect.

So the fulfillment of that reservoir of potency, that is, the existence of necessary accidents, requires the

prior existence of the relation of exercising substantial existence on the part of essence. Is there, as a result, another reserve of potency in the essence prior to its potency for accidents?

Don't forget. The potency for exercising existence is analogous to an active potency, while the potency for receiving existence is a passive potency.

But since the distinction between the essence and its exercise of existence is analogous to the distinction between relations in the Trinity, the distinction between essence as receiving existence and essence as in potency to exercise existence would have to also be a "proto-potency." Maybe we can say that it is a potency that is not even there until essence receives existence. Prior to essence's receiving existence, the essence is what it is in the mind of God. And it is complete as being what it is in the mind of God. There is no potency in it other than the potency for necessary accidents.

But it is also a potency for receiving existence. And as a potency for receiving existence it is a potency for becoming something that is potentially exercising existence. It is only a potency to be something exercising existence in relation to its reception of existence, not in relation to its completeness as an essence defining what something it is. And maybe that is what the phrase proto-potency would mean in terms of its cash value.

Wait; I've been forgetting what I said the other day about the two types of passive potency in 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. It also has (or is) an active potency for causing the existence of its accidents, for causing the fulfillment of its passive potency. But its active potency for causing accidents is not fulfilled just by receiving existence.

We can resolve the apparent contradiction between essence's being both an active and passive potency in the same respect by comparing essence to an active potency whose act is an immanent action. The actuation of a potency for immanent action resides in the potency. But it is not a passive actuation of the potency. Or Rather it is not formally a passive actuation of the potency. It is virtually a passive activation of

the potency. The way the immanent action perfects the power includes an actuation that is virtually the actuation of a passive potency. That is, it includes all there is of perfection in what happens when a passive potency is actuated, but it is formally more than the actuation of a passive potency.

Likewise, essence's actuation of its accidents is not formally the actuation of a passive potency. But it does everything that the actuation of a passive potency would do. So the actuation of what I just called the essence's passive potency for accidents is formally an active actuation, but it accomplishes everything that a passive actuation would. In other words, the accidents reside in the essence analogously to the way that the immanent action resides in the power from which it emerges.

Here is where subsistence comes in. An operative potency that is not always producing an immanent action must itself be moved from potency to act in a passive manner in order for it to be in sufficient act for the immanent action to emerge from. For if it was already in a sufficient state of act for the immanent action to emerge, an action would always be emerging. Likewise, for the essence to function as an active potency for its accidents, it has to be actuated by subsistence. Because a mere reception of existence puts in existence of the virtual passive potency for the accidents but does not actuate the active potency for the accidents.

In immanent action, the received act prior to the action is not virtually identical with the production of the action. The immanent action itself is virtually identical with that production. Substantial existence is like the act received prior to the immanent action; the exercise of existence is that with which the production of the substance's necessary accidents is identical.

Any effect has a transcendental relation to a cause. But where more than one cause can produce that kind of effect, the nature of the effect does not reveal the nature of the cause. But there is one thing we know about the cause necessary for any effect. We know that it is a supposit, a subsistent, something with subsistence. In the case of necessary accidents, that which has the subsistence could be the individual substance or be God.

My theory captures only a portion of the traditional theory of subsistence. (For example, on some

theories, subsistence distinguishes Socrates from Socrates's individual human nature.) My theory is intended to capture no more than that. But that is all I need.

HU, Jul. 8, 95

Why can't existence be that which makes essence a cause? Because the problem began with a need to get a distinction between the feature by which essence is an efficient cause and the feature by which it is a material cause, and both features need to be existents. They need to be something which exists, not existence itself. For in any case of causality, the efficient cause needs to be "something which exists" and so does the material cause. In fact, the problem could have been originally stated in those terms. The need for an efficient cause is the need for something, some existent, some that which exists, distinct from that which exists when the material cause exists.

HU, immanent action, causality, substance causing accidents, Feb. 4, 95

A substance's causing of its necessary accidents can be compared to immanent action emerging from a faculty. But a faculty that was 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. Likewise, a substance may require a further actuation to enable it to cause its necessary accidents. By removing that actuation and causing those necessary accidents directly, God assumes the substance as His own nature, as a nature through which He acts personally.

Note also that all physical causality requires an actuation over and above physical agents being what they are. It also requires physical agents to be in motion. 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.

In order to be an agent, a substance must first produce its own properties. For it to produce its own properties, there must be a solution to the dilemma that it would be the agent and patient in the same respect at the same time. The solution must be that, just as it causes an effect through a faculty, it causes the faculty through something non-identical with itself or with the faculty. That is what I call subsistence. If there still seems to be a paradox with respect to the whole substance being the material cause of the production the substance performs through its subsistence, we can solve the problem by comparing the production of the faculty to an immanent action. In an immanent action, the effect resides within the faculty. The effect is an act, not relative to a passive potency but to an active potency. The effect completes and actuates the potency as a result of the potency itself producing that effect. We can say that the relation between potency and act here is virtually that of a passive potency to its act. For the relation does all that the actuation of a passive potency does, it has all that the actuation of a passive potency has, but it has more than that. Likewise, with the production of necessary accidents.

HU, Mar 1, 1999 BIG

Why doesn't the termination of a necessary accident's relation of dependence go all the way back at the substance's act of existence? Of course, it should. So the question is what could prevent a necessary accident's relation of dependence from extending all the way to the act of existence? There are two possibilities.

The exercise of existence is at least logically distinct from the reception of existence. Can the logical distinction ever correspond to a real distinction? Here is where the two possibilities come in. If in order to cause our properties, we need a state of exercising existence that is really distinct from the reception of existence, God's depriving Christ of that state of exercising existence would prevent his properties' relation of dependence

on a quasi-efficient cause from extending all the way back to his created act of existence. But there is one more possibility.

What if in all other creatures, the exercise of existence is not really distinct from receiving existence? Then, to prevent Christ's properties' relation of dependence from terminating at the created act of existence, God could add something to Christ that was not found in other creatures, something corresponding negatively to the state of exercise of existence. He would add something that would not be the exercise of existence but would prevent Christ's human substantial nature from being the exerciser of existence.

Perhaps there is an insight in the fact that, in the case of human nature, subsistence belongs directly to the soul, not to the composite. Perhaps that explains something about the "change with no subject" in transubstantiation.

Feb 24, 1998

There must be two acts of existence in Jesus. See Summa Contra G. I, 27,2 (and I, 22-26). "Divine existence cannot belong to any quiddity that is not existence itself."

xxx subsistence, hu, Trinity, April 15, 2005

Reading from marginal comments in Sikora, "the Christian intellect and the mystery of being," page 111: he 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. Commenting on that: proper to the son, not the Father or spirit; hence "subsistence" is tied to the relation that constitutes the son in its character as a relation, not as essence or existence. But because this relation that

constitutes the son is identical with the essence and existence of God, as a consequence and only as a consequence is it tied to the essence and existence of God. 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 as identical with the essence and existence. But formally speaking subsistence is the relation because the relation is what is proper to the son.

The last paragraph is a comment trying to connect the concept of subsistence to the concept of a relation in preparation for using the concept of relation to describe the difference between subsistence and existence in creatures. One key to using relation for the concept of subsistence in creatures is the fact that to be a genuine relation the relation does not have to be received into a potential subject. For if subsistence were an actualization of a potency of the essence, subsistence might look like an accident. (No. Maybe it doesn't follow that it would look like an accident. And maybe that is a big clue. The potency of essence for existence does not make existence a predicamental accident; why should the potency of essence for subsistence make it an accident, that is, make subsistence an accident.)

And essence's potency for subsistence would be a potency for exercising existence. To be fully human Christ's human nature would have to include such a potency for subsistence. Can that potency be fulfilled by the divine subsistence? The potency for subsistence is the potency for the exercise of existence. The exercise of existence is what formally constitutes the virtual efficient causality by which the essence produces its necessary accidents. If God produces the necessary accidents by himself, the potency for subsistence that belongs to the essence will be fulfilled by God himself.

Quoting Sikora on page 112: "all the reality of the existent in a way is derived from its existence; without existence there is simply no being at all." So subsistence is "derived" from existence. That is, the existence is the existence of a nature to which certain active powers must belong of necessity. The nature of these accidental powers is specified by the substantial nature. The substantial nature is their cause in the order of specification. Because the existence is the existence of this nature and not that nature, existence is the cause of the powers in the order of exercise.

For, because the existence is the existence of the nature to which certain powers must belong (active potencies as opposed to the passive reception of accidents) this existence must give rise to "must be that from which is derived" the exercise of existence. How does God prevent Christ's's human existence from being that from which the exercise of existence is derived? By creating Christ in a \*relationship\* to himself, or to the Father, that is the same as the son's relationship.

Quoting Sikora on page 113: "existence is not merely added to essence; it is exercised as the act of the essence." So subsistence is the act of the essence. "of" indicates here that the essence somehow "dominates" over existence by owning the existence and making the existence its own. (The son "makes" the divine existence its own, that is, the son owns the divine existence as his "own" So do the Father and the Spirit).

Subsistence is the state of not just being subjected to what is greater than and prior to itself but being elevated to the status of controlling what it is subjected to. Not just being "acted on" by existence (as if acted on, quasi-acted on) But of being the "agent" (as if agent, quasi-agent) of the existence. That is, of being an actual, though virtual, agent producing a powers on the accidental level, once it has been "acted on" act the substantial level.

Subsistence is a foreword looking \*relation\* from the substance to its accidents, a relation belonging to, belonging at, the substantial level as the son is at the level of God's 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. (Here "Possess existence as its existence" does not mean just receiving existence but controlling it, dominating over it.)

Digression: being a divine person does not make Christ's less human, with respect to personness, with respect to the perfection, the actuality, of personness, then we are. He is everything that we are as



persons with a human nature, but he is more not less. End of digression.

Continuing from the back cover of Sikora: "possessing" existence does not mean just receiving it But grasping it, holding onto it, holding it in one's hand (think of the way Maritian describes persons as holding themselves in their hands; persons are defined as being subsistents of a rational nature.) The son exercises the divine existence as his own, as his possession.

Subsistence is distinct from existence and essence as a relation of the essence to existence, perhaps a relation not inhering in any potential subject (except virtually) but still a genuine relation, since a relation does not need to inhere in the subject to be a genuine form of relatedness, to be a way of being related.

April 23, 2005

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. 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 two 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.

Subsistence is traditionally described as a kind of incommunicability. Even Maritian, after introducing the new concept of subsistence as the exercise of existence, wants to make it incommunicability in the exercise of existence. Why do we need a form of incommunicability other than the kind provided by matter as the principle of individuation for material essences or the separated form as the principle that individuates existence in the case of angelic essences? The concept of the ethical value of a person provides an answer.

Each person is supposed to be uniquely valuable, that is, irreplaceably valuable. The fact that a person shares a common nature with another person 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 irreplaceable value. So if that ethical hypothesis is true, personality must imply a kind of incommunicability other than the incommunicability that derives from matter; matter cannot be the source of the value unique to each person; matter is a condition for it, not the source of it. And since this incommunicability is associated with ethical value, it must be associated with the fact of the person's causing his own acts of choice. For acts of choice are the acts in which the person puts into exercise his status as an end in itself.

So subsistence is at least this: incommunicability with reference to action's being of an incommunicable supposit. There must be a better way to put that. Actions are of the supposit in the sense that they belong to this supposit uniquely. But ordinarily when they belong to this supposit uniquely that the same time belong to this individual instance of human nature, for example, Socrates. But in the case of Christ, we want to say that the supposit to which the action belongs is the second person of the Blessed Trinity and that Christ's individual human nature does not correspond to, is not associated with, or simply just is not, a human supposit.

Actions belong to the supposit as opposed to being shared with any other supposit. And the actions of Christ do not belong to a human supposit but to a divine supposit. And very importantly notice that they do not belong to each of the supposits in God. They only belong to one of the supposits in God. Christ's actions are incommunicably the actions of the second person of the Trinity, not the other two.

About 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. Christ's substantial human nature does not produce his necessary accidents, his properties. God produces them directly. In doing so, God causes Christ's existing individual human nature to stand to him, to God, in exactly the same relationship that the son of God stands to the Father.

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 both are not 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.

But we also 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'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 necessary accidents. God is not the cause of Christ's actions by causing a created supposit to be a secondary cause of its own accidents. God is the cause of Christ's actions by creating those actions in Christ without a created supposit as a secondary cause. There still is a secondary cause. Christ's'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's human nature is genuinely a secondary cause; it acts when Christ's will acts. But it does not act as the supposit, as the created supposit to which this action uniquely belongs. Christ's's individual human nature is not the incommunicable source of the action; Christ's's human nature communicates with the second person of the Blessed Trinity's subsistence when Christ acts.

Perhaps the relation of Christ's human acts to the second person, as opposed to the other two persons, results from the specifying causality of the acts we are talking about rather than the efficient causality. I am thinking of the fact that among the acts that God will produce in Christ are acts stating that he is the second person of the Trinity, that he is the son of God, that he is less than the father in certain sense, etc. etc. The content of those statements provide content, formal content for the acts that God wills to produce in Christ's without producing a created exercise of existence in Christ. Is that fact, the fact that God wills such content to be the specifier, the specifying cause, of Christ's acts sufficient to make us attribute those acts uniquely to the incommunicability of the second person of the Trinity, the incommunicability that belongs to the second person and not any other person?

The dog's barking does not belong to any of the three persons as incommunicable, when we say that the dog's barking is God to action. But when God withholds subsistence from a created entity is it necessary that he supply a subsistence that is not shared by each of the members of the Trinity but is incommunicable to more than 1 member of the Trinity? Perhaps it is for a reason that we are not able to articulate. That would not make the mystery of the Trinity any more difficult than it now is.

In directly causing Christ's's necessary accidents, 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 that fact united with the divine nature in the sense that the divine nature is present where ever any created effect is present. So he can only supply for a lacking created subsistence by directly uniting the human nature not with the divine nature as nature, but with the divine nature as 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.) (Can we say he exercises \*the\* existence of the finite nature of Jesus?)

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 do the persons as distinct from one another rather than as communicating in the divine nature. Whatever that kind of incommunicability is, may be that is precisely what makes the incommunicability that is associated with the value of each unique, irreplaceable person, whether created or a created, differ from the kind of incommunicability that derives from matter.

No November 13, 2005

These are thoughts after hearing the Herald Bloom on TV talking about Christianity being a form

of polytheism because of the doctrine of the Trinity. In addition to God, Christianity appears to posit two other entities, the son and the holy spirit. But it is not as if these entities are posited as two beings unrelated to God. They are posited as entities that are related to God. But more than that, they are posited as entities whose whole reality consists in their relationship to God. That's all there is to the son and Holy Spirit, realities the whole of which are relationships to God.

When Christians say there are three persons in one God, they are saying that there are three persons subsisting in the same divine nature. There are three persons each of whom indwells the same infinite reality, the same infinite nature. How can three distinct realities dwell in the same nature without stepping on each other's turf? How can three realities indwell in the same nature without interfering with each other?

Well when Christians saying that the three persons indwell, live in, subsist in, dwell in, reside in the same nature, they are saying that three relations indwell in the same nature. So how can different relations each indwell in the same nature? That is, How can each in dwell wholly in the same nature? Because that is what Christians mean when they talk about persons subsisting in the Trinity or relations dwelling in Trinity. They mean that each of them dwells in the whole of the divine nature.

Well how can different relations be really different and yet each indwell in the whole divine nature without stepping on each other's turf, without interfering with the other's space? Well look at concave and convex curves. These are two different relationships, to be concave and to be convex. But one and the same curve that is convex from one point of view and has a relationship of being convex from one point of view is identical with the curve that is concave from another point of view and has a relationship of being concave from that other point of view. Likewise, the road north is the same as the road south. But the relation that is referred to by the direction of North is the contrary opposite of the relation that is referred to by the direction south.

So the divine nature is something like the curve that is both concave and convex at the same time. In other words when Christians say that three distinct relations each subsist in, indwell the whole of the divine nature, that each dwell in the whole of the divine nature, Christians are saying that the divine nature is relational, just as a curve is essentially relational, namely, relational as convex and concave at the same time. But the divine nature being relational, given that there is one relation, fatherhood, living in the divine nature there must be a contrary opposite relation, namely Sonship, dwelling in the whole of the same nature, just as the whole of the curve is and must be concave at the same time that it is convex.

The analogy is not perfect of course. The relation of fatherhood is distinct from the relation of sonship. But the curve that is convex is not distinct from the curve that is concave. Or, that which constitutes the convexity of the curve is not distinct from what constitutes the concavity of the curve. Well that which is fatherhood is not distinct from that which is Sonship. But the relation of fatherhood is distinct from the relation of sonship. Because when we say that fatherhood is identical with the divine nature, we are saying that fatherhood dwells in the divine nature as its nature, as the nature that fatherhood has. And Sonship dwells in the divine nature as its nature, as the nature that Sonship possesses.

Likewise, we can say that in the case of a human being one person subsists in an individual human nature. One person dwells in an individual human nature. One person has that individual human nature as its nature.

In the case of the Trinity three different persons, three different relations, each have the same individual nature as its nature, as the nature of each of the distinct persons. Three different persons each have the whole of the divine nature as its nature as the nature of that person, as what answer question what that person it is.

Trinity, November 13, 2005

How can there be diverse viewpoints in God in order for there to be diverse relations from the different viewpoints, as the same curve is concave and convex from different viewpoints?. The relations that live in the whole of the divine nature and have the whole of the divine nature as their nature are ways in which the divine nature relates to itself. The whole of the divine nature relates to itself as a generator of a generated. And therefore the whole of the divine nature must also relate to itself as what is it generated by the generator, or is that which is generated by the generator.

More descriptively the whole of the divine nature relates to itself as expressing itself to itself and as the expression of itself to itself. The whole of the divine nature relates to itself as an original copying itself and as a perfect copy of itself.

November 13, 2005 Trinity,

Does it make sense to say that the divine nature is identical with the copy of itself? It does make sense if the divine nature is owned by both a relation of those nature is that of the copier and a relation who is nature is that of the copy. When we say that the divine nature is the copy of itself, we are saying that the relation of being the expression of what the divine nature is in dwells, owns, lives in, exactly the same nature as the relation that is the expresser to itself of the divine nature. Both relations own the same divine nature.

Trinity, November 13, 2005

That is how the divine nature expresses itself to itself, namely, by generating the relation of being the expression. That is, by one relation, the relation of expressing itself to itself, generating another relation, being of the expression of itself to itself, the relation of being the expression of itself to itself. That is precisely what it mean is for the divine nature to be identical with a copy of itself. That is what it means for the divine nature to express itself to itself, to be the originator and

originated.

By expressing itself to itself, we do not mean that the divine nature makes another nature that is an exact copy of it. We mean one divine nature is owned by a relation which is that of the nature expressing itself to itself, and the same divine nature is owned by a relation that is the expression of the nature to itself. A multiplicity occurs that allows one relation to be the unitary nature's being an expresser of itself to itself and another relation to be the unitary's nature to be the expression of itself to itself, because both contrary relations are identical with the unitary nature and live in the whole of that nature.

The "Word of God" is God's cognitional expression of himself to himself. The "Sigh of God" ("Spirit" means breath) is God's affective, conative, expression of himself to himself. The Word of God is God's mind. The spirit of God is God's attitude of mind. The Spirit is the Father and Son's sigh of love to each other or groan of love (Romans 8) to each other.

xxx Trinity, Bible, first generation Christianity, February 11, 2004

What did first generation Christians believe about the Trinity? If we can find out, it is only by asking the question, as we read the early epistles, what is the author assuming that his audience already knows? In the first epistle to the Thessolonians, Paul says that we are children of God and that Jesus is the son of God. There must have been away that they would have distinguished these two senses of being children of God, and Paul is assuming that the Thessolonians are aware of that way. And that way must have been more specific than a vague "Jesus is God's son in a special way." (So sometime before 1 Thes, . . . .)

Another principle we can now invoke, having established something about what the early Christians believed is that there must be some evidence for, some vestige of,



that way of distinguishing Jesus from other children of God in the epistles, whether or not they are the earliest epistles. In the epistle to the Galatians, Paul says that we are adopted children of God. So Jesus must have been a child of God in a sense opposed to adoption. Jesus is a natural child of God. But what does this mean? (Again, before Galatians and probably before 1 Thessalonians, because this is the only one we can find in the early epistles.)

Using our concepts of person and nature, we can truthfully say that the first Christians believed that Jesus is one person in two natures. To say this does not imply that the first Christians possessed our concepts of person and nature, or even that they could have understood them. It only says that certain concepts that we possess can truthfully describe concepts that they possessed. But what concepts that they possessed, or could have acquired with ease, express what they believe about Jesus's sonship?

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, we get some evidence. In chapter three, there is teaching about the spirit. That teaching appears to be something new to the Corinthians. At least, Paul gives the impression in the way he writes that he is giving information to the Corinthians that they may not have had before. On the other hand, that information presupposes that the Corinthians already believed certain things about the spirit.

In particular, that information would not have made any sense if the Corinthians did not already believe that the spirit was part of the life of God. "Part of the life of God" uses concepts that the Corinthians either could have had or could have acquired in a way that was not anachronistic. "Part of the life of God" means that the spirit belongs to God not the way creation belongs to him, as something exterior to him, but as something interior to him.

"Interior" could be further clarified, using concepts of which they were at least capable, as compared to the way God's power, knowledge, love, beauty, etc. belongs to him and as opposed to the way the things he is made belong to him. Our metaphysics would want to distinguish the way an attribute of God's nature, such as power, belongs to him from the way the divine persons belong to him. But without a lot of explanation, it would be in anachronistic to read that distinction into the phrase "interior part of God's life", or "part of God's interior life," at this point.

Likewise, "life" in our metaphysics can refer to an attribute of God's nature rather than an attribute of the divine persons. But it would be unnecessary and anachronistic to read that distinction into the phrase "part of God's interior life" in describing the early Christians' beliefs about Trinity. Believers know that the early Christians were experiencing the life of the Trinity. So they could have acquired and used the concept of God's interior life to express what they believe about Trinity.

Again, they must have believed that the spirit belongs to God's interior life. So why can we not say that they knew that the spirit belonged to God's interior life as something uncreated, unmade? We get that from the first epistle to the Corinthians. That same epistle describes Jesus as he through whom we exist. And as we look for further vestiges of, evidence of, the earliest beliefs about the Trinity in perhaps later epistles, we again find beliefs that can be described by saying that Jesus is part of the interior life of God, Jesus belongs to the interior life of God, and he belongs to it not as something created but as something uncreated, unmade.

So it would be irrational to say that the earliest Christians could use such descriptions of the spirit but not use such descriptions of Jesus who gave them the

spirit, and who earned the spirit for them. The epistle to the Philippians uses the phrase "equal to God." Can we say that that phrase describes the earliest Christians belief about Jesus? Why not? Now that we know that Jesus is part of God's interior life, and uncreated part of God's interior life.

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Outtakes:

xxx Trinity and Incarnation, April 29, 2005,

: before revelation, we know that the meanings of certain words are formally present in God's

nature: goodness, power, knowledge, will, love, act, etc.. But we do not know that the meaning

of "relation" is formally present in God's nature before revelation. Perhaps we know that it is

possible for a relation or relations to be present in his nature. That is, perhaps we could come up

with Aquinas's argument about the possibility of relations in God before revelation. But we

would not know that relations can be formally present in God until revelation.

Perhaps we should say that subsistence is a property or a modification of the existence rather than of the essence. That would ensure that subsistence is on the side of substance rather than on the side of accidents. It would also give a little bit more specificity to calling subsistence a mode. Introducing the word mode can appear to be an ad hoc device that does not really fit into the list of realities and possible principles of realities that is justified by other legitimate metaphysical considerations. And in a sense it is such a device. But by calling it a modification of existence we are at least giving it a new place on our list, rather than putting it in a place that already seems to be filled up.

But existence is not potential in respect to anything. So subsistence is not a mode of existence in this sense of something that resides in existence by fulfilling a potency of existence. Or

Also, since action is on the level of accidents, and is an existence on the level of accidents, there must be a potency for action on the level of accidents, a potency fulfilled by existence such that the existence is not the same existence that actuates the substance.

June 26,2001

Subsistence: what is potential in some way or ways is identical with what is an actuality in other ways. If entity 1 is potentially red or green, indifferently red or green, something outside of entity 1 must cause it to be either red or green. The outside cause must have the energy required to change it from one color to another, or from no color to being colored, and also have a nature that explains why the color is this color, say red, not another color.

We are explaining how and essence acquires necessary accidents. Here the potential subject is potential only for this accident, not that. So the essence's nature accounts for the nature of the accident caused, so we only have to account for the energy that allows the essence to be the cause of its necessary accidents. That is, we have to explain the energy of the virtual efficient cause, or in other words, the virtual energy of the efficient cause, not the distinct nature of the cause. But that energy must be somehow distinct from the nature. That is where subsistence comes in. Nature is not contradictorily the cause of its accidents in the order of specification (think about the specification of conscious acts, like the specification of the act of sight), because it is not the cause in the order of exercise.

December 20th, 2002

Exercised existence: The union of an accident with a substance, for example, a ball's being in motion, *is* identical with the existence of the accident. But the ball's being in motion includes the existence of the substance. So the substance contributes to the existence of a complex, which existence is the existence of the accident, in a way that (the existence of) the accident does not. What the existence of the motion is is not exercised by the motion, but by the ball. The existence of the motion "belongs to" the motion in only a secondary way. It really belongs to the ball, since the accident is a feature of the ball.

The existence of Christ's human nature, which receives existence, does not belong to a human supposit. A human supposit (definition) is that to which received existence belongs, as the existence of an accident belongs to its substance, not to the accident.

Essence must not only specify existence and receive existence and limit existence, it must exercise existence.

An operative power is an act relative to substance and potency relative to its own operation. So there is room for two different applications of the statement "act and potency are in the same order," (that is, there is a coordination between act and potency; act and potency are coordinated and correlative. Substance and power are potency and act in the order of what a thing is. Power and operation are a further potency-act couple in a more restrictive order of what a thing is (analogical set). (See Simon on the definitions of action.)

xxx Hypostatic union, subsistence, BIG 12-29-00

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 necessary accidents should not be formally identical with either the essence or the existence of the substance. It should be distinct from the essence of the substance somewhat as ordinary action distinct from the active potency.

But maybe the problem is: why isn't subsistence just another accident, the first accident from which all others follow? Would that reduce the hypostatic union to something on the accidental level, and is that ruled out? Maybe the answer is in something like Maritain's treatment of subsistence. Essence is a cause of its effects in the order of specification and materiality. Subsistence makes essence a cause in the order of exercise. Specification and materiality are consistent, perhaps, because the specification takes place by essence's being a material cause for certain accidents and not others. Essence is also a material cause and cause in the order of specification relative to existence. But it cannot receive existence and have its material and specifying causality toward its necessary accidents not exercised at the same time. So it must not only receive existence but must be in a state of exercise relative to its accidents. That state is a state of causality on the substantial level, a state of causality preceding the accidental level because essence receives the state of exercise the way it receives existence. That is, its being material and specifying relative to subsistence is on the same side as its materiality and specificity relative to existence, the side that precedes the actuation of its materiality and specificity relative to accidents.

From marginal comments to Introduction to Metaphysics of Knowledge, p.

31: "Either the knower is the other by his very nature or he possesses by nature only the aptitude to be the other."

The knower's substance has the aptitude to know. But the actual existence of that substance is not the actualization of that aptitude. For existence to be the actualization of that aptitude, the substance's existence would have to be the same as its act of knowledge. If the substance's existence is not the same as its act of knowledge, its act of knowledge must be an act of . . . . It must be the act of some kind of potency, but why not the act of a substance's potency for accidents?

Since a substance's existence is not the actualization of its aptitude for knowing, another act must actualize it. So the substance must produce another act. So the substance must have the aptitude to produce another act. Why cannot this aptitude to produce be identical with the substantial nature, not an accident, so that only the produced act is an accident?

One argument might be that the production of an act of knowing must be formally, not just virtually, an act of efficient causality. But the substance's first accidents must be produced by virtual, not formal, efficient causality.

Another argument might be this: A substance is not always producing that act, so it must always be producing its power to produce that act. If the substance was always producing that act, it would be through its act of existence that it produces its act of knowing. And so it would become the other by virtue of its act of existence.

Also, for a substance to go from potentially producing an act to actually producing it, requires that the substance receive a prior actualization passively every time it actively produces a new act. (That outside causality can only be of the accidental order; otherwise, it would destroy the substance.) What the substance receives from the outside agent cannot be the power itself, for then the acts of that



power would not belong to, would not be acts of, the supposit. But if what the substance received from an outside agent were an accident residing directly in the substance, and not in a power distinct from the substance, that accident would be equivalent to a power received from an outside agent. For without that accident, the substance cannot produce its own act, but with that accident, the power can produce its own act.

Can it be existence, rather than subsistence, that is virtually identical with an act of producing necessary accidents? A cause must produce an effect in another. If existence produces an effect in the essence, existence has become the efficient cause, not the essence, although it must be the essence that produces its necessary accidents. Also, 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.

But remember, the kind of efficient causality we are looking for need only be virtual efficient causality, since there is not an absolute distinction between agent (the essence with subsistence) and the patient (the essence merely with existence). But 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 formally present? One thing that is formally present is the causality by which the substantial form causes prime matter to become this or that. The SF does not merely conjoin with the PM. The PM becomes something actual by the causality of the SF.

For other candidates for what is formally present when efficient causality is only virtually present, see the MS "Properties, Existence, Change."

HU, subsistence, trinity, April 16, 1997 BIG

Jan 3, 1998

For "A Theory of the Incarnation" in the MS fire box:

Other than being what it is, other than existing in this way or that way, what does a creature need to be a cause? It needs something really distinct from itself. A creature cannot make out of nothing. This is why there is a problem about a substance causing its own necessary accidents. So this is a problem the theory of subsistence as something somehow distinct from the substantial essence can help solve.

Jun 17, 1998

The act of existence can't be the cause of our accidents. For that which exists is a passive cause relative to the act of existence, so that which exists would be a passive cause entirely relative to its accidents. The cause of the accidents must be that which existence actuates; it must be the actuated essence, the existing essence. And that is true of all cases and kinds of causality.

Having been actuated, the existing essence must then "do" something else: it must exercise the existence it has received.

To produce accidents is to thrust our existence outwards, is to push against other existents.

Rather than inhering in essence as in a potential subject, it inheres in essence the way an immanent act inheres in its power. Essence is analogous to the power. The emergence of the

accident from the essence is analogous to an immanent act. The Relation of the emergence to the essence, the relation of subsistence, is analogous to the inherence of the act in the power, that is, not analogous to the inherence of form in a passive potency.