SUBSTANTIAL ACT AND ESSE SECUNDARIUM:

A CRITIQUE OF LONERGAN'S ONTOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL

CONSTITUTION OF CHRIST

by

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Substantial Act and *Esse Secundarium*: A Critique of Lonergan's *Ontological and Psychological Union of Christ*

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Abstract

Lonergan proposes in his *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* that in Christ there are two substantial acts, one the divine act of the Word, the other a created supernatural act actuating the human nature of Christ. He derives this teaching from a reading of Aquinas' *Quaestio Disputata de Unione Verbi Incarnati*, where Aquinas speaks of a secondary *esse* in Christ, besides the primary divine *esse*. Lonergan does not properly appropriate Thomistic metaphysics, since for Aquinas a single hypostasis can only have one substantial *esse*. He also reduces the Incarnation to a relation, thereby making it an accidental rather than substantial union. He also introduces something which is neither human (since the secondary act is supernatural) nor divine (since it is created) into Christ. Rather than reading the secondary *esse* in terms of substantial act, a more fruitful approach is to read it in terms of Aquinas' theology of kenosis.
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Introduction

Christian thinkers have always wrestled with understanding who exactly Christ was. The witness of the Scriptures provides us with a story of a human being who was born, lived, and died. At the same time, this human being made the most extraordinary statements: "Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). As the Gospel has entered shifting cultural contexts and spread to different modes of thought, thinkers have struggled to understand how to express it.

The crowning glory of expression in a mode descended from Greek thought came in the definition of the council of Chalcedon in 451: "Wherefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one voice confess our Lord Jesus Christ one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead, the same perfect in manhood (sic), truly God and truly man (sic), the same consisting of a reasonable soul and a body, of one substance with the Father as touching the Godhead, the same of one substance with us as touching the manhood, like us in all things apart from sin . . ." By declaring one and the same Son to be perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the discourse became one of being one person in two natures.

Modes of thought continued to develop over the centuries, with attention shifting to the precise nature of the union between the human and divine natures. The most influential writing on this question comes from the pen of Peter Lombard, who analyses three different theories on the union, the assumptus homo theory, the subsistence theory, and the habit theory. The assumpt-

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tus homo theory held that the union was between two distinct entities, the Word and an existing human being. The subsistence theory, on the other hand, held that the human nature derives its existence from the Word, while the Word (after the Incarnation) subsists in the human nature. Finally, the habit theory held that the human nature was like a garment which the Word "put on." All of these understandings of the union could be held, according to the Lombard.

By the thirteenth century, however, the bulk of theological support had swung behind the second theory, that of subsistence. We also find emerging theological considerations on the relation of the teaching of Chalcedon to the notion of esse (being), or the act of existence. While it seemed clear that there could only be one hypostatic esse in Christ, the esse of the person of the Word, discussions arose regarding the possibility of an esse humanae naturae, with many theologians asking what it would be, and what its relation would be to the hypostatic esse of the Word.

The most widely remembered theologian of the period, Thomas Aquinas, treated these questions of the esse of Christ a number of times. There are five major loci where he enters the fray: first in his early commentary on Lombard, the Scriptum Super Sententias, and later in the Compendium Theologiae, in the ninth Quodlibetal, the Tertia Pars of his great Summa Theologiae, and in the Quaestio Disputata de Unione Verbi Incarnati. Intriguingly, however, he paid


3. For an overview of the theological atmosphere on this question at the time of Aquinas, see Marie-Hélène Deloffre's introduction in Question Disputée l'Union du Verbe Incarné (Paris: Vrin, 2000), 45-50. I will use this text for the De Unione throughout this paper; English translations are mine.
very little attention to the notion of an *esse humanae naturae*, and only at the end of this last work does he speak of an *esse secundarium* which must be admitted, besides the *esse* of the Word.

In the twentieth century, questions arose regarding *psychological* unity and duality in Christ. Bernard Lonergan, in answering these questions, first set out an exposition of the *ontological* constitution of Christ; as a corollary to his exposition, he appropriated the *esse secundarium* in the *De Unione*, expanding upon the notion so that it found expression as a supernatural and substantial act, actuating the human nature of Christ, to which it is disproportionate. It must actuate it, Lonergan says, in order that the human nature can have a real relation of incarnation to the person of the Word (for a real relation requires a real foundation), and it must be supernatural, for the human nature to be incapable of receiving an act of existence proportionate to it, so that the human nature assumed by the Word would not be a complete hypostasis, so that there would not be two persons in Christ.  

In the course of this paper, I will argue that Lonergan's interpretation of Aquinas' incarnational metaphysics is problematic for a number of reasons. In the first part, I will begin by outlining the teaching of Aquinas in the relevant loci listed above, paying particular attention to the *De Unione*. In the second part, I will examine the portion of the *Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ* where Lonergan comes to his conclusions regarding the *esse secundarium*,

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and outline his reasons. In the third part, I will examine the sense of substantial act or esse in the writings of Aquinas, in order to demonstrate that where there are two substantial acts, there are two hypostases; if Lonergan posits a second substantial act in Christ, it leads either to two hypostases, or else to a reification of substantial act as an actual "thinglet" possessed by Christ. In the fourth place, I will argue that Lonergan's position renders the hypostatic union accidental, by reading it as fundamentally a matter of a relation between Christ's humanity and the person of the Word. In the fifth place, I will argue that Lonergan's theory introduces something non-divine and non-human into the union, which is clearly contrary to the intent of Aquinas. In the sixth place, to preserve resonance with Lonergan's major achievement in Constitution (later developed further in De Verbo Incarnato), I will argue that metaphysical categories are not the appropriate method to understand the esse secundarium, and propose a shift to reading the De Unione in light of Aquinas' theology of kenosis (as found in his Commentary on the Letter to the Philippians). I hope, in this way, to maintain resonance with Lonergan's major achievement in Constitution, the distinction of human and divine consciousness in Christ (further developed in his later work De Verbo Incarnato).
Aquinas first paid significant attention to the question of the *esse* of Christ in the *Commentary on the Sentences* (*In. Sent. d. 6,q. 2, a. 2*), "Whether in Christ there is not only one *esse*." After marshalling theological and metaphysical objections that there is more than one *esse* in Christ, Aquinas provides us with three *sed contra*.

The first claims that there would be two hypostases if there were two *esse*, since everything having *esse* in itself is a subsistence. The second argues from dogmatic regulation regarding what may be said of God: if two things differ according to *esse*, they are not said the one of the other. But we say that God has become a human being, and that this human being is God, therefore the human being and God the Son do not differ according to *esse*. The third rephrases the first, and connects it with the preceding article ("Whether Christ should be called "two" when the neuter gender is used") by arguing that one thing can only have one *esse*, and Christ is said to be *unum*.

In the body of the article, Aquinas makes clear that his concern is with being, as falling into one of the ten categories, rather than simply as being predicable of something. He argues


6. *In. Sent.* d. 6, q. 2, a. 1.

7. Ibid., d. 6, q. 2, a. 2, sc 1-3.
that when we thus take esse as the act of a being (actus entis), the second opinion (subsistence theory) given by Peter Lombard necessitates one esse, while the other opinions (assumptus homo and habit) necessitate two esse. Here, he makes the significant distinction between the quod est (that which is) and the quo est (that by which something is). The quo est, such as nature, accident, etc., can more properly be said to belong to a being, than to be (magis proprie est entis quam ens). The quod est is the substance or supposit, and if, as in the subsistence theory, there is only one substance, then there is only one esse, whereas the theories distinguishing between the assuming God and the assumed human being, or between God and the nature God puts on as between distinct entities will therefore teach that there are two esse in Christ. Aquinas concludes the body of the article by noting that one esse may have different relations to different constituent principles, and so the one esse of Christ has two relations (respectus), one to the human nature and another to the divine.

The first objection and its reply are worth noting here. The objection states that every substantial form bestows esse, and the soul is such a form, and therefore must bestow an esse besides the esse of the Word. In response, Aquinas states that form gives esse, not as belonging to the form, but as belonging to a subsisting thing, of which the form (along with the matter) is a constituent principle. Thus, it is only when the composite is subsisting in itself that it acquires independent being in itself (esse absolutum per se) from the form of which it is composed. When the composite does not subsist in itself, the esse of the form is derived from the subsistence to which it is conjoined. As noted above, Aquinas in the first sed contra makes the point that we are to concern ourselves with things having esse in themselves, rather than in another.
He employs here the analogy of a human being born without a hand, a hand formed separately, and later miraculously added to the man. Before the conjoining, the hand possesses its own esse by virtue of its form, but after it has been joined to the human being, the conjoined hand does not have its own esse, but a relationship to the human being according to his esse. Thus, the soul of Christ does not acquire an esse humanae naturae, but it acquires a rational relation from the Son to his human nature (since, there being no real change in the person of the Son, there can be no foundation for a real relation).

The point that substantial esse derives from the form is made several times in Aquinas' corpus. However, since he makes clear in this response that substantial esse comes from the form, not as belonging to the form, but as belonging to a subsisting thing, the notion of a distinct esse humanae naturae has no place in Aquinas' thought on the Incarnation in this stage of the development of his thought. The esse is not of a nature, but of an ens.
Compendium of Theology

In chapter 211 of the *Compendium of Theology*, Aquinas discusses the unity of personhood in Christ. He notes that, when discussing Christ, we need to distinguish between those terms which refer to an integral whole, and those which can simply refer to a part of such a whole. He places person, hypostasis, and existing subject (*suppositum*) in the former category, and thus states that we must speak only of unity in Christ with regards to these terms. He further notes that the conjunction of parts may *produce* something integral, but the conjunction does not *constitute* necessarily something integral in itself, as where something else is required. Thus, we might say, hydrogen and oxygen produce water, but the material elements of a human body do not constitute an integral human being, since a soul is required. Likewise, in the case of Christ, beyond the body and soul the divine person of the Word is also required to constitute the hypostasis, and thus the body and soul do not possess integrality in themselves; therefore, they constitute one of the two natures of Christ, but cannot be called a person, an hypostasis, or an existing subject.

In chapter 212, Aquinas goes on to consider what we may call one, and what many in Christ: "For we need to profess that any things multiple by reason of the different natures are many in Christ . . . Likewise, we need to call many in Christ any things belonging to nature commonly attributed to both God and human beings." Under the former category, he lists the genera-

tions of Christ, both his divine birth before all ages, and his human birth of Mary, as the two births or generations of Christ had been defined by the Council of Chalcedon. Under the latter category, he mentions the two intellects and wills of Christ, the divine and the human. He then notes that "we need to profess that things belonging to the existing subject or hypostasis are only one thing in Christ. So, if we should understand esse insofar as one esse belongs to one existing subject, it seems that we should say that there is only one esse in Christ. For separate individual parts clearly have their own esse, but the individual parts, insofar as they are considered in a whole, do not have their own individual esse. Rather, all of them exist by the esse of the whole." Here, we find echoes of the analogy of the hand and human being. When the hand is separate, it has its own existing, but once it is joined to an integral human person, it exists by his or her existing. "Therefore, if we should consider Christ in himself as a whole existing subject of two natures, only one existing will belong to him, just as there is one existing subject."

In the consideration of the activity of Christ that follows, a new analogy arises, and the humanity is seen as an instrument employed by a primary agent, rather than as a part subsisting in a whole. Thus, the actions of Christ's humanity, such as eating, drinking, and touching, are directed by the agency of the divine person from which his humanity derives both its subsistence and its activity.

9. See the conciliar definition, in Davis, *First Seven Ecumenical Councils*, 186.

10. *Compendium*, cap 212. For continuity with my usage in this paper, I have emended "existing" to "esse."

11. Ibid.
In the ninth of the *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, Aquinas again treats of the question of Christ's *esse*. In the first article of the second question ("Whether in Christ there is only one hypostasis"), we again find the distinctions of usage between those words referring to an integral whole, such as "hypostasis," and those which may refer to a part, such as "particular" and "individual." Basing himself in the affirmation of the second opinion of Peter Lombard and the rejection of the first and third opinions, Aquinas teaches that we can refer to Christ's humanity as singular or particular, but not as hypostatic, since that would divide Christ into two hypostases and two persons.

In the second article of the second question ("Whether in Christ there is only one *esse*"), Aquinas posits four objections: since there are two (1) lives, created and increate, (2) operations, human and divine, (3) generations, temporal and eternal, and (4) natures, human and divine, there must be two *esse*. These are followed by a succinct *sed contra*; since there is only one supposit, there must be only one *esse*.

12. The text I will use in this paper is the ninth quodlibetal, found in *Quaestioness Disputatae et Quaestiones Duodecim Quodlibetales: Volumen V, Quaestiones quodlibetales* (Rome: Marietti Library, 1927), henceforth Quodlibetal or *Quod*. Unless otherwise stated, the translations are mine.

13. *Quod*. 9, q. 2, a. 1, c.

Most of the body of the article is dedicated to making a number of distinctions. He begins with the distinction which began the treatment in the *Scriptum*: between (1) *esse* as a verbal copula used where something can be predicated of something else, and (2) *esse* as the *actum entis in quantum est ens*, and thus as something which falls into the ten categories. This latter understanding he further distinguishes between (1) *esse* attributed to a self-subsisting substance, and (2) *esse* attributed to a things which are not self-subsisting (as accidents, substantial forms, or parts). Only the former understanding can be called *esse* properly and truly, and so this is the understanding which interests us. Again, *esse* of a self-subsisting substance is further subdivided into (1) *esse* resulting from those things integrated into its unity, which is the substantial *esse*, and (2) *esse* attributed to a substance by virtue of those things which compose it, which is accidental *esse*. Since we claim that Christ is one sole subsisting thing, to which the humanity is added (*concurrit*), there can only be one substantial *esse* in Christ. The humanity, were it divided from the divinity, would have its own *esse*, since nothing prohibits this except for the fact that it is not self-subsistent. Each of the parts of Christ (the humanity and the divinity), if separated from the whole, can have its own *esse*. These distinctions enable Aquinas to defend the fullness of Christ's humanity, and also to speak in a meaningful way of accidental *esse* in Christ (such as brownness, etc.), in addition to the substantial *esse* of the Son.
The seventeenth question of the *Tertia Pars* of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* is divided into two articles.\(^{15}\) In the first article, Aquinas first asks whether Christ is one or two. Since he writes *unum vel duo*, we may consider this to roughly correlate to *In Sent.* d. 6, q. 2, a. 1, where he asks whether Christ is *duo neutraliter*. This is confirmed by the fact that the *sed contra* in the *Summa* repeats the first *sed contra* of the *Scriptum* article with an attribution to Boethius: "Each thing that is, insofar as it is, is one." He then goes on to point out that, while we may predicate divinity of Christ both in the abstract and the concrete ("Christ is divine," "Christ is divinity"), we may only predicate humanity of Christ in the concrete ("Christ is human"), and therefore, it must be through the supposit that we call Christ "one" or "two."

In the second article ("Whether in Christ there is only one *esse"), Aquinas again offers the identity of oneness and *esse* for a *sed contra*. Since, as he stated before, Christ as one supposit is one, there must be only one *esse*. We hear again the refrain of the reply to the first objection in *In Sent.* d.6, q.2, a.2: "*Esse* pertains both to the nature and to the hypostasis; to the hypostasis as to that which has *esse*, and to the nature as to that by which something has *esse*." Here, he again speaks of the multiplication of *esse* which are not said simply of an *ens*, namely

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\(^{15}\) In order to have access to Cajetan's commentary (referenced later), I use for this paper the following text: *Summa theologiae cum commentariis Thomae de Vio Caietani*, volume 11, Leonine edition, Rome: Romae Typographia Polyglotta, 1896-1906, online at http://www.archive.org/details/operaomniaiussui11thom, (accessed February 27, 2011), henceforth *ST* or *Summa*. For clarity, I will use the full title of the text and page numbers when Cajetan is referenced. Except where otherwise noted, translations are mine.
those esse "which do not pertain to the personal esse of a subsisting hypostasis." As in Quod. 9, this is sharply distinguished from the proper esse ("which pertains to a person or hypostasis") of a substance, which must necessarily be one, "since it is impossible that of one thing there should not be one esse." If the humanity came to Christ accidentally, then, it would be possible for there to be two esse in Christ, one hypostatic and divine, one accidental and human. He provides the example of whiteness coming to Socrates: by one esse Socrates would be white, by another he would be human, since whiteness does not pertain to his personal esse. Being headed (esse capitatum), however, belongs properly to the personal esse of Socrates, and thus it does not constitute a separate esse in Socrates in addition to his personal esse. We find here another analogy introduced: that of the man born blind in the Gospels. Since eyes (understood as a functioning element of his corporeality) came to him while he pre-existed personally, we may fittingly analogize to the humanity which came to the pre-existing Son. A new esse does not come to the man born blind, but only a new relation of his personal esse to the eyes which he received, and thus "he is said to be (esse), not only according to that which he first of all has, but also according to those which come to him later." Similarly, a new esse does not come to Christ, but only a new relation (habitudo) of his personal esse to the humanity which he received, "since that person is now said to subsist, not only according to a divine nature, but also according to a human nature."

We may here note the fourth objection and its reply. The objection states that, as the form of the body, the soul gives it esse, and therefore Christ has a created esse given by his soul to his
body. In the reply, Aquinas notes that, when we abstract the body-completed-by-the-soul from the hypostasis, we call it *humanity*, and thus it is not a *quod est*, but a *quo est*. Thus, *esse* belongs to the subsistent person, insofar as it is has a relation (*habituidinem*) to such a nature, and the soul is properly understood as the cause of this relation. Here, for the first time, we find Aquinas stating the unity of Christ's *esse* strongly enough to explicitly relegate the humanity to the realm of the *quo est*, rather than the *quod est* (although it is certainly implied elsewhere).

On the Union of the Incarnate Word: Approaches

We turn now to the part of the Thomistic corpus where our main concern lies: the Disputed Question on the Union of the Incarnate Word. Before we turn to the text itself, some words on chronology and reception are necessary.

It would seem that some Thomists have had difficulty reconciling their problems with the teaching of the De Unione with the notion that it represents the mature thought of Aquinas. Thus, it was once not uncommon for a particular Thomist's approach to the teaching of the De Unione to directly correlate to that Thomist's reception of the text itself; the most famous Thomist to treat the text in this way is Cajetan, who placed the text early in Aquinas' career. In his commentary on ST III q. 17, a.2, he was therefore able to reject the teaching of the De Unione as an immature opinion: "That opinion which was posited in the Question On the Union of the Word is to be excised as having been later rejected." In more extreme examples, some have rejected the entire text as not only immature, but as erroneously attributed to Aquinas. Another line of thought through the history of Thomism has held that there is no real difference between

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17. For this paper, the text I will use is the following: Question Disputée l'Union du Verbe Incarné, Latin text from the Marietti edition, intro., trans., and notes by Marie-Hélène Deloffre (Paris: Vrin, 2000), henceforth De Unione. Unless otherwise stated, English translations are mine.


the teaching of the *De Unione* and the teaching of Aquinas' other works, but both hold one *esse* in Christ; the *esse secundarium* is simply the eternal *esse* of the Son, considered as existing in time. In the twentieth century, some theologians such as Maurice de la Taille and Bernard Lonergan have used the tension between the *De Unione* and the rest of the Thomistic corpus to develop their own theories on incarnational metaphysics. In 2000, Marie-Hélène Deloffre pointed out that Aquinas uses a different vocabulary to describe the human nature, one of "inexistence" rather than simply of existence, and points out that we can speak of Christ as having two substantial *esse*, if we take "substantial" to refer to secondary substance rather than primary substance, that is, to nature rather than to person.

While contemporary scholarship has established without a doubt that the *De Unione* is authentic, and is a late work, the same is also true of the *Tertia Pars*, and it is not uncommon to portray the two works as separated by a matter of months. As scholars, we must avoid the danger of allowing our approach to the chronological placement of the *De Unione* to influence our understanding of the teaching of the *esse secundarium*. Serious theological engagement of the

20. For a medieval example of this opinion, see Johannes Capreolus, *Defensiones theologici divi Thomae Aquinatis, tomus quintus*, edited by Česlav Paban and Thomas Pegues (Turin: Alfred Cattier, 1904), d. 6, q. 1, a. 1, conc. 1; for a more modern example, see Victor Salas, "Thomas Aquinas on Christ's 'esse': a metaphysics of the Incarnation," in *Thomist* 70.4 (October 2006): 577-603.


22. Deloffre, 63-66.

23. See Torrell, 204-05.
passage in question requires us to treat it on its own merits, and to strive to bridge the apparent gap between this work and the rest of the Thomistic corpus.
On the Union of the Incarnate Word: Argument

In the De Unione, Aquinas musters a relatively exhaustive treatment of the questions under consideration. In the first article, he asks whether the union was effected in the person or in the nature. Having established that it was in the person, he then asks whether there is one hypostasis or two in Christ in the second article. Basing his answer on a quote from Damascene and on the communication of idioms, he concludes that there is one hypostasis. In the body of the article, the distinction between the usage of "person" or "hypostasis" and the usage of "particular," "singular," or "individual" again makes it appearance here (along with the analogy of the human being and the hand). In the third article, he again asks whether Christ is one or two when spoken of in the neuter gender, and concludes that he is one. Here, we find again the distinction between substantial and accidental esse, and Aquinas notes that the nature is to be considered as a (formal) part, while the supposit is to be considered as a whole.

We turn then to the fourth article, which is of primary concern to this paper. The first objection states that divine and human esse are found in Christ, and cannot be the same thing. The second objection states that each form answers to its own esse, but in Christ there is a human nature (form) and a divine nature (form). The third objection recites the Aristotelian principle that for a living thing, to live is to be (vivere viventibus est esse), and there is a human life and a divine life in Christ.

In the sed contra, Aquinas replies that something which is simply one is one according to esse, and that Christ is such. He goes on in the body to remind us that esse is properly and truly
predicated of a subsistent supposit. According to some forms (such as the accidental), a thing is an *ens* in a certain way, such as whiteness. According to other forms, a subsistent thing has *esse* simply, since they constitute its substantial being. "In Christ, however, the subsistent supposit is the person of the Son of God, who is substantified simply (*simpliciter substantificatur*) through the divine nature, but is not substantified simply through the human nature."24 The pre-existent person of the Son of God is not in any way made more complete by the assumption of the human nature, but the eternal supposit is substantified through the human nature. Since *esse* pertains to substance, Christ as one eternal supposit eternally has one *esse* simply. "There is, however, another *esse* of this supposit, not insofar as it is eternal, but insofar as it is temporally made human." If this were an accidental *esse*, then "human" would be predicated accidentally of Christ, and the union would be accidental. At the same time, we cannot talk about it as the principal *esse* of the supposit, since there is only one supposit in Christ, and thus he can only be said to be simply in one way.

Aquinas provides a single response to all the objections: "The *esse* of the human nature is not the *esse* of the divine nature. Nor should it be said simply that Christ is two according to *esse*, since each *esse* does not have the same relation to the divine supposit." We cannot, then, with the Capreolian school of thought hold that the human nature is actuated by the same *esse* which is the divine nature, but we must admit that in the way Aquinas speaks of *esse* here, there are two distinct *esse*, each with its own relation to the eternal supposit.

24. *De Unione*, a. 4, co.
On the Union of the Incarnate Word: Analysis

We see then that the treatment Aquinas gives in the *De Unione* differs significantly from those in the remainder of the Thomistic corpus. The most significant difference, of course, is that of discussing an *aliud esse* or *esse secundarium*, of which we find nothing explicit in Aquinas' other works. The fact that he is very clear that this *esse* is, indeed, something distinct from the eternal *esse* of the Word is particularly noteworthy. One of the few places outside the *De Unione* where the beginnings of a discussion of the *esse humanae naturae* can be found is in a response to an objection in the *Tertia Pars*. The objection notes that the *esse* of the human nature is temporal, while the *esse* of the Son is eternal, and thus they must be different. The reply to this objection does talk about an *esse hominis*, but in a radically different way from that found in the *De Unione*: "That eternal being of the Son of God which is the divine nature *becomes* the *esse* of the human being, insofar as the human nature is assumed by the Son of God into personal unity (emphasis mine)." Here, he portrays the *esse* of Christ-as-human as being one and the same with the *esse* of Christ-as-divine, only understood in one way as in eternity, in the other as in temporality. It is this text which has led to the Capreolian school of interpretation we saw above, but it is all but impossible to honestly read this as consonant with the reply to objections in the *De Unione*, where the *esse* of the human nature and of the divine nature are clearly seen as different. It is the supposit that is the commonality here, not the *esse* relating to it.

25. *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2, obj. 2.
Another significant difference in the treatment found in *De Unione* is the notion we encounter of "substantification." Deloffre notes that the concept is derived from Pseudo-Dionysius, through Bonaventure and his disciples. Aquinas tells us that the person of the Son is substantified *simpliciter* through the divine nature, but not through the human nature; the person is substantified through the human nature, however, "*inquantum est hic homo.*" Thus, the human nature enables us to speak of the Son of God as being not only of a particular sort, *homo*, but a particular example of that kind, *hic homo*.

We may note that Aquinas shies away from giving a clear account of the *aliud esse* in the usual terms of substance, person, and accident. He assures us that it cannot be seen as accident, but when trying to describe the way we *should* understand it, he drops the familiar vocabulary, and takes up a new distinction: that between principal and secondary *esse*. We may take this as a signal that, in speaking of the existence of the human nature of Christ, the normative vocabulary is tried and found to be wanting, and new terminology must be found.

The key towards unlocking this new terminology may be found in the adopted term "substantification." If we recall the old teaching that God must not be described as belonging to the ten categories, but as being outside of them, we may say that it is only when the Word becomes this human being that he may be properly considered a substance, a complex of matter and form, of essence and *esse* which are really distinct from each other.


27. In Aquinas, see *ST* I, q. 3, a. 4. For Lonergan on this teaching, see *Constitution*, 103-05.
To speak of Christ's humanity as being actuated by the divine *esse* in the same way as Stephen Harper is actuated by his human *esse*, as Capreolus would have us do, is to fail to account for the radical difference between human existence and divine existence (on the most fundamental level, human existence is an existence of composition [body, soul, act, potency, substance, accident, etc.], while the divine existence of the Word is totally simple). But to speak of Christ's humanity as being actuated by a human *esse* in the same way as Mr. Harper is would be to fail to pay due heed to the radical unity we call the hypostatic union, to the fundamental loyalty of Aquinas to the second opinion of Peter Lombard and his opposition to the *assumptus homo* theory, and to his basic concern to preserve the dogmatic teaching that there is one person, one substance in Christ, recalled in the first and second articles of the *De Unione*. Then again, we cannot speak of Christ's human nature as being actuated by an accidental *esse*; to do so would be to fail to account for the fact that the humanity of Christ is a full and complete human nature, and thus belongs to substance. If Christ's human nature were actuated by an accidental *esse*, it would mean not that Christ is *hic homo*, but that he has some quality of humanness, which would fall into the old heresies of Docetism, and so Christ's human nature can not be related to divine *esse*, to human *esse*, or to accidental *esse* without much qualification.

When we employ the standard language of substance and accident in considering the ways in which to speak of the human nature of Christ as existing, we find ourselves going astray wherever we turn. As noted before, this seems to point to an inadequacy of the standard metaphysical categories in describing the mystery of Incarnation, and thus Aquinas gives us a new terminology of principal/secondary existence. It may be noted that this distinction is highly in-
determinate. A far cry from the well-defined metaphysical terminologies of "substance/accident," "act/potency," "essence/existence," "primary/secondary" connotes only a certain ordering amongst themselves, with one having priority to the other in some way.

The principal existence of the Son is eternal, simple, and transcends the categories; it is in this way that we speak of the Son as existing simply (esse simpliciter). But after the Incarnation, this understanding of eternality, of simplicity, of transcendence is not sufficient to explain the phenomena of God. Most importantly, it does not explain the ways in which God makes God's life available to us, and enters into our own lives. We must find a new way to talk about God on order to discuss the way God is in this world, and not only the way God is out of this world. Thus, we may say that the Son, in assuming personally a human nature, begins (as a person) to exist and operate in the modalities of this substantial nature, within time, within the world, in discrete, separate operations, influenced and molded by the cultural context and relational situations into which the Son as a human being enters. All temporal existence is dependent on the eternal existence of the Trinity as its ontological source, but this temporal existence of the Son is also dependent on the eternal existence of the Son specifically, as finding its very selfhood radically rooted in the selfhood of the Son of God; and thus, it must be described as a secondary existence of the one divine person.

Another aspect of this primary/secondary distinction is that the former can have meaning outside of the latter, but the latter derives all meaning from the former. Thus, we may continue to consider the Trinitarian life of the Son in relation to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, and when we consider the Son in this way, eternality, simplicity, transcendence are the proper ways
to understand what is under consideration. Even when we consider the Son as Word, as a creative principle in the world, we consider that principle as standing outside the world to which the Word relates, and thus, we consider a Word eternal, simple, and transcendent. Both of these ways of thinking of the second person of the Trinity continue to have the same meaning which they had before the Incarnation, and thus, considering that person humanly is not necessary to understand them (although it is and always was necessary to understand their fullness). But when we consider the relation which the Son has to the created order by reason of having assumed and continuing to exist in a human nature, this secondary existence of the Son is only meaningful when it is understood in relation to the divine existence which precedes it and which bestows on the temporal existence its very own personhood. It is only when Thomas falls to his knees and says "My Lord and my God" that the significance of the human and temporal existence of Christ, and what it in fact is, is really revealed to him.

We remember also Aquinas' statement that, although the existence of the human nature is not the existence of the divine nature, we cannot speak *simpliciter* of Christ as being two, because the two existences have different relations to the eternal supposit, and this is clearly true. The absolute personal dependency of the human existence upon the personhood of the divine existence renders it truly subordinate, while the divine life is perfectly simple, being accomplished in one undivided operation, and thus is one with the perfectly simple divine person.\textsuperscript{28} The eternity, simplicity, and transcendence of the divine existence of the Son means that it is indistinguish-

\textsuperscript{28} See *ST* I, q. 3, a. 2 and 3.
able from the eternal supposit, while Christ's human existence is encountered in the world of becoming, and thus is subject as all existences in that world to undergoing, to temporal succession, to complexity, and even to placement in the categories of this world, to being the same kind of existence I live in my own life. It relates to the divine existence as a part does to the whole, as an image does to what is signified (Col. 2:12), as (in the analogy noted in the Compendium) an instrument does to an agent.

Thus, by reinterpreting the *esse secundarium* to no longer be a metaphysical category, but a descriptive one, our frame of reference in understanding Christ has shifted. Where a metaphysics falters in describing mystery, the theologian does not simply fall silent, but takes up a new mode of discourse, and so we are no longer talking about a metaphysical entity, but about a life lived and a way of existing.

Normally, Aquinas' reverence for the divinity of Christ and for the fullness of union leads him to a certain reticence regarding Christ's humanity. Here in the *De Unione*, the emphasis on unity of person which pervades Aquinas' christological thought is in no way compromised, and his answer to "Whether in Christ there is but one *esse*" remains an emphatic "Yes." However, this shift in paradigm allows him to use stronger language for discussing the fullness of Christ's humanity, and thus we come to a certain *esse humanae naturae* which is really distinct from the divine *esse*, but can be spoken of intelligibly in the context of a single hypostasis. This enables us to reconcile the *De Unione* with the rest of the Thomistic corpus, most notably the response mentioned above where Aquinas speaks clearly of the *esse* of the human and the divine natures as being one *esse* understood in two different ways. This remains true when speaking on an on-
tological level, but in terms of the way we understand Christ and his life, the introduction of the less well-defined terminology of principal and secondary esse, as well as the notion of substantification, enables us to enrich our understanding of Christ, so that we can truly (albeit not simply) say that Christ has more than one esse.
Lonergan: The Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ

The observation that theological concerns continue to shift with the shift of contexts of thought has continued to be true throughout the centuries. The rise of psychological and existential thought had its own influence on the development of theology, and in the twentieth century thinkers began to be concerned with understanding Christ in this light. Thus, the "I" of Christ, and in what ways we may speak of him as psychologically one or two came to be questions of significant theological concern. As these questions were engaged by a number of theologians, Bernard Lonergan gave his own response in the 1950s, first in the Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ,29 and later more fully developed in the De Verbo Incarnato. Time does not permit us here to consider in depth the relation between these two works, and thus we will confine our investigations to Constitution.

Constitution is primarily concerned with examining psychological unity or duality in Christ, a concern which manifests in an investigation of the unity or duality of his consciousness. In order to lay down a sufficient groundwork for these investigations, Lonergan begins with the treatise on the ontological constitution of Christ; it is this preliminary section which is our concern here.30


30. While there is growing interest in Constitution, most works focuses on the psychological more than the ontological. For an alternate approach to the ontological (comparison with Maurice de la Taille, see Matthew Lamb, "An Analogy for the Divine Self-Gift," in Lonergan Workshop Volume 14, edited by Fred Lawrence, 115-154. Boston: Boston College, 1998.
He begins, in Part 1, by defining significant terms such as being (strictly, "that which is"\textsuperscript{30}), one (most strictly, transcendental one, that which is "undivided in itself and divided from everything else"\textsuperscript{31}), subsistent ("beings in the strict sense;" here he also settles, with Aquinas, that Christ is one subsistent,\textsuperscript{32}) and, finally, person (with Aquinas, "a distinct subsistent in an intellectual nature"\textsuperscript{33}).

With these basic notions established, he moves on to define the constitution of a finite person in Part 2, which requires: "(1) a substantial essence of an intellectual nature . . . (2) an act of existence . . . (3) an act of existence received in an essence . . . (4) a proper act of existence . . . [and] 5) at least separable accidents."\textsuperscript{34} Lonergan here notes, as a preliminary to his own position, that an act of existence must be related to the essence it actuates as to a natural potency in order for it to be proportionate to that essence: "but if it is related to it as to an obediential potency, that act of existence is not proper to that essence."\textsuperscript{35}

In Part 3, Lonergan proposes a double understanding of theological truths. First, faith enlightens reason, and here we take up as principles revelation, which is more known to us than the theological principles of revelation, and from them deduce underlying theological principles.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 17.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 31-33.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 35.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 41.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 59-61.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 61.
\end{itemize}
Second, *ratio per fidem illustrata* attains some understanding of the mysteries which have been revealed to it, and here we begin from theological principles of greater *per se* simplicity than revealed truths, and thus understand the faith through those principles. The first way is called the way of discovery, the second, the way of teaching.  

Lonergan takes up the dogmatic declarations as his first principles, and proposes to analyze them into their constituent parts (using the philosophical discussions laid down beforehand), before synthetically reconstructing the analyzed elements into the truths with which we began. He further divides truths about God into those which are common and necessary, proper and necessary, common and contingent, and proper and contingent. Those truths which are common and necessary are true by reason of the divine nature. Proper and necessary truths, on the other hand, are true by reason of the subsistent relations which are the divine persons. Common and contingent truths posit nothing real in God, but they do posit a created term outside of God, which has an appropriate (real) relation to the Godhead. Proper and contingent truths (to which category the Incarnation belongs) "add to the subsistent relation [i.e., the person of the Trinity] only a relation of reason in the divine person, but imply an appropriate created term outside God that is really related to the divine subsistent relation." These resolutions cannot be considered to be resolutions to the causes of the truths, but to the causes of our knowing of the truths, since God is perfectly simple and uncaused.

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36. Ibid., 87.
37. Ibid., 97.
38. Ibid., 81.
Rather, as noted above, what we engage in theology is not the resolution of a being into its causes, but the resolution of a truth into its principles.  

With these things established, Lonergan goes on in Part 4 to the meat of the ontological section of Constitution. He proposes to take up as principles the christological dogmata, and to analyze these truths into their constituent parts, before re-synthesizing them into the same wholes we originally found. He affirms, with the councils, that Christ is one divine person subsisting in two natures, and also, with the theologians, that "Christ is one supposit, one being, one reality."  

He then moves on to inquire about the assumption of the human nature: what is the potency on the part of the subject, and what is the potency on the part of the object? What is the act on the part of each? The subjective potency to assume is found in the infinitude of God. The subjective act, on the other hand, must be understood in the light of Lonergan's earlier insight that contingent and proper truths add nothing real to the person in question; therefore, the subjective act in the assumption must be the same as the subsistent Son of God. The best way to understand the Son in relation to the subjective act of assumption is by the divine understanding and willing, which are identical with the divine existence. As regards the object of assumption, the human nature, Lonergan argues that the potency must be obediential (since no finite nature

39. Ibid., 87.
40. Ibid., 109.
41. Ibid., 111.
42. See Constitution, 135.
can be considered proportionate to the hypostatic union, and thus, as seen above, the potency cannot be natural), and more specifically, "an individual essence which lacks its own proper act of existence." When he moves to inquire about the act on the part of the object assumed, he insists that it must be a created act (since there must be an external term, as seen above, in contingent truths about God), and a created act having a particular relation to an uncreated act (namely, the person of the Word). This act must also be supernatural, since as said above the finite human nature cannot be proportionate to the assuming person, else there would be a human person in Christ: "For the actuation of a natural potency precludes the actuation of obediential potency." The act must also be substantial, since an accidental created act with a relation to uncreated act would be either sanctifying grace (if received in the nature) or the light of glory (if received in the intellect). He adduces two other proofs by arguing that an accidental act would result in an accidental union, and that a substantial potency requires a substantial act. Since, as noted above, Lonergan sees the act as correlative to an essence, we should note that what he refers to as "act" is the esse of Aquinas.

While the assumed nature has a real relation of Incarnation only to the person of the Son, it (as a created product) derives its being from the entire Trinity of persons; Lonergan thus refers to the Son as the intrinsic cause of the assumed nature, and to the triune God as the extrinsic

43. Ibid., 113.
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid., 113-15.
cause of that nature.\textsuperscript{46} This relation of intrinsic causality which the humanity has really to the Word, and the Word has rationally to the humanity, is "the external, created, contingent, appropriate term" which is necessary for the contingent and proper truths pertaining to the Son which are revealed in the doctrine of the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{47}

But because the real relation of the humanity to the Word requires a real foundation, Lonergan notes that the nature must have truly been assumed. We may also note that the humanity, as one term of the relation, constitutes one of the two foundations of the relation of Incarnation, and thus, it must also be real. We find this line of thought echoed later in the text: "There is no contingent truth prior to the existence of a contingent being."\textsuperscript{48} Lonergan clearly denies that the substantial act of Christ's humanity is necessary for the real existence of that humanity; it is only necessary for that humanity to be in a real relation with the person of the Word.\textsuperscript{49}

It is worth noting here that Capreolus lists an objection which is almost identical when considering "Whether in Christ there are many esse:" "The foundation of relation naturally precedes relation: and thus the actual esse precedes the account of actual relation. But this union is an actual relation. Therefore its foundation naturally precedes, according to its actual esse." For

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 145.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 149.
him, though, the answer is quite straightforward: "It does not follow that this actual *esse* is created. Therefore the argument concludes nothing against us."\(^{50}\)

However, as noted above, the actuation of obediential potency and of natural potency preclude one another; therefore, the natural potency of the human nature of Christ cannot have been actuated. This line of argument leads Lonergan to develop the notion of the supernatural, substantial act of existence which actuates (as obediential potency) the humanity of Christ. This obediential actuation prevents Christ's humanity from being a being or a unity in the strict sense, and thus, from being a subsistent, and thus, from being a person.\(^{51}\)

As noted above, the existence of Christ's humanity must precede the truth of the Incarnation. At the same time, the Incarnation must also precede the existence of Christ's humanity: "[the secondary substantial created act] is simply posterior, consequent, a resultant."\(^{52}\) Naturally, this precedence cannot be considered to be temporal, since the human nature is created and the Son of God is incarnate at the exact same moment; therefore, we must understand that this is an ontological priority.\(^{53}\) The order of ontological priority, then, runs thus: 1) the divine act of incarnating, that is, the *assuming* of a human nature, 2) the *substantial act* which actuates the human nature, 3) the fact of God being incarnate, that is, the human nature *being assumed*. Of course,

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50. Capreolus, *Defensiones theologici*, d. 6, q. 1, a. 2-7 and a. 3-7.
51. Ibid., 143-45.
52. Ibid., 147.
53. Ibid., 111.
even the act of incarnating itself is preceded by the existence of the Word. "The infinite act of existence is the sole reason and constitutive cause of this union because by the infinite act of existence the Word is not only what the Word necessarily is but also what the Word has contingently become."\(^{54}\)

While the person of the Word is the *quod* in the Incarnation, that which is God, and that which is human, the infinite act of existence of the Word is the *quo*, that by which the person of the Word becomes human. For this reason, Lonergan insists that the existence of the humanity must be understood as "secondary,"\(^{55}\) in an echo of the *De Unione*, and thus it is "simply posterior, consequent, a resultant." This resultant differs from a proportionately human substantial act insofar as it is delimited both by the relation it has to the person of the Son, and by the nature which receives it, whereas a proportionate act is only delimited by the receiving nature.\(^{56}\)

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54. Ibid., 147.
55. Ibid., 145.
56. Ibid., 149-51.
Difficulties

Having examined the texts of Aquinas on the *esse* of Christ and the *Constitution's* doctrine of the secondary substantial act in Christ, the time has come to look at Lonergan's doctrine against the Thomistic background in which it arose. As mentioned before, a number of difficulties arise with the Lonerganian thesis. The first difficulty we will consider (which will take up the bulk of this section) is that which arises when we understand Lonergan's teaching against the background of Aquinas' meaning for the term "substantial *esse*" or act. In order to flesh this out more fully, I will offer a brief study of Aquinas' thought on substantial *esse*.57

We begin with Aquinas' understanding of the relation of substantial *esse* to matter. We must first understand that, for Aquinas, matter in itself does not exist; it is only a possibility, which is ordered towards existence as a substance: "The power of matter is a potentiality relating to substantial *esse*."58 It is by union with a substantial form that matter is able to be incorporated into a composite whole, and thus, to become a part of a substance, and thus, to obtain substantial *esse*: "Now the composite has substantial *esse* through its substantial form."59 We cannot forget,

57. For the sake of brevity, I will strive to limit this study to the texts already cited in this paper. This is not altogether possible, and I will need to also cite the following texts: Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. by Anton C. Pegis (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), henceforth *SCG*; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae et Quaestionum Duodecim Quodlibetales ad fidem optimarum editionum diligenter reclusae* volumes 1-5, (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1942), henceforth *De Anima, De Potentia, De Veritate*, or *De Virtutibus*.

58. *ST* I, q. 54, a. 3, ad 3.

59. Ibid., q. 77, a. 1, ad 3.
however, that form and matter are complementary: "Nothing can be in act unless everything which determines its substantial esse exists," and so, a substantial form requires signate matter, in order for a complete thing to be. Therefore, "a substantial form is the act of matter in substantial esse."

As such, the form is a principium quo ("the form is understood as a principle with respect to that of which it is a form, whatever form it is, whether to substantial esse, or to accidental esse . . .") of that which it informs. Considering things according to the ten categories, the substantial form is a principle of being in the genus of substance. Because substantial form itself gives existence to matter, it must be united to it immediately: "between matter and form there is no medium in esse which is in the matter before its substantial form." This substantial form actuating the matter is itself "not some sensible thing; rather, it is ordered to substantial esse." Thus, when it is removed, the thing is itself radically changed to a different substance: "Hence, the inferior bodies are changeable . . . as regards their substantial esse, since their matter can be separated from the substantial form."

60. SCG lib. 1, cap. 24, n. 2.
61. In Sent., lib. 2, d. 26, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3.
62. Ibid., lib. 1, d. 32, q. 1, a. 1, co.
63. De Potentia, q. 3, a. 9, ad 9.
64. In Sent., lib. 3, d. 2, q. 2, a. 2, co.
65. Ibid., lib. 4, d. 11, q. 1, a. 1, co.
66. STI, q. 9, a. 2, co.
Since being informed by a substantial form makes matter a composite thing (res), and being deprived of its form makes it a different thing, we must understand that something cannot be more or less human, more or less an instantiation of a particular kind of substance: "Thus a substantial form cannot be made stronger or weaker, since it gives substantial esse, which is in only one way: where there is a different substantial esse, there is a different thing . . ."67

The assumption that substantial esse is in only one way means that there can only be one substantial esse in one subsisting thing. "For a substantial form differs from an accidental form in that the former makes this particular thing to be (esse) simply, but the latter comes to what is already this particular thing and makes it to have a quality or quantity, or to be disposed in a certain way,"68 but only one principle can give a thing existence without qualification. Thus, "one thing only has one substantial esse. But the substantial form gives substantial esse. Therefore of one thing there is but one substantial form."69

This leads us to ask what happens when other forms come to a completed subsistence. 
"[M]atter cannot be perfected by two substantial forms at once, since one matter has a capacity for only one substantial nature. But it is otherwise with accidental forms, which do not perfect their objects according to the entirety of their potency. Therefore, one perfectible thing can have

67. De Virtutibus, q. 1, a. 11, co.
68. Compendium lib. 1, cap. 90.
69. ST I, q. 76, a. 4, se.
many accidents." Aquinas' primary answer is therefore that a form which comes to a completed subsistence comes to it accidentally. This is even true if it is a substantial form: "Every form gives esse, and one thing cannot have substantial esse twice over. Therefore, if a first substantial form coming to matter gives it substantial esse, a second form must give it accidental esse." Thus, for instance, if someone puts on a leather jacket, the leather jacket only grants him or her being-in-some-way (in this case, being clad), although the jacket itself possesses full existence as a subsistent thing. However, Aquinas elsewhere offers another possibility: "I answer that each thing which comes to something after the complete esse, comes to it accidentally; unless perhaps it is assumed into participation in that very substantial esse." In the context of our discussion, the example which presents itself is the one Aquinas uses in the Summa passage on the esse of Christ: the man born blind in the Gospel, who later receives sight. The teleologically-fulfilled eyes which he receives do not add any esse to him, but rather they add a new relationality of his esse to this freshly-added element of that man-as-substance.

Thus, we have seen that in Aquinas' understanding of substantial esse, it is something which belongs to a subsistent thing. It arises from the union of matter and substantial form in a composite; the substantial form in particular is considered to stand to the substantial esse as a principle. Since it is that by which a thing exists simply, as opposed to existing in a particular

70. De Veritate, q. 15, a. 2, ad 11.
71. In Sent., lib. 2, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, co.
72. Ibid., lib. 1, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, co.
way, "esse belongs to things most immediately and intimately." From this it results that one substance can only have one substantial esse; no two forms can cause a thing to exist simply. Indeed, when we say that a thing has substantial esse, what we fundamentally mean is that it exists simply, rather than existing in a particular way. It is a first substance.

When Lonergan posits a secondary substantial act in Christ, he does not take into account that this is its basic meaning; rather than seeing the substantial act or esse as simply the truth that a thing is, he makes it into something which is had by the hypostatic entity. By so doing, his treatment of esse veers dangerously close to reification, and to making the act received in the essence into a sort of "thinglet," a quasi-existing principle of being which is had by an hypostasis, rather than the simple fact of its existence. This manufacturing of "thinglets" is the same sort of error which he attributed to Suarez, Cajetan, Maritain, and de la Taille. It is this which leads him to hold that there can be a created and an uncreated act of existence in the same Christ, a position which the notion of substantial esse as it is seen in the Thomistic corpus does not permit. To posit two substantial acts is to posit two hypostases. It would be foolish to impute heresy to Lonergan, but his own response to christological opinions he opposed may be aptly recalled here: "One can arrive at Nestorianism from Scotus' position by adding principles that are true in them-

73. De Anima, a. 9, co.

74. Constitution, 63. While there is growing interest in Constitution, most works focuses on the psychological more than the ontological. For an alternate approach to the ontological (comparison with Maurice de la Taille, see Matthew Lamb, "An Analogy for the Divine Self-Gift," in Lonergan Workshop Volume 14, edited by Fred Lawrence, 115-154. Boston: Boston College, 1998.
selves, but rejected by Scotus, and similarly by adding principles that are true in themselves but not admitted by Xiberta, one can arrive at monophysitism.\footnote{Constitution, 129.} If we bring Lonergan's teaching of the created substantial act into conjunction with the Thomistic principle that "one thing cannot have substantial esse twice over," a theologian could arrive at Nestorianism. Since Lonergan would certainly never have affirmed Nestorianism, and repudiated it at every opportunity, it is his inconsistency with Thomistic metaphysical principles we must problematize.

We must note that the two-substantial-act theory does point to a real issue in the intersection between Thomistic metaphysics and the doctrine of the Incarnation. Leaving aside Lonergan for a moment, let us turn to Aquinas to examine this issue more closely. As seen above, Thomas considers the nature of an hypostasis to be the primary principle of its substantial esse. If the form gives rise to the substantial esse, then one would expect that there should be in Christ an esse arising from the form of humanity, as well as the divine esse arising from the form of divinity, and this esse could be the esse of a res with a real relation to the divine esse. This line of thought would lead one to expect that there are two esse in Christ, which finds resonance in Lonergan's theory (although Lonergan himself is clear that the secondary act does not arise naturally from the nature, or else it would be proportionate, and would result in a second hypostasis). To clarify this issue, we should return to the \textit{Scriptum}. There, Aquinas writes in the reply to the first objection that "the form produces esse, not as belonging to matter or to form, but to a subsistent
thing. Since *esse* belongs to the hypostasis, and since one hypostasis cannot have two substantial *esse*, Lonergan's teaching that there should be a substantial act actuating Christ's humanity would necessitate that there be an hypostasis other than the divine hypostasis to which this *esse* would belong, an idea which Lonergan himself would immediately deny.

If we grant Lonergan's position that there is a secondary substantial act in Christ, and that this does not introduce a second hypostasis, other issues arise. The next which we will consider is the precise meaning of the Incarnation. Aquinas is very clear that the hypostatic union takes place in the person of the Son, and that the humanity is not assumed accidentally, but substantially. Since Aquinas consistently denies a secondary substantial *esse* in Christ, these principles resonate with his broader incarnational metaphysics.

However, if we admit this secondary substantial act with Lonergan, questions arise as to what the Incarnation means. As we saw above, he divides the act of the Incarnation into that pertaining to the subject (the Word), and that pertaining to the object (the assumed humanity). On the side of the subject, the act of the Incarnation is the divine existence of the hypostasis of the Word; on the side of the object, it is the created substantial act. Of course, there is no real change in the hypostasis of the Word, and so the real truth of the Incarnation is resolved to a relation of reason in the Word, and a real relation in the humanity. We may call this the relation of Incarnation, and it consists in the fact that the humanity relates to the Word as to an absolute principle,

76. *In Sent.*, d. 6, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1.
77. See *De Unione*, a. 1, and *ST* III q. 2, a. 3 and a. 6.
not only in the sense in which all created things relate to the Trinity as a source of the being, but also as the source of personhood.

This notion is not in any way alien to Aquinas; most notably, we saw above how in his use of the analogy of a person without hands receiving them miraculously, or of the man born blind in the Gospel, he speaks of "a new relation (habitudo) of the pre-existing personal esse to the human nature." However, in Aquinas, this relation consists precisely in the fact that the human nature is assumed into the Word, such that it is a part of the divine hypostasis and exists solely insofar as the Word exists (that is, by the divine esse), and such that, as Deloffre notes, it is most appropriate to speak of it as "existing in" the hypostasis of the Word or with similar terminology, and it is not really accurate to describe it as having existence, but as having "inexistence." However, in Lonergan, we find that the humanity is actuated by a created act, and thus its relation to the Word is more one of the term of an action to the source of that action, than one of a part to the whole hypostasis to which it belongs. While Lonergan is clear that the secondary substantial act is radically dependent on the increate act of the Divine Word, it is still distinct from it. Thus, the relation Aquinas speaks of can be called substantial, insofar as both terms are fully encompassed by one substantial act. The relation that Lonergan speaks of, on the other hand, ends up being a relation of one substantial act (that from which the divine act of incarnating proceeds) to another substantial act (that in which the divine act of incarnating terminates).

78. ST III, q. 17, a. 2, co.
79. Ibid., 63.
If the union of the humanity and divinity of Christ can be reduced to such a relation, it is difficult to see in what sense this union truly occurs in the person. As a relation between two substantial acts, it is reduced to an accident, and thus, the union itself becomes an accident.

The same difficulty arises in another way. As we saw above, Lonergan posits that an external created term is necessary, and that the substantial act is this created term in the Incarnation. But rendering the substantial act of Christ's humanity an external term relating to Christ's divinity places it outside the existence of the person of the Word. This means that it does not inhere in the person of the Word, and thus the union does not occur in the person.

The final difficulty we will consider is the place of the created, supernatural, substantial act in the order of being. Lonergan is clear that the act of Christ's human nature must be created, since otherwise the prerequisite external term for a contingent truth about God would be lacking.\(^8^0\) As such, it is clear that the act of Christ's humanity cannot be divine. At the same time, he is equally clear that it must not be proportionate to the essence which it actuates. If it were, there would be in Christ all the prerequisites for a human person, and there would thus be two persons in Christ.\(^8^1\) Since the act of Christ's human nature is not proportionate to his humanity, it clearly cannot be a human act of existence: "[W]e immediately have the criterion whereby we can determine which potency is proportioned to which act, namely, the principle that a potency is proportioned to an act when it is the same thing that is perfectible by a potency and perfected by an

\(^8^0\) Constitution, 113-115.

\(^8^1\) Ibid., 145.
We have, then, an ontological element introduced into Christ which is not human and is not divine, a fact which Lonergan himself notes: "Clearly, the secondary act of existence is neither God nor man, and so it is quite impossible for it to be that which links and unites the two natures in one person." This idea, however, is not found in the Thomistic discussion of the *esse* of Christ. In the *De Unione*, Aquinas bases his discussion of a secondary *esse* in the fact that Christ is substantified through the assumed human nature. It belongs to the supposit of Christ "insofar as it has temporally become human." Since Christ derives this *esse* from his being made human, it is derived from his human nature as from a *principium quo*. But a human nature, as human nature, is not capable of producing an *esse* which is beyond its own natural capacities. If we wish to take seriously Christ's human nature as a principle of the secondary *esse*, we must admit that this *esse* will be a human *esse*. The notion of an act of existence which is neither divine nor human in Christ is alien to Aquinas' thought.

It is worth noting that we can call the act "substantial" in a loose sense, insofar as it arises from a substantial essence. In this loose sense, an act can be called substantial insofar as it makes a thing to be of a substantial species, such as human. The primary meaning of the term,

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82. *Constitution*, 57.
83. *Constitution*, 149.
84. *De Unione*, a. 4, co.
85. See Deloffre, 65-66.
however, and clearly that with which Lonergan is concerned, is of what makes a "first substance," a "this thing."

We have seen, then, that the Lonerganian teaching of a created, supernatural, substantial act in Christ, disproportionate to the human nature which it actuates, is problematic from a Thomistic perspective for a number of reasons. In the first place, it fails to take into account the Thomistic principle that one thing cannot have more than one substantial act of existence, and makes the act of existence into a "thinglet" in a subsisting thing. In the second place, it leads to the resolution of the reality of the Incarnation into an incarnational relation between the Word and the assumed humanity (real in the humanity, rational in the Word), and thus ultimately renders the union an accidental rather than substantial union. In the third place, it posits in Christ a "thinglet" neither human nor divine, a notion clearly not to be found in Aquinas' teaching on the esse of Christ. These things being so, we may say that the Lonerganian theory of Christ's esse is incompatible with the thought of Thomas Aquinas.
Aquinas and *kenosis*

There is value in uncovering and elaborating the ways in which a particular reading of a text is problematic. Primarily, this lies in the fact that we open up new ways of reading the text, which will hopefully be more consistent with the framework of the original writer. Thus, rather than leaving the *De Unione* to its own devices after distancing myself from Lonergan's reading, I would like to propose an alternate reading of the text. In order to ground myself in Aquinas' thought, I will take as my starting point his writings on *kenosis*, the self-emptying of Christ in the Incarnation. Though Aquinas touches on the subject in several places in his corpus, I will limit myself to the treatment found in the most natural place: his *Commentary on Philippians*.86

Aquinas reads what modern scholars consider to be a discrete christological hymn in direct continuity with the verse which precedes it. The Apostle exhorts us to humility, and in so doing, offers Christ as an examplar of humility, that we may imitate him.87 In order to demonstrate the humility of Christ, however, he must first demonstrate his greatness, that his lowering might be all more significant, and thus he proposes to us the absolute equality of Christ to God when he says he was "in the form of God." It is noteworthy that Aquinas here reads "form" as an Aristotelian form, that is, as nature.88

86. The text I will use is found in the following edition: *Commentary on Saint Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians and the letter to the Philippians*, trans. by F. R. Larcher and Michael Duffy (Albany, New York: Magi Books, 1969), henceforth *PhilComm*.

87. Ibid., 78.

88. Ibid., 78-79.
Having established the perfect majesty of Christ, Paul goes on to commend to us his humility, when he tells us that Christ "emptied himself." Aquinas expounds on what precisely is meant by Christ's self-emptying; it is not that he put aside his divinity, but rather that he assumed humanity: "For just as he descended from heaven, not that He ceased to exist in heaven, but because He began to exist in a new way on earth, so He also emptied Himself, not by putting off His divine nature, but by assuming a human nature." As to why this constitutes a self-emptying, Aquinas reminds us that "human nature and the soul are not full, but capable of fulness, because it was made as a slate not written upon. Therefore, human nature is empty." Thus, in assuming a human nature, Christ assumed a sort of emptiness, and thereby emptied himself.

Commenting on what he calls the "manner and form" of the humility proclaimed in the saying "He humbled himself," Aquinas then goes on to appropriate the phrase "form of a servant" as a guard against Nestorianism. Paul did not write that he took an actual servant, but the form. To counter the opposite error of Monophysitism, he draws a guard from Christ's "being born in the likeness of men." "Being found in human form" is taken to denote all of the "defects and properties associated with the human species, except sin," which he refers to as the "external life" or "outward activities" of Christ. He then goes on to explain that the humanity is to Christ a sort of habit, which does not change the one assuming, but is itself changed, since the

89. Ibid, 80.
90. Ibid., 81.
91. Ibid.
humanity of Christ is filled with grace and truth (John 1:14). Drawing to the end of the section on the manner and form of Christ's humility, he uses the text to reject a number of heretical notions. Most notably, the teaching of the accidental union of humanity and divinity is undermined because Christ is "found in human form [emphasis mine]," and thus "the person existing in the divine nature became a person existing in the human nature."
Synthesis

We have seen that to read the two esse in the *De Unione* as two separate substantial acts as Lonergan does is inconsistent with the metaphysics of Aquinas, as well as with his theology of two natures experiencing a union which takes place in the person. At the same time, to read the two esse as in fact one sole act of existence only understood as temporal or eternal (as Capreolus and his followers do) is to fail to take seriously the difference between the two esse proposed in the body of the fourth article and the reply to objections in the *De Unione*, compromising the integrity of the *De Unione* for the sake of consistency throughout the Thomistic corpus. Also, to reject the *De Unione* as a mere experimentation (or even as falsely attributed to Aquinas) as Cajetan and others have done is not satisfactory, not least because it fails to account for recent scholarship dating the *De Unione* later in Aquinas' career than was previously believed.

The question then remains: How are we to take the *De Unione*? Having explored in brief Aquinas' theology of *kenosis*, I hope to point towards an answer which takes seriously the text itself, while still seeking consistency with the rest of Aquinas' works. As we saw before, when Aquinas begins to discuss the secondary esse, he shifts abruptly from a distinction between accidental and substantial esse to a distinction between principal and secondary esse. By adopting this more loosely-defined paradigm, Aquinas at once signals the inadequacy of more standard terminology, and opens a way to a greater variety of interpretation than was previously available.

He refuses to call the esse substantial, since if it were substantial, we would then say that Christ is *simpliciter* in two ways, which would posit two hypostases in him. At the same time, he
refuses to call it accidental, since the principle of this *esse* is itself a substantial essence (because life is an essential, not an accidental predicate),\(^92\) and the substantial union requires that the *esse* be substantial. Thus, we discern another meaning for the two *esse*, which may allow us to preserve their integrity while at the same time maintain unity of substance in Christ.

I propose that this kenotic theology of Aquinas provides a key to understanding what is meant by "principal" and "secondary" in the context of the *De Unione*. Indeed, Aquinas points us in a kenotic direction here, as the only direct reference to Scripture (found in the second objection) reads: "In Christ there are two forms; since, while in the form of God, he took up the form of a servant, as is said in Philippians 2."\(^93\) Upon examining Aquinas' reading of this passage, we find that Aquinas is concerned with speaking of the difference between the humanity and divinity. His primary understanding of *kenosis* is that it refers, not to losing divine ways of existing, but to taking up a second, lesser, created mode of existence.

Remembering always the absolute centrality of the hypostasis in Aquinas' thought, we can recall his analogy with the descent from heaven to help us understand. Just as, by saying that he descended from heaven, we speak of Christ not leaving heaven, but beginning "to exist in a new way,"\(^94\) so we speak of the person of the Word existing in a new way when we speak of the assumption of the human nature; specifically, we speak of him existing in a human and limited

\(^{92}\) *ST I*, q. 18, a.2, co.

\(^{93}\) *De Unione*, a. 4, obj. 2.

\(^{94}\) *PhilComm*, 80.
way, with all the "defects and properties associated with the human species, except sin." We may read the aliud esse huius suppositi as referring to this new, human existing which the Son of God assumes in the Incarnation, called by Aquinas the "external life" of Christ. We must also note that this is a life of not having, but reaching towards: "human nature and the soul are not full, but capable of fulness." Since Christ has taken up a life in a limited nature and according to the rules of that nature, he is able to image for our imitation the act of striving after God, rather than simply the act of being God. By demonstrating in his own life what it means to fully live out the human capacity for fulness, Christ shows us how high we ourselves may ascend, within the limits of our nature.

Metaphysical terminology, if pressed too far, will either fail to preserve the integrity of the human nature of Christ, or it will end in positing two separate hypostases. To understand the fullness of the duality in Christ, we must move to discussion of two lives, each proceeding from its appropriate essence. Aquinas has already prepared us to go down this road in his objections in the fourth article of the De Unione: there are in Christ two esse (human and divine), there are in Christ two forms (the forms of God and of a servant), there are in Christ two lives (a human and mortal life, and a divine and immortal life). We may discern here a sort of procedure from what is less known to us to what is more immediately apparent: we see the signs of a dual life in Christ, most immediately in the death (which belongs to human nature) and resurrection (which belongs to divine nature). From these two lives, we may see that Christ subsists in two separate

95. Ibid.
forms, one human and one divine. This leads us to see that a divine existence and a human existence, separate from one another, are seen (and truly are) in Christ. And so, in the Incarnation, "the person existing in the divine nature became a person existing in the human nature."\textsuperscript{96}  

His reply to the objections in no way diminishes the reality of these differences of life, form, and \textit{esse}; indeed, he states plainly that "the \textit{esse} of the human nature is not the \textit{esse} of the divine nature."\textsuperscript{97}  At the same time, he leaves no room open for us to understand that "Christ can simply be called two according to \textit{esse}," that is, that there are two substantial acts in Christ. Aquinas wholly concedes the objections, merely stipulating that they do not show two substantial acts in Christ, since Christ cannot be simply said to be two according to \textit{esse}. Rather, he is said to be \textit{simpliciter} by his divine \textit{esse}, while the human \textit{esse} is that by which Christ is said to be in a certain way. This usually indicates an accidental \textit{esse}, but when the form giving rise to the \textit{esse} is substantial, we cannot call the resultant \textit{esse} accidental. Since it cannot be substantial either, Aquinas refers to it as secondary. Thus, the secondary \textit{esse} is simply the being-in-a-certain-way which the Son of God assumes in the Incarnation.  

\textbf{Summary}  

In the course of this paper, we have sought to contextualize Lonergan's teaching of a secondary substantial act in Christ within the Thomistic framework from which it arises. We have begun by examining the works of Aquinas on the existence of Christ, in particular the \textit{De \textsuperscript{96} PhilComm, 81-82.  

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., a. 4, ad 1.
Unione. We have found this latter to differ from the rest of Aquinas' works in two major ways: the introduction of the notion of substantification, and the admission of a secondary esse (which is not esse simpliciter). Comparing this work, in particular, with Lonergan's own Ontological and Psychological Constitution of Christ, we have found the latter to diverge significantly from Aquinas a) in making of substantial act a "thinglet," so that one thing can be said to have more than one substantial act, b) in ultimately reducing the Incarnation to a relation rather than a true unity of being, and thus reducing it to an accidental union, and c) introducing something not-human and not-divine into Christ. Finally, we have then gone on to examine the passage in Aquinas' commentary on the letter to the Philippians which deals with the kenotic hymn, and found there significant hermeneutical tools for understanding the De Unione in relation to the rest of the Thomistic corpus. In particular, we have found the discussion of Christ adopting ways of existing, and an external life, which are according to human nature and wholly proceed from it, yet radically belong to the one hypostasis of the Word.
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