

Accrued Eyes and Sixth Digits: Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Cajetan on Christ's Single *Esse* and the Union of Natures

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THOMAS AQUINAS devotes the first fifty-nine questions of the *Summa theologiae's* *tertia pars* to a discussion of Christ, who as “our way to God,” completes the tripartite organization of the work.¹ Coming to question 17, he offers a sustained discussion of Christ's single *esse* and vigorously defends Christ's status as a single subject in whom two natures are united. In the *sed contra* to article 2, he writes: “Everything is said to be a being [*ens*], inasmuch as it is one, for one and being are convertible. Therefore if there were two beings [*esse*] in Christ, and not one only, Christ would be two and not one.”² The contention that Christ can only have one *esse*—inasmuch as he exists as a single entity—can seem like a mere technical or metaphysical verification of a larger scriptural and religious truth: that Christ is a single person. Thomas's affirmation in this question, however, performs remarkable conceptual work. As becomes evident in question 17 and the remainder of the expansive treatise on

¹ In the prologue to question 2 of the *prima pars*, Thomas indicates the basic structure of the *Summa*: “Because the chief aim of sacred doctrine is to teach the knowledge of God, not only as He is in Himself, but also as He is the beginning of things and their last end, and especially of rational creatures, as is clear from what has been already said, therefore, in our endeavor to expound this science, we shall treat: (1) Of God; (2) Of the rational creature's advance towards God; (3) Of Christ, Who as man, is our way to God.” St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 2, prologue. All English translations are taken from *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger, 1947).

² *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2, *sed contra*.

Christ, Christ's single *esse* ultimately informs the most critical theological implications of Thomas's Christology, such as Christ's status as a fully-graced human being, his ability to perform both divine and human actions, and the way that Christ as one person properly navigates Christological heresies such as Nestorianism or monophysitism. Beyond these centrally important outcomes of a functioning Christology, a single *esse* informs Christ's soteriological significance for believers by securing his ontological status as the means of return and the source of efficacy for the sacramental life of the Church.

Thomas's position on Christ's *esse* has historically invited criticism. Thomas himself knew of potential critiques as evidenced in *Summa theologiae* as well as the *quaestiones disputatae* that broach this topic. Certain late medieval theologians, most notably John Duns Scotus, directly dispute Thomas's contentions and conclusions about single *esse*, and some criticisms have been maintained and enlarged by modern scholars.³ Interpreters of Thomas also produced defenses of the single *esse* argument. Perhaps most notable among these is the *Summa* commentary by Tomasso de Vio, Cardinal Cajetan, which outlines the structure of Aquinas's position while developing lines of defense against Scotus and others.

The present study examines and promotes the theological significance of Thomas's single *esse* doctrine through two lines of investigation. It first exposit Thomas's mature teaching on single *esse* in its proper context and with reference to related treatments of the same subject. To that end, this study will outline the foundation of Thomas's mature teaching as found in *Summa theologiae* (*ST*) III, q. 17, aa. 1–2 and, where useful, in his works in the *Scriptum super Sententiis* III, d. VI, *Quodlibetal Question* IX, 2, and the disputed question *De unione Verbi incarnati*. Having noted Thomas's construction and defense of single *esse*, the study secondly will introduce Cajetan's reception and defense of Aquinas, particularly as it directly rebuts criticisms from Scotus; it will explicate the structure, objections, and solutions proposed in Cajetan's commentary on *ST* III, question 17 while consulting an unedited sermon on the mode of union in order to amplify Cajetan's own position. Attention will also be given to the wider

³ See for example Richard Cross's essay "Aquinas on Nature, Hypostasis, and the Metaphysics of the Incarnation," *The Thomist* 60 (April 1996): 171–201, especially 191 and 201–2; his book *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (London: Oxford, University Press, 2002) contains more detailed criticisms of Thomas's part-whole analogy for the hypostatic union and his theory of subsistence in *esse*. For a criticism of Thomas's use of suppositum to preserve Christ's single *esse*, see Thomas V. Morris, "St. Thomas on the Identity and Unity of the Person of Christ: A Problem of Reference in Christological Discourse," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982): 419–30.

Christological and theological commitments at stake in Thomas's teaching on single *esse* as a reminder that question 17 cannot be isolated from a host of larger theological claims held by the author. Indeed Christ's *esse* does not merely satisfy a metaphysical consideration of the mode of union in the Incarnation; rather, it provides a conceptual foundation on which to understand the import of Christ's saving mission and its consequences for the life of grace.

Aquinas: Christ as Single Subject with a Single *Esse*

Question 17 of the *tertia pars*, "Of Christ's Unity of Being," does not stand on its own; rather, it gains significance from its location within Thomas's treatise on Christ (*ST* III, qq. 1–59). It falls within a larger section (qq. 16–26) which Thomas refers to as "those things which follow on this union" and a smaller section (qq. 16–19) which he calls "what belongs to Christ in himself."⁴ The former title suggests that the insights of question 17 depend on questions 2 through 15, "the mode of the union of the Word Incarnate," and particularly question 2, "the union itself." Here Thomas indicates that before one can speak consistently about "what belongs to Christ in himself," one must first understand the way in which Christ is both divine and human. The reader should therefore expect that question 17 is indebted to its predecessors, especially question 2. Moreover, following questions 16 through 26, Thomas completes the treatise on Christ with a second broad section entitled "those things which were done and suffered by the Savior, God Incarnate." Question 17 can be understood as a prefatory question to the extended discussion of Christ's life as revealed in Scripture in questions 27 through 59. Indeed, question 17 belongs to the first 26 questions, which attempt to elucidate "the mystery of the Incarnation itself," and by adducing the proper terminological and conceptual tools for understanding the Incarnation, one can then plumb the meaning of "those things which were done and suffered by the Savior" because one can now speak, as accurately as human language will permit, of the mystery of God becoming a human being.⁵

⁴ These headings can be found in the paragraph which prefaces question 16 as a kind of mini-prologue.

⁵ One could speak at length about the location of Christ in the *tertia pars*. Here I have confined myself to the more immediate context of question 17, although much more could be said about the relation of Christology to the *exitus-reditus* pattern of the *Summa* and Thomas's view of God's providential movement of created things to the ends which God intends for them. While M. D. Chenu's work provides an over-all view to the structure of the *Summa theologiae*, Jean-Marc Laporte, S.J. provides a focused study of Christology in the *Summa theologiae*; see "Christ in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*: Peripheral or Pervasive," *The Thomist* 67 (2003): 221–48.

Question 17 is notable for its brevity and use of sources. It contains a scant two articles. This seeming dearth could suggest Thomas's conclusions are inevitable (and therefore short) consequences of earlier discussions, but it may also indicate that he feels constrained in what he can say about Christ's unique *esse*. Also, question 17 does not use authorities as frequently or in the same way. Thomas quotes no Scripture passages and the Fathers only sparingly (in this case Augustine twice and Nazianzen once) while relying more heavily on his own philosophical convictions about person (as hypostasis or suppositum), essence, and existence. This shift in use of authorities indicates that Thomas is cultivating different ground in question 17.

Article 1 asks "whether Christ is one or two," and it affirms the reality that there is both something singular and something plural in Christ. The task falls to Thomas to properly locate Christ's being vis-à-vis his two natures and one person. He accomplishes this with concision in the *sed contra*; quoting Boethius, he writes, "Whatever is, inasmuch as it is, is one. But we confess that Christ is. Therefore Christ is one."⁶ Thomas fortifies this assertion by arguing that Christ's concrete human nature cannot be predicated of him in the abstract because the person of Christ is the divine person of the Word, and in the abstract, the Word does not naturally possess a human nature. Rather, the Word assumes a concrete human nature to himself in the Incarnation, but not as something inherent to his utterly simple essence and existence as God.⁷ Given that human nature cannot be predicated of Christ (whose suppositum is the Word) in the abstract, there is no duality that can be predicated of his being; Thomas writes: "But because the two natures are not predicated of Christ, except as they are signified in the suppositum, it must be by reason of the suppositum that *one* or *two* be predicated of Christ."⁸ Christ's two natures are predicated of him "in the suppositum," which is the person of Christ, and his suppositum is singular (although in the concrete it possesses two natures) both before and after the Incarnation. This singularity of the suppositum establishes that Christ is a single subject.

The question of whether Christ may be called one or two may seem pedantic or at least self-evident to many, but Thomas reminds his readers

⁶ *ST* III, q. 17, a. 1, *sed contra*.

⁷ Here it is useful to note that in the corpus Thomas reminds his readers that in God existence and essence are the same, but that this does not hold with any creature. He explicitly references *ST* I, q. 29, a. 4, ad. 1, where he argues that God's essence and existence are one and simple; this position is also found in *ST* I, q. 3, aa. 3–4 and in *De ente et essentia*, 5:1–3.

⁸ *ST* III, q. 17, a. 1.

that his conclusion protects Christology from Nestorianism in either its more obvious ancient form or its more subtle and contemporary re-development. He recalls that some of his relative contemporaries "placed two supposita in Christ and one Person, which, in their opinion, would seem to be the suppositum completed with its final completion."⁹ These peers (probably followers of the *homo assumptus* opinion as outlined by Peter Lombard) attempted to posit two "completed supposita" (as connected with Christ's two natures) and *one* person in Christ, and they described him thus: two in the neuter and one in the masculine.¹⁰ Others who might explicitly support a Nestorian position would posit two persons and two supposita in Christ and so describe Christ as two in the neuter and two in the masculine. Both of these positions, in Thomas's mind, ultimately fall into heresy because, contra the Council of Chalcedon, they in some way affirm two subjects in Christ.¹¹ Thomas, in *ST* III, q. 2, a. 3, already affirms the almost synonymous character of person and suppositum so that it is impossible to say that Christ is one person and two supposita.¹² The only remaining possibility is Thomas's own

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Thomas uses "neuter" and "masculine" to indicate Christ in the abstract and in the concrete. He writes: "[F]or the neuter gender implies something unformed and imperfect, whereas the masculine signifies something formed and perfect" (*ST* III, q. 17, a. 1). For the *homo assumptus* opinion of the Lombard, see his *Sententiae* III, d. 6.

¹¹ The relevant part of the decree from the Council of Chalcedon (451) reads: "[O]ne and the same Christ, Son, Lord, unique; acknowledged in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation—the difference of the natures being by no means taken away because of the union, but rather the distinctive character of each nature being preserved, and [each] combining in one Person and hypostasis—not divided or separated into two Persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ." Taken from "The Chalcedonian Decree," trans. Henry R. Percival, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 373, emphasis mine.

¹² For example, he uses hypostasis and suppositum almost synonymously as he deploys and interprets a passage from the Council of Ephesus; he writes: "And this, too, was condemned with the approval of the Council of Ephesus (part iii, can. 4) in these words: 'If anyone ascribes to two persons or subsistences such words as are in the evangelical and apostolic Scriptures, or have been said of Christ by the saints, or by Himself of Himself, and, moreover, applies some of them to the man, taken as distinct from the Word of God, and some of them (as if they could be used of God alone) only to the Word of God the Father, let him be anathema.' Therefore it is plainly a heresy condemned long since by the Church to say that in Christ there are two hypostases, or two supposita, or that the union did not take place in the hypostasis or suppositum. Hence in the same Synod (can. 2) it is said: 'If anyone does not confess that the Word was united to

position: that Christ is one person and consequently has one suppositum so that he is one in the neuter and one in the masculine. The decision to affirm Christ's oneness—through a single suppositum—not only supports his unity of being, it prevents inadvertent heresy.

Question 17 is not the first time in the *Summa theologiae* that Thomas has concerned himself with the potential problems of Nestorianism for Christology. Rather, in *ST* III, q. 2, a. 6 he considers Nestorianism, along with Eutychianism, in greater detail, rejecting recent forms of Nestorianism which he detects in two of the three opinions on the mode of the Incarnation offered by Peter Lombard (cf. *Sententiae* III, d. 6). He writes:

But some more recent masters, thinking to avoid these heresies, through ignorance fell into them. For some conceded one person in Christ, but maintained two hypostases, or two supposita, saying that a man, composed of body and soul, was from the beginning of his conception assumed by the Word of God. And this is the first opinion set down by the Master. But others desirous of keeping the unity of person, held that the soul of Christ was not united to the body, but that these two were mutually separate, and were united to the Word accidentally, so that the number of persons might not be increased. And this is the third opinion which the Master sets down.¹³

The first opinion of the Lombard, often called *homo assumptus*, holds that there is one person, Christ, in whom there are two supposita—one human and one divine. In the third, often called the *habitus* opinion, one person is affirmed, and to maintain it, the person of Christ does not assume a complete human nature but rather receives a human soul and human flesh separately and accidentally as two garments. Thomas regards both opinions as Nestorian by their affirmation of accidental union between what is divine and what is human in Christ. He writes: “But both of these opinions fall into the heresy of Nestorius; the first, indeed, because to maintain two hypostases or two supposita in Christ is the same as to maintain two persons, as was shown above. . . . But the other opinion falls into the error of Nestorius by maintaining an accidental union.”¹⁴ For Thomas, *homo assumptus* always affirms two supposita, which negates the possibility of hypostatic union (or union in subsistence); this leaves no other option than to posit a non-substantial union. *Habitus* implies an accidental union of separate parts

flesh in subsistence, and that Christ with His flesh is both—to wit, God and man—let him be anathema’” (*ST* III, q. 2, a. 3).

¹³ *ST* III, q. 2, a. 6. For the first and third opinions of the Lombard, see his *Sententiae* III, d. 6, ch. 2 and ch. 4.

¹⁴ *ST* III, q. 2, a. 6.

of human nature to the divine Word which do not even constitute a human nature let alone a union in the suppositum of the Word.¹⁵ For our purposes, the problem of the *homo assumptus* opinion is particularly important because Thomas argues that two supposita eliminate a substantial union, leaving only an accidental one (by indwelling or some other means) to account for the unity of natures. This becomes vital in question 17, article 1 inasmuch as Thomas identifies the problem of Christ having two supposita “in the neuter” as tantamount to the position of *homo assumptus*.¹⁶ This same opinion will play an even more forceful role in question 17, article 2.

As Thomas rejects the first and third opinions of the Lombard—regarding them as heretical—he also defines the second opinion as “orthodox truth.” The second opinion navigates between Nestorianism (two subjects united accidentally) and Eutychianism or monophysitism (two natures which become one after the Incarnation), and in doing so it maintains the Christian dogma by positing one hypostasis of the divine Word in whom two separate natures are united.¹⁷ Question 17 therefore not only negates heresy but expresses the positive dogma of the Church and that of the Lombard’s second opinion. The task of question 17, article 2 becomes explaining how human nature can be said to subsist in the one *esse* of the suppositum or hypostasis of the Word.

¹⁵ For Thomas’s view of the *habitus* opinion in particular, see Walter H. Principe’s “St. Thomas on the Habitus—Theory of the Incarnation,” in *Saint Thomas Aquinas, 1274–1974: Commemorative Studies*, vol. 1, ed. E. Gilson et al. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 381–418.

¹⁶ For further evidence of the relation of ST III, q. 2, a. 6 and III, q. 17, aa. 1–2, refer to Thomas’s *Scriptum super Sententiis* III, d. VI where, in question 2, article 1 Thomas asks, “Is Christ two in the neuter?” Here he points out the inherent danger of two supposita in the neuter and explicitly associates this danger with the first opinion.

¹⁷ Thomas initially quotes the Second Council of Constantinople and its affirmation of “a union of the Word of God with flesh, by composition, which is in subsistence.” He then goes on to conclude: “Therefore it is plain that the second of the three opinions, mentioned by the Master (*Sent.* iii, D. 6), which holds one hypostasis of God and man, is not to be called an opinion, but an article of Catholic faith” (ST III, q. 2, a. 6). Weisheipl notes that Thomas “was the first Latin scholastic writer to utilize verbatim the acts of the first five ecumenical councils of the Church, namely in the *Catena aurea* (1262–1267) and in the *Summa theologiae* (1266–1273).” James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D’Aquino, His Life, Thought and Work* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 164. Both Weisheipl and Torrell agree that Thomas had access to the *acta* and *gesta* of these councils later in his career and that he possibly encountered and copied out a manuscript in the library at Monte Cassino; see Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas*, 164–65, and Jean Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: The Person and His Work*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Royal (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 140.

Question 17, article 2 advances the single-subject argument from the first article, but Thomas here wrestles with the metaphysics which underlie affirming one *esse* and one subject in Christ. The *sed contra* presents the straight forward contention: “Everything is said to be a being inasmuch as it is one, for one and being are convertible.”¹⁸ It follows from the position established in article 1—“Christ is one”—that Christ must have one being or *esse*, yet this affirmation becomes more important and more controversial when Thomas distinguishes the meaning of Christ’s one *esse* in the corpus.¹⁹ Thomas has thus far associated *esse* with the act of existence which belongs properly to Christ’s suppositum, but in the corpus he allows that *esse* is related to both the suppositum and to Christ’s two natures; this allowance is necessary inasmuch as one can say that Christ is both divine and human. He writes: “Now being pertains both to the nature and to the hypostasis; to the hypostasis as to that *which* [*quod*] has being—and to the nature as to that *whereby* [*quo*] it has being.”²⁰ The suppositum or hypostasis is that “which is”—*quod est*—or which has *esse* itself; it signifies the existing subject. The suppositum underlies everything, for instance, which constitutes Socrates, and only the whole person, Socrates, exists. Nature is that “whereby”—*quo est*—a thing exists; it signifies the quiddity (or essence) of a thing. Socrates exists as a

¹⁸ ST III, q. 17, a. 2, *sed contra*.

¹⁹ Here it should be noted that “*esse*” is the Latin infinitive of *sum* or “to be,” and when used as a substantive, *esse* refers to existence or the act of existence. Socrates has an *esse*—he has an existence. The word *ens* is also taken from *sum* in the participial form. *Ens* translates as “being” and as a verbal substantive it signifies a substantive that exists. Socrates is an *ens*—he is a being. Being (*ens*) and existence (*esse*) can therefore be distinguished; the former refers to a subject and the latter to a state. Socrates is a being who (somewhat redundantly) exists or has existence. Moreover, *esse* should be understood in reference to potency and act; it is *esse* which reduces a thing from potency to act in an Aristotelian framework; *esse* cannot therefore be subject to anything which is in potency but should be seen as that which actualizes created things. For further insights on Thomas’s understanding of *esse*, see E. A. Sillem, “Saint Thomas Aquinas on the Meaning of *Esse*,” *The Downside Review* 68 (1950): 414–39.

²⁰ ST III, q. 17, a. 2, *emphasis mine*. For a further elucidation of the relation of suppositum and nature to *esse*, see Thomas’s *Quodlibetal Question IX*, 2, 2, where he writes: “Sed hoc esse attribuitur alicui *dupliciter*. *Uno modo* ut sicut ei *quod* proprie et vere habet *esse* vel *est*. Et sic attribuitur soli substantiae *per se* subsistenti: unde quod vere est, dicitur substantia in *I Physic*. Omnia vero quae *non per se subsistunt*, sed in alio et cum alio, *sive* sint accidentia *sive* formae substantiales aut quaelibet partes, non habent *esse* ita ut ipsa vere sint, sed attribuitur eis *esse alio modo*, idest ut *quo* aliquid est; sicut albedo dicitur *esse*, non quia ipsa in se subsistat, sed quia ea aliquid habet *esse album*.” *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, ed. R. M. Spiazzi et al. (Turin and Rome: Marietti, 1949).

human being; his nature as rational animal defines the what-ness of his suppositum, and in that sense nature is related to *esse* as that “whereby” the suppositum exists.

Here it is useful to note Thomas's distinction between essence and existence. An essence can, in the abstract, be in potency before it is brought into existence; so in the abstract, the essence of Socrates (his human nature) exists in potency before he comes to exist. The essence is actualized by participating in *esse*; *esse*, or existence, is that perfection which renders any potency, including the essence of Socrates, actual. Essence and existence are therefore distinct, and essence depends on *esse* for its actualization (and, typically, matter for its individuation). Understood as such, that which is potential can never be said to possess what is actual *until it is actualized*. Wherefore in the *Summa theologiae*'s question on divine perfection Thomas explains: “Existence is the most perfect of all things as that by which they are made actual; for nothing has actuality except so far as it exists. *Hence existence is that which actuates all things, even their form.*”²¹ As the principle which actualizes even essence (here discussed as form), *esse* is separate and more perfect than essence. When applied to nature, then, *esse* must be regarded as that which brings nature into act, and it follows that it is separate and more perfect.

Question 17, article 2 further complicates the relations of suppositum and nature to *esse* by distinguishing two types of *esse*—“personal” and “accidental.” A suppositum possesses one personal *esse*; as that which constitutes a thing's existence, it cannot be multiplied under any circumstances. Accidental *esse* is the being which a suppositum has in virtue of a certain accident; Socrates can be “white” and be a “musician” and thereby have two accidental *esse* (whiteness exists and musicianship exists) attached to his suppositum. They are “attached” inasmuch as they do not constitute the personal *esse* of Socrates but actually gain their *esse* from their attachment or inherence to personal *esse* in the suppositum. To reprise: a suppositum has one personal *esse* by which the suppositum exists and as many accidental and conjoined *esse* as it has accidental properties. Nature relates to these *esse* by defining their quiddity, and so a single nature exists “whereby” Socrates's suppositum exists (as rational animal), and as many accidental *esse* (modes of existing in accidents) relate to Socrates's suppositum as he has accidental characteristics (Socrates exists accidentally as white, as a musician, etc.). From this taxonomy, Thomas concludes: “But the being which belongs to the very hypostasis or person in itself cannot possibly be multiplied in one hypostasis or

²¹ *ST* I, q. 4, a. 1, ad 3, emphasis mine.

person, since it is impossible that there should not be one being for one thing.”²² The identification of one personal *esse* with one suppositum—and the specification that the *esse* be defined by one nature—indicates that an existing suppositum cannot logically be multiplied even by multiple natures.

The impossibility of multiplying the personal *esse* of a suppositum seems to guarantee a single personal *esse* and a single personal existence in Christ. This defends against attempts to multiply Christ’s single subject on the basis of his two natures, and yet Christ’s single *esse* requires further support against more subtle claims by pseudo-Nestorian or *homo assumptus* proponents. For example, if Christ’s human nature possesses neither a personal *esse* nor an accidental *esse* (à la the *habitus* theory), then how can the human nature be said to exist? Thomas replies that Christ’s suppositum takes human nature to itself as “a constitutive part of the whole” of Christ. He likens Christ’s human nature to his suppositum as “being possessed of a head, being corporeal, being animated” is to the one being of Socrates.²³ The addition and conjunction of “constitutive parts of the whole”—such as a head—do not add new being to the suppositum because they belong inherently to it.

Indeed, the *homo assumptus* proponent might agree with Thomas to this point, but he would then reply that the human nature is assumed to Christ’s suppositum (which is the Word) subsequently or after the fact of its existence. The timing of the assumption implies that it cannot be likened to a head, without which a man cannot be constituted in the first place. Thomas, recognizing this wrinkle, describes the assumption of the human nature to Christ’s suppositum thus:

And if it so happened that after the person of Socrates was constituted there accrued to him hands or feet or eyes, as happened to him who was born blind, no new being would be thereby added to Socrates, *but only a relation to these*, i.e. inasmuch as he would be said to be, not only with reference to what he had previously, but also with reference to what accrued to him afterwards.²⁴

The human nature is added to Christ’s suppositum as if it was something which always belonged to the wholly constituted person. In that sense, just as an accrued eye does not convey a new *esse* to the healed man, so the human nature does not convey new *esse* to the suppositum (thereby multiplying its *esse*). The accrued human nature constitutes a “new relation” to

²² Ibid.

²³ *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2.

²⁴ Ibid.

the pre-existing suppositum, which signifies something radically different (just as an accrued eye would for a blind man), but it cannot signify new *esse*.²⁵ Thomas thus employs the language of “relations” to prevent the *homo assumptus* proponent from asserting any new *esse* in addition to the personal *esse* of the Word's suppositum. Also, the accrued eye is simultaneously essential and non-essential. An eye belongs naturally, and so essentially, to a properly constituted human being, yet the man born blind was “wholly human” before the miracle, and afterwards, he remains unchanged in terms of his personal *esse*. Thomas thus uses the analogy of an accrued eye to indicate the way in which human nature brings no new *esse* to the divine suppositum because it is as if it always essentially belonged to Christ.

Article 2 clearly pays great dividends against incursions of Nestorianism—classic or contemporary. Perhaps more impressively, however, it illuminates the wide-ranging power of the union of natures in the person of the Word. In response to the second objection of the article—which argues for dual *esse* from the ontological disparity between divine and human natures—Thomas illustrates the great elevation and actualization that Christ's human nature receives in its assumption to the suppositum of the divine Word. He writes: “The eternal being of the Son of God, which is the Divine Nature, becomes the being of man, inasmuch as the human nature is assumed by the Son of God to the unity of Person.”²⁶ The Incarnate Son's human nature, unlike other human natures which are instantiated in a human suppositum (such as Socrates) and participate in divine being for actualization, is conjoined to the Son of God as its suppositum, and it has being directly from divine being and not through a kind of participation.²⁷ Jesus can be said to enjoy the personal *esse* of the Son of God. Recall again Thomas's distinction between essence and existence; in this case the essence of Christ as a human being is made

²⁵ The language of “relations” is telling; for just as relations imply no substance in the person of the Trinity, so “a new relation of existence” implies nothing substantial (having *esse*) in the accrued human nature. For a potentially analogous account, see Thomas's discussion of Trinitarian relations in *ST* I, q. 28, aa. 1–3.

²⁶ *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2, ad 2. I owe the insight gained from this objection to Joseph Wawrykow, who indicated to me in conversation the importance of divine *esse* for the human nature.

²⁷ Thomas explains that all creatures participate in divine *esse* as that by which they exist; in *ST* I, q. 44, a. 1 he writes: “Therefore all beings apart from God are not their own being, but are beings by participation. Therefore it must be that all things which are diversified by the diverse participation of being, so as to be more or less perfect, are caused by one First Being, Who possesses being most perfectly.” If this First Being is the *esse* by which the human nature of Christ exists, then it is necessarily the most perfect creature.

actual by divine *esse* itself. While *ipsum esse* can hardly be defined, a notion of transcendent perfection can surely be attributed to it.²⁸ This kind of existence makes Christ's human nature wholly elevated and perfected; it makes Christ a perfectly graced human being whose human nature is fully actualized in view of its divine *esse* (*ipsum esse* or *actus purus*). Christ, in his human nature, thus enjoys perfect use of his powers and acts as exemplar to all humankind. He personifies perfect moral actions by proper use of his natural capacities, which makes questions 26 through 59 of the *tertia pars* far more rich in their meaning.²⁹ The human nature's possession of divine *esse* extends to the realm of soteriology so much so that one can argue that human nature—in the spirit of Nazianzen—is fully assumed and thus fully healed.³⁰ It also foreshadows the manner in which God will elevate the natures of all human persons—through the gift of sanctifying grace, which can be characterized as God's uncreated gift of God's own *esse* to humankind.³¹ Receiving such grace, human beings can follow and imitate “those things which were done and suffered by the Savior, God Incarnate” because their natures can be increasingly perfected like Christ's human nature. Thomas's protection of Christ's single divine *esse* therefore assists his readers to understand Christ as their exemplar and savior—their way of *reditus ad Deum*.

²⁸ For a discussion of the way that Thomas's use of *ipsum esse* performs grammatical work, see David Burrell's “Showing A Way: ‘Esse,’” in *Aquinas: God and Action* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 42–54. Burrell concludes: “Aquinas manages to employ the identity ‘to be God is to be to-be’ to help him to go on to make the grammatical points he does about ‘God.’ And he does so without presuming that we know how to use this substantival [sic] form of ‘to be.’ That is, none of the statements he makes using ‘to-be’ are empirical or informative. Taken together, however, these statements themselves display an ordered use of ‘to-be’” (54).

²⁹ For a discussion of how Jesus can be said to have grace in light of the hypostatic union of natures, see Joseph Wawrykow's “Grace,” in *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Rik Van Nieuwenhove and Joseph Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 192–222, especially 209–18.

³⁰ Thomas tellingly reminds his readers of the fittingness of the Incarnation in the first question of the *tertia pars*. Particularly in article 2, Thomas outlines five primary ways in which the Incarnation could be called necessary (in the sense of “fitting”), and all these pertain to the salvation and eternal life of human beings through the saving work of the incarnate Word.

³¹ Sanctifying grace is the gift of God which unites human beings to God's self and in doing so it necessarily heals (their sin) and elevates (their nature). The gift of sanctifying grace, in its effects, is therefore not unlike the gift of divine *esse* as the suppositum of Christ's human nature inasmuch as that divine *esse* elevates Christ's humanity and unites it to the divine Word. Thomas defines sanctifying grace in *ST I-II*, q. 111, a. 1.

Thomas's decision to limit Christ's *esse* to the divine *esse* of the Son is vital. The addition of any personal *esse* from the human nature would actually *deprive* the human nature of its full actualization in the suppositum of the Word. That being said, some have raised objections against this "restriction" of *esse* in the human nature. On one side stand those critics who regard a human nature lacking its own *esse* as not fully human and lacking in personality. Instead, they often propose a *homo assumptus*-like account of the Incarnation where Christ assumes a human nature that exists independently of the divine nature, which, in most metaphysical accounts would require a separate suppositum in which the assumed *homo* could be said to have independent existence. On another (although not completely different) side stand critics who, from a purely philosophical or metaphysical vantage point, argue that something like a human nature, if it accrues to the suppositum of the Word, cannot simply be regarded like Thomas's accrued eye; rather, the human nature must either be necessary (like a head) or unnecessary (like a fingernail); for them, the part-whole analogy fails to reflect the reality of the Incarnation.³² This philosophical critique often accuses Thomas of monophysitism insofar as the human nature possesses no proper *esse* of its own, and instead, it posits an accidental *esse* for the human nature in order to provide it some existence.³³ Either one of the two aforementioned viewpoints erodes the deeper foundation which supports Thomas's view. The former devolves into a proto-*homo assumptus* opinion which posits two separate subjects (leaving open the question of the mode of their union). The latter typically makes recourse to an accidental union for the human nature—thereby preserving its distinctive *esse* as accidental—

³² In his essay "Aquinas on Nature, Hypostasis, and the Metaphysics of the Incarnation," for example, Richard Cross argues that the "part-whole" analogy which Thomas uses to discuss the union of the human nature to the Word leaves the human nature lacking any integrity of its own. He writes: "So we cannot conclude, on the basis of the discussion in *Summa Theologiae* III, q.2, a.2, that it is possible for a self-individuated nature to be a part of a suppositum (as opposed to being the whole suppositum). In other words, we cannot show that a self-individuated nature can be a part of a suppositum unless we show *how* a self-individuated nature *can* be part of a suppositum" (179, emphasis mine). Cross also writes: "If a concrete part is non-necessary (viz. accidental), then Aquinas ought to allow that it contributes *esse* to the concrete whole (the suppositum) of which it is a part" (194).

³³ Concerning monophysitism, Cross writes: "In fact, just as Aquinas is unclear about the essential or non-essential status of a human hand, so too he is equivocal about the essential or non-essential status of the assumed human nature vis-à-vis the second person of the Trinity. Although Aquinas is always clear that he wants to reject a union of divine and human into one nature (i.e. some third type of thing), he sometimes uses language which suggests that his understanding of the hypostatic union fails to keep the two natures sufficiently distinct" (Cross, "Aquinas," 191).

which verges on the accidental union suggested by *habitus* theory. With these possible outcomes, Thomas leaves little room to accommodate their concerns, yet in his disputed question *De unione Verbi incarnati* he may indeed attempt to satisfy these questions.

The Place and Influence of *De unione Verbi incarnati*

The disputed question *De unione Verbi incarnati* is executed in four articles which ask with reference to Christ (1) whether the union was in nature or person, (2) whether there is one or two hypostases or supposita, (3) whether he is one or two in the neuter, and (4) whether there is only one *esse*. Written almost contemporaneously with the *tertia pars* of the *Summa*, the first three articles largely recapitulate the same findings articulated in Thomas's *Scriptum* and *Summa theologiae*.³⁴ Article 4 follows the argumentation of *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2 fairly closely but makes at least one additional affirmation. Thomas writes:

And thus just as Christ is one simply on account of the unity of the suppositum, and two in a certain respect on account of the two natures, so he has one being simply on account of the one being of the eternal suppositum. But, there is also another being of this suppositum, not insofar as it is eternal, but insofar as it becomes a man in time. That being, even if it is not an accidental being, because man is not accidentally predicated of the Son of God, as was said above, nevertheless is not the principle being of its suppositum, but secondary.³⁵

In this passage, Thomas allows for “another being [*esse*] of this suppositum” which at first glance seems to abandon the position taken in *ST* III,

³⁴ In his biography of St. Thomas, Torrell considers a wide range of possible dates for the disputed question *De unione*. He concludes: “We incline rather to accept those authors who situate this question toward the end of the second period of teaching in Paris, early in April (Weisheipl) or May (Glorieux) 1272” (*Saint Thomas*, vol. 1, 207). This would place its date at the outset of Thomas's work on the *tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*. For a wider discussion of the chronology for the *De unione*, see Torrell, *Saint Thomas*, vol. 1, 201–7 and 336–37.

³⁵ Thomas writes: “Et ideo sicut Christus est unum simpliciter propter unitatem suppositi, et duo secundum quid propter duas naturas, ita habet unum esse simpliciter propter unum esse aeternum aeterni suppositi. Est autem et aliud esse huius suppositi, non in quantum est aeternum, sed in quantum est temporaliter homo factum. Quod esse, etsi non sit esse accidentale—quia homo non praedicatur accidentaliter de Filio Dei, ut supra habitum est—non tamen est esse principale sui suppositi, sed secundarium” (*De unione*, a. 4). English translations are taken from *A Disputed Question: Concerning the Union of the Word Incarnate*, a. 4, trans. J. L. A. West, in *The Aquinas Translation Project*, coordinator Stephen Loughlin, www4.desales.edu/~philtheo/loughlin/ATP/.

q. 17, a. 2 for a "two-esse model." Thomas, however, surrounds his claims with a number of negations which must be noted. First, this *aliud esse* is not the *esse* of the eternal suppositum; it cannot therefore pertain to the Word as a suppositum for Christ. Second, it is not an accidental *esse* because Christ's human nature was not assumed accidentally. Third, it is not the principle *esse* of the suppositum which can be taken to mean that it is not the "personal" *esse* which Thomas speaks of in question 17. If it cannot pertain to the Word nor convey personal or accidental *esse*, what is it? It seems to gesture at a secondary kind of *esse* which belongs to Christ as he exists as man. It could be said that the *aliud esse* presents a particular instance "whereby" Christ is said to have *esse*, namely, as man, whereas Christ's divine nature can also explain "whereby" Christ has *esse* as God. If one understands the human nature to have an *esse* through its union to divine *esse* (so that it depends entirely on the personal *esse* of the Word) this could be called a secondary *esse* inasmuch as it is identifiable in the human nature of Christ in time. The fact that he relates the secondary *esse* to "this suppositum," namely Christ's one suppositum, adds to its possible "whereby" or "quo est" meaning which Thomas outlines in *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2.

Given Thomas's negations, one should be confident that the *De unione* does not reverse his view of a single personal (or substantial) *esse* for Christ. In a sense, this affirmation of a secondary *esse* is an affirmation of the mystery of the Incarnation which he acknowledges. Writing in the first article of *De unione*, Thomas submits that no analogy according to created things can fully exposit the union of two natures in one person; he writes: "And thus, as his power is not limited to these modes of goodness and being which are in creatures, but is able to make new kinds of goodness and being unknown to us; so also he was able to make a new kind of union through the infinity of his power, in order for human nature to be united to the Word personally, but not accidentally, although no adequate example for this can be found in creatures."³⁶ In this spirit, it can be argued that the secondary *esse* referred to in article 4, while neither personal nor accidental, affirms the reality of a certain existing duality (which relates to the natures) in Christ. Divine power, in this instance, exceeds the explanatory power of metaphysics because the Incarnation remains unique from any

³⁶ Thomas writes: "Et ideo, sicut virtus eius non est limitata ad istos modos bonitatis et esse qui sunt in creaturis, sed potest facere novos modos bonitatis et esse nobis incognitos; ita etiam per infinitatem suae virtutis potuit facere novum modum unionis, ut humana natura uniretur Verbo personaliter, non tamen accidentaliter. Quamvis ad hoc in creaturis nullum sufficiens exemplum inveniat" (*De unione*, a. 1).

other kind of existence observed in the economy. In that sense, Thomas's *esse secundarium* acts as a grammatical placeholder for something which is unlike any other kind of existence. This negative statement, or moment of apophasis, however, would have to be understood from within the larger set of negations already posited by Thomas in article 4, such as it cannot replace personal *esse* or refer to accidental *esse*. At best, it gestures to the ineffable way in which the human nature remains essential and distinct in its union with the divine suppositum.

Critical Views of Single *Esse*: A Defense by Cajetan

One of the most notable and influential commentators on Thomas, Cardinal Cajetan, devoted much of his adult life to adapting and defending Thomist positions. Over the course of his career, Cajetan produced over 150 separate works on theology and philosophy with varying degrees of fidelity to Thomas's own theological and philosophical commitments.³⁷ Beginning in 1507, Cajetan committed the next thirteen years of his life to a comprehensive commentary on the *Summa theologiae*, the first of its kind. He accomplished this task while serving as master general of the Dominican order (1508–1518), papal legate, and frequent theologian for papal decrees and positions. While he sometimes radicalizes or departs from Thomas's positions, he painstakingly follows the order set down by Thomas, commenting article-by-article, question-by-question, for each section of the *Summa*.³⁸ Often concise in his observations, his commentary on question 17 stands out as unusually long, especially for article 2, where he engages no less than fifteen separate objections to Thomas's teaching on *esse*. He clearly views the second article as critical to Thomas's Christology and as vulnerable to attack by later writers; a brief outline of the commentary illustrates the structure and content of Cajetan's thought on this point.³⁹

³⁷ A list of his works can be found in J. F. Groner's *Kardinal Cajetan. Eine Gestalt aus der Reformationszeit* (Fribourg, 1951), 66–73.

³⁸ In his biographical essay, Jared Wicks, S.J. describes Cajetan's commentary thus: "Cajetan's comments show the place of each part, question, and article in the total vision of Aquinas, indicate the main divisions and steps in Aquinas' arguments, and take up the objections made against the Thomist position by intervening thinkers like Duns Scotus and Durandus of Saint-Pourcain." Wicks, *Cajetan Responds: A Reader in Reformation Controversy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 6. Wicks includes a useful "biographical essay" from pages 3 to 42, which in part describes Cajetan's primary strengths and weaknesses in his adaptation of Thomas.

³⁹ It should be noted that certain interpreters of Thomas regard Cajetan as misconstruing Thomas's teaching on Christ's *esse*. This study, in part, attempts to indicate wider agreement and the useful manner in which Cajetan defends Thomas's view of single-*esse*. For a critical reading of Cajetan, see H. M. Diepen, "Un scotisme

Cajetan's commentary comprises twenty-four total sections, and he devotes only the first three to a basic commentary on the corpus of *ST III*, q. 17, a. 2.⁴⁰ The remaining twenty-one act as a kind of disputed question which engages various objections to Christ's single *esse*. Sections 4 through 6 acknowledge and attempt to resolve the difficult and potentially compromising language of article 4 in *De unione*. In section 8 Cajetan outlines four "types" of objections which can be leveled against *ST III*, q. 17, a. 2; they include doubts: (1) concerning the premise of Thomas's argument, (2) about the way in which Christ "has" a human nature, (3) concerning Thomas's conclusion, and (4) concerning contradictions (offered by his opponents).⁴¹ He follows this by enumerating a host of objections under these four headings in sections 8 through 12, citing Scotus as the primary and overarching antagonist but also Durandus of Saint-Pourcain, Peter Aureolus, and John of Naples. He references the sentence commentaries of Scotus, Durandus, and Capreolus as sources for these opinions, and at certain points quotes directly from these sources.⁴² In sections 13 through 14 Cajetan offers his own *respondeo* to the objections, and following this

apocryphe, la christologie du P. Deodat de Basly, O.F.M.," *Revue Thomiste* 49 (1949): 428–92; Torrell has chronicled this debate in "Le thomisme dans le débat-christologique contemporain," in *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle* (Actes du colloque du Centenaire de la *Revue Thomiste*: 25–28 mars, 1993—Toulouse), ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. (Paris: 1994), 383–87. Adrian Hastings also tracks Diepen's criticisms of Cajetan, particularly the notion of the "ecstasy of existence" which he and Diepen associate with Cajetan, arguing that it departs from Thomas's mature teaching; see "Christ's Act of Existence," *The Downside Review* 73 (1955): 139–59.

⁴⁰ In an ironic comment, Cajetan warns his audience of Dominican novices that they ought not to analyze the particulars of question 17, article 2 without first seeing the broad implications of Thomas's Christology; Cajetan then proceeds to introduce a dense and lengthy defense of Thomas's position. He writes: "Do not hold stubbornly to [Thomas's] conclusions unless you already clearly grasp the truth of his solutions to the more general problems. Be content to acknowledge the logic and consonance of this conclusion." Tommaso de Vio Cajetanus, *Commentaria in Summam Theologiae Sancti Thomae de Aquino*, in Sancti Thomae Aquinatis, *Opera Omnia*, iussu impensaques, ed. Leonis XIII P.M., Tom. 11 (Roma: S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1903), section 22.

⁴¹ Cajetan writes: "Circa secundam autem quaestionem multiplex dubium occurrit. Nam primo, dubitatur de praemissis; deinde de modo quo ponitur Christus existentiam humanam habere; tertio, de ipsa conclusione; quarto, de sua contradictoria" (*Commentaria*, section 8).

⁴² It would seem as if Cajetan has certain commentaries at hand as he writes his own so that he draws objections directly from the above-mentioned sources. See sections VII, X, and XI respectively for explicit references to Scotus, Durandus, Aureolus, and John of Naples; Cajetan seems to extract the opinions of Aureolus and John of Naples from within Capreolus's sentence commentary.

corpus, he renders specific rebuttals to each objection previously cited (at least fifteen distinct critiques) in sections 15 through 21. He concludes his commentary with a résumé and defense of what he considers the two indispensable premises of Thomas's argument (sections 22–24).

The following study of Cajetan's commentary first considers representative objections and responses to the "four" kinds of doubts pertaining to Thomas's text (sections 8–12 and 15–21), and it concludes by examining his discussion of *De unione* (sections 4–6). While this procedure inverts Cajetan's own organization, it provides a more expeditious and telling ingress into the prevailing critiques of Thomas and Cajetan's response. The first important objection against Thomas is one by Scotus "against his premises," and it asserts that the human nature assumed by the Word possesses its own proper *esse* distinct from that of the suppositum. Citing an argument from his sentence commentary, Cajetan quotes Scotus directly:

A part coming to a whole does not give *esse* to the whole, but it receives [*esse*], because it is perfected by the form of the whole. The conclusion is proved: because if [the part] remains distinct as earlier, it does not receive the *esse* of the whole but it has either its own proper *esse* or none at all. But the human nature united to the Word does not have the *ratio* of a part . . . because it is not informed by the Word, but remains simply distinct. Therefore it either has no *esse* at all or a certain proper *esse*.⁴³

Scotus does not reject Thomas's "part-whole" concept of shared *esse*; rather, he disputes the premise that the human nature assumed by the Word has the *ratio* of a part. If it is in no way a part of the whole, and is thereby not informed by the Word, it necessarily retains its own distinct *esse* or none at all (the latter being impossible). Scotus could certainly add that, if Christ's human nature is essential to the whole—as a part typically is—then it loses its own identity and seems subsumed into the divine nature. Cajetan views this as a serious challenge to the fittingness of Thomas's part-whole analogy for the assumption of human nature.

In section 9—arguments against the way in which Christ is said to have a human nature—Cajetan again cites an argument of Scotus, namely, if the

⁴³ Scotus writes: "Pars adveniens toti non dat esse toti, sed recipit, quia perficitur a forma totius. Quod probatur: quia, si remaneret distincta sicut prius, non reciperet esse totius, sed vel haberet proprium esse, vel nullum. Sed natura humana unita Verbo non habet rationem partis, nec istam rationem partis: quia non informatur a Verbo, sed remanet simpliciter distincta. Igitur vel nullum esse habet, vel aliquod esse proprium" (Cajetan, *Commentaria*, section 8).

human nature of the Word does not have its own proper *esse*, then Christ as a *homo* cannot be said to be a certain something (*aliquid*). Cajetan quotes Scotus: "If the Word has only a new respect to that [human] nature, and that [nature] is only a respect of reason [*rationis*], since through the respect of reason it is not said that a subject is formally a certain thing, therefore the Word, insofar as he is a man, will not be a certain thing."⁴⁴ Here Cajetan identifies a particularly bold criticism, namely, that the way in which Thomas speaks about the relation of the human nature to the Word is heretical. Scotus asserts that, inasmuch as the human nature is related to the Word by *respectus rationis*, nothing substantial can be posited of Christ as a *homo*. If this is true, Christ is not a certain thing (*aliquid*) and the Christology falls under the condemnation of Pope Alexander III who held that Christ must be a certain something.⁴⁵ Thomas's view that the human nature—like the accrued eye—has a "new relation of the pre-existing personal being to the human nature" is under attack. Relations cannot posit anything substantial, including existence, and so a new relation to the pre-existing Word is not substantial enough to convey personal *esse* to the human nature. Without personal *esse*, the human nature of Christ cannot be said to exist or to be an *aliquid* (unless of course through accidental *esse*).

A third kind of objection comes from the "arguments against the conclusion," and a number of the objections drive at this same reality. Cajetan summarizes: "There was a two-fold living in Christ: as is clear from the fact that he lost one through death. Therefore there was in [Christ] a two-fold *esse*. And the conclusion is confirmed by this quote from Book II of *de Anima*: *For living beings, living is being*."⁴⁶ Here the objection points to a basic reality of Christian faith: Christ is said to die on the cross, yet the divine nature did not die. Yet if Christ possessed only a divine *esse*, it would be impossible for his human nature to die in the

⁴⁴ Scotus writes: "Si Verbum tantum habeat respectum novum ad naturam illam, et ille est respectus rationis tantum; cum per respectum rationis non dicatur subiectum formaliter esse aliquid, ergo Verbum, in quantum homo, non erit formaliter aliquid" (Cajetan, *Commentaria*, section 9).

⁴⁵ The irony of this objection is that Thomas is fully aware of Alexander's decretal and himself uses it to declare the third opinion of the Lombard heretical in his *Scriptum* and the *Summa theologiae*; see *Scriptum* III, d. VI, a. 1, response and *ST* III, q. 2, a. 6. The decretal *Cum Christos* was defined by Pope Alexander III on February 18, 1177, and a similar, though less famous, decretal was earlier issued against the Bishop of Sens on March 28, 1170 by the same Alexander III.

⁴⁶ Cajetan writes: "In Christo fuit duplex vivere: ut patet ex hoc quod unum per mortem perdidit. Ergo in ipso fuit duplex esse. —Et tenet sequela ex II *de Anima*: *Vivere viventibus est esse*" (*Commentaria*, section 10).

sense of losing its existence. Instead, the death on the cross requires a second human *esse* whose existence can expire, for a time, on the cross.⁴⁷ The critique relies on the identification of *esse* with vital being—so that to be alive is the same as to exist. It also implicitly accuses Thomas of monophysitism; that is, if a second *esse*, which dies on the cross, cannot be posited of Christ, then it is as if Christ only has an eternal divine nature and *esse*, or that the human nature is at best one with the divine. This same argument holds for other aspects of Christ's human nature, such as his soul or his birth. If by generation or by a human soul Christ's humanity does not have a proper *esse*, then Scotus et al. argue that it is necessary to conclude that the divine nature is generated or constitutes Christ's human soul, again intimating monophysitism.

This same kind of objection becomes more forceful in the fourth section—those against the contradictions—where Scotus takes up the reality of Christ's two wills and reasons to the reality of two *esse* in Christ. Cajetan writes:

For because in Christ there are two wills and two willings [*velle*], according to the Damascene, ch. 62. But *esse* has itself more intimately and more immediately to essence than willing to the will. Therefore *esse* is more necessarily multiplied according to the plurality of natures. . . . Nature, as distinguished against suppositum, is the principle of operation. Therefore is it also the principle of being in act, because *esse* has itself more intimately, etc.⁴⁸

Scotus here attempts to collapse Thomas's distinction between essence and existence by arguing that *esse* is more intimate to an essence than "willing" to a will. He sustains his claim in part by positing that natures (essences) constitute the principles of operations in the suppositum, which almost demands that they have their own personal or substantial *esse*. If he can establish that *esse* inheres in essence, then he can posit that, just as Christ has two "willings" according to two wills, so he has two *esse* according to two natures. Christ's necessary possession of two natures implies two *esse* on the principle of an essence's intimacy with existence.

⁴⁷ Cajetan cites a similar kind of argument with respect to Christ's birth (natural generation) and his possession of a created soul (see the first and third objections in section 10).

⁴⁸ Cajetan writes: "Tum quia in Christo sunt duae voluntates et duo velle, secundum Damascenum, cap. LXII. Sed esse intimius et immediatius se habet ad essentiam quam velle ad voluntatem. Ergo magis necesse est plurificari esse secundum pluralitatem naturarum. . . . Natura, ut distinguitur contra suppositum, est principium operandi. Ergo est etiam principium essendi in actu: quia esse immediatius se habet etc." (*Commentaria*, section 12).

A denial of this intimacy, inherent in Thomas according to Scotus, allows Thomas's position to devolve into monophysitism.

A final kind of objection by Scotus is worth noting, namely, that Christ's humanity lies *outside* the suppositum of Christ and therefore requires its own *esse*—which Scotus calls an *esse* of quiddity. Referencing the Subtle Doctor, Cajetan explains: "For because the humanity of Christ is outside its cause, it therefore has a necessary proper actual existence, just as it has a proper *esse* of quiddity; although it does not have its own subsistence, which, however, adds nothing positive."⁴⁹ Christ's humanity is beyond or outside of its suppositum (otherwise it is an essential part of the divine suppositum,) and hence it must have its own existence. Here again, the relation of a part to whole is denied while a second *esse* for the human nature is posited in its place. Cajetan adds: "Nor is it, says Scotus, that the existence of the humanity of Christ [is] an existence according to something [*secundum quid*], but [it is] simply; for [it exists] in itself, because it is an existence of the genus of substance, which is being [*ens*] simply; as with respect to Christ."⁵⁰ The human nature does not have existence according to something else (like divine *esse*) but instead possesses *esse* the way that substances do. Here it is important to note that Scotus regards all substances as having *esse*, but Thomas would regard a substance—if this means form, nature, or essence—as having *esse* by its suppositum. Cajetan notes that Scotus skips this step and instead asserts *esse* for nature as an individual substance.

Not unlike a scholastic question, Cajetan offers his own *respondeo* in sections 13 through 14 which constitutes the heart of his response to the objections listed above. As an important tool in his defense, Cajetan reintroduces Thomas's important distinction that person is related to *esse* as "what is" (*quod est*), and nature is related to person "whereby" it is (*quo est*). This distinction allows him to affirm that nature indeed has something to do with *esse* but only within its proper context. He writes: "And so nature is the immediate principle *by which* (*quo*) of that *esse*; but it is not the immediate receptacle of that *esse*, but [only] through the person mediating [*serving as receptacle*]."⁵¹ Natures have *esse* immediately but not

⁴⁹ "Tum quia humanitas Christi est extra causam suam. Ergo habet necessario propriam existentiam actualem, sicut habet proprium esse quidditativum: licet non habeat propriam subsistentiam, quae nihil positivi addit" (*Commentaria*, section 12).

⁵⁰ "Nec est, inquit Scotus, existentia humanitatis Christi existentia secundum quid, sed simpliciter: tam in se, quia est existentia de genere substantiae, quae est ens simpliciter; quam respectu Christi" (*Commentaria*, section 12).

⁵¹ "Ita quod natura est principium quo immediatum ipsius esse: sed non est receptivum immediatum ipsius esse, sed mediante persona" (*Commentaria*, section 13, emphasis mine).

separately from a person; a person (or suppositum) mediates *esse* to the nature which it “personates” as the receptacle of *esse*. In this scheme, it is impossible to talk about nature having *esse* apart from its instantiation in a person. Cajetan continues: “And so it is necessary that a nature be personated [personari] to it, so that from it [nature], *esse* itself is actually originated [*principietur*], not by a defect of that originating nature as “by which,” [*quo*] but because it would lack a first receptacle of that *esse* if it were not personated; *for person is that to which esse first convenes as a subject as either that which has esse or that which is [quod est]*.”⁵² Nature must be “personated” if it is to have *esse* because person is the first receptacle of *esse*; once a nature is joined to the person, it can then serve as a principle of *esse* “*quo est*.” *Esse* thus belongs to both person and nature but by different modes, with person remaining the primary and prevenient locus of *esse*, that is, as the *ens* of a concrete being. Here, then, the reader sees Cajetan’s metaphysical response to Scotus, namely, that natures in themselves cannot possess *esse* but depend on a union to the suppositum (a union in subsistence) for their personation and connection to *esse*. Person is indeed “more intimate” to nature than existence because nature is first personated and then said to exist.⁵³ The distinction between essence and existence is thus maintained according to Thomas’s own teaching, and it is located in the language of person or suppositum. To this distinction, however, Cajetan adds the conceptual imagery of “personation” which indicates the priority of personhood to nature in terms of *esse*.

With this distinction in hand, Cajetan proceeds to the specific case of the Incarnation. In this circumstance, an existing person assumes a second nature which, in potency, has no personality of its own (because it lacks a suppositum of its own). To posit a separate suppositum of the human nature would be to fall into the *homo assumptus* trap, and so it must be said that the human nature lacks a personality. Two important conclusions follow from this. First, this lack of personality implies that the human nature can bring no additional *esse* to the person of the Word. Second, the potential humanity of Christ (only in the order of logic) can have no *esse* of its own because it has no person of its own. Cajetan explains: “Therefore, because the humanity of Christ is ‘prevened’ in the mystery

⁵² “Ita quod oportet naturam personari ad hoc ut ab ea principietur actualiter ipsum esse: non ex defectu naturae principiantis ut quo sed quia deficeret susceptivum primum ipsius esse, si non esset personata; persona enim est cui primo convenit esse ut subiecto, seu quod habet esse, seu quod est” (ibid, emphasis mine).

⁵³ Cajetan writes: “Aliud est quod, quia prius natura personatur quam existentiam propriam constituat, intimior est persona naturae quam existentia” (*Commentaria*, section 13).

of the Incarnation, it does not emerge from taking on its own proper personality, but it is assumed to the personality of the Word; and for that reason it is as if impeded from having its own *esse* and emerges with the *esse* of the divine person."⁵⁴ Cajetan concludes that Christ retains only one *esse*, that of the divine Word, because his humanity is prevented from taking on its own *esse*. It gains personality, or is personated, only through its assumption to the eternal Word.

After Cajetan defends the separation of essence and existence and applies it to the case of the Incarnation, he responds to the explicit objections of Scotus, and particularly to his accusation that the human nature of Christ lacks the *ratio* of a part. He first reminds his readers that nature and person can be understood as both related to *esse* according to the *quo est* versus *quod est* distinction and that nature can be said to have *esse* inasmuch as it is that "whereby" a thing exists. The *quo est* relation, he argues, applies to any constitutive part of a whole. Second, he argues that Scotus is mistaken when he rejects Thomas's part-whole analogy as incoherent. Cajetan argues that Christ's human nature has the *ratio* of a part to the whole precisely because it is determined—personated—through its assumption to the suppositum of the Word. He writes: "Because, as it is clear from the points laid out above, person adds a certain thing above [*supra*] nature; for it adds the intended end [or object—*terminatio*] of that nature. Whence the argument of Scotus takes a non-cause for a cause, and this is wrong. The true cause, however, is because *esse* suffices to whatever thing by its mode."⁵⁵ Nature has the *ratio* of a part and possesses *esse* only by "its mode." This mode, obviously, is the mode of *quo est*, not that of having being/being a something, that is, "quod" (*ens*). Cajetan also appends the concept of integrity here and argues that any part of the whole has its *esse* in virtue of the integrity of the whole. In that sense, Christ's human nature is an integral part of the whole (even if it is unnecessary) and cannot be considered as distinct in the sense of having its own proper *esse*. What makes a thing an integral whole is not the nature but the suppositum, and in that sense, Cajetan concludes that *esse* must be primarily affirmed of the person as the *quod est* of personal *esse*.

⁵⁴ "Quocirca, quia humanitas Christi praevenita est in mysterio incarnationis ut propriam non sortiretur personalitatem, sed ad personalitatem Verbi assumpta est; ideo quasi impedita est a proprio esse, et est sortita esse personae divinae . . ." (*Commentaria*, section 14).

⁵⁵ "Quoniam, ut patet ex superius discussis, persona addit rem aliquam supra naturam: addit enim terminationem ipsius. Unde argumentum Scoti assumit et non-causam pro causam, et falsum. —Vera autem causa est quia esse unicuique rei sufficit suo modo" (*Commentaria*, section 15).

Cajetan next rebuts Scotus's denial of the part-whole's fittingness according to the notion of "relations." He cautions that Scotus's critique of the part-whole relation proceeds from "a bad understanding of the text" and its sense "is more distant from us than earth from heaven."⁵⁶ He asserts that "a new relation to the preexisting thing" is not insubstantial at all, but because it is not something which posits new *esse*, it is properly called a relation between two things sharing their original *esse*. Cajetan writes:

But because that substantial conjunction [of Christ's humanity to the person of the Word] is not according to a new *esse* of that humanity, but according to the eternal *esse* of that Word, in order to exclude the acquisition of new *esse*, the Author [Thomas] says that only a new relation is added to it; and he does not say this in order to exclude a substantial conjunction according to the personality and to that *esse*, as is patently clear in the text.⁵⁷

Thomas uses the language of a new relation to negate any notion of a second personal *esse* of human nature, but this language need not be seen as excluding the *esse* which already actualizes the suppositum. The union of the human nature to the divine suppositum, as well as its corresponding relation, relies on the personal *esse* of the suppositum to exist. While the language of relations can therefore be used to negate new or additional *esse*, it cannot deny—rather it presupposes—the original *esse* of the two terms of the relation. Cajetan concludes this argument: "Wherefore it is clear that [Scotus's] argument totally collapses."⁵⁸

Applying himself to the argument that two *esse* are necessary to account for a number of Christ's actions *ad extra*—including his birth and his death, Cajetan distinguishes between *esse essentialis* and *esse actualis existentiae*. He regards the former as related to living (*vivere*) and the latter as personal *esse*. If one speaks of the *esse essentialis*, then it can be said that there is a duplex *esse* of "this kind" in Christ, namely that both the divine and human natures are living or vital. Here Cajetan tries to elicit a kind of secondary use of *esse* as the *esse essentialis* in order to explain that both natures are vital and that one part of the whole can expire while the

⁵⁶ Cajetan writes: "Ad objecta deinde eiusdem Scoti contra modum respondetur quod ex malo intellectu litterae procedit. . . . Hic autem sensus longe est a nobis plus quam terra a caelo" (*Commentaria*, section 16).

⁵⁷ "Sed quia coniunctio ista substantialis non est secundum novum esse ipsius humanitatis, sed secundum aeternum esse ipsius Verbi, ideo Auctor, ad excludendam acquisitionem novi esse, dicit quod solum advenit sibi nova relatio: et non dixit hoc ad excludendam coniunctionem substantialem secundum personalitatem et illius esse, ut clare patet in littera" (*ibid.*).

⁵⁸ "Unde patet argumentum totaliter rueri" (*ibid.*).

other continues to live (*vivere* as opposed to *existere*). Lest Scotus or others confuse this with the personal *esse* of the suppositum—which is the primary meaning of *esse*—Cajetan warns: “And this is not to be understood of the *esse* of actual existence.”⁵⁹ An important question which Cajetan leaves unanswered is, what exactly does an *esse essentialis* mean if it is not related to personal *esse*? His thinking here seems to parallel Thomas's *aliud esse* in *De unione*, affirming that Christ's human nature exists in a unique way such that it can be said to exist without meaning that it exists outside the actual *ipsum esse* of the Word.

Scotus's final charge again attempts to posit a distinct *esse* for the humanity of Christ; this time it is approached from the perspective of its cause being outside the suppositum. One can anticipate Cajetan's response, namely, that an essence or nature cannot exist outside a suppositum, and so the humanity of Christ must be personated either in the person of the Word or in a separate person. Rather than simply refuting the argument, however, Cajetan adds that the relation of part-to-whole need not be viewed as one of two stark options. Scotus, he thinks, would have his readers believe that a part is either distinct unto itself with its own *esse* (unnecessary) or absorbed into the person of the Word (necessary) as “a part of water is contained in a body of water” or as “food and drink are consumed by someone eating.”⁶⁰ Rather, Cajetan returns to Thomas's analogy of the accrued eye. The new eye cannot add *esse* to the person of Socrates because (1) it inheres in Socrates and gains *esse* from his suppositum (which is the receptacle of his *esse*) and (2) the person of Socrates belongs to an intelligent and immaterial genus which cannot admit any material *esse* which an eye could communicate. Cajetan adds that the accrued eye must be regarded like a congenital eye, which has its own distinctive relation to *esse* (a *quo est* relation) but nevertheless does not add more *esse* to Socrates's suppositum. On this account, the humanity of Christ is a congenital part

⁵⁹ The larger context of the argument runs as follows; Cajetan writes: “Scoti dicitur quod verbum Philosophi verum est de vivere essentiali et de esse essentiali: vivere enim est esse essentialia. Et hoc in Christo duplex fuit. Et unum eorum, quod in coniunctione animae et corporis consistit, corruptum est per mortem. Et non intelligitur de esse actualis existentiae” (*Commentaria*, section 17, ad 2).

⁶⁰ Cajetan writes: “Ubi adverte, pro clariori intellectu, quod non est imaginandum, ut isti putant, quod additio partis ad personam sit velut additio quanti ad quantum: sive per modum continuationis, puta cum aqua aquae continuatur, ubi ex duabus quantitativis partialibus fit una totalis quantitas partialiter inhaerens partibus totius aquae; sive per modum aggenerationis, puta cum alimentum auget hominem qui alitur ex illo, ubi non remanet quantitas cibi potusque alentis, sed sic adiungitur alito ut subinuat quantitatem ipsius qui alitur, extendente illam anima, ut in II *de Anima* dicitur” (*Commentaria*, section 19).

that remains distinct because Christ exists “by” the human nature but not “on account of” the human nature. In this way Cajetan redeploys the accrued eye to maintain the tension that Christ’s humanity has as a “necessary yet unnecessary” status as a part to the whole.⁶¹

Two important features deserve note in Cajetan’s responses to the objections against Aquinas’s argument. He believes that Thomas’s single *esse* teaching is protected from the kinds of attacks rendered especially by Scotus and Durandus by following two basic commitments. Cajetan explains:

Attend diligently and cautiously, o novice, that that decision depends on two common questions. The one is: whether existence and *esse* are really distinguished. The other is: whether substantial existence is of person as the proper receptacle or whether it is commonly of person or nature. For [Thomas’s] teaching presupposes both that *esse* is another thing from essence and that *esse* is owed to person as [its] proper subject.⁶²

Cajetan’s rebuttals can be largely reduced to these two commitments. While this may in fact seem rather limited or unimaginative, these same premises come under scrutiny with each objection and so demand nuanced defenses. Moreover, Cajetan demonstrates his awareness of potential heresy and the importance of one *esse* for understanding Christ’s human actions (such as his nativity or passion). Of note is that neither Scotus, in these objections, nor Cajetan in his answers deals with the concept of accidental *esse* except to note its difference from personal *esse*. The lack of discussion about this concept is telling; Cajetan never imagines that Thomas speaks of the union of a human nature to the divine as accidental, and so accidental *esse* has no bearing on Thomas’s position. It should be inferred that, in Cajetan’s mind, the part-whole analogy has no connection with the relation of accidents to a subject.⁶³

⁶¹ Cajetan explains: “Et quia idem est iudicium de oculo adveniente de novo et oculo congenito, et de hac et reliquis partibus, ideo humanitas Christi, quae quasi pars quaedam est personae Verbi, quia ad personalitatem propriam Verbi: assumpta est, invenitur sufficienter posita extra causam suam existens absque propria existentia, et absque hoc quod actuetur per informationem inhaesivam ab existentia Verbi: sibi enim non debetur existentia nisi per personam cuius est” (*Commentaria*, section 19).

⁶² “Attende diligenter et caute, Novitie, quod ista decisio pendet ex duabus quaestionibus communibus. Altera est: An existentia et essentia distinguantur realiter. Altera: An existentia substantialis sit personae ut proprii susceptivi, an communiter sit personae vel naturae. Praesupponit enim doctrina ista et esse aliam rem esse ab essentia: et esse deberi personae ut proprio subjecto” (*Commentaria*, section 22).

⁶³ The question of accidental *esse*, while acknowledged by Cajetan in section 3, does not play a significant role. In the modern context, Cross has suggested that accidental *esse* resolves the most “theologically damaging” problems associated with Thomas’s single-*esse* view (“Aquinas,” 202).

Cajetan on *De unione*

During his commentary on *ST* III, q. 17, Cajetan notably decides to introduce a problem found in another text; his intentional discussion of *De unione* signals its importance to the debate on Christ's single *esse*. Addressing article 4 of the disputed question, Cajetan illustrates that the admission of an *aliud esse* could be regarded either as an insight or a mistake. As an insight, Cajetan argues that Thomas also affirms a second *esse* in *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2, ad 1. He writes: "In the response to the first [objection] a duality of *esse* is not totally negated, but with the comparative *magis* it is said that *esse magis retinet unitatem secundum unitatem hypostasis, quam habeat dualitatem secundum dualitatem naturae*. In which words a duality of *esse* is indeed *less* affirmed, but it is not totally negated. . . ." ⁶⁴ Cajetan here seems to hold that, even in the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas posits a view of dual *esse* in Christ. This dual *esse*, however, boils down to the distinction between *quo est* and *quod est*; specifically, *esse* can be considered in a dual manner *insofar as it relates to the two natures* whereby it exists. This is a necessary flexibility that stems from affirming that a nature gives a thing its quiddity or that it is related to *esse quo est*. As a positive insight, then, Cajetan allows the possibility that *De unione* (and also *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2, ad 1 and ad 3) can be taken as speaking to the way in which Christ's natures relate to his *esse*, as *quo est*. This view not only makes use of Thomas's own *quod est* versus *quo est* distinction; it also fits with the restrictions laid down about the *esse secundarium*. This position also relieves potential tension between the *Summa theologiae* and *De unione* and suggests that they may be read in tandem as supporting Christ's single-*esse* in principle. Here one sees Cajetan receiving Thomas and laboring to illustrate consistency within his corpus.

If a reader refuses to interpret Thomas's position in this more supple and generous manner and insists that he posits of Christ's humanity a second *esse quod est*, then *De unione* should be abandoned as misleading. The *esse secundarium* can never be taken as implying personal or substantial *esse*; it also cannot be understood as accidental inasmuch as the union of natures in the Word is not accidental (contra the *habitus* opinion). If

⁶⁴ "In responsione quoque ad primum, non negatur totaliter dualitas esse: sed cum comparativo *magis* dicitur quod *esse magis retinet unitatem secundum unitatem hypostasis, quam habeat dualitatem secundum dualitatem naturae*. In quibus verbis dualitas esse minus quidem affirmatur, non autem negatur totaliter . . ." (*Commentaria*, section 4). One should note the infelicitous translation by the English Dominicans which ignores this comparative (*magis/quam*) cited by Cajetan. He goes on to add that the response to the third objection "also insinuates" the possibility of a duality of *esse*; see section 4.

someone persists in positing another personal *esse* based on this text, Cajetan recommends this response:

It is said that that opinion posited in the Question *De unione Verbi* needs to be considered as retracted, unless somebody is such a fool believing that the doctrine laid out in this last book [*ST* III, q. 17, a. 2], and also proven earlier in the authentic books, namely in *III Sent.*, dist. VI, q. II, and in *Quodlib.* IX, q. II, has to be reduced to the little question hardly known among the works of the Author and composed much earlier.⁶⁵

He argues that if one cannot see a way of harmonizing the *De unione* text, as he outlined above, then it cannot be regarded as authoritative against the weight of Thomas's other writings on this issue. Recent biographers have proven Cajetan's dating of *De unione* incorrect; he regards the opinion as written when Thomas was still young and had not yet reached his mature view of a single *esse* in Christ. Cajetan's interpretive judgment nevertheless remains the same irregardless of the work's date. The importance of Cajetan's defense is two-fold. First, he regards the opinion as potentially consonant with the rest of Thomas's writings if one but grasp the *quo est* versus *quod est* distinction. Second, if it remains subject to misinterpretation it does not contribute enough new information to merit defense and retention.⁶⁶

Cajetan's *Oratio de unione Verbi*

Cajetan's commentary on *ST* III, q. 17, a. 2 provides a spirited and metaphysical defense of Thomas's single *esse* position. Further, he indicates at least implicitly that these arguments have larger theological consequences. The affirmation of one personal *esse* in Christ, as well as the rejection of any language of accidental union, clearly mediates against the first and third opinions of the Lombard. He moreover recognizes in the cited objections that Scotus and others see inchoate Eutychianism in Thomas's single *esse*

⁶⁵ "Dicitur quod opinio illa, posita in Quaestione illa *de Unione Verbi*, ut retractata censenda est: nisi quis adeo desipiat ut putet doctrinam in hoc ultimo libro traditam, et in authenticis libris etiam prius probatam, scilicet in *III Sent.*, dist. VI, q. II, et in *Quodlib.* IX, q. II, reducendam esse ad quaestiunculam vix cognitam inter opera Auctoris, et longe ante factam" (*Commentaria*, section 6).

⁶⁶ This question of how to handle *De unione* persists among modern Thomists with Torrell leaving its interpretation open (*Saint Thomas*, vol. 1, 201–6) while others insist that it is irredeemable. Here one should see J. L. A. West's essay "Aquinas on the Metaphysics of *Esse* in Christ," *The Thomist* 66 (2002): 231–50. The author regards *De unione* as positing two *esse* and therefore admits: "Accordingly, I think we must conclude that the two-*esse* doctrine of the *De unione* is a theological and philosophical aberration" (237).

Christology to the point that it is difficult to exposit events such as Jesus' birth and death.⁶⁷ Cardinal Cajetan was not, however, blind to the great theological and pastoral consequences of a single *esse* and union in the suppositum of the Word. While serving as the Dominican procurator in Rome (1501–1507), Cajetan was invited to preach before the papal court on at least five occasions during Advent and Lent, and for one of his Advent sermons, the *Oratio de unione Verbi cum natura humana*, Cajetan drew upon his Thomistic heritage and explicated the wonder, salvific nature, and dignity of Christ's Incarnation. The sermon survives, unedited, in early modern editions of Cajetan's *opuscula*. The sermon's value for the present study is most obviously found in its subject of the Incarnation, yet it also provides a rare glimpse into Cajetan's pastoral concern and practical work as a preacher called to teach and exhort even the papal household.

Cajetan's sermon combines theological precision with commitment to rhetorical exhortation. Unwilling to pass over the challenge to understand the mode of the Incarnation, Cajetan admits that theologians must strive to penetrate the mystery that he "who was God in the beginning was made flesh so that the Church stands ready to give answer for that which it believes."⁶⁸ The most common ways of parsing this mystery, he says, are to understand the union as either in person or in nature, and if it is understood in the person, then as a union of substance or accidents. Significant consequences stem from these choices, and the early lines of the oration attest to the need for theological caution and perspicacity. He says:

For if that conjunction of God and man is of substance, either divinity will be the form of humanity, or just as Apollinarius dreamed, a third kind of nature will be conflated from a commingling of both. But if it is affirmed as being an accidental [union], either by saying that the Word lives in that man, as in a temple, or that it is connected [to it] as to a garment (as if two hypostases compounded in the same person), then the Nestorian impiety has to be conceded, which was long ago expelled by the Fathers from the borders of the Church.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Here one can note, in the least, objections 1 through 4 in the *Commentaria*, section 17.

⁶⁸ He writes: "An fortem satis erit nobis pertransire crassa (ut aiunt) Minerva; et ruditer arbitrari talem fuisse illam unionem, qualem Deus voluit, aut qualem Ecclesia credit. Sed si haec fides sufficit, vana est admonitio principis Apostolorum, qua nos paratos esse iubet de ea, quae apud nos est inconvulsa fide, omni posceti nos rationed reddere." Tommaso de Vio Cajetanus, *Oratio de Unione Verbi cum Natura Humana*, 184a 24–30, in *Opuscula Omnia Thomae de Vio Cajetani* (Lyon: 1581), 183–85.

⁶⁹ "Etenim si substantialis est ipsa Dei hominisque coniunctio, aut divinitas erit humanitatis forma, et perinde, ut Apollinaris somniavit, tertia quaedam natura ex utriusque commixtione conflata est. Si vero accidentalis affirmatur, sive divinum

Any failure to properly understand the manner of union threatens Christology on one side with Apollinarianism (which seems much like monophysitism in this account) and on the other with Nestorianism. To properly sail these straits, Cajetan suggests that neither a union of two substances into one nor an accidental union of natures can be affirmed in the divine suppositum. Here, then, the papal court finds its preacher striving to define the proper way that the human nature is joined to the divine Word. Cajetan stresses over and over again that the union should be seen through the model of a conjoined instrument so that, as Damascene and Thomas stress, Christ's humanity is an organ of his divinity.⁷⁰ Ultimately, Cajetan uses the vivid image of a sixth digit to illustrate the union between the humanity of Christ—as congenital and conjoined—and the Word. He writes: "And it does not interfere with us [our argument], that the connected organs seem to be part of the completeness of [a person]. This indeed ought not to be true always, as can be proved by the example of a sixth finger, which—by whatever reason—was born simultaneously. It is not part of the integrity of the person of the human species, but nevertheless it is a connected organ of the human person who has it."⁷¹ Just as Thomas and Cajetan take up the example of an accrued eye as something which belongs to the integrity of the whole person, but as non-essential, so a sixth finger signifies the way in which the human nature is conjoined to the divine as if it were congenital. This congenital nature, however, is simultaneously unnecessary, and so God can be praised for God's utter gratuity in assuming it.

Cajetan does not leave his technical definitions and concepts to stand on their own in his sermon; on the contrary, in a show of rhetorical force, he extols the great dignity which the Incarnation confers on humankind

dicamus Verbum habitare in illo homine, veluti in templo, sive ut indumento connexum (quemadmodum duas hypostates in eandem personam componentes) concedere oportet Nestoriam impietatem a finibus Ecclesiae iampridem a Patribus explosam ultro revocaremus" (*Oratio*, 184a 14–22).

⁷⁰ Cajetan does not cite either Thomas or Damascene, but his use of "conjoined instrument" and *organum* is frequent. For instance, after discussing an example of an accrued eye, Cajetan remarks: "Quocirca modus quidam relinquitur, quo personalis aliqua coniunctio definiri potest, nulla se vel partium, vel accidentium natura commmiscente, quoniam organum implicitum asseveravimus cuiuspiam tributum esse personae, atque hoc nimirum pacto nostram naturam Dei verbo unitam citra omnem dubitatione confitemur" (*Oratio*, 184 78a–1b).

⁷¹ "Nec officit quicquam nobis, quod coniuncta organa ad integritatem naturae eius, cuius sunt, spectare videantur, non enim oportet id continuum verum esse, ut sexti digiti quacunquē ex causa cogeniti exemplo probari potest. Is enim de speciei humane integritate non est, et tamen organum connexum est hominis habentis illum" (*Oratio*, 184b 48–53).

through its particular union. He refers to the assumption of human nature to the Word as a "great sacrament" by which Christ as a second Adam comes as a bridegroom to his people.⁷² This wonderful marriage is the source of salvation for the Church and her members, and in view of this, the Incarnation is a reminder of the great dignity which God has given to all human beings. This gift and human dignity should move believers to practice holy living as befits their status. Cajetan thus says to Alexander VI and his court: "Acknowledge, therefore, your dignity, you whoever who deem yourself a Christian; and you who have been made a participant of the divine nature do not return to old worthlessness by living ignobly. Remember of whose head and body you are a member!"⁷³ The Incarnation has made it possible for human beings to become members of Christ's body with him as their head, and in view of this gift no one ought to return to the practices of an old and degenerate life.

Indeed, in Cajetan's oration the reader sees the Thomist doctrine of the Incarnation—including the necessity of Christ's single *esse* (hence the sixth digit analogy)—serve a multiplicity of ends. For example, the language of dignity illustrates a positive theological anthropology not in view of human nature itself, but in view of its new status through God's condescension and activity as incarnate. Also, the language of membership in Christ's body and a new way of life demonstrate the ecclesiological and moral implications of the Incarnation. Christians ought to remember their dignity, gained through participation in divine life, and respond with the appropriate moral life that befits the state begun for them in the Incarnation. The technical understanding of the Incarnation, which is found in his commentary, can be said to inform his larger view of the economy of salvation and the theological milieu of his own day.⁷⁴

⁷² Cajetan states: "Hoc est magnum illud atque apostolicum sacramentum: quo secundus Adam tamquam sponsus procedens patrem relinquit matrem, quando forma suscepta servili splendorem maiestatis obtexit, et synagoga dimissa novae sponsae inhaesit, factique sunt duo, Deus inquam et homo, in carne una" (*Oratio*, 184b 70–73).

⁷³ "Agnosce ergo quisquis Christianae professionis censeris dignitatem tuam et divinae iam consors factus naturae noli in veteram vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire. Memento cuius capitis corporisque membrum sis" (*Oratio*, 185a 5–9). In his essay on this and other orations by Cajetan, Jared Wicks, S.J., describes this passage reminding those who hear it of their *noblesse oblige*. Wicks argues that Cajetan uses his Thomist understanding of the Incarnation as a union of natures in the divine Person as an opportunity to exhort his listeners to remember their dignity. See Wicks, "Thomism Between the Renaissance and Reformation: The Case of Cajetan," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 68 (1977): 9–31, at 19–20.

⁷⁴ While these court sermons are indeed earlier than his commentary on the *tertia pars*, Cajetan's encounter with Thomist theology is evident enough by his time at

Here, then, one can at least argue that, like Thomas, Cajetan's metaphysical views of the Incarnation can and should be scrutinized within the larger context of his theological commitments and vision.

Conclusion: Metaphysical and Theological Continuity

The preceding exposition of Thomas and Cajetan on Christ's *esse* underscores several important insights. Foremost is that both authors support a single-*esse* Christology. This is clear from their insistence on one personal *esse* for a suppositum and one suppositum in Christ. Moreover, their common affirmation (1) of the distinction between essence and existence and (2) that both "person" and "nature" relate to *esse* as *quod est* and *quo est* respectively demonstrates the way in which Christ's existence relates to both his suppositum and his two natures. With this teaching in place, neither author is inconsistent to suggest an *esse secundarium* that pertains to the *quo est* of Christ's humanity, and in that sense, Thomas's *De unione* can be read harmoniously with his other texts. Cajetan's emphasis on the suppositum as the primary receptacle of *esse* also proves useful in a defense against predicating *esse* directly of natures as critics seem wont to do. The teaching of single-*esse*, taken on its own, can therefore be regarded as consistent and coherent in Thomas's *Summa theologiae* and other writings as well as in Cajetan's commentary.

This essay has argued, however, that the single-*esse* doctrine *not* be taken on its own. This drains the teaching of its real force and does an injustice to both Thomas and Cajetan. For Thomas, single-*esse* mediates against incursions of *homo assumptus* and *habitus* opinions inasmuch as it excludes two subjects and accidental union. Moreover, the necessary-unnecessary tension of the accrued eye attempts to underscore simultaneously the congenital and gratuitous nature of the Incarnation; that is, Christ's humanity really belongs to the suppositum as a constitutive part yet it is not necessary, and so God in God's love can deign to assume it to God's self as an integral part of the whole. Finally, that Christ's humanity is personated by divine *esse* itself perfects the humanity and makes Christ a *human* exemplar in every possible way. This perfection of Christ's human nature signifies the way in which God will sanctify human beings through God's grace. These realities are not lost on Cajetan. He too sees

the papal court that such comparisons are possible and apt. Indeed, Wicks explains the relation of his Thomist training to these sermons thus: "These sixteen printed columns of oratory based on the Gospel passages of these Sundays show us, instructively, I believe, how Renaissance themes could flow into the Thomist framework of ordered creation, total divine providence, the Incarnation, and man's supernatural gifts" ("Thomism," 15).

the conceptual teaching of single-*esse* give way to the adoption of humankind through the Incarnation. Human beings have been made “participants” in the divine nature by Christ’s humanity possessing divine *esse*, and this participation ought to give way to a life where Christians imitate their savior, seeking eternal life as the summit of their existence and the purpose of the Incarnation.

When Cajetan comments that Thomas’s doctrine hinges on (1) the distinction between essence and existence and (2) the suppositum as the first receptacle of *esse*, he provides a useful guideline for modern lines of defense for Christ’s single *esse*. Additionally, both Thomas and Cajetan have suggested that accidental *esse* only complicates the mode of union inasmuch as it destroys the “congenital” aspect of Christ’s human nature while only providing it with accidental existence in return. This kind of *esse* makes it more difficult to discuss the union of natures hypostatically, and therefore contributes little “explanatory” help to the mode of union affirmed as dogma. Thomas and Cajetan are thus wise to view accidental *esse* as problematic and worth discarding. In these preceding ways, then, the two theologians provide their followers with consistent and defensible responses to their critics. In the case of Cross, for instance, it has been noted that his critique targets Thomas’s part-whole analogy by arguing that the human nature must either be necessary (having no *esse* and being absorbed into the divine nature) or non-necessary (in which case it has its own *esse* and possibly its own suppositum). To avoid this last problem of two subjects, Cross recommends assigning accidental *esse* to human nature.⁷⁵ As a critique against the essence–existence distinction which recommends accidental *esse* to avoid Nestorianism, Cajetan outlines the appropriate response to the critique by reasserting the suppositum as the primary locus of *esse*, and Thomas explains the danger of the accidental-*esse* solution. These kinds of modern objections, like their historical predecessors, should be welcomed by readers of Thomas. They ultimately locate the single-*esse* teaching at the nexus of theological commitments in Thomas’s thought. Indeed they underscore that the hypostatic union, Christ’s human life as exemplary, and his sanctifying activity in the economy all find their footing in Christ’s single and divine *esse*. N V

⁷⁵ Cross writes: “If Aquinas had seen his way to these two conclusions, he could have made a straightforward claim that the human nature could be accidental to the Son of God—and thus have contributed new accidental *esse* to the Son of God. This would have enabled him to avoid all sorts of theologically damaging claims about the unity of *esse* in Christ” (“Aquinas,” 202).

