

**Persons, Pronouns, and Perfections:
A Response to Thomas Weinandy’s
“The Hypostatic Union: Personhood, Consciousness,
and Knowledge”¹**

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This article responds to Thomas Weinandy’s account of the consciousness and knowledge of Christ. Deserving of careful consideration, his is a rich and multifaceted proposal on a difficult and complex topic. Some of the complexity is theological in nature, not all of which I will be able to avoid in my response. Still, this response is meant to be primarily philosophical in nature. And it appears that there are two kinds of philosophical presuppositions that typically go unacknowledged in discussions of this topic. One concerns theories of personhood and self-consciousness. The other has to do with the “principle of perfection,” a “principle of fittingness”—or what Thomas Weinandy calls “the false presupposition” of Thomas Aquinas’s Christology. To my mind, both are philosophical presuppositions, but the first (on personhood and self-consciousness) fits the theme of this volume more closely, and so it will be the topic of this response.

Person versus I—The Trinity

Weinandy’s proposal regarding the human consciousness of Christ seems peculiar if not unique in that it suggests that in Christ there is no divine *I*, but only a human *I*. In fact, in this proposal none of the divine persons has an *I*—though I am not sure the suggestion is that they share a *common*

¹ I would like to thank Fr. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., for his comments on an early draft of this article.

I.² Thus Christ would be a divine person without a divine *I*. The personal pronoun *I* would be connected with a human nature as self-conscious, rather than with the divine person in which this nature subsists.

While it might seem strange to disconnect personal pronouns from the persons to whom they refer, I think we can indeed make sense of this distinction, if we identify being an *I* with *being self-conscious*. Being self-conscious is that which is left from being an *I*, if we subtract personhood from the *I*—if we subtract from it the *who* in which the property of self-consciousness subsists. We may indeed have philosophical or ethical reasons to make such a distinction between persons and their self-consciousness in the case of embryos and persons in a permanent vegetative state, who presumably are persons, though they are not self-conscious and cannot say, “I,” to themselves.³

In the case of *divine* persons, of course, we would wonder whether this distinction can be more than conceptual. Divine persons do not develop from an embryo state, nor are they ever in a permanent vegetative state. Here the distinction seems to be rather based in the fact that all three persons share one and the same essence, but not their personhood, and that this essence might then be the one and only location for self-consciousness. The full actualization of personhood in the Trinity would then be rather different from what our knowledge of *human* personhood suggests.

I do not currently see any *philosophical* objections to this suggestion regarding the Trinity. But neither do I see what would force us to make this assumption. By contrast, Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, for example, would hold that there are three intelligent and free subjects in God.⁴ And

² Déodat de Basly made a similar suggestion, because he wanted to conceive of the relationship between the Trinity (as one *I*) and the *homo assumptus* (as another *I*) as a tragic battle of love; see Jean Galot, “La psychologie du Christ,” *La nouvelle revue théologique* 90 (1958): 337–58, at 348–49. The crucial relationships are then not those of the Trinity, but those between God as a whole, on the one hand, and the *homo assumptus*, on the other hand. See also Felix Malmberg, *Über den Gottmenschen*, Quaestiones Disputatae 9 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1960), 33–34. Paul Galtier will modify Basly only in his later work; see Galot, “La psychologie,” 343–44. This is a curious parallel, since Weinandy otherwise does not seem inclined to agree with this school of thought.

³ There are also good theological reasons for this distinction. The Günther school equated person and self-consciousness, and therefore denied Christ a human self-consciousness; see Engelbert Gutwenger, S.J., “Das menschliche Wissen des irdischen Christus,” in *Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie* 76 (1954): 225–46, at 171. This is noted also by Paul Galtier, *L’unité du Christ* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1939), 321.

⁴ Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., “L’unique personnalité du Christ,” *Angelicum*

indeed, though the three persons are distinct from each other, each is not “really” distinct from the divine essence, and we would therefore expect each person to have all the properties that the essence has. The persons are distinct only by their proper relationality with each other. And this relationality consists in the way in which each person passes on the whole and entire essence to the other.⁵ Thus the Son has the whole essence as received from the Father; he has the essence in a filial way. He has the divine will in a filial manner, and the divine mind as “conceived” or in the form of a concept, word, or *logos*. If therefore self-consciousness is a property of the divine essence—for God is Spirit—and if persons are beings that have a nature or essence, then each of the divine persons has this one divine essence and the property of self-consciousness in his own, personal way. Since the three persons are not distinct from the essence, they are three ways in which the divine essence has *itself*. Because the three persons are three ways in which God’s self-conscious nature has itself, God is self-conscious in three ways. There is only one act of divine self-consciousness, yet it is had by three persons in three different ways. While this does not necessarily prove that God *must* have three *I*s or selves, I would find this to be a more plausible reconstruction because it is in accord with our *prima facie* intuitions about what persons are.⁶

Autonomy?

Are there other reasons for why we might reject a threefold *I* or self-consciousness in the divinity? Weinandy notes:

As they subsist as persons only in relation to one another, the

29 (1952): 60–75, at 64. Likewise Lonergan: “Ulterius secundum quod processiones divinae sint intelligendae ad modum emanationum intelligibilium verbi a dicente et amoris ab utroque, etiam tres personae sunt subiecta psychologica secundum actus notionales singulis proprios. Et ideo Christus ut Deus est sui conscius tum qua Deus tum qua persona distincta [Further, in so far as the divine processions are to be understood in analogy to the intelligible emanations of a word from a speaker and of love from both, so also are the three persons psychological subjects according to the notional acts that are proper to each. And therefore Christ as God is conscious of himself, insofar as he is God as much as insofar as he is a distinct person]” (Lonergan, *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica*, 3rd ed. [Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1961], 134; translation mine; he agrees in this with Pietro Parente on 141).

⁵ They could not pass on only part of the essence, because that would split the simple divine essence.

⁶ And perhaps also with the way God reveals himself; see Malmberg, *Gott-mensch*, 102.

persons of the Trinity know themselves only in knowing one another. . . . The self-identity of the persons of the Trinity, and thus their own self-awareness, resides not in themselves, but only as they subsist in relation to one another. Apart from one another, they are, literally, no one and nothing.⁷

And elsewhere he notes that for reasons of this dependence in subsistence, one should not even speak of a divine *I*.⁸ From this, it would seem that the three persons do indeed know themselves and are self-conscious. What seems to prevent them from being an *I*, nevertheless, is their mutual dependence. The ontological dependence—that is, a dependence in subsistence that follows from the fact that the divine persons subsist only relationally—implies a correlated epistemological dependence: the Father and the Son do not know themselves in relation to themselves, but only in relation to one another; that is, their self-consciousness and therefore self-knowledge is a dependent one. Or, taking one's clue from the economic Trinity: as the Son reveals the Father, but not himself, so the divine persons are not self-conscious, except as they reveal each other. Their self-consciousness is not *autonomous*, and therefore they do not have an *I*. Thus, contrary to what I have suggested earlier, in Weinandy's account it seems that self-consciousness is *not* co-extensive with being an *I*. Rather, there is one added feature that makes us an *I*, and that is *autonomy*. "Selfhood" or *I*-ness would be more than self-consciousness; in addition, it would require that we can have self-consciousness independently from anything else (perhaps like Avicenna's "flying man," or Descartes's *res cogitans*). While one can be a person, yet lack autonomy, this would be impossible for an *I*; persons are relational, but *I*'s are autonomous.

But now we might wonder whether we have not just defined selfhood out of existence altogether. Can *anyone* be an *I* in an autonomous way? Leaving aside angelic beings, it does not seem that God can, at least on this account. But most certainly, *we* cannot. Human persons in their fully actualized state are self-conscious. But whether they can be so in an autonomous way is at least a matter of philosophical debate. While Cartesians hold that we have a privileged self-access that is unrestricted and autonomous, others will claim that we are rather opaque to ourselves, lacking insight into ourselves. Some, like David Hume, will take this self-opacity

⁷ Weinandy, "The Hypostatic Union: Personhood, Consciousness, and Knowledge," 401–423 in this issue of *Nova et Vetera* (English).

⁸ Thomas Weinandy, "Jesus' Filial Vision of the Father," *Pro Ecclesia*, 13, no. 2 (2004): 189–201, at 195n10, and more clearly in an earlier draft of his paper.

all the way to a denial of the very existence of a self. The truth would seem to be somewhere in the middle: While human self-consciousness does not exhibit a complete, autonomous translucidity, we are not therefore inclined to say that there is no such thing as a human self or *I* at all.⁹ There can be an *I* without epistemic autonomy. But, if even we can have an *I* without complete autonomy, then this should be possible *a fortiori* for the divine persons. They, too, can lack epistemic autonomy while not therefore lacking a self or *I*.

Nor is there any obvious reason why their unique relational subsistence and *ontological* dependence on each other should change this. Weinandy seems to suggest that this ontological dependence would affect self-consciousness in such a way that the location of self-consciousness would be external to the self, and hence that the self is not an *I*. But again: It is not clear how this would follow from the ontological dependence of the divine persons; to suppose so would seem to require us to retract the distinction between persons and *I*'s on which the whole debate is based in the first place. Nor is it clear how my self-consciousness could be outside of myself. Self-knowledge, much as it might be informed by the view of others, is something that only I myself can have; nobody can have it for me. By contrast, Weinandy suggests that "the self-identity of the persons of the Trinity, and thus their own self-awareness, resides not in themselves but only as they subsist in relation to one another."¹⁰ Perhaps what "resides in" means in this context needs further explanation. It can at most mean that the other is a necessary condition of my self-consciousness, but not its location. That others help me to become self-conscious does not mean that they *have* my self-consciousness. As other persons, they cannot have the typical first-person quality of my self-knowledge that results from the identity and intimacy that I have with myself and my own mind.

The Number of I's in Jesus

And this leads me to the question of the human *I* of Jesus. It is Weinandy's concern, shared by many contemporary theologians, to make Jesus more "like us in all things." This includes a human *I* like ours, not to be replaced by the divine *I* that Bernard Lonergan and many Thomists¹¹ suggest

⁹ For Aquinas's balanced account, see Therese Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), e.g., 215–20.

¹⁰ Weinandy, "Hypostatic Union," 419.

¹¹ E.g.: Jean-Hervé Nicolas, "Chronique de théologie dogmatique," *Revue thomiste* 53 (1953): 415–31, at 423; Mario Luigi Ciappi, O.P., "De unitate ontologica ac psychologica personae Christi," *Angelicum* 29 (1952): 182–89, at 186. Weinandy

against the autonomous human psychology and “personality” proposed by Paul Galtier, S.J.¹² Moreover, Weinandy and others would make this human *I* less replete of divinely inspired knowledge, infused or beatific, than Thomas Aquinas suggests.¹³ And consequently, Jesus in his human knowledge, including his human self-knowledge, should be thought of as *less* autonomous, and more dependent on circumstances and acquired knowledge.

Now, here the first problem emerges: As we have seen, within the Trinity, lack of epistemic autonomy was an argument against having an *I*, whereas according to Weinandy’s account, in Jesus, such a lack does not seem to prevent him from having a human *I*; it rather seems to be required for a human *I* to lack this autonomy. So, something does not quite line up in this picture, at least when we connect it with Weinandy’s account of the divine persons. From the Trinitarian presuppositions, it would seem more logical to deny Jesus a human *I* as well.

This would also align better with Weinandy’s suggestion that Jesus never talks about himself, but only about the Father and the Spirit. In his own words: “[Jesus] never says: ‘I am the Son of God.’ Instead, Jesus reveals who he is by revealing his Father, ‘my Father,’ and in revealing his Father he reveals that he is indeed the Father’s Son.”¹⁴ This is an interesting observation, but it also suggests a rather problematic use of pronouns. It is at least not obvious that one can say “you” or “he” without at the same time being ready to say “I.” For how can Jesus reveal “his” Father as “my Father,” without implying a knowledge of himself by which he can relate to the Father as “his”? Personal pronouns are indexical expressions; they depend for their meaning on the identity of their respective user. Moreover, in the case of possessive pronouns, such personal pronouns are also *reflexive*. They cannot be had without presupposing and identifying one’s own location,

himself seems to agree in his earlier work, in *Does God change?* (Still River, MA: St. Bede’s, 1985), 121. Franz Diekamp attributes only one “*Ich, Ichgedanke*” to Christ, though a dual self-consciousness; see Franz Diekamp, *Katholische Dogmatik nach den Grundsätzen des heiligen Thomas*, vol. 2, ed. Klaudius Jüssen (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorff, 1952), 285. Garrigou-Lagrange, “L’unique personnalité,” 65–68, compares this consciousness to the saints who lose their identity in God, who becomes their “alter Ego.”

¹² See the account of Hermann Diepen, “La Psychologie humaine du Christ selon saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue thomiste* 50, no. 3 (1950): 515–62, at 533–38.

¹³ For Aquinas, however, being like us *in all things* includes precisely something of *all* of our three states: the state of innocence (Jesus was without sin), the state of glory (beatific vision), and the state of sin (being under the penalties of this life); see *Summa theologiae* [ST] III, q. 13, a. 3, ad 2.

¹⁴ Weinandy, “Hypostatic Union,” 419.

even if one at the same time locates others. The system of pronouns would seem to emerge only as a whole. If anything, the first-person pronoun would seem to precede the other pronouns, in so far as the use of “I” necessarily implies the existence of the speaker, which is not true for the use of the other personal pronouns; and this much might be true in Descartes.

What, then, should we suggest as an alternative account? I have suggested earlier ascribing a threefold *I* to the divine persons, including the second person of the Trinity, the one person who became incarnate in a human nature. Should this second person also have an additional *human I*? Since the condemnation of Apollinaris, it is at least theologically settled that Christ’s human nature included a full human mind. And in this sense, Christ was indeed like us in all things. That he was not a human *person* did not preclude him from having a full human *nature*, and this human nature included a human consciousness. Whether this consciousness amounts to a human *I* is debated. Lonergan and others will say *no*, fearing Galtier’s Nestorian tendencies. For two *I*’s in Christ might suggest a duality of persons—or else a schizophrenic person, such that the human *I* of Jesus could erroneously think of himself as being someone else than the Son of God.¹⁵

However, I am not so sure that this follows. If the distinction between a person and self-consciousness is correct, then it should be possible to say that in Christ there was one (divine) person that was expressed in two forms of self-consciousness. And if being self-conscious and being an *I* are the same, then this would imply two forms of being an *I*. This would avoid a confusion of divine and human natures in their respective properties of self-consciousness. At the same time, it need not suggest Nestorianism, because both forms of self-consciousness would be had by and refer to the same person or *who*.¹⁶ There is, then, no “Baslyan” autonomy of the human *I*, nor is autonomy required for something to be an *I*, as we have said earli-

¹⁵ Jacques Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Christ* (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), 118–19.

¹⁶ That an *I* as a state of consciousness is not the same as the (ontological) person does not imply eliminating the grammatical and epistemic function of the *I* as referring to a person.

er.¹⁷ The *I*'s are perfectly in sync with each other and know it to be so.¹⁸

Still, in making this claim, I am going outside of what most authors are willing to say. Not only Lonergan, but many traditional Thomist authors are willing to ascribe two *consciousnesses* to Christ, but not two *I*'s.¹⁹ But what, then, is the human consciousness that they ascribe to Christ? Must it not be a form of *self-consciousness*? And if so, how can it not be an *I*—given at least our earlier definition?²⁰ A human consciousness that is not self-consciousness might leave us with a truncated human nature that is *not* like us in all things.²¹ How indeed would this consciousness be different from a mere animal consciousness? *Rational* animals have self-consciousness by virtue of their rationality. For a rational mind is open to *all* being—that is, it has a capacity for *universality*—and it is under this universal horizon that such a mind can come to thematize itself as *one particular among others*. This is then also the condition of the possibility for having a system of pronouns: from this self-transcendent perspective, consciousness is able to reflect on itself and see itself in relation to other beings.²² Should Jesus, saying “I” to himself in a human way, locating himself in relation to other human beings, not have had that ability as well, in a human way? We

¹⁷ Nor does this non-autonomy in turn make Jesus into a ventriloquist; there is full human self-consciousness, but a self-consciousness that (against Basly) refers *in recto* to the divine person, not just *in obliquo*; see Hermann Diepen, “Note sur le basilisme et le dogme d’Éphèse,” *Revue thomiste* 51 (1951): 162–69, at 167. If the human self-consciousness were truly autonomous, then Christ’s beatific vision would be necessary to *correct* it, rather than *perfecting* it (and hence, *gratia tollit naturam*); see Nicolas, “Chronique,” 423.

¹⁸ Christ must also know that his human self-consciousness is *different from* his divine self-consciousness. And he knows this difference with each of his minds, for Christ knows who he is with all the levels of his divine and human natures.

¹⁹ E.g., for Malmberg, we should speak of “Christ’s human consciousness of his divine ‘I’”; see Malmberg, *Gottmensch*, 110.

²⁰ Diekamp distinguishes Christ’s *I* from his self-consciousness, of which there are indeed two (*Dogmatik*, 285). While this might be possible, it does not align with the definitions from which our current discussion began.

²¹ Perhaps one needs to agree with Galtier at least to the extent that he says that this would not be *human* consciousness (Galtier, *L’unité*, 332–33). But Galtier makes the mistake of thinking that self-consciousness is coextensive with a “*quelqu’un*,” and a human one at that; see Hermann Diepen, “L’Unique Seigneur Jesus Christ,” *Revue thomiste* 53 (1953): 28–75, at 64.

²² Such a universal, self-transcendent perspective would also be required for having a sense of personal unity over time and across various acts that our mind performs. Lonergan (quoting Galtier!) says that Christ has had that sense; otherwise his ontological unity would have been humanly unconscious to him (*De constitutione*, 138).

do, after all, ascribe to Christ, besides his divine will, also a fully rational human will, not just a truncated drive or animal appetite. If this is true for Christ's appetitive powers, should it not also be true for his cognitive powers—especially given that these appetitive powers presuppose the cognitive powers?²³ Why would we eliminate self-consciousness from his consciousness, leaving it truncated?

One fear might be that ascribing a double self-consciousness to Christ might imply Nestorianism. On the other hand, not ascribing to both natures their proper operations might bring us close to Apollinarian monergism. So we can and have to ascribe to both natures their proper operations. We can do so even to the extent that they function as two *grammatical* subjects.²⁴ From all of this it would not follow that we are dealing with two *ontological* subjects, as Nestorians are inclined to say.²⁵ Both natures do still subsist in the same person, which is the second person of the Trinity. They are the operation *of* this person,²⁶ even though

²³ And hence, "Christ as man cannot love God perfectly unless he knows him perfectly"; see Dominic Legge, *The Trinitarian Christology of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 179. This might also be important to recall regarding another question: Since the beatific vision makes Christ also impeccable, does it take away his freedom and merit (and hence our salvation)? Gutwenger ("Das menschliche Wissen," 183) points out that knowledge rather fulfills freedom and its spontaneity—as indeed Aquinas says (*In III sent.*, d. 18, q. 1, a. 2, ad 5; see also Malmberg, *Gottmensch*, 120–21). Timothy Pawl also argues convincingly that deliberation is not essential to freedom even in a deep sense, but only under the conditions of a lack of knowledge; hence Christ did not need to lack knowledge to be free, but rather the opposite; see Timothy Pawl, "The Freedom of Christ and the Problem of Deliberation," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 75 (2014): 233–47. Balthasar's appeal to a trans-temporal decision of the whole Trinity preceding the Incarnation (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theodramatik*, vol. 2/2, *Die Personen in Christus* [Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1978], 172), as the root of merit, might then not be necessary. Christ at the same time also remains *viator*, and hence he is still able to merit (Gutwenger, "Das menschliche Wissen," 183).

²⁴ With Leo's tome: "Agit enim utraque forma cum alterius communione quod proprium est [each form 'acts' (performs) in communion with the other that which is proper to it]"—and just as within each nature, intellect and will are different principles of operations and can therefore occasionally function as grammatical subjects in sentences, without an implication of ontological independence.

²⁵ As Lonergan points out: *relativa* are not multiplied by their correlatives; a father begetting a second son does not become two fathers. Similarly, we can say that a person acting through a second nature does not therefore become two persons; see Lonergan, "Christ as Subject: A Reply," *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 242–70, at 248–49.

²⁶ Contrary to Galtier, for whom the divine person does not operate at all in the

every person must operate *through* a nature, and in this case through two self-conscious natures at once.²⁷

The Psychological Coordination of Two I's

But there is another problem that arises from my assumption of two *I*s in Christ. For how are these two to be correlated and coordinated, especially on the psychological level? Yes, there is an ontological unity in the hypostatic union, but how is it that these two are not schizophrenic in their operations? And does Jesus's having a human *I* mean that he does not think of himself, in his human self-consciousness, as a divine person? This certainly must not be the result of our proposal. For *I* is a personal pronoun, and therefore must refer to the *person* whose pronoun it is. And this person is the same for both the human and divine self-consciousness or *I*—namely, the second divine person.²⁸ Let us take an example from Scripture: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling!" (Luke 13:34). The *I* that is speaking here is obviously the one who is using human vocal chords and human self-consciousness (and a human *I* in this sense); but at the same time, this *I* cannot possibly be separated from the divine *I*, since he refers to activities from the time before the existence of Christ's humanity (that is, God sending prophets in the Old Testament). And so also, if Jesus says in his human nature, "Before Abraham was, I AM," the *I* cannot refer to two entities at once or at different times, but always only to the same divine person that is also present in the human *I* that is speaking here. The only solution is that both *I*-consciousnesses, both self-consciousnesses, will think of the same person. After all, the human self-consciousness has no other person to refer to. Unless, that is, this self-consciousness is mistaken about its identity.²⁹ The question is: What kind of knowledge

hypostatic union which tends towards a mere *moral* union of activities (coordinated by the beatific vision) such as would be possible even without a personal union; see Galtier, *L'unité*, 366.

²⁷ For all related issues, see Thomas Joseph White, "Dyothelitism and the Instrumental Human Consciousness of Jesus," *Pro Ecclesia* 17 (2008): 396–422.

²⁸ The distinction of a grammatical from an ontological subject might be porous in that regard.

²⁹ This includes his early life. As Rudolf Haubst points out: there would be a disruption and sudden change of identity from an autonomous human *I* in Christ to a consciousness of his divine identity, if he did not begin with the latter right away, or else, early on, others would have known more about his identity than he himself; see Rudolf Haubst, "Über das Seelenleben des Kindes Jesus," *Geist und*

does Christ's consciousness have to have, in order not to be mistaken and hence schizophrenic?³⁰

One suggestion might be that God arranges for this harmony of the self-consciousnesses by some kind of occasionalist parallelism.³¹ Human and divine nature function in tandem like two synchronized clockworks. God could arrange for Jesus's consciousness to be coordinated with his divine mind by orchestrating—perhaps by means of some middle knowledge—all the circumstances of his life that make him learn and think the appropriate things in such a way that he will not go wrong. His knowledge of his divine identity might then be entirely *acquired* knowledge of some sort.

But this is not how Jesus himself describes it in John 5:19: "Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his Father doing; for what he does, his Son will do also."³² Nor does ordinary human knowledge seem sufficient for knowing oneself as having a *divine* identity. Acquired human knowledge, however inerrant it might be, cannot positively know such an identity. Knowing an ontologically divine identity is not possible without some cognitive assimilation to that divinity. That sort of knowledge would have to be supernatural. But not even every supernatural knowledge might be sufficient. "Infused knowledge," for example, though it can provide various ideas supernaturally, would at most provide some theoretical knowledge *about* such an identity,

Leben 33 (1960): 405–15, at 411–12.

³⁰ Unlike Raymond Brown, who thinks that Jesus was infallible only in his moral teaching, and positively wrong in his ideas about demons and the afterlife—see *Jesus, God and Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 55–56 and 97–98—I will assume that, though there are *limitations* in the human knowledge of Christ, there is no error in him. Given the analogy with scriptural inspiration, this might be important.

³¹ This would provide an alternative to a causal influence of the divine nature on the human nature (as an *instrumentum coniunctum*). Yet this causality, beyond mere psychological coordination (see White, "Dyothelitism," 413–14), is inevitable: the causal asymmetry between the two natures is unavoidable, given that it is God who *through his divine nature* creates and sustains in being the human nature of Christ; the latter also subsists in a divine person, not in a human person. The real question might be whether this is efficient causality (which would imply the whole Trinity) or something akin to formal causality (see Nicolas, "Chronique," 424–46), expressive causality (Galot, "La psychologie," 356–57), or an *influxus intra lineam personalitatis et existentiae* (Ciappi, "De unitate," 187).

³² Diepen points out that, if this statement is true, then every sin of Christ would be a sin of God, and not just for ontological reasons (quoting Capreolus and John of St. Thomas); see Diepen, "L'Unique Seigneur," 76.

but not an immediate experience of the identity as identity. As such it can be subject to doubt; the human response to such thought content would at most be some sort of faith.³³ But because faith is subject to uncertainty and compatible with struggles for belief, the Synod of Carthage in 426 condemned the opinion that Christ was subject to the limitations of mere faith, let alone that Christ was in a “Nestorian” struggle to accept his identity, as some popular movies might have it.³⁴ Under such circumstances he might have been awaiting salvation with us, rather than being our Savior.³⁵ Christ must *know* his divine identity and know it with certainty. For if Jesus could not with truly divine certainty claim his divine identity, then, according to C. S. Lewis’s famous trilemma (“mad, bad, or God”), other people would need to identify him as either a liar or lunatic. The claim to be God is presumptuous or insane, unless it can be made with truly divine authority and certainty.³⁶

³³ Infused knowledge, based in created and finite species, does not provide certain knowledge—just as one cannot know whether one is in the state of grace even by infused knowledge: grace is intrinsically a relation to God, which cannot be known without knowing the divine essence; so it would also be with the “*sensus filiationis*” (see Bernard Lonergan, *De Verbo Incarnato* [Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University, 1961], 349–51).

³⁴ See the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the works of Father Jon Sobrino, SJ: Jesucristo liberador: Lectura histórico-teológica de Jesús de Nazaret* (Madrid, 1991) and *La fe en Jesucristo: Ensayo desde las víctimas* (San Salvador, 1999) (November 26, 2006), §8: “The filial and messianic consciousness of Jesus is the direct consequence of his ontology as Son of God made man. If Jesus were a believer like ourselves, albeit in an exemplary manner, he would not be able to be the true Revealer showing us the face of the Father. . . . Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, enjoys an intimate and immediate knowledge of his Father, a ‘vision’ that certainly goes beyond the vision of faith. The hypostatic union and Jesus’s mission of revelation and redemption require the vision of the Father and the knowledge of his plan of salvation.”

³⁵ This is the striking observation of Thomas Joseph White: “If Christ did not possess this grace in his earthly life, then in a very real sense, Christ was not saved as of yet, and lived in faith, awaiting the salvation or redemption of his human nature. This is incongruent because it means that Christ, while in solidarity with us by virtue of his faith, would also be in solidarity with us in his awaiting redemption from another (the Father for example). He would not be the savior but only one saved” (White, “The Infused Science of Christ,” *Nova et Vetera* [English] 16, no. 2, 634).

³⁶ Gutwenger, not otherwise a maximalist, insists that Christ knew all the free decisions and the inner intelligibility of this mystery in such a way that no infused knowledge could provide (“Das menschliche Wissen,” 176). And indeed, how else could Jesus promise the good thief that he will be in paradise?

In Persona Christi

This can be further illustrated with one of Weinandy's own examples. The example concerns the minister of the sacraments, who is speaking *in persona Christi* when he uses the first-person pronoun. This is a rich and intriguing analogy to our topic at hand. As Weinandy suggests, the minister joins the human *I* of Jesus in saying "I absolve you from your sins," or "This is my body." Weinandy rightly suggests that joining a human *I* of Jesus is a beautiful and suggestive way of thinking about this process. But does the minister only join the human *I* of Jesus, or must he not also join his *divine I*? After all, no *man* can forgive sins, or consecrate, but only God. Even the mere humanity of Christ alone might not be enough; it must be a theandric act involving his divinity as well. But in the case of an ordained minister, unlike the case of Christ himself, there is the difference that the priest's humanity and his self-consciousness is not joined to Christ's divinity in the very same sense that Christ's humanity is. And correspondingly, in joining the *I* of Christ, the minister might be in an analogous, but not in an identical state of mind. This is important, for to speak validly in the person of Christ requires only an act of *faith* from the minister. Indeed, not even faith is necessary, as long as the minister intends to do what the Church does. The "infelicity conditions" of such "speech acts" are wide enough to prevent it from misfiring.³⁷ But whatever Jesus's own self-consciousness was, it must have been more than what is required from the minister who speaks in his person. For Christ acted not only as the *minister* of the sacrament, but as the one who *instituted* it and thereby established its infelicity conditions in the first place.³⁸ These infelicity conditions establish an assurance of validity precisely because Christ's certainty supplies for our uncertainties. Not the administration, but the institution of a sacrament requires divine identity and certainty.³⁹ The validity of the administration depends, in its

³⁷ I am referring, of course, to the speech-act theory of John Austin. Similarly, the validity of a judge's sentencing does not depend on the degree of his personal qualities, but only on his actually holding the office.

³⁸ The *perichoresis* of the two natures in Christ must be different from that of the minister's *I* with Jesus's human *I*.

³⁹ As Helmut Riedlinger points out, in Matthew, Jesus knows that the power of binding and loosing bestowed by him upon the apostles is valid ("Geschichtlichkeit und Vollendung des Wissens Jesu," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 146 [1966]: 40–61, at 44). William Most rightly asks how else he could have assumed that he can institute the Eucharistic presence in perpetuity (*The Consciousness of Christ* [Front Royal, VA: Christendom College Press, 1980], 88). *Agere sequitur esse* implies Christ cannot *act* as God if he *is* not God also in the sense that he *knows* himself to be God; for such actions cannot be mere acts of a man (*actus hominis*), but human acts (*actus humanus*).

certainty, on this institution. For administration, faith is enough, precisely because the institution is not based on mere faith, but on the certainty of Christ's identity. And unlike faith, neither identity nor certainty is a matter of degree, for persons and identities do not come in degrees.

That persons and identities do not come in degrees is true even on a human level, for human self-consciousness: we, too, know our own identity with that same kind of certainty and immediacy. I know that I am not you and, more generally, I know my own identity as distinct from any other thing with an intuitive and direct kind of knowledge. And so we should also expect Christ's human knowledge of his divine identity to have this certain, intuitive, and immediate quality. Though, in his case, it is the knowledge of an identity with a being of a nature other than the nature that has this knowledge. No acquired or infused knowledge can bring about this intuitive immediacy with another nature, but only the beatific vision, which, according to tradition, Christ had in his human nature already during his life on earth, as a wayfarer. The beatific vision is the best candidate to guarantee his proper way of referring to himself.⁴⁰

Self-Consciousness, Subject and Object

Now, no philosopher would make any of these claims, unless he were already convinced by a revelation that something like the Incarnation actually took place and that the various magisterial statements of the Church regarding this Incarnation are correct. Moreover, some of the claims I just made are at best theological opinions (though we hasten to add that Christ's beatific vision in particular is supported by magisterial statements). The most a philosopher can do in the face of theological opinions about revealed content is to ask whether these opinions are viable options, or whether they run into some conceptual or metaphysical problems, or else to ask whether some of the objections made against the position I just outlined are cogent or not.

One such objection would claim that for Christ to have the beatific vision in his human nature during this lifetime would precisely *not* bring

⁴⁰ This identity lifts him also out of the perspectival nature of human knowledge: he is not only a first-century Jew (the exegetical principle of dissimilarity confirms this); he does not reveal just a certain cultural identity, but a divine identity. He incarnates and embodies a divine "view from nowhere" beyond the dichotomy of appearance and reality. See Klaus Müller, "Über die neurobiologische Unhintergebarkeit von Subjektivität und ein religionsphilosophischer Folgegedanke," in *Ich Denke, Also Bin Ich Ich? Das Selbst Zwischen Neurobiologie, Philosophie und Religion*, ed. Tobias Müller and Thomas M. Schmidt (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 161–87, at 179–80.

about the required self-consciousness of being identical with a divine person. It is said that, if Christ would know himself in such a vision, he would see himself in this vision only as an *object*. And since every object is an object for a subject, the object would be distinct from the subject that knows this object. Hence Christ could not know his identity in this manner. If anything, such a vision might lead him to be mistaken about his identity, because he would see his divinity as an object—that is, as other than himself, the subject. In fact, this vision might make Jesus into some sort of a Nestorian.⁴¹ For this reason, even some of those who defend the beatific vision of Christ have come to reinterpret this vision as a “subjective” rather than an “objective” vision. What might this mean?

The problem that is being raised is not unique to Christ’s self-consciousness but occurs in any self-consciousness. If we use the terms “object” and “subject” in their modern sense (as I will in what follows), then any explicit self-consciousness would seem to be a form of knowledge in which a subject knows itself as an object. The kind of reflexivity that human, rational consciousness affords allows us to take a step back from ourselves and look at ourselves as if from a distance. We thus *objectify* ourselves. This is true not just for the human consciousness of Christ, but for all human self-consciousness. And yet, in our ordinary human self-consciousness, this does not seem to entail a split consciousness or schizophrenia or self-alienation. How is that possible? There are two riddles that need to be answered.

(1) The first problem is that complete self-objectification seems impossible, because the object that we are looking at is an object for a subject—that is, for *us*. And in so far as we are those who are looking, we are not the object, but the subject. Yet we are trying to look at *ourselves*. We are necessarily on both the subject and object side; complete self-objectification seems impossible. This quandary is the root of the self-opacity that we have mentioned earlier.

(2) The second problem is this: In the object that we see, we do indeed see ourselves. But how do we *know* that we are looking at ourselves and not

⁴¹ This might be true regardless of what that divine object is taken to be: the divine Word (*ST* III, q. 9, a. 3, resp.), or the Father, or the whole Trinity, or the divine essence. Perhaps the object of the vision includes all of these, depending on what we are trying to explain: Christ’s obedience or his prayer cannot be directed to himself; but his self-consciousness is not directed to the Father, even if he is conscious of himself in a filial manner, i.e., in relation to the Father. Garrigou-Lagrange, “L’unique personnalité,” 71, conceives of it as an immediate vision of his own *divine intelligence*, with which the human mind as a *compenetration* similar to that of air and light.

someone or something else?⁴² How, for example, do we recognize ourselves in a mirror—and by analogy in the “mirror” of our own consciousness? Our ability to recognize ourselves in an objectified form implies two things. (a) We have to be in some kind of third position that holds together both subject and object—a perspective or view from nowhere from which we recognize both subject and object in their identity. This perspective is what German Idealists, for example, will appeal to under the name of “intellectual intuition.” Moreover, secondly (b), in order to *re*-cognize ourselves in the object that we are looking at, we need to have a prior acquaintance with ourselves. This is what St. Augustine would call the *memoria*, a recollection that we have of ourselves prior to any explicit thematization of ourselves, but which allows us to recognize ourselves as identically the same in those thematizations. If the oracle of Delphi asks us to “know ourselves,” then we must already be acquainted with ourselves, or else we would not know what we are looking for, nor would we recognize that we have found ourselves once we have arrived.⁴³

In other words, there must be some kind of pre-reflexive awareness of ourselves that is only further explicated in our subsequent, reflexive self-objectifications. This latter process, St. Thomas Aquinas, following the *Liber de causis*, describes as *reditio in seipsum*, as reflexive going back into oneself.⁴⁴ For Aquinas, too, this presupposes a form of prior, habitual self-knowledge, as well as an actual but implicit self-awareness that accounts for the sense of ownership that we have of our own cognitive acts. These presupposed forms of self-awareness can then become the focus of an attention that cannot and does not need to leave behind the particular cognitive acts that inform and actualize our minds. The subsequent self-explication can be called an increasing objectification of the self; unlike our basic sense of identity, this self-explication does come in degrees.⁴⁵

This second issue of prior self-acquaintance, intellectual intuition,

⁴² The object can come arbitrarily close to the subject: How do I know that the nose I am looking at is my nose? How do I know that my pain is indeed my pain, and not someone else’s? What constitutes “mine-ness”?

⁴³ This acquaintance is minimally, like Kant’s transcendental apperception, “that which accompanies all of our thoughts” in such a way that we can say that this thought is *my* thought, or this pain is *my* pain.

⁴⁴ Philosophers who take this to be the model not only of human self-consciousness but also of reality in its entirety will accordingly have large-scale explanations along these lines; the result will look like Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

⁴⁵ For a further analysis along these lines, cf. Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge*, especially 202–14. The intricate details of Aquinas’s analysis need not concern us here.

habitual self-awareness, or *memoria*, then, is the other side of human self-consciousness; it is the side of privileged self-access, by contrast with the first problem, the self-opacity that results from an always incomplete self-objectification.⁴⁶

The Vision: Subject, Object, or Both?

Now, to return to the human self-consciousness of Christ, as a consciousness of his own identity, his knowledge of his divinity cannot be merely on the object side of things. Just as in our self-consciousness, Christ's cannot be merely a *conscientia-perceptio*, but must be a *conscientia-experientia*. It must be a *subiecti experientia* as well as an *obiecti perceptio*.⁴⁷ As Jean Galot points out, this immediacy of self-consciousness on the subject side also implies that Jesus cannot "discover" his divine self in the beatific vision, because it is this self itself that does the discovering; this self is the subject of this discovery, and not only the object.⁴⁸

Other theologians are not content to point out that there must be a subjective side *also*, but rather want to reduce the beatific vision to the subjective pole *alone*. Karl Rahner, for example, though willing to entertain some notion of the beatific vision of Christ, will nevertheless like to limit this vision by locating it on the side of this pre-reflexive acquaintance that every human mind has with itself.⁴⁹ In doing so, one may hope to

⁴⁶ It is worth noting that this complex structure is something that no artificial intelligence can replicate.

⁴⁷ Lonergan, "Christ as Subject," 250, and *De constitutione Christi*, 136. By contrast, Galtier would leave the beatific vision entirely on the object side (*connaître* rather than *conscientia*), to protect the human *moi* from being anything more than autonomously human (*L'unité du Christ*, 310–12). Because this *I* is incommunicable, even God cannot understand himself to have Christ's human affects (317), even though these affects *are* in fact his (323) and are as such redemptive; God's ownership is more like the signature of famous painter on his work (327–28). Within *human* self-consciousness, Galtier distinguishes the pre-reflexive, active *je* (subject) from a phenomenal, objective *moi*. Both have an empirical or psychological side, and an ontological, substantial side, though for Galtier none of these is to be identified with the person; see the summary in Galot, "La psychologie," 341.

⁴⁸ Galot, "La psychologie," 348–49.

⁴⁹ Karl Rahner, "Dogmatische Erwägungen über das Wissen und Selbstbewußtsein Christi," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, vol. 15 (Cologne: Benziger, 1962), 236. This vision is not a *gegenständliches Vorsichhaben*; rather, it is *am subjektiven Pol des Bewußtseins Jesu gelegen* and merely a *farblos scheinende Grundbefindlichkeit* (236–37) or *Gestimmtheit* (238–39). It can be had even without knowing it (238–40). Lonergan pupils like Frederick E. Crowe will reduce Lonergan's understanding of the beatific vision to his notion of infinite openness and (natural) desire to know. This openness is without objective or expressible content—although it is a most

avoid the implications of an objectification that would alienate Christ from his divine identity rather than uniting him with it. But one will also eliminate much of the content that comes with the object side. The preferred term for such a reduced vision is *visio immediata*, as opposed to *visio beatifica*.⁵⁰ Still others will suggest degrees of clarity of this vision,⁵¹ or make it “supra-conscious,”⁵² but will not consider it objective in the sense

perfect desire to know; see Frederick E. Crowe, “Eschaton and Finite Knowledge in the Mind of Jesus,” in *The Eschaton: A Community of Love*, ed. J. Papin (Villanova, PA: Villanova University Press, 1971), 110–24, at 115. Most objects that desire as such implies a lack, not a perfection (*Consciousness*, 153). That Lonergan himself preferred “knowledge” to the “ocular” term “vision” (see Randall S. Rosenberg, “Christ’s Human Knowledge: A Conversation with Lonergan and Balthasar,” *Theological Studies* 71 [2010]: 817–45, at 834) does not mean that it is not *beatific* knowledge for Lonergan himself. This is different for Crowe, “The Mind of Jesus,” *Communio* 1 (1974): 365–84, at 371–72.

⁵⁰ Rahner, “Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 232; the *visio immediata* is the absolute closeness of the *mystery* (as opposed to knowledge) and its “blessed acceptance.” Yet, it is not only not beatific, but can even be terrifying (231). Most rightly objects that it is terrifying only for sinners (*Consciousness*, 150). Ciappi (“De unitate ontologica,” 188–89) likewise insists that “immediate” can mean only beatific. Balthasar also speaks of a *visio immediata* instead; (*Theodramatik*, 2/2:152). It has no content except his “mission”; see also Rosenberg, “Christ’s Human Knowledge,” 828.

⁵¹ E.g., Parente, as Lonergan notes: “ubi ille ponit Verbum tamquam obscurum terminum perceptionis cuiusdam indirectae et mediatæ, nos ponimus Verbum clarum subiectum conscius cuiuscumque operationis psychologicae [where he posits the Word as if it were some obscure object of an indirect and mediated perception, there we posit the Word as a clear subject, conscious of all its psychological operations]” (*De constitutione Christi*, 142; translation mine). Parente apparently claims that Christ knows only his divine *esse subsistens*, which he shares qua person (only) with the Godhead, and which is the principle of action (*actiones sunt suppositorum*); hence he would know himself in reflection on these actions. But how would these deeds not be presumptuous if he did not know his divinity beforehand, rather than in subsequent reflection? Since his disciples are promised to do even greater works, how would his own deeds reflect his divinity to him? He must know and claim his divinity beforehand so that his deeds can confirm it *ad extra*. And, as Maritain (*On the Grace*, 123–24) points out, where Christ made that proclamation only later (e.g., before Caiaphas), it was not because he did not know, but because he had to show his holiness in theandric acts first, before proclaiming it. While Maritain maintains, against Diepen, that Jesus cannot have had merely the experience of the absence of a human *I*, but something more positive, he only envisions a subjective knowledge by connaturality, too (114–16).

⁵² Maritain, *On the Grace*, 54–144. That Christ knew and loved each member of his Mystical Body from conception (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* [1943]), Maritain, consequently also relegated to this supra-conscious paradise in his soul (89) that is cordoned off by a partitioning (54–61). In Jesus’s childhood, this supra-conscious-

of having the content traditionally associated with it—at least not at all times, if ever.⁵³ On that basis one would then be able to claim that Christ, in addition to this subjective knowledge, *grows* in an objective understanding of himself,⁵⁴ possibly by using his first-century Jewish environment as a clue.⁵⁵

ness is compatible with illusory images (99).

⁵³ Even Gutwenger, who endorses an objective vision (“Das menschliche Wissen,” 184–85), would limit this vision to habitual rather than actual knowledge; the vision would be something like the act of surveying a landscape while refraining from looking at details (such as the day of judgment; similarly, see Most, *Consciousness*, 144). Gutwenger claims Bonaventure, Albert, and Scotus as antecedents (184), but in these authors, it seems to be rather about limiting the comprehensive knowledge of the infinite that indeed only the divine nature can have; Christ’s human knowledge can know the infinite only habitually, not actually. See also Philipp Kaiser, *Das Wissen Jesu Christi in der lateinischen (westlichen) Theologie* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981), 167–98 and 193–94. That a limited actual knowledge depends on Jesus’s paying attention would not impose a limitation—for Aquinas, Christ can do that perfectly and does not suffer from distraction; see Matthew Levering, *Christ’s Fulfillment of Torah and Temple: Salvation According to Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 32, quoting Torrell. Nor can Jesus *choose* not to know something (like the day of judgment), because one cannot decide not to know something without thereby presupposing the knowledge; see Johannes Theodorus Ernst, O.P., *Die Lehre der hochmittelalterlichen Theologen von der vollkommenen Erkenntnis Christi* (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), 158. Gutwenger admits that his is an arbitrary limitation that can be argued for only for reasons of some principle of fittingness. Charles Hess, on the other hand, claims that there is no such reason, because such voluntary ignorance would be useless; see Hess, “Jesus’s Knowledge as Man,” *Angelicum* 53 (1976): 3–10. For Aquinas, the degree of clarity and of seeing things in God depends on the measure of grace, and Christ was full of grace; his vision therefore is not vague and without content; see *ST* I, q. 12, a. 8, ad 4; see also Most, *Consciousness*, 155, and Loneragan, *De Verbo Incarnato*, 353. If Christ can know in his human nature all relevant details as judge at the end of times, then this must be possible during his lifetime as well. He can know each one personally and intimately (the beatific vision thus not making him remote from us, but rather the opposite). After this life, this will also be true for the Blessed Virgin Mary.

⁵⁴ There is growth from potency to act, for this “immediate vision” searches “nach einer Thematisierung und geistig-begrifflichen Objektivation [for a thematization and intellectual-conceptual objectification]” (Rahner, “Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 240–42); in this way, Christ in his humanity may avoid being an “onto-theologian,” but he might become the first modernist theologian instead.

⁵⁵ It is frequently claimed, even by Thomists, that the beatific vision lacks necessary finite species and hence requires additional infused knowledge, or application to acquired knowledge (and *conversio ad phantasmata*). Maritain thinks that infused knowledge is necessary for Jesus even to express *to himself* who he was, and hence for his self-consciousness (*On the Grace*, 94). He claims that, for Jesus’s human

Similarly, Weinandy suggests:

This becoming aware of who he is, however, is not, in relationship to himself, an inner act of reflection by which the human soul or intellect contemplates the divinity of the Word within the beatific vision and so, through the accompanying infused knowledge, grasps his divine identity. Rather, as ordinary human children differentiate themselves in relationship to others, parents and siblings, and so conceive themselves as “I’s,” so the child Jesus came to differentiate himself in relationship to others.⁵⁶

All of these proposals, which are obviously plausible in ordinary human self-awareness, will have to wrestle with the specific problems of Jesus’s claims to divinity that we have discussed earlier. And if I have been correct, then merely human knowledge of himself, either subjectively or objectively, is not sufficient.

In fact, this form of knowledge might not even suffice for adequate *human* self-knowledge. Aquinas and Immanuel Kant seem to agree that mere subjective self-knowledge or pre-reflexive acquaintance with ourselves is at most a knowledge *that* we are (and perhaps of a basic identity with ourselves); but it is not a knowledge of *what* we are.⁵⁷ Whatever we

linguistic expression, even infused knowledge (as quasi-angelic) is not enough: material signifiers are acquired only with action of the agent intellect (94, 103); this is true even in heaven (97). But Aquinas never really says such things (Most, *Consciousness*, 159); rather, images can be directly generated from the beatific vision (*ST* I, q. 12, a. 9, ad 2). White notes: “The text of Aquinas that comes closest to affirming this idea is found in *ST* III, q. 9, a. 3, corp. and ad 3, coupled with q. 11, a. 5, ad 1” (“Infused Science”). Yet even these texts speak only of infused knowledge and indicate that it is (a) proportionate to human nature, and (b) less perfect, because at times only habitual—neither of which indicates a necessity for any purpose whatsoever. Leo Scheffczyk explains that these additional forms of knowledge are, for Aquinas, only demanded by an “integrity principle” for Jesus’s human nature (“Der Wandel in der Auffassung vom menschlichen Wissen Christi bei Thomas von Aquin und seine bleibende Bedeutung für die Frage nach den Prinzipien der Problemlösung,” *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 8 [1957]: 278–88, at 284–85). For Bonaventure, acquired knowledge is not necessary, but penitential; see Gutwenger, “Das menschliche Wissen,” 180, and Kaiser, *Das Wissen Jesu*, 150 and 175.

⁵⁶ Weinandy, “Hypostatic Union,” 418.

⁵⁷ That is, this pre-reflexive acquaintance is Descartes’s *sum* without the *Cogito*, let alone the *res cogitans*. If we indeed knew with the same immediacy *what* we are, then we would not have mistaken philosophies of mind, and no artificial intelli-

know “quidditatively” about ourselves must be located on the object-side of self-knowledge, and this is true also for the human self-knowledge of Christ. His subjective knowledge of himself would have allowed him to say “I am I,” but not “I am who AM”; the first statement is analytically true, the second statement synthetically (even if, in Christ’s case, perhaps synthetically *a priori*). Knowing one’s nature therefore cannot be merely subjective; it requires objective elements. Thus, Jesus’s human nature cannot even know *itself* subjectively, let alone have knowledge of his *divine* nature in this way.

If, then, quidditative knowledge must be objective knowledge, where does Jesus find this objective knowledge? If Jesus’s human environment is not sufficient to reveal his divine identity, then perhaps it is in the person of the Father that the human consciousness of Christ finds himself to be a divine person?

Weinandy indeed suggests a “filial” vision that Jesus has of the Father:

Jesus, the Son of God existing as man, must, as man, come to know humanly that he is the Father’s Son not in relation to his own divinity, but in and through his human relationship with his heavenly Father.⁵⁸

This contrast between the Father and the divine nature, however, defeats the purpose, if the purpose is precisely for Christ to come to know *his divinity* in the Father. It is even doubtful that he could come to know the person of the Father in this way. For, much as we may distinguish person from nature and identify personhood with ineffable uniqueness, it is still the uniqueness *of a specific nature*, and we cannot know or love a unique person apart from his or her nature (it is not clear what this would even mean).⁵⁹ Only if Jesus knows the Father also in his nature, does he truly know both himself and the Father; only then does he know his own divinity. Jesus cannot know who he is without knowing that he is not only the Son, but God; for he is not just anyone’s son, but the Son *of God*. His personal identity presupposes both his incommunicable personhood and his shared nature. Knowing his identity therefore requires both the filial and the beatific vision at once.

gence theorists or materialists. See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] III, ch. 46, and Scarpelli Cory, *Aquinas on Human Self-Knowledge*, 174–98.

⁵⁸ Weinandy, “Hypostatic Union,” 418.

⁵⁹ See Blaise Pascal’s quandaries in *Pensées*, no. 688.

Self-Consciousness and Our Own Fulfillment

These considerations are relevant also for our own self-knowledge; for we, too, strive for such a perfect knowledge of our own nature, in which we have a fully objective grasp of ourselves. Can this desire for perfect self-knowledge ever be completed? Jean-Paul Sartre thought that this is not possible, and hence that our desire for perfect self-knowledge is a “useless passion” that will make us perpetually miserable. It is in fact, he says, the desire *to be God*, since the idea of God is the idea of an “in-itself-for-itself” or of a completed self-objectification. Sartre for that reason thought that God himself is an impossible idea.⁶⁰

But perhaps we should draw the opposite conclusion instead. I think that Sartre is right that the very idea of God, if he exists, must be the idea of someone who has perfect self-knowledge without self-opacity. It is the idea of someone whose return to himself is always already completed, because there is no split between subject and object in a perfectly simple being.⁶¹ There cannot be the process of an actualization of the potentiality for self-consciousness in someone who is a pure act. God’s self-explication does not come in degrees. The example of God therefore also indicates that perfect self-objectification does not necessarily imply self-alienation, but rather exemplifies the actualized telos of self-consciousness. *Ab esse ad posse valet consequentia* (“from the fact that something exists, it follows that it is possible”): perfect self-explication cannot be impossible in principle, because it is actual in God’s perfectly simple knowledge of himself.

How about *human* self-consciousness? If Sartre is right, then we strive for something similar, but it is not possible for us by our own resources. Left to our own devices, it would be a “useless passion” indeed. For how indeed can we, in the return to ourselves, make a unified whole of subject and object in ourselves; how indeed can we actualize the unity of these

⁶⁰ Lonergan traces the origin of this idea of a necessary, real distinction of subject and object in God to the Platonists and their distinction between the One and the Nous (*De constitutione Christi*, 130–31). This would be also the *proton pseudos* of Hegel, who thinks that self-consciousness requires a “diremption” from itself, even in God.

⁶¹ Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 2; nor can such a split be the meaning of the Trinity, as Hegel thought, who accordingly suggested that God needs the process of the world for his self-consciousness, just as Jesus does according to newer theories of his human self-consciousness. Nevertheless, one might have to maintain some kind of “virtual distinction” of subject and object in God, qua self-transparency; or else one might end up with an Absolute that is beyond subject and object in such a way that it is not a person or self at all (as in F. H. Bradley), but rather thing-like or Spinozistic.

subjective and objective parts without a source of unity that is itself already and actually supremely one, and that comes to us *thyraten*, “from the outside”? Yes, there is an underlying unity, a “Ground in Consciousness” that undergirds the duality of subject and object, even in ordinary human self-consciousness.⁶² But in this life, human self-consciousness remains *in potentia* toward the full self-knowledge that it aims at; it requires actualization and unification by a source that is always already eternally one. If this is correct, then human self-consciousness, the reflexive bending of ourselves on ourselves in a circular return, is—like the movement of the ancient heavens—an image of the eternal unity that God has with himself. He is the one who enables us by his activity in our souls to be “at one” with ourselves. This activity in our souls, this participation in his unity is, in its completion, what we call the beatific vision. It is the beatific vision in which we have an objective knowledge of ourselves—yet not in ourselves, but rather in the objective knowledge that *God* has of us and that he shares with us.

Would it not be pertinent to think of Christ’s beatific knowledge as the instrumental and exemplary cause of this fulfillment? Rahner would seem to make our point, when he notes that being and returning to oneself (*reditio in seipsum*) are convertible: the more something *is*, the more it is *aware* of itself and has self-knowledge.⁶³ This he believes to be true not only for God as he is in himself, but even for the hypostatic union as the apex

⁶² Dieter Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 62–64. For Henrich, following Fichte and Hölderlin, this Ground is an anticipation of something beyond the split between appearance and reality, phenomenon and noumenon, and hence an anticipation of Kant’s idea of God as an *intellectus archetypus* rather than an *intellectus ektypus*. As noted above, Müller (“Über die neurobiologische Unhintergebarkeit” 179–80) sees this *intellectus archetypus* as incarnate in the human mind of Jesus. Augustine’s *memoria* is similarly grounded in God: “I will pass even beyond this power of mine which is called memory: yea, I will pass beyond it, that I may approach unto Thee, O sweet Light. What sayest Thou to me? See, I am mounting up through my mind towards Thee who abidest above me. Yea, I now will pass beyond this power of mine which is called memory, desirous to arrive at Thee, whence Thou mayest be arrived at; and to cleave unto Thee, whence one may cleave unto Thee” (*Confessions* 10.17, trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey [London and Toronto: J. M. Dent & Co., 1920], 220).

⁶³ Rahner, “Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 234. Aquinas, following the *Liber de causis*, would indeed think of self-knowledge in ontological terms as well; persons have their very subsistence reflexively in self-knowledge: “redire ad essentiam suam nihil aliud est quam rem subsistere in seipsam [to return to its own essence is nothing else, but that a thing subsists in itself]” (*ST* I, q. 14, a. 2, ad 1; see also *Super de causis*, lec. 15).

of the *analogia entis* in creation.⁶⁴ According to Rahner the *visio immediata Dei* is *intrinsic* to the hypostatical union as such.⁶⁵ His claim that this vision is, nevertheless, not beatific and objective does not really seem to be consistent with his own premises.⁶⁶

Such a completed return to ourselves in the beatific vision may also make sense of an earlier suggestion of Weinandy: we come to self-knowledge only *in another of ourselves*, such that the other-directedness of our mind and our self-knowledge are of one piece. This would certainly be true in the beatific vision. And yet, for Weinandy this vision is “filial” rather than “beatific,” because he thinks of objective knowledge as an alienation from our identity. This alienating feature, he suggests, makes any beatific vision actually *impossible*—for Christ as well as for us, including our heavenly state. This seems only consequent: if Christ cannot have the beatific vision on earth, then he cannot have it in heaven either. And if Christ himself cannot have it in his glorified, post-Resurrection state, then we can have this fulfillment even less (*nemo dat quod non habet* [“nobody can give what he does not have”]). Beatific visions are then impossible *simpliciter*. Something else needs to take their place, and that is what Weinandy calls “filial vision”—a term that is not entirely clear to me.⁶⁷ In his own words:

Because Christians relate to the Father as his sons and daughters, their knowledge of him is not simply an objective knowledge of someone who stands over against themselves, as in the beatific vision, but a filial knowledge, a filial vision, of him whose very life they now share.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Rahner, “Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 234.

⁶⁵ D. Legge makes the important qualification that Aquinas explicitly states that the hypostatic union is *not* sufficient for any vision, because the hypostatic union concerns only Christ’s personal being as opposed to the cognitive operations of a nature (which is rather where the Holy Spirit comes in); see Legge, *Trinitarian Christology*, 174–77. Rahner equally explicitly finds this distinction between an ontic and a subjective level a metaphysical impossibility; accordingly, he understands his argument to be of greater force than one from mere fittingness (“Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 235).

⁶⁶ He suggests a positive will to not-knowing, celebrating freedom as “risk” and “openness” (Rahner, “Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 230, 244)—which, however, might imply some fundamental misconceptions about the nature of freedom.

⁶⁷ If the vision is not objective, is it then a loss of ourselves in another, a form of mere intoxication? Or is something like Rahner’s *ursprüngliches, ungegenständliches Gottessohnbewußtsein* (Rahner, “Dogmatische Erwägungen,” 237)? But while, for Rahner, this filial consciousness is seeking its objective completion, for Weinandy it seems to be content with itself.

⁶⁸ Weinandy, “Hypostatic Union,” 423.

This formulation retains a certain ambivalence: that it is “not simply” an objective knowledge would not seem to exclude that it is that *also*. If so, then there is no need to create what might be a false dichotomy; why could the beatific vision not be filial as well? And why would the filial vision not be beatific and objective? What greater way to share someone’s life, filially, than by knowledge? After all, “We will be like him, because we will *see* him as he is” (1 John 3:2).⁶⁹

Nor would this self-forgetful knowledge of an Other be in opposition to self-knowledge and human self-consciousness. As I have argued earlier: That we need another to know ourselves does not mean that this knowledge is not still *our* knowledge. Indeed, such self-knowledge is even *necessary* in the beatific vision; for truly to know God as God we need to know him as *different from* ourselves. But this implies that we know ourselves as well, as different; knowledge of self and other are necessarily intertwined. We know ourselves in our knowledge of God. We become acquainted with ourselves in the very same process by which we become acquainted with God. Such knowledge is knowledge both *in* God and *of* God.

And thus the problems that seem implied in Christ’s objective knowledge of himself may turn out to be neither unusual nor unsolvable. A complete reflective and objective self-knowledge exists in God in all simplicity. Even in our own, still incomplete state, objective knowledge does not imply an alienation from ourselves, and we hope it to be complete in the beatific vision. It is therefore not metaphysically impossible for Christ to have the beatific vision as a wayfarer; nor would such a vision imperil his knowledge of his identity, but rather enhance it. For the philosopher, no metaphysical impossibility ensues. Christ’s beatific vision is a philosophical possibility. Whether this possibility is also actualized is not for the philosopher to decide. But given theological premises, it might be that a person who has two natures with their two respective self-conscious operations can have one true subjective identity only under the premise that the person’s human self-consciousness has always already completed its return to itself in another of himself—namely in the beatific vision.

⁶⁹ We should also note, that, in this quotation, the personal pronoun “he” refers to Christ, not the Father. Our beatific vision is *not* exclusively “filial”!

This would then also mean that perfect self-knowledge has at least once been realized in a human being, this side of heaven—namely, where the mind of God himself entered creation in a human being. This is the beginning and exemplary cause of our salvation, which includes the fulfillment of our cognitive desires regarding perfect self-knowledge.⁷⁰ N.V

⁷⁰ Christ's human self-knowledge may then even be the exemplary cause for what continues to be present in the infallible mind of the Church, which incarnates in its own way an anticipated divine view from nowhere, looking from all perspectives, from all the ends of the world, speaking in all tongues of all the nations and cultures.