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III. THE SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE THREE PERSONS

When we speak of God in human language, we must make use of ideas drawn from our understanding of created being. That which such ideas analogically designate – without ever being able to express in its full reality – in God must somehow correspond to what they signify when they are referred to creatures.⁴⁶ Anything else would mean a simple equivocity between speech about creatures and speech about God, and therefore complete agnosticism about the divine being. But Christian revelation, and its clear explanation by the magisterium of the Church, excludes such agnosticism; Christian theologians must always attempt to say something about the mystery of the divine being, even though this must be through the faltering manner of human language and thought.

Assuming then the correspondence between what is designated in God by an analogical idea and what this idea signifies when it is applied to creatures, and assuming also the meaningful distinction between person and nature both in the world of created persons and in God, and therefore the distinction between the unity and the trinity of God, one may legitimately inquire about how definite terms are to be applied to God. Should a given term be applied to the divine nature or to the divine Persons, to the divine unity or to the Trinity? And the answer to such questions must necessarily depend upon the use of the term in relation to creatures, upon the place of the designated perfection in the metaphysical structure of finite being and particularly of the finite person.

From the preceding essay it should be evident enough that formally relative terms are not necessarily the only personal terms to be applied to the Trinity. We have seen that even the divine existence is in some manner trinitified by these relations, which are not just tacked on to this existence but rather identified with it and therefore draw it along in some manner into the real distinction of the Persons. Such trinitification of the divine existence must also mean trinitification of other divine perfections often enough heretofore associated solely with the divine unity and the divine nature as opposed to the Trinity of Persons. For example, the divine intellect and the divine intellection – while of course one with the one divine nature and existence, and one, again, in

⁴⁶ I have treated the problems of human thought about divine perfections from a metaphysical viewpoint in *Inquiry into Being*, ch. 20.

virtue of the fact that intellect and intellection, as faculty and act, follow upon nature so that for one nature there must be only one intellect and one intellection – still, this divine intellect and divine intellection is trinitified with the trinitification of the divine existence. There is then a common fund of (infinite) knowledge of the divine being itself and of the being of creatures possessed by all three divine Persons, and in a unique manner by each.

Now the primary mode of divine knowledge, which really contains all others, is that of self-consciousness or self-awareness, the auto-transparency of the subject to itself. If the divine intellect and the divine intellection are trinitified through the trinitification of the divine existence, the divine self-consciousness is all the more so trinitified. And, of course, this must be still more true because in fact there is not just one conscious subject in God but three; for the conscious subject is the Person. If one does speak of an “absolute consciousness” in God, he must at the same time understand that it is identified with three distinct relative consciousnesses.

Such a statement as the last cannot but scandalize theologians of an older school, for whom consciousness was a secondary and rather neglected adjunct of knowledge in created persons and therefore also in God. For them, knowledge pertained to the divine unity of nature, and with knowledge also consciousness. (This supposed, of course, that only formally relative terms could be applied personally, in a “trinitarian” manner; but this supposition has already been dealt with in the preceding essay.) This attitude toward consciousness rested on a conception of consciousness as either a secondary reflective act of knowing one’s direct acts or, alternatively, a concomitant reflexive awareness of one’s acts of intellect and will in virtue of the very spirituality of these acts. In either case, the acts would be known not only as acts but as acts *of a subject* and would therefore yield an awareness of the subject – in the former view, of the subject as objectified; in the latter view, of the subject as subject. Such concepts of act-consciousness are with difficulty applied to the divine being, and in any event scarcely suggest any trinitarian character in the divine consciousness; for the divine acts are identical with the divine existence.

But if act-consciousness arises in virtue of the spirituality of conscious acts, as a consequence of the fundamental reflexivity of spirit (I pass completely over the now thoroughly obsolete position that consciousness is a secondary reflective objectification of primary direct knowing – one must after all have regard for the phenomenological data

in this domain), may we not also speak of being-consciousness where existence is itself spiritual and consequently endowed with reflexivity?⁴⁷ But this is in fact so in every person – persons are such only because of their spiritual being, and even human existence is first of all the spiritual existence of a spiritual soul communicated to matter. This being-consciousness, deeper than all act-consciousness, deeper even than intellect itself in the finite existent, is the ground of the unity of the finite consciousness and the fundamental initial horizon of being to be transcended by the finite intellect. Such being-consciousness is in fact identical with the substratum of the intellect in the subjectivity of the existent; it is nothing other than the obscurely (at least in the human person) reflexive, and therefore conscious, exercise of substantial existence in the subject. Such finite, conscious exercise of finite existence, of existence separated from the fullness of existence and consequently striving to unite itself with this fullness in whatever way may be possible, is the finite ground for the emanation of the intellective faculty as a tendency toward transcendence of the finite existent in which it is and even toward transcendence to the infinite being of God. We find then that consciousness in the most radical sense as being-consciousness is identical with the actual exercise of existence in the spiritual person; this is consciousness of the incommunicable exercise of existence by a spiritual subject, and therefore *is* conscious subjectivity. Such being-consciousness is, then, an attribute not of nature but of person.

It is important at this point to emphasize that the consciousness of God, which is His fundamental act of knowledge containing all the rest, should be conceived not as act-consciousness but as being-consciousness – not an obscure being-consciousness such as that possessed by the human existent but an utterly luminous being-consciousness in which is clearly seen the totality of the divine perfection as well as all the possibilities and actualities in the domain of creatures. But this being-consciousness, we have just said, is an attribute of person rather than of nature, at least in the world of finite persons. A difficulty arises when we come to God, for the being-consciousness of God is identical with His existence and therefore also with His nature. One might therefore hesitate about placing it in the line of person rather than of nature in God, in the line of Trinity rather than of unity. But it was seen in the preceding essays that in God not only is existence itself trinitified through its identity with the relations of opposition but also there is a threefold incommunicable exercise of this one existence,

⁴⁷ See *Inquiry into Being*, ch. 8.

therefore a trinity of Persons, marked out by these relations of opposition. Now, the being-consciousness of which we have been speaking has not been identified simply with spiritual existence but with *exercised* spiritual existence. There is therefore more than a trinification of being-consciousness in God; there is in fact an actual Trinity of such being-consciousness, identical with the Trinity of Persons.

This Trinity is a Trinity of relative consciousnesses, for everything distinctly attributed to the Persons is somehow marked by relativity in accordance with the principle of Florence. At the same time, the three relative consciousnesses are identical with one absolute consciousness, itself identified with the pure act of exercised spiritual existence which is God. But one could not speak of any priority of this absolute consciousness to the relative consciousnesses, no more than one could speak of any other priority of the absolute to the relative, of the nature to the Persons, in the being of God. There are then three radically distinct centers of knowledge and love in the Trinity, but the consciousness (and everything else too) of each is entirely relative to the other two and in the closest immediacy with them. We can see here at least the outline of the very perfection of social being among distinct personal centers, a most intimate community, to which we ourselves are destined to be admitted in a mysterious manner, so far as is possible for a finite person.

So far, revelation making use of theological reason has led us to distinguish sharply between person and nature in God, to consider the respective places of the relative and the absolute in God, to speak even of a Trinity of relative consciousnesses in the Trinity of Persons. But underneath all this meditation, perhaps reasonable enough, about the Trinity, a still deeper question lurks, one to which perhaps no definitive answer can be given, and yet one which calls for at least an attempt at an answer – so far as this be possible for a mere human intellect, but one endowed with at least some degree of light through divine revelation. Why should there be a distinction of three Persons, three Consciousnesses, relations of opposition? Revelation tells us that the Son proceeds from the Father, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son or from the Father through the Son, and these processions bring about all the rest. But then we must ask about these processions and their nature. Why I have asked this question in the chapter entitled “The Self-Consciousness of the Three Persons” will become clearer as we go along.

The inquiry may begin at a point apparently somewhat removed

from the actual questions we have asked, with the consideration of the nature of finite consciousness, of finite knowledge and love. We shall speak primarily of consciousness in knowledge, understanding that our remarks are also applicable in an analogous way to consciousness in love; for love in fact follows right along with knowledge, and its structure is conditioned by that of knowledge. Note that our concern is not with knowledge of anything distinct from the knower himself, however much it be that such knowledge of the other is always found with self-consciousness, but rather with self-consciousness itself. Moreover, we consider not any merely reflective, secondary consciousness through some second act of knowing, not even primary reflexive act-consciousness, but rather the being-consciousness of the finite person. We shall see also that even at this level, deep in the heart of being and prior to the emanation of the faculties of intellect and will, there is a mode of being-consciousness not only in knowledge but also in spontaneous love.

Earlier scholastic analyses of knowledge emphasized the duality between knower and known that was always present in knowledge, even while this duality was somehow transcended in union. Recent attention to the reality of reflexive consciousness and its role in all our intellectual knowledge has tended to focus attention on the unity between knower and known, on the fact that the knower in some way must *be* the known in order to know it; this of course is especially true as regards self-consciousness in knowledge. But this focus upon the immanence of the act of knowing and upon the unity of the known with the knower in the act of knowing must not be allowed to obscure the necessary affirmation, now possible from a deeper perspective than that of the old scholastics, of a duality even within the structure of self-consciousness itself. Always in knowledge, even here, there is found a formal structure of relations of opposition; the known as known is somehow opposed to the knower as knower, and the structure even of self-consciousness is radically bipolar. There is a kind of circle in consciousness, in which the subject as subject goes out of itself to discover itself as subject. Whether this subject goes out of itself through an act in act-consciousness or through existence in being-consciousness, always it is in the spiritual reflexivity of an exercised act that the subject comes upon itself as subject; this is indeed why consciousness is always *con-*sciousness as opposed to simply direct knowing.

In order to complete the picture of being-consciousness as including duality within its formal structure and ontological base we must also

point out that this duality is in fact a double duality. For such being-consciousness is not only being-consciousness in knowledge but also being-consciousness in love. For the spiritually reflexive exercised act of existence is not only (materially) possessed, which would suffice to constitute being-consciousness in knowledge, but also (formally) exercised, which constitutes being-consciousness in love. This second mode of being-consciousness flows from the first; for the formal exercise and affirmation of existence by which it is made one's own and embraced as one's proper good presupposes that this exercised act has been received first so as to constitute the being of the subject which exercises this act. A double set of relations of opposition then appears in the deepest heart of the finite subject and its being-consciousness, those between possessor and possessed and those between exerciser and exercised, the former giving rise to radical being-consciousness in knowledge, and the latter – posterior to and dependent upon the first in the constitution of being, though not in any temporal order – giving rise to radical being-consciousness in love.

One can of course note that the dualities noted in the formal structure of being-consciousness have their parallels in the structure of act-consciousness, whether this be primary reflexive act-consciousness or secondary, reflective consciousness through some second act of knowing the direct act or an act of love following upon a direct act of knowledge. This very last case, in which a distinct act of love follows upon some direct act of knowing, is the ordinary one with which philosophers and theologians have been familiar for a very long time; here the duality-structure is apparent enough in both the knowledge of the other as other (or of the self as other), and the consequent love of the other known as other (or of the self known as other). But such parallels in the order of act-consciousness to our analysis of being-consciousness are not of special interest here. For our whole aim is eventually to gain some insight into the nature of the divine consciousness; and the divine consciousness must not be conceived according to some analogy with act-consciousness but rather according to an analogy with fundamental being-consciousness – all being and action in God are identical with the pure being of the infinite act of existence.

The problem as regards God is obvious enough. God, so far as He is knowable to our reason, manifests Himself as pure and simple infinite existence, seemingly excluding any kind of duality from His being. But, on the other hand, if He is truly infinite existence, then He lacks nothing of the perfection of existence; and it seems obvious that self-conscious-

ness is not only a perfection but among the highest of perfections. Moreover, as a spiritual being, He *must* be self-conscious in virtue of His spiritual reflexivity. Indeed, it was already pointed out above that self-consciousness must be the primary mode of divine knowledge; for God's knowledge could not be determined by anything outside Himself. And all who have considered the evidence of natural theology will understand that in God this is not only self-consciousness in knowledge but also self-consciousness in love.

Could it be then that consciousness in God lacks the formal structure of consciousness as we have come to see it in finite persons? But if this be so, are we really justified in using the same term of both God and creatures? Have we not ended with an equivocal usage, so that it would be just as true to say that there is not consciousness in God? We may recall that similar considerations induced Plotinus to locate the supreme reality, the One, beyond consciousness altogether. One could, of course, reply to these considerations that just as the duality of essence and existence is surmounted in God, so also the dualities of consciousness in knowledge and love must be surmounted. But while the name being is drawn from the act of existing and has a meaningful significance when it is applied even to the pure act of existing, the names of knowledge, love, and consciousness seem to carry with them necessarily the idea of opposition and duality, and therefore perhaps to lose their formal significance when they are applied to God. And yet not only Christian theology but even philosophy declares that such names are truly and analogously applicable to God. Certainly we will not say that God does not know, that He does not love, that He is not self-conscious. Have we perhaps hit upon a genuine antinomy of natural reason? This would say too much. But we have at least come up against a mystery in God (where indeed we might well have expected to encounter mystery!), a mystery which might even dispose us to listen for any possible word from God about His inner life and being. Certainly, if there *were* to be found any kind of duality in God, any relations of opposition immanent to the divine being, we should attempt to correlate them with the self-consciousness of God in knowledge and love.

In fact, revelation has told us of the distinction of Persons in the Trinity, of their relative names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; of the processions of the Son from the Father (with consequent relations of opposition), and of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son (with other consequent relations of opposition). Theological reflection has led us to affirm three distinct relative Consciousnesses, all identical

with the one absolute consciousness of the divine being. It has also led us to pose the general question of the nature of the processions and why they and the relative opposition should be present at all, why there should after all be such a distinction of three Persons in the one divine nature. Now there appears to us the possibility of shedding light upon a philosophical mystery through the revealed doctrine of the Trinity and its theological interpretation, and at the same time making use of the already-given philosophical analysis of self-consciousness in order to achieve this very theological interpretation of the revealed truth. There would thus come to pass a kind of symbiotic relationship between the philosophical effort and the theological effort. While it will be difficult to affirm with certainty the truth of the hypothesis to be presented, we will be able to point to various confirmatory evidences which seems to increase its probability.

Within pure existence as also pure consciousness in knowledge, within this absolute consciousness, we would look for relations of opposition and some kind of duality, from the viewpoint of philosophical reason. That there should be no such relations of opposition in God leaves us with a certain mystery in the understanding of the meaning of consciousness in God. But revelation tells us that the duality and relations of opposition that seemed out of the question in the pure and simple infinite act of existence are actually found there; that there is a procession of the Son from the Father by a kind of spiritual generation. Both the usage of Scripture, which calls the Son the Word, and the common tradition of Western theology, which has even made its influence felt in statements of the Church's magisterium, strongly suggest – if not more than suggest – that this spiritual generation is intellectual generation. Such a view of the procession of the Son from the Father yields a duality and relations of opposition precisely in the line of consciousness in intellectual knowledge, just what is suggested by the philosophical consideration of the meaning of absolute consciousness in the infinite act of existence – even though this suggestion has to be set aside by the mere philosopher. Theology then would conceive of a relation-structure within the absolute divine consciousness, a relation-structure whereby two relative consciousnesses are constituted, one as a kind of going out or ecstasy of the other, and therefore the former as second in relation to a first. It is not that there is first an absolute divine consciousness and then a relation-structure constituting relative consciousnesses. Rather, the very being of the absolute consciousness is necessarily at once also this relation-structure and the two

relative consciousnesses. Thus the Father and the Son are not results of, but indeed constitutive of, the absolute consciousness and absolute being of God.

Within pure existence as also pure consciousness in *love*, within this absolute consciousness already structured by the relations of opposition between Father and Son and by the duality there, we must look for still further relations of opposition and another duality. For consciousness in love again seems to the philosopher to call for such relations and duality, above and beyond those of knowledge alone since love follows upon and is in accordance with knowledge, and consequently to leave the mere philosopher with a rather mysterious notion of the divine consciousness in love. But revelation does speak of a second procession, of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, and consequently of further relations of opposition and further duality in God. This second procession is contrasted in revelation with the first, as non-generative, since the Son is called the *only-begotten* Son. While Scripture is rather unclear about the nature of this procession, it does in some manner present the Spirit as of both the Father and the Son; and the common tradition of Western theology, again making its influence felt in statements of the magisterium, suggests that the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son is in the line of love. But this yields new duality and new relations of opposition precisely in the line of consciousness in love, just what is suggested by the philosophical consideration of the meaning of absolute consciousness in love in the infinite act of existence (but of course set aside by the mere philosopher). Theology here conceives of a second relation-structure within the absolute divine consciousness, a relation-structure whereby a third relative consciousness is constituted in relation to the first two, as a kind of going out or ecstasy of the first two taken together, or perhaps of the first through the second. Once again, this second relation-structure and duality is not in any sense an ontological consequence of absolute consciousness but rather is constitutive of this absolute consciousness as consciousness not only in knowledge but also in love. Here then, the Holy Spirit as proceeding and constitutive of the duality and relation-structure of consciousness in love is not in any sense a result of, but rather constitutive of, the absolute consciousness and absolute being of God.

In the order of revelation and of theological understanding of revelation, first is seen the distinction between the three Persons in one God and the two processions, of the Son from the Father and of the Spirit

from the Father and the Son. Consideration of the meaning of the processions reveals the presence of relative opposition between the Persons and therefore of relations of opposition which are identical with the Persons and mark them out as mutually distinct. The processions and relative opposition are then interpreted as constitutive of the formal structure of divine consciousness in knowledge and love. This interpretation is welcomed by the philosopher, who prior to this could only be mystified by the fact of divine consciousness, a fact surely enough, but one seemingly calling for dualities and relations of opposition which the philosopher could hardly admit as possible in the simple infinite act of existence, which indeed he could only set aside as seemingly impossible.

But although the theory elaborated sheds light both on the revealed doctrine of the processions and the Trinity and on the philosophical problem of the nature of consciousness in knowledge and love in God, still, is it anything more than a plausible hypothesis with very satisfying confirmations? Some have in fact suggested that the entire attempt to make some analogy between the psychology of finite consciousness, knowledge, and love and the processions and distinction of Persons in the Trinity is a mistake, an intrusion of merely philosophical reason into domains which utterly transcend it. Even without taking so extreme a view, one might wonder whether the testimony of revelation and of the Christian theological tradition is really sufficiently clear to justify firm confidence in the use of the psychological analogy for conceptualization of the Trinity. And of course the theory presented is only one form of the psychological analogy, although I believe that it is by far to be preferred to those which consider self-consciousness as merely act-consciousness of some kind or other.

It should be unnecessary by now to make any further response to objections against the use of philosophical reason by the theologian in order to shed some light upon the revealed mysteries. But it may be well to add a few words in support of the psychological analogy in general, without actually coming to a firm decision as to whether it passes from the realm of highly plausible hypothesis to that of unshakeable theological certitude. As was noted earlier, the evidence in Scripture, small though it be, does suggest that the first procession is in the line of knowledge; and even while Scripture is unclear about the second procession, the mere fact that it is second and from the Father and the Son tempts us to place it in the line of love. But the hints of Scripture do not stand alone; a whole line of Fathers and the common teaching

of theologians have settled upon the use of the psychological analogy from intellectual knowledge and love to "explain" the Trinity, and this teaching has gradually penetrated into the belief of the faithful, the liturgy of the Church, and even into the pronouncements of the magisterium (although so far not in a clearly infallible pronouncement). But of course one could object that non-infallible pronouncements, the liturgy, the belief of the faithful, can make use of the theology of the time in the expression of the faith without necessarily committing us to the whole of such theology. Certainly the evidence is not so clear as to place Catholic authors who remain unconvinced of it in bad standing in the Church.

Perhaps the best evidence for the use of the psychological analogy is its power to illuminate both revelation and the philosophical problem of consciousness in God. A more negative argument might run as follows. Since the divine existence is utterly simple, no conceptualization of the Trinity could arise out of a consideration of this existence alone; no foundation of the relations of opposition in the Trinity could be conceived by us solely on the basis of the one and simple infinite existence. Therefore the processions and the relations of opposition should be conceived as grounded in, not the divine existence, but the divine activity. How this could be done might well appear very problematic since the divine activity is identified with the divine existence; but these can be distinguished in our conceptualization, and our problem is precisely how to *conceptualize* the ground for the distinction of Persons. Now the divine activity does seem more open to the notion of relations of opposition than does the divine existence, and indeed, since every created activity involves some kind of procession, we might well hope to find here some more or less suitable analogue in terms of which to understand the divine processions. But there can be no question of any transitive activity of God here; for any such activity would be specified by a created term and terminate in a creature, while here we are seeking to understand processions in which both terms – beginning and end – are divine. For a similar reason, the formally immanent and virtually transitive activity of God in creation and conservation of creatures is likewise excluded; while the immediate specifying term of such activity is indeed God (since it is formally immanent), this term is not God according to His total reality (since the activity is virtually transitive). The procession in such a case is not that of God from God (as in the Trinitarian processions) but rather of a created being from God. Therefore we must turn to consider the imma-

nent activity of God. But since God does not have parts, the only immanent activity to be found in Him is that proper to a pure spirit, namely that of knowledge and love, which for Him means self-consciousness in knowledge and love (for the primary object of His knowledge and love, which contains all other secondary objects, can only be Himself). One might, of course, suggest that perhaps there are still other immanent activities of which we know nothing at all, which would be more relevant to the conceptualization of the divine processions. But such an hypothesis would be not only gratuitous but utterly destructive of any attempt on our part to conceptualize these processions. Moreover, such an hypothesis is extremely unlikely, both because of the testimony of revelation that man is the image of God and because there is a certain well-founded totality and enclosedness in the notion of infinite spirit self-conscious in knowledge and love. Such a spirit is infinitely happy and sufficient in Himself, without need of any other; and this happiness needs nothing more than joyful self-acceptance by One who totally comprehends the inexhaustible riches of His own being. And of course, be it pointed out that this happiness is also a social reality, since this one infinite spirit is in fact three Persons in the closest interpersonal communion in knowledge and love. In this light the hypothesis of other unknown aspects of the immanent life of God, which would account for the Trinitarian processions, seems even worse than gratuitous; and this in turn suggests that the account of these processions in terms of self-consciousness in knowledge and love is a good deal more than a fruitful hypothesis strongly confirmed by the data of revelation, philosophical inquiry, and theological understanding.

Finally, theologians have long noted that the psychological analogy leads to a certain dissymmetry in the understanding of the two processions, a dissymmetry which very neatly corresponds with a dissymmetry in the revealed data concerning these processions. For if the first procession is truly in the line of knowledge and in virtue of the necessity of a mediating term for perfect self-consciousness, this procession must by its essential nature be generative of a term perfectly similar to the Generator; for only such perfect similarity would permit this mediating term to mediate a perfect self-consciousness in the line of knowledge. Such a procession essentially productive of a perfectly similar living term from another living term can be called generation in the true and proper sense, and the end-term of the procession (that is, the mediating term of self-consciousness in knowledge) can be called a Son in the true and proper sense. But all this corresponds very well

with the manner of speaking in the data of revelation and the teaching of the magisterium about the second Person and His relation to the First. On the other hand, if the second procession is truly in the line of love, which is not formally assimilative but rather outgoing (although, of course, there is a perfect – material – similarity here too between the mediating term and the beloved, Who in this case is also the lover), this procession cannot be called generation in the true and proper sense, and the end-term (that is, the mediating term of self-consciousness in love) cannot be called a Son in the true and proper sense. It would be better to call the procession a kind of “out-breathing,” or *spiration*, and the end-term a kind of “breath,” or *Spirit*. But this of course is the very word employed in revelation and by the magisterium in speaking of the Third Person, who proceeds from the Father through the Son as a “Breath,” and therefore as the *Spirit* of the Father and the Son. So it is, in the light of the psychological analogy, that the Father is the ultimate source, *fons et origo totius Trinitatis*, of both processions, even while He has just one, the only-begotten, Son. This consideration could only serve to strengthen our confidence, already very firm, in the value of the psychological analogy from the structure of finite self-consciousness in knowledge and love as an instrument to understand more fully the divine self-consciousness, both as absolute consciousness and as the relative consciousness of three distinct Persons.

In the approach we have taken, a consideration of the formal structure of the absolute divine self-consciousness in knowledge and love led to the distinction of the three Persons and their three relative consciousnesses. This leads us to make a further inquiry into the three distinct relative consciousnesses themselves, to discover if possible what diverse nuances of meaning are contained in the “self-consciousness of the Father,” the “self-consciousness of the Son,” and the “self-consciousness of the Holy Spirit.” For each of these is in fact a distinct center with His own unique relativity to the other two Persons, and therefore with His own unique self-consciousness. While the three Persons and their three relative consciousnesses are constitutive of the formal structure of the divine absolute consciousness, and identical with this absolute consciousness, still each of the three Persons is a distinct central reference-point for a reflexive circle of consciousness in knowledge and love, with the appropriate duality-structure and relations of opposition. We may wonder then where such duality and relations of opposition are to be found in each of the three Persons as distinct relative consciousness. Clearly, we should not look for a substructure of duality

and opposition within each Person; this would set us off on an infinite series of such substructures. Rather, we must reemphasize the point that the distinct consciousnesses of each Person are *relative* consciousnesses and not absolute; the self-consciousness of each Person is a consciousness of Himself as with the other two Persons and even through the other two Persons. Each Person is conscious of an exercised existence which is itself trinitified and triply relativized; immanent therefore to His self-consciousness, even constitutive of it, is the very interiority of the other two Persons present in “perichoretic”⁴⁸ immediacy. Thus, the dualities and relation-structures of the divine absolute consciousness can also serve to structure the three relative consciousnesses in knowledge and love. This is not, after all, so paradoxical as it may sound: the three relative consciousnesses are completely identical with the absolute consciousness, and can be distinguished as three central (relative) points of reference within the one absolute consciousness, even while they are regarded not as consequences of but as constitutive of the formal structure of this absolute consciousness. Each relative consciousness is itself a unique perspective on the trinitification of the absolute consciousness, and is therefore a most intimate communion with the other two such unique perspectives of the other two Persons. This intimacy may be described as the utter spiritual compenetration of the very interiority of consciousness among three Persons.

But even with this utter spiritual compenetration of the interiority of consciousness, there is distinction between the perspectives and self-consciousnesses of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father sees Himself as the source of the others and Himself without a source; the Son sees Himself as generated and spirating; the Spirit sees Himself as spirated from the other two Persons. The Father’s self-consciousness in knowledge is through the Son, and His self-consciousness in love is through the Spirit – thus the duality structures of the absolute consciousness serve also to constitute the self-consciousness of the Father. The Son’s self-consciousness in knowledge is of Himself as the mediating term for the self-consciousness in knowledge of the Father; His self-consciousness in love is through the Spirit spirated by the Father and the Son. The Spirit’s self-consciousness in knowledge is again through the

⁴⁸ I refer here to the traditional understanding of the mutual immediate presence of the three Persons, which means that no one could ever be found in any manner separated from the others. This mutual immediate presence is called *perichoresis* by the Greeks and *circum-incessio* by the Latins.

Son; His self-consciousness in love is of Himself as the mediating term for the self-consciousness in love of both the Father and the Son taken together. Thus the reflexive circle of consciousness in the relative consciousnesses of the distinct Persons is not enclosed *within* each distinct Person (that would be to embark upon the infinite series spoken of earlier) but rather between the Persons; such a reflexive circle would be impossible between really distinct absolute consciousnesses such as those we find in really distinct finite persons, and is possible here only because of the perichoretic immediacy of the three Persons, which is the complete compenetration of the most profound interiority of each of the three relative consciousnesses.

Finally, a few words seem desirable concerning the analogy that is so often made between the Second Person as Word and the human concept as an expression of the content of one's insight; these remarks are also applicable in a way to the other analogy between the Third Person and the interior expression of human love in the will. If our analogy resting on the formal structure of self-consciousness in knowledge and love is correct, there is clearly some foundation for the analogies mentioned; and yet these analogies appear to limp, for they present the Son and Spirit as consequences of a prior divine consciousness, as derivatives from the divine nature as possessed by the Father. But if we are right, Son and Spirit are themselves constitutive of this very divine consciousness rather than posterior to it; this would seem to be necessarily so if the Son and Spirit, together with the Father, are to be regarded as in no sense posterior to and derivative from the divine nature. We have already taken considerable trouble to get rid of this mistaken conception of the Persons as somehow superadded and "tacked on" to the divine nature. One might also wonder why the divine self-consciousness finds need of expression and formulation through the Word and the Spirit. If there is already given a divine self-consciousness prior to the expression of the Word, why should it be expressed at all? Is not the divine self-consciousness already clear and exhaustive enough? The necessity for such expression of the concept in human knowledge has reasons in the mode of human insight, but these reasons seem lacking in the divine self-consciousness. And if there could be such a divine self-consciousness in knowledge antecedent to the expression of the Word, could there not also be such a divine self-consciousness in love antecedent to the emission of the Spirit? Such difficulties confirm us in the determination to seek for analogical understanding of the processions, not in this common form of the psycho-

logical analogy, in which the Word is expression and formulation of consciousness, but rather in the analogy drawn from analysis of the formal structure of consciousness in knowledge and love as constituted by dualities and relations of opposition. Here the Word is still proceeding Word, but not so much like an impressed or expressed species of the scholastic philosophers, as the necessary opposed term in the constitution of self-consciousness in knowledge. And the Spirit is still proceeding Spirit, but not so much like the *pondus amoris* of John of St. Thomas, as the necessary opposed term in the constitution of self-consciousness in love. The earlier analogues are not therefore to be dismissed as invalid and useless; far from it! But I suggest that even better understanding, halting though it be, of the mystery of the divine processions can be gained by consideration of the most profound structures of being-consciousness in knowledge and love in the spiritual self.

THE HYPOSTATIC UNION AND THE
CONSCIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

Before beginning any attempt to understand something of the mystery of the hypostatic union and of the consciousness of Christ, it is necessary to insist most firmly upon the absolute transcendence of God in regard to the world. The Uncreated Life of the three divine Persons stands eternally immutable and untouched by the decision to create, by the existence of creatures, and even by the hypostatic union of the human nature of Christ with the Second Person of the Trinity. No creature could ever rise to God, touch Him, cling to Him so as to comprise His utter transcendence of every creature. The total being of every creature is entirely dependent on God, and this dependence includes even the union of the creature with God. Therefore, if there is some union of creature to God, it is God who with complete gratuity and preserving His complete transcendence unifies and is the bond of unity between the creature and Himself. There is nothing between the creature thus unified to God and God, no created claim, which would in some sense pull God down to union with the creature. If God should choose to enter into a fuller union with some creature, this will be accomplished by the divine knowledge, love, and decree of all three Persons acting in concert and wholly prior to the actual drawing of the creature into such a union. Indeed, this decree of the three Persons, with its infallibility in producing its created effects, *is* already the union itself (in the active sense). The created effect primarily produced by the decree, a created term or reality referring the creature to God in a new way, can be called union (in a passive sense); but this is only secondary and consequent union depending entirely for its being on the primary active union which is the uncreated divine decree.¹

In the preceding paragraph we have suggested the possibility,

¹ This aspect of union has been explained by Lonergan in *De constitutione Christi ontologica et psychologica*, 5ff., 57-82.

specifically, of the hypostatic union, and more generically, of "fuller union." Under the second would be included any of the diverse modes of supernatural union with God through some mode of divine grace. Three such modes come immediately to mind: the beatific vision, supernatural union through sanctifying grace, and the hypostatic union. Only the third concerns us here; the former two will be considered later. But all three are modes of union transcending any natural union of persons with God. Such a natural union would be a union of knowledge and love mediated through the knowledge and love of creatures. In such a union the acts of the created person would remain properly his own acts, although of course in total dependence for their being upon God. But even the fullest and most stable such union, such as might be the final end of a human being existing in a state of pure nature, would still be only mediated through union with other creatures. In supernatural union of a created person to God, a more immediate union is given (though there is always a created term through which the whole created person is passively drawn up into union); and the acts of the created person performed in consequence of this union transcend the natural powers of this person and so cannot simply be called his acts alone. But the hypostatic union which is manifested to us in the Incarnation, as the Church has come to understand it through the development of dogma and the formulations of Councils, especially Chalcedon—this hypostatic union is much more than a supernatural union of a created person to God. Rather, here a human nature so belongs to God that its human acts must be attributed wholly and properly to a divine Person, to the Second Person of the Trinity. This is not a union of persons, but a personal union of a human nature to a divine Person.

A priori we should be inclined to wonder whether such a personal union would even be possible, but it is a factual datum in the mystery of the Incarnation. Given to us even in Scripture that Christ is true man and also God, this doctrine was clarified through the struggles with the early Christological heresies and through the later progress of theology; but this work of clarification and deeper understanding continues even today, and the present essay seeks only to push the investigation a little farther. Two points are of particular interest to us: What is the metaphysical structure of the hypostatic union? What is the consequent structure of the consciousness of Christ, at once divine and human? The former is a long-discussed question among scholastic theologians; the latter question has only recently been posed in a sharp manner, although it could hardly ever have been purely and simply overlooked.

The generic structure of the union of a creature to God, given earlier, can be applied to the understanding of the hypostatic union. Always it is God in utter transcendence who is the cause of the union, who *is* the union in the active sense by His uncreated knowledge, love, and formal decree to unify. Always a created term corresponds to the divine decree, which infallibly produces this term. Here one should distinguish the material term, which is the creature itself which is unified to God in some manner, and the formal term, which is the precise creaturely correlate and product of the decree to unify. This formal term of union could perhaps be called the created conjunction of the creature to God; but it must be emphasized that this term does not enable the creature to touch God, but on the contrary entirely flows from God in order to relate the creature to God in a new way. This term is thus not a means of holding God on the part of the creature, but rather a mode by which God holds the creature to Himself.

This formal term of union is of primary concern in understanding the metaphysical structure of the hypostatic union. By the very nature of the hypostatic union, this term must somehow replace and exclude whatever it is that renders the ordinary created human nature a created supposit or person; only thus could the acts of this human nature truly be also the acts of a divine Person. But this sharply poses the question as to what distinguishes a mere created nature from a supposit or person, the same question that we have already seen to be posed by the mystery of the Trinity. Historically, the problem of understanding the hypostatic union seems to have been the predominant concern in the treatment of the intrinsically philosophical question of the relation of nature and person. Indeed, so much has this been so that some have wondered whether the latter question is really by right a philosophical question at all. But we have already considered this question as a properly philosophical one and then applied our results to the effort to understand something of the mystery of the Trinity even before coming to consider the Incarnation. In doing this, we relied to a great extent upon the work of Maritain, which itself is centered on the problem of the hypostatic union. It would in fact be very profitable at this point simply to read his treatment in order to gain much light on the metaphysical structure of the hypostatic union. While I propose to set down my own development of this theme, I must acknowledge the greatest debt to Maritain's work here. But before we actually apply our already achieved understanding of the relation of nature and person to

² Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 434-444.

the clarification of the mystery of the hypostatic union, it seems useful to make some brief remarks about the five classic views here.

In fact, the inadequacies of these five views, of Scotus, Tiphanus, Suarez, Cajetan, and Capreolus (with the modifications of the latter by De La Taille and Lonergan) have already been noted in the first chapter on the Trinity; but we may here briefly recall their difficulties as regards the hypostatic union. Scotus thought that the finite person or finite supposit added to the notes of the individual nature a double negation of dependence on any other being; it was simply an individual nature which neither is nor can be communicated to any other being as some kind of part of that being. Such a notion of the person can be applied successfully to the hypostatic union, but only because this notion is purely descriptive and not explanatory; it does not really come to grips with the problem of nature and person but merely points out their factual difference. The same can be said about the opinion of Tiphanus, that person and supposit add to the individual nature the note of wholeness. This is basically a more positive formulation of the description of Scotus, and in that respect a better description; but it still falls short of a really metaphysical statement about the ontological root of personality. Neither view can actually illuminate our partial understanding of the mystery of the hypostatic union. The hypothesis of Suarez, that personality in the finite person is a special *mode* beyond the individual nature, and that the hypostatic union can take place because the individual human nature of Christ is in fact deprived of this substantial mode, is unsatisfactory from the outset by reason of the philosophical context in which this mode is to be understood, namely in the context of the denial of the real distinction between essence and existence. But beyond this, the Suarezian mode appears to be an *ad hoc* hypothesis without any real metaphysical reason other than the simple fact that in one case there is found an individual human nature which is not a person, namely in the hypostatic union. The view of Cajetan attempts to go a little deeper, pointing out that the individual nature needs a termination analogous to the point which terminates the line, in order that it be able to be a subject, that which is and not merely that by which something is. This substantial termination of the nature is a mode in the line of essence itself, completing the essence and enabling this essence to subsist. While this does appear as an attempt at some metaphysical explanation of the constitution of the person, and of why the individual human nature of Christ is still not itself a person (since it lacks this substantial mode in the line of essence), still this

mode itself and the possibility of its absence seem rather incomprehensible and therefore radically as *ad hoc* hypotheses. The most common view among Thomists at present is that of Capreolus and Billot, that the person and the supposit are constituted not by anything in the line of essence at all but by substantial existence. In the earlier, simpler form of this opinion, Christ was thought not even to have any finite human existence but to exist in virtue of the infinite existence of the Word. But in response to the obvious difficulty of understanding an immediate actuation of Christ's finite human nature by the infinite act of existence of God, and of understanding how this actuation would be an actuation by the Word and not by all three Persons in common, De La Taille proposed the notion of a created actuation by uncreated act. This created, supernatural, existential act, which is simply a medium through which God Himself actuates the obediential potency of the human nature of Christ, replaces, preempts the place of, the natural and proper and proportioned existential act which would ordinarily actuate the substantial human nature. But while this conception does give some account of the metaphysical structure of the hypostatic union without the special problems of Capreolus and Billot, inasmuch as it avoids immediate actuation by the infinite existence of God and also accounts for this actuation as an actuation by the Word and not by the other two Persons (for this created actuation in the supernatural order refers essentially to the Word), still the metaphysics implicit in this view of the hypostatic union seems *ad hoc*, made in view of the problem of the Incarnation. We would prefer to be shown how a proper and proportioned existence actually raises a mere individual nature to a new level, through an analysis of the metaphysical principles involved, namely existence and nature. But this seems to be simply postulated in order that the supernatural created actuation by uncreated act may then be introduced to preempt the place of such a proper and proportioned existence (thus preventing the human nature of Christ from being also a human person) and to join the human nature to the Word (thus effecting the hypostatic union). Lonergan's attempt to improve the theory of De La Taille by emphasizing the transcendence of God and of the Word even while the union is actively effected, and by describing the created actuation itself as the secondary appropriate created term produced by and corresponding to the divine decree – a created passive union entirely posterior to and totally dependent upon the uncreated active union in the divine knowledge, love, and decree – is indeed an improvement; but one does not find in Lonergan any more

than in De La Taille the kind of metaphysical understanding of the constitution of the finite person that we seek in order the better to understand something about the nature of the hypostatic union.

In our earlier discussion of the problem of person and nature in the Trinity, Maritain's metaphysical treatment has already been noted and has provided the basic guideline according to which was evolved a more satisfactory metaphysics of the constitution of a person. His discussion of the metaphysics of person and nature, and the application of it to the understanding of the hypostatic union can be considered as another development in the line of De La Taille and Lonergan, and therefore of Capreolus and Billot, although he in fact began by adopting the perspective of Cajetan in his earlier treatment of the problem.³ It is not necessary here to repeat the basic metaphysical analysis, which can be found in our earlier essay on the nature and Persons in the Trinity. Here we shall proceed immediately to the problem of the hypostatic union, taking up the matter in our own way rather than following the treatment of Maritain step-by-step.

We saw in the earlier essay that the person or supposit is constituted as such precisely through the incommunicable exercise of the act of substantial existence. Accordingly, the individual nature of Christ as man lacks this exercise or affirmation of its own substantial existence; moreover, this exercise must even be positively excluded by the formal term of union to the divine Person of the Word. But this is not to say that the finite existential and substantial act of the created human nature is itself lacking or excluded. If this finite human existence were in fact absent, then the human nature would have to exist in virtue of the uncreated and infinite divine existence, which would bring us back to the position of Capreolus and Billot. But in fact, if there is no finite existence of the human nature, it is difficult to see how there could really be any genuine human action at all in Christ; for action follows upon and is a function of being. There is a growing conviction, as we have seen with Maritain, De La Taille, and Lonergan, that the finite secondary human existence of Christ is actually found, and a growing tendency to emphasize those texts of St. Thomas in which he speaks of just such a finite and secondary existence in Christ.⁴

Yet, if this finite, secondary, substantial existence of Christ is indeed present – though it is not actually exercised by the finite individual human nature of Christ – an obvious difficulty must be met. Existence,

³ *Ibid.*, 430–434.

⁴ *De unione Verbi incarnati*, a. 4.

by its very "nature," is an exercised, dynamic act; it could never be merely possessed. But here a finite existence is found which is not actually exercised by the individual nature to which it gives being. How could this be so? It must be said that if this existence is not actually exercised by the creature, by the finite nature, this can only be because this exercise of the act has been in some manner preempted by the Second Person of the Trinity. In this way, instead of the human nature affirming and making fully its own the act of substantial existence that it receives and merely possesses "on loan," instead of the human nature having a quasi-efficient and emanative causality in regard to this existence, on the contrary this existence is affirmed by, emanates in some manner from, and pertains as to a subject of exercise to the Word. But note some important differences in the mode of emanation in this case and in the ordinary case in which actual exercise is not thus preempted by a divine Person. In the latter case, an existent essence affirms the very act which has made this essence to exist, in a kind of mutual causality; but now the Word who is Existence affirms a secondary act of existence which He does not at all need in any manner, which in fact is totally dependent for its being on the three divine Persons acting in concert to produce it. In the ordinary case, the emanative causality of the finite nature derives ultimately from the very act of existence itself, which gives being to the finite nature; now the emanative causality of the divine nature is in no way dependent upon the finite existence but rather is the total transcendent cause of this finite existence, and not by an emanation in the strict sense but rather by a formally immanent and virtually transitive act which perfectly safeguards the transcendence and untouchability of the divine nature in itself even while it gives being in a quasi-emanative manner to the finite existence as essentially referred, in the line of exercise, to the Person of the Word although it is the actuation (as merely possessed) of the finite human nature. While the human nature would ordinarily possess its act of existence even more fully in virtue of its affirmation and exercise of this act, in this case the individual nature is more possessed by the act of existence than possessing this act; but since this existence already pertains to the Person of the Word, through it the nature also so pertains to the same Person of the Word and is thus the human nature of a divine Person.

In view of the aforementioned differences between the ordinary emanation of substantial existence from the self-affirming finite existent and this quasi-emanation of substantial existence (of a finite

nature) from a divine Person, it must be said that the substantial existence in the ordinary case is quite distinct from the substantial existence in this special case. If the former is the natural, proper, and proportioned existence of the finite nature, the latter is a supernatural, special existential act which can still give existence to the finite nature but which has pronounced differences in the relational order from the ordinary natural and proper existence. This supernatural existence, therefore, does not actuate the natural potency of the finite nature, but rather its obediencial potency in relation to the supernatural order and the interior life of God. It can still be said to preempt the exercise of natural, proper, and proportioned existence in so far as it actually renders this latter existence unnecessary at all. Since this created supernatural actuation in effect joins the created nature to the Uncreated Act of Existence (as exercised by the Word), one could speak of the human nature as being actuated by Uncreated Act through the medium of a created actuation. Such was the manner of speaking of De La Taille, who used this idea to reach a unified conception of supernatural union with God not only in the hypostatic union, but also in the life of grace and in the beatific vision. We shall return to this in a later essay. But from this viewpoint it is possible to see the divine causality here not only as quasi-emanative but also as quasi-formal; for the created actuation not only "emanates" in some manner from God but also joins the human nature of Christ to the Uncreated Act as if to a formal term. But such a quasi-formal causality here seems similar to that suggested by Rahner.⁵

The supernatural, created, existential actuation of which we have been speaking thus cannot be understood without pointing to several functions of it at once and to diverse modes of causality which produce it. It preempts the place of a natural, proper, and proportioned existence in the finite nature by being itself an existential actuation, but already referred as to exercise to the Person of the Word. Since it cannot be affirmed by the created nature in such a manner that it be fully *of* this nature, it rather holds the nature than is held by the nature, and therefore draws the nature with itself in its reference to the Person of the Word; from this viewpoint, this actuation is the formal term of union (in the passive sense) and the medium of assumption of the created nature to the Word. Since through this actuation the human nature is joined to Uncreated Act, the actuation can be called a created

⁵ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, I, transl. by Cornelius Ernst, Baltimore, 1961, 319-346.

actuation by Uncreated Act and thus a quasi-formal cause mediating another quasi-formal causality, this time of the very Uncreated Act of the Word Himself. But of course it is necessary to guarantee the complete transcendence of the Uncreated Act by recognizing that the mediating term itself is entirely dependent upon and flowing from the determination of the three Persons of the Trinity in concert that the word actually *be* a quasi-formal cause of a created nature. The mediating actuation is only the appropriate created term resulting from this determination in God, just as it is the appropriate created term, as we saw, resulting from the determination of the three Persons together, that the Word be the quasi-emanative cause of the substantial existence of the human nature. These two divine determinations are, of course, really one determination with two aspects; and the appropriate created term has two corresponding aspects. It is the aspect of quasi-emanative causality that comes to the fore when we think of the Word as preempting, by the created actuation, the place of the natural, proper and proportioned existence of the human nature; and the aspect of quasi-formal causality comes to the fore when we think of the Word as assuming this human nature to Himself by the same created actuation. Both of these aspects of the causality of the Word and of the corresponding created term can be embraced in the happy phrase of De La Taille: created actuation by Uncreated Act, where actuation is understood both formally and emanatively in reference to the Word. Lest it seem that the matter of efficient causality has been overlooked, it should be pointed out that it is already contained in the idea of a determination of the three Persons together, to which corresponds an appropriate created term. The created term flows from the determination of the Trinity, by their common efficient causality; but what they efficiently cause is a term that is referred in the lines of formal and emanative causality to the Person of the Word. So it is then that the Infinite Person of the Word exists not only in His divine nature but also in a human nature.

Such a hypostatic union would be impossible between two creatures, for the exercise of substantial existence could be referred only to a substance which itself has this existence or which is the plenitude of infinite existence containing in a supereminent manner the existence of all things. Only in such a case could the quasi-emanative causality or properly emanative causality be found, for such causality is really a kind of flowing from the depths of subjectivity of what is already in some manner there. This is true even in the cases of the emanation of

accidents from finite substance and in the emanation of operation from the same finite substance through the medium of the operative powers; for the substance in the first case, and the substance together with the operative powers in the second case, are not simply in passive potency to the accidents and to the operations. Rather, there is a quasi-active exigency in the first case and a properly active exigency in the second case. But no finite existent has such an active or quasi-active exigency for the substantial existence of another distinct finite existent, and therefore no finite existent could be the emanative or quasi-emanative cause of the substantial existence of another finite existent.

What has been said regarding the substantial existence of Christ's human nature as an actuation "exercised" by a divine Person is also analogically applicable to the various modes of accidental existence in this same human nature. Ordinarily, such accidental existence is possessed by the accidental forms and exercised by the subject in which the accidents inhere. Here it is, of course, possessed by the accidental forms; but it is referred as to exercise to the same subject to whom the substantial existence is so referred. But such accidental existence is quite distinct from the primary formal term of union, and is only a set of secondary, consequent terms of union, referred to the Word through the mediation of His secondary, substantial human existence. There is in the existing human nature of Christ a quasi-active exigency for His accidents, but this exigency is modified by the unique mode of His substantial existence – it is an exigency for accidental existence to be possessed by the human nature but not to be exercised by this nature. It is similar in regard to the human operations of Christ; the active exigency for them in the human nature and active powers of Christ is not an exigency that these operations emanate from this human nature and active powers, but rather that such operations be genuine operations of the Word acting through the human nature and its powers. And the actual operations of Christ as man are so referred to the Word in accordance with this exigency of the existent human nature and powers. Here again the principle is verified that the mode of operation follows upon the mode of being.

Is the human nature of Christ then in any sense the subject of His accidental perfections and operations? If by subjectivity we mean the actual exercise of existence and activity, then Christ's human nature is not a subject in the proper sense. However, it is possible to speak of a purely receptive subject, as prime matter is said to be the subject of substantial form; and in this sense Christ's human nature can be said to be

a subject both of existence—substantial and accidental—and of operation. But such a purely receptive subject is not what is ordinarily meant nowadays by the term “subject,” and is not what we have meant by this term in this and earlier essays. Accordingly, the purely receptive subject is here regarded as a subject only in a secondary and qualified sense, with the subject of actual exercise being regarded as the subject in the full and proper sense. This distinction will prove to be of some value in understanding something about the consciousness of Christ.

We come now to the knotty problem of the consciousness of Christ, a question of much recent interest to theologians in view of our greater awareness of this dimension of human and of intellectual existence in general. Although it would be possible to discuss the matter in the context of recent speculations, it seems better here to proceed to a rather straightforward analysis in the light of the principles elaborated in earlier essays concerning consciousness and in this essay concerning the metaphysical structure of the hypostatic union.

That there are in fact diverse modes of divine and human intellection and volition in Christ, flowing from His diverse natures, is evident enough in the tradition and teaching of the Church. The theologians have ordinarily distinguished three fundamental modes of human knowing in Christ: the beatific vision, infused knowledge, and knowledge acquired through the ordinary human mode resting on experience. The special problem concerning the presence of the beatific vision in the human being of Christ will be considered later, and we will not dwell on the other two modes of human knowledge which He has. Rather, we are primarily interested in that mode of self-awareness which is concomitant with all human knowledge and volition, and indeed with all intellectual being, with all spiritual being, which has already been described in the treatment of the Trinity. And here we shall focus principally upon the human self-consciousness of Christ rather than upon the divine self-consciousness of the Second Person in His uncreated eternal being. The latter has already been sufficiently considered in the essays on the Trinity, and will be referred to only when we come to a synoptic view of the total structure of the consciousness of the Word-made-man.

Earlier, we distinguished three modes of consciousness: reflective and secondary act-consciousness, reflexive act-consciousness, and reflexive being-consciousness. The first of these presents no special problem here; it is not really consciousness in the proper sense, which is a reflexive awareness without any need for a special act of its own, but only another

act of knowing among other ordinary objective acts of knowing – special only in that it has as its object other acts of knowing rather than the real being to which these other acts refer. That some scholastic philosophers and theologians should have regarded, and perhaps even continue to regard this as the deepest reality of consciousness, betrays the inadequate phenomenological base of their thought.

We come to consciousness in the proper sense with reflexive act-consciousness. Its nature has already been described in the chapter on “The Self-consciousness of the Three Persons.” Briefly, it is a reflexive awareness of an intellectual act of intellection or volition as exercised, and therefore as the act of a subject; but this is also to say that it is a reflexive awareness of the subject in its very exercise of such activity. This kind of reflexive awareness arises in virtue of the spirituality of the subject of the act and consequently of the act itself. The very presence of such a spiritual act in such a spiritual subject makes the act (and the subject) actually intelligible and understood (by the obscure understanding which is consciousness – obscure at least in man). But note that it is the mere presence of the act, and not its exercise, that makes it thus knowable by consciousness. This means that such consciousness will be found even in a purely receptive spiritual subject, such as is the human soul of Christ in relation to the human intellectual powers, habits, and acts of Christ. But this consciousness is not simply consciousness of the purely receptive human subject of these acts, but also of the subject of actual exercise of these acts, who is the Uncreated Word. For these intellectual acts are not merely received in the human nature of Christ but also actually exercised by the divine Person; and their reflexive consciousness includes not only awareness of the acts as possessed but also as exercised. Yet this actual exercise of such acts takes place through the medium of the existent human nature. Therefore, in speaking of the subject-term of consciousness, we may here distinguish the intermediate, proximate term of the act-consciousness of Christ, which is the purely receptive human subject – subject in only a qualified sense – and the ultimate remote term of this same act-consciousness, which is the infinite subject of actual exercise who is the Word. This ultimate term is attained only obscurely in this act-consciousness considered precisely as such, for the intermediate term itself is known only obscurely and indirectly in virtue of such act-consciousness alone.

Reflexive being-consciousness is analogically similar to reflexive act-consciousness, as was seen in the earlier treatment; such being-con-

consciousness is a reflexive awareness of an act, not of activity but of existence, as exercised by a subject. Fundamental being-consciousness, which is of special interest here, is such a reflexive awareness of the exercise of substantial existence by any spiritual subject. It is in fact found in any spiritual and intellectual being, and in man in so far as his existence is primarily the existence of his spiritual soul, though here such being-consciousness is very obscure because of the union of the spiritual soul with prime matter. Once again, however, it is the mere presence of such an act of existence in a spiritual subject, even apart from its exercise, that renders this act reflexive and therefore conscious and leading to a reflexive grasp of the subject which has this act, whether this subject be only a purely receptive subject or also the subject of actual exercise of the act. Therefore, in Christ there is such a consciousness given of the purely receptive human subject of His human existence through this very existence itself as spiritual and reflexive. But this human existence is, of course, also of necessity an exercised dynamic act and essentially referred to whatever be the subject of actual exercise, namely, the Person of the Word. This means that in the conscious living of His human existence, Christ is conscious at once of the finite, human subject which only receives this existence and also of the infinite, divine Person who actually exercises this act of human existence. There is no reason to think that the human consciousness of the finite, human, purely receptive subject is any clearer than that which other men have; for the metaphysical structure of form in matter, and of existence in a matter-form composite is here the same as in other men, and therefore yields only a very obscure grasp of His human existence in the human consciousness of Christ. But in view of this obscurity, and in view of the fact that this obscure consciousness of His human existence as in the receptive human subject is also the very medium through which is given the consciousness of the divine Person and Subject of actual exercise, Christ's human consciousness of assumption to the Word is itself very obscure, so obscure that it could not be formulated in the conceptual and propositional level of Christ's knowledge without the aid of infused knowledge, whenever such knowledge is actually conferred. There is of course no doubt that the beatific vision would illumine the obscure awareness of assumption, but we must defer consideration of this kind of illumination until we come to consider the problem of the beatific vision in Christ at least to some extent.

But it *does* seem possible to say something about the mode of Christ's

human consciousness of the actual Subject of exercise of His human existence and therefore of His assumption to the Word. Ordinary men are in some manner aware of their own self-affirmation and relative autonomy in the line of existence; they are aware of being at their own disposal to some extent through their free action. All this points to their radical being-consciousness of themselves as subjects of actual exercise of existence and not merely as purely receptive of existence. But in the human being-consciousness of Christ, this ordinary human awareness of radical independence and autonomy must be lacking, since the human subject here is purely receptive and not a subject of actual exercise of existence. Rather, in place of such an awareness, is given another awareness, of His human existence as affirmed by another, by a certain obscure plenitude of being darkly present even in this human consciousness. This awareness is much like the mystical awareness of supernatural graces precisely as given by God, and indeed is the primary mystical union of Christ's human nature as purely receptive subject with the Word. Would it be possible for Christ as man, even without the aid of infused knowledge and apart from the beatific vision, to bring His acquired knowledge to bear upon this substantial mystical union and thence to conclude that He indeed is God? It seems that it would be difficult for Him to come to such a conclusion, since this mystical mode of awareness is so obscure and hard to distinguish from other mystical modes of awareness which mean much less than such a mode of union. We are sufficiently acquainted with the stumblings of mere human reason when it seeks to interpret mystical modes of union with God apart from the infused light of faith and the insights of theologians.

It is now possible to present a synoptic view of the consciousness of Christ, both from the perspective of the Second Person of the Trinity and from the perspective of the human nature of Christ as purely receptive subject. From the former perspective, the ultimate ground of unity of the total consciousness of Christ must be sought in the divine, uncreated consciousness of the Second Person. In this consciousness the Word knows both Himself and the other two Persons and all other actual or possible reality; in it is also known the special created reality of His secondary human consciousness precisely as His, and this knowledge in no way depends upon the secondary consciousness but rather is the transcendent cause of such consciousness. The created secondary consciousness, both being-consciousness and act-consciousness, is entirely distinct from the infinite and transcendent reality of the

Second Person and His uncreated self-consciousness, but is essentially referred to this properly divine consciousness by quasi-emanative and quasi-formal causality, and held to the Word by Himself as His.

From the perspective of the human nature of Christ as purely receptive subject, the reality of the uncreated, divine self-consciousness recedes from view. There is given a consciousness of the finite action and being of the human receptive subject, and therefore of this subject itself. In this consciousness of the finite subject is found a radical awareness of dependence, of createdness, such as would be found in any other created spirit or created intellectual being; but beyond this there is also found reference not to the finite subject but to an Other as the true owner and affirmer of the finite action and being of the receptive human subject. This Other, a plenitude of being, remains obscure at the plane of this human consciousness itself, but is illumined by the infused knowledge of Christ and by His beatific vision, and to some extent at least, even by His acquired knowledge. Of particular interest here, because of its seeming relevance in interpreting the created consciousness of Christ, is the beatific vision. We would like to know about how this beatific vision is actually present in Christ, and how it affects the created consciousness of Christ, either as an ultimate form of unity or in some other manner.

Some theologians have felt rather uneasy at the idea of the beatific vision in the human Christ even while He lived, suffered, and died here on earth. The "temptations," the seeming ignorance of certain matters, the intense suffering, the utter humanness of Christ, His likeness to us in all things save sin, all these aspects of Christ's life on earth make it more difficult for us to conceive of Him as at the same time enjoying the face-to-face vision of the Trinity which is our final beatitude and eternal rest for all our desires. And yet, if Christ's human nature is hypostatically united to the Word through the supernatural grace of union (which is the formal term of union of which we have spoken at length), the beatific vision is due to this nature right from the first moment of its being. For it is truly God who exists in this human nature and who through it first of all enters in communion with the Trinity even before going out to the created world. There could be no question of meriting the beatific vision here, for the natural Son does not have to merit what is His due. Is it possible that God would deprive His natural Son of what is His due? Such an hypothesis of deprivation for a time of the beatific vision that was Christ's by right might still be a tempting one to some, despite the intrinsic repugnance in the idea, unless it could be

shown that the presence of the beatific vision is somehow compatible with the obvious utter humanness of Christ as man in His life on earth.

Although the problem of the nature of the beatific vision will be considered in a later essay, some brief remarks must be made here, perhaps more adequately intelligible only in the light of the later discussion. Since no creature can rise to God, "touch" God in any manner, God Himself must draw the finite intellect to Himself in order that it enjoy the beatific vision. This drawing is not accomplished through the infusion of any intelligible species, since no creature, no finite species, stands as a medium in the immediate face-to-face seeing that is the beatific vision. The "light of glory" conferred upon the finite intellect in order that it be able to see God is not such an intelligible species, but only places the creature in a state in which it can immediately see God. This state is only the immediate union of the finite intellect with God manifesting Himself as the supreme intelligible object (and Subjects). This union, again, had God alone as its unique transcendent cause; and the created term corresponding to the divine determination is the light of glory. Again, the union in the active sense is the divine decree itself, while the union in the passive sense is the light of glory. In virtue of this passive union the finite intellect is open to the immediate presence of God and to the radiance of His uncreated light, which is His very being. But there is no further active response on the part of the finite intellect appropriate to such a union, for this is union with the very infinite being of God Himself. There can only be adherence, a simple entranced gaze, and the profoundest joy of the intellect in this simple adherence and gaze. The only created response to the uncreated decree and union (in the active sense) is the created term corresponding to this decree; thus the created term, the light of glory, is both the condition under which the finite intellect can see God immediately and the appropriate created response to the divine determination of God to manifest Himself to the finite intellect. In this way, this created term is both the primary formal effect of the beatific vision in the finite intellect and the ultimate material disposition of this finite intellect for the beatific vision, which is only a new case of the scholastic principle that the act itself brings with itself the ultimate formal disposition for the act. Any further active response of the created person requires the mediation of infused knowledge in addition to the beatific vision, with the single exception of the act of charity in the will (a complacent love immediately specified by the beatific vision itself). Such infused knowledge and charity are genuine properties of the

beatific vision, since they are contained in the requirements of complete subjective beatitude of the finite person; but they are not essentially constitutive of this beatitude. This does not mean that charity is unnecessary to beatitude; it is at once the immediate material condition for the reception of the light of glory and a property, a formal effect, consequent upon the possession of the beatific vision. Nor does the fact that charity does not actually enter into the essential constitution of beatitude mean that there is a lesser degree of communion (lacking the affective component of our ordinary communion with being) with God, in virtue of the vision alone. For the supplement to merely cognitive communion that affective communion ordinarily brings is already present in the beatific vision, which is a presence of God not only as objectified but also in His very subjectivity in most intimate communion with the created spirit, and a presence which is not only seen but also tasted as fully gratifying the infinite desire of the intellect. A further act and joy of the will is actually found, but it is in the manner of a superabundance. If in our ordinary life it is otherwise, so that the will gives us a fuller entry into communion with being than does the intellect alone, this is because the intellect cannot in any other case enter into the fullness of presence either of self or of other that is given to it in the beatific vision.

But if the above remarks about the beatific vision be true, then this vision in itself is a principle of rest and not of activity in the finite person. Only when something of its content is mediated through lower, infused knowledge can the vision become a (remote) principle of activity. But then the presence of the beatific vision at the summit of Christ's spirit does not necessarily imply that any of his human acts on earth, or indeed in heaven either, are elicited in the immediate light of the vision, so as to destroy their human mode. When infused knowledge does in fact mediate the light of the beatific vision, so that Christ acts humanly according to a light that is far beyond the human, His acts indeed range far beyond those of ordinary men, but they still retain their human mode to some extent in that they are still finite acts at such and such a point of space and time. So it was that the historical acts of Christ's life all remain historical acts, despite their transcendent significance; and Christ's human being is a truly historical being. Moreover, mediation through infused knowledge of the content of the beatific vision in Christ during His actual life on earth might not have been the ordinary rule at all; this could have been the exceptional event, perhaps only at moments such as the baptism by John or during those

mysterious periods of prayer alone with the Father. In this light, one might entertain the idea of a gradual growth, at the lower, ordinary level of human consciousness below the beatific vision, of Christ's awareness of Himself as Messiah and of some of the details of His mission. To some this might seem to introduce a certain element of imperfection into Christ in His human being. But one may wonder whether the true manhood of Christ is not far better safeguarded and conceived so as to accord with the data of the Scriptural accounts of His life on earth when we admit such a level of ordinary human consciousness below the beatific vision and not utterly transfigured by this vision at every moment. To posit a non-mediated influence of the beatific vision on the human acts of Christ, or to posit a continual mediation through infused knowledge at every moment in every matter and detail of Christ's life both make it difficult to recognize Christ as truly one of us, like us in all things save sin, and to regard many of the events narrated by the Evangelists as anything but a kind of play-acting instead of the real drama of a flesh-and-blood human being.

In the light of the preceding remarks about the beatific vision in Christ, it is possible to make some suggestions concerning the relationship of this beatific vision to the created consciousness of Christ. This vision in Christ stands in a certain relative transcendence as compared with all lower knowledge in Christ, analogous to the absolute transcendence of the uncreated knowledge and consciousness of the Second Person of the Trinity even in relation to the human consciousness and beatific vision He has through the hypostatic union. And just as there is an ultimate unity of the consciousness of Christ in the uncreated self-consciousness of the Word, so also there is an ultimate (relatively ultimate) unity of the *human* consciousness of Christ in the beatific vision – in this vision Christ discovers His human being more fully and completely and adequately than He could through any lower level of His knowledge and consciousness, and He sees here not only His human being but also all the diverse levels of His human knowledge and consciousness all unified in this light, together with the very emanation from and union with the divine being of the Word.

But because of the transcendence of the beatific vision in relation to the lower levels of human knowing in Christ, this vision provides only an extrinsic unity of consciousness so far as the lower levels of the consciousness of Christ are concerned. The intrinsic unity of the human consciousness of Christ must be sought outside the beatific vision itself. And yet it cannot lack all reference to this beatific vision, since a true in-

trinsic unity of human consciousness must somehow embrace in itself a reference to all the diverse modes of human knowledge, at least in the sense that all these modes refer back to and evoke this unity. In Christ, then, this true unity must be found in the created self-consciousness of the human receptive subject outside the beatific vision but precisely as concomitant with the beatific vision. Even as Christ discovers Himself in His depths of human (purely receptive) subjectivity in the beatific vision (this is the medieval *cognitio matutina*), He simultaneously discovers Himself in this same human subjectivity in His being-consciousness outside the beatific vision (this is a form of *cognitio vespertina*). Despite the transcendence of the beatific vision, it remains present in the very same finite subject which has this being-consciousness; and the reflexivity and auto-transparency of spirit prevent the *cognitio vespertina* from being utterly unaffected in any manner by the *cognitio matutina*. The former, of course, cannot itself be transmuted into clear vision but it is obscurely illuminated by the latter in a warm and pleasant night; this warm and pleasant night is the only immediate "manifestation" of the presence of the beatific vision, to the lower levels of human consciousness. Now, this same "illuminated" *cognitio vespertina*, which is the being-consciousness of Christ as human and having the beatific vision, is at the same time the focal point of all other aspects of the human consciousness of Christ, the center and reference-point for all act-consciousness and really identical with all fundamental being-consciousness in Christ as man. Here then is the ultimate intrinsic ground and form of unity of the human consciousness of Christ. Let us also note that this analysis reveals, in the obscure illumination proceeding from the compresence of the beatific vision, a new dimension to the substantial mystical union of Christ's human nature to the Word; for it is this same radical being-consciousness, which is thus "illuminated," that is also the substantial mystical experience of the grace of hypostatic union to the Word.

Thus there is a real unity of human consciousness in Christ, dominated by the pure light of the beatific vision but intrinsically constituted in the darkness of the concomitant (and obscurely mediating) human being-consciousness. From the perspective of the lower modes of knowing and consciousness the beatific vision itself here is a warm, comforting, and consoling night, but without any determinate influence in the details of life, action, and lower knowledge apart from the mediation of infused knowledge. In this manner it is quite possible to hold the presence of the beatific vision even during His life on earth,

without any prejudice to His humanity and to the utterly human mode of His life and action. At certain moments and during certain periods, the light of the beatific vision might be mediated by infused knowledge with a radiance and a clarity that would utterly surpass the illuminations of the highest of merely human mystics; but at other times, this light could remain only at the summit of the human soul of Christ in the pure form of the vision itself, with only a memory of previous illuminations at the lower levels of human awareness. While always resting in the pure light of the Trinity at all times at the highest peak of His being, the human Christ might go about much of His human life in the dimmer light of acquired knowledge and recollections of previous illuminations and expectancy of new illuminations to come.