

Questions Concerning the Existences of Christ

MICHAEL GORMAN (The Catholic University of America)

Not for citation or quotation.
 Unofficial preprint version;
 real paper forthcoming in a festschrift for Stephen F. Brown,
 to be published by Brill.

Introduction

According to Christian doctrine as formulated by the Council of Chalcedon (451), Christ is one person (one supposit, one hypostasis) existing in two natures (two essences), human and divine. The human and divine natures are not merged into a third nature, nor are they separated from one another in such a way that the divine nature goes with one person, namely, the Word of God, and the human nature with another person, namely, Jesus of Nazareth. The two natures belong to just one person, and the one person has two distinct natures.

Chalcedon's justly-famous formula brought the debate into sharper focus and ruled out certain options, but of course it did not bring the arguments to a complete end. More councils, more debates, and more questions were to follow, although the range of disagreement tended to narrow. In the medieval Latin West, Peter Lombard († 1160) identified in book III of the *Sententiae* three "opinions" on the topic, but by the middle of the thirteenth century, it was widely agreed that only one of them was orthodox teaching¹.

This relative unity of thought provided the space within which more detailed issues could be debated, and one of the most interesting of these concerned existence (*esse*): how many existences are there in Christ? Since Christ is only one person, it might seem that he has only one existence. On the other hand, he has two natures, so perhaps instead he has more than one existence.

The question itself might seem straightforward enough, but as formulated it is ambiguous in a number of ways: there are several questions that can be explored under this heading, and not everyone who asks about the number of Christ's *esse* is asking about the same thing. We must be on the lookout, therefore, lest we take an author to be answering one question when in fact he is answering another. Likewise, we must be on the lookout for the possibility that an author is answering more than one question – perhaps even unwittingly.

¹ Cf. W. H. Principe, *William of Auxerre's Theology of the Hypostatic Union*, Toronto 1963, pp. 64-70.
 Michael Gorman – The Existences of Christ

It is not entirely original to note that there is more than one question about the existences of Christ, and yet the point has nowhere been examined systematically and in detail. Indeed, an entire monograph could be written studying what was said by the numerous authors who explored this territory. What questions were they asking? What answers did they give, and how did they support them? To what extent did they pose these questions, and answer them, in dialogue and conflict with other thinkers? And all of this would be complicated by the fact that the debates took place in a context of wider-ranging disagreements, e.g., over the very concepts of nature and person and existence, in such a way that it is not always easy to be sure where the real issues lie.

In this one paper, my goal is rather modest. I discuss only a few of the relevant authors, and I focus primarily on which questions they were asking. To be sure, it is not really possible to figure out which questions they were asking without paying at least some attention to what answers they gave to them, in large part because looking at their answers is often enough the only way to determine what their questions were. But my exploration of their answers will not go beyond what is needed to spell out their questions; still less will I discuss in any detail their arguments for their answers or how these questions and answers went to make up complicated debates. Perhaps what I say here will, however, help make it possible for such research to be carried out at a later time.

I proceed as follows. I first look at Thomas Aquinas, whose remarks on these topics had such a large influence on the debate later in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries². Crucial will be certain distinctions that Thomas makes, distinctions we can see as disambiguating the question we began with, namely, ‘How many existences are there in Christ?’. After that I will look at how one of those distinctions makes its appearance in the writings of two post-Thomistic authors, Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines.

Thomas and three distinctions concerning existence

Thomas’ main discussions of Christ’s existence are found in five different texts, and what he says has been widely discussed in the last six decades or so. That there has been so much debate is not surprising in view of an interesting interpretative puzzle: it at least appears that

² For an overview of the high-scholastic debate from precisely this perspective, cf. S. F. Brown, “Thomas Aquinas and His Contemporaries on the Unique Existence in Christ”, in: K. Emery, Jr. / J. Wawrykow (edd.), *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers*, Notre Dame 1998, pp. 220-237.
Michael Gorman – The Existences of Christ

Thomas offers two opposed views: that in four texts he says there is one *esse* in Christ³, whereas in another he says there is more than one⁴. But what is the question that these are supposed to be answers to?

In two of the texts – the text from *Scriptum super Sententiis* III and the text from *Quodlibet* IX – Thomas begins by distinguishing what we can call logical or conceptual existence from what we can call real existence. In the first sense, we can speak of the ‘existence’ of anything that can serve as the subject of an affirmative proposition. Since we can say that Socrates is wise and that Homer’s blindness is a burden, we can say that Socrates exists and that Homer’s blindness exists. But this sense of ‘existence’ is quite weak: basically anything that can be talked about can be said to exist in this sense. In the second sense, by contrast, existence belongs only to what is a real existent in one of the ten categories: Socrates, a substance, ‘exists’ in this sense, as does his whiteness (a quality). But Homer’s blindness does not – it is a privation, not a real entity (even an accidental one).

In neither the text from *Scriptum super Sententiis* III nor the text from *Quodlibet* IX does Thomas pursue the question of how many conceptual or logical essences there are in Christ. Perhaps this is because the question is really of no great interest: there are as many such existences in him as there are predicates that can be affirmed truly of him. These texts are the earliest ones we are concerned with, and in later discussions of Christ’s existence, Thomas does not even mention the distinction between logical and real existence, instead jumping directly to the task of distinguishing types of real existence. The distinction between logical and real existence will not be discussed further in this paper⁵.

The first distinction that is important for us is a division of real existence, and it comes up in four of Thomas’ discussions: in *Scriptum super Sententiis* III, *Quodlibet* IX, *De unione Verbi incarnati*, and *Summa theologiae* III⁶. In this last, for example, Thomas says this:

Existence pertains to hypostasis and to nature: to hypostasis as to that which has existence, and to nature as to that by which something has existence; for nature is signified in the mode of a form,

³ Cf. *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*, III, dist. 6, q. 2, art. 2 (ed. M. F. Moos), Paris 1933, pp. 237-240; *Quaestiones de quodlibet*, quodlibet IX, q. 2, art. 2 (ed. Leonina), vol. 25/1, pp. 93 sqq.; *Compendium theologiae*, I, c. 212 (ed. Leonina), vol. 42, pp. 165 sq.; *Summa theologiae*, III, q. 17, a. 2 (ed. Leonina), vol. 11, p. 222 sq.

⁴ Cf. *Quaestio disputata de unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4 (ed. M. Calcaterra / T. S. Centi), in: S. Thomae Aquinatis *Quaestiones disputatae*, Turin-Rome 1949, vol. 2, p. 432. There are a few brief remarks in *Summa contra gentiles*, IV, c. 49, but they will not be discussed in this paper.

⁵ Another issue that will not come into our discussion is Thomas’ mention, in the text from *Scriptum super Sententiis* III, of the use of the word *esse* that makes it a synonym for *essentia*.

⁶ The discussion in the *Comp. theol.* is quite brief and says nothing about this distinction one way or the other; on the other hand, that discussion does nothing to rule it out, and furthermore it makes the most sense if the distinction is presupposed.

which is called a being from the fact that by it, something is, as something is white by whiteness, and someone is human by humanity⁷.

We find here a distinction between (a) existence as belonging to a supposit and (b) existence as belonging to a nature or some other principle of a supposit, such as an accident (the way in which an accident is a principle of a substance is of course somewhat different from the way in which a substantial nature is a principle of a substance). When we are concerned with (a), we say that Socrates the man exists or that Rusty the cat exists; when we are concerned with (b), we say that Socrates' humanity exists or that Rusty's felinity exists, or again that Socrates' ability to speak Greek exists or that Rusty's agility exists.

A few points need to be made about this distinction. First, Thomas pretty clearly thinks that while both of these are legitimate ways of speaking, the more proper and fundamental sense of 'existence' is the one attributed to supposits, not the one attributed to natures or other principles of substances. He does not say so in the passage just quoted, but he does say so in *Scriptum super Sententiis* III, *Quodlibet* IX, and *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4. Given the importance of substance in Thomas' metaphysical thinking, this is not surprising.

Second, Thomas does not present this distinction in exactly the same way in each of the Christological texts where he discusses it explicitly. In *Quodlibet* IX, for instance, his examples of things that do not 'exist' in the proper sense are not accidents and natures, as in the text just quoted, but accidents, substantial forms and parts⁸. In *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, his examples are accidents and non-subsisting forms⁹. In *Scriptum super Sententiis* III, he mentions natures, forms, parts and accidents¹⁰. But these discrepancies do not matter for our purposes here: Thomas' point is simply to contrast supposits, on the one hand, with non-supposits in virtue of which supposits exist, on the other. Supposits exist, and since they exist

⁷ *S.th.*, III, q. 17, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 222: "Esse autem pertinet ad hypostasim et ad naturam: ad hypostasim quidem sicut ad id quod habet esse; ad naturam autem sicut ad id quo aliquid habet esse; natura enim significatur per modum formae, quae dicitur ens ex eo quod ea aliquid est, sicut albedine est aliquid album, et humanitate est aliquis homo". All translations in this paper are my own.

⁸ Cf. *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 94: "Set hoc esse attribuitur alicui rei dupliciter. Vno modo, sicut ei quod proprie et uere habet esse uel est; et sic attribuitur soli substantie per se subsistenti, unde *quod uere est* dicitur substantia in I Phisicorum. Omnibus uero que non per se subsistunt set in alio et cum alio, siue sint accidentia siue forme substantiales aut quelibet partes, non habent esse ita quod ipsa uere sint, set attribuitur eis esse alio modo, id est ut quo aliquid est, sicut albedo dicitur esse, non quia ipsa in esse subsistat, set quia ea aliquid habet esse album. Esse ergo proprie et uere non attribuitur nisi rei per se subsistenti".

⁹ Cf. *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, corp. (cf. n. 4), p. 432: "Esse enim proprie et uere dicitur de supposito subsistente. Accidentia enim et formae non subsistentes dicuntur esse, in quantum eis aliquid subsistit; sicut albedo dicitur ens, in quantum ea est aliquid album".

¹⁰ Cf. *In III Sent.*, dist. 6, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 238 sq: "Esse enim subsistens est quod habet esse tanquam ejus quod est, quamvis sit naturae vel formae quasi ejus quo est. Unde nec natura rei nec partes ejus dicuntur proprie esse, si esse praedicto modo accipiatur; similiter autem nec accidentia, sed suppositum completum est, quod est secundum omnia illa".

by accidents, by forms, and so on, then each of these latter can also be said to ‘exist’, albeit in a different sense.

Third, one might wonder if this is truly a division of real existence. Real beings always belong to some one of the ten categories, and the ten categories make room only for substances and accidents. But natures and substantial forms are neither substances nor accidents, so how can they have real existence? The answer, I think, would be that these belong to the category of substance, but that they do so ‘by reduction’, i.e., in virtue of being principles of substances¹¹.

Thomas, then, in the course of discussing the number of existences in Christ, makes a distinction between existence as it belongs to a supposit and existence as it belongs to a nature. At that point, one would expect him to make explicit use of this distinction. For example, he might propose that Christ, a supposit, exists in the first sense, and that each of his natures exists in the second sense. And then he might go on to make further refinements: by identifying the existence of the divine nature with Christ’s existence as a supposit, for example, in order to protect divine simplicity. But strangely, Thomas does not do anything like this, in any of the texts. He simply goes on to talk about existence(s) in Christ, leaving it to the reader to figure out whether he is talking about existence as attributable to supposits or existence as attributable to natures.

So which is it? The answer is that in all five of the main texts, Thomas is primarily interested in existence in the sense in which it can be attributed to a supposit, and not in the sense in which it can be attributed to a nature or any other principle of a supposit. The way to see this is just to look at how Thomas proceeds. Taking the texts in their most likely chronological order¹², let us begin with *Scriptum super Sententiis* III. After noting what advocates of the (erroneous) first and third opinions would hold, Thomas says the following:

For the second opinion, because it posits one subsisting thing and a humanity that comes non-accidentally to the divine person, it is necessary to posit one existence. For it is impossible that one thing should have two substantial existences, because ‘one’ is founded upon ‘being’, so that if there were more than one existence [*plura esse*] according to which something is called a being absolutely, it is impossible for it to be called one thing¹³.

¹¹ Cf., for example, *In Octos Libros Physicorum Aristotelis*, III, lect. 1, n. 7 (ed. Leonina), vol. 2, p. 103: “[...] omne autem quod est imperfectum, sub eodem genere cadit cum perfecto, non quidem sicut species, sed per reductionem (sicut materia prima est in genere substantiae)”.

¹² Cf. the catalogue established by G. Emery, in J.-P. Torrell, *Initiation à saint Thomas d’Aquin*, Fribourg 1993, pp. 483-525. Note, however, that the final two, *S.th.* III, q. 17 and *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, are “pratiquement contemporains” (p. 492).

¹³ *In III Sent.*, dist. 6, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 239: “Secunda vero opinio, quia ponit unum subsistens, et humanitatem non accidentaliter divinae personae advenire, oportet quod ponat unum esse. Impossibile est enim quod unum aliquid habeat duo esse substantialia; quia unum fundatur super ens. Unde si sint plura esse, secundum quae aliquid dicitur ens simpliciter, impossibile est quod dicatur unum”.

At this point all we need to notice is that Thomas is not talking about existence that might be had by Christ's divinity or humanity, but about existence that might be had by Christ himself, by Christ the supposit. The 'one thing' that can have only one 'substantial existence' is a supposit, 'one subsisting thing', i.e., Christ.

Now let us turn to *Quodlibet* IX. Thomas says:

It is necessary to say of substantial existence, which is properly attributed to a supposit, that in Christ there is only one [...]. It is necessary to say that in Christ there is one substantial existence – existence that is proper to a supposit – although there are multiple accidental existences¹⁴.

It seems clear that when he says these things, Thomas is speaking of the existence or existences that Christ has, not of the existence or existences Christ's natures have¹⁵.

Now let us look at *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4. As he reaches his conclusion, Thomas expresses things in a way that indicates strongly that he is interested in existence that belongs to a supposit: "There is another existence of this supposit, not insofar as it is eternal, but insofar as it was made a human being in time"¹⁶. Thomas goes on to say that this existence, "although it is not accidental (because 'human being' is not predicated accidentally of the Son of God, as shown above), is nonetheless not the principal existence of its supposit, but a secondary one"¹⁷. Here the existence under consideration is very clearly the sort of existence that supposits have.

Finally let us turn to *Summa theologiae* III. After distinguishing existence that belongs to a supposit from existence that belongs to a nature, Thomas says the following:

But it must be considered that if there is some form or nature that does not pertain to the personal existence of a subsisting hypostasis, that existence [sc. the existence had in virtue of that form or nature] will not be attributed to that person absolutely, but rather with qualification [...]. But it is impossible for there to be multiplied, in one hypostasis or person, the existence that pertains to a hypostasis or person according to itself, because it is impossible for one thing not to have one existence¹⁸.

¹⁴ *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 95: "[...] oportet dicere quod esse substancialie, quod proprie attribuitur supposito, in Christo est unum tantum [...] oportet dicere quod in Christo est unum esse substancialie, secundum quod esse proprie est suppositi, quamvis sit multiplex esse accidentale".

¹⁵ For remarks on what Thomas says in the passage elided in this quotation, cf. *infra*, n. 19.

¹⁶ *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, corp. (cf. n. 4), p. 432: "Est autem et aliud esse huius suppositi, non in quantum est aeternum, sed in quantum est temporaliter homo factum".

¹⁷ *Ibid.*: "Quod esse, etsi non sit esse accidentale – quia homo non praedicatur accidentaliter de Filio Dei, ut supra habitum est – non tamen est esse principale sui suppositi, sed secundarium".

¹⁸ *S.th.* III, q. 17, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 222: "Est autem considerandum quod, si aliqua forma vel natura est quae non pertineat ad esse personale hypostasis subsistentis, illud esse non dicitur esse illius personae simpliciter, sed secundum quid [...]. Sed illud esse quod pertinet ad ipsam hypostasim vel personam secundum se, impossibile est in una hypostasi vel persona multiplicari: quia impossibile est quod unius rei non sit unum esse".

Here Thomas is making a distinction between two types of existence. We will deal with this distinction below; for now what is important is simply that in either case, Thomas is talking about existence that is attributed to ‘that person’. In other words, he is focusing on existence that belongs to Christ, not existence that belongs to Christ’s natures.

It would be an exaggeration to say that Thomas has no interest at all in the question of the existence that belongs to Christ’s natures. An example can be found in the passage that was elided in the quotation from *Quodlibet IX* above (cf. n. 14). The full text, without elisions, reads as follows:

It is necessary to say of substantial existence, which is properly attributed to a supposit, that in Christ there is only one: he has unity from his very supposit, and not from his natures. If nevertheless his humanity were posited to be separated from his divinity, then the humanity will have its own existence, different from the divine existence. For it [sc. Christ’s humanity] was prevented from having its own proper existence only by the fact that it was not subsisting through itself; as, if an arch were a certain natural individual, then this whole would have only one existence, whereas any of its parts, separated from the arch, would have its own existence. And thus it is clear that according to the second opinion it is necessary to say that in Christ there is one substantial existence – existence that is proper to a supposit – although there are multiple accidental existences¹⁹.

Here Thomas engages in an odd thought-experiment: what would happen if Christ’s humanity were separated from his divinity²⁰? He says that Christ’s human nature would have its own existence in that case: what prevents it from having its own existence while joined to the supposit of Christ is that, as so joined, it does not subsist. But to talk like this is to talk about the existence of Christ’s humanity: apparently it has no existence of its own when it belongs to Christ, but if it were somehow to be separated from him, then it would have an existence of its own²¹.

¹⁹ *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 95: “[...] oportet dicere quod esse substancialie, quod proprie attribuitur supposito, in Christo est unum tantum, habet autem unitatem ex ipso supposito et non ex naturis. Si tamen ponatur humanitas a diuinitate separari, tunc humanitas suum esse habebit aliud ab esse divino: non enim impediēbat quin proprium esse haberet nisi hoc quod non erat per se subsistens; sicut si archa esset quoddam indiuiduum naturale, ipsa tota non habet nisi unum esse, quelibet tamen partium eius ab archa separata proprium esse habebit. Et sic patet quod, secundum opinionem secundam, oportet dicere quod in Christo est unum esse substancialie, secundum quod esse proprie est suppositi, quamuis sit multiplex esse accidentale”.

²⁰ Speaking as if Christ’s humanity could be separated is to talk about it in a way that is somewhat at odds with Thomas’ canonical way of talking about natures. For discussion of the two relevant senses, cf. M. Gorman, “Uses of the Person-Nature Distinction in Thomas’ Christology”, in: *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 67 (2000), pp. 58-79.

²¹ Another passage in which Thomas seems to be talking about the existence of Christ’s humanity is *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, ad 1; cf., for example, A. Hastings, “Christ’s Act of Existence”, in: *Downside Review* 73 (1955), pp. 139-159, esp. pp. 149 sq. Still another passage is pointed to by R. Cross, namely, *S.th.*, III, q. 2, art. 6, ad 2. There is no space to discuss Cross’ understanding of this text here; cf. his “Aquinas on Nature, Hypostasis, and the Metaphysics of the Incarnation”, in: *The Thomist* 60 (1996), pp. 171-202, esp. pp. 194-198, and also *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation*, Oxford 2002, p. 58 and p. 120.

So in the text from *Quodlibet* IX that we just saw, Thomas does indeed talk about the existence of one of Christ's natures, and he even switches without warning from talk about the existence of Christ, the supposit, to the existence of one of his natures, only to switch right back. But still I think it is correct to say that Thomas' primary concern, in all five of the main texts, is the existence of the supposit, and not the existence of the natures. He is asking, for instance, whether Christ has a divine existence and a human existence, and not, for instance, whether Christ's human nature has an existence distinct from that of the Word. His concern with the latter sort of question is marginal at best.

As already noted, Thomas' views on Christ and existence have received a lot of attention²². It appears, however, that much of it has been misguided. Many commentators have failed to see the difference between the two versions of the question or to grasp which version Thomas was more interested in. Often they have proceeded as if Thomas' interest was in the existence of natures²³. Another problematic interpretative move is thinking that the distinction is one of terminology only²⁴. Even once the distinction is seen, and seen to be more than terminological, there are questions about the right way of interpreting it²⁵. In my view, the topic has not yet received a fully satisfactory treatment.

Now I would like to move on to the second of the two important distinctions that Thomas makes. We have seen hints of it already, especially in the passage from *Summa theologiae* III,

²² For a chronicle, by now slightly dated, cf. J.-P. Torrell, "Le thomisme dans le débat christologique contemporain", in: S. Th. Bonino (ed.), *Saint Thomas au XXe siècle. Actes du Colloque du Centenaire de la « Revue thomiste »*, Paris 1994, pp. 379-393, esp. pp. 383-387.

²³ Cf. A. Patfoort, *L'unité d'être dans le Christ d'après S. Thomas*, Tournai 1964, p. 86, n. : "[...] il s'agit de savoir en vertu de quel esse 'formaliter' existe l'humanité du Christ"; cf. also, e.g., pp. 93, 188. Patfoort is not alone in focusing on the existence of a nature; cf. for examples, R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *De Christo salvatore*, Turin 1946, pp. 314-321 and id., "La possibilité de l'Incarnation sans aucune déviation panthéistique", in: *Angelicum* 30 (1953), pp. 337-346, esp. pp. 345 sq.; Ph. Kaiser, *Die gott-menschliche Einigung in Christus als Problem der spekulativen Theologie seit der Scholastik*, Munich 1968, pp. 51-53; M.-V. Leroy, "L'union selon l'hypostase d'après saint Thomas d'Aquin", in: *Revue Thomiste* 74 (1974), pp. 205-243, esp. pp. 234 sqq.; F. Pelster, "La *Quaestio disputata* de saint Thomas *De unione Verbi incarnati*", in: *Archives de philosophie* 3 (1925), pp. 198-245, esp. pp. 225-229; E. Schiltz, "Si Christus humanam naturam quam assumpsit deponeret", in: *Divus Thomas* 42 (1939), pp. 3-16, esp. pp. 11-14; J. L. A. West, "Aquinas on the Metaphysics of *Esse* in Christ", in: *The Thomist* 66 (2002), pp. 231-250.

²⁴ Cf., seemingly, P. Koster, "Die Menschennatur in Christus hat ihr eigenes Dasein?" in: J. Auer / H. Volk (edd.), *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Munich 1957, pp. 607-624, esp. p. 624.

²⁵ Hastings does not attempt to distinguish the questions in the way that I have been urging here, but his overall approach seems to me to embody the right idea: cf. A. Hastings, "Christ's Act of Existence" (cf. n. 21), esp. pp. 145 sq. R. Cross is certainly aware of the distinction between attributing existence to a supposit and attributing existence to a nature, although his understanding of it is rather complicated. In a way that is related to the two senses of "nature" discussed in my "Uses of the Person-Nature Distinction" (cf. n. 20), Cross appears to find in Aquinas' writings both a deflationary view of the existence of a nature, such that only supposit exist in any serious sense, and a view according to which individual natures certainly do exist, in the sense that they are (apart from the case of Christ) identical with existing individual supposit. Either way, the distinction between the existence of a nature and the existence of a supposit tends to break down. The issues, and Cross' discussion of them, are too complicated to be discussed further here. For Cross in his own words, cf. especially "Aquinas on Nature, Hypostasis, and the Metaphysics of the Incarnation" (cf. n. 21), pp 180 sq., and also *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (cf. n. 21), pp. 7 sq. and pp. 246-256.

q. 17, art. 2 most recently quoted above (cf. n. 18). This new distinction is a subdivision of existence as belonging to a supposit, i.e., it has to do with various kinds of existence of a supposit. It is found spelled out in three of the Christological passages we are concerned with: *Quodlibet IX, De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, and *Summa theologiae III*, q. 17, art. 2²⁶.

In *Quodlibet IX* we find:

Existence therefore is properly and truly attributed only to a thing that subsists per se. But existence is attributed to it in two ways. One existence results from those things from which its unity is made up, which is the proper substantial existence of the supposit. The other existence is attributed to the supposit beside those things that make it a whole; this existence is super-added, accidental, as ‘to be white’ is attributed to Socrates when we say said, ‘Socrates is white’²⁷.

In the first sense, we have the *esse* that the substance has in virtue of those principles that make up its basic unity, while in the second sense we have the *esse* that a substance has in virtue of super-added principles. In this text, it is important to note, Thomas seems to identify the second sort of existence with accidental existence, i.e., existence in virtue of an accidental form.

In *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, we find the following:

It must be considered that there are certain forms by which a being exists not absolutely, but rather with qualification – all accidental forms are like this. But there are other forms by which a subsisting thing has existence absolutely, because they constitute the substantial existence of the subsisting thing²⁸.

In this text Thomas says that there are forms in virtue of which a subsisting thing exists absolutely (*simpliciter*), and then again there are forms in virtue of which a subsisting thing exists with qualification (*secundum quid*). Note that he says that all accidental forms are of the second sort, but he seems to stop short of identifying the existence that a supposit has *secundum quid* with the existence it has by virtue of possessing accidental forms, as if to leave open the possibility that a supposit might have existence *secundum quid* in some other way. More will be said about this below.

²⁶ The texts from *Compendium theologiae* and *Scriptum super Sententiis* do not shed much light on the distinction; instead they presuppose it and focus on whether Christ has one or more than one of what I will be calling ‘substantial existence’.

²⁷ *Quodl. IX*, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), pp. 94 sq.: “Esse ergo proprie et uere non attribuitur nisi rei per se subsistenti. Huic autem attribuitur esse duplex. Vnum scilicet esse quod resultat ex hiis ex quibus eius unitas integratur, quod est proprium esse suppositi substanciale. Aliud esse est supposito attributum preter ea que integrant ipsum, quod est esse superadditum, scilicet accidentale, ut esse album attribuitur Sorti cum dicimus: Sortes est albus”.

²⁸ *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, corp. (cf. n. 4), p. 432: “Considerandum est autem, quod aliquae formae sunt quibus est aliquid ens non simpliciter, sed secundum quid; sicut sunt omnes formae accidentales. Aliquae autem formae sunt quibus res subsistens simpliciter habet esse; quia videlicet constituunt esse substantiale rei subsistentis”.

The next text, from *Summa theologiae* III, q. 17, art. 2, is one we have seen part of already:

But it must be considered that if there is some form or nature that does not pertain to the personal existence of a subsisting hypostasis, that existence [sc. the existence had in virtue of that form or nature] will not be attributed to that person absolutely, but rather with qualification, as “to be white” is an existence of Socrates not insofar as he is Socrates, but insofar as he is white. And nothing prohibits existence of this sort from being multiplied in one hypostasis or person, for the existence by which Socrates is white is different from that by which Socrates is musical. But it is impossible for there to be multiplied, in one hypostasis or person, the existence which pertains to a hypostasis or person according to itself, because it is impossible for one thing not to have one existence²⁹.

There is a difference between existence that belongs to a hypostasis absolutely and existence that belongs to it only with qualification. Here again we find accidental existence as an example of the latter, but the quoted passage is perhaps not clear on whether accidental existence is the only kind of existence that can be had *secundum quid*.

These passages are not exactly alike, but the similarities are striking. All three draw a distinction between two kinds of existence insofar as it belongs to a supposit. In all three, one term of the distinction is, or at least includes, accidental existence, while the other term seems, to a first approximation, to be the existence that is most fundamental to the supposit in question. The second and third texts speak of a contrast between the kind of existence that a substance possesses absolutely and the kind of existence that a substance possesses with qualification; the first text does not use this language, but it does contrast the existence that is proper (*proprium*) to its supposit with another kind of existence.

In my view, all three texts are attempting to spell out the same distinction, the distinction between what I will, for the sake of having consistent terminology, call the *substantial* existence of a supposit and the *non-substantial* existence of a supposit³⁰. Substantial existence is the most basic kind of existence that a substance has, the existence on the basis of which it exists as a substance and indeed on the basis of which it exists at all. For Socrates, the most basic form of existence is existence-as-human, while for Rusty the cat, the most basic form of existence is existence-as-feline. Non-substantial existence, by contrast, is a less fundamental

²⁹ *S.th.* III, q. 17, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 222: “Est autem considerandum quod, si aliqua forma vel natura est quae non pertineat ad esse personale hypostasis subsistentis, illud esse non dicitur esse illius personae simpliciter, sed secundum quid: sicut esse album est esse Socratis, non in quantum est Socrates, sed in quantum est albus. Et huiusmodi esse nihil prohibet multiplicari in una hypostasi vel persona: aliud enim est esse quo Socrates est albus, et quo Socrates est musicus. Sed illud esse quod pertinet ad ipsam hypostasim vel personam secundum se, impossibile est in una hypostasi vel persona multiplicari: quia impossibile est quod unius rei non sit unum esse”.

³⁰ The expression “substantial existence” is found in the passage from *De unione Verbi incarnati* and in the passage from *Quodlibet* IX. In the passage from the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas speaks of “personal existence”, but since for Thomas a person is a special sort of individual substance, viz., one with a rational nature, it seems right to say that in the contexts we are concerned with, ‘substantial existence’ and ‘personal existence’ come to the same thing.

form of existence, one upon which the substance's status as a substance, and the very fact that it exists at all, does not depend: Socrates exists as white and as Greek-speaking, but these are not fundamental to him, and likewise Rusty exists as black and as agile, but these are not fundamental to him. And as we have seen, while Thomas clearly thinks that accidental existence is a type of non-substantial existence, it is not entirely clear whether he thinks it the only type.

Much more can be said about this distinction, but this paper is not the place to do it³¹. What has been said is, I hope, sufficient to allow us to proceed with our task of determining which questions Thomas is addressing. We now have two new questions, questions that correspond to the sub-division of existence that belongs to a supposit. Instead of asking merely how many existences are had by Christ, the supposit, we can ask, first, how many substantial existences he has, and second, how many non-substantial existences he has.

Thomas is interested in both of these questions. Let us consider them in turn. In all five of the texts, it is clear that for Thomas, Christ has but one substantial existence.

[I]t is impossible that one thing should have two substantial existences, because 'one' is founded upon 'being', so that if there was more than one existence according to which something is called a being absolutely, it would be impossible for it to be called one thing³².

And thus it is clear that according to the second opinion it is necessary to say that in Christ there is one substantial existence – existence that is proper to a supposit [...]³³.

If existence is taken in such a way that there is one existence for one supposit, it seems it must be said that in Christ there is only one existence³⁴.

He [Christ] has one existence absolutely, on account of the one eternal existence of the eternal supposit³⁵.

But it is impossible for there to be multiplied, in one hypostasis or person, the existence which pertains to a hypostasis or person according to itself, because it is impossible for one thing not to have one existence³⁶.

³¹ Commentators who have taken Thomas to be interested in the existence of the natures have naturally not had much to say about this distinction. It is discussed by, for example, Hastings, "Christ's Act of Existence" (cf. n. 21), and P. Galtier, "L'union hypostatique et l'entre deux de Saint Thomas", in: *Ephemerides Theologicae Louvanienses* 7 (1930), pp. 425-470, esp. p. 467.

³² *In III Sent.*, dist. 6, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 239: "Impossibile est enim quod unum aliquid habeat duo esse substantialia; quia unum fundatur super ens. Unde si sint plura esse, secundum quae aliquid dicitur ens simpliciter, impossibile est quod dicatur unum".

³³ *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 95: "Et sic patet quod, secundum opinionem secundam, oportet dicere quod in Christo est unum esse substancialia, secundum quod esse proprie est suppositi [...]".

³⁴ *Comp. theol.* I, c. 212: "Unde si esse accipiatur secundum quod unum esse est unius suppositi, uidetur dicendum quod in Christo sit unum tantum esse".

³⁵ *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, corp. (cf. n. 4), p. 432: "[...] habet unum esse simpliciter propter unum esse aeternum aeterni suppositi".

It should be altogether unsurprising that this is Thomas' view. If Christ is a single supposit, then naturally he is going to have only one substantial existence, and naturally it is going to be the divine existence, for this is the one that is his most fundamentally. To attribute two substantial existences to him would be to make him a supposit twice over, which would be to fall into the Nestorian heresy according to which Christ is not one person but instead a team or partnership of two persons working closely together.

If Christ cannot have two substantial existences, and if the one that he does have is the one given by his divine nature, then he does not have one by his human nature. Whatever Christ's human nature does, it does not contribute substantial existence to Christ. It makes perfectly good sense for this to be Thomas' position, but then one is compelled to ask: if Christ's human nature does not contribute substantial existence, then what does it do? We will come back to this in a moment.

If Christ has only one substantial existence, then how many non-substantial existences does he have? Thomas is interested in this question as well. As we have seen, accidental existence is an excellent example of non-substantial existence. It would seem that Christ has plenty of these: he is tall perhaps, Aramaic-speaking, and so forth. Thomas explicitly affirms the reality and multiplicity of Christ's accidental existences in a passage from *Quodlibet* IX that we have seen before (cf. n. 14 and n. 19): "there are multiple accidental existences". He does not affirm this explicitly in any other passages that I know of, although he comes close in a text quoted above (cf. n. 29) from *Summa theologiae* III, q. 17, art. 2, when he says, speaking of non-substantial *esse* and using the example of accidental existence: "nothing prohibits existence of this sort from being multiplied in one hypostasis or person, for the existence by which Socrates is white is different from that by which Socrates is musical". If such can be multiplied in Socrates, it is difficult to see why they could not be multiplied in Christ as well. So I think it is safe to say that Thomas' view is that Christ has multiple non-substantial existences in virtue of multiple really distinct accidental forms: being tall, being Aramaic-speaking, and so on.

Now for Thomas it is important to emphasize that Christ's human nature is not an accidental form and that it does not contribute accidental existence to Christ³⁷. His whiteness,

³⁶ *S.th.* III, q. 17, art. 2, corp. (cf. n. 3), p. 222: "Sed illud esse quod pertinet ad ipsam hypostasim vel personam secundum se, impossibile est in una hypostasi vel persona multiplicari: quia impossibile est quod unius rei non sit unum esse".

³⁷ Cf. *Summa contra gentiles* IV, c. 41 (ed. Leonina), vol. 15, pp. 140-141: "Et quidem manifestum est quod non potest inesse Verbo ut accidens: tum quia Deus non est susceptivum accidentis, ut supra probatum est; tum quia humana natura, cum sit de genere substantiae, nullius accidentis esse potest". Cross thinks that Thomas ought not

Michael Gorman – The Existences of Christ

an accidental form, is a principle in virtue of which he has existence-as-white, a type of accidental existence, but his humanity, a substantial nature or essence, is not a principle in virtue of which he has accidental existence of any sort. But this raises then the same question that we saw before. Christ's human nature is not a principle in virtue of which he has substantial existence, and neither is it a principle in virtue of which he has accidental existence. Does Christ have *any* existence in virtue of his human nature?

As noted already, commentators have had to grapple with the fact that Thomas' views on the existences of Christ seem not to be the same in all his discussions. Using the typology of questions laid out in this paper, the issue can be framed in the following way. In all five discussions, Thomas affirms the unity of Christ's substantial existence. In some discussions, he seems to endorse a multiplicity of non-substantial *accidental* existences, and in no text does he deny this or say anything that undermines it. To this extent, we can say that Thomas' views are consistent: one substantial existence, and multiple accidental existences.

The inconsistency, or at least the appearance of inconsistency, is connected with the question raised above concerning whether Christ's humanity is in any way a principle of existence. Much of what Thomas says suggests a negative answer, but in *De unione Verbi incarnati* he avoids this conclusion by sub-dividing non-substantial existence into accidental existence and what he terms "secondary" existence:

He [Christ] has one existence absolutely, on account of the one eternal existence of the eternal supposit. But there is another existence of this supposit, not insofar as it is eternal, but insofar as it was made a human being in time – which existence, although it is not accidental (because 'human being' is not predicated accidentally of the Son of God, as shown above), is nonetheless not the principal existence of its supposit, but a secondary one³⁸.

Here Thomas seems to have found a way to distinguish his questions even further. Not only can he ask whether Christ has any accidental existences, he can also ask whether Christ has any non-accidental but still non-substantial existences. This new distinction is helpful in the following way. If substantial existence and accidental existence are the only two options – if, in other words, accidental existence is the only kind of non-substantial existence that there is –

to scruple at God's having accidents or at human nature's being an accident; cf. R. Cross, "Aquinas on Nature, Hypostasis, and the Metaphysics of the Incarnation" (cf. n. 21), pp. 176, 185 sq., 201 sq. and also *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (cf. n. 21), pp. 317 sq. For more sympathetic discussions of Thomas' views on the issue, cf. Leroy, "L'union selon l'hypostase" (cf. n. 23), pp. 218 sq., and B. Bro, "La notion métaphysique de tout et son application au problème théologique de l'union hypostatique", in: *Revue Thomiste* 68 (1968), pp. 181-97, 357-380, esp. p. 188.

³⁸ *De unione Verbi incarnati*, art. 4, corp. (cf. n. 4), p. 432: "[...] habet unum esse simpliciter propter unum esse aeternum aeterni suppositi. Est autem et aliud esse huius suppositi, non in quantum est aeternum, sed in quantum est temporaliter homo factum. Quod esse, etsi non sit esse accidentale – quia homo non praedicatur accidentaliter de Filio Dei, ut supra habitum est – non tamen est esse principale sui suppositi, sed secundarium".

then it will turn out that Christ's human nature does not contribute any existence to Christ. If, on the other hand, a still further division is introduced, one that sub-divides non-substantial existence into accidental existence and some other kind, then there might be a way to say that Christ's human nature contributes existence.

In this paper I am focusing on questions rather than on answers. For that reason, I will restrict myself to saying that I believe we could shed light on the tensions between the *De unione Verbi incarnati* text and the other texts by considering how they stand with regard to this division of non-substantial existence. Only the *De unione Verbi incarnati* makes such a division explicitly. If the other texts do not rule it out, then they can probably be reconciled with the *De unione Verbi incarnati*, but if they do rule it out, then it seems difficult to see how they could be reconciled with this text³⁹.

To conclude this section, let us note in summary that Thomas' writings on the existences of Christ allow us to distinguish the following questions:

- I. How many logical existences are there in Christ?
- II. How many real existences are there in Christ?
- II-A. How many existences are possessed by Christ's natures?
- II-B. How many existences are possessed by Christ, the supposit?
- II-B-i: How many substantial existences are possessed by Christ?
- II-B-ii: How many non-substantial existences are possessed by Christ?
- II-B-ii-a: How many accidental existences are possessed by Christ?
- II-B-ii-b: How many secondary existences are possessed by Christ?

As noted, the distinction between I and II is not very interesting. The distinction between II-A and II-B is interesting, but Thomas usually addresses himself only to the II-B side of it. The distinction between II-B-i and II-B-ii is interesting and very important for Thomas as he tries to find a way to secure the unity of Christ's person while granting that there is a difference between, say, Christ's being divine and his being an Aramaic-speaker. The difference, finally, between II-B-ii-a and II-B-ii-b also seems important, but Thomas makes it in only one text, the *De unione Verbi incarnati*.

In the rest of this paper, I look at two theologians who came after Thomas, Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines, and I focus on just one of the distinctions, namely, the distinction

³⁹ My approach is, in this regard, similar to Hastings', although I am not in full agreement with his interpretation. I discuss Thomas' answer(s) in some unpublished papers, and I hope to do so in even more detail in a book on Thomas' understanding of the incarnation, currently in preparation.
Michael Gorman – The Existences of Christ

between asking about the existence of a supposit and asking about the existence of a nature. But, of course, we cannot assume that if later authors make this same distinction, they are making it in Thomas' way.

Giles of Rome

Let us look at two discussions given by Giles of Rome, one of them from *Quodlibet* II and the other from *Quodlibet* V⁴⁰. In *Quodlibet* II, q. 2, Giles takes up the question whether Christ's humanity could exist on its own (*per se*) without the addition of some new existence. Here Giles is thinking of the thought-experiment that we already saw in Thomas, the one according to which Christ sets aside his human nature. Once set aside, the nature will certainly need some existence if it is not to pass away altogether. If it needs no new existence added to it, then it must have had one beforehand, while it still belonged to Christ, and indeed it must have had the sort of existence that was sufficient for allowing it to exist apart from Christ. If, on the other hand, the nature upon separation needs some new existence, then beforehand, while it still belonged to Christ, it did not have existence – or at any rate, it did not have the sort of existence it would need in order to exist on its own.

Giles' answer is that Christ's human nature could not exist on its own without some new existence coming to it. In accordance with his understanding of the real distinction between essence and existence, Giles holds that any essence or nature, apart from the divine, cannot exist except as actualized by an existence that is really distinct from it. A created nature exists only in a whole supposit and in virtue of the existence of that whole supposit. This applies to the case of Christ and his human nature, albeit in a way that is different from other humans:

In other human beings, the nature exists through a created existence, and for that reason, in other human beings the nature and the existence make a created supposit; but in Christ, the human nature exists through the uncreated existence, on account of which there is in Christ only the uncreated supposit⁴¹.

⁴⁰ There is a discussion in *Ordinatio* III, dist. 6, part 2, art. 2, but this work appears to be inauthentic; cf. C. Luna, "La 'Reportatio' della lettura di Egidio Romano sul libro III delle Sentenze (Cm. 8005) e il problema dell'autenticità dell' 'Ordinatio'", in: *Documenti e Studi sulla Tradizione filosofica medievale* 1 (1990), pp. 113-225, 2 (1991), pp. 75-146. The *Reportatio* appears to be authentic, but it says so little on our topic that I will not discuss it in this paper: cf. *Reportatio Lecturae Super Libros I-IV [Reportatio Monacensis]*, III, q. 16 (dist. 6) (ed. C. Luna), *Aegidii Romani Opera Omnia III* 2, Firenze 2003, p. 406.

⁴¹ *Quodlibeta*, quodlibet II, q. 2 (ed. P. D. De Coninck), Louvain 1646 [reprinted in Frankfurt a.M.: Minerva 1966], p. 51b: "In aliis quidem hominibus natura existit per esse creatum: ideoque in aliis hominibus natura et esse faciunt suppositum creatum: sed in Christo natura humana existit per esse increatum: propter quod in Christo non est nisi suppositum increatum".

The human nature is part of the whole supposit that Christ is, a supposit whose existence as a whole supposit is the uncreated existence of the Word. There is no created existence, in addition to the divine existence, which actualizes the human nature. Instead, the human nature is actualized by the divine existence.

If somehow it happened that this human nature were set aside by Christ, then a new created existence would have to enter the scene:

Therefore when it is asked whether, if the human nature were separated from the Word, some other existence would be communicated to it, it is clear what the response should be: since the human nature could not exist unless it were conjoined to some existence, and if it were separated from the Word, it would not exist through the Word's existence, nor would it be sustained in the supposit of the Word, it would be necessary for some other, created existence to be communicated to it; and on the assumption that this had happened, it would constitute some created supposit and be sustained in a created supposit⁴².

If set aside, the nature would no longer be part of Christ and hence would no longer be actualized by Christ's divine *esse*. On the assumption that this nature would continue to exist, therefore, we have to conclude that it would do so only by virtue of some new, created *esse* having been added to it so as to make it actual, and with which it would make up a created supposit.

To conclude this discussion of *Quodlibet* II, q. 2, it seems that Giles is here interested in the existence of a nature, and not the existence or existences of a supposit. To be sure, he does speak of the supposit as having a unique existence, but his point in so doing is to explain how the human nature can exist, insofar as the existence by which the nature exists is none other than that by which the supposit exists.

In *Quodlibet* V, q. 3, Giles is confronted with a different question, namely, whether there is more than one existence (*plura esse*) in Christ. He distinguishes four senses of this question, based on four senses of *esse*. In the first sense, the word *esse* just means the same as essence. The question this gives rise to is not very interesting, because it is just the question how many essences Christ has, a question whose answer is pre-given by the doctrinal formulations that make the debate possible in the first place: "if '*esse*' is taken for essence or nature, it is certain

⁴² *Quodl.* II, q. 2 (cf. n. 41), p. 52b: "Cum ergo quaeritur, Si natura humana separetur a Verbo, Utrum communicaretur ei aliquod aliud esse? patet quid respondendum sit; scilicet, cum natura humana non posset existere, nisi esset conjuncta alicui esse: et si separetur a Verbo, non existeret per esse Verbi, et non sustentaretur in supposito Verbi, quod oporteret communicari illi aliquod aliud esse creatum; quo casu posito, constitueret aliquod suppositum creatum, et sustentaretur in supposito creato".

that there will be more than one existence in him, because in him there is more than one essence”.⁴³

The second sense concerns the existence that one nature, such as matter, receives from another, such as form. Giles says that there are many such existences in Christ, because there are many such relations in Christ:

according to this way [of taking the word *esse*], there is more than one existence [*esse*] in Christ, because the nature of body in Christ receives from the nature of the soul that it should be alive [*esse vivum*], from quantity that it should be large [*esse magnum*], and so on with other perfections⁴⁴.

This sounds at first like existence as belonging to a nature, in much the same way that Giles had been discussing it in *Quodl.* II. On the other hand, matter and form are not complete natures in the way that humanity is, but rather only elements of a complete nature. The topic cannot be discussed further here⁴⁵.

The third sense of *esse* that Giles spells out is in some sense the existence that a supposit has in virtue of its forms, whether these be substantial natures or accidental forms. Again this gives us a multiplicity: “thus in the supposit of the Son of God there is more than one existence [*esse*], because it has from divinity the existence of God, and from humanity the existence of a human being”⁴⁶. It seems to be Christ, not his natures, who is here said to have two kinds of existence. But the fourth sense raises a complication.

The fourth sense of *esse* that Giles isolates is “existence itself”: “In the fourth way, *esse* can be taken for existence itself [*ipso existere*]”⁴⁷. *Existere* is what makes the difference between merely potential being and actual being. Furthermore, this sort of existence belongs *per se* to supposits; accidents are actual, instead of merely potential, only insofar as they exist in supposits. Of this sort of existence, Giles says there is only one in Christ:

But if *esse* is taken in the fourth way, for existence itself [*ipso existere*], which belongs to the supposit itself through itself, then there will be just one *esse* and one *existere* for one thing. For if Christ is not two but instead one, there will not be more than one such *esse* in him”.⁴⁸

⁴³ *Quodl.* V, q. 3 (cf. n. 41), p. 273a: “Si accipitur esse pro essentia vel natura, certum est, quod in ipso sint plura esse: quia sunt in eo plures essentiae”; the first sense itself is spelled out on p. 272b.

⁴⁴ *Quodl.* V, q. 3 (cf. n. 41), p. 273a: “[...] adhuc modo isto in Christo sunt plura esse; quia natura corporis Christi ex natura animae sortitur esse vivum, ex quantitate sortitur esse magnum, et sic de aliis perfectionibus”; the second sense itself is spelled out on p. 272b-273a.

⁴⁵ Thomas too touches on this sort of question; cf. *In III Sent.*, dist. 6, q. 2, art. 2, ad 1; *Quodl.* IX, q. 2, art. 2, arg. 1 and ad 1; *S.th.*, III, q. 17, art. 2, ad 4.

⁴⁶ *Quodl.* V, q. 3 (cf. n. 41), p. 273b: “[...] sic in supposito Filii Dei sunt multa esse, quia ex Deitate habet esse Dei, ex humanitate esse hominis”; the third sense itself is spelled out on p. 273a.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 273a: “[...] quarto modo potest accipi esse pro ipso existere”.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 273b: “Sed si accipiatur esse quarto modo, pro ipso existere, quod est per se ipsius suppositi, sic unius rei unicum est esse, et unicum existere. Si enim non duo sed unus est Christus; non sunt in eo plura talia esse”.

This is clearly on the topic of existence that belongs to supposit, not to natures.

The third and fourth senses both appear to concern existence as belonging to a supposit, but care must be exercised. On the basis of texts such as *Theoremata de Esse et Essentia* XII and XIII⁴⁹, where Giles discusses the relationship in creatures between essence and existence, it seems it might be more accurate to say that for Giles, existence in the fourth sense, *existere*, is the actuality of the supposit that Christ is, while existence in the third sense (*esse* but not *existere*) is a determination of Christ considered as a being-to-be-actualized. If that is so, then these are not both existences of Christ in just the same sense.

A pair of remarks will bring this discussion of Giles to a close. First, he gives a much more detailed discussion of something that Thomas looks at only in passing, i.e., the sense in which Christ's human nature has existence (or not) and therewith the question of whether that nature would need a new existence were it to be set aside. Second, while he clearly discusses the existence of a supposit as well, his approach to that topic seems somewhat different from anything we saw in Thomas, in a way that is tied up with the prior differences between their two metaphysical systems⁵⁰.

Godfrey of Fontaines

In the first question of Godfrey of Fontaines' eighth *Quodlibet*, we find a rather long and complicated discussion of whether Christ is one or more than one (*unum vel plura*). The three basic issues that Godfrey treats are, first, whether Christ is one supposit or more than one supposit; second, given that Christ is one supposit with many natures, whether we should say that he is "one thing" (*unum*) or instead "more than one thing" (*plura*); third, whether there is in Christ one or more than one existence.

The third of these issues is naturally of most interest here. Godfrey begins by discussing a view he formulates as follows:

⁴⁹ Giles of Rome, *Theoremata de Esse et Essentia* (ed. E. Hocedez), Louvain 1930 (Museum Lessianum. Section Philosophique 12), pp. 66-84.

⁵⁰ Not much has been written on Giles' Christology in general, or on his views on this topic in particular. José María Ozaeta summarizes much of the literature on Giles, and puts forth his own views, in "La cuestión de las existencias en Cristo según Egidio Romano", *Augustinianum* 2 (1962), pp. 73-87. Unfortunately, his paper presupposes the authenticity of the *Ordinatio*. For a detailed look at this topic in Giles' Christology, cf. R. Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (cf. n. 21), pp. 89-104, 119 sq., 263-269; on p. 103, Cross appears to be missing the significance of the difference between the third and fourth senses of *esse* as given in *Quodlibet* V, but what he says on p. 120 makes it clear enough that this is not the case.

The human nature in Christ, even though it is not an accident, has nonetheless the mode of an accident, because it is made substantial in the divine supposit (which is already constituted in existence), and thus it [the human nature] exists through its [the divine supposit's] existence. [...] Therefore, if it were separated from the Word [...] it would be necessary for some created existence to be communicated to it⁵¹.

This seems clearly to be a treatment of existence as had by a nature, not existence as had by a supposit. Christ's human nature does not have its own proper existence but instead exists through the divine existence of Christ.

Godfrey rejects this proposal. It does not make sense from his own perspective, because, according to him, natures and existences are not really distinct; the idea that there could be a human nature that lacked its own existence is a non-starter⁵². He also thinks the idea does not make a lot of sense even from the perspective of those who advocate it⁵³.

Coming to a presentation of his own position, Godfrey says something that is similar in content and phrasing to something we have already seen in Thomas: existence (*esse existentiae*) can be said of supposits, as what have existence, and of natures, as that by which supposits have existence⁵⁴. He then goes on to say the following:

Therefore because in Christ there is more than one nature, in him there is also more than one existence according to this plurality of natures – namely, divine and human⁵⁵.

But Godfrey does not make clear whether he means that Christ, the supposit, has two existences on account of his two natures or whether instead there are, in Christ, two existences belonging to natures, one that belongs to his divinity and one that belongs to his humanity. He has just indicated that one can speak of existence in either way, so the question seems still to be left open; however, given the nature of the position he discussed at the outset, it would seem that he might well be thinking of the existences of the natures.

⁵¹ *Quodlibeta*, quodlibet VIII, q. 1 (ed. J. Hoffmans), in: *Les Philosophes Belges*, t. 4: "Le huitième Quodlibet de Godefroid de Fontaines", Louvain 1924, p. 10: "[...] natura autem humana in Christo, etsi non sit accidens, habet tamen modum accidentis quia substantificatur in supposito divino iam constituo in esse et sic existit per esse illius [...] ideo si separetur a Verbo [...] oporteret sibi communicari aliquod esse creatum [...]"

⁵² Cf. *Quodl.*, VIII, q. 1 (cf. n. 51), p. 10. For a discussion of Godfrey's views on the *esse* of Christ that highlights this point, cf. J. F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Godfrey of Fontaines*, Washington, D.C. 1981, pp. 250-257.

⁵³ Cf. *Quodl.*, VIII, q. 1 (cf. n. 51), pp. 10 sq.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12: "Esse autem existentiae pertinet ad naturam et ad suppositum; ad suppositum sicut ad illud quod habet esse [...] ad naturam sicut quo aliquid habet esse [...]"

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*: "Quia ergo in Christo sunt plures naturae, in ipso etiam sunt plura esse secundum pluralitatem naturarum, scilicet divinae et humanae".

But just a little farther down, Godfrey addresses a different proposal, namely, that Christ the supposit does not have a new existence by his human nature, but instead there is just a new relation of the divine supposit to the human nature:

There does not come to him [sc. the Son of God], in accordance with the human nature, any new personal existence, but only a new relation of the pre-existing personal existence to the human nature, so that that person is now said to subsist not only according to the divine nature, but also according to the human⁵⁶.

This view, which Godfrey also wishes to oppose, is an opinion about the existence that Christ, the supposit, would have, not an opinion about the existence that Christ's natures would have. It is difficult to avoid feeling that Godfrey has switched to a different topic, even though he has not announced any such switch.

In responding to this proposal, Godfrey says the following:

Since, as was said, in the assumption of the human nature there comes to the divine supposit some thing, some substantial nature, to which a real and proper *esse existentiae* is not less but rather more fitting than to any accident, if it is conceded that the advening nature of an accident gives some *esse* (although an imperfect one because the nature is imperfect), how could it be said that the human nature in Christ does not have its own proper *esse*⁵⁷?

Such-and-such holds good of accidents; but if it holds good of accidents, surely it will hold all the more so of Christ's humanity; therefore, etc. That seems clear enough, but let us look at the argument more closely:

(Premise 1) Existence is more fitting for the human nature that comes to the divine supposit than for any accident.

(Premise 2) An accident gives existence (to a supposit).

Therefore,

(Conclusion) Christ's human nature possesses its own proper existence.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 13: "[...] secundum naturam humanam non adveniat sibi [sc. Filio Dei] novum esse personale, sed solum nova habitudo esse personalis praeexistentis ad naturam humanam, ut scilicet persona illa iam dicatur subsistere non solum secundum naturam divinam, sed etiam secundum humanam".

⁵⁷ *Quodl.*, VIII, q. 1 (cf. n. 51), p. 14: "Cum enim, ut dictum est, in assumptione naturae humanae advenit supposito divino aliqua res et natura substantialis cui non minus, immo magis convenit esse existentiae reale proprium quam cuicumque accidenti, si concedatur quod natura accidentis adveniens dat aliquod esse, licet imperfectum quia est natura imperfecta, quomodo dicetur quod natura humana in Christo nullum esse proprium haberet?"

The first premise is ambiguous: it could mean that it belongs more fittingly to Christ's human nature to be a principle by which a supposit has existence, or it could mean that it belongs more fittingly to it to have its own proper existence. The first interpretation concerns existence as belonging to a supposit, the second concerns existence as belonging to a principle of a supposit (an accident or a nature). The second premise is not ambiguous. According to it, supposits receive existence from their accidents, i.e., accidents give (accidental) existence to supposits. This is clearly existence that belongs to a supposit, and thus it suggests disambiguating the first premise in the direction of the first interpretation. But the conclusion concerns existence that belongs to a nature, which suggests disambiguating the first premise in the opposite direction! Given the way the conclusion is formulated, the second premise ought to be, 'It belongs to an accident to have existence'; given the way the second premise is formulated, the conclusion ought to be, 'Christ's human nature gives existence to the divine supposit'. In a word, the argument seems to be invalid.

Before concluding that Godfrey is confused, however, let us consider the following possibility. Earlier⁵⁸ we saw Godfrey say that existence belongs not only to supposits but also to natures, as principles by which supposits have existence. It seems reasonable to extend this to accidental natures as well; they too, in their own way, are principles by which supposits have existence. If that is correct, then it ought to be that if a given supposit has a certain kind of existence by virtue of having a certain nature or accident, then that nature or accident itself ought to have existence as well – admittedly in a different sense.

Richard Cross formulates the idea as follows: "If a form *F*-ness is that in virtue of which something is *F*, then *F*-ness must itself exist". He attributes it to Godfrey and even takes the text just examined to be a case of Godfrey's arguing for that principle⁵⁹. It seems to me that in the text in question, Godfrey does not argue for the principle at all – on the contrary, he takes it for granted. But this is, relatively speaking, a quibble. Cross seems right to attribute the principle to Godfrey as the best way of making sense of his remarks⁶⁰.

So Godfrey's argument, though confusingly expressed, is not confused. He means something like this: it would belong to a human nature, more than it would to an accident,

⁵⁸ Cf. *supra*, n. 54.

⁵⁹ Cf. R. Cross, *The Metaphysics of the Incarnation* (cf. n. 21), p. 118: "So Godfrey argues that a property's giving existence to its *suppositum* requires that the property itself exists"; for Cross' initial discussion of the principle, cf. p. 50.

⁶⁰ It is worth asking what to make of the converse principle: If some form *F*-ness exists, then it must be the case that *F*-ness is that in virtue of which something is *F*. Such a principle would need qualification to be acceptable to defenders of transubstantiation or the existence of a disembodied soul.

both to have and to give existence; but it does belong to an accident both to have and to give existence; therefore, etc. Thus understood, the argument is certainly valid. What's more, it shows that two topics that we previously distinguished – the existence of a nature and the existence of a supposit – are in fact closely related, more closely than we had suspected so far.

To summarize this all-too-brief discussion of Godfrey. He is interested both in the existence of a supposit and in the existence of a nature. Further, he appears to see them as being connected in an important way: the natures by which supposits have existence must have existence themselves. And once the point is put that way, then certain issues that are already important in Christology stand out even more sharply: for example, the more strongly we feel bound to attribute existence to Christ's humanity, the more strongly we will feel bound to explain how its existence is not the existence of a person⁶¹.

Conclusion

I have argued that certain distinctions that the Schoolmen made have not received enough attention, and I have tried to take a first step or two towards rectifying the situation. If I have made it possible for the topic to be addressed more adequately in the future, I will have achieved my goal⁶².

⁶¹ As noted above, Thomas himself states that existence is attributed both to supposits and to natures. The more seriously one takes this affirmation, the more one will have to say that even though (as argued earlier) Thomas is primarily concerned with the existence or existences that belong to a supposit, still he is committed to saying, in some sense or other, that the natures themselves exist. From this it follows that at least some commentators who have misunderstood Thomas' main concern might nonetheless be describing an authentically Thomistic position. More cannot be said about this here.

⁶² The seed of this study was a paper written for a graduate class taught by Stephen F. Brown. The seed grew during research stays at the University of Cologne's Thomas-Institut in 1996-97 and at the University of Bonn's Philosophisches Seminar B in 1997. An early version of the Thomas material appeared in an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Boston College, 1997). A version that also discussed Giles, Godfrey and Scotus was presented in a session sponsored by the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy in Kalamazoo, MI in 1999; after a long period of dormancy, the seed grew to its present (rather different) form during another research stay at the Thomas-Institut, this one in 2008. I would like to thank the following: the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung and Boston College's Institute for Medieval Philosophy and Theology, which funded the first research stay at the Thomas-Institut; the Heinrich-Hertz-Stiftung, which funded the research stay at the University of Bonn; the Fulbright Commission, which funded the second stay at the Thomas-Institut; and Silvia Donati, Gregory Doolan, Anne-Marie Gorman, and Timothy Noone, who commented on various aspects of the project; Michael O'Halloran for checking references. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank Steve Brown for sparking and supporting an interest in medieval Christology in general and in this topic in particular.
Michael Gorman – The Existences of Christ