

THE THEORY OF R. P. MAURICE DE LA TAILLE, S.J. ON THE HYPOSTATIC UNION

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Mysteries, of their very nature, are not penetrable to human reason. This does not mean, however, that the Catholic theologian may not, under the protective direction of the Church, reason philosophically upon the revealed mystery, with a view to bringing into sharper focus the grandeur—and to a limited degree—the reasonableness of the truth contained in the mystery. It is thus that Catholic theologians approach the mystery of the Hypostatic Union. The dogma must remain in its integrity: the Word of God exists according to two natures, the human and the divine. The mystery remains unsolved: God is Man, and Man is God; the Word is His Deity, but is not His humanity;¹ the theandric composite is perfect Man, but is not a human person. Provided these truths be safeguarded, the Church encourages theological and philosophical speculation concerning this august mystery of faith.

In this connection, most theologians begin with what they hold to be the formal constituent of person as based upon philosophical principles. Then, in treating the Hypostatic Union, they largely devote their time to showing how, according to their definition of the formal constituent of person, the human nature of Christ lacks human personality.

Père de la Taille does not approach the problem in this way. His attention is directed almost wholly to the Union *qua* union; to what a union really is; to what makes possible a union of the substantial order between the humanity and the Word; to what happens to the humanity in the union itself.

De la Taille builds his theory on the doctrine of act and potency. He does so because, in the Hypostatic Union, he can not but see "the possession of the Divinity by a creature."² And, for this possession, he sees the need of an antecedent potency and of an actuation of this potency—all this, that the possession may be real and that every trace of quasi-juxtaposition of the two natures be eliminated.

The article in the *Recherches* begins thus: "By the word actuation one does not necessarily mean information."³ This is certainly one of the most important ideas in the theory. "By act," says Père de la Taille, "we mean that which is in a being for the purpose of determining it to a certain essential perfection, or to the having of a perfection super-

¹St. Thomas, *Sum. Theol.*, III^a, q. 3, art. 7, ad 3^m.

²Maurice de la Taille, S.J., "Entretien Amical d'Eudoxe et de Palamède", *Revue Apologétique*, 48 (1929), p. 23. (Our translation throughout.)

³Maurice de la Taille, S.J., "Actuation Créée par Acte Incréé", *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, xviii (1929), p. 252. Quotations are taken from this article unless otherwise noted.

added to its essence." If we abstract from the subject which is its own perfection, i.e., God, then, in all other cases, "there is respective to the act a power of receiving by which the subject is in potency to the act." The potency will be either a part of the essence, the matter; or it will be the entire essence relative to the act of existence; or, finally, it will be the actually existing essence with regard to accidental acts or perfections, in reference to which it is in potency. "In this case"—when the subject is not its own perfection—, "the act is that which, *by communication of itself*, brings to the 'imperfect' the perfection of which the 'imperfect' is capable. That which receives a perfection is the subjective potency."

"This potency is actuated when there is a union between it and the act. The actuation is therefore the communication of the act to the potency, or correspondingly the reception of the act into the potency: it is the perfecting of the potency by the act: a perfecting, a changing, not of the act, but of the potency. Necessary as an efficient cause may be, nevertheless, it is not in the order of efficient causality that one must seek the relationship which the actuation places between the potency and the act. The relationship that the act, precisely as act, bears toward the potency has nothing to do with a generation or production: it is a union, a giving of itself."

And now we come to the heart of the theory—the difference between *information* and *pure actuation*. The actuation is called information, if the act depends in whatsoever way upon the potency. It may depend upon the potency in two ways: 1) for its very existence, 2) as upon a subject necessary for the completion of its fundamental powers (*ses énergies radicales*). An act depends upon a potency for its very existence whenever the act is not subsistent. Thus the "soul" of a dog depends upon the matter which it actuates, and that for its very existence, to such an extent that, once the canine "soul" ceases to actuate the matter, the "soul," or rather form, no longer exists. In the second place, the act may depend upon the matter which it actuates, not indeed for its existence, but in such wise that, only in the actuated matter, does the act find a subject in which it can fulfil its own radical energies. Thus, only in actuating the body, is the human soul able to exercise sensation and the accompanying physical emotions dependent thereon. Yet, the human soul, unlike the canine form, is not *absolutely* dependent upon the matter which it actuates.

In connection with the two kinds of act-dependency mentioned above, another distinction is called for. In certain types of actuation, the act and the actuation are *identical*, absolutely one indistinguishable entity. Again, the act and the actuation are, at times, really *distinct* one from another.

When is the act to be identified with the actuation by the act? This will be the case whenever the act in question is not a subsistent act, when

it cannot exist apart from the actuated potency. Thus, in the example of the dog, the act by which the matter is actuated to form a dog is identical with the actuation of the matter by this act. Here, by the actuation in question is meant that vital principle in the living composite, the dog, as distinguished from the lifeless matter which the dog becomes when the matter ceases to be actuated by the canine form, or act, and becomes a carcass. The act, the canine form, and the actuation by this act are identical; for, not only do they appear together, but they also lose existence together, disappear together; in such wise that, with the death of the dog, the act ceases to actuate and the matter ceases to be actuated. To repeat, with the cessation of the existence of the actuation, the act also loses existence; for they are one and the same reality. Were they not, it would be possible for the canine soul to exist after it ceased to actuate the matter. As a result, there would be no reason for denying its immortality, its spirituality.

Again, the act of existence by which the essence of an angel is actuated is identical with the actuation of the angelic essence by this act. The same holds true for the human act of existence. This act of existence is *actual* existence only in actuating the essence into which it is received as into a passive potency. Such is the doctrine of St. Thomas as followed by Père de la Taille.

Now, we may ask, when is the act really distinguished from the actuation by this act? Such is the case whenever the act itself is subsistent, i.e., when it does not depend for its existence upon the potency which it actuates. Thus, the human soul, as act, is really different from the actuation by which the body is actuated by the soul. In this case, "if the information of my body by my soul is ephemeral, if the animation of my physical organism is corruptible, if my bodily life is unstable, it is clear that my life is not the vital principle, which is immortal; nor is the animation of the body the soul, which is incorruptible; nor is the information the form, which is imperishable."⁴ The intrinsic *determination* of the body is corporeal; yet, "the formal *determinant* is not corporeal, but spiritual."⁵ From this de la Taille concludes that the act is not to be identified with the actuation by the act. He continually insists that the substantial participation of the body in the being of the soul, the communication of the soul-life, *precisely as received* by the body, is a reality and not a mere nothing. It is different from the soul, in that it is ephemeral, corruptible, fragile, and corporeal; while, contrariwise, the soul is immortal, incorruptible, imperishable, and spiritual. Hence, he concludes, by way of a general law, act and actuation are really distinct whenever a subsistent act, or form, communicates by actuation its being to the potency into which it is received.

⁴"Entretien, etc." *Revue Apol.* 48 (1929) 23.

⁵*Ibid.*

In all these examples, we note, there is dependence of the act upon the subjective potency. While it is true that the act is not perfected *qua* act, nevertheless, it is received into, and is dependent upon, the potency, either for its very existence (as the canine form), or as upon a subject for the fulfilment of its fundamental powers (as the human soul). Because of this reception into, and dependence of the act upon, the subjective potency, such actuation is called *information*, as opposed to *pure actuation*. In pure actuation, the act is not received into, nor is it dependent upon, the potency: it merely terminates the potency which it actuates. "In the natural order," de la Taille asserts by way of summation, "every actuation is information."

But is this true in every conceivable order? "It is clear," he says "that such is not the case, if somewhere the uncreated act of existence or of intelligibility, or of life, unites itself as such to created potency." Here there will be *actuation*, but not *information* as just explained. For it is impossible that the Uncreated Act depend in whatsoever way upon a creature. The Uncreated Act will give itself to the potency, yet, receive nothing; communicate its own perfection, but, in no wise share in a new perfection as found in the creature or derived therefrom. The potency will be perfected, changed, bettered. And this perfecting, this changing, this bettering of the potency is a reality, not a mere nothing.⁶ What is it? Certainly not the Uncreated Act which can suffer no change. It is not the potency which is its subject and existed before it received the new perfection, or, at least, could exist if the perfection were afterwards taken from it. "It is a created something in the potency: an infused adaptation of the potency to the act. But, *at the same time*, it is the actuation of the potency by the Act; consequently, it is created actuation by Uncreated Act." Now, we have a right to ask, does this ever take place; does the Uncreated Act ever actuate a created potency with a created actuation?

St. Paul tells us (1 Cor: 13, 4-13) and it is a defined dogma of Faith⁷ that the Blessed in heaven see God face to face as He is in Himself without any intermediary between them and Him. This is only possible if there be union between their intellect and God's essence *qua* intelligible; for no created species can represent God as He is in Himself. God, as the supreme Intelligible, will actuate our intellect in heaven, unite with it as Act with potency. Yet, He will not be received into, nor be dependent upon, our created intellect. Now, since God becomes the Act of a created potency, and since the actuation—precisely as received into the created potency—is finite, created, yet *a real* actuation, we have a case of created actuation by Uncreated Act. And that the finite potency bear

⁶"Cette mutation n'est pas rien, elle est quelque chose."

⁷Denziger-Bannwart, "Enchiridion Symbolorum", *Const. Benedict*, n. 530, *Conc. Florent.*, n. 693.

the necessary proportion to the Infinite Act—an absolute requisite for the union of potency with act—it is necessary that there be a created adaptation of the intellect to the Uncreated Act. This infused adaptation, mutation, disposition of the intellect, by which a proportion is established between the finite and created potency (the finite intellect) and the infinite and uncreated Act (the divine essence *qua* intelligible), is what St. Thomas calls *Lumen Gloriae*. As de la Taille points out, “it is a disposition immediately connected with the Act, and, as a consequence, not *antecedent* to, but introduced by the Act itself, of which, at the very most, it is but the communication to, or the reception of the Act into, the potency.”⁸

De la Taille deduces this from a passage of St. Thomas where we read:

Nihil est susceptivum formae sublimioris nisi per aliquam *dispositionem* ad illius capacitatem eleveetur; proprius enim actus in propria potentia fit. Essentia autem divina est forma altior omni intellectu creato. Ad hoc igitur quod essentia divina fiat intelligibilis species alicuius intellectus creati (quod requiritur ad hoc quod divina essentia videatur), necesse est quod intellectus creatus aliqua *dispositione* sublimiori ad hoc eleveetur.⁹

In brief, the created intellect must receive into it a created disposition, *in order that* (this does in no sense mean *before* the actuation by the act, but in the very actuation, or union, itself) it may have the required proportion to the divine essence which is its actuating principle.

St. Thomas continues with a further argument in the same place:

Amplius, si aliqua duo prius fuerint non unita et postmodum uniantur, oportet quod hoc fiat per *mutationem* utriusque vel alterius tantum. Si autem ponatur quod intellectus aliquis creatus de novo incipiat Dei substantiam videre, oportet, secundum praemissa (Supra, C.51), quod divina essentia copuletur ei de novo ut intelligibilis species. Impossibile est autem quod divina essentia moveatur, sicut supra ostensum est (L.I, C.13). Oportet igitur quod talis unio incipiat per *mutationem* intellectus creati; quae quidem *mutatio* aliter esse non potest nisi per hoc quod intellectus creatus *aliquam* dispositionem de novo acquirat. (Italics inserted)

In de la Taille's words, this disposition is here presented as the sole new reality which the actuation of the created potency by the Uncreated

⁸William R. O'Connor, of Dunwoodie, N. Y., writing in the *Eccl. Rev.*, 98 (1938), 401-13, misinterprets Père de la Taille. He speaks (pp. 404-405) as though he understands the infused adaptation, disposition, or mutation to *precede* the union between the created potency and the Uncreated Act. This, as is quite evident, would destroy all *immediacy* in the union. De la Taille insists times out of number that the mutation is *consequent* upon, or better *concomitant* with, the union; that it is the union itself; that, in no wise, is it an *antecedent* condition of the union between created potency and Uncreated Act.

⁹St. Thomas, *Contra Gentiles*, L. III, c. 53.

Act formally implies. "It constitutes the fact of the union in all its newness."¹⁰

According to de la Taille, the thought of St. Thomas is quite clear on this point and confirmatory of the general theory of created actuation by Uncreated Act as discussed above. The Light of Glory—so called because light is "that which perfects the mind in regard to the vision"—is this disposition, the infused adaptation, the mutation of the potency (not of degree, but of kind) to a level where it can be actuated by an altogether superior and transcendent form. It is the very *union* of the created intelligence with the Uncreated Act. It is created actuation by Uncreated Act. And, once again we are to bear in mind that this is pure *actuation*, and in no way *information*, by the Act. Apart from the impossibility of the Uncreated Act's being dependent upon a created potency, this is further brought out in that "the operation consequent upon this actuation is not the operation common to two conjoined principles, potency and Act, but only of the potency conjoined to the actuation." In short, the Beatific Vision is not an operation common to God (the Act) and the created intelligence (the potency), but an operation belonging only to the potency (the created intellect) conjoined to the actuation (the *Lumen Gloriar*e).

Created actuation, as had in the Beatific Vision, deals with the actuation of a *faculty*, the intellect. Another example is had in sanctifying grace. This takes place by created actuation in the *essence* of the soul by Uncreated Act, God, not as the supreme Intelligible, but as the Giver of supernatural life. In both these cases, the actuation is habitual: that is to say, at once accidental and permanent, and not transitory, nor much more is it substantial.

"But," asks de la Taille, "could there not be, over and above these habitual actuations, some substantial actuation by Uncreated Act?" Namely, could there not be an instance where the Uncreated Act would actuate a creature substantially; where there would be a changing of the created potency which would be both a disposition elevating the potency to a proportion with the Act and be also the union of the potency with the Act, the possession of the Act by the potency, the communication of the Act to the potency; where the potency would look to the Act, not as to a formal cause—properly so called in the sense of *informing* form—, but as to the *terminus* of the Union, as to the purely *actuating* form: and where all this would take place, not in the accidental, but in the *substantial* order? He replies in the affirmative; and, we may surmise, with some premonition of the torrent of criticism he was to meet, bravely applies his principles, as discussed earlier in this paper, to the Hypostatic Union.

¹⁰"Elle constitue le fait de l'union dans toute sa nouveauté."

In Jesus Christ, the Word Incarnate, there is duality and unity. "The unity is not had from the side of the natures according to which Christ has existence, but from the side of the Act by which he has existence." This is true, because in a composite it is necessarily the same act which renders account of the unity and of the existence—*ens et unum convertuntur*.¹¹ If, then, the Word forms with the humanity a substantial composite, it is due to the fact that the humanity has with the Word a community of substantial existence. The humanity will accordingly receive a communication of the Act of divine existence, in so far as it is personal to the Word by eternal generation from the Father. This will again be created actuation by Uncreated Act, not of the accidental, but of the substantial order. It will be a substantial adaptation and rendering of the human nature apt for the Word; *at the same time* it will be the Union with the Word, the created Grace of Union. It will be of the substantial order, yet not substance or part thereof; no more will it be such than is the existence of creatures, which existence, however, actuates the creature substantially.

Once more, with due emphasis, is it pointed out that this actuation is not information: the Word does not depend upon the humanity, He merely terminates the Union. Yet, the Word does *communicate* Himself to the human nature. But this *communication of Himself* is not, as such, in the genus of efficient causality alone, since this communication is peculiar to the Word, and since all efficient causality is common to the whole Trinity. Père de la Taille, to be sure, maintains that the entire Trinity effects the Union, but the Word alone terminates it; and, consequently, on the part of the Word as term of the Union, it is not only a causal activity (efficient causality) with which we deal; it is a function of an Act that perfects, without being, nevertheless, an Act that informs. Finally, it is absolutely essential that we continually bear in mind that this infused disposition, or adaptation, does *in no wise* precede the Union. It is the Union, viewed from the side of the humanity; for it is only from the part of the humanity that the new element, which is the Union, must be sought.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE HYPOSTATIC UNION. Because in his article in the *Recherches* he applied his theory of created actuation by Uncreated Act to the Hypostatic Union, Père de la Taille encountered much opposition. He was thought *cantare extra chorum* in introducing this *created* actuation into the Hypostatic Union. Had not the "School" before admitted only the created humanity, the relation, and the Word as

¹¹De la Taille offers here a compelling proof of the unity of substantial existence in the Incarnate Word. Cf. also, Maurice de la Taille, "The Schoolmen," *The Incarnation* (Camb. Sum. School of Cath. Studies, edit. by the Rev. C. Lattey, S.J., Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1926) p. 182 ff.

the elements in the Union. And here was a modern introduction of a fourth element, where only three could be allowed. It was for the purpose of answering these and many other objections that the article in the *Revue Apologétique* (R. A. cf. note 2) was written.

In the dialogue between Eudoxius and Palamedes,¹² de la Taille proposes the objection (evidently received in the many letters of protest against his article in the *Recherches*) that the introduction of the fourth element, his created actuation, into the Hypostatic Union would destroy it; for, by interposing between the Word and the humanity something other than the relation, i.e., a kind of created gift, one would end up by denying every immediate and substantial union. The humanity would then be united to the Word by the intermediary of a created grace, which could be but a variety of habitual grace. That would make the union both accidental as well as mediate.

The grace of union, he answers in the "Entretien Amical," is in no sense of the word an habitual grace. For habitual grace is an accident from every point of view; whereas the Grace of Union, like our own existence, is an accident only in the order of affirmation (the logical order), but is truly substantial in the order of reality (the metaphysical order).

One must consider carefully the saying of St. Thomas: *sed quod natura habeat esse in supposito suo non fit mediante aliquo habitu*. (*Sum. Th.* 3 q. 2. a. 10). "Now what St. Thomas precisely excludes," remarks de la Taille, "is a connecting link which the humanity touches on one side, and which the Person of the Word touches on the other side; a true medium, such as, for example, is the medium between the soul of the blessed and the divine intelligible in the form of the intellectual faculty: for, in reference to the *radical* principle of knowledge (the soul), the proximate subject of truth (the intellect) forms a kind of intermediary. On the contrary, the *Lumen Glorise* forms no medium of this kind between the intellect and the uncreated Object: for it is precisely the means by which the intelligence is conjoined *immediately* with the divine Object: or rather it (the *Lumen Glorise*) is itself this immediate conjunction, as St. Thomas teaches explicitly in the *Contra Gentiles*, III, 53. And that this is precisely what Saint Thomas meant, when in the quotation above he excluded that illusory medium between the two terms, follows very clearly from the precisions which he himself makes in commenting on the Lombard:

... in unione humane nature ad divinam nihil potest cadere medium formaliter unionem causans, cui per *prius humana natura conjungatur* quam divine persone: sicut enim inter materiam et formam nihil cadit medium in esse quod per prius sit in materia quam forma substantialis; alias esse accidentale esset prius substantiali, quod est im-

¹²R.A., p. 11.

possible; ita inter naturam et suppositum non potest aliquid dicto modo medium cadere, cum utraque conjunctio sit ad esse substantiale.¹³

The intermediary or mediation to be rejected, as Père de la Taille pointedly remarks, is that which places in the human nature a modification *antecedent* to the Union; not, indeed, that which is consequent upon, or better concomitant with, the assumption of the humanity by the Word and which, in reality, constitutes the Hypostatic Union taken *qua* union. This modification of the human nature, by which it is substantially elevated to the highest supernatural level and thereby made proportionate to the Act which is the Word Himself, is introduced into the human nature by the Word and constitutes the Union in its fulness. For this modification, as actuation, looks to, and is caused by, the Act; and, as such, it can in no sense be an *antecedent* modification by *means of which* the Word would unite the humanity to Himself.

To the objection that the relation alone constitutes the passive union, the reply comes that the relation must have a foundation. Furthermore, the relation can not be the *terminus* of the Divine Action. For, *ad relationem non datur generatio*. That is to say, a relation is never itself the direct object of a production: it comes into being with the production of the related terms; or, in the case of the relation between the creature and God, with the production of the created term. Hence, that which is responsible for the relation's existence must fall under the causal activity of the Trinity. This is the mutation in the human nature. Nor is it of any avail to claim that the privation of human personality would supply a foundation of the relation. For the mere privation would not thus found a relation to the Word, in preference to the other two Persons, or to any combination of two Persons, or to the entire Trinity taken together. Also, one must bear in mind that a privation is of its very necessity founded on a positive perfection and can not itself found a perfection. As St. Thomas has it, the truth of the negation, "the Ethiopian is not white," is founded on the truth of this affirmation: "the Ethiopian is black,"¹⁴ And the only reason why any entity does lack a quality, is that it has some other positive quality which by its presence excludes the absent quality which it lacks. St. Thomas puts it another way in his comment on Boethius: *Similiter etiam ab hoc ente non dividitur hoc ens, nisi per hoc quod in hoc ente includitur negatio illius entis*.¹⁵

Another difficulty occurs in the writings of St. Thomas. He says that the Union, in so far as it is a relation, is created.¹⁶ This would seem to contradict de la Taille's theory of a created union different from the relation which it founds. But, St. Thomas also says that the relation, in that

¹³St. Thomas, *Comment. in Sent. Petri Lombardi*, 3 d. 2, q. 2, sol. 1.

¹⁴*De Potentia*, 10, 5.

¹⁵*In Boethium de Trinitate*, q. 4, art. 1.

¹⁶*Sum. Theol.*, III^a, q. 2, art. 7.

it is real only on the side of the creature, derives from a mutation of the creature: *per cuius* (i.e. *creaturae*) *mutationem talis relatio oritur*. In the eighth article of the same question, St. Thomas brings out the accepted fact that every mutation consists of *actio* and *passio*. Since the *actio* comes from the Word who is unchangeable, the entire reality of the *mutatio* must consist in the *passio*. And this is wholly on the side of the humanity. The *mutatio*, then, is identified with the *passio*, and, as such, will be the foundation of the relation. And this *mutatio* will be of the substantial order. The human nature assumed by the Word is analogously like unto the garment worn by a man. The garment is changed, conformed to the figure of the man, without, nevertheless, the man's undergoing any change. So, too, the human nature is changed, conformed *substantially* (not accidentally, as in the case of the garment) to the Being of the Word. And this *mutatio*, this *passio*, and, as St. Thomas adds, this *tractio* of the human nature to the divine Person, is something real in the human nature. It is created actuation by Uncreated Act as explained above in this paper.

It is something intrinsic to the human nature, for the existence which is communicated to the human nature is of its very nature an *intrinsic* quality. Hence, if the humanity has its existence from the Word, this existence must be intrinsic. For, if the Word actuates the humanity in the order of existence merely extrinsically, He does not actuate it at all. For to communicate only extrinsically an essentially intrinsic quality is not to communicate it at all.¹⁷

This created actuation, this *passive* actuation, the *actuari*, that in the humanity corresponds to the eternal *actuare* of the Word, is, then, the true foundation of the relation between the humanity and the Word. By this communication of the *Esse* of the Eternal Word, the humanity, in de la Taille's words (which are those of Cajetan¹⁸) finds itself actuated, not

¹⁷The argumentation is based on John of St. Thomas' commentary in *Sum. Theol.* 3, disp. 18, n. 20.

¹⁸De la Taille quotes from Cajetan in his first article in the *Recherches*: "Haec intellige, loquendo de actuare et actuari per modum inhaesionis. Nam si de actuare et actuari infra totam latitudinem modorum suorum sermo sit, non est remotum a philosophia divina *Deum posse actuare rem creatam*. In cuius signum divinam essentiam esse actum cuiusque intellectus videtis ipsam, et theologi et philosophi fatentur. Cum ergo naturam humanam in Christo . . . ex esse divino *perfecti* fateamur, non est absolum fateri etiam quod *actuatur* aliquo modo (i.e., non inhaesivo aut informativo) *per . . . esse divinum*. Quocirca cum additur (ab Aureolo); 'Aut est actuata proprio esse, aut perseverat potentialis ad proprium esse', dicitur quod, proprie loquendo, utraque pars disjunctive est falsa; quoniam ex assumptione ad divinum esse perfecta est potentialitas ad existentiam longe excellentius quam fuisset perfecta per propriam existentiam. . . . Et quia potentiae perfectio *actuatio* vocatur, ideo dicere potes quod potentia ad propriam existentiam est *actuata* non per proprium, sed per divinum esse, *longe excellentius et perfectius* quam fuisset actuata per proprium esse. Et ideo non remanet humanitas Christi potentialis, hoc est in statu potenciali ad propriam existentiam; ad quem statum rediret, si dimitteretur a Verbo, *cessante tam eccellente actione* prohibente naturam ab imperfectioribus sibi propriis et connaturalibus, personalitate scilicet et existentia propria." (Cajetan, in *Sum. Theol.*, III^{am}, q. 17, art. 2.)

by its own proper existence but by the divine existence, and that in a much more excellent and perfect manner than it would have been actuated by its own proper existence. Were the humanity to be separated from the Word (a possibility in the *absolute* order), and were the humanity to be preserved in existence by the conserving action of God, it would then exist under its own proper act of existence. It would be changed in no way regarding its essence, but only with respect to its *manner* of existence.

The basic reason for de la Taille's insisting on this theory of created actuation by Uncreated Act, is that in the Hypostatic Union we have a completely new type of relationship between act and potency hitherto unknown to the philosophers. This is brought to light again in the difference between pure actuation and actuation that is information. At the risk of causing tedium to the reader, we stress this once more; for it is essential to an understanding of the de la Taille theory. Pure actuation derives from an Act that cannot be limited or be dependent upon the matter actuated. Again, the act is not the actuation whenever the act is subsistent, transcendent in regard to the potency. The converse is pointed out with great acumen: "Whenever the act is the actuation, the existence of the subject is at one and the same time both the *act* of existence by which the subject is actuated and is also the *actuation* of the subject by this existence." Thus, the existence of the human soul and the angelic form is at one and the same time the act of existence by which the human soul and angelic form are actuated and also the actuation of the soul and form by this act of existence. The act is the actuation, because the act (existence) is not subsistent, i.e., cannot have *actuality* apart from the actuation of the potency (the human soul and the angelic form). In like manner, the canine form does not exist other than in the actuation of the matter, from which springs the dog. Act and actuation are identical, both appear and disappear together whenever the act is non-subsistent.

As mentioned above, in the actuation of the body by the soul, the act by which the body is actuated and the actuation of the body by this act are not identical. Both appear together, but the actuation ceases, while the act remains forever; for it is the immortal soul. We have here a case of actuation that is not *pure* information.

As we ascend the scale of being, we find that, in the case of the Uncreated Act's actuating a created potency, there will not only be a real difference between the Act and the *passive actuation* by this Act, but there will also be no trace of *information*. Pure actuation is the result. There is, again we quote de la Taille, no contradiction in this; "for *in se* to actuate is to give oneself and not to receive; and consequently, in proportion as the act is more purely act, in like proportion will it actuate more purely—and, as a consequence, it will give without receiving, will give of itself without gaining or losing thereby. In such sort, that, far from being excluded, the reality and the verity of the proper rôle of the act in reference

to the potency will be brought to its maximum purity, to its sovereign degree of perfection."¹⁹

THE SUPERNATURALITY OF THE HYPOSTATIC UNION. Perè de la Taille was a firm believer in the absolute transcendence of the supernatural order. That this transcendence be maintained, he places the essence of the supernatural in the presence of God by communication. While it is true, he allows, every created gift is an effect of God—as true of the Hypostatic Union as of the Light of Glory, or of sanctifying grace—yet, that which endows the gift with its supernatural qualities is not, in the last analysis, the causal relationship. Rather is it, in a manner that is either immediate or remote, a relation of union between created passive potency—nature or faculty—and the Uncreated Act.

This passive potency will not be connatural to the creature, but strictly obediential. That the necessary proportion be attained (not *before*, but *in* the union) between the potency and the Act, an adaptation must be divinely infused. It will be accidental and habitual in the Beatific Vision and in sanctifying grace; in the Hypostatic Union it will be substantial. Since this adaptation, or disposition, or mutation, comes immediately from the Act, and is indissolubly dependent upon the Act, the supernaturality of the disposition is evident. For the Act is supernatural relative to the potency which it actuates. And since the disposition divinely infused is the very Union itself, the Union is seen to be supernatural in the highest degree.

The theological reasoning back of de la Taille's thesis on the supernatural seems to be the following. If we hold that the supernatural is absolutely transcendent over created nature—whether human or angelic—then, a presence of God by quasi-formal causality, or a presence by union between Himself as Uncreated Act and the created nature as potency, will alone fulfil the definition of the supernatural. For God to be present by operation, or by efficient causality alone, would mean that He is present in created nature in so far as He operates, or produces an effect therein.²⁰ Now, if the formal *ratio* of the supernatural were to consist in this mere effect—merely and precisely as an effect of an efficient cause, and not also as a means by which the subject in which the effect is produced is united to God who produces the effect—then, the supernatural would consist in an entity which would not of itself tend to effect a new relation between the intellectual creature and God, a relation that would exceed the relationship of effect to cause, of simple creature to Creator. Of course, the presence of God by operation is necessary that the presence of God by com-

¹⁹"Entretien amical", R.A., p. 140.

²⁰*Sum. Theol.*, 1, q. 8, art. 1. I am indebted for this idea of the supernatural to a former professor, Rev. Père Paulin Bleau, S.J., professor of dogmatic theology and special metaphysics at L'Immaculée-Conception, Montréal. As a former student under Père de la Taille at the Gregorian University in Rome, he absorbed much of his professor's penetration into the supernatural order.

munication may be had. But efficient causality does not adequately explain the supernatural order.

Hence, in the Hypostatic Union we may say that God's presence by operation precedes, according to a priority of reason, His presence by communication. His presence by operation is common to the whole Trinity, His presence by substantial communication of His Being is proper to the Word alone. Through God's presence by operation the human nature is elevated by the infused disposition to a level where it bears the necessary proportion of potency to the Uncreated Act which substantially actuates it. By God's presence by communication the potency is united with the Act as the terminus of the Hypostatic Union. Consequently, the humanity has two relations towards God: one, that of an effect to its cause, of a creature to its creator; the other, that of a potency to its Act, of one member of a substantial Union to the Other Member in virtue of which the humanity is made capable of substantial union, and actually substantially united with the Word. This is the supernatural at its peak.

THE PROBLEM OF THE TWO EXISTENCES IN CHRIST. This question hinges around two statements of St. Thomas. In the one,²¹ he admits only one existence in Christ, while in the other,²² he seemingly admits of two. In the much discussed article in the *Recherches*, de la Taille says flatly that there is no contradiction in the two statements of St. Thomas, but full agreement. For two existences in that which is substantially One, can only be conceived by means of the unity of the Act of existence; and the community of the Act of existence between the different components implies necessarily in one of the two an actuation which is quite different from that which is found in the other as Act. There is one *Act* of existence, that of the Word; and this act of existence is identified with the Word. But the human nature also exists and its existence is not that of the Word; but it is a *sharing* of the Existence of the Word, a created *communication* of the one existential Act to the humanity which it substantially actuates. De la Taille thus puts the matter in another of his writings:

Actuatio enim naturae humanae per *Esse* divinum, neque est *Esse* divinum quo est humana natura; siquidem tale *Esse* est aeternum, incepit autem in tempore actuatio illa; neque est ipsa natura secundum se spectata, siquidem posset esse eadem natura sine tali actuazione. Actuatio igitur illa est, praeter et supra talem naturam, aliquid creatum et supernaturale: communicatio scilicet divini *Esse* ad naturam humanam, vel vicissim unio naturae humanae ad *Esse* Verbi.²³

Father Boyer, professor at the Gregorian University, in answering the contention that the statement of St. Thomas on the two existences in Christ

²¹*Sum. Theol.*, III^a, q. 17, art. 2.

²²*Quaestio Disputata de Unione Verbi Incarnati*, art. 4, corp.

²³Maurice de la Taille, S.J., *Mysterium Fidei* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1921), p. 514.

is an argument against the real distinction between essence and existence in creatures, says:

Rather, indeed, it (the doctrine of the two-fold *esse* in Christ) testifies in favor of this distinction; for, if St. Thomas had not admitted it, it would have been simpler for him, instead of subtle considerations in which he busies himself, to declare simply: since there are in Christ two natures, and since nature and existence are a single reality, there are evidently in Him two existences. But, let us go on to the thesis according to which the human nature in Christ exists by the existence of the Word. Ought not this thesis, if one understand it correctly, speak of an existence of the human nature in Christ, which would be distinct from the existence of the divine nature? If the *Esse* of the Word is communicated to the human nature, the human nature, in virtue of this communication, exists truly by an existence which is intrinsic to it. This existence has begun in time, while the Word is from all eternity. The existence of the human nature, being a temporal and created communication of the existence of the Word, is, then, something distinct from the eternal existence of the Word. The human nature cannot exist by the existence of the Word, without possessing in itself an actuation in existence which is not the act itself of the existence of the Word. One can, one should even, say *secundum quid* that Christ has two *esse*, if by *esse* one understand not the act by which a nature exists, but the actuation given by this act; but one could not speak thus absolutely because the existence of the human nature is not an absolute, but the existence of the Word *qua* received, by a real actuation in the human nature.²⁴

The testimony of Fr. Boyer is quite the same as that of de la Taille.

When the objection is raised that, by his theory of a created actuation by Uncreated Act, he would go counter to the entire Thomistic school under the leadership of Cajetan, de la Taille solves the objection perfectly. The duality of existences, he remarks, that the school of St. Thomas has always strenuously combated "is that which attributes to the Word His own proper existence and to the humanity also its proper existence: in such wise, that neither the existence of the humanity borrows from that of the Word, nor that of the Word gives aught to the humanity. Each of these two existences is an act. Neither of the two is a pure actuation by the other. They are both, consequently, independent of one another, to such a degree that, in the separation of the Word and the humanity (were it to take place), the two existences would each follow its proper subject, without finding itself in the slightest degree affected."²⁵

²⁴C. Boyer, S.J., "Conspectus Bibliographici," *Gregorianum*, 7 (1926), p. 276. Cf. also, *The Incarnation*, loc. cit.

²⁵"Entretien amical," R.A., loc. cit.

But the duality of existence that de la Taille allows is quite different. There is but one *act* of existence; it is uncreated; it is the *same* for the Word and the humanity, with the exception that it is identified with the Word and is only communicated to the humanity. This communication is a reality, "without thereby being the unchangeable, eternal, and necessary Divinity; for the Divinity could not begin, be produced, cease to be, or in any way be contingent. Hence, this communication is not identified with the Word; nor is it identified with the humanity, for which it is an absolutely supernatural grace, something which could disappear, without the humanity's undergoing any substantial change in regard to *what* it is, but only in regard to its *way* of existing." And just as, in the words of John of St. Thomas, one may call that sanctity, which is communicated to the humanity of Christ by the Uncreated Sanctity of the Word, a created, substantial sanctity, so, too, may we call that existence, which is communicated to the humanity by the Uncreated Act of existence of the Word, a truly created substantial existence.

THE PLACE OF HABITUAL GRACE IN THE HYPOSTATIC UNION. In the problem of the two existences in the Incarnate Word, we have seen that the One is the divine *Esse* of the Word, the one existential Act by which He actuates the humanity. The other is the created communication of the *Esse* of the Word, the passive actuation of the humanity by the divine Act of existence personal to the Word by eternal generation from the Father. In the Word this Act is that by which He exists, it is the Word Himself; in the humanity it is the actuation by this Act. In the Word it is strictly connatural; in the humanity, it is purely a grace.

But, if the Hypostatic Union be itself a grace, indeed, the acme of all graces, what room is there for habitual, or sanctifying grace, to be super-added to the humanity? In solving this objection, de la Taille quotes from the book of a "modern." Briefly, his teaching is the following. Every created substance, or nature, has two different potencies: 1) the nature is a certain passive potency for existence; 2) once existent, it is a radical active potency in regard to its operations. Now the grace of union actuates the human soul in relation to its existence, but in its formality places nothing in the soul other than a belonging to the Word, an association to the personal Being of the Word, by which it finds itself actuated for substantial existence. This actuation, though according to efficient causality deriving from the entire Trinity, nevertheless, from the point of view of quasi-formal causality, unites the humanity to the Word alone.²⁶

Sanctifying grace, as the supernatural perfection of the soul as a radical active potency in reference to the operations of the soul, has, as such, not only the entire Trinity as its efficient cause, but also ordains the soul towards

²⁶*Mysterium Fidei*, p. 516.

the entire Trinity as to an object of knowledge and enjoyment. Hence, the soul of Christ must be actuated by another grace than the grace of union, viz. by an habitual, not substantial grace. This grace has not as its end, as do the virtues, a proximate power, but a radical power. And since this radical power pre-supposes the existence of the soul in act, seeing that the soul is the *root* of the faculties or principle from which they emanate only consequent upon its substantial existence without which it is not in a state of giving birth to anything whatsoever, it follows that the actuation of this radical power, even though it is a manner of being pertaining to the essence of the soul, is, nevertheless, only an habitual and not substantial way of existence.

The grace of union, then, gives the soul supernatural existence, consequently substantial sanctity by its relationship of Union to the Word; only a relationship of causality is had to the entire Trinity. Habitual Grace actuates the soul *already* existing in virtue of the Grace of Union, gives it a relationship, not only of efficient causality to the Trinity, but *formally* and *in se* a relation of *union* to the Three Persons of the Trinity.

DE LA TAILLE, BILLOT, CAJETAN. Since these three men hold the unicity of the existential Act of existence in Christ, it may be helpful to compare their respective views of the Hypostatic Union.

For the late Cardinal Billot, the formal constituent of person consists in the proper, substantial, cut-to-measure, perfectly commensurate act of existence that is received into an individual, singular, intellectual nature.

Cajetan places the formal constituent of person in a mode in the line of essence, a mode really distinct from existence, essence, and the individuating principles of the essence. This mode prepares the essence for the reception of its proper act of existence and is by nature prior to this reception. It is contended²⁷ that, since essence and existence are in two entirely different orders, the essence must first be prepared, be brought into proportion with the act of existence, before it can receive this act. This is the function of the Cajetan mode.

De la Taille and Billot are in full accord in regard to the formal constituent of person and the union of essence and existence in the purely *natural* order.²⁸ But, not so in the *supernatural* order, in the explanation of the Hypostatic Union. Here they agree in that the divine *Esse* of the Word performs the function which would be proper to the human *esse* in the natural order, but in a more eminent way.²⁹ Billot even admits that "*gratia unionis formaliter considerata non est haec relatio, sed fundamentum eius.*" Yet, he leaves this statement undeveloped. One wonders did he realize that therein is contained *in ovo* the entire de la Taille theory. Consequently, in

²⁷J. Maritain, "La Subsistence," *Les Degrés du Savoir* (Paris: Desclée, 1932).

²⁸For the general outline of this comparison, I am indebted to R. P. Paulin Bleau, S.J.

²⁹L. Card. Billot, S.J., *De Verbo Incarnato* (ed. sept., Romae, 1927), p. 123 sqq.

his next thesis, he treats of the relation taken formally, not fundamentally, despite the fact that he has just admitted that the grace of union, the Hypostatic Union, consists in the relation considered fundamentally, not formally. For, as he himself says in the same passage:

. . . fundamentaliter quidem considerata, nihil aliud est quam passio, vel quasi passio qua humana natura tracta est ad esse personae divinae, ut non in seipsa seorsum existeret, sed per actum hypostaticum Verbi. Formaliter vero accepta, est habitudo resultans inter divinitatem et humanitatem, prout ad unam eamdemque hypostasim pertinentes.

De la Taille differs, therefore, from Billot in that he went farther into the problem than did the learned Cardinal. Fearlessly he tackled the very heart of the difficulty, the *passio*, the foundation of the relation; in a word, the Hypostatic Union taken formally as union.

With Cajetan, de la Taille admits that a personal union in the supernatural order calls for the presence of a supernatural entity intrinsic to the humanity. But he rejects flatly and without compromise that this can be a mode of union such as Cajetan postulates. De la Taille says, quoting H. Collin: "the flaw in every substantial mode is that it is itself irreducible to act or to potency, which, nevertheless, divides all being in creatures."⁸⁰ For de la Taille, any mode of union destroys the possibility of an immediate union; it always acts as a connecting link which the two entities to be united touch from different sides, yet in such wise that the mode, instead of uniting, separates them.

Put most briefly, the theory of de la Taille may be thus worded: the Hypostatic Union is created actuation by Uncreated Act in the substantial order. The Hypostatic Union is a "substantial perfecting of the human nature of Jesus Christ, a mutation, which founds the relation predicated of the Union, and which already can be called the Union, not in the formally relative sense, but in the sense of a passive actuation of the humanity by the uncreated Being of the Word to which it is conjoined as potency to act."⁸¹

In this paper we have not aimed at originality, but at a faithful presentation in digest form of the theory of Père de la Taille on the Hypostatic Union. Whether one agree or not with de la Taille, one must consider him thoughtfully. If the reader of his articles on the Hypostatic Union derive a greater appreciation of what Chesterton called "the staggering fact of the Incarnation," his time will have been well spent. Scientific theology and scholastic discussion of the dogmas of our Faith should principally contribute to the revivifying and kindling afresh our personal belief. The dogma will remain unchanged; but, nevertheless, it is possible that it may unfold and reveal more plentifully its profounder meaning. To this end Père de la Taille devoted his full and busy life.

⁸⁰H. Collin, *Manuel de Philosophie Thomiste*, p. 136.

⁸¹"Entretien amical," R.A., loc. cit., p. 23.