Since the Nativity of Jesus of Nazareth, sages, scholars and ordinary men and women wondered, and continue to wonder, at how the Word, the Son of God, could become man. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, the Church Fathers set out the formula that defines orthodoxy even today:

Following therefore the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of a rational soul and body, the same in being with the father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity, like unto us in all things but sin... We confess that one and the same Lord Jesus Christ [...] must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation... He is not split or divided into two persons, but he is one and the same Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ... (The Christian Faith, 2001: 227-8)

At first glance, the doctrine makes a very simple claim: Jesus of Nazareth, who is called the Christ, is both fully God and fully Man, “like unto us in all things but sin” (The Christian Faith, 2001: 227). Yet, on further examination we find a doctrine apparently riddled with problems logical, metaphysical and psychological. We will consider the specific guidelines this statement sets forth for any orthodox Christology in the next section. Before we do so, however, we must consider the ramifications of this doctrine.

As we will discuss in a moment, the Chalcedonian definition contains a number of difficulties. These difficulties generally fall into one of three categories: the logical, the metaphysical and the psychological. Most theologians since Chalcedon readily admit to these difficulties and attempt philosophical explanations that move toward alleviating some, or all, of these problems. These philosophical accounts fall under one of two basic strategies. The goal of both is the same: to arrive at a unified Christ. But their methods differ drastically: the first strategy works by “thinning out” the semantic content of the Chalcedonian definition, the second by “thinning out” the traditional properties of Christ’s divine or human nature. The reduplicative strategy of St. Thomas Aquinas exemplifies the first strategy, and deals explicitly with the logical and metaphysical problems presented in the next section. Robert Feenstra’s kenotic account and Thomas Morris's “two-minds” theory exemplify the second strategy. Like Aquinas, these theories deal with the logical and metaphysical problems; unlike Aquinas, they also deal with the psychological problem. My goal in this paper is to show that Aquinas’s strategy, which does not deal with the psychological problem explicitly, has the tools to deal more effectively with the psychological problem than either the kenotic or two minds accounts. In section I, I outline the three major Christological problems I allude to above. Section II outlines the basic argument of Aquinas’s reduplicative strategy. Section III gives the accounts of Feenstra, and Morris, with a specific eye toward their solution to the psychological problem. From the successes and failures of these accounts I hope to develop a set of guidelines for Aquinas’s treatment of the psychological problem and his subsequent solution, which I present in section IV.
I. Introduction to the Problems

The Symbol of Chalcedon explicitly states the doctrine of the Incarnation along with specific guidelines for making sense of that doctrine. It authoritatively states:

Following therefore the holy Fathers, we unanimously teach to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, composed of a rational soul and body, the same in being with the Father as to the divinity and one in being with us as to the humanity, like unto us in all things but sin. [...] We confess that one and the same Lord Jesus Christ [...] must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation. The distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person and one hypostasis. He is not split or divided into two persons, but he is one and the same Only-begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ [...] (The Christian Faith, 2001: 227-8).

The Council therefore affirms four essential characteristics of the incarnation: (1) that Christ is “perfect in divinity” (which may be read without significant change that Christ is fully God and all that entails), (2) that Christ is “perfect in humanity” (which may be read similar to (1)), (3) that Christ “must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or ... division” and (4) that the two natures of Christ must be united in a single Person. In order, then, to maintain the orthodox faith, any subsequent theory of the incarnation must, without fail, preserve the four guidelines above. The central problem for any theory of the incarnation comes from attempts to maintain these guidelines in the face of what appears, prima facie, to be at best irreconcilable pairs of qualities, which constitutes a serious logical conundrum. For example, eternality, temporality, omniscience, limited knowledge, omnipotence and limited power must somehow predicate to Jesus Christ if he is both human and divine. Consequently, this logical problem yields a metaphysical problem, since the contrary sets of qualities appear to require that immutable God change in some way so as to become human. Finally, even if the logical and metaphysical problems were set aside, there would remain a question as to how those pairs of qualities could exist and function in any single individual.

The traditional Christian account of human nature consists of a certain set of qualities predicable to all men as essential to their nature, which includes such properties as temporality, spatiality, limit with respect to power and knowledge, moral imperfection, and so forth. On that same traditional account, the divine nature also contains a set of predicable properties such as eternity, immateriality (non-spatiality), omniscience, omnipotence, moral perfection, and so on. Though these are by no means exhaustive lists, they are sufficient for present purposes. Assume for the moment that the divine attributes constitute a set of positive qualities. If such is the case, then the human attributes above constitute a set of negative qualities, in that properties such as temporality could also be read as “not eternal”, and so on. The Chalcedonian definition claims, however, that there is one being that has both sets of properties. Though the tension should be obvious, for clarity’s sake, note that for one being to be both eternal and temporal (i.e. non-eternal), for example, is manifestly contradictory. The same is true of the other qualities listed above, for if we take any one of the above given divine attributes and pair it with the corresponding human attribute, there is, at best, a tension between those paired
attributes, which would preclude any one being from having both the property and its
negation. Thus, the logical problem poses a serious challenge to the orthodox account of
the incarnation, since it seems to show that one being could not possibly be both divine
and human.

Likewise, if one such being with one nature, and thus one set of attributes, is also
somehow to take on another nature and opposite set of attributes, there must be some
essential change to the person with the prior nature, which effectively causes that person
to cease to exist\footnote{1}. This concern is generally deemed the metaphysical problem, and
follows from the logical problem. Since the divine nature is most certainly not identical
with the human nature, as stated above, and since human beings are essentially human\footnote{2},
for Christ to also be essentially human, he must have been so at all points of his existence.
Nonetheless, tradition and scripture\footnote{3} both maintain that Christ existed as God prior to
his historical incarnation, which implicitly calls for a being of one essential nature to
become a being of a very different essential nature. At the least, this implies both change
in the divine person – which is impossible if immutability is an essential attribute of that
preexistent divine nature – and a process by which a person with one essential nature
becomes another person with a different essential nature – a metaphysical impossibility
given that an essential being cannot become another essential being.

The final problem in the doctrine of the Incarnation is the psychological problem. This
question ultimately concerns how one person could possibly act, perceive and know with
two minds. The Chalcedonian decree requires that interpretation of the doctrine affirm
Christ in two natures but one person. By definition, a human mind and will are constituents
of Christ’s human nature. Likewise, Christ’s divine nature requires a divine mind and will. In
virtue of having two natures, then, Christ must therefore have two wills and two minds,
since a particular mind and a will are proper to both natures. These two minds and wills
rely on different perceptual frameworks and epistemic foundations, however. Thus, it
would be possible for one mind to know something, and the other to not know that same
thing. In and of itself, this would not cause too serious a problem for the Incarnation,
except for the added qualification that these two minds and wills must constitute a single
person. The Chalcedonian definition seems to imply, then, that one and the same person
can both know and not know something, or can will and not will some act, which seems
impossible. As Eleanor Stump asks, “if one mind knows the date of the last judgment and
the other does not, what are we to say about the mental or cognitive state of the one
person?” (Stump, 2003: 411) This simple question strikes to the heart of the problem:
what is it like for one person to perceive or act in two minds simultaneously? The task for
Aquinas, Feenstra and Morris is to show how one and the same person can contain two
totally distinct natures without either conflating natures, dividing the person or dissolving
the hypostatic union into a bizarre form of schizophrenia.
II. St. Thomas Aquinas and the Reduplicative Strategy

The goal of the reduplicative strategy is to show that contrary properties inherent in the two natures of Christ do not constitute a formal contradiction. Thomas indicates that certain properties in the divine nature – such as eternality, etc. – that have contrary properties in the human nature – temporality, for instance – predicate to Christ in His divinity. The contrary property of temporality inherent in His human nature predicates to Christ in His humanity. These contrary properties do not belong inherently to the other nature. It is incorrect to state that Christ is temporal with respect to His divinity, or that He is eternal with respect to His humanity. Rather, Aquinas claims these properties belong to the natures, “since those things that belong to the divine nature are predicated of Christ in His divine nature, and those things that belong in to the human nature are predicated to Christ in His human nature,” although we ascribe those properties to the person in virtue of the hypostasis of Christ (Aquinas, 1947: (III. Q. 16. a. 4) [2110]). This strategy is ultimately bound up in a set of relations between the proper definitions of nature, hypostasis and person. These relations provide guidelines for subsequent predication statements in the reduplicative strategy that ultimately dispel the logical problem. Aquinas believes that a proper understanding of the metaphysical implications of these terms yields a Christology consistent with scripture and the Fathers.

Aquinas defines supposita or hypostases as individual instances of some species. So, humanity is a species or specific nature with certain properties that belong intrinsically to that species. Man is a specific instance of that species, as in Socrates is this human. So also, Godhead is the abstract term denoting the divine nature, and God is the proper name indicating the specific instance of divinity. In most rational species or natures, the suppositum wherein that specific nature resides is also a person (there is an exception to this which I will treat shortly). In such cases where matter and form comprise a rational nature, such as in an individual man, “we happen to find what does not belong to the notion of the species, viz. accidents and individuating principles” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2028]). In these cases the “nature and the suppositum really differ” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2028]), to the effect that a given hypostasis, though perfected by a single rational nature, could also have united to itself an individuating nature distinct from the prior nature. Since this united or assumed nature could be any nature whatever, there is nothing to prevent that assumed nature from being a rational nature of a different species. Thomas concludes “therefore, whatever adheres to a person is united to it in person, whether it belongs its nature or not”(Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2029]). Hence, the one hypostasis and person of Christ instantiates a single individual with a rational nature as its perfecting part that has assumed to it a second rational nature as an individuating principle. This schema sufficiently distinguishes the natures from one another so as to prevent the contrary properties intrinsic to them from negating one another. At the same time, Aquinas also maintains the substantial unity of Christ, wherein the natures
unite to one another at the level of subsistence. This is Aquinas’s primary defense against the charge that the doctrine of the Incarnation manifests a logical contradiction. I now turn to how Aquinas uses this strategy to deal with the logical and metaphysical problems of the Incarnation.

i. The logical problem

So far, we have given some account of Aquinas’s strategy, but we have only hinted at how this strategy deals with the problems we stated at the outset. To begin with the logical problem, Aquinas uses his metaphysics of personhood and nature to describe a situation in which a single individual could instantiate contrary properties in His natures. For this account Aquinas needs three concepts: nature, hypostasis (or *suppositum*) and person. Aquinas argues that nature, properly defined, ultimately “signif[ies] any intrinsic principle of motion” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2027]). Deriving as it does originally from the words *natura* and *nascitura* (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2027]), the term nature implies nativity, mode of generation and, finally, principle of motion. In other words, for a thing to have a specific nature, that thing must have a nativity common to a species as well as a generative cause in common with its species and a common principle of motion, “either form or matter” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2027]) with the species. In the case of Christ this must be true both in His human and divine natures. He was born of Mary, His mother, took on flesh from her, and so had both the matter and form of a man. He was also “begotten of the Father before the ages” (*The Christian Faith*, 2001: 227) and had the form and matter (whatever that may be) of God. Thus, Christ has the natures common to both humans and God.

Given this account of nature, Aquinas points out that “person has a different meaning from nature” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2028]). Person, on Aquinas’s account, is similar to *suppositum* or hypostasis, a *suppositum* or hypostasis being “a whole which has the nature as its formal part to perfect it” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2028]). The difference lies in that “ person only adds to hypostasis a determinate nature, viz. rational...” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2029]). The important point to note here is that the *suppositum* does not exclude the existence of other “accidents and individuating principles” (Aquinas, 1947: III. Q. 2. a. 2 [2028]) in the *suppositum*. Likewise, this also means that a second nature could potentially subsist in a *suppositum* concurrently with the first nature, even if the second nature were incompatible, without affecting some change or consequence in the prior nature.

In and of itself, the above explanation of Aquinas’s treatment of nature, hypostasis and person is not sufficient to deal with the logical problem. Rather, Aquinas’s elucidation of the differences in these terms serves as a set-up to what some of Aquinas’s commentators call the “communication of idioms” (Garrigou-LaGrange, 1950: 420). Garrigou-LaGrange defines this idea as “the mutual predication and interchange in themselves of
the two natures, the divine and the human, and their properties, by reason of the hypostatic union.” (Garrigou-LaGrange, 1950: 420-1) Properties themselves do not reside in the nature and then “move” into the person; it is not as if the person is some entity that draws predicates into itself as if from separate tool cabinets. Rather, the properties predicate to the person indirectly in virtue of the person possessing the natures. So the properties belong intrinsically to the natures, but since the natures are not subjects of predication, the properties ascribe to the person. To explain, Aquinas makes a distinction between proper names and abstract categories. *God* and *man* are proper names that directly signify the person: these names answer the question “Who is it?” *Godhead* and *humanity*, however, signify the natures: these words answer the question “What is it?” (Dauphinais & Levering, 2002: 84) Predication statements only apply to specific instances of a nature, i.e., to a person, not to the generic nature itself. This is because any claims about the qualities of a nature only make sense by pointing to specific instances of that nature.

This is telling, since the formula for predication in Christ follows the form “Christ (the proper name) *qua* x (the general term denoting the nature) *is* A (some predicate)”. In this case, the verb to be relates to the person, not the nature. In other words, trying to relate to be to a nature directly makes no sense, since the nature in itself cannot be a subject of predication. So, properties “borrow” because the property that belongs to the nature is not a predicate of the nature but of the person, since the nature is not itself a subsisting thing. The person takes on the predication that would follow if the nature were an individual subsisting thing. Whereas the sentences of the logical problem above utilize a single variable to denote an entity *simpliciter* with contrary predicates, a reduplicative translation of the same sentences yields sentences with a single, qualified variable letter. This new translation, which follows the schema above, does not involve a formal contradiction since the subjects of predication (Christ *qua* human being and Christ *qua* divine) are not formally the same. This comprises Aquinas’s solution to the logical problem, which forms a basis for his solution to the metaphysical problem.

**ii. The metaphysical problem**

Following from Aquinas’s solution to the logical problem, Aquinas’s solution to the metaphysical problem also relies on the distinctness of nature and person (which includes hypostasis or *suppositum*). As shown above, the union of the two natures in the hypostasis does not immediately imply some intrinsic effect or cancellation of one nature by the other. This is the key move in the solution to the logical problem and is also the central focus for the metaphysical problem. To reiterate the problem, bear in mind that, first, Chalcedon appears to claim God became man, and second, this is metaphysically impossible since God and humans are hypostases with very different essential natures. If God is to become man, then He must change from a person of one essential nature into a person of another essential nature. This change would require either a change to the divine
nature itself, through the attachment of a human nature, or a relinquishing of the divine nature altogether by the Person assuming the human nature. In either case, the preexistent divine person of Christ would cease to exist. According to Aquinas, essential natures cannot change, for if they did that essential nature would, similar to the person, cease to exist as that essential nature. The natures must therefore exist in the hypostasis conceptually distinct from one another.

Nevertheless, the assumption of the human nature, although it cannot change the essential nature of divinity, should still cause a substantial change in the person. Similar to his solution to the logical problem, however, Aquinas argues that a person – as a rational hypostasis – may have not only His own essential nature, but other individuating principles as well. Thus, the assumption of the human nature does not change the Person’s possession of the divine nature. If the Person does not cease to possess the divine nature, then there is no essential change to that person. Rather, the Person of the Word takes to Himself a second nature, which He may be said to possess essentially as well, by virtue of His common generation with other men. Therefore, Christ does not undergo an essential change in the Incarnation because He does not relinquish His preexistent divine nature. Neither does the assumption of the human nature indicate a substantial change to the person, since the divine nature denominates the Divine Person simply. The human nature denominates that same person only insofar as that nature resides in the hypostasis, “for the human nature does not make the Son of Man to be simply” (Aquinas, 1947: (III. Q. 3 a. 1) [2039]). The divine nature, as the underlying simple constituent of the Divine Person remains the dominant constituent in the hypostasis. Hence, the Divine Person does not even change on a subsistent level.

iii. The Psychological Criticism

A central criticism – and perhaps one that Aquinas himself was not in a historical position to deal with specifically – of Aquinas’s theory is the psychological problem that issues from ascriptions of opposing cognitive properties to the two natures. It would be uncharitable to claim that Aquinas simply ignores this problem, since the specific formulation of this objection only arose in the last four hundred years with the advent of modern perceptual psychology. It appears that, on Aquinas’s account, we have an instance of a very complex kind of schizophrenia, wherein one set of attributes or another controls the actions of the person at a given time. Again, this criticism is somewhat anachronistic, but it still constitutes a major problem for the reduplicative strategy. Moreover, if the hypostatic union is akin to a form of advanced schizophrenia, then Aquinas’s property ascriptions cannot hold for the whole person of Christ at all times. To wit, if one set of attributes dominates another at a given time, then the whole person really only has that one set of properties during that time, and not the other. This implies that the hypostatic union does not exist at any point in time, if we assume that person only possesses one set of attributes at any one time. Although Aquinas does not address
this problem specifically, he does have the requisite tools built into the framework of the reduplicative strategy to deal with the problem. In order to see how we can extrapolate a solution to this problem from Aquinas’s thought, we will first turn to a more current theory. The successes and failures of these theories give some insight into a successful reduplicative solution to the psychological problem.

III. Kenosis and the Three Christological Problems

As I attempt to show in the previous section, Aquinas’s strategy is to “thin out” the semantic content of the Chalcedonian definition in a way that indicates the internal consistency of the doctrine of the Incarnation. This is not, however, the only strategy for dealing with the philosophical problems of that doctrine evident in the Chalcedonian definition. Another strategy, one that has found favor in theological circles in recent years, is to thin out not the semantic content of the doctrine, but rather to thin out the underlying metaphysical assumptions of the Chalcedonian Fathers. The general strategy evident in such writers as Feenstra and Morris is to examine closely the two natures of Christ to determine which properties constitute the essential nature of divinity or humanity. If Feenstra or Morris can show that some of the properties assumed to belong to either nature are not essential for that nature, then solutions to the logical, metaphysical and psychological problem become evident through a proper understanding of the metaphysics of the Incarnation. Feenstra employs this strategy with regard to the divinity of Christ; Morris does the same with regard to the humanity. In both cases the result is the same: one of the two natures, with its rarified property definition, becomes empty enough to pose no contradiction, and hence no change, to the other nature.

For Feenstra, if these natures are in fact compatible, then the union of the two natures in the hypostasis is hardly an issue at all, for so long as there is no contradiction in the natures, both can exist in the same person simultaneously with no change to either. In brief, Feenstra makes the following argument: (1) Jesus Christ is God, and (2) from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, Jesus admits to not knowing the time of his second coming[4], which means he is not omniscient; therefore, (3) if Jesus Christ is not omniscient and Jesus Christ is God, then God is not omniscient (at least, not in an absolute sense). Rather, God’s omniscience, insofar as he has the quality in the eternity of his existence, is the qualified property “omniscient-unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise” (Feenstra, 1989: 140), which Feenstra takes (following Morris), with the addition “for-the-purpose-of-kenotic-incarnation”, to be the only way kenotic theorists can logically ascribe omniscience to the divine nature.

The notion that God the Son deliberately used the qualification above to empty himself of these qualified properties stands at the heart of kenotic Christology. Thus, Feenstra’s account of kenotic Christology demands three things in order for the doctrine of the
incarnation to remain metaphysically coherent: first, that omniscience absolutely (or omniscience *simpliciter*) is not an essential characteristic of God; second, if God is omniscient in any way, it is in the qualified sense of “unless-freely-and-temporarily-choosing-to-be-otherwise-for-the-purpose-of-kenotic-incarnation”; and third, Christ had, in some way, to empty Himself of that property in whatever form in order to become incarnate in the manner expressed in the scriptures.[5]

With regard to the metaphysical problem, Feenstra’s definition of divinity allows the divine nature to exist concurrently with the human nature in the one person of Christ because the divine knowledge does not interfere with or negate the normal operation of the human cognition. This means that the union of divine and human nature entails no essential change in either nature, since limiting “omniscience-qualified” in the divine nature only actualizes a potential God had from eternity. With regard to the logical problem, if omniscience in the divine nature qualifies in the manner Feenstra indicates, then there is no contradiction in that qualified omniscience can be compatible with limited knowledge. Lastly, since “omniscience-qualified” does not require change to the essential natures and does not contradict the function of limited human knowledge, there would be little psychological tension in the person since the cognitive capacity of the divine nature would not be far different from that of a very intelligent man.

Although Feenstra provides a strong theoretical framework, he fails when his theory tries to uphold the Chalcedonian definition. Feenstra claims that the kenotic account does not trespass against the Chalcedonian definition because the property of omniscience-qualified remains with the divine nature during the incarnation. Yet, the very language of such statements is ultimately problematic. If God has the power to know all things, and His manifestation of that power is the fullest realization of his divinity, then during the incarnation He could hardly be described as fully God. In fact, Feenstra and Forrest both seem to believe that for at least a certain period, one of the Persons of the Trinity is less than the other two Persons. Alternately, if the kenotic theory is to uphold the Chalcedonian definition, then they must be willing to say that the entire Trinity gave up omniscience, for Christ must remain “the same in being with the Father”, which is to say, equal to the Father.

In contrast to the kenotic account, the two-minds view rarifies the account of humanity so as to clear the way for the traditionally defined Son of God to achieve the hypostasis without the problematic change indicated in the metaphysical problem. In “The Metaphysics of God Incarnate”, Thomas Morris begins with an “exalted conception of deity” (Morris, 1989: 114) and a “down-to-earth conception of humanity” (Morris, 1989:121). He then makes the claim that the only essential properties necessary or essential for any individual to belong to the natural kind *humanity* are a human body and a human soul. The other commonly predicated features of humanity - contingency, temporality, createdness, limited knowledge, and so forth - are really just that: common
properties, not universal or essential properties. Therefore, a being with a human body and human mind that is not contingent, limited with respect to knowledge and temporal would still be fully human just in virtue of possessing a human body and mind. With regard to the metaphysical problem, then, since the properties that would entail change in the natures - the presumed human properties Morris does away with - do not exist in the human nature, Christ’s assumption of a human nature does not require Him to change or limit any of the properties of His divine nature. Likewise, since in His humanity Christ does not happen to have the common limitations of most other humans, there is no formal contradiction in claims about Christ’s knowledge. In this case, Morris simply eliminates one side of the conjunction, “Christ is omniscient and limited with respect to knowledge”.

Although this account does deal rather well with the metaphysical and logical problems from the standpoint of pure reason, so far as we have formulated it, the questions as to how this account actually functions and how it fits the scriptural record remains unanswered. Morris responds to these questions by pointing to the fact that, on the two-minds view, the hypostasis is “not just a duality of abstract natures”, but rather manifests itself as an “asymmetrical accessing relationship” (Morris, 1989:121) wherein the divine mind wholly encompasses the human mind. On this account, the divine mind has access at all times to the thoughts, emotions, knowledge and conditions of the human mind, while the human mind does not share exactly the same privilege. Practically, this means that at certain times in the Gospel record, Christ speaks and acts from his full divinity, and at others - the problematic times when He appears limited with respect to knowledge or power - from his full humanity.

The main problem inherent in the Morris two-minds account is that he blinds himself to the obvious consequences of their “down-to-earth conception of humanity”. Morris “[waits] upon a perfected science or a more complete revelation” to say “what essentially constitutes a human body and a human mind” (Morris, 1989:113). Although this is fine to say, the fact of the matter is that rather good, if not perfect, science does at least say what constitutes a human body. If nothing else, mutability is certain from the facts that Christ grew up in the manner of all human children, which indicates that his physical mass increased over time, and he received normal human sustenance, which indicates that nutrients both entered and left his body throughout his life. Likewise, if Christ’s human body is mutable, then temporality must necessarily follow, for there can be no change outside of time. Since Christ’s human body is necessary for his human nature, then so too must mutability and temporality. If these are still present in the human nature of Christ, then Morris does not manage to fully account for the tension he attempts to dispel.

By presenting the above theories, I attempt to show that the strategy of thinning out essential properties does not uphold the criteria of orthodoxy, as both Feenstra and Morris would like. Since both theories fail in this regard, the subsequent psychological schemas they present cannot answer the psychological problem in a manner consistent
with Chalcedon. My purpose, then, in presenting these theories at all is to eliminate two possible avenues Aquinas’s response to the psychological problem could follow. One of those avenues, the kenotic path, shows that Christ’s cognitive capacities are qualitatively similar during the event of the Incarnation, and thus do not negate one another. The other avenue, the two-minds approach, establishes an asymmetrical dual accessing relationship between the minds, to the end that the mind of the divine nature knows but does not interfere with the function of the human mind. In either case, if the metaphysical and logical principles underpinning the theory do not hold, then the given psychological account founded on those principles cannot accurately answer the challenges of Chalcedon. Therefore, there must be some other avenue for Aquinas to pursue that neither requires a qualitative similarity in knowledge nor an inert divine knowledge.

IV. St. Thomas and the Psychological Problem

I argue in section II above that Aquinas deals specifically with the logical and metaphysical problems of the incarnation. I also indicate that Aquinas does not respond to the psychological problem of the union of the natures in the one Person of Christ, largely because the problem itself is anachronistic to Aquinas’s thought. The specific formulation of this problem is a product of the revolution and exploration of perceptual psychology beginning with Descartes. Aquinas, writing some three centuries prior to this revolution, would not have had access to the problem in the formulation used by theologians today and spelled out in Section I above. I assert, however, that Aquinas has the tools at his disposal, already built into the reduplicative strategy, to render a resolution to the psychological problem. Perhaps the best way to show this is by examining (or perhaps reexamining) the mode of union in the person of Christ. This mode of union requires a necessarily related set of natures in one person, and hence a relationship of wills and knowledge between the natures. This relationship between the divine will and knowledge and the human will and knowledge in Christ forms the backbone of Aquinas’s argument. From this relationship I will extrapolate a possible mode of psychological union, and explore some of the implications of this union.

The focus of Aquinas’s treatment of Christ’s knowledge is to maintain the perfect divinity and humanity of Christ’s natures, without allowing those natures the measure of commiseration evident in kenoticism or the contingency of limited knowledge in the two-minds view. To this extent, Aquinas affirms one kind of knowledge in the divine nature – the perfect omniscience of God – and three kinds of knowledge in the human nature – beatific, infused and acquired knowledge. Aquinas argues if Christ is, in fact, both perfect in His divinity and perfect in His humanity, then He must have those modes of knowledge actually proper to each nature. This means that the divine knowledge cannot be limited or qualified in any sense, and that the human knowledge must be suitably perfected and possessed completely. Bear in mind that when Aquinas claims that Christ’s human nature
is perfect, he does not mean it is perfect in its normality—, but rather that this particular human nature is the pinnacle of qualitative human existence. The task for the reduplicative strategy here is to show how the divine knowledge and the human knowledge constitute at least a non-contradictory cognitive framework. Note that this position need only affirm that there is no competition or contradiction in the modes of knowledge, not that they are strictly compatible. If the human and divine knowledge in Christ contradict one another in any way, then the unified cognitive capacity of the person cannot exist, and hence Christ cannot instantiate a psychologically unified being. If, however, the reduplicative strategy can show Christ as a being in two natures with compatible cognitive functions, then the final question of compatibility of wills becomes easier to deal with. Let us begin by looking at the beatific knowledge.

The human nature, if it is in any way the perfection of humanity, must possess beatific knowledge at least on the level of the greatest prophets and saints. This beatific knowledge, “which consists in the knowledge of God” (Aquinas, 1947: (III. Q.9. A.2.) [2077]), comes “through a light participated from the Divine Nature [...] whereby it sees God in essence” (Aquinas, 1947: (III. Q.9. A.2.) [2077]). In this case then, the beatific knowledge is a form of cognition, through which Christ qua man “sees” God essentially, and thereby participates in that divine person. Put another way, if beatific knowledge is a form of cognition, then in order for the divine knowledge to negate this form of human cognition there must be some essential contradiction in Christ having both the divine cognition and the human cognition of God. The human cognition of God, however, does not derive from humanity “in as much as it cannot reach [beatific cognition] of its own accord” (Aquinas, 1947: (III. Q.9. A.2.) [2077]), but from the divine. Hence, the human nature, if it is perfect, must be perfected with the human version of the beatific knowledge. With regard to beatific cognition, then, there is no tension in one being having both the uncreated, divine beatific knowledge and the created, human beatific knowledge. This indicates to some extent how Christ as man has a form of knowledge that allows a psychological union with the divine. For ascription of a divine beatific cognition to the divinity and a human beatific cognition to the humanity, as Aquinas does, allows not only a reiteration of the perfections of the natures in Christ, but also points to the lack of opposition between the divine knowledge and certain types of human cognition. But in itself this beatific knowledge is not complete for full participation of the human nature with the divine, for beatific knowledge only constitutes one mode of knowing in the human nature.

Using the example of beatific knowledge, the reduplicative strategy can go on to state that the two other primary types of human cognition - infused and acquired - pose no opposition to the divine intellect. Infused knowledge is that knowledge or cognition that human beings know a priori, similar to natural reason. Acquired knowledge is empirical or a posteriori knowledge or cognition - i.e., knowledge gained by experiencing things. Aquinas states “cognition by infused species poses no opposition to beatific cognition” (Aquinas,
1947: (III. Q. 9. A.2.) [2078]), which means that the natural reason of men does not prevent or contradict knowledge gained by divine participation. Thus, Christ in His divinity imparts beatific knowledge, but Christ in His humanity receives that knowledge. If infused knowledge of this sort does not counter beatific knowledge – a type of knowledge gained directly from the divine knowledge – then such infused knowledge will not pose opposition to the divine knowledge. For if a thing does not oppose the effect, then that same thing does not oppose the cause.

Finally, acquired knowledge – or empirical knowledge of the world – is the last piece of this puzzle, and perhaps the most important for the psychological problem. Beatific knowledge does not involve cognition via the senses, and infused knowledge remains a product of speculation in the mind. Empirical knowledge, however, relies on the physical senses as well as the ability of the human mind to synthesize information and draw conclusions from that information. Now, it pertains exclusively to Christ’s perfect humanity that He has this mode of knowing. Thus, how do we reconcile this one mode of perception and cognition to the divine mode of perception that must be vastly different, since the divine cognition neither uses physical senses nor deduces conclusions? The answer to this question becomes more clear when we take into account the manner of union of the divine and human wills in Christ.

Like knowledge, it is proper for Christ in His full humanity to have a human will. Likewise, it is proper for Christ in His full divinity to have a divine will. In most human persons, human will does not conform to the divine will. This usual conflict is not a necessary condition of humanity; instead, it is a contingent fact of the world, for human beings and wills were originally created to conform to the divine will. According to Aquinas, will has two parts: desire, or the sensual will and the will to action, or the rational will. Aquinas argues that insofar as the human sensual will desires some end contrary to the divine will – such as preservation of His life – as long as His human rational will does not reject the reasons for the divine end, there is no contrariety in Christ’s will.

Aquinas believes, following Aristotle, in a hierarchy of wills in a person. In Christ, the human sensual will is at the bottom of the totem pole, and may desire any end so long as “neither the Divine Will nor the will of reason in Christ [is] impeded or retarded by the natural will or the appetite of sensuality” (Aquinas, 1947: (III. Q. 18 A. 6) [2124]) because the divine will and rational will always overrule a subordinate desire. Thus, so long as a desire in the rational human will does not constitute sin, which is a denial of the divine will, there is no contradiction in the two wills of Christ. Now the reason this works is because there is also a hierarchy of natures in the hypostasis. The human nature, to which the human will ascribes, submits to the divine nature in the hypostasis. Hence, the divine nature, and hence the divine will, takes precedence over the human will in motivating the person of Christ.
From Aquinas’s discussion of the submission of the human nature and will to the divine nature and will we can begin to see how human empirical knowledge fits into the hypostasis and person of Christ. Similar to the submission of the human will to the divine will, the empirical knowledge of Christ qua man is formed by the divine knowledge. In other words, because the divine nature already knows all propositional truths, the empirical knowledge of Christ cannot add anything factual to the divine knowledge. Rather, in virtue of that formation, the human knowledge becomes an instrument of the divine knowledge, not by which the divine knows anything new, but instead through which the divine rationality perceives corporeally. Thus, because the divine rationality does not itself have a corporeal mode of cognition or perception, there is no conflict in Christ using both the incorporeal mode of divine cognition and the corporeal mode of human cognition. Therefore, in Christ there is no apparent conflict between the various modes of cognition and the disparate wills. All that the reduplicative strategy shows at this point is the possibility of a being in one hypostasis composed of two natures with different though unopposed modes of cognition and will. Unfortunately, the reduplicative strategy as yet does not give a possible model for what that being would be like. To this we now turn.

i. Psychological unity and the hypostatic union

Eleanor Stump, an eminent Thomist, gives one possible model for how the reduplicative strategy deals with the psychological problem:

In science fiction stories [such as Robert Heinlein’s The Puppetmasters], an alien invader of some superintelligent race enters the mind of a human person in such a way as to be able to operate simultaneously through the human being’s mind and through his own. So, for example, operating through his own mind the alien knows that an alien invasion of earth is in process, in virtue of remembering having landed on earth with the ships from his home planet and knowing what he himself is currently doing. There is no similar memory or awareness in the human mind through which the alien simultaneously operating, however; and so when the human mind sees the alien spaceship for the first time, that mind will be surprised and wonder at what is happening. (Stump, 2003: 420-1)

This example, albeit strange, has great potential for the reduplicative strategy. To wit, we have a – fictional – case of an incorporeal being close enough to omniscience as makes little difference attached to a being of limited human intelligence. Likewise, the incorporeal being lacks corporeal cognitive states, and thus uses the cognitive and perceptual capacities of his victim as a means of access into the nature of that human being. The key for this example is that the psychological union, in this instance, of the superintelligent being and the human being admits of no change to either intelligence. In this case, the human mind has no access into the alien mind, though the alien mind does have access to the human. Presumably, however, even if the human mind had some form of limited access into the alien mind, that would only be an increase in empirical knowledge, not a substantial change to the nature of that human’s mind. And so we have a case where one being experiences both surprise and no surprise at the appearance of alien spaceships. Yet this state is functionally possible on this model because the states of surprise and no surprise predicate solely to the natures, human and alien.

Leaving aside some of the nonessential differences in this account, such as the method
whereby the natures unify and so forth, this example comes rather close to how Christ’s natures could have unified psychologically in the hypostasis. If the mental states properly attributable to Christ’s different natures unify in a similar way, where the knowledge of the divine mind and the knowledge of the human mind unify without change to either, then although there is some crossover of information, either in the form of corporeal sense experiences or access to the beatific knowledge, there would be nothing inherently wrong with the claim that Christ both knows and doesn’t know something, or experiences and doesn’t experience some event (i.e., death).

As yet, though, this model cannot be entirely complete. To begin, this model indicates how two persons sharing a body could operate, so really this example seems to deny the hypostatic union, or at least ignore it. But how does this kind of psychological non-contradiction apply to or work when the two minds united constitute a single person? Here again we must bear in mind that the divine person assumes the human nature and perfects it, which is to say, controls or overshadows it in some way. Thus, the various cognitive states of the human nature also assume or unite to the divine person, since the controlling rationality – i.e., the person – takes on those properties through human cognitive mechanisms. The cognitive states not possessed in the divine nature still obtain to the person by virtue of the communication of idioms, as I discussed in Section II. As such, these human cognitive facilities still remain at the disposal of the divine person and nature even in situations when these cognitive states are not in active use. So also, the divine person might for some purpose obscure the divine knowledge from the human nature and operate solely through that human nature. Meanwhile, the person still possess those divine cognitive states in virtue of those states not actually opposing the operation of the human cognitive states.

And this is where the divine and human natures seem to meet: in the realm of cognition. For one person may not perceive as or know the perceptions of another person. This much is true by definition, since perception, at least for human persons, is specifically related to the particular sense organs possessed physically in a human hypostasis. Likewise, God the Son, as a Person wholly separate from all other persons, cannot perceive any other human person’s perceptions. So for God the Son to have experiences of human sensations, He must have assumed to himself a full human nature with a full realm of human cognitions. And so also, for the human nature of God to become perfect, He must also have allowed that human nature access to the divine cognition. Although these modes of cognition apply simpliciter to the natures, the overarching Person of God the Son has access to both sets of cognitions. But these disparate modes of cognition cannot interfere with one another because they are not themselves joined intrinsically to one another, but rather access one another as necessary through and in the hypostasis. It may be that such problematic incidents as Christ’s claim to not know the time of the last judgment was a conscious act of suppression of the divine cognition, though His reason for this is known to Him alone. And so the reduplicative strategy seems to answer the psychological
problem along with the other problems of the Incarnation. Two final concerns pertain to this account, however. First, is it orthodox? If St. Thomas Aquinas’s account does not maintain the Chalcedonian definition, then his work is for naught. Second, what are the pastoral ramifications of this interpretation of Chalcedon? Aquinas believed, fundamentally, that theology is not a matter of intellectual sparring or abstract debate. Theology, for Aquinas, is the task of dealing with life’s most essential questions. In that vein I turn at last to the existential or pastoral implications of Aquinas’s strategy.

V. Conclusion – Reduplication and Pastoral Concerns

Finally, I argue in Section III that Feenstra and Morris do not uphold the Chalcedonian definition, since on both views there is something lacking in either the full humanity or full divinity of the Person of Christ. But if Aquinas is to succeed where his successors fail, his strategy must uphold the Chalcedonian definition. I believe that Aquinas does this because, instead of trying to tamper with the property ascriptions of the natures, he tries to clarify the semantic content of the dense statements of the Fathers. The Chalcedonian Fathers presuppose – believe might be a better way to put it – that certain properties belong to humanity and divinity essentially. Temporality, limited knowledge and power, mutability, etc., the Fathers believe, are not simply common properties most men happen to have. Instead, these are properties that define human nature and the human experience. Conversely, eternality, omniscience, omnipotence, immutability, etc., define the essential nature of God and the Divine Life. Undermining any of these presuppositions would undermine the pastoral project of the Fathers. Aquinas, though, does not undermine these definitions, and thus does not trespass against the faith delivered to him through the Church he loved. Aquinas maintains the duality of natures in Christ, as well as Christ’s psychological, logical and metaphysical unity in the hypostasis of Christ’s Person. On these points, Aquinas is explicit. Aquinas goes on to show that this unity is not just a unity of abstract natures, but is also a unity in will and knowledge, perception and cognition that establishes a real unity on an operational level of the Person of Christ.

Aquinas, Feenstra, Morris and the Fathers at Chalcedon all hold the core belief that the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity is the central moment of human history. They likewise believe that a proper understanding of that event has vast implications for the way human beings live their lives. The Fathers at Chalcedon were only theologians by necessity; they were primarily called to be bishops and pastors to the Christian world. Believing as they did from the scriptures that only a perfect deity who exists as a perfect man could redeem all humanity, they focused their efforts on providing a statement that affirms this belief. Theories such as the kenoticism and the two-minds view that do not uphold this statement from the Fathers do not also uphold that core Christian belief in the redeeming work of Christ, despite the best intentions of their authors. The kenotic theory argues for a union between a human being and a person who is not wholly divine, thus denying the real potential for the unity of human beings and their creator. The two-minds
view seems to reject the temporality and weakness of humanity of Christ, thereby denying that men, in their weakness, could be adoptive sons and daughters of God.

Aquinas, on the other hand, by virtue of his affirmation of the traditional definitions of humanity and divinity, succeeds where his modern successors fail. For Aquinas, the union of the body and soul of a human nature, "like unto us in all things but sin", with the divine nature in the hypostasis of the second Person of the Trinity points to the possibility that every human being can become a son or daughter of the Father through the merits of Christ. Likewise, the necessity of union both of the body and soul of humanity and of humanity and divinity in the hypostasis elevates the body above the level of mere sensual pleasure and elevates the human to greater intrinsic moral worth. Regardless of whether Aquinas is correct in believing these consequences to be an unqualified good, the fact remains that these concerns underpin the entire project of Chalcedon and the Fathers, something kenoticism and the two-minds view cannot do.

**Bibliography:**


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[1] This does not depend on any presupposition of divine immutability, however. Rather, this would still be a problem even if God were mutable since the change here is not in some particular property, but a change on an ontological level. Cf. Footnote below.
This is not to say that there would not be some person who exists after the change. That person, however, would not be the same person because the shift from one essential nature to another changes the essence of the person. Prince Charming, for example, is not the person Prince Charming after the witch changes him into a frog, nor is he the same frog after the Princess kisses him.

St. Jn. 1:1-2 as well as the Symbols of Nicea and Constantinople, to name a few.

See St. Matt. 24: 36 and St. Mk. 15: 21

Feenstra seems to think that there is some way in which Christ could have become incarnate without losing this property, but that incarnation would not be the same as that expressed in the New Testament.

I am making a distinction here between common traits shared by humans and essential properties necessary for a thing to belong to a certain species, similar to Morris. In other words, Christ’s perfection as a human is not that He was exactly like all other humans, but rather that He had the essential qualities of humanity in a maximally perfect way (which includes human knowledge and will).