

Hylemorphic Animalism and the Incarnational Problem of Identity

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Abstract: In this paper, I argue that adherents of Patrick Toner's (2011b) hylemorphic animalism who also assent to orthodox Christology and a thesis about the necessity of identity must reject a *prima facie* plausible theological possibility held by Ockham, entertained in one form by St. Thomas Aquinas, and recently held by Richard Cross (1989), Thomas Flint (2001a), (2001b), and (2011), and Timothy Pawl (2016) and (forthcoming) concerning which individual concrete human natures an omnipotent God could assume (viz. any of them).

Hylemorphic animalism is an attractive metaphysical thesis. However, I will not argue for hylemorphism, animalism, nor hylemorphic animalism here.¹ Rather, I will argue that if one accepts hylemorphic animalism, then interesting theological consequences follow. In short, I will argue that if hylemorphic animalism is true, then it is *not* possible for God to assume *any* individual concrete human nature, especially the concrete human natures of human persons like you and me.

Hylemorphic animalism is a thesis about the ontology and identity of human persons. Although some versions of animalism hold that human persons need not be *identical* to human animals, but are instead constituted by human animals at certain stages of development and functionality, or are *emergent* from human animals under certain conditions, etc., the particular version of animalism under question in this paper – hylemorphic animalism – holds that human persons are *identical* with certain material substances – human animals – taken to be hylemorphic compounds. The precise details of the hylemorphic analysis of material substances aren't of great importance for the thesis advanced in this paper, and for that reason, I will not spend much time distinguishing various forms of hylemorphism. I suspect that a more

¹ I adopt Patrick Toner's (2011b) spelling of 'hylemorphism' rather than 'hylomorphism', since his thesis 'hylemorphic animalism' (developed in (2011b)) plays a central role in what follows. For a discussion and defense of hylemorphism, see: Brower (2014), and for a defense of animalism in metaphysics and the metaphysics of mind, see: Snowdon (2014), Blatti (2012), Madden (2011), Bailey (forthcoming), Yang (2015) and (2013), Lee and George (2008), and very recently Jaworksi (2016); for a defense of hylemorphic animalism as such, see: Toner (2011b) and (2011a).

generic version of the argument advanced in this paper can be run for other types of animalism which do not endorse a hylemorphic analysis of human animals. This argument will hold for anyone who believes that human persons *are identical to* human animals (individual instantiations of human nature, or what has been called concrete human natures).² Following Timothy Pawl (2016, 36), let's take "concrete nature" to mean the following:

Concrete Nature: *x* is a concrete nature of some type, *y*, if and only if *x* is an individual instance of *y*, and *y* is an infima species.³

As already noted, whether we analyze concrete natures as hylemorphic compounds or not is not of central importance for this paper. Why, one might ask, should I limit the scope of this paper to the more specific thesis – hylemorphic animalism? I have three reasons for doing so, all of which are fairly pragmatic in nature.

First, it is heuristically useful to run the argument using *some* analysis of material substance; why not run it using the analysis one finds the most plausible? Second, the doctrine of the incarnation, and its relevant theological concepts and distinctions, was developed and explained by theologians working within a hylemorphic framework. Therefore, it is useful to continue to discuss those theological concepts, while also entertaining new theological possibilities, from within that metaphysical framework. Whether these theological concepts and categories can be uprooted from a hylemorphic framework will be left a live possibility for the reader. Last, there has been a resurgence of traditional Thomistic hylemorphism (Brower 2014), its application in debates about personal identity (Toner 2011b), and its use in explaining (or explaining away) various objections that have arisen for the orthodox doctrine on the incarnation of Christ (Pawl 2016). Therefore, pointing out a significant consequence of *that* hylemorphic view, even if it is a consequence of *other* views, might still be of particular interest for many. Be that as it may, and this is important, even if hylemorphic animalism is rejected by the reader, variations of the following argument can still be run for other non-hylemorphic accounts of material objects.⁴

I. The Incarnational Problem of Identity: The Argument

In what follows, I will lay out the *Incarnation Problem of Identity*, which concludes that hylemorphic animalists who assent to orthodox Christology, must reject one of the following theses:

² See Pawl (2016, 34-46) for a good discussion of both what a concrete (as opposed to an abstract) human nature is and why the early Christological Councils employed the phrase "human nature" according to the concrete sense.

³ Here *infima species* means "a lowest level type. Mammal, then, is not an infima species, though a specific type of mammal is" (Pawl 2016, 36).

⁴ As mentioned above, and to be explained below, what is necessary for the argument to carry through is the acceptance that human persons are *identical to* human animals (i.e., concrete human natures), not that they are hylemorphic compounds.

Assumption Thesis (AT): It is possible for God to assume *any* concrete human nature, including the concrete human nature of an actually existing human person.

Necessity of Identity (NI): If it is possible that $x = y$, then necessarily $x = y$.

The (AT) seems like an initially plausible theological possibility. It has been endorsed by a handful of philosophers and theologians, both old and new.⁵ More recently it has been endorsed by Richard Cross (1989), Thomas Flint (2001a), (2001b), and (2011), and Timothy Pawl (2016) and (forthcoming). It is important to emphasize that this paper sets out to prove a *conditional* – *If* hylemorphic animalism is true, *then* either (AT) or (NI) is false. Supposing that (NI) is true, it follows that the hylemorphic animalist assenting to orthodox Christology must deny (AT). This is what I will set out to prove. The argument takes the form of a conditional proof with an embedded *reductio*. Let's call this argument the *Incarnational Problem of Identity*.

- (1) Suppose it is *possible* for God to assume *any* concrete human nature, including the concrete natures of any actually existing (non-Trinitarian) human persons.⁶ (AT)
- (2) There can be only one person in any assumed concrete human nature. [Anathema 4, Constantinople II]
- (3) So, it is possible for the concrete human nature of any actually existing (non-Trinitarian) human person to exist without that (non-Trinitarian) human person existing in that nature. [from 1,2]
- (4) Suppose hylemorphic animalism is true.
- (5) If hylemorphic animalism is true, then for any actually existing (non-Trinitarian) human person, say p , p is identical to an individual concrete human nature, n (taken to be a hylemorphic compound).
- (6) If $x = y$, then *necessarily* $x = y$. (NI)
- (7) If hylemorphic animalism is true, then it is *not* possible for n to exist without it being identical to p . [from 5,6]
- (8) So, it is *not* possible for the individual concrete human nature of any actually existing (non-Trinitarian) human person to exist without that (non-Trinitarian) human person existing. [from 4,7]
- (9) But, (3) contradicts (8)!
- (10) So, if hylemorphic animalism is true, then either (1) or (6) must be false.

⁵ See, Cross (1989) for Ockham's and Scotus's discussion of this thesis, and why Aquinas entertained some version of it (he entertains what looks to be close to the contrapositive of it), more on this in section II.

⁶ The qualifier 'non-Trinitarian' is taken to distinguish those 'human persons' who are not also divine from those who are. For example, Jesus is a person who is both human *and* divine, and so there is *some* sense in which he can be called a human person as well as a divine person. This will be explained below in our discussion of premise (1). Also, see the discussion in sect. II on how Jeffrey Brower explains the ways in which Jesus is a human person (*viz.* he is a person *and* a human), as well as St. Thomas Aquinas's discussion on the ways in which Jesus is a person insofar as he is a human.

II. Premise (1)

Let's consider the incarnational problem of identity line by line, beginning with premise (1). Clearly, God is able to assume *a* concrete human nature. After all, actuality entails possibility. God actually assumed an individual concrete human nature in Nazareth, and so it is possible for God to assume an individual concrete human nature (or, so we can suppose in good faith, as it were). Premise (1) does not merely assert that God can assume *a* concrete human nature, but that God is able to assume *any* concrete human nature. Here 'any' includes those concrete human natures that are the concrete human natures of *actually* existing human person. If premise (1) is true, then there are possible worlds wherein God assumes *your* concrete human nature, *my* concrete human nature, and the concrete human natures of Adolf Hitler and Adolf Eichmann.⁷ This is a bit more surprising, let's see what this thesis entails. Let's begin to unpack (1) by examining the nature of the assumption relation (inasmuch as is possible). The relation of assumption – *x* *assumes* the concrete human nature *y* – brings about a type of union between *x* and *y*. However, this union is incredibly mysterious; in fact, it is so mysterious it is ineffable. Not much can be said about this relation by way of *analysis*. In fact, the Second Council of Constantinople anathematizes against any such analysis,

If anyone, when speaking about the two natures, does not confess a belief in our one lord Jesus Christ, understood in both his divinity and his humanity, so as by this signify a difference of natures of which an *ineffable union has been made*, without confusion, in which neither the nature of the word was changed into the nature of human flesh, nor was the nature of human flesh changed into that of the Word...let him be anathema.⁸

The important point here is that the union that obtains between the two natures is *ineffable*. Ineffable isn't the same as *utterly* indescribable. The first thing we can say about the act of assuming a nature, is that it is a *person* (or more properly, only an omnipotent person) that can assume a concrete human nature. A person who assumes a nature fails to have it at one time, and then at some later time possesses it. This might be a problematic way of putting things.⁹ It is probably safer to say that person assumed natures contingently rather than necessarily.

⁷ Perhaps he can't do this all within the same world, but (1) asserts that there distinct worlds wherein such concrete human natures are assumed. For more discussion on multiple incarnations from the Thomistic perspective, see Pawl (2014).

⁸ Tanner (1990, 117), cited in Pawl (2016).

⁹ Characterizing a person's assumption of a nature in terms of *earlier than* and *later than* is an imperfect way of classifying the nature of assumption, since it seems to preclude what seems possible, that a nature could have been assumed from all eternity (supposing that it is possible that the world be eternal). It also requires that the assuming person can be characterized as existing in time *prior* to the assumption, which might pose problems for the orthodox doctrine that God is atemporal. For an excellent discussion of how to reconcile God's atemporality with the fact that the

In this paper, let's take it for granted that only persons of the Trinity can assume a concrete human nature. In what follows, I will use the phrase "Trinitarian person" to signify a person who is a member of the blessed Trinity – Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. I will use the phrase "non-Trinitarian person" to signify a person who is not identical to a Trinitarian person – i.e., a person who is not the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. Moreover, I will take it for granted that no non-Trinitarian person can become a Trinitarian person, or vice versa. As we will see in our discussion of the derivation of premise (3), we need the following plausible assumption.

- (1a) No non-Trinitarian human person can become a Trinitarian person (i.e., non-Trinitarian *persons* are necessarily distinct from Trinitarian *persons*).

As we will see, this is quite different from holding that a Trinitarian person can become human (this is required by orthodox Christology). This is also quite different from holding that my concrete human nature could become the human nature of a Trinitarian person – which is what premise (1) holds. This assumption – (1a) – is quite reasonable. No non-Trinitarian person can become the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. What premise (1) maintains – to reiterate – is that the *human nature* of any non-Trinitarian human person (*not* any non-Trinitarian human *person*) can become the concrete human nature of a Trinitarian person.

Return to the assumption relation. The assuming person (i.e., the person who performs the act of assuming a concrete nature) must *persist* through the assumption. When the second person of the Trinity assumed Christ's human nature, *that* person – the second person of the Trinity – persisted through the assumption. After the assumption, that Trinitarian person who had a divine nature then became "one divine-and-human person."¹⁰ Is the person divine? Yes. Is the person human? Yes. Is there any way in which we can speak of Jesus Christ as a human person? Yes, *provided* the phrase 'human person' is *not* taken to imply the qualified "merely human" or "solely human," or a multiplicity of persons in Christ.¹¹ Brower (2014, 296) explains the way in which Christ can be described as a human person.

In light of this difference, it might be better to say that whereas ordinary human beings are human persons (full stop), Christ is a human person only in a qualified sense - namely, a person of another sort (a divine person) that happens to be human.

second person of the Trinity assumed a concrete human nature, see: Pawl (2016, 187-209). I think it better to discuss these matters in terms of a person possessing an assumed nature contingently rather than necessarily.

¹⁰ Gorman (2011, 431).

¹¹ On this account, being a human person doesn't entail being *merely* a human person. Human persons can also be divine persons, *in the sense that* the person who is human can also be identical to the person who is divine. Here, special caution is required so as to *not* mistake the statement "Jesus was a human person" as asserting any of the following heretical propositions: (i) Jesus was not a divine person, (ii) Jesus was a human person distinct from the Word, or (iii) Necessarily, the Word is human.

Brower (2014, 296, n. 29) explains this – at least according to St. Thomas – in a bit more detail as follows,

...not only does Aquinas allow that Christ is a human person in the obvious sense that he is both a person and a human being (at least when his soul is united to his body), but he even insists that there is a sense in which Christ can be described as a person *insofar as he is human* (provided we understand the reduplicative phrase properly)...

Initially, this might sound fairly strange, but Aquinas explains,

When the term ‘human’ occurs in a reduplication, it can be taken either for the subject [of human nature] or for the nature. Suppose, therefore, we say ‘Christ is a person, insofar as he is human.’ If ‘human’ is taken for the subject [of the nature], it is obvious that Christ *is* a person, insofar as he is human. For in that case the subject of human nature is nothing other than the Person of the Son of God. On the other hand, if ‘human’ is taken for the nature, then the claim can be understood in two ways. First, it can be understood as saying that human nature must be in a person. And in this sense, the claim is also true, since everything which subsists in human nature is a person. Second, it can be understood as asserting that the personhood proper to Christ derives from his human nature, having been caused by the principles of his human nature. And in this sense, Christ is *not* a person, insofar as he is human. For his human nature is not something existing separately from his divine nature, as this understanding of his person requires. (*ST* III, Q.16, a.12)

As will be explained in the next section, this should not be taken to imply that the person who is a human (*viz.* Christ) is in any way *distinct* from the person who is divine (*viz.* the second person of the Trinity). Part of the great mystery of the Incarnation is simply this very fact of unity of personhood. The person who is divine and existed for all eternity, is the one and same person who became man, was crucified, died, and was buried. The person who is divine is identical to the person who is human. Given this *identity*, there is no threat of Nestorianism afoot.¹² Once again, because it is always good to avoid heresy even on pains of repeating oneself,

¹² However, to avoid slipping into heresy, the Church has found it more convenient to speak of this one person who is human and divine as one divine-and-human person. Gorman (2011, 431) explains,

But who—that is, which person—is Christ? Or to put the question in linguistic terms, which person does the expression “Christ” stand for? It stands for the very same person that expressions like “the Word” or “the Son of God” or “the second person of the Trinity” stand for, and also for the very same person that “Jesus” stands for. The human being at issue is not a different person from the second person of the Trinity but rather the very same person. Christ is one divine-and-human person whose humanity retains its own powers while serving as an instrument of the divinity.

the claim that there is a person who is human (i.e., a human person) does not entail that he is not divine. As mentioned above, I will distinguish between Trinitarian human persons (who are also therefore necessarily divine) and non-Trinitarian human persons (who are necessarily not divine – given (1a)).

The important point is that the person who assumes a concrete human nature (i.e., a Trinitarian person) must *persist through* the assumption. The assuming person exists ‘in’ that newly assumed concrete human nature.

With some (as incomplete as it may be) handle on what is included in the assumption of a concrete human nature – or at least the relationship between the assuming person and the assumed nature – let’s now turn to the second part of premise (1). Begin by considering the phrase “any actually existing non-Trinitarian human persons” in premise (1). Consider the non-Trinitarian human person, Otto. Otto is a human person with a concrete human nature. It is currently an open question just *how* Otto (the person) is related to Otto’s human nature. As we will see in our discussion of premise (5) below, some hylemorphists hold that their relationship is one of identity – Otto is nothing other than Otto’s concrete human nature. But for now, we will leave it an open question just how the person – Otto – is related to Otto’s concrete human nature.¹³ Premise (1) holds that for any non-Trinitarian human person with a concrete human nature, there is a possible world wherein his or her concrete human nature is assumed by a Trinitarian person. In light of the above discussion, that Trinitarian person who assumes Otto’s human nature would persist through the assumption and then exist *in* Otto’s human nature.¹⁴ Therefore, the concrete human nature of Otto would become the concrete human nature of a Trinitarian person. According to premise (1), any concrete human nature can be assumed by a Trinitarian person. Therefore, there is a possible world wherein one of the persons of the Trinity can exist in that concrete human nature.

St. Thomas Aquinas raises a similar question about a similar possibility: could the assumed concrete human nature of Jesus Christ have existed as the concrete human nature of a non-Trinitarian person? In other words, could it have existed unassumed by the Second Person of the Trinity? Aquinas’ answer is somewhat surprising.

As long as the human nature is united to the Word of God, it does not have its own suppositum or hypostasis beyond the person of the Word, because it does not exist in itself. *But if it were separated from the Word,*

¹³ There is in fact many questions in this and related areas that deserve special attention. For example, in addition to how the person – Otto – is related to Otto’s concrete human nature, there is also the important question about what the name “Otto” refers to. We typically take the referent of “Otto” to be a human *person*, but perhaps “Otto” directly refers to a concrete human nature who happens (either necessarily or contingently) to be a person. For discussion of this issue, see Flint (2011) and Pawl (2016, 65-67).

¹⁴ Talk about a person existing “in” an assumed concrete human nature should be understood in the same manner as talk about the second person of the Trinity existing *in* two natures - Christ’s concrete human nature and the divine nature; see Pawl (2016, 14-15).

*it would have, not only its own hypostasis or suppositum, but also its own person; because it would now exist per se.*¹⁵

Again, St. Thomas entertains this apparently metaphysical possibility elsewhere,

For if the human nature had not been assumed by a Divine Person, *the human nature would have had its own personality*; and in this way it is said, although improperly, that the Person "absorbed the person," inasmuch as *the Divine Person by His union hindered the human nature from having its personality.*¹⁶

This entails that it is possible for it to have been the concrete human nature of a non-Trinitarian person. According to the above, there would be a possible world wherein Christ's concrete human nature is not assumed, and so is the concrete human nature of a non-Trinitarian person. If that is correct, then we have the following two metaphysical possibilities: (i) it is *possible* for Christ's human nature to be the human nature of a non-Trinitarian person, and (ii) it is *possible* for Christ's human nature to be the human nature of a Trinitarian person. Therefore, both (i) and (ii) entail that a concrete human nature can be the concrete human nature of distinct persons. This possibility would support premise (1) even if it doesn't directly entail it. An adherent of (1) might argue that until one can prove that this is *not* a genuine metaphysical possibility, one should regard it as something that God could bring about through His omnipotence. Alfred Freddoso (1986) has taken up the challenge of trying to show that St. Thomas did not think (nor should we) that it is *metaphysically* possible for Christ's concrete human nature to exist unassumed. He argues that the counterfactuals asserted by Aquinas, (e.g., "But *if it were* separated from the Word, it *would have*, not only its own hypostasis or suppositum, but also its own person") are best interpreted as *counterpossible* conditionals. However, Richard Cross (1989) has argued that Freddoso's arguments are unconvincing. R.T. Mullins (2015) has also taken up the challenge of refuting premise (1), at least inasmuch as it is found in Flint's (2011) account of salvation. Mullins argues that this thesis is in conflict with the fifth ecumenical council (Constantinople II). Thomas Flint (2016) has replied to Mullins' charge, arguing that there is no such conflict. For the purposes of this paper, all that is needed is an understanding of what it would be for (1) to be true, as well as why it might strike some as an initially plausible theological possibility.¹⁷ That much has been done here.

III. Premise (2)

¹⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Unione Verbi Incarnati*, Q.2, ad.10; emphasis added.

¹⁶ *Summa Theologica*, III, Q.4, a.2, ad.3; emphasis added.

¹⁷ As mentioned above, in the recent literature, Richard Cross (1989), Thomas Flint (2001a), (2001b), and (2012), and Timothy Pawl (2016) and (forthcoming) all find the thesis in (1) highly plausible, if not true.

Premise (2) states, that there can be only one person in any assumed concrete human nature. This premise is held on the basis of the fourth anathema at the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople. The relevant text from the council is cited by Pawl (2016, 15):

Anathema 4: if anyone does not accept the teaching of the holy fathers that the union occurred of the Word of God with human flesh which is possessed by a rational and intellectual soul, and that this union is by synthesis or by person, and that *therefore there is only one person, namely the lord Jesus Christ, one member of the Holy Trinity*: let him be anathema.

It should be noted that this anathema only explicitly condemns particular claims about “the lord Jesus Christ” who is the Son, the Word of God, the second person of the holy Trinity, and his relationship to his divine nature and the concrete human nature that he assumed.¹⁸ Anathema 4 of the second council at Constantinople requires the orthodox Christian faithful to assent to there being *one and only one* person in the assumed concrete human nature of Christ, and that person is the second person of the Holy Trinity. Anathema 4 relates to the condemnation of the Nestorian heresy. One implication of that heresy was that lack of real unity – identity – of persons in Christ. One aspect of the view was that there were two persons – one pertaining to the divine nature and one pertaining to the assumed concrete human nature – in Christ. Joseph Pohle (1913, 89), summarizing this aspect of the Nestorian heresy, writes,

The Nestorian heresy which denied the personal unity of Christ, grew out of the Christological teaching of Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia, who has been called a “Nestorius before Nestorius.” Nestorianism was anathematized by the Third Ecumenical Council held at Ephesus, A.D. 431.

Filling in some details of the Nestorian heresy relevant to premise (2), Pohle (ibid, 90) explains,

These heretical teachings may be summarized as follows: (1) Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, is a different person from the Divine Logos or the son of God. As there are in Christ two different and distinct natures, so there are in Him also two different and distinct persons, one divine, the other human.

¹⁸ It should be emphasized that the fourth anathema of the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople condemned only claims pertaining to *Jesus Christ* and his relationship to the Son. As such, it is too strong to hold that one can be anathematized if she rejects premise (2) in its general form. However, in this section I will argue that although not directly asserted by Second Constantinople, a strong case can be made in favor of premise (2) – even if not explicitly doctrinal – in light of that council. Thanks to a reviewer for pressing me on this point.

Lastly, the canon from the Fourth General Council at Chalcedon (cited in Pohle, 88) reaffirms that there is *one and only one* person in the assumed concrete human nature of Christ, namely, the second person of the Trinity.

...we do with one voice teach one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten, acknowledged to be in two natures, without confusion, change, division, separation; the distinction of natures being by no means destroyed by their union; but rather the distinction of each nature being preserved and concurring in one Person and one Hypostasis; not something that is parted or divided into two persons, but in one and the same and Only-Begotten Son, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Once again, these doctrinal pronouncements only pertain to claims made about a single person – the second person of the Trinity – and a very specific particular concrete human nature. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to maintain that since the councils condemned particular claims of a certain type about *Jesus Christ*, they would have condemned other claims of the same type. To see how this might be, let's consider an example pertaining to another doctrine – the real presence of the body of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

There have been numerous councils whose purpose was the development (clarification) of the doctrine of the Real Presence and Transubstantiation. One ecumenical council of particular relevance for our discussion here is the Council of Constance which condemned various articles held by John Wycliffe pertaining to the relationship between the substance of Christ and the accidents of bread on the altar. In session 8 (May 4, 1415), the council condemned the following articles, among others, of Wycliffe:

2. The accidents of bread do not remain without their subject in the said sacrament.
3. Christ is not identically and really present in the said sacrament in his own bodily persona.¹⁹

Like the doctrinal pronouncements of Christology, these condemnations pertain to very particular theological claims, namely about the relationship between the substance of Christ and the “accidents of bread.” But, surely it is possible for Jesus to have taken, not bread, but rice and transubstantiated it into his body. That this is possible (or in what sense it is possible) might be questioned, but I see no reason to restrict God's power of transubstantiation to some grain products but not others.²⁰ Suppose it is possible for God to transubstantiate rice into His body. Do we have any

¹⁹ Tanner (1990, 411).

²⁰ I am not suggesting that in the actual world rice could be substituted for bread for sacramental purposes, but that Christ could have – from the get go as it were – instituted the Eucharist under the species of rice rather than bread.

clue what should be said about the accidents of the rice after the transubstantiation has taken place? Applying David Lewis's (1973) analysis of counterfactual conditionals, a strong case can be made for the truth of (Rice).²¹

(Rice) If Christ had transubstantiated rice into his body, then it would be the case that one should believe that the accidents of the rice *would* persist and yet not inhere in the substance of Christ.

It seems reasonable to hold that a world at which Christ had transubstantiated rice into his body and at which one should believe that the accidents of the rice *would* persist and yet not inhere in the substance of Christ (because of certain pronouncements of ecumenical councils), would be closer to the actual world than *any* world at which Christ had transubstantiated rice into his body and yet there weren't doctrinal pronouncements (despite the council's knowledge of this event) requiring one to believe that the accidents of the rice *would* persist and yet not inhere in the substance of Christ. In short, even if *actual* doctrine doesn't require believing anything about rice and the accidents of rice, a case can be made that the ecumenical councils *would* have made such doctrinal pronouncements about rice and the accidents of rice under certain conditions (e.g., where Christ took the rice, said the blessing, and...). Therefore, actual doctrine about a particular thing (*bread* and its accidents, or *Christ's* concrete human nature) can be used to justify belief in what should be believed in certain counterfactual situations regarding *other* things (*rice* and its accidents, or *Otto's* concrete human nature).

Let's now return to Christology and premise (2) of the Incarnational Problem of Identity. Premise (2) states that there can be only one person in any assumed concrete human nature. As discussed above, the grounds for this premise were the doctrinal pronouncements of Second Constantinople and Fourth General Council at Chalcedon. But, as noted already, these pronouncements only pertain to *Christ's* concrete human nature. However, in light of our discussion of transubstantiation and the truth of certain theological counterfactuals, we have grounds for holding the general principle in (2) on the basis of those particular doctrinal pronouncements about Christ. Applying the analysis of counterfactuals discussed above, it seems likely (although, as Lewis notes, measuring similarity is always a tricky and fairly imprecise business) that the following counterfactual would come out true.

(Otto Assumption) If a Trinitarian person were to assume Otto's concrete human nature, then it would be the case that we should believe that there is only one person, the Trinitarian person, in that concrete human nature.²²

²¹ I have some concerns for the adequacy of the Lewis-Stalnaker method for evaluating the truth of counterfactuals, but since it is somewhat standard and no analysis is uncontroversial, we'll go with it. For a detailed discussion of the semantics of counterfactuals (and the Lewis-Stalnaker approach in particular), see Bennett (2003, 152-332).

²² Granted, councils can only make pronouncements if they are aware of such things, and so it is implicit in this conditional that the councils are aware of the antecedent being true in that world.

This conditional strikes me as true for the reasons found in orthodox Christology. On the assumption that those ecumenical councils knew about Otto's concrete human nature being assumed (in that counterfactual situation), they would have made doctrinal pronouncements about there being only one person in Otto's concrete human nature. That seems right to me. One of those worlds (where a Trinitarian person assumes Otto's concrete human nature and one at which we should believe that there is only one person, the Trinitarian person, in that concrete human nature) is closer to the actual world than any world at which a Trinitarian person assumes Otto's concrete human nature, but the ecumenical councils (still being aware of that assumption) allow there to be two persons in Otto's concrete human nature. If that's right, then the conditional (Otto Assumption) is true. This seems very reasonable. Since Otto's concrete human nature was selected *arbitrarily*, we can then make the universal generalization that *any* assumed concrete human nature, *n*, would be one such that we should believe there is only one person (the assuming Trinitarian person) in *n*. Therefore, a strong case can be made for the truth of premise (2) on the basis of orthodox Christology.

IV. Premise (3)

Premise (3) is a derived proposition from (1) and (2). Premise (3) states, it is possible for the concrete human nature of any actually existing non-Trinitarian human person to exist without that non-Trinitarian human person existing in that nature. How does (3) follow from the first two premises? On the assumption that it is possible for a Trinitarian person to assume any concrete human nature (which entails that that Trinitarian person persists through the assumption so that it then exists in that concrete human nature), and that only *one* person can exist in any concrete human nature, it follows that after the assumption the Trinitarian person would exist in that concrete human nature. What, then, becomes of the previous non-Trinitarian human person? Given there can be only *one* person in any concrete human nature (from (2)), that prior non-Trinitarian human person would then either become identical to the divine person who assumed that nature (and so continue to exist in that concrete human nature), or it ceases to exist in that concrete human nature (because it either ceases to exist altogether or exists in some *other* concrete human nature). However, given (1a) from section II, the first disjunct is false. Therefore, it follows that it is possible for the concrete human nature of any actually existing (non-Trinitarian) human person to exist without that (non-Trinitarian) human person existing in that nature. That is just what (3) states.

V. Premise (4) and (5)

As discussed at the beginning of this paper, hylemorphic animalism is a metaphysical thesis about the ontology and identity of human persons. According to many hylemorphic animalists, the following identity claims are true.

- (i) Otto (the human person) = a human animal.
- (ii) A human animal = a material substance (i.e., an individual human nature).
- (iii) A material substance = a hylemorphic compound.

Patrick Toner (2011b), takes claim (i) to be central to hylemorphic animalism. In fact, it is defined in terms of claim (i). Toner writes,

And this, then, provides a way to say *exactly* what hylemorphic animalism is: it claims that each of us—*each human person*—is *identical* with an animal.²³

Moreover, it is fairly uncontroversial that hylemorphic animalists hold (ii), namely that human animals are material substances. This claim is also found in Toner's (2011b) and (2014) discussion of hylemorphism. In other words, *material substance* is the basic ontological category into which human animals fall. Toner (2014, 76) writes,

Consider the traditional Aristotelian definition of human: *rational animal*. This definition gives an account of our nature or essence: it asserts that we are animals. It doesn't assert that we are souls that bear some kind of causal relation to animals. It doesn't assert that we are constituted or composed by human animals. It says we *are* human animals. Hylemorphists are animalists.

After holding that human persons are identical to human animals, Toner goes on to endorse the Boethian account of personhood,

The claim here is that anything that is a person is a substance of a certain kind. (Specifically, of a rational kind.) This claim is not especially controversial. Even people who accept a very different account of personhood than Boethius's tend to think that persons are substances.²⁴

Human animals aren't processes, accidents, forms, accidental unities, or abstract objects; human animals are material substances. So, identity claim (ii) also seems fairly uncontroversial among hylemorphic animalists. Being *hylemorphic* animalists, the view also maintains that material substances are to be analyzed in terms of matter and form – i.e., as a hylemorphic compound of matter and form. Just what matter and form *are* is a matter of dispute. Likewise, it is a matter of dispute about just what a hylemorphist should say about the relationship between the constituent hylemorphic parts (whatever they may be) and the compound whole. Is the compound identical

²³ Toner (2011b, 79), emphasis added.

²⁴ Toner (2014, 79).

to the hylemorphic parts? Is it emergent from those hylemorphic parts? Is it constituted by those hylemorphic parts? Once again, thankfully, we will not need to settle – nor even take a stand on – these debates in this paper. What is essential for the Incarnational Problem of Identity are the identity claims in (i) and (ii). Hylemorphic animalists can accept (i) and (ii) while disagreeing about the precise nature of the hylemorphic parts and the nature of the composition relation holding between the parts and the whole. It is fairly clear that once identity claims (i) and (ii) are accepted – as hylemorphic animalists (of the Toner-ian variety) *certainly* will – premise (5) follows. After all, premise (5) is a reworking of those identity claims which are constitutive of the view.

VI. Premise (6)

Premise (6) is simply a statement of the classic law of the necessity of identity. Saul Kripke is usually regarded as the founder of this law in recent literature. Kripke (1971) formulates the law as follows:

It [the law of necessity of identity] says for every object x and object y , if x and y are the same object, then it is necessary that x and y are the same object. And this, I think, if we think about it, (anyway, if someone does not think about it, I will argue for it here), really amounts to something very little different from statement (2) [i.e., $(x) \Box (x=x)$].²⁵

However, unlike Kripke, I will not argue for the truth of this law here. There has been much discussion over whether identity is contingent (varying across both possible worlds and different times within a world), and I certainly could not do this debate justice in the space allotted here.²⁶ In what follows, I will regard this law as a deep-seated metaphysical thesis. A thesis that should not be given up easily. Giving it up would come at a great cost, or so I'm inclined to think. If one is inclined to give up the law of the necessity of identity within the context of other debates in metaphysics (e.g., the problem of material constitution, the problem of identity over time, the problem of transworld-identity, the problem of the many, the problem of personal identity, etc.), then perhaps its denial in this context won't come at any cost. That may be so. Perhaps such a denial is the only way to hold both (1) and (4). Perhaps. I leave it to the reader to evaluate how strongly she regards the truth of (6). Along with a handful of other philosophers, I take (6) to be a deeply rooted thesis. I think a strong case can be made on its behalf independent of questions about philosophical

²⁵ Kripke (1971) reprinted in (2011). John Burgess (2013) has recently returned to Kripke's (1971) proof of the law of the necessity of identity with the hopes of improving understanding and acceptance of it.

²⁶ A focused defense of contingent identity has arisen from within the metaphysical context of the problem of material constitution. In addition to the overview of the debate on modal status of identity in Schwarz (2013), see: Gibbard (1975), Carter (1982) and (1987), Noonan (1997), and Gallois (1998). For particular application to the nature of identity across times, see: Gallois (1998) and (2016), and Myro (1986) reprinted in Rea (1992).

theology, but that case can't be made (or rehearsed) here. If you reject the necessity of identity, then the following won't be very gripping. Be the as it may, let's grant its truth and press on.

VII. Conclusion

At this point, the rest of the argument carries through. Premise (7) is another derived premise from (5) and (6). The consequent of premise (5) is an identity statement about *actually* existing non-Trinitarian human persons being *identical* to their individual concrete human natures. If they are actually identical, then – given (6) – they are necessarily identical. If they are necessarily identical, then it is *not possible* to have one existing without the other. Therefore, if hylemorphic animalism is true, then it is *not possible* for the concrete human nature of an actually existing non-Trinitarian human person to exist without that non-Trinitarian human person existing. And so, (7) follows from (5) and (6). From this (8) clearly follows *via modus ponens* from (4) and (7).

Premise (9) notes the contradiction between (3) and (8); therefore, one of the assumed premises must be false. Possible culprits are: (1), (2), (4), and (6). I take (2) to be well-founded on orthodox Christology. This leaves us with (1), (4), or (6). An adherent of hylemorphic animalism (i.e., an adherent of (4)), would have to deny either (1) or (6), and that is what the conclusion in (10) states. On the supposition that identity is necessary, the hylemorphic animalist *must* (on pains of contradiction) deny (1).

However, the tables can be turned on the hylemorphic animalist. The adherent of (1) and (6) could just as easily argue that the Incarnational Problem of Identity provides sufficient reason for denying the truth of (4). On this version of the argument, the adherent of (1) and (6) can show that hylemorphic animalism must be false. I suspect this is what Flint, Cross, Pawl, and company would say about the Incarnational Problem of Identity. That is a perfectly reasonable thing to argue; after all, a *modus ponens* is just as valid as its respective *modus tollens*. This paper doesn't take a stand on which way the argument should be run. Rather, what has been proven here is a conditional: given orthodox Christology and the necessity of identity, if hylomorphic animalism is true, then (1) is false.²⁷

²⁷ Many thanks to Timothy Pawl, Thomas Flint, Jeremy Sienkiewicz and the participants of the 2015 University of St. Thomas Summer Seminar in Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Theology for helpful discussion on this paper. Many thanks to Kenneth Pearce for reading an earlier draft of this paper and providing helpful comments.

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