

**THOMISTIC HYLOMORPHISM
AND
THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELF-SENSING**

by

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Liebende, euch, ihr einander Genügten
 frag ihr nach uns. Ihr geraft euch. Habt ihr Beweise?
 Seht, mir geschiehts, daß meine Hände einander
 inne werden oder daß mein gebrauchtes
 Gesicht in ihnen sich schont. Das gibt mir ein wenig
 Empfindung. Doch wer wagte darum schon zu sein?
 Ihr aber, die ihr im Entzücken des andern
 zunehmt, bis er euch überwältigt
 anfleht: nich *mehr*—; die ihr unter den Händen
 euch reichlicher werdet wie Traubenjahre;
 die ihr manchmal vergeht, nur weil der andere
 ganz überhandnimmt: euch frag ich nach uns. Ich weiß
 ihr berührt euch so selig, weil die Liebkosung verhält,
 weil die Stelle nicht schwindet, die ihr, Zärtliche,
 zudeckt; weil ihr darunter das reine
 Dauern verspürt. So versprecht ihr euch Ewigkeit fast
 von der Urarmung.

RAINER MARIA RILKE
Duineser Elegien: Die zweite Elegie

Translation by J.B. Leishman and Stephen Spender:

Lovers, to you, each satisfied in the other,
 I turn with my question about us. You grasp yourselves. Have you proofs?
 Look, with me it may happen at times that my hands
 grow aware of each other, or else that my hard worn face
 seeks refuges within them. That gives me a little
 sensation. But who, just for that, could presume to exist?
 You, though, that go on growing
 in the other's rapture till, overwhelmed, he implores
 'No more'; you that under each other's hands
 grow more abundant like vintage grapes;
 sinking at times, but only because the other
 has so completely emerged; I ask you about us. I know
 why you so blissfully touch: because the caress persists,
 because it does not vanish, the place that you
 so tenderly cover; because you perceive thereunder
 pure duration. Until your embraces almost
 promise eternity.

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ABSTRACT

In this study I show that self-sensing, that is, the interior experience of one's body, as described by some phenomenologists, is evidence for Thomas Aquinas' hylomorphist metaphysics of the human person. Thomistic hylomorphism is the theory that human persons are unified substances composed of an immaterial form or soul, and matter, where the form structures the matter, is the root of its powers, and is subsistent. Self-sensing is not evidence for a theory of what we are such as a form of dualism or materialism.

In this study I fulfill the appeal by analytic Thomists David Braine and John Haldane to incorporate phenomenological data into Thomistic hylomorphism. I synthesize the descriptions of self-sensing given by four phenomenologists who are often considered to be at odds with one another: Max Scheler, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Henry. I contribute to work on methodology in philosophy, demonstrating that phenomenology both provides evidence for metaphysics and requires metaphysics as a foundation, and showing that Aquinas' methodology compares favorably to methodologies used in contemporary metaphysics, especially when it comes to accounting for our experience.

The study is divided into four parts. The first part motivates the study by reviewing work already done on this topic, related questions, and objections to hylomorphism that have been raised by contemporary philosophers. These objections center on the idea of "form"; it is objected, for example, that the notion of form is vague, tries to do too much, is self-contradictory, or is opposed by science. Objections to the combination of phenomenology and metaphysics are also raised. In later chapters I show that these objections can be defeated by a phenomenologically supported hylomorphism. In this first chapter, Thomistic and phenomenological methods are examined and compared to those of contemporary metaphysics.

I demonstrate that Thomistic hylomorphism is a more experientially-based theory than other medieval hylomorphisms and that the work of my four chosen phenomenologists is truer to our experience than the work of some other phenomenologists, such as Edmund Husserl.

In the second part, I present in detail Aquinas' accounts of human powers and of the nature of the human person. Here I make it clear, through a review of further objections, that this theory requires greater evidence than has been provided by other thinkers.

In the third part, I present, critique, and synthesize descriptions of the experience of self-sensing. In self-sensing we have a tacit sense of where our limbs are, what we are feeling and sensing, what we are able to do, and of our subjective interiority. In this experience we are aware of our bodies as being both experiencing subjects and as material objects, and we are aware of being able to subjectively transcend all consideration of our material bodies. I show that this experience is a necessary condition for other experiences and so it indicates our nature more than other experiences do. I demonstrate that our experiential and third-person-describable aspects are closely related but irreducible to one another, and that the phenomenology of self-sensing indicates the need for a metaphysical account to explain this experience. In synthesizing the accounts, I phenomenologically analyze the experience, so as to show which aspects of each account are correct, and how the accounts are compatible with one another.

In the fourth part, I show that Thomistic hylomorphism answers well the question of what we are metaphysically in order to self-sense. The structure of self-sensing is evidence that a human person is a material body with powers rooted in a form, which structures but transcends the body. I show that phenomenological accounts of self-sensing cohere with Aquinas' account of self-awareness and with his view of our powers in general. I demonstrate that phenomenologically supported hylomorphism can refute objections to hylomorphism.

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

A philosophical account of the human person requires an answer to the question “what are we, most fundamentally?”¹ The answer to this question is important both in itself and for the implications it has for questions regarding our personal identity, the nature of the mind, and our ethical commitments.² We seek to answer the question of what we are using scientific data, descriptions of experience, broader metaphysical systems, analyses of language, solutions to puzzles, and intuitions about real-life cases and thought experiments. One radically non-reductionistic answer to this question is the theory known as Thomistic hylomorphism, proposed by Thomas Aquinas. This theory has received a fair amount of support in recent debates about what we are, but a number of objections to it have also been raised, including that this theory is philosophically confused and divorced from our experience. In this study, I seek to answer the questions of why we should believe in such a theory and whether there is any experiential evidence for it. I argue that the experience of self-sensing, as described by the phenomenologists Max Scheler, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Henry, provides experiential evidence for the Thomistic hylomorphic account of what we are.³

¹ The importance of this question for contemporary philosophy is highlighted in Eric T. Olson, *What Are We?: A Study in Personal Ontology*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 3; Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, (Oxford: OUP, 1984), 202; Dean Zimmerman, “Material People”, in Michael Loux and Dean Zimmerman, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*, (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 491, available on author’s website.

² cf. David Braine, *The Human Person: Animal and Spirit*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 1992), 15-16; Olson, *What are We*, 19-22. Consider also the approach taken by Thomas Aquinas to ethics throughout *ST I-II* and *II-II*, where ethical principles are rooted in the powers and acts described in his philosophical anthropology, outlined in *ST I*, q.75-89; see Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 17.

³ Some important recent papers that support Thomistic hylomorphism are: Bernardo Carlos Bazan, “The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas’ Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism”, *Archives d’histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen age* 64 (1997): 95-126; Jason T. Eberl, “Aquinas on the Nature of Human Beings”, *Review of Metaphysics* 58 (2004):

I. OUTLINE OF THE BASIC ARGUMENT

Brief explanation of my basic argument, Thomistic hylomorphism, and the phenomenology of self-sensing are necessary at the outset of this study. The accounts of these positions in this section and of my fundamental terminology in the next section are necessarily rather rough and cursory, but more detailed explanations of these issues will be given throughout this study, after a few other introductory matters have been explained.

According to Thomistic hylomorphism, we human persons are substances composed of a principle of potentiality called “matter” and a principle of actuality called “form”.⁴ A substance, according to Aquinas, has an essence or nature, and exists by itself and not as an attribute of

333-367; John Haldane, “The Breakdown of Contemporary Philosophy of Mind”, in John Haldane, ed., *Mind, Metaphysics, and Value in the Aristotelian Tradition*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 2002), 54-75; Gyula Klima, “Aquinas on the Materiality of the Human Soul and the Immateriality of the Human Intellect”, *Philosophical Investigations* 32 (2009): 163-182; David S. Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, *Social Philosophy and Policy* 22 (2005): 70-99; Eleonore Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism”, *Faith and Philosophy* 12 (1995). See also Braine, *The Human Person* and Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*. Some important objections are raised in: Gordon P. Barnes, “The Paradoxes of Hylomorphism”, *Review of Metaphysics* 56 (2003): 501-523; David Hershenov, “Soulless Organisms? Hylomorphism vs. Animalism”, *ACPQ* 85 (2011): 465-482; William Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 168-170; Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 27-28, 119, 123-125, 136; Olson, *What Are We*, 171-176

⁴ *In II DA*, lect. 1; *QDDA*, a. 1; *SCG II*, c. 69-72; *ST* q. 75, a. 1 and 4; q. 76, a. 1. ‘Hylomorphic’ refers to a combination of form and matter, and so some contend that Aquinas’ theory should not strictly be called ‘hylomorphism’ because the soul, according to him, is also subsistent, not just a form; this point was raised to me by John Thorp. However, the terms ‘hylomorphism’ and ‘hylomorphic’ have become standard in contemporary discussions of the anthropology of Aristotle and Aquinas, so I follow this usage here. I also use ‘hylomorphic’ rather than ‘hylemorphic’ due to common usage; the latter is strictly more correct, since this term is derived from the Greek *hule* (matter) and *morphē* (form); see Patrick Toner, “Hylemorphic Animalism”, forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*. In this study, biographical and bibliographical background on Aquinas was drawn largely from Jean-Pierre Torrell, Robert Royall, trans., *St. Thomas Aquinas*, v. 1, *The Person and His Work*, (Washington: CUA Press, 2005); John Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, (Washington: CUA Press, 2000).

something else.⁵ The human person is a substance that has a bodily and intellectual nature. Like other substances, the human person must be explained in terms of his or her actuality and potentiality; indeed, the way in which hylomorphism focuses on these principles is what most sets it apart from many other theories of what we are. The ideas of actuality and potency are central to Thomistic metaphysics, as they explain the metaphysical composition of everything there is. ‘Potentiality’ refers to any ability to exist in some way, to have some attribute, to undergo some change, or to perform some action. ‘Actuality’ refers to in fact existing, having some attribute, undergoing some change, or performing some action.⁶ To exist is to be actual, on Aquinas’ theory.⁷ The sorts of actuality and potency exhibited in what it is to be human are the basic principles of human nature, the answers to the question of what we are. That we are made of matter refers to the fact that we are made of something that can potentially be many particular things. But we are actually human persons and remain so over time; this fact is explained by our form or soul, which is the principle that configures our matter and makes it to be an actually existing human body. Indeed, each substance has a form that makes it be what it is. We are thus made of two basic principles: a particular sort of matter, which accounts for our potency, and a particular sort of form, which accounts for our actuality.⁸

Form, the principle of what we actually are, also accounts for our “powers” (*potentiae*,

⁵ *In IV Sent.*, d.12, q.1, a.1, ql.1, ad 2; *DEE* 5-19, 34-35.; *DPN* 1. cf. Etienne Gilson, L.K. Shook, trans., *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 1994), 29-31; Gyula Klima, “Contemporary “Essentialism” vs. Aristotelian Essentialism”, in John Haldane, ed., *Mind, Metaphysics and Value in the Thomistic and Analytic Traditions*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 2002); Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 36-41, 111-112; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 229-231.

⁶ *DPN* 1-4; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 296-298.

⁷ *DEE*, 18, 20; *SCG* I, c.22; *ST*, I, q.3, a.4. See Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed., (Toronto: PIMS, 1952), 183-189; *Christian Philosophy*, 29f., 60; David Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 121 Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 33-35, 172.

⁸ *DEE*, 18; *In I Phys.*, lect.19; *In VII Met.*, lect.17; *In II DA*, lect.1; Stump, *Aquinas*, 36-37.

ves, *virtutes*), our abilities to perform actions and to receive effects from the world.⁹ For example, we have powers to grow, to see, to love, and to think. A focus on our various powers and their hierarchical relations is also a central feature of Thomistic hylomorphism, and this focus also sets hylomorphism apart from other theories of what we are. Most of our powers require the potentiality of matter, since they involve material interactions with the world, but some of our powers, Aquinas contends, are exercised apart from matter. These include our powers to understand the world intellectually and to will freely. The intentionality of these powers, that is, the way in which they allow us to apprehend objects without changing into those objects, cannot be explained in terms of matter.¹⁰ By examining the sorts of actuality and potentiality that we exhibit in exercising our powers, we can come to understand our fundamental nature.¹¹ In this way Aquinas argues that the human form or soul is both the principle that actualizes our matter, forming it into a human body with its powers, structure, and unity, and a subsistent thing that transcends the body. A human person is a unified substance composed of form and matter, but he or she is also dual in that some of his or her powers are bodily and others transcend the body. The form or soul requires matter but also transcends it.¹² The human person is both a material thing among other material things in the world and an

⁹ *In II DA*, lect.2, n.240; see also lect.4 and 11; *QDDA*, a.7; *DOO*; *ST*, q.77, a.3.

¹⁰ *DEE*, 56; *In II DA*, lect.5, n.282-285; *In III DA*, lect.13, no.787; *In DSS* lect.1; *DV*, q.1, a.1; *QQ* 7, q.1, a.4; *SCG* II, c.73-74, 98; *ST*, I, q.75, a.2; q.84, a.2; I-II, q.22, a.2. cf. Aristotle, *DA* III.4.430a4; Caitlin Smith Gilson, *The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Being in the World*, (New York: Continuum, 2010), 42, 62-64; Robert Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1997), 33, 295f.

¹¹ *In II DA*, lect.6, n.180-186. cf. *DA* II.4.415a19; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 336.

¹² *DOO*; *DUI*, c.3; *QDDA*, a.7-8; *SCG*, c.68; *ST* I, q.76, a.1 and 5. See Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 211-215; Eberl, "Nature of Human Beings", 335-336; Anton C. Pegis, *At the Origins of the Thomistic Notion of Man*, (New York: Macmillan, 1963), 38-41; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 192-199; Armand Maurer, *Medieval Philosophy*, (Toronto: PIMS, 1982), 180-181; Pasnau, "The Mind-Soul Problem", in Paul J.J.M. Bakker, et.al., eds., *Mind, Cognition, and Representation*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), available on author's website, 14-15.

intellectual agent open to understanding all material things and thereby transcending them. This account of what we are shall be considered in detail in Chapter Two. Reasons for considering this view and an explanation of the methodology it presupposes will be discussed in this chapter.

As already mentioned, the thesis of this study is that the experience of self-sensing, as phenomenologically examined, provides evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism. The evidence of this experience allows us to answer the questions of why we should believe this theory and whether there is any experiential evidence for this theory. Also, bolstered by experiential evidence, the hylomorphist can respond to some objections to hylomorphism. These objections, which show how hylomorphism needs more evidence than has been provided up until now, are presented partly in this chapter and partly in the last section of Chapter Two; they are answered in the second section of Chapter Four. These objections provide negative answers to the question of whether there can be experiential evidence for hylomorphism, to which my thesis responds. But while I shall certainly consider such objections, including those raised by the proponents of other theories of what we are, my focus in this study is on working out the ways in which the experience of self-sensing can be used as evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism.

In phenomenology, a number of different questions are asked, all having to do with the structure of experience and of objects given to us experientially. For example, phenomenology considers the structure of various intentional acts and experiences, such as visual experiences or experiences of loving someone. It describes how the objects of these different sorts of intentionality are given, that is, presented or made manifest to us experientially; for instance, it describes how visible physical objects are given in visual intentional experience. A phenomenologist describing this sort of intentionality might describe how visible objects are given as having some sides present to one's sight and other sides absent or hidden from one's

sight but still implicitly given or known. The various sides of the object and the ways in which these sides can come into view are all related to one another in definite ways; the structure of visual intentionality is discoverable by focusing on and describing the experience.¹³

Furthermore, the phenomenologist inquires into conditions that need to be in place to have certain experiences, the relationship among various acts and experiences, and what it means for an object to be given or manifested in experience in the first place. In inquiring into the conditions and relations among experiences, a phenomenologist might examine how certain experiences are presupposed by and always accompany acts of vision, such as experiences of ocular movement, having a body, and the passage of time.¹⁴ Various layers of a particular act of vision are explored by a phenomenological inquiry. For example, a phenomenologist might argue that the experience of seeing a tree involves seeing a colored patch, and then subsuming this colored patch under various ideas, such as the ideas of tree, living thing, physical object, and object in general, each of which is in turn given experientially in some describable way. Phenomenology makes sense of our ideas by considering how they are given in experience, the variations to which these ideas are open, what sort of intentionality they are presented to, and what other acts are related to their presentation.¹⁵ In inquiring into the nature of givenness or manifestation, a phenomenologist might examine how the manifestation of anything at all in one's conscious intentional experience involves receptivity to what is manifested or presupposes an openness to what is beyond oneself.¹⁶ Phenomenology describes objects and experiences as

¹³ Edmund Husserl, *LI*, 220-222. cf. Emmanuel Levinas, "On *Ideas*", in *DEH*, 4-6; Jean-Luc Marion, *BG*, 126; Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, (Evanston: NWU Press, 1974), 21-23, 86-89; Max Scheler, *F*, 56.

¹⁴ Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 192-196; Levinas, "The Work of Edmund Husserl", in *DEH*, 76-78; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, xii-xiii.

¹⁵ Husserl, *Ideas 3*, 1-9, 27-32; Levinas, "Work", in *DEH*, 54-56; Marion, *BG*, 23-33.

¹⁶ *BG*, 264-266; *PP*, xi-xii; Max Scheler, *MPN*, 39-40.

they are “lived” or consciously experienced, not primarily in terms of their physiological or causal bases.¹⁷ But this examination of lived experience includes everything given in experience, not just the qualitative features of experience or “what it is like” to have an experience.

Scheler, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Henry describe a set of experiences, which they refer to as the experience of self-sensing or the experience of life.¹⁸ In such experiences I experience myself as both sensing and as sensible. I experience myself as a material thing among other material things in the world, but also as transcending my materiality. I experience myself as both receptive and as active, in various ways. There are many aspects to such an experience that can be phenomenologically distinguished and there are many examples of such an experience. These will be considered, following the descriptions of the four phenomenologists, in Chapter Three. When we inquire as to what we must be like most fundamentally in order to be the sorts of things that have such an experience, we discover the Thomistic hylomorphist account of the human person. This argument will be made in Chapter Four. Some phenomenologists contend that their work automatically yields an account of what we are. In the final section of this chapter and in Chapter Three I shall argue, against various phenomenological objections, that further metaphysical and natural philosophical reasoning about the evidence of experience is necessary to come to an account of what we are. A phenomenological account of experience

¹⁷ Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 113, 131; Levinas, “The Permanent and the Human in Husserl”, in *DEH*, 138; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, xiv. Phenomenology does consider how the idea of causality and real causal connections are given to and even condition experience; see Husserl, *Ideas 3*, 3-4; Merleau-Ponty, *VI*, 231-234; Scheler, *CHB*, 402.

¹⁸ Such experiences, described in these and similar terms, are considered by each of the four thinkers I will focus on in this study. See for instance: Max Scheler, *CHB*, 77-78, 146, 167, 170-172, 190, 405, 418-420; *F*, 94-96, 106-107, 398-424; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 63-67, 100-102, 473-474, 500-503; *VI*, throughout the entire book, especially: p.9, all of ch.4, p.248-251; Emmanuel Levinas, *EE*, 47; *TI*, 135-140, 144-146, 229, 239, 257-259; *OBBE*, 31, 51, 54-56, 63-64, 68-80, 109, 111; Michel Henry, *EM*, 285, 290-293, 462-465, 475-476, 498-504, 604-606; *PPB*, 25, 54-58.

cannot directly tell us what we are, but it does provide important evidence for such an account. Thus, in this study, I shall not argue that the phenomenology of self-sensing proves or directly points us toward Thomistic hylomorphism; rather, when examined using the Aristotelian method of metaphysics and natural philosophy, the phenomenology of self-sensing can be seen as providing experiential evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism.¹⁹

An example of an experience of self-sensing is the experience of one hand touching the other. This experience can be easily achieved by the reader; in this way the reader can verify the phenomenological descriptions given here and elsewhere throughout this study.

Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes this experience as follows:

If my left hand is touching my right hand, and if I should suddenly wish to apprehend with my right hand the work of my left hand as it touches, this reflection of the body upon itself always miscarries at the last moment: the moment I feel my left hand with my right hand, I correspondingly cease touching my right hand with my left hand. But this last-minute failure does not drain all truth from that presentiment I had of being able to touch myself touching: my body does not perceive, but it is as if it were built around the perception that dawns through it; through its whole internal arrangement, its sensory-motor circuits, the return ways that control and release movements, it is, as it were, prepared for a self-perception, even though it is never itself that is perceived not itself that perceives.²⁰

...my hand, while it is felt from within is also accessible from

¹⁹ This argument may seem circular here; it will be elaborated on and shown to be not circular in Section V of this chapter.

²⁰ *VI, 9*; original text in *Le Visible et l'invisible*, Claude Lefort, ed., (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), 24: "Si ma main gauche touche ma main droite, et que je veuille soudain, par ma main droite, saisir le travail de ma main gauche en train de toucher, cette réflexion du corps sur lui-même avorte toujours au dernier moment: au moment où je sens ma gauche avec ma droite, je cesse dans la même mesure de toucher ma main droite de ma main gauche. Mais cet échec du dernier moment n'ôte pas toute vérité à ce pressentiment que j'avais de pouvoir me toucher touchant: mon corps ne perçoit pas, mais il est comme bâti autour de la perception qui se fait jour à travers lui; par tout son arrangement interne, par ses circuits sensori-moteurs, par les voies de retour qui contrôlent et relancent les mouvements, il se prépare pour ainsi dire à une perception de soi, même si ce n'est jamais lui qu'il perçoit ou lui qui le perçoit."

without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example, if it takes its place among the things that it touches, is in a sense one of them, opens finally upon a tangible being of which it is a part. Through this crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible, its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate...Already in the “touch” we have just found three distinct experiences which subtend one another, three dimensions which overlap but are distinct: a touching of the sleek and the rough [textures of my hands], a touching of the things—a passive sentiment of the body and of its space—and finally a veritable touching of the touch, when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpitating the things, where the “touching subject” passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things.²¹

In this experience, as described here, I experience the touched hand as a material thing with an intelligible structure, an “internal arrangement”, which to some extent escapes my perception and to some extent “built around” or organized to facilitate my perception. I experience the touching hand as both receptive to sensible qualities (“the sleek and the rough”) and to objects with a more intelligible content (“hand”). Each hand tries to “become” or coincide with the other intentionally, to come to know all of the other hand’s features. The touching hand also active: sensing one hand with another requires moving the hands over one another; passive sensation and active motion are linked in a “sensory-motor circuit”, and each aspect of this “circuit” is oriented towards exploring and “interrogating” or investigating things in the world.

²¹ VI, 133-4; original text in *Le Visible*, 176: “...en même temps que sentie du dedans, ma main est aussi accessible du dehors, tangible elle-même, par exemple, pour mon autre main, si elle prend place parmi les choses qu’elle touche est en un sens l’une d’elles, ouvre enfin sur un être tangible dont elle fait aussi partie. Par ce recroisement en elle du touchant et du tangible, ses mouvents propres s’incorporent à l’univers qu’ils interrogent...Déjà dans le “toucher”, nous venons de trouver trois expériences distinctes qui se sous-tendent, trois dimensions qui se recouperent, mais sont distinctes: un toucher du lisse et du rugueux, un toucher des choses,—un sentiment passif du corps et de son espace—, et enfin un véritable toucher du toucher, quand ma main droite touche ma main gauche en train de palper les choses, par lequel le “sujet touchant” passe au rang de touché, descend dans les choses, de sorte que le toucher se fait du milieu du monde et comme en elles.”

The active and passive, and material and intentional features of my hands as experienced “crisscross”: each hand has all of these features, and my conscious attention slides between these features in each of the hands. Matter, movement, sensation, and sensorimotor powers are all constitutive of this experience, and all help to explain one another: no one of these is given as reducible to one of the others. Although these passages do not reveal it, self-sensing also involves affectivity, an experience of exerting effort and of being a material thing resisted by other material things, and an experience of having a subjective interiority that transcends the body. In Chapter Three, these and other aspects of such experiences of self-sensing will be considered as the phenomenologists Max Scheler, Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Henry describe them.²² I shall argue that each of these features of self-sensing is evidence for some aspect of the Thomistic hylomorphism.

Before turning to a detailed consideration of Thomistic hylomorphism and the phenomenology of self-sensing, a few further introductory matters must be considered. In the next section, a few key terms will be disambiguated. These terms are prevalent throughout this study and the different writers considered here use them in very different ways. I shall clarify the different meanings with which these terms are used and also explain how I use them. In the third section of this chapter, the reasons why this study is important will be considered, along with a summary of work that has already been done toward defending my thesis. In the fourth section, the scope of this work shall be strictly delineated, including a justification as to why I consider the particular thinkers that I do rather than others. In the final section of this chapter, I shall describe and defend phenomenological and metaphysical methodologies used in this study.

²² The order in which these philosophers are listed here and elsewhere in the paper is a historical order. Scheler’s work was done during the first three decades of the 20th century; Merleau-Ponty’s mainly during the 1940’s and 1950’s; Levinas’ most important works were written during the 1940’s through the 1970’s; and Henry’s mainly from the 1960’s to the 1990’s.

II. DISAMBIGUATION OF TERMS

In this study, the term ‘phenomenology’ means the branch or method of philosophy that examines the structure of experience in as broad a sense as possible. Some philosophers restrict phenomenology to the study of only intentional experiences, that is, experiences that are clearly and explicitly directed toward some object, but I do not so restrict the term.²³ Phenomenology can also consider non-intentional experiences and events that are transcendent to experience but that condition or affect experience.

‘Phenomenology’ is sometimes used to refer to the “*qualia*” or “what it is like” to have an experience. In this sense, the phenomenology of an experience is the felt quality of that experience which seems to exceed any causal or physical explanation, and which can only be described from a first-person perspective, rather than from a third-person perspective, that is, from a point of view that is not a particular person’s.²⁴ The fact that experience has a phenomenology in this sense is sometimes cited as evidence that the nature of the person cannot be explained in reductively materialistic terms, since the phenomenology of an experience is always left out of such an explanation.²⁵ This is not the sense in which I use ‘phenomenology’,

²³ Regarding this restricted meaning of ‘phenomenology’ see Dominique Janicaud, Bernard Prusak, trans., “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology”, in *Phenomenology and the Theological Turn*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 92-99.

²⁴ Good discussions of phenomenology in the sense of *qualia* include: David Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 4ff.; Frank Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia”, *Philosophical Quarterly* 32 (1982): 127-136; Joseph Levine, “Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap”, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 354-361; Jose Mussachio, “Why do Qualia and the Mind Seem Non-Physical?”, *Synthese* 137 (2005): 425-460; Thomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?”, *Philosophical Review* 4 (1974): 435-450; David Woodruff Smith and Amie L. Thomasson, “Introduction” to *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*, (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 7-8; Dan Zahavi, *Self-Awareness and Alterity*, (Evanston: NWU Press, 1999), 111-113.

²⁵ By ‘reductive materialism’, I mean any theory of materialism that contends that all phenomena are “nothing but” or “can be entirely reduced to” matter, as opposed to ‘non-reductive materialism’, by which I mean those theories of materialism which allow that consciousness

though I do not dismiss such arguments against reductive materialism. In the sense in which I am using it, phenomenology takes into account not only the felt “what it is like” of an experience, but also the sort of intentionality involved in the experience, the conditions for the experience, the connections between this experience and other experiences, and an account of the bodily structures involved in the experience. A phenomenological account of an experience includes an account of the felt quality of the experience, but it also includes a good deal more.

Phenomenology in my sense seeks to describe experience exactly as it happens to us, with all its aspects, not just felt or introspected mental states, for the sake of clarifying the significance or meaning that our experiences and the things that we experience have for us. As we shall see, phenomenologically supportedhylomorphism gives us good reasons to think that the “what it is like” of an experience is not as separate from our physical aspects as is sometimes supposed. It also gives us good reasons to reject the idea that everything in the world or that we experience is “first-person” or “third-person”, “mental” or “physical”.²⁶ Furthermore, while this is not my focus here, such an account helps us to see the inadequacies with materialism and dualism, and to see that there is more to experience than *qualia* with which materialism has trouble.

The terms ‘act’ and ‘experience’ can be ambiguous in ordinary language, in phenomenology, and in Thomistic metaphysics. In Aquinas, ‘act’ can, in the first place, refer to the general metaphysical idea of actuality (*actualitas*) and being in act (*in actu*); something is actual or in act when it exists in some way. This is in distinction to something existing or having

and perhaps some other phenomena are not entirely reducible to or explainable in terms of matter, but are a new kind of phenomena that, on some such theories, emerges from matter.

²⁶ I shall explain these distinctions and their importance for this study in greater detail in Chapter Two. For a good account of this distinction that supports it see Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 236-241. For a good account of this distinction that rejects it see Braine, *Human Person*, 19-41.

some attribute potentially.²⁷ In this sense, ‘act’ can refer to actually having some power or actuality without exercising it or without it giving rise to further operations; thus, habits and the soul itself are called acts in this sense.²⁸

Second, ‘act’ refers to the category of action (*actio*) or acting (*agere*), which is one of the ten categories of being in Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics. The ten categories are, for Aquinas, the most general kind of beings that there are. An action is a kind of accident that a substance can have. We can ascribe an action to a substance insofar as it is rooted in the substance, or, as Aquinas says, insofar as the substance is its principle (*principium*). Thus, for instance, “running” is an action: it is a predicate that we can ascribe to someone, as when we say, “Socrates is running”.²⁹ The principle of this predicate, that is, its origin or cause, is a power belonging to Socrates. This is in distinction, for instance, to the category of passion or “being acted upon” (*passio*) into which accidents fall that are ascribed to a substance insofar as it receives some action.³⁰

Third, ‘act’ can be synonymous with Aquinas’ term ‘operation’ (*operatio*). Aquinas uses this term for all the ways in which a substance exercises its powers. Operations can include actions and passions. For instance, the operation of the power of vision is a passion insofar as it involves receiving the form of the thing seen. It is also an action of the living thing that is doing the seeing, since the foundation for the operation is the visual power, and ultimately, the essence of the living thing. ‘Operation’ can refer to instances of these actualizations, as in a particular act

²⁷ *DPN*, 1, 9-10. cf. Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, 121-122; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 128-131, 296.

²⁸ *In II DA*, lect.1, n.216.

²⁹ This example is my own.

³⁰ *In V Met.*, lect.9; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 215.

of seeing, or it can refer to an act universally speaking, as in the act of seeing in general.³¹

In phenomenology, ‘act’ refers to some exercise of intentionality. Phenomenologists speak, for example, of the act of perception, the act of judgment, the act of insight, and so on. Intentional acts contain their objects; thus, a given object—for instance, a tree—is experienced as having a particular meaning because of the act in which it is contained—for instance, the act of perceiving something as a tree or the act of judging something to be a tree.³² This is contrasted to various sorts of ‘passivity’, in which there is no conscious act of intending some object *as* something, but only a non-intentional experience of, for instance, a sensory field.³³ Both our acts and our passivities are operations in the Thomistic sense. In this study, I use the term ‘act’ to refer all of our operations, and so to both acts and passivities in the phenomenological sense.

In addition, the phenomenologists also sometimes use the terms ‘actuality’ and ‘potentiality’. ‘Actuality’ refers to the state of an object insofar as it is an intentional object, while ‘potentiality’ refers to all the possible ways in which that object can be given intentionally. For example, if I look at a book before me on the desk, its actuality is the way in which it is actually given right now, the way in which it correlates to my visual intentionality. But I also experience it as having an infinite potentiality: all the various perspectives that it could give to me intentionally.³⁴ In this study, these terms will be used in their Thomistic senses.

‘Experience’ also can be understood in several senses. Aquinas defines ‘experience’ (*experimentum*) as what is taken from many retained memories or sense images.³⁵ Experience is

³¹ *In I DA*, lect. 19; *ST I*, q.54, a.2, ad 2.

³² Husserl, *Ideas I*, 64-65, 71-80, 221-222, 271-272; *LI*, Investigation Six, 100-101, 113-115.

³³ cf. Levinas, “Humanism and An-Archy”, in *CPP*, 132-136; “No Identity”, in *CPP*, 145-146.

³⁴ Husserl, *CM* 2.19 and 20, 3.25 and 26, p.44-49, 58-60.

³⁵ *In II Post An*, lect.20: “...experimentum nihil aliud esse videtur quam accipere aliquid ex multis in memoria retentis.”; cf. *In II DA*, lect.13, n.398; *In DMR.*, lect.2; *In I Met.*, lect.1, n.15, 29; *SCG II*, c.83; Peter King, “Two Conceptions of Experience”, *Medieval Philosophy*

the operation of the estimative or cogitative power (*vis cogitativa*), in virtue of which we consider individual sensed objects *as* something. Experience involves taking in many sense impressions of a thing so as to have a practical and particular understanding of that thing, taking it *as* something. Experience is a more developed awareness of a thing than mere sense perception. For Aquinas, experience is narrower than awareness; for example, we are aware of the objects of our senses, but this does not count as “experience” on Aquinas’ definition.³⁶ Nevertheless, Aquinas sometimes uses ‘experience’ more broadly, to cover further sorts of conscious awareness, including sense perception, as when he says, “perception indicates a certain experiential acquaintance”.³⁷ Aquinas furthermore sometimes calls some non-sensory forms of consciousness, such as religious experiences, types of “experience” (*experimentum*) as well.³⁸ ‘Experience’ in Aquinas thus has a restricted, technical sense, referring to a certain kind of intentionality directed at individual sensory objects, and taking them as something. But it also has a broader sense, referring to all sorts of conscious awareness.

In phenomenology, ‘experience’ likewise is sometimes taken in a broad and in a narrow sense. In its narrow sense, ‘experience’ refers to the content of intentional acts that is clearly given in conscious awareness. ‘Experience’ in this sense excludes instances of consciousness in which some content is not given explicitly, such as various forms of tacit consciousness which will be described in Chapter Three. In a broad sense, ‘experience’ includes all episodes of

and Theology 11 (2003): 211-215.

³⁶ *In II DA*, lect.13, n.383, 390; *In III DA*, lect.1 and 2, esp. n.588. cf. Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 50-60.

³⁷ *ST I*, q.43, a.5, ad 2: “...perceptio enim experimentalem quandam notitiam significat”. cf. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, trans., *The Glory of the Lord*, v.1, *Seeing the Form*, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1982), 287.

³⁸ cf. *SCG II*, c.76; *ST II-II*, q.97, a.2, ad 2.

conscious awareness, no matter how obscure or non-intentional.³⁹ The broad sense of ‘experience’ in both Thomism and phenomenology correspond to one another and in this study ‘experience’ is used in this sense.

‘Self-sensing’ can also be used in more or less restricted senses. By ‘self-sensing’ I mean experiences in which one is aware of oneself in a sensory or affective way. ‘Self-sensing’ does not refer to intellectual thinking about what one is or what one’s essence is.⁴⁰ ‘Self-sensing’ is also, in my sense, not restricted to the awareness of a qualitative “sense of self” or contentless “background hum...that is somehow fundamental to consciousness”.⁴¹ If there is any such sort of experience, it is included in self-sensing, but self-sensing includes other kinds of awareness than this. Self-sensing is more differentiated than a vague “background” feeling of one’s existence.⁴²

‘Life’ is another term that has multiple senses and that has several terms to which it has been historically related. In Thomistic philosophy, ‘life’ and its cognates can be understood in several ways. ‘Life’ (*vita*) and ‘to live’ (*vivere*) are related to one another as abstract and concrete terms.⁴³ These terms have to do with beings that are essentially able to move themselves, not just be moved by outside forces, such as plants and animals. In its most precise sense, ‘to live’ signifies existing as something having a nature that allows one to move oneself.⁴⁴ Aquinas sums this up in a phrase he draws from Aristotle: “to live is to exist for living things”

³⁹ Husserl, *LI*, Investigation Six, 84-85, 101, 109-112.

⁴⁰ Aquinas distinguishes perception of the self and thinking about the self intellectually at *DV*, q.10, a.8; *ST I*, q.87, a.1. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 337-347.

⁴¹ Chalmers, *Conscious Mind*, 10.

⁴² Matthew Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 109.

⁴³ *ST I*, q.18, a.2: “...vivere nihil aliud est quam esse in tali natura, et vita significat hoc ipsum, sed in abstracto...”; q.54, a.1, ad 2: “...vita non hoc modo se habet ad vivere, sicut essentia ad esse; sed sicut cursus ad currere, quorum unum significat actum in abstracto, aliud in concreto.” cf. James Royce, “Life and Living Beings”, *Modern Schoolman* 37 (1960): 217; Albert Wingell, “‘*Vivere Viventibus Est Esse*’ in Aristotle and St. Thomas”, *Modern Schoolman* 38 (1961):115.

⁴⁴ *ST I*, q.18, a.1.

(*vivere viventibus est esse*).⁴⁵ ‘To live’ or ‘living’ (*vivere*) is not accidentally predicated of a living thing. It signifies what a living thing essentially and actually is; it indicates the type of substance that the living thing is. ‘Life’ (*vita*) signifies this substantial nature taken in the abstract.⁴⁶ It can even indicate the “to be” or existence (*esse*) of a living thing, that is, its actuality or actual existence.⁴⁷ Life is a perfection of existence, since it adds to simple existence the tendency to move toward other things, to not just remain in oneself, as non-living things do.⁴⁸ ‘Life’ and ‘soul’ are closely connected, since the latter refers to the actuality of a living body and the principle that makes a body actually alive and able to move itself.⁴⁹

We cannot directly observe the essence of living things, according to Aquinas; rather, we reason to an account of a substance’s essence on the basis of observing its operations. ‘Life’ and ‘living’ are sometimes taken to indicate not the essential nature, substance, or existence of a living thing, but its operations, that is, all the actions and passions by which a living thing manifests that it is alive. In this more common but less precise sense of the terms, ‘life’ and ‘living’ indicate operations such as growth, reproduction, sensation, appetite, locomotion, and understanding. Self-motion sums up what all of these operations have in common and so it indicates the necessary and sufficient condition for something being alive. These operations are not just indications of the essence of life or acts that follow from that essence, but they are also the ways in which an organism perfects itself. An account of the operations of which an

⁴⁵ *ST I*, q.18, a.2, s.c.; Aristotle, *DA II*.415b9. See Royce, “Life”, 218; Wingell, “*Vivere*”, 107

⁴⁶ *ST I*, q.18, a.2.

⁴⁷ *ST I*, q.18, a.2, ad 1. See Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 96, 154; Royce, “Life”, 218.

⁴⁸ *In DC*, lect.18; *QQ 7*, q.1, a.4; *ST I*, q.4, a.2, ad 3. cf. John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 20, 31, 34; Rudi Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality in Thomas Aquinas*, (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 265-272.

⁴⁹ *In II DA*, lect.1. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 187-188; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 33-38.

organism is capable is necessary for a complete account of it.⁵⁰

‘Life’ is used in other senses by other philosophers. For some contemporary philosophers of the person, ‘life’ is understood in a biological sense, as defined by natural science. ‘Life’ here refers to the biological operations shared by all living things, such as metabolism, growth, responsiveness, and so on.⁵¹ In this sense, ‘life’ refers, in Aristotelian categorical terms, to a set of actions, passions, and qualities. Only material things can be living on this biological view, whereas on the Thomistic view, anything self-moving, whether material or immaterial, is alive. This biological view is compatible with the view that living things are not essentially self-movers, but are subject entirely to outside forces or are just composites of non-living particles.⁵² Such views are incompatible with the Thomistic understanding of life. Aquinas’ view of life, both in its operational and its essential senses, is broader than the biological view of life.

‘Life’ and related terms are also used in phenomenology, in which ‘life’ refers to our consciousness or experience. For Michel Henry, ‘life’ (*vie*) means the impressions and affections that we are how we fundamentally experience the world, and for Emmanuel Levinas, it means the enjoyment of self-sensing and the drive to go on experiencing oneself and the world in a sensory manner.⁵³ By ‘affection’ the phenomenologists always mean feeling and felt experience

⁵⁰ *DV*, q.13, a.4; *In DSS*, lect.4; *SCG* II, c.87, 89, 90; *ST* I, q.18, a.1 and 2; q. 54, a.2, ad 1. See Pasnau, “Mind-Soul Problem”, 12-16; Royce, “Life”, 230-232; Walz, “Power”, 344; Wingell, “*Vivere*”, 112-115.

⁵¹ ‘Life’ in this sense is taken to be decisive for an account of what we are in: Eric Olson, *The Human Animal*, (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 126-131; Peter Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 146, 237-238. It is brought into a hylomorphist context in Rose Koch and David Hershenov, “Fission and Confusion”, *Christian Bioethics* 12 (2006): 237-254.

⁵² Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 146, 237-238.

⁵³ For Henry, see *EM*, 463-466, 475, 479, 604, 626; *MP*, 81, 96; “Quatre principes de la phenomenologie”, *Revue de metaphysique et de morale* 96 (1991): 3-26. cf. Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 73; Simon Jarvis, “Michel Henry’s Concept of Life”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 (2009): 362-374; Jean-Francois Lavigne, “The Paradox and

broadly considered, not, for example, affection in the sense of liking and caring for someone. These impressions, affections, self-sensings, and drives underlie or accompany all our other experiences, and provide content to our intentional acts, and so they are the ‘life’ of those experiences and acts, the directly experienced content that makes those acts possible. Similarly, ‘lived experience’ refers to experience as one is directly aware of it, not insofar as one reflects on it, thinks about it, and considers it apart from the original direct experience of it. Related to this notion is the idea of the “life-world”, the world insofar as one directly and naturally experiences it, not insofar as it is scientifically or phenomenologically analyzed.⁵⁴ ‘Life’ and the related terms phenomenologically all have to do with what is immediately experienced. However, another related term, ‘vital’, especially as it is used by Scheler, refers to one’s experiences of oneself and of the world as a biological being. ‘Vital’ (*vital*) refers to biological drives, experiences of one’s body, and experiences of feeling strong or weak in a bodily or health-related sense.⁵⁵ The experiential structures included in phenomenological life and vitality involve, in terms of the Aristotelian categories, actions, passions, and qualities of the person, the substance of the person, and substances and accidents other than the person, taken insofar as they are intended by the person and insofar as they cause qualities like sense impressions in the person.⁵⁶ In this study, I use the term ‘life’ in the essential sense indicated by Aquinas, but I use the technical terms of the phenomenologists with the senses that they give to those terms.

Another pair of terms that requires disambiguation is the pair ‘form’ and ‘matter’. As we

Limits of Michel Henry’s Concept of Transcendence”, 385; Marion, *IE*, 17-19. For Levinas see *TI*, 127-130, 144-147.

⁵⁴ Husserl, *Crisis*, 111-113; *Ideas 2*, 384-385.

⁵⁵ Scheler, *F*, 106-107; *R*, 126-143. cf. John Nota, Nota and Theodore Plantinga, trans., *Max Scheler: The Man and His Work*, (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 54; John White, “Exemplary Persons and Ethics: The Significance of St. Francis for the Philosophy of Max Scheler”, *ACPQ* 79 (2005): 57-90.

⁵⁶ cf. *QQ* VII, q.1, a.2.

have seen, for Aquinas and the Aristotelian tradition, these terms refer to the principles that make up a substance.⁵⁷ The form is the principle internal to a substance that makes that substance actually be what it is, that is the source of all its powers, and that accounts for the unity and persistence of the thing over time. The matter is the stuff out of which a thing is made, the principle that accounts for its changeability, the element of potentiality in the thing, and the stuff in which the substance's various powers are instantiated and implemented.⁵⁸ But in phenomenology, 'matter' (*hulē*) refers to lived impressions and affections. 'Form' (*morphē*) refers to the intentional acts in which the material content is contained and which confer some meaning on the matter. For instance, one might receive some visual impressions of color as phenomenological matter, and this might be formed through taking this visual matter to be a tree. The impression or phenomenological matter is taken as a tree; it is the content of the latter intentional act.⁵⁹ In this essay, I use 'form' and 'matter' in their Aristotelian senses. I use 'impressions' and 'affections' for phenomenological matter and 'intentional act' for phenomenological form.

Another term that has different meanings for Aquinas and for the phenomenologists and other contemporary philosophers is the term 'subject'. For Aquinas, 'subject' (*subjectum*) primarily means something that can have accidents but which is not itself an accident, that is, a substance.⁶⁰ For the phenomenologists as for many other contemporary philosophers, 'subject' and 'subjectivity' refer to one's interior self-awareness and consciousness or to something that

⁵⁷ The notion of "principle" will be explained in greater detail in Chapter Two.

⁵⁸ As we shall see in Chapter Two, 'matter' has several further senses on the Thomistic account, but these do not need to be discussed here.

⁵⁹ Henry, *MP*, 7-42; Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 203-207; *Ideas 2*, 15-23; *OPCT*, 69-70, 93, 109-110, 131.

⁶⁰ *DME* 34-36; *In VII Met.*, lect.2, n.1270-1274. As we shall see in Chapter Two, there are some things, like the human soul, which are subjects and subsistent entities, but not substances strictly speaking. cf. Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 208; Jorge Gracia, *Suarez on Individuation*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), 265-266.

has experiences insofar as it has experiences.⁶¹ The Thomistic view easily accommodates the idea that there are many different subjects in the world, some of which have experiences and some of which do not. It also, as we shall see, accommodates the idea that the human subject is not just something that has experiences, but is more than this.⁶² The “self” or “person” on this view is not just something that is conscious or has experiences, but is more than this, in a manner that will be described later in this study. For some phenomenologists, by contrast, the subject, by contrast, tends to present the world as a set of “objects” faced by me, the subject that knows them; on this view, other persons and things, at least *prima facie*, appear as my “objects” rather than as other “subjects”. For other phenomenologists, the division of the world into a “subjective” side and an “objective” side is artificial: as we shall see, for phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty, the subjective and objective features of the world are deeply interconnected. I primarily use ‘subject’ and ‘subjectivity’, as well as related phrases like ‘subjective interiority’, with their phenomenological senses, disambiguating them throughout the study as needed; when I use ‘subject’ in its Thomistic sense this will be made clear.

The last term that requires disambiguation is ‘metaphysics’. ‘Metaphysics’ in the Thomistic sense refers to the branch of philosophy that inquires into the nature of being, that is, into what actually exists and its principles and attributes, reasoning on the basis of what appears to us. Aquinas, as we shall see later in this chapter, distinguishes ‘metaphysics’ from ‘natural philosophy’: the former refers to the branch of philosophy which examines being as such, while the latter examines material being insofar as it is in motion.⁶³ For many contemporary

⁶¹ For phenomenological uses of these terms see for example Husserl, *CM* 1.8, p.19-20; Scheler, *F*, 266. For a non-phenomenological use see Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 223.

⁶² cf. Jacques Maritain, Gerard B. Phelen, trans., *The Degrees of Knowledge*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 1995), 99-101.

⁶³ *In DMR.*, lect.2. cf. Thomas Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion*,

philosophers, including some Thomists, ‘metaphysics’ encompasses both branches of philosophy, since both are theoretical inquiries into the fundamental nature of things. This use of ‘metaphysics’ is influenced by contemporary notions of what metaphysics does. ‘Metaphysics’ for many contemporary metaphysicians refers to an *a priori* inquiry into necessary facts or to a speculative positing of entities that explain observed facts, rather than to an inquiry into the fundamental principles of things on the basis of observed effects. These views of metaphysics will be considered in greater detail in the last section of this chapter and in Chapter Four.

The phenomenologists also sometimes discuss “metaphysics”. For Scheler, metaphysics is a method of unifying the data from phenomenological, scientific, and everyday inquiries into things, giving a unified account of everything there is.⁶⁴ For Levinas, ‘metaphysics’ indicates our desire for what transcends the world as known. According to Levinas, this is the social relationship with other people and the call to be ethically good; metaphysics on this view has to do with these relationships and this call, not with an account of what there is. Levinasian metaphysics is largely unlike other accounts of metaphysics. Levinas rejects traditional metaphysics, or “ontology” as he calls it, because he thinks that it reduces things to only their experientiable aspects, and so does violence to them.⁶⁵ We shall see in Chapter Three why Levinas thinks this and why this criticism does not apply to Thomistic metaphysics. In this paper I use ‘metaphysics’ primarily in Aquinas’ sense, but more loosely than he uses it, since I often refer to both natural philosophy and metaphysics proper with this term. I sometimes use ‘metaphysics’ in Scheler’s and Levinas’ senses, but when I do so, this will always be made clear.

(Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007), 80; Matthew Walz, “What is a Power of the Soul?”, *Sapientia* 60 (2006): 321.

⁶⁴ *CHB*, 11-17, 38-45, 61-67; *F*, 378; *MPN*, 5-7. Such a view was shared by other phenomenologists, such as Edith Stein, as Ian Leask describes in *Being Reconfigured*, 101.

⁶⁵ *TI*, 35-40.

This then must suffice for an initial disambiguation of these key terms. The referents of these terms will be discussed in greater detail in later sections, and so greater clarity will be achieved there. The foregoing consideration of these terms will serve as a constant reference point throughout the remainder of this study. Much of the conflict that has arisen between metaphysics and phenomenology in the past has been due to confusion about just these terms. Confusion in the course of this study can be avoided by keeping the different senses of these terms and their interrelations carefully distinguished, as has been done here. For those readers who immediately want greater clarity on the topics and terms considered in the first two sections of this chapter, or who wish to get directly to the argument, the next two sections can be skipped. These sections deal with the reasons for taking up this study and its scope.

III. JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS STUDY

I have three main reasons for engaging in this study. Each of these reasons also points to a different intended audience for this essay, and, taken together, these reasons will help to clarify the limits of what I argue in this study. I shall spend a good deal of space discussing these reasons because my thesis may be *prima facie* quite implausible to some readers, since this study draws together numerous strands of philosophy which are rarely connected to one another. For this reason, it is important for the reader to see how this study fits into the various current debates in philosophy. Showing this is my task in this section and the next.

First, it is important for any metaphysical theory to justify itself with evidence. Many recent justifications of hylomorphism have been developments of Aquinas' arguments or translations of these arguments into contemporary language. Hylomorphism could be bolstered by finding evidence for it that was not gathered for the purpose of justifying hylomorphism. The phenomenology of self-sensing provides such evidence. In connection to this point, my first

intended audience is other hylomorphists, who seek evidence for this theory.

Second, such evidence can help to respond to critics of hylomorphism, especially those who find the theory to be a confused amalgamation of dualism and materialism. By ‘dualism’ I mean the views that hold that the human person is a soul or mind defined in terms of consciousness or thought, or at least that the human mind and body are substances separate from one another. By ‘materialism’ in this essay I mean the views that hold that everything about a human person is ultimately entirely explainable in terms of scientifically describable matter or material interactions. This includes “non-reductive” materialisms, such as emergent dualism, in which consciousness emerges from or supervenes on matter.⁶⁶ Most contemporary hylomorphists see hylomorphism as a middle way between these other theories of the person; these other theories are not my concern in this study, but overcoming the objections to hylomorphism given by their supporters is. Phenomenological accounts of self-sensing, when it is seen how it supports hylomorphism, can be helpful in overcoming objections to the theory. My second intended audience is those who have found hylomorphism to be a theory worth addressing but object to it.

Third, this study is important to develop because some philosophers and theologians have already suggested its thesis, though these suggestions have never been developed in detail. This essay seeks to fill that gap, and my third intended audience consists of those who have already suggested the thesis of this study or a thesis similar to it.

⁶⁶ For information on these “non-reductive materialisms” see: Boyd, “Materialism without Reductionism”, in Ned Block, ed., *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology*, v.1, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Braine, *Human Person*, 1-3, 13-14, 23-24; David Chalmers *The Conscious Mind*, (Oxford: OUP, 1996), 123-129; Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism”, 517-523.

III.A. EVIDENCE FOR HYLOMORPHISM

Many recent accounts of hylomorphism have largely been attempts to translate what Aquinas said into contemporary metaphysical or semantic terms. Four types of evidence are generally adduced for Thomistic hylomorphism in these contexts. These types of evidence need to be reviewed here so that it can be seen where the evidence considered in this study fits with the evidence for hylomorphism already considered by others.

First, some philosophers have offered evidence from intuitions about thought experiments, such as brain-transfer thought experiments. They contend that hylomorphism can deal with our intuitions about these thought experiments in a way which cuts across problems with other intuitions, allowing for a hylomorphist theory of personal identity.⁶⁷ Second, some philosophers have given semantic evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism, drawing on the semantics of predication in order to make sense of Aquinas' talk of forms as the principles in virtue of which a substance has some attribute.⁶⁸ These two forms of evidence are not my concern in this essay, though as we shall see, the phenomenology of self-sensing has something

⁶⁷ For Thomistic and Aristotelian answers to these thought experiments see Jason Eberl, *Thomistic Principles and Bioethics*, (London: Routledge, 2006), 46f.; David Hershenov, "A Hylomorphic Account of Personal Identity Thought Experiments", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 82:3 (Summer 2008): 481-502; Alan Shewmon, "The Metaphysics of Brain Death, Persistent Vegetative State, and Dementia". *The Thomist* 49 (1985): 24-80, and "Recovery from "Brain Death": A Neurologist's Apologia", *Linacre Quarterly* 64:1 (February 1997): 30-96; my own "A Reexamination of the Hylomorphic Theory of Death." *The Review of Metaphysics* 63:4 (June 2010): 843-870; Patrick Toner, "On Hylomorphism and Personal Identity", *European Journal of Philosophy* 19 (2011): 454-473; David Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 206f. The thought experiments themselves are explained especially well in Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, part 3, but see also numerous texts throughout Olson, *Human Animal* and Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*; and Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations*, (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1981), 29-37; Sydney Shoemaker, *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), 23-24; Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future", reprint in Raymond Martin and John Barresi, eds., *Personal Identity*, (Malden: Blackwell, 2003).

⁶⁸ Peter Geach, *God and the Soul*, (London: Routledge, 1969), 42-66; Klima, "Materiality and Immateriality", and "Essentialism".

to say about our identity over time and the language we use to talk about persons, in a way that supports these first two types of evidence.

Third, some philosophers have offered evidence having to do with the structure of living things. The organization and configuration of living things, their functional and structural unity and dynamism, and the way in which material components are teleologically “caught up in the life processes” of living things, have all been offered as evidence for the Thomistic view of organisms as composed of form and matter.⁶⁹ Patrick Lee and Robert George describe how animals behave as a sensorimotor unity irreducible to their parts, responsive to their sensations, which are bodily acts. They argue that in human persons, the same organism that senses and moves is the organism that thinks, though thinking (and free action) transcend what mere matter can do. Observations of the structure and unity of sensation, locomotion, and thinking provide evidence for the hylomorphic structure of the human person.⁷⁰ Eleonore Stump describes the human soul or form as a “configurer”, and compares it to the configurational state of a protein molecule, which gives the protein its structure and function; Stump argues that the configurational states of biological entities are essential parts of a causal account of these entities. These empirically observed features of biological evidences are evidence for the Thomistic idea of “form”.⁷¹ This sort of evidence will play a larger role in this study than the

⁶⁹ Talk about particles and parts of living things being “caught up” in the organism’s life processes comes from Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 92, 94. It is explicitly applied to the Thomistic account by Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 90.

⁷⁰ The basic argument here is presented in summary form in *Body-Self Dualism in Contemporary Ethics and Politics*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 4, and developed throughout chapters 1 and 2.

⁷¹ Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism”, 508-517; *Aquinas*, 36-42, 56-58, 194-197. Similar accounts are given by Braine, *Human Person*, throughout the book but see especially p.228-233; Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 83-85; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 92. Such claims are also made about Aristotelian rather than Thomistic hylomorphism; see Alan Code and Julius Moravcsik, “Explaining Various Forms of Living”, in Nussbaum and Rorty, *op.cit.*,

previous two sorts, because descriptions of self-sensing reveal how human functioning and configuration are given to us. Phenomenology purports to present a broader set of experiences pertinent to thinking about life than the natural sciences provide, while still taking into account scientific evidence; thus, phenomenological evidence can build on the scientific evidence for hylomorphism.⁷²

Finally, some philosophers offer what can broadly be termed phenomenological evidence for hylomorphism. Descriptions of *qualia* and of intentional states and accounts of how human consciousness is both closely connected to but also irreducible to the body are all considered by Thomists as evidence for the theory. This sort of evidence is most similar to the sort of evidence considered in this study; previous work on this sort of evidence will be considered below in my discussion of my third reason for undertaking this study.

III.B. OBJECTIONS TO HYLOMORPHISM

Although all of these pieces of evidence support Thomistic hylomorphism, each is subject to objections. Responding to some of these is my second reason for taking up this thesis. The chief objections to hylomorphism are that the principles of form and matter are superfluous, incoherent, or unknowable. Historically, these objections can be traced back to Descartes and Locke, the figures who have, arguably, most influenced contemporary philosophy of the person, and even to earlier thinkers, like Peter Ramus and Michel de Montaigne. Such objections are

131,133; Michael Frede, “On Aristotle’s Conception of the Soul”, in Nussbaum and Rorty, op.cit., 95, 98, 101-102; Martha Nussbaum, *Aristotle’s De Motu Animalium*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 71-73, 78, 85-86.

⁷² Phenomenologists have frequently considered the relationship of phenomenological accounts of experience and of the world to scientific accounts, often critiquing science’s attempt to provide a complete explanation of things. Phenomenologists emphasize that all scientific inquiry is rooted in the world of our experience. See for instance: Edmund Husserl, *Ideas 2*, 27; *Ideas 3*, especially 19-22, 81-85; *Crisis*, especially 123-141; Scheler, “The Theory of the Three Facts”, in *SPE*, 224-252; *R*, 126-143; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, ix-xvi, 62-68, 89-102; Levinas, *TI*, 70-74, 169-170; Henry, *LB*.

raised largely to the notion of forms, since these are supposed to be causally responsible, in some sense, for the structure, functioning, and actuality of material bodies, yet are immaterial and so unobservable in themselves. It seems that all observed phenomena can be explained either in terms of accounts of consciousness or of other psychological entities or properties, without reference to forms, or of scientific accounts of matter, again without reference to forms. Forms seem to be both unobservable and superfluous.⁷³

In the contemporary debates, these objections are generally raised because hylomorphism is often presented as a “middle way” between materialistic and dualistic theories of the person. Hylomorphists often interpret their theory to be an anti-reductionistic materialism, similar to functionalism or emergent dualism, or a non-Cartesian form of dualism, that is, a theory that respects the evidence for dualism without saying that the human person is an immaterial substance entirely separate from the body.⁷⁴ I do not intend in this study to defend this idea of

⁷³ Rene Descartes, “Principles of Philosophy” I.63-65, II.64, John Cottingham, et.al., trans., *Selected Philosophical Writings*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1988), 182-183, 199; “Letter to Regius, January 1642”, in Cottingham, et.al, trans., *Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, v.3, 208-209; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* III.6.10, 24, (London: Penguin, 2004), 398, 404. For a summary of these late medieval and early modern attacks on hylomorphism see also Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, v.3, *Ockham to Suarez*, (Westminster: Newman Press, 1953), 163-166, 217-220, 228-229; Christopher Shields, “The Reality of Substantial Form: Suarez, *Metaphysical Disputation XV*”, forthcoming in Daniel Schwartz, ed., *Interpreting Suarez: Critical Essays*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2011).

⁷⁴ The need to chart such a middle way was noticed even in Aquinas’ own time. See *QDDA* a.2, *respondeo*. The conflicts between Aquinas and his contemporaries on these issues is described in Anton C. Pegis, *St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, (Toronto: PIMS, 1934), especially 180-186. For this issue in the contemporary debates see: Braine, *Human Person*, 19-40, 316-318, 331-338, 493-500; Anthony J. Lisska, “Medieval Theories of Intentionality”, in Craig Patterson and Matthew Pugh, eds., *Analytic Thomism*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 155-156; Klima, “Materiality and Immateriality”, 163; Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 72; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 68-72, 95-99, 132-140; Pasnau and Christopher Shields, *Philosophy of Aquinas*, (Boulder: Westview, 2004), 164-168, 172; Stump, *Aquinas*, 208-216; “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism”, 517-523. See also, in the context of Aristotelian hylomorphism, Putnam and Nussbaum, “Changing Aristotle’s Mind”, 48-49; Charles Kahn, “Aristotle on Thinking”, in Nussbaum and Putnam, *op.cit.*, 361-362;

hylomorphism as a “middle way”, nor do I intend to consider fully the relationships among hylomorphism, dualism, and materialism; my concern here is with the objections to which this idea leads, and with considering evidence for hylomorphism on its own. Bernard Williams has pointed out that this makes it unclear whether the human form or soul is a thing or substance, thus leaning towards dualism, or a property of the body, thus leaning towards materialism.⁷⁵ Anthony Kenny, although supportive of much of Aquinas’ anthropology, points out that it is unclear whether the soul is something abstract, like the body’s shape, or a concrete causal agent.⁷⁶ Aquinas seems to say that it is both in some sense; Donald Abel objects that this is implausible and *ad hoc*, not consonant with other points of hylomorphist metaphysics.⁷⁷

Furthermore, it is unclear whether human ‘matter’ refers to the body, or to the body’s elemental components, or to a pure potentiality for change.⁷⁸ Gordon Barnes points out that it is not entirely clear whether the distinction between form and matter is supposed to be a distinction of real parts or principles or merely a conceptual distinction. If the former, hylomorphism seems to inherit all the problems of classical dualism, such as the problem of mind-body interaction; if the latter, the unity of the person is preserved, but at the expense of making hylomorphism really

Richard Sorabji, “Body and Soul in Aristotle”, *Philosophy* 49 (1974): 77-79, 88.

⁷⁵ Bernard Williams, “Hylomorphism”, in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, v.4, *A Festschrift for J. L. Ackrill*, M.J. Woods, ed., (Oxford: OUP, 1986), 197; cf. Barnes, “Paradoxes”, 502-503.

⁷⁶ Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 28, 136; cf. Barnes, “Paradoxes”, 503; Braine, *Human Person*, 504-506; Hasker, *The Emergent Self*, 167-170.

⁷⁷ Donald Abel, “Intellectual Substance as Form of the Body in Aquinas”, *Proceedings of the ACPA* 69 (1995): 233. cf. Klima, “Materiality and Immateriality”, 163.

⁷⁸ This problem is posed by the following authors, though each provides an answer as well: Davies, *Thought of Aquinas*, 208-209; Gyula Klima, “Man= Body+Soul”, in Brian Davies, ed., *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*, (Oxford: OUP, 2002), 258-259; Brian Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust”, in Kevin Corcoran, ed., *Soul, Body, and Survival*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 123-127; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 133-136. See also J.L. Ackrill, “Aristotle’s Definitions of ‘*Psuche*’”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 73 (1972-1973), 128-132; Jennifer Whiting, “Living Bodies”, in Nussbaum and Rorty, op.cit., 78-81.

just a sort of materialism.⁷⁹ Such difficulties arise from the many roles which form and from the way in which hylomorphism is fitted into debates between dualism and materialism.

These issues also give rise to other objections. As Eric Olson points out, it is not clear whether I, a person, am to be identified with my soul or with the composite of soul and matter, on a hylomorphic account; this is a form of the “too many thinkers” problem, as it is not clear which of these is doing my thinking.⁸⁰ Aquinas says it is the latter, but various points seem to call this into question.⁸¹ For instance, Aquinas thinks that the soul can live on after death and that it can continue to think and retain some memories from earthly life, and that during earthly life, my thinking goes on “in” my soul, not in my body.⁸² It is not my concern here to deal with Aquinas on the immortality of the soul but this issue is illustrative of a lack of clarity regarding the identity and unity of the person on Aquinas’ account.

Aquinas’ account of the way in which form and matter give rise to our cognitive powers and acts leads to another set of objections. According to hylomorphism, all of our sensory powers involve both our form and our matter. Sensation involves receiving forms from things into one’s material sense organs, which are sense organs only because of the powers that are operative in them, powers ultimately rooted in the soul.⁸³ Miles Burnyeat objects that this

⁷⁹ Barnes, “Paradoxes”, 509-512, 516-517. The objection to hylomorphism is already found in Aristotle, *Met.* III.6.1003a6-16.

⁸⁰ Olson, *What Are We?*, 172-6. cf. Hershenov, “Shoemaker’s Problem of Too Many Thinkers”, *Proceedings of the ACPA* 80 (2007): 225-236; Olson, “A Compound of Two Substances,” found on author’s website, 3; “Thinking Animals and the Reference of ‘I’”, *Philosophical Topics* 30 (2002): 189-208, found on author’s website; *Human Animal*, 106; *What are We?*, 29-30; Sydney Shoemaker, “Self, Body, and Coincidence”, *Supplement to the Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 73 (1999): 287-306; Zimmerman, “Material People”, 297.

⁸¹ *ST I*, q.75, a.4.

⁸² *ST I* q.75, a.6; q.77, a.5 and 8; q.89, a.5. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 384-393; Stump, *Aquinas*, 51-54; Patrick Toner, “St. Thomas on Death and the Separated Soul”, forthcoming in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*.

⁸³ *ST I* q.78, a.3.

presents a picture of matter as “pregnant with consciousness”, a view of matter that is unacceptable in post-Cartesian philosophy, with its dichotomy between matter and mind, and its account of matter as mechanistic and describable only in terms of quantity.⁸⁴ On this objection, hylomorphism makes matter subjective and conscious, and so is an implausible theory.

However, according to others, such as Karol Wojtyła, Aquinas and the Aristotelian tradition entirely leave out an account of subjectivity. On this view, Aquinas’ account of the person is made entirely in “objective” or “third-person” terms. Aquinas only accounts for the specific nature of humanity, not the irreducible subjective interiority and uniqueness of each person, which can only be described in phenomenological terms.⁸⁵ Wojtyła holds that experience as it is “lived” or experienced cannot be accounted for in terms of the Aristotelian categories, such as in terms of the categories of action and passion; it is a category all its own, and must be part of any adequate metaphysics of the human person.⁸⁶ However, Wojtyła also thinks that human subjectivity is intimately related to the objective features of the person that Aquinas describes. Thus, according to Wojtyła, Aquinas’ metaphysics of the person remains a valuable starting point for examining what it is to be a person, though it does not get at the subjective core of personhood.⁸⁷

This objection is especially important for this study, because it draws on the work of Max Scheler. Scheler contends that the person cannot be understood as a substance with an essence that can be an intentional object of thought, but only as a subject executing intentional acts,

⁸⁴ Miles Burnyeat, “Is Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind Still Credible?”, in Nussbaum and Rorty, eds., *op.cit.*, 18, 24-26. See also Peter King, “Scholasticism and the Philosophy of Mind”, in Tamara Horowitz, ed., *Scientific Failure*, (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993), found on author’s website, 16.

⁸⁵ Karol Wojtyła, Theresa Sandok, trans., *Person and Community*, (Bonn: Peter Lang, 2008), 170-171, 210-212, 227.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 212-213.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 226.

understandable only from a first-person point of view.⁸⁸ Such an account of the person is *prima facie* incompatible with Aquinas' theory. In a similar but less phenomenological vein, Peter King contends that Aquinas has very little of an account of subjective qualitative experiences.⁸⁹ And shortly after Aquinas' own time, Peter John Olivi contended that Aquinas does not allow for the experience of directly introspecting one's essence, because Aquinas describes all of our experiences, even self-awareness, in terms of relations between powers and objects.⁹⁰ Aquinas seems not to appreciate the distinction of human experience from all other sorts of events.

All of these objections, along with the fact that other interpreters think that Aquinas has a clear and robust account of subjective and intentional experience,⁹¹ show that added evidence is required to show whether Aquinas' theory is supported by experiential evidence. If my thesis is to be successful, I need to show that Aquinas either has or can accommodate an account of subjective experience. I shall argue that the phenomenology of self-sensing provides an experiential basis for many of the principles posited by hylomorphism, and that it can thus help us overcome all of these objections and see the experiential core of Aquinas' account. Several thinkers have already noted the affinities and similarities between phenomenology and Thomistic hylomorphism, and the potential of such a union for making sense of hylomorphism. It is to these that I now turn, in order to give my third reason for taking up this thesis.

⁸⁸ Scheler, *F*, 389-391; *MPN*, 64, 75.

⁸⁹ Peter King, "Why Isn't the Mind-Body Problem Medieval?", in Henrick Lagerlund, ed., *Forming the Mind*, (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 187, 191.

⁹⁰ Peter John Olivi, *In II S*, q.72 (found at <http://spot.colorado.edu/~pasnau/research/olivi72.htm>) and 76, cited in Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 348 and Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 132-134.

⁹¹ Gilson, *Being and Some Philosophers*, 2nd ed., (Toronto: PIMS, 1952), 202, 205-207; Pegis, *Origins*, 17-18, 45, 52-53, 58; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 61f.

III.C. INTERSECTIONS OF HYLOMORPHISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY

Aquinas himself says several things that suggest, at least to one inclined to the phenomenological style of philosophy, that his theory of human nature could be somehow joined with a phenomenological account of our experience. In this section, I present a number of texts in which Aquinas makes statements that could and have been phenomenologically interpreted. I then review the contemporary literature that brings phenomenology andhylomorphism together. However, as we have already seen, some philosophers argue that Aquinas has no account of subjective experience, or even cannot accommodate such an account in his theoretical framework. The disparity between these interpretations is exacerbated by the terminological differences between medieval and contemporary philosophy, as well as within contemporary philosophy. Peter King points out that the medievals largely did not have terms to refer clearly and particularly to “phenomenal states of consciousness” or the “qualitative feel” of conscious states. It is not clear, for examples, whether the term ‘*sensatio*’ in Aquinas should be taken to refer to the “what it is like” of an experience of sensation.⁹² There is a need to determine which medieval concepts line up with contemporary concepts, if any. If there is no direct match between them, there is a need to determine whether and how the experiences and ideas described by each group can be translated into the terminology and conceptual framework of the other group. I contend that experience as phenomenologically described can be used as evidence for Thomistic metaphysics. I also think that Aquinas provides an opening to this project in some statements that he makes, which I review in the following section.

⁹² King, “Why Isn’t the Mind-Body Problem Medieval?”, 187-188, 190-191.

II.C.1. PHENOMENOLOGICAL THEMES IN AQUINAS

One place where similarities can be found between Aquinas' work and that of the phenomenologists is in Aquinas' account of our intentional acts. Aquinas describes how our acts are directed towards specific objects; for example, vision is intentionally directed towards color.⁹³ More to the point of this study, Aquinas sometimes alludes to the ways in which one "perceives oneself" (*percipit se*). He does not always explain what he means by perceiving oneself, though self-perception is often taken as evidence for the structure of a particular power or other aspect of human nature. For example, Aquinas says that one "perceives that one has an intellectual soul from [the fact] that one perceives oneself understanding" something other than oneself, and that for this self-perception, "the very presence of the mind suffices".⁹⁴ Furthermore, he says that "no one ever erred in that one did not perceive oneself to live. [Such a perception] pertains to the cognition by which one cognizes singularly what occurs in one's soul".⁹⁵ Aquinas describes this as a habitual sort of self-perception, which we always have and can always actualize in an explicit act of self-perception. He even says that this sort of self-perception produces certain knowledge about the soul, that one has a soul and that acts occur in it, though he does not adequately describe how this self-perception works.⁹⁶ Indeed, the self-reflection of which the intellectual soul is capable is an important part of Aquinas' account of the intellect and of the soul. Aquinas also refers to perception of oneself on a non-intellectual level, for instance, one perceives that one is alive through the "common sense" (*sensus communis*), the

⁹³ *In II DA, In III DA, In DSS, and In DMR* are devoted to such analyses.

⁹⁴ *ST I*, q.87, a.1: "...percipit se habere animam intellectivam, ex hoc quod percipit se intelligere...sufficit ipsa mentis praesentia". See also *DV*, q.10, a.8, *respondeo*; *SCG II*, c.75. See also Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 338.

⁹⁵ *DV*, q.10, a.8, ad 2: "...nullus unquam erravit in hoc quod non perciperet se vivere, quod pertinet ad cognitionem qua aliquis singulariter cognoscit quid in anima sua agatur".

⁹⁶ *DV*, q.10, a.8, ad 8 sc: "...secundum hoc scientia de anima est certissima, quod unusquisque in seipso experitur se animam habere, et actus animae sibi inesse".

power whereby we join together data from each of the five external senses, and are aware of our acts of sensing.⁹⁷ This sensory self-awareness will be considered in Chapter Two, while intellectual self-perception will be considered in Chapter Four; there, I shall defend my claim that Aquinas is presenting, in these passages, an account of subjective experience.

Aquinas also sometimes raises experiential arguments about the powers of the soul.⁹⁸ For instance, we know that the powers of the soul are rooted in one common principle, the soul, because intense focus on one power can impede other powers. For instance, intense focus on a feeling of bodily pleasure can impede one's ability to calculate or to be aware of what one is seeing.⁹⁹ This would not be the case if the powers came from different sources. Furthermore, we would not even know about our actions and come to theorize about the powers and nature that give rise to them unless we experienced these actions in us.¹⁰⁰ Finally, Aquinas mentions that we even sense ourselves to exist, and that this self-sensing is connected to our perception of time.¹⁰¹

Each of these selections is a possible point of contact between Aquinas' work and that of the phenomenologists of self-sensing. Several contemporary philosophers make more explicit suggestions in the direction of this parallel; their writings fall into two main groups. First, there

⁹⁷ *SCG*, II, c.66; *ST*, I, q.78, a.4, ad 2; *In III DA*, lect. 2 and 3. cf. Aristotle, *DA* III.2.425b18f; Edmund Joseph Ryan, *The Role of the "Sensus Communis" in the Psychology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Carthagen: Messenger Press, 1951), 141-145; Victor Caston, "Aristotle on Consciousness", *Mind* 111 (2002): 801-803 argues that the idea of the common sense does go back to Aristotle; K.V. Wilkes, "Psyche versus the Mind", in Nussbaum and Rorty, op.cit., 122 denies this and that Aristotle has an account of consciousness.

⁹⁸ Fernand Van Steenberghen, *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism*, (Washington: CUA Press, 1980), 46-47.

⁹⁹ *DV*, q.13, a.3; *SCG*, II, c.55, 58. cf. Lee and George, *Body-Self Dualism*, 15-19; Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 134-135.

¹⁰⁰ *SCG* II, c.76: "...non enim aliter in notitiam harum actionum venissemus nisi eas in nobis experiremur".

¹⁰¹ *In DSS*, lect. 18: "...si aliquando aliquis sentit se ipsum esse in aliquo continuo tempore, non contingit latere illud tempus esse: manifestum est autem quod homo vel aliquid aliud est in quodam continuo tempore...".

are those who argue thathylomorphism is a metaphysics of the human person that already takes into account intentionality and lived experience in a non-reductive way, that is, a way that does not reduce these to matter or purely material interactions, or that it is better suited to do so than other metaphysics. Those who argue in this way set up a connection between phenomenology and hylomorphism at a general level. Second, there are those who argue that phenomenological descriptions of our experiences, including our experience of self-sensing, are evidence for or resemble hylomorphist accounts of the person. These two groups of philosophers, especially the latter, are a third, and most important, audience for this study.

III.C.2. GENERAL AFFINITIES BETWEEN HYLOMORPHISM AND PHENOMENOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

III.C.2.a. PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE ARISTOTELIAN TRADITION

Martha Nussbaum and Hilary Putnam suggest that both the philosophers in the Aristotelian tradition, especially Aquinas, and phenomenologists, provide us with reasons not to accept a view of the world as composed ultimately only of mathematically and scientifically describable matter. Rather, these traditions in philosophy each give us reason to see intentionality and phenomenal appearances as irreducible and not merely features that supervene on physical organization. On both the Aristotelian and phenomenological views, intentionality and appearances are nevertheless linked in some way to the physical and mathematically describable features of things, and even help to explain the latter or perhaps even organize the latter causally. Nussbaum and Putnam suggest a phenomenological reading of the Aristotelian and Thomistic theories of the human person, because these theories include such close examinations of our various sorts of intentional acts.¹⁰²

Charles Kahn likewise thinks that Aristotle's theory of the person takes into account

¹⁰² Nussbaum and Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind", 46-56.

phenomenological aspects of what we are. We are natural and we transcend nature, for instance, in the cultural and linguistic realms. We have intentional experiences and experiences of ourselves, but some of them are experienced as bodily, such as sensation, and some as supra-bodily, such as intellectual understanding, which is a cognizing of the fundamental “formal structure of the universe”.¹⁰³ Unlike materialists and Cartesian dualists, Aristotle is aware of subtle differences and connections between materiality, life, sentience, and rationality, many of which can only be described in phenomenological terms.¹⁰⁴

Martin Heidegger likewise argues that the Aristotelian analysis of human and other organisms’ powers and acts began a project that in contemporary times has been taken up by phenomenology. On this view, the human person is intentionally present to the world in various ways, for instance, in thinking, feeling, and suffering. These intentional acts have to do with the whole person, as a unified bodily and noetic being that is linked to the world in a particular way. Analysis of the person in terms of biology or a mind dualistically separated from the body cannot account for these intentional orientations of the whole person toward the world that Aristotelians have described, but phenomenology can. The Aristotelian theory of mind and of intentionality in general is built on descriptions of experience, he claims, and this accounts for its often fragmentary or confused-sounding character.¹⁰⁵

Charles Taliaferro similarly suggests that philosophy of mind and of the person must take

¹⁰³ Kahn, “Aristotle on Thinking”, 375; see also p.361-364.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 359-360.

¹⁰⁵ Martin Heidegger, Robert Metcalf and Mark Tanzer, trans., *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 133-135. cf. Heidegger, Walter Brogan and Peter Warnek, trans., *Aristotle’s Metaphysics Θ 1-3*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 60-71; Heidegger, John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, trans., *Being and Time*, (Malden: Blackwell, 1962), 34-35, 55-57. John Deely, in “Immateriality”, 295, has argued that intentionality, following Heidegger’s account, can be used as evidence for the aspects of Aquinas’ metaphysics that are based on intentionality.

into account first-person lived experience and not try to reduce it to physical processes. He argues that phenomenology is a method well suited to do this. Lived experience must be taken into account not just in terms of the irreducible “qualia” or “what it is like” of an experience, but as embodied or linked to matter, since we have lived experiences in and through the body, and we naturally explain our experiences in a bodily way. Hylomorphism, with its acknowledgment of united material and immaterial components to the human person, can take this lived experience into account in a way that does not fall into materialism, the complete separation of soul and body found in traditional dualisms, or the quasi-reductionism found in naturalistic or property dualisms.¹⁰⁶

Victor Caston has similarly argued that Aristotle and Aquinas’ accounts of consciousness and self-consciousness move beyond naturalistic or mechanistic accounts, and also beyond accounts that present phenomenal *qualia* as the only aspect of consciousness that resists material explanation. Aristotelian accounts also emphasize the importance and irreducibility of intentionality and self-reflection for a complete account of the person and of consciousness.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Charles Taliaferro, *Consciousness and the Mind of God*, 15-17, 31-32, 48-51, 115-122; a similar argument is made by Lee and George, *Body-Self Dualism*, 15. For an example of attempting to explain human consciousness in terms of underlying material substructures (a “bottom-up” approach to human experience) which Taliaferro targets as especially problematic, see Daniel C. Dennett, *Brainstorms*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), especially 122-125; Paul Churchland, *Scientific Realism and the Plasticity of Mind*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), especially 8-10. For examples of naturalistic or supervenient dualism which takes seriously the importance of phenomenal *qualia* and intentionality see: Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind*, especially 4-5, 124-125, 214-218, 294-308; Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?” *Philosophical Review* 4 (1974): 435-450; Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, (Oxford: OUP, 1986), especially 51-53; John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 41-43, 111-112, 122-126, 130-133. For contemporary examples of more or less traditional substance dualism see John Foster, *The Immaterial Self*, (London: Routledge, 1991), especially 206-212, 261-266; Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), especially 17-18, 289-297; Dean Zimmerman, “From Property Dualism to Substance Dualism”, forthcoming in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*.

¹⁰⁷ Caston, “Aristotle on Consciousness”, 788-797.

II.C.2.b. PHENOMENOLOGY AND AQUINAS

A number of those working directly on Thomas Aquinas, rather than just on the Aristotelian tradition in general, have noted these affinities between his thought on the person and work in phenomenology. Etienne Gilson, for instance, has noted the relationship between Thomistic metaphysics, and phenomenology and contemporary existentialism. According to Gilson, Aquinas grounds his metaphysics, including his metaphysics of the person, in an account of the act of existence, the dynamic actuality of each thing that is. For Aquinas, existence is not reducible to an essence or nature that can be known conceptually: rather, existence is experienced in perception and known by the dynamic act of intellectual judgment.¹⁰⁸ In this, Aquinas has some affinity with phenomenology and existentialism, especially with Kierkegaard and Heidegger. But the latter fall into several errors, Gilson thinks, which mean that in many ways Aquinas and they are opposed. The existentialists reduce existence to temporal existence, and they entirely disconnect existence from conceptualizable essence. They remove the role of judgment in knowing existence, and seek to discover existence purely in feeling, sensation, and materiality, which renders human existence unknowable, even absurd. Unlike Aquinas, they fail to see how existence and essence, as well as perception, feeling, conceptualization, and judgment are all interconnected. Gilson thinks that Thomistic metaphysics of essence and existence is “existentialism as it should be understood”, the true ontology for which contemporary phenomenology and existentialism are striving.¹⁰⁹ Thus, while Gilson cautions against reducing Thomistic metaphysics to phenomenology, or naively conflating the two, he also thinks that accounts of feeling, sensing, and human existence found in phenomenological existentialism can be seen as pointing to, even requiring, Thomistic metaphysics.

¹⁰⁸ Gilson, *Being*, 207.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 167; see also *Ibid.*, 206-209; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 367-369.

Jacques Maritain concurs: phenomenology, stripped of its idealistic tendencies, can be quite useful for gathering experiential data in preparation for metaphysical reasoning. But metaphysical reasoning and insight into the existence and intelligibility of things goes beyond the experiences described by the phenomenologists. Without this further reasoning and insight, phenomenology is inadequate for giving us understanding of the world, but with it, phenomenology can be a very helpful starting point for doing metaphysics and achieving such an insight.¹¹⁰ This study seeks, in part, to develop these suggestions.

Other philosophers have also developed these suggestions. Anton Pegis has argued that Aquinas uses Aristotelian metaphysical terms to express the development of the human person. The soul is intellectual but incomplete on its own, since it requires the senses to know and so reach its proper end, knowledge of God; the soul requires a body, powers, and actions in order to be complete. We begin with sensation—for instance, the feeling that one exists and that one has an intellectual soul—and we move towards greater understanding of this situation—for instance, an understanding of the nature of the intellectual soul. The soul forms a body for the sake of reaching its goal, and this dynamic movement toward fulfillment is the structure of human existence.¹¹¹ Pegis thinks that, with the phenomenological existentialists, Aquinas could have affirmed that time and history are the essence of the human person, for we are the history of our development toward fulfillment.¹¹² By this, I think, Pegis means that the human person is essentially a being that develops toward intellectual and spiritual fulfillment in the manner we see expressed in human history and the narratives of particular lives, a way that involves bodily

¹¹⁰ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 79; *A Preface to Metaphysics*, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1941), 60. cf. Ralph McNerny, *The Very Rich Hours of Jacques Maritain*, (Notre Dame: UND Press, 2003), 179.

¹¹¹ Pegis, *Origins*, 40-43, 55.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 46-47.

and material developments as well, such as the cultural artifacts that we create. It is part of the human essence to develop in a temporal and historical manner.¹¹³ Aquinas can be read as giving a metaphysical account built on existential and phenomenological considerations. Human bodily and affective existence is the “vehicle” of the movement from “spiritual emptiness and poverty” to fulfillment, a fulfillment that occurs through our unique “incarnated” kind of intellectuality.¹¹⁴ The unity and dynamism of the human person and the role of the soul as unifying the body are revealed through an examination of “lived experience”.¹¹⁵ Pegis argues that Aquinas translates the Augustinian view of the person as a historical and spiritual “pilgrim” into Aristotelian metaphysical terms, so as to show that the human person is a “wayfarer” in nature and history.¹¹⁶

Caitlin Smith Gilson has recently drawn out the importance of a “confrontation” between Thomistic metaphysics and phenomenology. She argues, following Pegis, that Aquinas understands the human person to be a finite “vehicle” of self-transcendence, moving toward a goal through various sorts of intentionality. The human person is a “being in the world”, going outside of itself to know things by receiving the forms of things into itself intentionally.¹¹⁷

Aquinas’ account of human intentionality and development toward fulfillment is “phenomenologically descriptive”; it is similar to the thought of Heidegger and Husserl, but it is also the occasion of a critique of their phenomenology.¹¹⁸ On a Thomistic view, a phenomenology of intentionality leads to a metaphysics of causality. Our experiences of things

¹¹³ The same basic argument is given by Lee and George at *Body-Self Dualism*, 57.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 41, 43.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 38-41, 54. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 196.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17-18, 46-47, 56-58. W. Norris Clarke has argued that phenomenological accounts of relationality and dynamism, especially those of Heidegger, Levinas, and Marcel, ought to be “grafted” onto Aquinas’ account of human substantiality, in order to develop the latter. See *Person and Being*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993), 1, 4.

¹¹⁷ Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, xii, 97, 141.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73

“lag behind” the way things are; we have to, through causal and metaphysical reasoning, “catch up” to, that is, discover, the way things actually are.¹¹⁹ Considering the ways in which we examine the world helps us better understand our own nature, which in turn leads to deeper causal reasoning about ourselves and the world. All of these cognitive processes require soul and body, intellect and sensation.¹²⁰ Smith Gilson contrasts Aquinas’ metaphysics to the anti-metaphysical ontology of Heidegger and others. The latter does not move beyond our lived experiences of things; it does not take into account the causal, teleological, and metaphysical structure of our intellectual experience or the necessity of causal and metaphysical reasoning for an account of what we are.¹²¹ However, though her assessment of phenomenology shows the importance of joining it with Thomistic metaphysics, it also distorts much of what the phenomenologists say.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 111-112.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 56-60, 63-78.

¹²¹ Ibid., 97, 105. Leo Elders likewise contends that phenomenology, left to itself without a metaphysics like that of Aquinas, leads to a view of reality as requiring us to impose meaning on it; Aquinas’ metaphysics, by contrast, recognizes that the world is already given to us as meaningful and valuable. See *The Metaphysics of Being of St. Thomas Aquinas in a Historical Perspective*, (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 73-76.

¹²² Other connections between phenomenology and Thomistic metaphysics not directly pertinent to the project of this study include the following; I review these here so as to show the even broader intellectual situation of this study. As is shown in Lisska, “Medieval Theories of Intentionality”, 150 and Robert Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, 92, 263, Edmund Husserl’s theory of intentionality is ultimately built on Aquinas’ theory. Robert Sokolowski has further argued that phenomenology allows us to think about medieval theories of language in a modern context, in *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2008), 273-303. Edith Stein undertook a major joining of phenomenology and Thomistic metaphysics in *Finite and Eternal Being*, Kurt Reinhardt, trans., (Washington: ICS, 2002); cf. Ian Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 100-102. Finally, work has been done in theology and philosophy of religion on a rapprochement between phenomenology and Thomism on the question of how we can know God and on the role of sense perception, perception of beauty, the body, and self-knowledge in knowledge of God; see Von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, v.1, 237-238; John Paul II (Karol Wojtyła), Micheal Waldstein, trans., *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, (Boston: Pauline, 2007), 335, 390, 513; Hibbs, *Aquinas*; Marion, *GWB*, 72-83; Marion, “Saint

III.C.3. HYLOMORPHISM AND THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELF-SENSING IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Having considered some general accounts drawing together phenomenology and hylomorphism, I turn now to three groups of thinkers who have drawn together Aquinas' metaphysics and the work of the phenomenologists with whom I am dealing in this study.

III.C.3.a. ANALYTIC THOMISTS

A first group of such accounts comes from two philosophers in the “analytic Thomist” movement, a movement that includes many of the Thomists mentioned above. John Haldane, in arguing for the explanatory superiority of hylomorphism over other philosophies of mind and the person, points out that those theories attempt to explain experience and consciousness in terms of causal mechanisms or mental representations. Such theories are ill suited, he argues, for accommodating and explaining our non-intentional experiences. For instance, most of those theories are unable to take into account Merleau-Ponty's analyses of “body-knowledge”.¹²³ Merleau-Ponty describes how we always have a tacit awareness of our bodies. We “know” where our limbs are at all times through what he calls a “body-schema” (*schéma corporel*), a “tacit” (*tacite*) awareness of the position and parts of the body. The body-schema is never the focus of intentional awareness, but is always operative in our experience “in the background”.

Thomas d'Aquin et l'onto-theo-logie”, *Revue Thomiste* 95 (1995): 31-66.

¹²³ Haldane, “Breakdown”, 57-58; “Insight, Inference and Intellection,” *Proceedings of the ACPA*, 73 (1999), 42. Haldane mentions that G.E.M. Anscombe has also described similar notions about our bodily self-awareness and its irreducibility to particular normal sensations; see her *Intention*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963) and “On Sensations of Position”, *Analysis* 22 (1962): 55-58. In this same regard I would draw attention to Sydney Shoemaker's work on the necessity of non-introspective awareness of the self prior to introspective or intentional awareness of the self or for identification of the self or ascription of ‘I’ to the self: “Self-Reference and Self-Awareness”, *Journal of Philosophy* 65 (1968): 559-563; (with Swinburne), *Personal Identity*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 102-105.

This awareness is not based on particular proprioceptive or other kinaesthetic sensations. Rather, it is a general and tacit self-awareness, which allows one to directly move the body without having to “translate” consciously one’s volitions and thoughts into bodily movements.¹²⁴

Haldane suggests that the hylomorphic account of the unity between soul and body as a relation of formal-material causality, can take into account Merleau-Ponty’s ideas about one’s constant tacit awareness of the body. We can begin to understand the “unity of soul and body” in terms of this constant tacit awareness of the body, rather than in terms of two efficient-causally-connected objects or in terms of physical-mental dualism.¹²⁵

David Braine has also noted affinities between hylomorphism and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. However, because Braine draws only on Merleau-Ponty’s earlier work in which, by Merleau-Ponty’s own admission, he expressed himself in somewhat dualistic terms, Braine tends to be more critical of Merleau-Ponty than Haldane is. Braine notes that for both Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty we know that our cognition is related to the world not only because a cognition of a thing in the world and the thing itself have the same content, but also because cognizing an object bring about behavioral modification. I am moved and affected by objects, and disposed by them to have further affective attitudes and bodily motions. Links between apprehension, appetite, and bodily motion reveal our metaphysical nature according to Aquinas and the ways in which we are linked to the world according to Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty’s

¹²⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 62-68, 94-95, 102, 104-105, 148-153, 500-503; *SB*, 147, 161-4, 202; *VI*, 168, 248-251; *Signs*, (Evanston: NWU Press, 1964), 56. cf. Richard Shusterman, “The Silent, Limping Body of Philosophy”, in Taylor Carman and Mark Hansen, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), 155-164.

¹²⁵ Haldane, “Breakdown”, 68. Building on this thesis, Joshua Miller has recently argued that Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of the experience of the “lived body”, that is, the body insofar as we “internally” experience it, can help make sense of what Aquinas says about the unity and form of the human person; see his *On whether or not Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of lived body experience can enrich St. Thomas Aquinas's integral anthropology*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Duquesne University, 2009.

descriptions thus are evidence for Aquinas' theories, according to Braine.¹²⁶ Yet Braine criticizes Merleau-Ponty for reducing life and vital form to a phenomenon in the Kantian sense, that is, a mere sensory appearance, and not a real cause that actually exists in the world.¹²⁷ As with Smith and Gilson, Braine faults the phenomenologists for not providing causal explanations of our experience; he thinks that Merleau-Ponty is wrong to just do phenomenology, that is, an account of our experience, without allowing that we are able, via our experience, to discover the way that the world really is. This deficiency in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, Braine argues, leaves us without an account of the connection between our experience and what we really are.¹²⁸

Haldane and Braine highlight the need for a philosophy of mind and of the person that takes into account lived experience, without reducing them to other phenomena, but which also connects accounts of experience and causal explanations. They argue that bringing Merleau-Ponty's accounts of experience into a Thomistic framework helps accomplish this. My thesis draws on a similar set of intuitions to those guiding Haldane and Braine.

Eleonore Stump has also recently brought together a Thomistic approach to the philosophy of the human person with phenomenology, most particularly the phenomenology of Emmanuel Levinas. Stump argues that there are certain types of knowledge that cannot be expressed propositionally. One of these kinds of knowledge is the knowledge we have of other persons when we know them directly, a type of knowledge that she calls "second-person experience". This is not knowledge *that* certain things are the case about those persons, but is rather directly knowing them as persons, as when we "get to know" a friend, or intimately know a lover. Such knowledge is not expressible propositionally, though it is expressible in a narrative.

¹²⁶ Braine, *Human Person*, 70-73, 309.

¹²⁷ Braine, *Human Person*, 283-286. cf. Merleau-Ponty, *SB*, 153.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 309.

Stump suggests that Levinas is an important philosophical authority on this kind of knowledge, with his account of the “face to face relationship” being the very foundation of philosophical knowledge. While Stump focuses more on narrative accounts of this kind of experience than phenomenological accounts, she opens the door to the idea that a phenomenology of second-person experience captures something essential about the human person that cannot be described in metaphysical terms.¹²⁹ This study builds on and develops Stump’s intuition.

III.C.3.b. PHENOMENOLOGISTS

A few thinkers working in phenomenology also note some connections between their descriptions of our experience and hylomorphism. Merleau-Ponty notes some affinities between his and Aristotle’s analyses of “form”. Our primary experience of things is in terms of their “form” or *Gestalt*: we perceive things as organized wholes.¹³⁰ These structured wholes cannot be reduced to their matter; we experience things first as configured wholes and only subsequently analyze them into parts, which cannot completely explain the total *Gestalt*. A prime example of such a *Gestalt* is an organism. Merleau-Ponty draws on the Aristotelian idea of nature (*phusis*) to understand organisms as self-structuring entities. They grow and adapt to their environment in a meaningful way, that is, such that their parts harmonize with one another and its environment.

¹²⁹ Eleonore Stump, *Wandering in Darkness: Narrative and the Problem of Suffering*, (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 49-60, 75-81, 505.

¹³⁰ In this study I mostly leave ‘*Gestalt*’ untranslated, though it certainly can be translated as ‘form’. This is to avoid confusion between ‘*Gestalt*’ in Merleau-Ponty and ‘form’ in Aquinas. It is especially important to keep these terms distinguished because I argue that experienced *Gestalt* is evidence for, but not identical to, the metaphysical principle of form; the two are very similar but are not the same. Everything in the world, including all relations among things, are given as *Gestalten* according to Merleau-Ponty, but there is not a form corresponding to each *Gestalt*. *Gestalten* pertain to our experience; forms have to do with the way things actually are. When I do translate ‘*Gestalt*’ as ‘form’, this will be for a clear purpose and it will be made clear that this is how I am using ‘form’. More on this will be discussed in this chapter and in Chapters Three and Four. For an account of Aristotelian forms which interprets them more as *Gestalten* see Kathrin Koslicki, *The Structure of Objects*, (Oxford: OUP, 2010), ch.9.

Particular parts and functions of the organism must always be understood in the context of the overall form displayed by the organism. The perceptible and intelligible *Gestalten* of a thing, he argues, is like the Aristotelian form, which organizes and bestows function and unity on the matter of a substance.¹³¹ As we have already seen, Merleau-Ponty thinks that, in self-sensing we experience ourselves as forms around which the matter of our bodies is organized.¹³² But although Merleau-Ponty gives reasons for drawing together phenomenology and Aristotelian hylomorphism, he opposes the teleological aspects of Aristotle's thought, since he wrongly thinks that the Aristotelian form is "outside" an organism guiding its development.¹³³ Although Merleau-Ponty gives us some reason to see the world in an Aristotelian way, he certainly does not directly endorse full-fledged hylomorphism. Further argument is needed.

A few of Merleau-Ponty's commentators have noted affinities between Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty. Mary Rose Barral suggests that both thinkers seek an account of the "real nature of being" and of integration and unity between soul and body, but the connections that she draws amount to just a list of similarities and differences.¹³⁴ M.C. Dillon notes how Merleau-Ponty describes how we discover the intelligible core of things through considering their sensible features.¹³⁵ Dillon likens this to Aquinas' account of understanding of the intelligible essence of

¹³¹ *SB*, 47-49, 136-137, 144, 156, 159, 168; *PP*, 70-73, 352-353, 382-389, 529; *N*, 3, 155-157, 204, 208, 260, 281; *VI*, 149-155, 194, 204-206, 237. cf. Renaud Barbaras, Ted Toadvine and Leonard Lawlor, trans., *The Being of the Phenomenon*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 73, 179-181; Barbaras, "A Phenomenology of Life", in *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, op.cit., 218-225; Mark B.N. Hansen, "The Embryology of the (In)visible", in *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, op.cit., 237.

¹³² *VI*, 9.

¹³³ *N*, 155-157, 176. cf. Barbaras, "A Phenomenology of Life", 222-227, 229; Hansen, "Embryology", 241-242.

¹³⁴ Mary Rose Barral, "Thomas Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty", *Philosophy Today* 26 (1982): 204-216.

¹³⁵ *VI*, 149-150, 188.

things as involving a “turning to the phantasms” (*conversio ad phantasmata*).¹³⁶ For Aquinas, roughly, understanding the essences of things requires examining “phantasms” or mental images of things. Aquinas argues that “anyone can experience in him or herself” that understanding requires forming sense images.¹³⁷ For both, gaining access to the intelligible content of things requires us to “do something” to the sensory world to render it intelligible.¹³⁸ Dillon does not develop this connection further, though he takes it to be explanatory of Merleau-Ponty’s theory. Stephen Priest argues that Merleau-Ponty’s descriptions of experience are descriptions of what Priest calls the traditional idea of the soul. By ‘soul’ Priest means an experiential “space” in which all my experiences occur: for both Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty, I “know [something] by being it”, by coinciding with it experientially.¹³⁹ Priest thinks that medieval accounts of the soul and body can be best understood using phenomenology and that a joined theory can overcome problems in dualism and materialism.¹⁴⁰ These commentators leave us with some suggestions as to points of contact between Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty, but no analysis of the connection. Other interpreters of Merleau-Ponty object to joining his thought with Aristotelianism.¹⁴¹

Similarly tantalizing but underdeveloped suggestions of points of contact have been made with regard to the other thinkers I am considering in this study. Scheler suggests, without developing the point, that the Aristotelian view on the relationship between soul and body is truer to our experience than dualism or materialism, though he thinks Aristotelianism is still too

¹³⁶ M.C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 210.

¹³⁷ *ST*, I, q.79, a.4; q.84, a.7: “...hoc quilibet in seipso experiri potest...”

¹³⁸ Dillon, *Ontology*, 210.

¹³⁹ Stephen Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 232-235.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 267.

¹⁴¹ Lawrence Hass, *Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 73; Gary Brent Madison, *The Phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty*, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981), 196, 293-294.

dualistic.¹⁴² Levinas finds a limited parallel with Aristotle to his own thought. Levinas thinks that we find in ourselves a call which impels us outward into the world to serve others and thereby renders the world intelligible. He likens this call in us to Aristotle's notion of the agent intellect, the power that allows us to abstract the intelligible content from our sense images of the world. This power is in some sense transcendent to the world; it renders things understood, but is not itself what is understood when we conceptualize something.¹⁴³ He does not explain what he means by this parallel and elsewhere argues that Aristotle's metaphysics do not take into account many of our experiences, including the experience of something that exceeds our ideas and categories; he does not explain whether or how he takes these seemingly incompatible claims to be consonant.¹⁴⁴ In discussing Michel Henry's work, Jean Racette suggests a parallel between Henry and Aquinas. Henry thinks that at the foundation of all our experiences is an experience of self-sensing, which includes an experience of bodily power similar to the "body-schema" mentioned earlier. Henry calls this self-sensing which underlies all experience of the body, the soul.¹⁴⁵ Racette suggests that this power, as described by Henry, is similar to Aquinas' notion of the form of the body.¹⁴⁶ But, as with all these thinkers, he does not develop this suggestion.

Finally, Ian Leask has argued that a phenomenology inspired by scholasticism, especially

¹⁴² *CHB*, 143-144, 280, 308.

¹⁴³ *TI*, 49, 60-63. cf. Aristotle, *DA* III.5; Aquinas, *In III DA*, lect.10; Theodore de Boer, "An Ethical Transcendental Philosophy", in Richard Cohen, *Face to Face with Levinas*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 1986), 90-95, 100; John E. Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001), 158-160, 181-183; Richard Cohen, "Some Notes on the Title of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity* and its First Sentence", in *Levinasian Meditations*, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2010), 126; Edith Wyschogrod, *Emmanuel Levinas: The Problem of Ethical Metaphysics*, (New York: Fordham, 2000), 235-237.

¹⁴⁴ *TI*, 112; *AT*, 48, 59-60. The way in which the phenomenologists have misinterpreted the Aristotelian tradition is considered by Louis Dupre, "Alternatives to the Cogito", *Review of Metaphysics* 40 (1987): 689-692, 716.

¹⁴⁵ Michel Henry, Girard Etzkorn, trans., "Does the Concept 'Soul' Mean Anything?", *Philosophy Today* 13 (1969): 110-113.

¹⁴⁶ Jean Racette, "Michel Henry's Philosophy of the Body", *Philosophy Today* 13 (1969): 92-93.

that of Aquinas, can help overcome the subjectivism and idealism toward which phenomenology, with its focus on experience and despite its best efforts, tends. The phenomenological work on self-sensing of Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Henry can help with this movement toward a phenomenological metaphysics that does not reduce everything to the conscious subject. These phenomenologists resist the move toward idealism and subjectivism, Leask thinks, more than other phenomenologists, such as Husserl, because of their focus on how our materiality and corporeality are constitutive of our experience. The experience of self-sensing shows how we human persons are rooted in the world and how we are given to ourselves prior to being conscious.¹⁴⁷ With these suggestions Leask points toward the project of this study more explicitly than do the other phenomenologists reviewed in this section. This study is part of a larger current project to join certain strands of phenomenology and pre-modern metaphysics, a project in which Leask and others like Smith Gilson are also involved.

III.C.3.c. JOHN MILBANK

The theologian John Milbank has made some suggestions quite similar to the thesis of this study, though he does not develop these suggestions in sufficient detail and he paints both the Aristotelian and phenomenological traditions with a very broad brush, making it difficult to assess the plausibility of his position. Milbank understands the soul as understood by Aristotle and Aquinas to be a “spontaneous, non-mechanistic force” which, as “form” of the body, “opens” the person in his or her interiority to “become all things” intentionally. The body, in turn, is a mediator between the soul and informed matter in the exterior world. Milbank sees Merleau-Ponty as pointing us toward this view of the person, with his idea of the body as the

¹⁴⁷ Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, 5, 80-121.

“hinge” or point of contact between subjective interiority and external objects.¹⁴⁸ On a view of the soul that is a hybrid of the traditional and Merleau-Ponty’s views, the self-sensing of the ensouled body requires bodily movement and an awareness of things in the world. We sense ourselves when we are sensing things in the world. There is a “reciprocity” between sensing and moving, between passively receiving sensations and actively constituting the objects of our experience, and between sensibility and intelligibility.¹⁴⁹ Milbank sees Merleau-Ponty as pointing us back to that older view of the soul informing the body and providing a basis for intentional union with things, but in a “postmodern” way, that is, a way that does not require talk of a “substance-accident metaphysics”.¹⁵⁰ This position overcomes dualistic and materialistic theories, since it shows the reciprocal interconnections between soul and body, self-knowledge and knowledge of the world.¹⁵¹ Milbank argues that Henry and Levinas fall into problematic views of the person which sunder the person from the sort of intimate contact with the world possible on Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty’s views.¹⁵²

Milbank overlooks the close similarities between Merleau-Ponty, Henry, and Levinas on self-sensing. His replacement of Aristotelian metaphysics with a post-modern understanding of the soul as an “event” of self-sensing also leads to the question of what it is he is trying to recover from the Aristotelian tradition.¹⁵³ Although he makes the most concrete suggestions of

¹⁴⁸ John Milbank, “The Soul of Reciprocity Part One: Reciprocity Refused”, *Modern Theology* 17 (2001): 336-338.

¹⁴⁹ Milbank, “The Soul of Reciprocity Part Two: Reciprocity Regained”, *Modern Theology* 17 (2001): 490-492, 495-501.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 490.

¹⁵¹ Milbank, “Reciprocity Part One”, 335-336, 340; “Reciprocity Part Two”, 490, 504-505.

¹⁵² Milbank, “Reciprocity Part One”, 341-342, 349-350, 357-359, 365; “Reciprocity Part Two”, 501. cf. Wayne Hankey, *One Hundred Years of Neo-Platonism in France*, (Leuven: Peters, 2006), on author’s website, 71-72.

¹⁵³ cf. Hankey, *Neo-Platonism*, 72; Hankey, “Philosophical Religion and the Neoplatonic Turn to the Subject”, in Hankey and Douglas Hedley, eds., *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*,

any thinker in the direction of my thesis, his misunderstanding or misinterpretation of key elements and thinkers in both traditions means that more work needs to be done to assess the connection between these traditions.

A number of thinkers thus think that there is some affinity between the phenomenology of self-sensing and Thomistichylomorphism, but that little has been done to explain this connection. One final and most important audience for this study is those who have made these suggestions; my goal is to try to develop the intuitions that they and I seem to share. I must now explain the scope of this study, for I am covering only a small part of the connection that could be drawn between these two traditions.

IV. THE SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

It is important at the outset of this project to understand its limited scope. Though this project touches on many issues, I am just arguing that the phenomenology of self-sensing, as described just by Scheler, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Henry, is evidence for the Thomistichylomorphist theory of the person. I want to now distinguish this thesis from related issues, which some might think I ought to consider. This study could be used as a starting point for investigating these other topics.

IV.A. RELATED QUESTIONS AND CLAIMS

My claim is not that Aquinas himself was a phenomenologist or was implicitly using the phenomenological method.¹⁵⁴ Rather, my claim is that phenomenology can be used to support his metaphysical claims. I do think that some of Aquinas' claims about our experience are phenomenological and that these can be given a phenomenological interpretation, though this is

(Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 29; Neil G. Robinson, "Milbank and Modern Secularity", in *Deconstructing Radical Orthodoxy*, op.cit., 90-91.

¹⁵⁴ This claim—indeed, the implausible claim that every philosophical insight and inquiry is phenomenological—is made by Barral, "Aquinas and Merleau-Ponty", 204.

not my thesis in this study. Even if it were to turn out that the proper interpretation of Aquinas' texts is that he never gave a first-person account of experience, my thesis would be unaffected, for my thesis is just that phenomenology is evidence for his theory. This is a study on the foundations of the philosophy of the human person, not, strictly speaking, on the history of philosophy. I do not, except insofar as it is necessary for demonstrating my thesis, take up related topics in Thomistic metaphysics, such as the relationship between essence and existence, the idea of participation, or the hierarchy of creatures, or topics in Thomistic theology such as the idea that the human person is made in the image of God.¹⁵⁵ I think that phenomenologically-described experience could be used as evidence for these ideas,¹⁵⁶ but it is not necessary to delve into such issues for the purposes of this study. Similarly there are many topics in contemporary metaphysics and epistemology related to my project that I shall not take up here. I shall not, for example, directly consider problems regarding personal identity¹⁵⁷ or regarding the spatial boundaries of the human person.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵ For a good summary of all of these debates see the Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*. Other fine sources which review the relevant literature on these debates and offer substantive positions of their own include: Jan Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals*, (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Oliva Blanchette, *The Perfection of the Universe According to Thomas Aquinas*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992); Gilson, *Being*; Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion*; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, especially chapter 2; Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 212-214.

¹⁵⁶ If one were to use phenomenology to provide evidence for these topics in Thomistic metaphysics, key places to begin would be: Scheler, *F*, 87-104, 108-110, 292-295, 554-555; "Idealism and Realism", in *SPE*, 317-327; *MPN*, 88-95; *OEM*, 163-270; Merleau-Ponty, *VI*, 169, 250, 267; Levinas, *OE*, 49-55; *EE*, 15-20; *TI*, 72-81, 293-294, 298-299; *OBBE*, 149-162; "Meaning and Sense", in *CPP*, 106-107; "In the Image of God", in *BV*, 159-163; Henry, *EM*, 8-12, 43-45, 309-335, 425-433, 550-552; *IATT*, throughout.

¹⁵⁷ For a summary of how these issues relate to Aquinas see: Hershenov, "A Hylomorphic Account"; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 381-393, 461; Toner, "Personal Identity".

¹⁵⁸ cf. Andy Clarke and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind", *Analysis* 58 (1998): 10-23, as well as the response papers in Richard Menary, ed., *The Extended Mind*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2010); Olson, *What are We?*, 4, 71-73; Van Inwagen, *Material Beings*, 213-227;. On how this issue relates to Aquinas see Toner, "On Substance", *ACPQ* 84 (2010): 25-48.

One might object that the above mentioned issues are so important for metaphysics, phenomenology, epistemology, and interpreting of Aquinas that I cannot set them aside like this. But this order of inquiry is fully in accord with the methodology of both Aquinas and the phenomenologists, both of whom start with the world as it is presented to us and then proceed to theorize more abstractly about it. There is no problem within this framework with focusing just on the human person without inquiring into a broader philosophical framework.

Still, there are several issues closely related to my thesis which I shall touch on. I am not directly arguing for a position on these issues, though I shall offer some suggestions on them. First, although I am arguing that the phenomenology of self-sensing provides evidence for Thomistichylomorphism, it could also be argued that phenomenological accounts can help illuminate and explain what Aquinas means in various passages of his texts. One could read Aquinas phenomenologically, elucidating, for instance, his accounts of the five senses by using phenomenological descriptions of the senses.¹⁵⁹ Second, phenomenological accounts could be used to criticize Aquinas when his metaphysics is incompatible with our experience. Third, Aquinas' theories could also be used to critique phenomenological accounts, as failing to cohere with metaphysical principles or as descriptively deficient. This last point would require us to be able to read Aquinas as engaging in a sort of phenomenological description. Again, I am not arguing that Aquinas does in fact do this, though I do think it is suggested in several passages. I shall suggest some of these mutual explanations and critiques throughout this study.

This study takes up the question of what the proper relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics is; this will be seen especially in the final section of this chapter and in Chapter

¹⁵⁹ A claim like this has recently been made regarding the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty elucidating the unity of the person and the nature of the human intellect by Joshua Miller, *Lived Body Experience*.

Three. Some object to any conjoining of these two disciplines; this debate has led in recent literature to the “problem of first philosophy”, the debate about which of these disciplines is the primary branch of philosophy. It seems that each discipline has a good claim to be the most fundamental philosophy; each can plausibly claim to found the other. Phenomenology can claim this because it investigates the significance of things as they are presented to us in our experience, and we have no access to anything unless it first appears in our experience, even to the fundamental structure of the world; metaphysics can claim this because it investigates the fundamental structure of the world, which must underlie even our own experience. Although this study is not focused on this problem, in demonstrating my thesis I shall work out a relationship between metaphysics and phenomenology that overcomes many of the objections raised by the practitioners of each of these disciplines.¹⁶⁰ It is in part because of the ramifications of this problem of first philosophy that I think that metaphysics must take phenomenological evidence quite seriously, at least at the beginning of metaphysical inquiry.

This study is thus connected to a large number of philosophical questions, not all of which can be taken up here. This study can be seen as a preliminary investigation prior to a broader investigation of whether and how other experiences as phenomenologically described

¹⁶⁰ On the problem of first philosophy see: Simon Critchley, “Introduction”, in Critchley and Robert Bernasconi, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 6; de Boer, “Transcendental Philosophy”, 104-109; Dominique Janicaud, Charles Cabral, trans., *Phenomenology “Wide Open”*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 27-45; Levinas, *TI*, 42-48, 304; Henry, *EM*, 2; Marion, *IE*, 1-29; Milbank, “Only Theology Overcomes Metaphysics”, in *The Word Made Strange*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997); Michael Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2006), 24-25; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 97. These texts on the issue are all from a phenomenological point of view. Some Thomists have also referred to the issue of which branch of philosophy is primary, though not under the name of ‘the problem of first philosophy’: Aertsen, *Transcendentals*, 151-156; Gilson, *Being*, 214. These draw on Aquinas’ history of the problem, which he sees as culminating in a metaphysics of existence and creation: *In VIII Phys.*, lect. 2; *In IV Met.*, lect. 1 and 2; *QDPD*, q.3, a.5; *DSS*, c.9; *SCG II*, c.37; *ST I*, q.44, a.2

can be used as evidence for other aspects of Thomistic philosophy; this in turn could lead to a broader investigation into the relationship between phenomenology and metaphysics in general. Confining myself to descriptions of one sort of experience and one aspect of metaphysics is part of the reason why I have chosen to examine the thinkers that I have. Still, a short justification of these sources is in order. I first explain why I have chosen to focus on Aquinas, as opposed to some other hylomorphist, and then explain why I have chosen to use the work of the four phenomenologists that I have, as opposed to other phenomenologists.

IV.B. JUSTIFICATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL SOURCES

A first question that could be asked in this regard is why I have chosen to argue that the phenomenology of self-sensing points toward hylomorphism, rather than some other basic philosophy of the person. Indeed, some have alleged that each of the phenomenologists whom I review, except for Scheler, provide support for some sort of non-reductive materialism, such as emergent dualism, or an account of consciousness according to which consciousness is “enacted” by our motor or linguistic activity.¹⁶¹ Others have alleged, based especially on their focus on experience, that each of these philosophers provides support for dualism.¹⁶² Eugene

¹⁶¹ For Merleau-Ponty: Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, 101-102, 105, 113-114, 131, 164 Hansen, “Embryology”, 235, 254-255; Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 14-17; Barbaras, “Phenomenology of Life”, 218, 223-224; For Levinas: Richard Cohen, “Being, Time, and the Ethical Body”, in op.cit.; 37-38; Cohen, “Virtue Embodied”, in op.cit., 291; Alphonso Lingis, “The Sensuality and the Sensitivity”, in Eric Sean Nelson, et.al., eds., *Addressing Levinas*, (Evanston: NWU Press, 2005), 227-230; Diane Perpich, “Sensible Subjects”, in Nelson, op.cit., 299-301. For Henry: Laszlo Tengelyi, “Selfhood, Passivity, and Affectivity in Henry and Levinas”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 (2009): 410; Michael O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 77-79, 86-94, 110-111.

¹⁶² For Scheler: Nota, *Scheler*, 47-48, 154-156; Jonathan J. Sanford, “Scheler vs. Scheler: The Case for a Better Ontology of the Person”, *ACPQ* 79 (2005): 149, 151-152; Peter Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism*, (New York: Fordham, 2002), 186, 215-217. For Merleau-Ponty: Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 14-17, 287-288. For Levinas: Cristian Ciocan, Kascha Semon, trans., “The Problem of Embodiment in the Early Writings of Emmanuel Levinas”, *Levinas Studies* 4 (2009): 4; Leora Batnitzky, “Encountering the Modern Subject in

Kelly argues that phenomenology cannot provide evidence for a metaphysical theory at all.¹⁶³

A complete response to such objections is beyond the scope of this study. However, the phenomenologists studied here consciously seek to move beyond materialism and dualism. Their conception of the human body as something describable phenomenologically makes any materialism that they support unlike any mainstream non-reductive materialism.¹⁶⁴ Their insistence on the importance and constitutive role of materiality to human experience makes their views unlike dualism. Nevertheless, at times these phenomenologists also reject an Aristotelian or Thomistic account; I shall have to show why, contrary to their stated views, their work actually provides evidence for that account.

IV.B.1. JUSTIFICATION OF THE USE OF THOMISTIC HYLOMORPHISM

A more pertinent question here is the question of why I argue that the phenomenological evidence points to Thomistic hylomorphism, rather than some other version of hylomorphism. There have been, from ancient times to the present, many versions of the thesis that the human person is composed of form and matter. Three medieval and one ancient hylomorphist accounts should be mentioned, as each seems *prima facie* to capture some phenomenological concerns. Here, I seek to head off objections that the phenomenology of self-sensing provides evidence more for these versions of hylomorphism than for Thomistic hylomorphism and in the next section I seek to head off objections to the particular phenomenologists that I choose here. It is not my intention in this study to present a history or historically-based argument regarding either hylomorphism or phenomenology. Rather, I am quite consciously seeking experiential evidence

Levinas”, *Yale French Studies* 104 (2004): 6-7, 12-13, 15-16; Milbank, “Soul of Reciprocity, Part One”, 341-342. For Henry: Dupre, “Alternatives”, 696-701; John Llewelyn, *The Hypocritical Imagination*, (London: Routledge, 2000), 168; Christoph Moonen, “Immediacy and Incarnation”, *Bijdragen tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 66 (2005): 407-408.

¹⁶³ Eugene Kelly, *Max Scheler*, (Boston: Twayne, 1977), 162-163.

¹⁶⁴ This point is made by Stephen Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 66-79.

specifically for Thomistichylomorphism; much of the history of these views, while certainly important in itself, will be left out of this study, which is systematic rather than historical. Thus these responses here will be brief: I merely seek to respond, in a rather cursory fashion, to those who would advocate that the experiential evidence points to another form ofhylomorphism or that I should have used some other phenomenologist's descriptions than the ones that I did.

First, it has been contended, for instance by Robert Pasnau, that, among medieval philosophers, Peter John Olivi is the most "phenomenological" philosopher, since he describes in great detail what it is like to perform various actions, such as to will or to know oneself.¹⁶⁵ Olivi even uses language like that of Merleau-Ponty when he says that cognition occurs through harmony (*colligantia*) of our powers with external objects. Olivi describes sensation in terms of mental focus rather than in terms of physical structures.¹⁶⁶ He thinks we have immediate knowledge of what we are, whereas Aquinas thinks that discovery of our essence requires reflection on and analysis of our experience and powers, and that we can only know our essence to a limited degree. One could argue that since Olivi seems already phenomenological in his method and findings and so I ought to argue that phenomenological descriptions point to his version ofhylomorphism. Olivi, unlike Aquinas but like most medievalhylomorphists, held that the human person has more than one form, that is, more than one principle of actuality that

¹⁶⁵ Olivi is called "phenomenological" at Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 348. The passages that Pasnau cites in support of this are Olivi, *In II S*, q.57, where Olivi claims that we know what our essence is because we can immediately sense and feel ourselves, and q.54, where Olivi describes the experience of freedom. See also Francois-Xavier Putallaz, "Peter Olivi", in Jorge Gracia and Timothy Noone, eds., *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 520-521. The suggestion that Olivi was the most phenomenological of the medieval scholastics (and that the Franciscan philosophers were in general more phenomenological than Aquinas) was made to me by Peter Hartman and Simona Vucu. The suggestion that the Franciscan philosophers were in general more phenomenological than Aquinas was also made to me by Bill Tullius.

¹⁶⁶ Olivi, *In II S*, q.58, 74, cited in King, "Scholasticism and the Philosophy of Mind", 25-26.

makes us what we are. We have one form for our intellectual nature and another which accounts for our animal and bodily nature. This accounts, most medieval hylomorphists contend, for the dualistic aspects of experience and for the immortality of the soul.¹⁶⁷

Aquinas, although writing before Olivi, rejects the idea that there is a plurality of forms in us; he holds that the human being is unified and that this unity is due to a single form. If I had more than one form, I would not be one thing, and I would not experience the sort of interconnections that I experience between my various powers, for instance, the experience of one power impeding another.¹⁶⁸ The phenomenologists also emphasize the unity of the person. In particular, especially in Merleau-Ponty and Levinas, the close connection between intellectual and sensitive activity is emphasized.¹⁶⁹ Olivi's plurality of souls is not well-suited to explain this unity of our experience. Furthermore, the phenomenologists do not think that we straightforwardly and immediately know what our essence is, as Olivi contends we do. Rather, the phenomenologists and Aquinas both hold that we immediately know *that* we are, but that deeper knowledge of *what* we are requires reflection on one's experience in the world and of other people. Finally, unlike Olivi the phenomenologists describe the experience of sensation as involving bodily structures. Aquinas' account of cognition, including self-cognition, turns out to be much closer to the phenomenologists' than Olivi's account does.

A second version of hylomorphism, that of Solomon Ibn Gabriol (Avicebron), holds that all things, even spiritual beings like our intellectual souls, are composed of matter and form. On this theory, matter is any individuating and receiving principle and form is any principle that

¹⁶⁷ Olivi, *In II S*, q.51, cited in Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 159-160.

¹⁶⁸ *QDDA*, a.1; *DUI*, c.1, n.49; c.3, n.70; *SCG*, II, c.58, 72, 73; *ST*, I, q.76, a.3. cf. Lee and George, *Body-Self Dualism*, 16-19; Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 121-124.

¹⁶⁹ Levinas, *TI*, 163-174; Merleau-Ponty, *VI*, 149-155.

determines what a thing is and brings it to perfection.¹⁷⁰ It could be argued that this account of all things being composed of matter and form is indicated by the experience of self-sensing. Self-sensing is described, for instance by Merleau-Ponty and Henry, as an experience of simultaneously sensing and being sensed, affecting oneself and being affected by oneself. This experience is given prior to any experience of being a material body.¹⁷¹ Indeed, as we have seen, according to Merleau-Ponty, the material body is experienced as organized around this basic experience of self-sensing. Yet this experience still has aspects of matter and form, that is, of receptivity and activity. Perhaps a hylomorphism that allows us to prescind from considerations of bodies, but still talk about all experienced things in terms of matter and form, is what is indicated by these descriptions. This would fit into the general pattern of Ibn Gabriol's hylomorphism, in which everything, not just bodies, consists of form and matter.

According to Aquinas, this position fails to grasp the difference between the corporeal and the intellectual or spiritual. According to Aquinas, the way in which corporeal things are able to be changed, and the way intellectual things are able to be changed are completely different. Matter changes by really becoming some new particular thing or taking on some new real particular property; the intellect changes by taking on forms intentionally, that is, by gaining new knowledge about things and not by becoming those things. To use the term 'matter' for the potency in both cases is not at all informative; such a usage would yield a metaphysical theory that did not adequately attend to salient differences in ways in which we are experientially

¹⁷⁰ Solomon Ibn Gabriol, *The Fountain of Life* treatise 4, Arthur Hyman, trans., in Hyman and James Walsh, eds., *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1973), 363-365. See Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 42; Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 129; Tamar Rudavsky, "Avencebrol", in Gracia and Noone, eds., *Companion*, op.cit., 176-177; Te Valde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 234-244.

¹⁷¹ Merleau-Ponty, *VI*, 116-118, 142-144, 239, 248-250; Henry, *EM*, 475-477, 488-489, 517-519, 626-628; *PPB*, 129-134, 195-198; *MP*, 38-39, 81.

presented to ourselves.¹⁷² Furthermore, if the soul were composed of matter and form, it would not be able to also be the form of corporeal matter.¹⁷³ For the phenomenologists' part, to say that their descriptions are evidence for universalhylomorphism is to ignore the emphasis that they place on the body as a corporeal, objectively examinable thing, and the centrality of the body in this sense to what we are as human beings. While, as will be explained in Chapter Three in the section on Michel Henry, there is an experience of self-sensing presented to us in some way prior to the experience of the corporeal body, the latter experience always quickly follows on the former. I sense myself sensing myself, but I also sense myself as a material thing, as something I have to exert effort to move. The experience of self-sensing and the experience of bodily effort are aspects of one and the same experience, and this is, I argue, indicative of what we are.

The third medievalhylomorphist account that one might contend is supported by phenomenological evidence is that of Ibn Rushd (Averroes). Ibn Rushd held that there is only one intellect that is common to all human beings, while sensitive powers, such as the external senses and the imagination, are in each individual person. We understand the natures of things in virtue of this one intellect in conjunction with the images of things that we sense. Each of us has a form that makes us what we are, but this form gives rise only to non-intellectual powers.¹⁷⁴

One could contend that there is phenomenological evidence for this position. In Edmund Husserl's phenomenological method we try to focus on pure experience. This requires that we

¹⁷² Aquinas does have a term for potency generally considered as including both the potency of matter and the potency of the intellect, 'ylatim'. But this is not to be identified with matter as it is found in bodily things. Aquinas uses this term at *In DC*, lect.9; *SCG II*, c.54. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 333; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 373-374.

¹⁷³ *QDDA* a.6, *QDSC*, a.7; *DSS*, c.7; *SCG II*, c.50; *ST*, I, q.75, a.5.

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Rushd (Averroes), "Long Commentary on *De Anima*" III, texts 4 and 5, Hyman, trans., in *Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, op.cit., 324-334. cf. *DUI* c.5; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 162; Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 161-164; Richard C. Taylor, "Averroes", in *Companion*, op.cit., 190-192.

mentally set aside or “bracket” all considerations of the world and the self as real or causally influenced. When one focuses on pure experience in this way, as just whatever is given to consciousness, exactly as it is given, the self is experienced as a “pure ego” or “transcendental consciousness”, a pure consciousness to which objects are given in intentionality. When we are aware of such a consciousness, there is nothing that individuates it or makes it mine. All considerations of myself as real have been set aside and any personality traits of mine are considered as objects presented to pure consciousness. The pure ego surveys all objects; the significance or meaning of each object is part of the ego’s intentional acts.¹⁷⁵ Such a view of consciousness could be taken to provide evidence for Ibn Rushd’s idea of a common intellect once we turn from a phenomenological consideration of experience to metaphysical reasoning about that experience.

Aquinas rejects Averroes’ view. What it is to be a human being is to be an understander in an intellectual sense; each of us experiences his or her own act of understanding in him or herself. Averroes’ theory goes against both our experience and the best account of what sets the human person apart from other animals, that is, the intellect.¹⁷⁶ On the part of phenomenologists, Merleau-Ponty and Scheler offer some phenomenological evidence that our intellectual powers are own, not common. Levinas offers evidence for the unity of the person and the rootedness of

¹⁷⁵ Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 58-62, 91-98, 109-114, 142; *Ideas 3*, 94-102. There is a good deal of controversy regarding the proper interpretation of Husserl’s notion of the “transcendental ego”. Bill Tullius has pointed out to me in private correspondence that, at least in his later works such the *Crisis*, Husserl conceived of the transcendental ego as radically individual, and given as in a community with other individual transcendental egos; in earlier works such as the *Ideas*, Husserl should not be read as giving an account that could be used as evidence for what we are, but just as an account of the structure of experience. On such a view, Husserl’s views could not be used as evidence for Averroes’ metaphysics. Tim Stapleton, however, has contended to me in private conversation that Husserl should be read as providing an account of what we are in these passages.

¹⁷⁶ *In III DA*, lect.10; *DUI*, c.4 and 5; *QDDA*, a.3 and 5; *QDSC*, a.9 and 10; *SCG*, II, c.73-76; *ST*, 1, q.76, a.2; q.79, a. 4 and 5. cf. Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 168-169.

the human powers in the body and in self-sensing: even though reason is experienced as impersonal, rational and intellectual activity arises only on the basis of individual sensing. As we shall see in the next section, each of the phenomenologists considered here provide experiential reasons to reject Husserl's notion of transcendental consciousness. For these reasons, phenomenology does not provide evidence for Averroistic hylomorphism.

Finally, one could ask why I choose to use Thomistic, rather than Aristotelian, hylomorphism, considering that Aristotle is the founder of this school of thought. I shall indeed draw on Aristotle throughout this study, but as we have seen in considering the various medieval theories, Aristotle's ideas can be interpreted in widely divergent ways. Likewise, in the contemporary secondary literature on Aristotle there is not a clear consensus about what he means by various metaphysical terms.¹⁷⁷ Aquinas' interpretation and application of Aristotelian hylomorphism emphasizes the unity of the person and of experience in a way that other interpretations do not and in a way that is suggested by the phenomenological evidence.

IV.B.2. JUSTIFICATION OF THE USE OF SCHELER, MERLEAU-PONTY, LEVINAS, AND HENRY

We must now turn to a consideration of why I have chosen to consider the phenomenologists that I have. The chief reason is that for each of these phenomenologists, unlike others, the experience of self-sensing is taken to be a necessary condition and accompaniment to all our other experiences and to be indicative of what we are. They provide strong arguments that this is the correct description of our experience, rather than the descriptions given by other phenomenologists; this will become clearer in Chapter Three. For

¹⁷⁷ For a good overview of contemporary positions on a variety of issues in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* see Mary Louise Gill, "Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Reconsidered", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 43 (2005): 223-251. For an account of how Aristotle's hylomorphism is not a unified theory see Jiyuan Yu, "Two Conceptions of Hylomorphism in *Metaphysics ZHΘ*", *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 15 (1997): 119-145.

example, Scheler focuses a good deal of attention on the “lived body” (*Leib*), the body insofar as we experience it, and its relationship to the “body-thing” (*Korper*), the body insofar as it is considered as a thing like any other material thing. My lived body is something I always immediately experience; I do not sense it as a thing in the external world just like other things.¹⁷⁸ According to Merleau-Ponty, every experience involves an implicit or “tacit” self-sensing awareness of oneself as a body, as occupying a particular position and executing certain movements.¹⁷⁹ Levinas too describes how underlying and accompanying every other experience is the experience of self-sensing: an experience of being aware of oneself as living and bodily and of a desire or tendency to go on living which he calls “enjoyment”. All of our practical actions and intellectual inquiries presuppose and include self-sensing and so it more clearly indicates what we are, at foundation.¹⁸⁰ Henry describes self-sensing as the foundation of experience, the fundamental sensory and intellectual impressions and feelings that are a necessary condition for all other experiences and that make up my subjective life.¹⁸¹ By calling an experience ‘foundational’, phenomenologists mean that it is a necessary condition for other experiences, that it is presupposed by other experiences but does not presuppose them.

Other phenomenologists who have described self-sensing do not understand self-sensing to be a foundational experience or do not think that it is indicative of what we are. The four phenomenologists I have chosen take pains to show how those other thinkers are wrong to think that self-sensing is not foundational or not indicative of what we are; they also critique those phenomenologists, like Martin Heidegger, who did not take into account the experience of self-

¹⁷⁸ Scheler, *F*, 144; 398-415

¹⁷⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 241-246, 270, 468-471, 474-475; *VI*, 143-145.

¹⁸⁰ Levinas, *EE*, 28-36; *TI*, 127-140, 163-168.

¹⁸¹ Henry, *EM*, 459, 475-477, 517-518, 626, 660-661; *MP*, 24, 38-41, 95-97, 132.

sensing much at all.¹⁸² One earlier thinker who did consider self-sensing, but who did not think it to be foundational to our experience in the same way as the four phenomenologists considered here, was Edmund Husserl. Contrasting his treatment of experiences of self-sensing to those of the four phenomenologists I am considering will help to show why I have chosen these four and not others like Husserl. For Husserl, I am ultimately a “transcendental ego”, a subject of intentional acts, able to consider all other things as objects. In my natural everyday experience, I assume that I am a real empirical thing in the world among other real empirical things. But in thinking phenomenologically about my experience, according to Husserl, I set aside all such considerations of real existence, and just focus on how things are given to me experientially.¹⁸³ I can even consider how my body is given as something separate from and not identical to me as a transcendental ego. Thus, although some of my experiences are bodily experiences, I can still consider these as intentional objects not identical to me. Experiences of my body are given as happening in the “sphere of ownness”, that is as belonging to me not happening out in the world, but I, as a transcendental ego, can “step back” even from these experiences and consider them as objects. I am a transcendental ego that *has* a body and an essence, not *is* a body with a particular essence.¹⁸⁴ Husserl does describe in detail the experience of one hand touching the other, and Merleau-Ponty and Henry both draw on this description:

Touching my left hand, I have touch-appearances, that is to say, I do not just sense, but I perceive and have appearances of a soft, smooth hand, with such a form. The indicational sensations of movement and the representational sensations of touch, which are Objectified as features of the thing, “left hand”, belong in fact to

¹⁸² Levinas, *TI*, 294. Heidegger does describe some aspects of self-sensing in his description of the experience of moods in *Being and Time*, 172-179, and in his phenomenological interpretation of Aristotle on bodily passivity in *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, 132-137.

¹⁸³ Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 57-61.

¹⁸⁴ Husserl, *CM*, 99-103; *Crisis*, 161-162; *Ideas 2*, 161.

my right hand. But when I touch the left hand I also find in it, too, series of touch-sensations, which are “localized” in it, though these are not constitutive of properties...If I speak of the *physical* thing, “left hand”, then I am abstracting from these sensations...If I do include them, then it is not the physical thing that is now richer, but instead *it becomes Body, it senses...* so we have the sensation *doubled* in the two parts of the Body, since each is then precisely for the other an external thing that is touching and acting upon it, and each is at the same time Body.¹⁸⁵

Husserl notes many of the same facets of this experience as did Merleau-Ponty.

Nevertheless, Merleau-Ponty saw such experiences as foundational, while Husserl thinks that we can abstract from these experiences, and discover the self as a non-bodily pure subject of experience. For this reason, this experience of the two hands is not taken to indicate my deepest nature, but is an experience that happens “in” my body, which is a physical object peculiarly my own, but which is under the volitional and cognitive control of a deeper non-bodily ego.¹⁸⁶

The four phenomenologists on whom I focus recognize that any experience, including intellectual experience, is always founded upon and presupposes an act of bodily self-sensing

¹⁸⁵ *Ideas 2*, 152-153; original text at *Ideen* b.2, 144-145: “Die linke Hand abtastend habe ich Tasterscheinungen, d.h. ich empfinde nicht nur, sondern ich nehme wahr und habe Erscheinungen von einer weichen, so und so geformten, glatten Hand. Die anzeigenden Bewegungsempfindungen und die repräsentierenden Tastempfindungen, die an dem Ding “linke Hand” zu Merkmalen objektiviert werden, gehören der rechten Hand zu. Aber die linke Hand betastend finde ich auch in ihr Serien von Tastempfindungen, sie werden “lokalisiert”, sind aber nicht Eigenschaften konstituierend...Spreche ich vom physischen Ding “linke Hand”, so abstrahiere ich von diese Empfindungen...Nehme ich sie mit dazu, so bereichert sich nicht das physische Ding, sondern es wird Leib, es empfindet...so haben wir dergleichen doppelt in beiden Leibesteilen, weil jeder eben für den andern berührendes, wirkendens Außending ist und jeder zugleich Leib.”

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 153, 159. Again, as mentioned earlier, there is some controversy as to how Husserl should be understood here, that is, whether he is providing an account of what we are, or an account of the structure of experience, with the transcendental ego as the foundation of experience and the source of the signifi- cance or meaning which our experiences have. Either way, Husserl holds that transcendental thinking and meaning-bestowal, not self-sensing, is at our foundations, which later phenomenologists show to be false.

and that I am bodily in and affected by the world, not a pure subject set over and against it.¹⁸⁷ Husserl did recognize the foundational role that self-sensing, with its passive impressions and sensations, and its events that are outside our conscious control and that are given tacitly, plays at the structure of the foundation of experience, but he subordinated these experiences to the transcendental ego. Self-sensing experience and subjective life occur for the sake of building up the experiences of the transcendental ego and can be entirely considered by it since they are, ultimately, “internal” to its conscious life.¹⁸⁸ The four phenomenologists considered in this study present descriptions of experience that refute this idea that I am a pure consciousness independent of everything besides myself and able to consider everything as an object. Husserl can easily be interpreted as falling into a sort of idealism, that is, a view that would reduce the world to our experience metaphysically. The other phenomenologists, though they have idealist tendencies as we shall see, ultimately provide us with good experiential evidence for Aquinas’ realism. This realism is the view that there are things that exist in a way that transcends our experience of them, and that contact with these things is the source of our experience, not something we must posit or reason to. It is not the view that experience is entirely reducible to third-person accessible or mechanistic things or interactions, as some phenomenologists understand realism.

We shall see the phenomenologists' experiential reasons more in Chapter Three. Thus, though historically Husserl was an important source for the phenomenologists I consider in this study, the latter were more successful than he was in describing our foundational experiences and so I only consider there in this study.

¹⁸⁷ Henry, *EM*, 28-31; *MP*, 121, 132-133; Levinas, *TI*, 28, 126-127; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, 241-242; *VI*, 45-49, 173; Scheler, *CHB*, 22, 77-78, 112-115, 169-170.

¹⁸⁸ Husserl, *Ideas 2*, 32, 222; *EJ*, 30, 48-50; *CM*, 4.37-41, Conclusion.64, p. 75-88, 152-156. cf. Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, 12-23.

There have been other philosophers who have considered the experience of self-sensing, and on whose work the four phenomenologists I consider build. But they were not using the phenomenological method and their findings are made more precise by the phenomenologists I consider, so I shall not consider these thinkers here. They include Rene Descartes and Niccolo Malebranche, with their considerations of the experience of the *cogito*, and how this indicates our nature;¹⁸⁹ Maine de Biran, with his analysis of the experiences of bodily effort, bodily power, and the feeling of the self when things in the world resist one's effort and power;¹⁹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, with his descriptions of the primal Dionysian drives at the core of what we are;¹⁹¹ and Henri Bergson, with his descriptions of the experience of the self over time.¹⁹² One final thinker who has done phenomenological work on self-sensing is the contemporary French phenomenologist Jean-Luc Marion. His work on self-sensing is not a primary source in this study, since it is largely a synthesis of earlier work, especially by Levinas and Henry.¹⁹³ His work is an important secondary source for synthesizing the work of the four main phenomenologists.

V. METHODOLOGY

It is important at this point to clarify a few points about the methodology that I am using in this paper. In this study, I fit phenomenological method into the theoretical method that

¹⁸⁹ Henry applies Descartes on the *cogito* to self-sensing in *MP*, 46-47, and Levinas does so in *TI*, 49-50, 90-93, 135-136, 210-212. Merleau-Ponty examines Malebranche on this issue in *IS*, as does Henry in *PPB*, 47-50.

¹⁹⁰ Henry's *PPB* is a phenomenological consideration of Maine de Biran's analysis of self-sensing. Merleau-Ponty studies Biran in *IS*.

¹⁹¹ Nietzsche's examination of the Dionysian "pulse of life" in *The Will to Power* §1067 and in *On the Genealogy of Morality* is applied to the experience of self-sensing by Henry in "On Nietzsche's 'We Good, Beautiful, Happy Ones!'" *Graduate Faculty Journal* 15 (1991): 133. See Michael Kelly, "Dispossession", *Journal for the British Society of Phenomenology* 35 (2004): 268-269. Scheler uses these same ideas in *CHB*, 402.

¹⁹² Merleau-Ponty considers Bergson in *IS*.

¹⁹³ Marion, *BG*, 231-232; *EP*, 106-150; *IE*, 82-103.

Aquinas uses in doing metaphysics and natural philosophy. This combination is subject to three sets of objections, which will be mentioned here and answered in Chapters Three and Four.

V.A. METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS

The first set of objections comes from contemporary metaphysics. Many contemporary metaphysicians could contend that Aquinas' metaphysical method is not the proper method for doing metaphysics. They could even object that it is question-begging to use Aquinas' method to demonstrate Aquinas' metaphysics. Many contemporary metaphysicians take it that their object of inquiry is supposed to be the necessary structure of reality, as opposed to contingent facts. This can be discovered by rational insight, as in mathematics. Some contemporary metaphysicians thus focus on what is conceivable about a thing, given certain constraints drawn from science, common sense, quantificational logic, or mereology, and often using intuitions about what is conceivable in various thought experiments and about various puzzle cases. Those who follow this method do not think that the basic categories or structures of reality can be found straight-forwardly in our experience. They are seeking, in the terms of P.F. Strawson, a "revisionary" or "prescriptive" metaphysics, rather than a "descriptive" metaphysics. A "descriptive" metaphysics is an account of how the world appears to us, for example, phenomenologically or according to our common sense beliefs. A "revisionary" metaphysics revises the descriptive account so as to solve various abstract conceptual puzzles and *aporiae* that arise in the descriptive account and so as to correct the descriptive account in light of advances in science and other disciplines. This certainly does not mean that the revisionary account rejects descriptive evidence, but it does mean that a revisionary metaphysics cannot be drawn only or chiefly from phenomenological descriptions.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ For examples of this contemporary view of metaphysics see: Saul Kripke, *Naming and*

Aquinas, as we shall see, bases his account of the nature of the human person on what we actually do and experience, not on abstract considerations of necessity. This might seem too empirical to count as metaphysics, only reaching contingent facts, not the necessary nature of things. His account of the human person is not a revisionary account of our fundamental parts or stuff, but an account of powers, actuality, and potentiality. This does not seem to be the right sort of answer to the question “what are we?” It is too descriptive and obscure, and seems to ignore modern science and various metaphysical puzzles. Objections like this lead us to the question of this study, the question why we should believe this theory at all, when there seems to be no necessity about it and no advance past a descriptive metaphysics. These problems with hylomorphism and its method are exacerbated by using phenomenologically-described experience as evidence for them. Phenomenology seems to be at odds with science in many respects, and, according to the revisionary metaphysician, the evidence of science ought to be privileged over that of phenomenology when trying to give an account of fundamental reality. Furthermore hylomorphism and phenomenology seem to appeal to sources of evidence that are rather obscure, such as our “tacit” and “*Gestalt*” experiences. Some contemporary metaphysicians, such as Derek Parfit, contend that all our experience is either of psychological or mental states, or of physical objects and facts. Hylomorphism and phenomenology appeal to

Necessity, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 35-44; David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*, (Malden: Blackwell, 1986), 109-115; Derek Parfit, “Personal Identity”, *The Philosophical Review* 80 (1971):8-10, 18-21; Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 178-186, 202-217, 227-243, 266-273; Theodore Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, (Oxford: OUP, 2001), xiv-xviii, 24-25, 92-93, 156-157, 179-180, 218. For description of this method from its opponents in contemporary metaphysics see: Koslicki, *Structure*, 10-21, 167-198; Oderberg, *Real Essentialism*, 18-20, 52-54, 62-65, 121-130; Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed*, 31-32, 70-71, 218, 241; Zimmerman, “Material People”, 495-496. For the revisionary-descriptive metaphysics distinctions see: P.F. Strawson, *Individuals*, (London: Routledge, 1990), 9-11 and also Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, x; Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, xiv-xv. This objection was raised to me by Neil Williams.

other sorts of experience and so such obscure claims can be rejected¹⁹⁵

A second set of objections comes from some phenomenologists. They could contend that metaphysics as such moves beyond what is experientially given in an inadmissible way. Concepts are justified when they can be traced back to experience, but the concepts of metaphysics do not have any correlate in experience since they are purely speculative. I cannot get beyond my experience to observe the world purely as it is “in itself”. Thinking that we have cognitive access to things that transcend our experience is the very sort of naiveté that phenomenology is supposed to overcome. Phenomenology renders metaphysics unnecessary by tracing back everything posited or experienced to its experiential foundations, even discovering the fundamental principles that present themselves to us in experience. It clarifies our experience by setting aside everything merely assumed or posited in order to discover what is given and how it is given. A full account of our experience is sufficient to understand what there is, what it is to be a human being, and even what being is. To reason from the phenomenology of self-sensing to Thomistic metaphysics is both unnecessary and unjustified.

Levinas offers a further objection in this same vein. Accounts which purport to explain human persons in conceptual terms, as traditional metaphysics seems to him to do, not only fail to account for everything it is to be a human person, but are “violent”. The claim that there is a conceptualizable essence “behind” or “underlying” a person as he or she appears and experiences him or herself reduces a person to an abstraction, an element of a system, and thereby implicitly seeks to control him or her. The claim here is that if one understands what someone is essentially, one has reduced that person to something manipulable, something that is merely a facet of one's conceptual system, and not a real person who transcends any conception

¹⁹⁵ cf. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, 228.

we might have of him or her. According to Levinas, to understand is to reduce something to a concept. Levinas does think that we do want to get beyond what is directly given in experience, but what is prior to and transcendent to experience is not being or a conceptualizable essence, but a call to ethical service. Other persons always exceed our experience of them and our attempts to conceptualize them through the demand that we serve them. Other persons are fundamentally presented to me not as something that I can understand, but as someone that I must serve. Transcendence over experience is not achieved through metaphysical reasoning but through service. Aquinas' methodology is not only unnecessary but also unethical.¹⁹⁶

A third set of objections comes from the Thomists themselves. Thomists could contend that what phenomenologists are doing when they inquire into the structure of experience, and what Aquinas is doing when he shows the proper method for theoretical inquiry, are fundamentally different. Phenomenological method is built upon an examination of "pure consciousness" which ignores existence and precludes the possibility of a further causal account of things. Aquinas' method is based on the ways in which things in the world cause knowledge in us. Without being grounded in a causality and real existence, which are discoverable by Aquinas' theoretical method, knowledge and inquiry do not make sense, the Thomist contends, and thus phenomenological method yields an absurd worldview. Setting aside natural experience and real existence leads to a loss of real experience, substituting the artificiality of phenomenologically "clarified" experience. Jacques Maritain contends that Thomism is actually

¹⁹⁶ For various facets of these phenomenological objections see: DeBoer, "Ethical Transcendental Philosophy"; Jacques Derrida, Alan Bass, trans., "Violence and Metaphysics", in *Writing and Difference*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978); Janicaud, *Theological Turn*, 26-44, 92-99; Husserl, *CM*, Introduction.1,2 and 5.60, p.1-6, 139-141; Kelly, *Structure and Diversity*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1997), 25-27; Levinas, *TI*, 21-30, 42-52, 55, 62-64, 70-79, 89-90, 109-110, 198-204; Merleau-Ponty, *VI*, 15-20, 44-49, 110-115, 187, 226-227; Bernard Waldenfels, "Levinas and the face of the other", in *Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, op.cit., 66.

more true to our experience than phenomenology, since our experience is not founded in an absolutely certain knowledge of the self as transcendental ego, but in our awareness of real beings. Furthermore, while Aquinas does appeal to our experience, he draws on many more sources for theoretical inquiry, such as linguistic usage, conceptual analysis, and coherence with fundamental metaphysical principles. The Thomist could argue that phenomenological evidence is unnecessary for Aquinas' theories and, besides, phenomenological method obscures the evidence it is supposed to produce.¹⁹⁷

We must briefly examine first the Thomistic method of theoretical inquiry, especially as it is used to inquire into the nature of the human person, and then examine the phenomenological method, especially as it is used to consider and describe the experience of self-sensing, so as to see how these two methods can fit together. These objections will be partially answered through this comparison, and partially through more direct consideration later in the study.

V.B. THOMISTIC THEORETICAL METHOD

Aquinas most clearly lays out the proper method for theoretical inquiry in his commentary on Boethius' *De Trinitate* and he applies this method to inquiring into human nature in his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*. This is his method for theoretical inquiry in general; Aquinas uses this method both in metaphysics, and in physics or natural philosophy.¹⁹⁸ The natural philosopher inquires into changeable and movable material things, whereas the metaphysician studies being as such, as well as immaterial intellectual things. Aquinas and

¹⁹⁷ For versions of this objection see: Elders, *Historical Perspective*, 70-73; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 79, 107-114; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 52, 92. Still, Maritain and Smith Gilson do not outright reject phenomenology; they allow that it can be very useful as long as it is put in its proper place relative to metaphysics. In this section I present only their objections; we have already examined their account of the positive relationship between phenomenology and Thomistic metaphysics.

¹⁹⁸ *In De Trin.*, q.6, a.1. See also *In I Phys.*, lect.1; *In I Met.*, lect. 1 and 3; Walz, "Power", 320.

contemporary metaphysicians thus differ in what they take metaphysics to do. An inquiry into the nature of the human person, on Thomistic terms, is partly a matter of natural philosophy and partly a matter of metaphysics—the former because the human person is a changeable material thing, and the latter because the soul of the human person is an immaterial intellectual thing.¹⁹⁹

In undertaking theoretical inquiry in order to give an account of the things in the world, Aquinas argues that we must follow the natural way in which reasoning proceeds. The normal way that human cognition operates is to proceed from sensation to intellectual understanding. We take in sense perceptions, and then, through focusing and abstraction, draw out of the perceptions the intelligible nature of the perceived things.²⁰⁰ We proceed from what is more known to us to what is less known to us, but to what has, in itself, greater intelligibility and explanatory power.

In theoretical inquiry we thus begin with what is most known to us, observed appearances and effects. We then reason to that which is less known to us, but is more intelligible: either the external causes of the thing observed, or the internal nature of the thing. This way of reasoning from effects to causes, and from particular sensory things to their universal natures, is called the “way of resolution”: effects are “resolved” into their causes and particulars into universals. In this way, a thing comes to be understood.²⁰¹ The goal of such a process of thinking is a direct

¹⁹⁹ *In DMR.*, lect.2. See also Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion*, 80; Walz, “Power”, 321. The importance of this point was emphasized to me by Jonathan Sanford.

²⁰⁰ *ST I*, q.85, a.1.

²⁰¹ *In De Trin.*, q.6, a.1, co.2: “Scientia enim naturalis in suis processibus servat proprium modum rationalis animae quantum ad duo. Primo quantum ad hoc, quod sicut anima rationalis a sensibilibus, quae sunt nota magis quoad nos, accipit cognitionem intelligibilium, quae sunt magis nota secundum naturam, ita scientia naturalis procedit ex his, quae sunt nota magis quoad nos et minus nota secundum naturam, ut patet in I physicorum, et demonstratio, quae est per signum vel effectum, maxime usitatur in scientia naturali. Secundo, quia cum rationis sit de uno in aliud discurre, hoc maxime in scientia naturali observatur, ubi ex cognitione unius rei in cognitionem alterius devenitur, sicut ex cognitione effectus in cognitionem

insight into the nature or cause of a thing; this is never something we fully achieve, for we can only know the essences of things through their sensory effects, never directly. Still, by reasoning and abstracting in this way, we come to know to some extent the natures of things.²⁰² This method of resolution and abstraction relies upon the fundamental insight that the world is made up of different sorts of actuality and potentiality and that these fit together, an insight that is drawn from all of the various sorts of experience we have of the world. When one thing is in potency to be actualized in a particular way, the potentiality and the thing that actualizes are suited to each other: Aquinas says that they are “proportional” or “connatural” to one another, that is, what each one naturally is fits with what the other is.²⁰³ By examining how things fit together, manifest themselves, and interact with other things, we can get a better sense of what they are, fundamentally. Because potentiality and actuality, and so causes and effects, are proportioned to one another, I can ask, “What must the cause of this appearing thing be like, in order to produce this thing as it now appears to me?” Or I can ask, “What must this thing be essentially in order for these appearances to arise?”

For example, visible objects, such as colors, actualize our power of vision, that is, they change us from only potentially seeing to actually seeing. Colors and vision fit together, in such a way that one can discover facts about the power by considering the way this particular object appears to and actualizes that power. Similarly, the powers of a thing and its essence fit together. The powers of a thing are ways that a thing actually is, ways that it can act, not mere

causae.” See also q.5, a.4. For good contemporary explanations of this method see Aertsen, *Transcendentals*, 130-135; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 42-43.

²⁰² *In De Trin.*, q.6, a.1, co.22 and ad 23. For the limitations on our power to know the essences of things, see *QDSC* a.11, ad 13; *ST I*, q.77, a.1, ad 7. See also Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 165.

²⁰³ *DOO*; *In III DA*, lect.15; *QDDA* a.13; *QQ VII*, q.1, a.4 *SCG II*, c.68, 73, 77, 81; *ST I*, q.78, a.1; q.80, a.1; *II*, q.26, a.1; q.58, a.5. cf. Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion*, 60-61; McInerny, *Maritain*, 171; Taki Suto, “Virtue and Knowledge: Connatural Knowledge According to Thomas Aquinas,” *The Review of Metaphysics* 58 (September 2004): 65.

appearances. We can, by observing the powers of a thing in operation, reason back to its essence; we thus reason from a thing's operation to its powers and then to its essence. Since actuality and potentiality are proportioned to one another, and since this thing displays these actual powers, its essence—what it is most fundamentally—must be of such-and-such a sort as to give rise to such powers. It must be composed of certain sorts of actuality and potency. In this way, we resolve the particular appearances back into the stable nature which gives rise to and explain all the varying appearances of a thing. The essence of a substance and its causes are not completely unobserved objects that one posits as explanations, as one does in some contemporary forms of metaphysics. Rather, through resolution, these essences and causes are discovered in the appearing effects, as giving rise to and explaining these effects. Metaphysics requires both experiential and empirical evidence, not privileging a natural-scientific or an *a priori* mode of access to things.²⁰⁴

This method of resolution is a process of reasoning to which we are naturally drawn, because we naturally perceive the world in terms of actuality and potency. But we can develop this way of reasoning through practice and the formation of intellectual virtues.²⁰⁵ It takes practice and habituation to know how to reason from effects to causes and from what is particular to what is general, to note the proportionality among things. This is based in a power to abstract and resolve that we naturally have, which Aquinas calls the agent intellect.²⁰⁶ How this method is applied to human nature will be seen in detail in Chapter Two.

Since the Thomistic theoretical method begins with an account of a thing's acts and objects, it is open to phenomenological evidence. Phenomenology can clarify how acts, objects,

²⁰⁴ cf. William Jaworski, "Hylomorphism and the Mind-Body Problem", *Proceedings of the ACPA* 78 (2004): 184-187; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 336-340.

²⁰⁵ *SCG* II, c.79; *ST* I, q.57, a.1; Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion*, 88, 94-95.

²⁰⁶ *ST* I, q.88, a.3, ad 1; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 349.

and the underlying powers present themselves to us experientially and so help at the beginning of the process of theoretical inquiry. It can provide a good deal of rigorously clarified data about how things appear to us, regarding which one can reason theoretically in order to draw out the essences and causes that account for the appearances. If the Thomistic method were just a matter of positing abstract explanations for phenomena, rather than a matter of tracing back effects to causes based on what is manifested to us, then phenomenology would not be as helpful in gathering evidence for the theory. Those who hold to a more abstract method of doing metaphysics will not hold to any of these methods. Still, for my thesis to hold, the two methods must be compatible in the way that I have described; even those who disagree with the thesis of this study can assent to the compatibility between them. I shall now examine the phenomenological method, so as to show further how it is compatible with the Thomistic theoretical method.

V.C. PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

As first developed by Husserl, phenomenology is a method for describing the structure of experience and of the world as it presents itself to us experientially. The basic idea of the phenomenological method is to examine and describe experience exactly as it presents itself to us. All thought of how objects and acts are causally connected to other objects and acts is set aside or “bracketed”, as are all theoretical explanations of phenomena, both scientific and metaphysical, and all consideration of things as “real” or “outside” of experience. This method of “bracketing” is called the “phenomenological reduction”. Theoretical and causal explanations can get in the way of focusing on experience exactly as it happens to us, since we tend to think about these explanations rather than experience itself. We tend to overlook the various assumptions that we make in our everyday “natural” experience and so phenomenology seeks to

identify these and bracket them out, so as to be able to consider things exactly as they are experientially given. The original significance or meaning that objects, acts, and theories have for us can only be understood if we see how these items were first given to us experientially. Since objects are given to us in the context of intentional acts, Husserl tends to focus on the structure of these acts, though, as we have already seen, he also considers experiences of non-intentional sense impressions and feelings which play a crucial role in the structure of our experience. Phenomenology is descriptive, not explanatory.²⁰⁷ Phenomenological descriptions are meant to allow someone to see for him or herself the structure of experience; phenomenological descriptions are thus supposed to be verifiable and revisable by others, through their reflection on their own experiences.²⁰⁸

In Heidegger, and in the later work of Husserl, this method is taken further. Experience, once clarified, is not merely a set of intentional acts intending objects. Rather, all intentional acts are caught up in actual existence, which we can bracket out only to a certain extent. In examining experience, we find ourselves always already in the world, already caught up in historical and natural processes. Heidegger and the later Husserl expand the phenomenological method: it is also a method of focusing on and describing this irreducible existential situation and of examining the ways in which it impacts our experience. This expanded method involves

²⁰⁷ Once again, this is a point about which there is some controversy. It can be contended that phenomenology does explain experience insofar as it discovers the various hidden layers of experience that account for and constitute our everyday experience. Still, I contend that this is just a rigorous and analytic description of experience, not an explanation in the sense that metaphysics, by discovering the fundamental real structure of things, is explanatory.

²⁰⁸ Aspects of Husserl's method, of which this is a summary, are presented throughout many of his works, as Husserl focused a good deal of attention on clarifying and developing exactly what phenomenology does; see especially: *Ideas I*, 57-62, 75-80, 128-130, 139-146; *IP*, 33-51. cf. Cohen, "Thinking Least About Death", in *Levinasian Meditations*, op.cit., 62, 64; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, viii-ix; Levinas, "On *Ideas*", "Freiburg, Husserl, and Phenomenology", and "Phenomenology", in *DEH*; Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, chs.2-3.

interpreting our experience in order to discover the conditions for experience that are hidden in our normal, everyday experiences. These conditions include, for example, the ways in which our bodies interact with the world; these interactions can be discovered through a careful reflection on and description of experience, but they are often overlooked. These hidden conditions must be examined if we are to understand experience and how we experience acts and objects as meaningful. This is not, it must be emphasized, a scientific or causal explanation of experience, but an examination of the conditions for experience as we live it.²⁰⁹

The four phenomenologists who are my focus in this study further develop the phenomenological method. Scheler presents phenomenological method less as a systematic way of reasoning and more as an attitude toward the world meant to take us to “the liveliest, most intense, and most immediately experienced contact with the world itself, that is, with those things in the world with which it is concerned, and with these things as they are immediately given in experience, that is, in the act of experience”.²¹⁰ Phenomenology is most interested in considering what is given in “immediate intuition”, that is, objects that are directly given intentionally, such as colors presented to vision. Such objects are contrasted to objects not immediately present to intuition, such as signs which indirectly present what they signify. The phenomenological attitude calls our attention to the ways in which objects are directly and

²⁰⁹ This is a summary of a trend in phenomenological methodology which is described in many sources: Steven Crowell, “Is There a Phenomenological Research Program?”, *Synthese* 131 (2002): 426; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 58-63, 67-86; Husserl, *Crisis*, 142-148, 173-186; Janicaud, *Theological Turn*, 20-21, 28-34; Levinas, “The Work of Edmund Husserl, in *DEH*, 85-87, and “The Ruin of Representation”, in *DEH*, 117-121; Marion, *RG*, 88-107; Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, xxi-xxiii; *VI*, 168-170; Sokolowski, *Husserlian Meditations*, 167-180.

²¹⁰ Scheler, “Theory of Cognition”, in *SPE*, 138 (with my modifications to the translation). Original text found at “Phänomenologie und Erkenntnistheorie”, in *Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, b.1, (Bern: Francke, 1957), 380: “...der lebendigste, intensivste und unmittelbarste Erlebnisverkehr mit der Welt selbst—d.h. mit den Sachen, um die es sich gerade handelt. Und zwar mit den Sachen, wie sie sich ganz unmittelbar im Erleben im Akte des Erlebens geben...”. cf. Crowell, “Research Program”, 428.

indirectly presented, and the structure of the experiences in which these objects are presented.

Considering our acts and their objects sometimes requires “bracketing” an aspect of our experience so as to focus better on some other aspect, but the phenomenological attitude ultimately must return to the full concrete way in which experiences are actually given to us; bracketing does not bring us entirely to the foundations of experience.²¹¹ Phenomenology is concerned not just with intentionality, but also with non-intentional experiences such as experiences in which we feel the reality of things.²¹² The phenomenological attitude is meant to bring us to a focused consideration of all aspects of our experience and all aspects of the world as it is experientially given to us. The goal of phenomenological description is to bring the reader to a greater awareness of his or her own experience. The phenomenological attitude also leads, Scheler thinks, to a clarified metaphysics by integrating scientific, religious, and other theoretical accounts of the world with phenomenological and natural or “everyday” account of experiences, leading to an integrated account of all the ways in which the world is given. Central to this project is a metaphysical anthropology, since the human person is the one to whom all experiences and objects are given.²¹³

The other three phenomenologists begin with a similar framework to that of Scheler,

²¹¹ Scheler, *F*, 48, 55-56; *R*, 126-143; “Three Facts”, in *SPE*, 202-208, 219-221, 231-240. Such a move back towards concrete everyday experience is also the centerpiece of Richard Kearny's “fourth reduction” or “eschatological reduction” outlined in his “Epiphany of the Everyday: Toward a Micro-Eschatology”, in John Panteleion Manoussakis, *After God: Richard Kearny and the Religious Turn in Continental Philosophy*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 5. cf. Frings, *The Mind of Max Scheler*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1997), 182-192; Spader, *Personalism*, 58-68; Brian Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity: Levinas, Marcel, and the Contemporary Debate*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 224-225, 266.

²¹² Scheler, *CHB*, 78-81, 104-106; *F*, 130-138, 152-159; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 313-326; Frings, *Mind*, 191-192; Spader, *Personalism*, 74-75.

²¹³ Scheler, *CHB*, 11-17, 38-45, 52-56, 61-67; *F*, 378; *MPN*, 5-7. cf. Frings, *Mind of Scheler*, 189.

Husserl, and Heidegger, but they emphasize ways in which phenomenological method can further expand its descriptive powers.²¹⁴ Merleau-Ponty emphasizes how the phenomenological method can be used to describe some aspects of our experience that do not come directly into our conscious attention, such as our peripheral vision or the tacit self-sensing of the position of one's limbs. These aspects of our experience have a necessary and foundational place in the overall meaningful *Gestalt* that is our total experience, each aspect of which is coherent and describable in its own way.²¹⁵ Phenomenological inquiry shows that these tacit aspects of experience cannot be separated from scientific and medical examinations of our physical structures, such as the structures of our brain. Thus, Merleau-Ponty carefully examines psychological and neurological scientific findings: by examining deficient states of the person, in which some aspects of our experience are not present, we can better understand all the aspects of normal experience. Phenomenology must take all this into account; it must "interrogate" our "total situation".²¹⁶ It must draw on neurological and psychological research; for example, by examining how various pathologies lead to altered experience, one can come to recognize in others the various layers that exist in normal experience and so are missing in the experience of persons with various injuries. Experience and physiological structures together form a *Gestalt*, which must be understood as a whole, but which can only be accessed through a variety of methods.²¹⁷ Merleau-Ponty seeks to describe, and so to expand the power of the phenomenological method in

²¹⁴ Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 28-33.

²¹⁵ *PP*, 60-74; *SB*, 129-136; *VI*, 5-8, 43-45, 204-206; "The Primacy of Perception", in *POP*, 12-13. cf. Barbaras, "Phenomenology of Life", 222-224; Dillon, *Ontology*, 98; Hass, *Philosophy*, 57-58; Shusterman, "Body", 153.

²¹⁶ *VI*, 35. See Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 142-145; Hass, *Philosophy*, 87-88.

²¹⁷ *PP*, 84-102; *SB*, 47-51; *VI*, 147, 233; "The Primacy of Perception", in *POP*, 20-25; "The Child's Relation with Others", in *POP*, 99-100. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 120-121; Joseph Rouse, "Merleau-Ponty's Existential Conception of Science", in *Cambridge Companion*, op.cit., 265, 279-280; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 2-3.

describing, the “advent of consciousness”, the way in which intentional consciousness arises out of the world as given in non-intentional experience.²¹⁸ He also examines how artistic and linguistic expressions shape our experience. Experiences and objects are not just passively received, but we, by our expressivity, help to shape them. Phenomenology must thus describe the ways in which we so affect our experience, including the ways in which it affects experience. Merleau-Ponty calls his phenomenological method “interrogation” because it is not just a description of experience, but an active questioning and interpreting of experience. Like Scheler, Merleau-Ponty argued that phenomenology must lead to a metaphysics or ontology, which ties together all the ways in which the world is given into an account of our “total situation”.²¹⁹

Levinas likewise expands the phenomenological method to examine more than earlier phenomenologists had. He notes that there are certain aspects of our experience which point beyond themselves to events which one never consciously or fully experiences, but which have decisive importance for the experiences one is consciously aware of. Phenomenology must examine the “traces” that these earlier events have left and so seek to examine those events. For example, one’s conscious awareness of a sense perceived object includes traces of being affected by that thing prior to one’s conscious awareness of it. We find ourselves already structured by events prior to our conscious awareness; these events are necessary for our experience, though we cannot consciously recall them. Phenomenology must point us toward and make way for

²¹⁸ *PP*, 71. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 184-185; Seamus Carey, “Cultivating Ethos Through the Body”, *Human Studies* 23 (2000): 29-33; Hass, *Philosophy*, 171-172; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 156-162.

²¹⁹ *VI*, 144, 152-155, 179; “The Primacy of Perception”, in *POP*, 26-27; “Eye and Mind”, in *POP*, 159-190. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 99-100, 156-161, 204; Remy C. Kwant, *From Phenomenology to Metaphysics*, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1966), 192-195, 203-206; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 31-35.

examining such events.²²⁰ The person is incarnate; one's body and the impressions that occur in it preexist one's conscious experience, and this "pre-history" of experience structures experience and must be described phenomenologically.²²¹ His most famous example of this sort of event is in the encounter with another person through the ethical call. When one encounters another person, one finds oneself already called to treat that person ethically, and even to serve that person. There is no experience of being called, but rather one finds oneself already called and obligated to serve that other person. Indeed, the other person and oneself only appear in the context of this already existing ethical relationship.²²² Here we see, as Scheler and Merleau-Ponty would both also affirm, that some experiences described by the phenomenologists might not be had by all persons. Phenomenology is not confined to those experiences which are had by everyone, but aims at describing all experiences that have been had, thus revealing all the possibilities available to the human person.

Here Levinas seeks, just like other phenomenologists, to find the foundation to the experienced idea of a moral call, but he finds this foundation beyond experience, at least beyond experience which gives its objects such that they can be conceptualized.²²³ Phenomenology must

²²⁰ *EE*, 21-22; *OBBE*, 100, 121; "Meaning and Sense", in *CPP*, 102-107. See also: Cohen, "Thinking Least About Death", 64; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 68-80, 158-161; Leslie MacAvoy, "The Other Side of Intentionality", in Nelson, op.cit., 109-115; Lingis, "Sensuality", 219-220.

²²¹ *OBBE*, 33-34, 63-64; "Reflections on Phenomenological "Technique", in *DEH*, 98-100; "Ruin" in *DEH*, 117-120; "Intentionality and Metaphysics", in *DEH*, 126; "Intentionality and Sensation", 138-143. cf. Ciocan, "Embodiment", 9-13; Cohen, "Ethical Body", 37-38; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 209; David Kleinberg-Levin, "Persecution", in Nelson, op.cit., 204-205; Lingis, "Sensuality", 227-228.

²²² *TI*, 194-200; *OBBE*, 9, 87-89, 113-117; "Language and Proximity", in *CPP*, 123-124. cf. Robert Bernasconi, "What is the question to which 'substitution' is the answer?" in *Cambridge Companion*, op.cit.; Critchley, "Introduction", 8; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 101; Marion, *IE*, 118; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 62, 105-106.

²²³ *TI*, 104-105 *OBBE*, 37-38, 102-105, 113; "Humanism and An-Archy", in *CPP*, 136.

perform “exegesis” on experience, to discover the “traces” within it,²²⁴ though description of these prior events runs the risk of “betraying” them, of taking an event that could never be consciously experienced as an object of experience.²²⁵ The phenomenological method can point us towards the transcendent events that have structured our experience; it is not just a method of reflecting on and describing what is given in experience, but a way to discover the call to ethical action that requires me to act in a particular way.²²⁶

Finally, Henry also pushes phenomenological method further than earlier phenomenologists. He argues that earlier phenomenologists took for granted the notions of “givenness”, “manifestation”, and “lived experience”.²²⁷ Phenomenological method needs to be expanded so that it can examine how these are presented to us. While intentional objects are given to me as different from me, acts and experiences are given as purely “immanent” events that I “feel” within me, within my lived consciousness, with no difference between me and my experiences. Henry attempts to express a layer of experience which cannot be fully articulated in language, since language, he thinks, sets things and experiences at a distance from me, in an intentional act, and this experience is not intentional layer at all, but the immanent feeling of what happens to me. If I do not feel an experience in myself, no experience and so no object has been given to me. For example, it is a necessary condition to having an intentional experience of a tree as a thing separate from me that I must have a visual sense impression of the tree. If I did not have purely immanent experiences—which I almost never consciously focus on in normal life—I would not experience the world or myself as I do. Felt impressions and affections are the

²²⁴ *OBBE*, 41.

²²⁵ *OBBE*, 6-7, 156.

²²⁶ *OE*, 72; *TI*, 33-35, 73-77, 80; *OBBE*, 29-30, 118-120; “God and Philosophy”, in *CPP*, 166-173; “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity”, in *CPP*, 55-56. cf. Critchley, “Introduction”, 15.

²²⁷ *EM*, 1-2, 10-11, 19, 39-45.

essence of manifestation, givenness, and lived experience. By bracketing out and setting aside all consciousness of things as separate from me, I can experience this fundamental layer of experience that is purely immanent to me. Henry calls this method of focusing on this layer of experience by bracketing out all intentional objects “material phenomenology” (*phénoménologie matérielle*); it is a radicalization of Husserl’s method of phenomenological reduction.²²⁸ The phenomenologist needs to examine closely impressions and affections in order to understand the basic structure of the experienced world and of ourselves, Henry thinks.²²⁹ The material phenomenologist must use descriptive language to evoke immanent experience, by helping us know which aspects of our experience to set aside and which to focus on. Henry holds, like the other phenomenologists, that our experiences are inherently describable; even when we cannot form an adequate concept of something, we can still evoke it through descriptive language. This is because descriptive language itself is experienced as rooted in immanent feeling. There is always some danger of falsifying an experience, but description can help a reader to re-create an experience for him or herself and so not just think about the experience conceptually but really bracket out and feel the described experience.²³⁰

Each of these phenomenologists expands on the fundamental insights of phenomenology: that experience is describable in itself, without reference to theoretical explanation, because each

²²⁸ *EM*, 29-31, 459-466, 475-479, 553-560, 570-571, 604, 626; *MP*, 38-42, 49-50, 77-78, 81, 96; ; “Quatre principes de la phénoménologie”, *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 96 (1991): 3-26. cf. Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 73; Jarvis, “Life”, 362-374; Lavigne, “Paradox”, 385; Marion, *IE*, 17-19.

²²⁹ *EM*, 475-476, 608-609, 641-648, 668; *PPB*, 35-36, 52-55, 73-75, 94-95, 98-99. cf. Marion, *IE*, 86.

²³⁰ *EM*, 568-571, 668; *MP*, 42-43, 96-99; *I*, 265; “Speech and Religion”, in *Phenomenology and the ‘Theological Turn’*, op.cit., 222-225, 236-238. cf. Janicaud, *Theological Turn*, 80; Jarvis, “Life”, 362-363, 371-372; Marion, *RG*, 2-3; John Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, (London: Continuum, 2006), 54-56; Sebastian Laoureux, “Hyper-Transcendentalism and Intentionality”, *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 17 (2009): 393-398; Tengelyi, “Selfhood”, 405-406.

kind of and condition of experience is given to consciousness with its own sort of evidence or meaning. By this they do not mean that the theories we believe do not affect our experiences, but that when examining the structure of experience, we should not assume a theory about what we are or what experience is; we should just examine experience as it happens to us. Yet most phenomenologists also recognize that a more fundamental metaphysical account is necessary to join and explain the various sorts of phenomenological evidence. We must move beyond phenomenology to metaphysical explanations, while remaining grounded in the world as it is given in experience and described through the phenomenological method.²³¹ Phenomenology can supplement the beginning of metaphysics, by gathering data for metaphysical reasoning to work on. We will consider objections to using phenomenology in this way more in Chapter Three, but there need be no absolute prohibition on so using phenomenology. Because both phenomenological and Thomistic methodology recognize the fundamental way in which our experience, powers, and objects fit together, the two methods need not be at odds. The phenomenologists I am considering allow for doing metaphysics, as long as it is experientially grounded, not purely speculative positing. Furthermore, no one phenomenologist's restrictions on this method need be taken as normative for all of phenomenology. Phenomenological method itself is open to development and to phenomenological verification. It may turn out that an adequate phenomenological account of experience requires more reference to metaphysical principles than any phenomenologist has hitherto allowed. Phenomenological method cannot rule out this combination *a priori*, but must examine and describe experience exactly as it is given. Thus, having shown that bringing together phenomenology and Thomistic philosophy is at least possible, I now turn to a consideration of Aquinas' philosophy of the person.

²³¹ cf. Antonio Calcagno, "The Incarnation, Michel Henry, and the Possibility of an Husserlian-Inspired Transcendental Life", *Heythrop Journal* 45 (2004): 290; Lavigne, "Paradox", 385;

CHAPTER TWO THOMAS AQUINAS' PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Before the thesis that the phenomenology of self-sensing provides experiential evidence for Aquinas' theory of the human persons can be defended, we need a clear account of that theory. This chapter will provide a better understanding of the theory and will make clear why further evidence for it must be sought beyond the evidence that Aquinas and his commentators already give. This will require going into some detail on Aquinas' views about our powers, though many details and interpretive controversies will have to go undiscussed. This account emphasizes what I see as aspects of Aquinas' theory which are already somewhat phenomenological; as said in Chapter One, this is not my thesis, but it is an important aspect of Aquinas' theory often neglected by its expositors. It also emphasizes, as the central feature of the theory, the relationships between actuality and potentiality found in human nature and human powers. Most importantly, the account draws out the problems and *aporiae* that arise from Aquinas' theory, taking into account some of its most important interpretations and its applications to contemporary philosophical questions by Thomists of the last hundred years. These problems cast doubt on the value and relevance of this theory and raise the need for more evidence. These problems can in part be resolved by considering evidence from the phenomenology of self-sensing. This account will first examine Aquinas' view of human powers. Second, it considers and interprets Aquinas's view of the fundamental nature of the human person. Finally, it will identify problems that call for more evidence.

In Aquinas' methodology, one reasons from the objects of our acts, which are the things most apparent (*manifestum*) to us experientially, to the underlying causes and principles of those

acts, and ultimately to an account of what our essence is.²³² But in the exposition of the philosophy of the person, for instance in the *Summa contra gentiles* and the *Summa theologiae*, as well as in the commentaries on Aristotelian works, Aquinas does not follow this methodological order. Rather, he follows the order of causation, which he calls the “natural order” (*ordo naturalis*).²³³ A person’s essence—what he or she is most fundamentally—is causally prior to all of his or her powers, acts, and awareness of objects. In his accounts of his philosophy of the person, Aquinas generally begins by explaining what we are most fundamentally, and then turns to our powers and acts. Here I shall not follow Aquinas’ order of presentation; rather, I shall follow his methodological order, first discussing the powers that he says we have, and then turning to his account of the underlying essence. This order will allow us, in subsequent chapters, to see better where phenomenological description can be fitted in this methodological order so as to provide evidence for the theory.

I. HUMAN POWERS

Aquinas distinguishes a number of types of acts (*actus*) that human persons can perform, and, correlated to these acts, powers (*potentiae, ves, virtutes*) to perform these acts.²³⁴ It should be remembered that “acts”, as Aquinas understands them, include events one passively undergoes; “acts” here are actualizations of one’s powers to perform those acts. This is in accord with Aquinas’ broader commitment to the idea of the world as understandable in terms of various sorts of correlated actuality and potentiality. Things have powers to perform certain acts and undergo certain changes; when conditions are right, these become actualized, that is, the

²³² *ST I*, q.64, a.1, ad 2; q.77, a.3.

²³³ Aquinas explicitly examines these different orders of examination at *In II DA*, lect.1, n.228; lect.6, n.303-305; *ST I*, q.77, a.7.

²³⁴ *QDDA*, a.12 and 13; *ST I*, q.77, a.3. cf. Field, “Properties and Powers”, 205; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 200-201; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 153-155; Walz, “Power”, 327.

things actually perform the acts or actually are changed. Substances are not identical to their powers, but are essentially unchanging sorts of actuality and potentiality: a given substance has a particular form and particular kind of matter, and these facts about the substance never change. But things also have the potentiality to perform various acts at certain times. These potentialities or powers to perform acts are, on the one hand, further actualizations above and beyond a thing's essential actuality, that is, what it essentially is; they are ways that a thing actually is that follow from its essence but are not identical to its essence. The human person is essentially a rational animal; powers to see and to breathe, for example, are further ways that the person is actual, over and above the basic actuality of being a rational animal. They are also further potentialities a thing has over and above the potentiality it has to be the sort of thing that it is, as they are potentialities to perform various acts. Powers thus mediate between the stable unchanging essence of a thing and its changing acts. We discover what a thing is essentially by considering its powers and acts; these indicate what that essence is because they are proportioned to it.²³⁵

Thus, to understand what the human person fundamentally is, we need to understand what the human person is able to do. The human person, we shall see, is essentially a rational animal, but has many powers, such as the power to understand. This power, which is the potentiality to perform acts of understanding, follows from the essence of the human person: the human person is a rational animal and therefore has the power to perform acts of rationality like understanding. But this power is not identical to the human essence because the essence is always actualized as long as a person exists, and this power is not always actualized, that is, we are not perpetually performing acts of understanding.²³⁶ These powers are “proper accidents”

²³⁵ *In II DA*, lect.5, n.286; *In IX Met.*, lect. 9; *QDDA*, a.1, 12; *ST I*, q.77, a.1-3. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 178-179; Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 23-26; Walz, “Power”, 327.

²³⁶ *ST I*, q.77, a.1.

(*propriae*) because they are caused directly by the essence: whoever has the human essence and is developmentally mature will have all the human powers, as long as there are no material defects in his or her bodily structure. Proper accidents differ from other accidental attributes which are not directly caused by the essence of a thing but are caused in a thing in some other way; for example, “having white skin” is not a proper accident of the human person.²³⁷

Aquinas uses several sorts of evidence in explaining our acts and powers. At times he reflects on our experience of acting; at other times, he describes observations of other persons and other sorts of living things. He also considers the ways we normally talk about persons, and he takes into account empirical examinations of our organs and other bodily structures.²³⁸ Each of these sorts of evidence indicates something about what our powers and acts are. The primary way in which types of acts and powers are distinguished is on the basis of their objects (*objecta*), that is, the things to which they are directed.²³⁹ For example, our power (*virtus*) to see is distinguished from other senses (*sensus*) because it alone is directed towards color; no other power that we have is a power to sense colors.²⁴⁰ However, our powers are not entirely explainable in terms of intentional relations to specific sorts of objects or functional relations to certain stimuli and responses.²⁴¹ Rather, there are further aspects essential to each power. Aquinas thinks that most of our powers must be explained in terms of the matter required for their exercise. For example, the power of vision requires an organ composed of some transparent and reflective material, the fluid in the eyes, and of protective structures, the eyelids and fatty

²³⁷ *QDSC*, a.11, *respondeo*, ad 4; *ST I*, q.77, a.1, ad 5.

²³⁸ See *In II DA*, lect.3; *In DSS*, lect.1; *SCG II*, c.85, 88-89; *ST I*, q.78, a.1. cf. Walz, “Power”, 320

²³⁹ *ST I*, q.77, a.3

²⁴⁰ Aquinas says that the senses (*sensus*) are kinds of powers (*virtutes*) at *ST I*, q.85, a.1.

²⁴¹ cf. Putnam and Nussbaum, “Changing Aristotle’s Mind”, 53-54.

layers around the eye; without these material structures, one would not be able to see.²⁴² Most of our powers also have emotional and temporal aspects as well, which are important for understanding them. All of our powers must also be understood in terms of their relations to one another, especially the way in which they are hierarchically ordered, and in terms of the ways in which the exercise of one power affects the exercise of another.²⁴³

I.A. BODILY POWERS

Building on Aristotle, Aquinas says that the human person has five main sorts of powers: the vegetative (*vegetabilis*), sensitive (*sensibilis*), locomotive (*motiva*), appetitive (*appetitiva*), and intellectual (*intellectabilis*) powers.²⁴⁴ I shall examine what each of these sorts of power is, and through this examination it will become clear why and how these powers are hierarchically ordered, and how they are related.

I.A.1. VEGETATIVE POWERS

The vegetative powers allow us to perform largely unconscious biological activities.²⁴⁵ They include our powers to reproduce, to nourish ourselves by eating and digesting, and to grow. They are powers that the human person has as an organism to maintain itself and to reproduce and so to maintain the species. The operations of these powers are entirely carried out in material organs and using material processes; they involve the conversion of food into various bodily fluids and parts, including the resulting excretory processes. To use an example that is not Aquinas', the power to digest food can only be exercised with the stomach and the metabolic processes which go on there. Digesting food is the function of the stomach; likewise, the other

²⁴² *In DSS*, lect.4.

²⁴³ *In I DA*, lect.13; *ST I*, q.77, a.3, ad.4; q.77, a.4; q. 78, a.1. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 201; Royce, "Life", 230-231.

²⁴⁴ *In II DA*, lect.3; *QDDA*, a.13; *ST* q.78, a.1. See Aristotle, *DA II.3.414a30*.

²⁴⁵ Aquinas does not discuss powers in terms of consciousness; such language is an interpretation of his thought in contemporary language.

vegetative powers are the functions of other organs, and, Aquinas argues, the organs exist for the sake of these powers. For example, we have stomachs in order to digest food. Our material parts are structured to facilitate the exercise of these powers.

These powers relate to objects outside of the human person only insofar as those objects can be incorporated into one's life processes, as food and air are, or insofar as with these powers one reproduces and so generates children outside oneself. The vegetative powers are necessary conditions for all the further sorts of human powers, since one cannot sense, for example, if one is not biologically alive. Aquinas thinks that vegetative acts and the organs and processes that facilitate these acts cannot just be explained as purely material interactions, as, for example, gravitation and combustion can, or as purely material structures. Material elements do not perform vegetative acts without the addition of something above and beyond their elemental natures. The further component required to explain vegetative acts is the vegetative power itself and the underlying form or soul; for this reason, Aquinas says that these powers are "acts" of bodily parts. We can only understand what the parts of an organism like the human person are if we understand the powers for the sake of which those parts exist. These powers involve an organism moving, changing, and affecting itself, whereas purely material processes only involve one material thing acting externally on another, as when the earth gravitationally attracts another thing. The power to act on and move oneself, for example, to cause oneself to be nourished and grow, indicates the sort of actuality or form that makes something alive.

We can further only understand the acts and parts of living things by understanding their place in the actuality of the whole organism, for the sake of which these powers exist. The powers and acts of living things require more than an explanation in terms of matter; they require

an explanation in terms of form and teleology.²⁴⁶ No human power or act can be explained in terms of a purely mechanistic, computational, or functionalist theory of mind or of biology; human powers are not just causal functions which process inputs and deliver outputs, but are the actualities that make organs be what they are.²⁴⁷

I.A.2. THE BODILY POWERS AND THE FOUR CAUSES

At this point, a brief summary of the four types of causes (*causae*) that Aquinas recognizes is necessary, because much of what follows in this account of his theory will be explained in terms of these four types of causes. Here I build on the short explanation of the principles form and matter in Chapter One. Following Aristotle, Aquinas says that things are caused in four ways; a cause is anything that brings about existence of some sort, that is, that makes something actually be in some way. The material (*materialis*) cause of a thing is its matter, that out of which it is made, such as the elements out of which the human body is made. The formal (*formalis*) cause of a thing is its form, the principle that makes it have the structure and powers that it has, and that makes it exist as a specific kind of thing. Form structures or informs matter; the matter and form of a thing are suited or proportionate to one another. For example, the matter of our organs is the right sort of matter to perform the operations of the powers that form them. To know a thing's form is to know what that thing essentially and actually is. In the human person, the formal cause is the soul, though Aquinas sometimes refers

²⁴⁶ These points about the vegetative power are given at *In II DA*, lect.9; *In DSS*, lect.1; *SCG IV*, c.11; *ST I*, q.78, a.2; q.119, a.1 and 2; II-II, q.153, a.3, ad 1. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 201-203; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 88-90; Royce, "Life", 230-231; Walz, "Power", 326-330.

²⁴⁷ A few times during this chapter I contrast Aquinas' view of our acts and powers to the functionalist view, because hylomorphism is sometimes taken to be a kind of functionalism; see Nussbaum and Putnam, "Changing Aristotle's Mind", 47-49. For accounts of and arguments against functionalism see Foster, *Immaterial Self*, ch.3; Searle, *Rediscovery*, 40-43.

to the whole essence of the human person, including its specific sort of matter, as its “form”.²⁴⁸

The final (*finalis*) cause is the purpose of a thing or the goal of a process, that for the sake of which something exists. This cause often coincides with the formal cause. For example, Aquinas says that our organs are both formally structured by the soul and exist for the sake of the soul, that is, for the sake of what the human person actually is as a whole. Along with the formal cause, the final cause thus also helps explain why a thing is structured as it is and has the powers it has: these things are so for the sake of some goal. The efficient (*efficiens*) cause is what begins a process or motion, or makes or first brings into existence some other thing; for instance, parents are the efficient causes of their children.²⁴⁹ The most important element in an efficient cause is the form of the cause, since one thing can efficiently cause or move others because of the sort of thing that it is, that is, because of or in virtue of its form, which is the cause of its powers to move and to cause other things.²⁵⁰

Each of these four causes helps to explain the phenomena we observe in the world; together, the four causes are a framework for explaining any and every creature.²⁵¹ Aquinas does not restrict causality to interactions among physical things pushing and pulling one another, nor does he think of causality as entirely explainable as one event following another, as some contemporary Humeans think of it.²⁵² The fact that Aquinas recognizes multiple kinds of causes is important for his account of the connection between body and soul.

As we can see with the vegetative powers, each (or rather, as we shall see, most) human power has a material cause in the matter that makes up the bodily organ and material processes

²⁴⁸ On these two uses of ‘form’ see *DEE* n.46-47.

²⁴⁹ *DPN* n.20-30; *In II Phys.*, lect.6. See also Blanchette, *Perfection*, 155-186; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 256.

²⁵⁰ *In II Phys.*, lect.5 and 6.

²⁵¹ Blanchette, *Perfection*, 155-186; Pasnau and Shields, *Philosophy*, introduction.

²⁵² cf. Braine, *The Human Person*, 201-226.

necessary for carrying out that power. Each power is a formal cause for its organ, making that organ be what it is and perform certain kinds of acts. Organs as we observe them are composites of some matter and their formal power; these are the fundamental principles that make up our organs. The organs exist for the sake of their powers and these powers exist for the sake of the well-being of the person as a whole. Some organs efficiently move others in virtue of their powers; for example, the heart causes blood to flow, which in turn causes changes elsewhere in the body.²⁵³ Aquinas calls body parts the “integral parts” (*partes integrales*) of the person; it is important to note that the powers of the person are not “parts” of the person in this sense, though they are in some sense more fundamental to what it is to be a person than integral parts are. A person cannot be explained purely in terms of integral parts.²⁵⁴ Indeed, all physical things are made of and must be explained in terms of form and matter, or matter and some formal power that derives from a form, and so no physical thing can be explained just in terms of its integral parts, that is, the physical structures of which it is composed. The composition of a given substance must thus be understood in multiple senses, if we are to understand fully what that substance is: we must understand not only its integral parts, but also the more fundamental principles of actuality and potentiality which make up those parts.

We can also see in this initial discussion of the vegetative powers how Aquinas’ methodology for discovering what we most fundamentally are is used. Individual things originally wholly separate from us, such as food, are the objects of these vegetative powers, that is, the things to which these powers are directed. When these powers are exercised, union of a certain sort is achieved with those objects. For example, in exercising the power to nourish

²⁵³ *DMC*; *QDDA* a.9.

²⁵⁴ *In V Met.*, lect.21, n.1099; *QDSC* a.11, ad 2; *ST* II-II, q.48, a.1. cf. Klima, “Man”, 360-361, 370-371; Stump, *Aquinas*, 48, 209-210.

oneself, one takes in food, and so achieves union with it. The operation of each of our powers involves becoming “united” (*coniungi*) with the objects of that power.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, the operation of each power involves not only union with its objects, but this union involves both the person and the object being “transformed” (*converti*) in some way. This can be seen in the case of the vegetative power of eating and digestion: we seek union with food, which transforms us by causing us to grow, and transforms the food by converting its matter into our matter.²⁵⁶ In various ways, receptivity, or potentiality, and activity are aspects of each of our powers. We are receptive to the objects of our powers, but we also actively transform those objects. Each power and its objects are suited or proportionate to one another; in Aquinas’ terms they are “connatural” (*connaturale*) to one another. By this he means that the power is able to interact with its object in a coherent, harmonious way, altering its object so that it is apt to be received by the power.²⁵⁷ For example, the nutritive powers and organs are suited to receive and transform food; the two fit together and there is not a mismatch between them, as might occur, for instance, if we tried to digest with our lungs rather than with our stomach.

Human powers are not isolated from one another, but are organized into a hierarchical order. This is the case within each group of powers, as well as between the various groups of powers. Within the vegetative powers, for instance, the power of digestion and absorbing nutrients exists to facilitate the powers of growth and reproduction.²⁵⁸ One cannot understand digestion fully by just examining how the power works on its object and what the organs are like through which this power is implemented. Rather, this power must be understood in relation to

²⁵⁵ cf. *ST*, I, q.78, a.1.

²⁵⁶ *In II DA*, lect. 9, n.339-342; lect.10, n.357; lect.11, n.365-367.

²⁵⁷ *DOO*; *In III DA*, lect.15; *QDDA* a.13; *QQ VII*, q.1, a.4 *SCG II*, c.68, 73, 77, 81; *ST I*, q.78, a.1; q.80, a.1; *II*, q.26, a.1; q.58, a.5. cf. Hibbs, *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion*, 60-61; McNerny, *Maritain*, 171; Suto, “Virtue and Knowledge”, 65.

²⁵⁸ *In II DA*, lect.9, n.347.

other powers, and in terms of all four causes.

I.A.3. SENSITIVE POWERS

The next powers on Aquinas' hierarchy are the sensitive powers. These include our five external senses—vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—as well as some internal senses, such as imagination and memory.²⁵⁹ These powers allow us to be aware of individual material things through intentional (*intentionale*) or spiritual (*spirituale*) union with them, a kind of union different from that provided by the vegetative powers. Aquinas explains this new type of union through comparison with material changes. In material changes, a thing changes what it actually is; in Aquinas' terminology, it takes on a new form. If a human person takes on a new characteristic, such as when he or she becomes sunburned, or if a piece of matter becomes something new, such as when a lump of clay becomes a statue, then Aquinas says that the person and the clay have taken on new forms: the form of sunburn and the form of statue, respectively. Aquinas calls this natural transformation or “natural immutation” (*naturalis immutatio*): a thing has really changed characteristics through a form transforming its matter. In sensation, a person takes on a new form, but through “spiritual immutation” (*spiritualis immutatio*) rather than the natural immutation of material changes.²⁶⁰

The following example is illustrative of the difference between these two sorts of reception of forms. When a lump of clay is shaped into a statue, it receives the form of statue, that is, it becomes a statue, thus changing what the clay is. According to hylomorphism, clay is taken up by the new form, so that it is no longer a separate thing from the statue, although the clay retains the power or potential to become a separate thing in its own right once more. The hylomorphist says that the clay is contained in the statue “virtually” or “with respect to power”

²⁵⁹ *ST I*, q.78, a.3 and 4.

²⁶⁰ *ST I*, q.78, a.3.

(*virtute*). When I see a statue, I also receive the form of statue into my eyes, which are the organs though which I exercise my power of vision. But my eyes and power of vision do not actually become a statue by receiving this form. Rather, the form of the statue is received in a “spiritual” or “intentional” manner.²⁶¹ The spiritually received form transforms my visual powers to allow me to see the statue, thus facilitating an intentional act of vision.²⁶² The form I receive has the same content as the form in the statue. I see the statue because I have received its form; the colors in the statue have the power, under the right lighting conditions, to affect my eyes in this way. All things tend to manifest themselves, including in an intentional manner.²⁶³

When I sense something through union with its form I am directly aware of the thing itself that has caused these forms to be in my sensitive powers. I am not first aware of the form impressed on my eye and then infer the existence of the real thing of which it is the form. However, this formal union does not allow me to sense every aspect of the sensed thing. In natural immutation, when the form of statue is received by the lump of clay, the lump of clay becomes the statue. But in the spiritual immutation of the eye by the form of statue, one becomes aware just of the visible aspects of the statue; much of what the statue is exceeds the cognition (*cognitio, cognoscitivus*) facilitated by the power of vision. Other senses allow us to cognize other aspects of the statue through the reception of its form into powers of different sorts.²⁶⁴ In

²⁶¹ ‘Intention’ (*intentio*) here refers to the joining (*conjungere*) of a cognitive power with its object; see *QQ* 7, q.1, a.2. This should not be confused with ‘intention’ (*intentio*) in the sense of *ST* I-II, q.12, a.1, where the term refers to the aiming of the will at some goal when choosing to perform some action. The term in general refers to the directedness of our powers to certain objects or goals.

²⁶² cf. Braine, *Human Person*, 125.

²⁶³ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 121-123.

²⁶⁴ *QQ* 7, q.1, a.4; *In DSS*, lect.2; cf. Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 62-66. Aquinas uses ‘cognition’ (*cognitio, cognoscitivus*, and their cognates) and ‘apprehension’ (*apprehensio, apprehensivus*, and their cognates) as blanket terms for all the different sorts of intentionality that involve spiritual reception of forms, including all the forms of sense

sensing I passively receive forms, but this reception involves a transformation of the form of the sensed thing, as it comes to exist in sense powers in a different way than it exists in things: in things, it is the principle that makes things be what they are, while in sense powers, it is the principle that makes me aware of the thing.²⁶⁵ An act of sensing also causes a form that was just potentially sensible as it exists in a thing to become actually sensed by the sense power.²⁶⁶

To return to our example, when I see a statue, certain material changes are effected in my eyes and brain by light entering my eyes and interacting with material structures there. My power of vision is implemented in my eyes (*oculi*), optic nerves (*nervi ex oculis procedentes*), and my brain (or, as Aquinas says wrongly, just a place near the brain (*iuxta cerebrum*) where the optic nerves meet).²⁶⁷ These organs must be properly structured and made of the right sorts of matter in order for the sense power to work. If there is a defect in my sense organ, then I will not be able to sense the thing correctly or at all. I do not receive the clay, the matter that underlies the form in the statue, into my eyes. Sensation involves the reception of forms stripped of their natural matter, though not stripped of all matter. The material processes involved in sensation just dispose my eyes to be able to receive the form of the statue. The reception of form explains the structure of intentional acts, the essential relatedness of the one sensing to the thing sensed.²⁶⁸

perception and all the intellectual acts. Aquinas also uses ‘perceive’ (*percipere*) to indicate the intentional relationship between any of the cognitive powers and its objects. The terms ‘knowledge’ (*scientia*), ‘understanding’ (*intellectus*), and ‘acquaintance’ (*notitia*) are reserved for acts of the intellect and will be explained in the section of this chapter on the intellectual powers. I follow Aquinas’ usage for all of these terms throughout this essay.

²⁶⁵ *In III DA*, lect.3, n.613.

²⁶⁶ *In DSS*, lect. 6.

²⁶⁷ *In DSS*, lect.5.

²⁶⁸ *In DSS*, lect. 1 and 5; *ST I*, q.78, a.3. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 203; John Haldane, “A Return to Form in the Philosophy of Mind” in David Oderberg, ed., *Form and Matter*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 56; Lisska, “Intentionality”, 154-155; MacDonald, *Transcendent*, 88; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 173-177, 184-189.

The sensitive powers have “a degree of immateriality” (*gradus immateriale*).²⁶⁹ This phrase should not be interpreted dualistically or idealistically, as meaning that these powers are entirely immaterial, since Aquinas thinks they require matter. Rather, Aquinas is here referring to the fact that sensation involves reception of forms apart from the matter of the things of which they are the form. Immateriality accounts for intentionality and immaterial things have a greater degree of openness to receiving objects than material things. A material thing can only be changed in certain ways; a particular piece of matter cannot be multiple things at the same time or have contrary attributes at the same time. But intentionally, we can receive all sorts of forms. A statue cannot take on different colors at the same time in the same respect, but I can sense different colors at the same time; I can only ingest a few things, but I can sense anything sensible. Insofar as we can sense and so have a degree of immateriality, we can be affected by a wider range of things than we can as purely vegetative organisms. This difference is not just a difference in ability, Aquinas thinks, but a difference of value; organisms that can sense are more valuable and perfect than organisms that can only perform nutritive functions, due to their greater receptivity and power. The more perfect a being, the more it tends to move out of itself toward things other than itself and the more it is able to receive this other insofar as it is other.²⁷⁰

For different senses, degrees of materiality and immateriality differ. For example, in taste and touch, one receives the form of the thing, but in the process there many material changes. When I touch something hot, for example, I both intentionally receive the form of heat and my skin is also altered by being burned; the hot thing both naturally and spiritually alters my skin.

²⁶⁹ *In II DA*, lect.5, n.284; *QDDA* a.13. cf. Deely, “Immateriality”, 297.

²⁷⁰ *In II DA*, lect.24; *In DMR*, lect.8; *In DC*, lect.18; *SCG IV*, c.11; *ST I*, q.3, a.1; q.4, a.2, ad 3. cf. Aertsen, *Transcendentals*, 105, 108; Deely, “Immateriality”, 298-299; Hoffman, “Sensible Being”, 77-82; Lisska, “Intentionality”, 155; Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 230-233, 266-269.

Vision, by contrast, allows me to sense more things at one time than touch allows, while remaining less naturally affected. Both senses involve a degree of immateriality in their intentional reception of form, but both also involve physiological processes.²⁷¹ Investigating the senses requires not just attending to one's experience, but also empirical observation of other people engaging in sensation, so as to be able to discover the processes that facilitate the experience of sensation. For example, Aquinas notes that when we look at another's eyes, we can see there a reflected image of what that person is currently seeing. This image shows to us the reflectivity of the eye revealing aspects of sight not available to a first-person perspective.²⁷²

If the act of sensing consisted of nothing but material interactions, then we would have to say that air senses, since it, like our eyes, receives the intentional form of the seen object; only by being received in this way can the form pass from the seen object to our eyes. The difference between eyes and air is that the eye is made to be what it is by the power of vision, in virtue of which the reception of the form causes a conscious intentional awareness of the seen object.²⁷³ The sense power, as the actuality of the sense organ, formally causes that organ to be able to perform operations that normal matter cannot; it allows conscious events to occur there. One way in which the power of vision involves conscious awareness of its objects is that with this power one judges (*diiudicet*) the seen object. By this Aquinas means that, in exercising one's power of vision, one distinguishes different colors and shapes in the world.²⁷⁴ In doing so, one experiences the real existence of the sensed thing, through the way in which one's sense power is receptive to

²⁷¹ Aquinas wrongly says that vision involves no material changes at *ST I*, q.78, a.3, but he rightly says that it does involve them at *In DSS*, lect.4 and 5. From contemporary physiology, we know that vision involves material processes, but we can still affirm Aquinas' broader point about the different degrees of materiality and immateriality involved in different senses

²⁷² *In DSS*, lect.4. cf. Braine, *The Human Person*, 188-195.

²⁷³ See *In II DA*, lect.24, n.553; *In III DA*, lect.1, n.570. For the objection see Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 50f. and for the response see MacDonald, *Transcendent*, 92.

²⁷⁴ *QDDA* a.13. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 204; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 197-198.

and comes into contact with real formed things distinct from us.²⁷⁵ One is also able, using the power of vision, to focus attention on various aspects of things; for example, one can consider an object as a whole or consider it part by part.²⁷⁶

Although the operation of our sense powers is not purely passive but includes our conscious activity, its veracity is based not in consciousness but in formal causality. Because both I and the objects of my sense powers are composed of form and matter, and because my form gives me powers of a certain sort, I can receive the forms of others and so intend and become conscious of them. We are similar or “connatural” to those things in virtue of the affinity between the forms of things and our cognitive powers. We are open to the world in certain definite ways prior to ever actually sensing in virtue of what we actually are and in virtue of our powers. Our sensitive powers open us to receiving certain aspects of the forms of things and not others; for example, we have the power to see but not the power to echolocate, and this constrains the forms that we can receive.²⁷⁷ Through formal causality by things and identity of the received forms with the form of things, we cognize them as existing outside us without destroying or absorbing them.²⁷⁸ Epistemology is based in ontology; we are able to know because of what we are and what the things we know are.

For these reasons some Thomists see Aquinas’ account of cognition as providing the

²⁷⁵ *In III Sent.*, d.23, q.2, a.2, sol.1, as interpreted by Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 102.

²⁷⁶ *In DSS*, lect.9.

²⁷⁷ *In III DA*, lect.3; *In DSS*, lect.1 and 2. cf. King, “Scholasticism”, 10-12. The example of echolocation being a sense we do not have and so yielding experiences we do not have is from Nagel, “Bat”.

²⁷⁸ These ideas about the connaturality and formal identity between person and thing involved in sensation are brought out vividly and poetically in Owen Barfield, *Saving the Appearances*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 28-34, 61-64, 86-91, and in Marion Montgomery, *With Walker Percy at the Tupperware Party*, (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2009), 116-134, 245-257. For straight-forward analyses of these ideas in Aquinas see: Gilson, *Being*, 188; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 79-107; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 116.

theoretical apparatus necessary to overcome some of the problems with modern realist and idealist epistemologies, and with dualist and materialist philosophies of mind. On the Thomistic view, sense powers, whereby we are conscious of things in a certain way, are not related to their accompanying organs and matter extrinsically, as two separate things, that is, through a relation of efficient causality between some powers and some mindless, mechanistic material stuff. Rather, sense powers and matter are related as correlated actuality and potentiality, as formal and material causes: the power forms the matter into the organ, so that the matter facilitates the operation of the power. Consciousness does not “supervene” on or “emerge” from purely material processes, nor is it an act of something purely immaterial, but is an aspect of an act of a form-matter composite. We see with our eyes, with the whole form-matter composite, and this act occurs in concert with the acts of other powers, in the context of the whole human person. The act of the eyes cannot be explained just in terms of consciousness, functional inputs and outputs, or material interactions; rather, the act of the eyes includes all of these aspects, rooted in the correlated matter and formal power that make up the eyes. The act of seeing has conscious aspects and physiological aspects, but all are explained in terms of the actuality that is the power of vision and the potentiality that is the matter that makes up the eye. Furthermore, as we have seen, on Aquinas’ view sensation is explained in terms of formal causality and identity, not just material and efficient causality, and awareness, albeit incomplete awareness, of things themselves, not representations of them. Some contemporary Thomists argue that this view overcomes the divide between “subject” and “object” typical of some modern representationalist epistemologies, in which we first know a representation of a thing and then infer from it to the thing itself. Rather, on Aquinas’ view, we know things first, and only reason to the presence of the form of the thing in our cognitive powers on that basis. The mind is not split from the body

or from the world, but rather gains a formal union with things in coming to know them and receiving their forms.²⁷⁹

Aquinas' account of the sensory powers involves more than just his view on our external senses; we have internal senses as well. When I sense, I am aware of the sensible qualities of things, but I am also aware that I am seeing and I experience, for example, the colors I see in combination with the textures I feel and the sounds I hear in a single holistic sensory awareness of the world. I can distinguish between each of my senses and the sorts of objects each reveals. Furthermore, some sensory objects can be sensed by more than one sense; for example, the shape of things can be sensed by both sight and touch. An awareness of the passing of time also accompanies all sensation, and the more focused (*perspicacior*) we are in examining things, the more we are aware of time. The powers to experience the sensory world as a whole, to be aware of one's external senses, to be aware of the objects common to multiple senses, and to be aware of time are not the powers of the external senses.²⁸⁰ Rather, Aquinas takes all of these powers to be one power, the power of the "common sense" (*sensus communis*) which, facilitated by parts of the brain, receives and unifies all sensory forms, allowing for unified sensed objects and a sense of being a single sensing subject. The operation of the common sense occurs passively as soon as I start sensing, as long as it is not inhibited by brain defects. For example, when I see and touch a statue, the visual and tactile forms I receive are combined together, yielding a single

²⁷⁹ This contrast between contemporary epistemologies and philosophies of mind and Aquinas' theories is explained in Braine, *The Human Person*, part 1; Haldane, "Philosophy of Mind"; MacDonald, *Transcendent*, 85-90; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, ch.3; Pasnau and Shields, *Philosophy*, 164-168, 171-172; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 66-71.

²⁸⁰ *In DA*, lect.2 and 3; *In DSS*, lect.8 and 19; *In DMR*, lect.1; *DV*, q.1, a.9; *SCG II*, c.66; *ST I*, q.78, a.4. cf. Caston, "Consciousness", 801-803; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 204-206; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 190-199

unified sensation of a single thing facilitated by the combined received form.²⁸¹

We can retain these received sensory forms through the power of memory and recall and combine them through the power of imagination.²⁸² When we do so, the form once again facilitates intending the thing of which it is the form; in virtue of having forms stored in our memories we can remember past and absent things. Our cognitive powers are always oriented towards the real world, in virtue of the forms we have received. With the imagination we can recreate images or, as Aquinas calls them, “phantasms” (*phantasmata*) of things that we have sensed, and put together aspects of these images to imagine things that we have never sensed. Finally, when we sense we generally do not just see colored patches, hear tones, smell odors, and so forth. Rather, for example, we see statues, hear pleasant songs, and smell noxious fumes. Aquinas calls this power to interpret and so sense things *as* something the “cogitative power” (*vis cogitativa*).²⁸³ As mentioned in Chapter One, Aquinas does not refer to cognition as “experience” (*experimentum*) until the cogitative power is exercised.

The sensitive powers are distinguished in virtue of the different aspects of the forms of sensible things that actualize them and in virtue of the different sorts of consciousness of time involved in each. Our experience generally involves many of these powers working together, and working with other powers: appetites, intellect, will, and bodily movement are all operative in our sense experience. These powers cannot be understood in a purely functional sort of way, that is, they do not serve just to process certain inputs and give certain outputs. Rather, each of them is bound up with the others; the exercise of one causes and presupposes the exercise of other

²⁸¹ *In II DA*, lect.24, n.553; *In III DA*, lect.1, n.570; *In DSS*, lect.5. cf. Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition*, 50f.; Ryan, *Sensus Communis*, 141-144.

²⁸² cf. *ST I*, q.85, a.2, ad 3.

²⁸³ *In II DA*, lect.13, n.393-398; *In III DA*, lect.4-6; *QDDA* a.13; *SCG* c.60; *ST I*, q.78, a.4. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 270-284.

powers. For example, the exercise of our sensitive powers almost always immediately leads to the exercise of the intellect; we do not just sense particular things, but we automatically think about them, categorize them, and apply linguistic terms to them, thus using our intellects.²⁸⁴

The vegetative and sensitive powers are ordered to one another in different ways. First, in the organic development of the person, the vegetative powers emerge before the sensitive powers: the human fetus can grow and take in nutrients before it can sense. The vegetative powers are necessary conditions for the sensitive powers, but not vice versa. Second, as already said the sensitive powers have a greater range of objects than the vegetative, and the sensitive powers are more immaterial and less able to be explained in terms of material processes than the vegetative. Third, in connection with other powers, the senses allow for greater control over oneself and other objects than do the vegetative powers. They facilitate a more effective usage of the vegetative powers than could be had if one did not have them. One is able to more effectively get food, for example, using one's senses than one could without senses. For these reasons, the sensitive powers are "nobler" or more desirable to have than the vegetative.²⁸⁵

The operation of the sensitive powers is ordered to and leads to an exercise of other powers; all conceptualizing, feeling, and desiring presupposes sensation. For example, our experience of sensation includes what could be called, using a phrase Aquinas does not use, an emotive aspect. We frequently experience the operation of our sensitive powers as enjoyable, painful, or having some other felt quality. Some such feelings are experienced as bodily, as in the sensation of pain, for example; others are experienced as "in the apprehension of the soul" (*in apprehensione animae*) accompanying sensation, as in the delight or sadness we feel when

²⁸⁴ *In II DA*, lect.13, n.398. See Pegis, *Problem of Soul*, 194.

²⁸⁵ *ST I*, q.75, a.3, ad 3; 77, a.4; *QDDA*, a.7. Blanchette, *Perfection*, 165-167.

listening to certain sounds.²⁸⁶ Such experiences reveal a close interplay between our sensitive powers and our appetitive powers, in virtue of which we have feelings. Good operation of the sensitive powers leads to a feeling of joy, while poor operation leads to pain.²⁸⁷ Aquinas thus does acknowledge, contrary to some claims, that our experience has felt or qualitative aspects. But Aquinas does not, as some contemporary philosophers do, see felt *qualia* as separable from the other aspects of a sensory act. Rather, all aspects of such an act, the material and the experiential, are united to one another in the manner of formal and material causality, requiring and causing one another in various ways for a full explanation of the acts that we perform.²⁸⁸

I.A.4. THE SENSITIVE APPETITES

The operation of the sensitive powers generally leads to the operation of one of another set of powers, the sensible appetites. Using our cogitative powers we judge certain things to be pleasant and desirable, and other things to be hateful and worthy of avoidance, in various ways. When we find something pleasant and desirable we are moved to seek union of some sort with that thing; when we find something unpleasant, we are moved to shun it. Through our senses we apprehend things, and on this basis an appetite for them arises; sensed things act as final causes or goals for the appetite, drawing or repulsing it. Appetites are first had for the sake of preserving our lives; as soon as we touch something we discern whether it is harmful or beneficial, and so immediately avoid or seek it. Whereas our cognitive powers are oriented towards just certain cognizable features of things, our appetites are oriented towards things as real wholes: I do not love just the visible features of another person, but that other person. The appetites not only

²⁸⁶ *ST I*, q.77, a.5, ad 3: “...quaedam sentit cum corpore, idest in corpore existentia, sicut cum sentit vulnus vel aliquid huiusmodi, quaedam vero sentit sine corpore, idest non existentia in corpore, sed solum in apprehensione animae, sicut cum sentit se tristari vel gaudere de aliquo audito.”

²⁸⁷ *ST I-II*, q.11, a.1 and 4; q.59, a.5; *II-II*, q.82, a.4.

²⁸⁸ cf. King, “Mind-Body Problem”, 187, 191.

move us to seek or shun things; they also involve a sort of cognition different from sensitive cognition. When we have some appetite for things, such as love or anger, we feel their goodness or evil. This cognition of goodness or evil through feeling is an important part of becoming a moral person: the moral person feels such values correctly.²⁸⁹ To becoming virtuous and so good is to habituate one's appetites so that they feel aright and are correctly drawn or repulsed by things.²⁹⁰ It is through the unique sort of knowledge yielded by the appetites that we can know other people in an "intimate" or personal way; for example, though the appetite that Aquinas calls "love of friendship" (*amor amicitiae*) one feels what is valuable to another person without thereby subsuming the other's subjectivity in one's own.²⁹¹ The knowledge provided by the appetites is based on the feeling or passion (*passio*) that the thing arouses in one. The appetites are thus crucial for our ordinary experience of the world.

It is also through our appetites that we feel whether something requires effort to attain or avoid. Some appetites, such as anger and hope, which Aquinas calls "irascible appetites" (*appetitus irascibilis*) involve a feeling of the difficulty involved in and the effort required for achieving their end. Other appetites, such as love and hate, which Aquinas calls the "concupiscible appetites" (*appetitus concupiscibilis*) are simpler feelings, which lack this feeling of difficulty and effort.²⁹² Appetites also, like our sensitive powers, involve a consciousness of

²⁸⁹ Aquinas does not use the term 'value' in this context; I am here importing a modern term. See *ST I*, q.28, a.1; *II-II*, q.45, a.2; q.97, a.2, ad 2. cf. Mark Drost, "Intentionality in Aquinas' Theory of the Emotions", *IPQ* 31 (1991): 451-454; Francis Klauder, *A Philosophy Rooted in Love: The Dominant Themes in the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 263-264; McNerny, *Maritain*, 171-172; Suto, "Virtue", 62; Andrew Tallon, "Connaturality in Aquinas and Rahner", *Philosophy Today* 28 (1984): 143-145.

²⁹⁰ *ST I-II*, q.55, a.3; q.59, a.2, 4, 5.

²⁹¹ *ST I*, q.28, a.2.

²⁹² *QDDA*, a.13; *ST I-II*, q.23, a.1.

time: fear, for example, intends a future evil, while anger intends a present evil.²⁹³

Aquinas links appetite and the sense of touch most closely of all the senses; we can see this connection in the simplest reflex arcs. For example, when we touch a hot stove, we immediately discern the danger and seek to avoid touching it. Touch and appetite are linked for the preservation of life. Other senses, being more immaterial and providing us with more information about the world, allow for more complex appetitive reactions to the world.²⁹⁴ Indeed, the appetites are not only guided by sensed forms, but also can be guided by the intellect, by understanding as to what is right and wrong; indeed, such guidance is necessary for the appetitive powers to be perfected and for them to best reach their proper goals.²⁹⁵ These interactions among the powers are not just a matter of cognitive inputs and behavioral results; rather, they involve unified experiential and physiological relations to the world, all explained in terms of received forms and internal formal powers.

When we have an appetite for a thing, we do not want to be united with it or avoid it just insofar as it is colored or textured, for example, but as it is in its entirety. “Love of concupiscence” (*amor concupiscentiae*), for example, is an inclination to be united with the loved thing; when a person loves something or someone in this way, that person is changed so as to seek physical union with that thing.²⁹⁶ But unlike the vegetative powers, through which we seek union with things just insofar as they help biological life, appetitive powers are based on our sensitive awareness and judgment. Because of this, they can intend anything sensible, any individual material thing.²⁹⁷ By opening us up to these appetites, the sensitive powers allow us to

²⁹³ *ST I-II*, q.23, a.2 and 3.

²⁹⁴ *In III DA*, lect.18, n.872; *ST I*, q.78, a.4; *I-II*, q.22, a.2. cf. Braine, *Human Person*, 305-308.

²⁹⁵ *ST I-II*, q.50, a.3

²⁹⁶ *ST I-II*, q.28, a.1.

²⁹⁷ *ST I*, q.80, a.1.

be affected by things to a greater degree than we would be if we just had vegetative powers; this in turn allows for new sorts of union with and avoidance of things. We seek union with different things in different ways: the type of union I seek with a slice of pizza, an exciting film, and my wife, upon sensing them are very different sorts of union, but they all follow the same pattern of appetitive response following upon sensitive reception of form.

Like the senses, the appetites have both a material and an immaterial or formal component. We cannot feel and exercise our appetites without material dispositions and changes in the body.²⁹⁸ For example, Aquinas describes, using the science of his day, how, in the appetite of anger, the blood around the heart “boils”.²⁹⁹ These material causal aspects of the appetites only make sense within a formal explanation. Anger is a desire for revenge or to avert some evil or harm; it thus involves a conscious, intentional component that is not reducible to the material, physiological component, but instead makes sense of and organizes the latter. As with the senses, the appetites do not involve a purely conscious part efficiently moving a mechanistic material part; I do not first feel and then move a body that is separate from my feeling. Rather, the operation of the appetites involves material processes formed by powers, which provide for both for the actuality of both the conscious and the unconscious physiological aspects of the powers’ operations. The operation of the appetites must be explained primarily in terms of the reception of forms, which here act as final causes, drawing the appetites toward things themselves as goals of the appetites. The appetites cannot be understood in dualistic, materialistic, or functionalistic terms, but only hylomorphically, in the context of the actuality of the whole human person and the person’s relations to things in the world.

²⁹⁸ *ST I-II*, q.28, a.5.

²⁹⁹ *DMC*; *ST I-II*, q.48, a.2.

I.A.5. LOCOMOTIVE POWERS

We further know that appetite is not just felt and intentional but is also physiological because the appetitive powers give rise to another kind of power we have, our locomotive powers.³⁰⁰ In virtue of these we move our bodies and bodily limbs from place to place. When we feel an appetite it impels us not just to affectively react to a thing. Rather, we are impelled to move ourselves toward or away from the object of appetite. To do this we have locomotive powers, which are implemented in our legs, arms, and other organs for moving ourselves. Our appetitive and locomotive powers work together, and together reveal another coupling of receptivity and activity in our powers. Appetites involve receptivity to being affected by things, but they also give rise to active movement with respect to those things. Likewise, our sensitive powers work together with our locomotive powers; for example, being able to see things at a distance facilitates our locomotive powers by allowing us to direct our motions more effectively. The locomotive powers are also closely related to the vegetative powers in that each involves the ability of the person to move itself, and both rely on internal motion in the blood vessels and nerves.³⁰¹ This ability of persons to move themselves is one of the two key signs that person are alive, the other being cognition.³⁰²

Sensitive appetites can immediately move our bodies in some cases, because appetites have a physiological component, and the bodily changes involved in feeling an appetite can efficiently cause muscular movements that allow us to pursue the appetite's goal.³⁰³ Other appetites are more complex and require a decision making process to bring about bodily motion. But even when we freely decide to move our bodies, the motion is effected through the

³⁰⁰ *In III DA*, lect. 15 and 16; *ST I*, q.78, a.1. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 201.

³⁰¹ *In DSS*, lect.2; *QDDA* a.10.

³⁰² *ST I*, q.18, a.2.

³⁰³ *In III DA*, lect. 16, n.842. cf. Nussbaum, *Aristotle's De Motu Animalium*, 62-66, 86-90.

appetitive and locomotive powers.³⁰⁴ To move the body requires arousing a desire to move, which involves physiological changes capable of causing bodily motion. For example, if I decide to eat, I must arouse in myself at least a minimal desire for food. This desire includes bodily changes, involving, for instance, movements in my muscles, which cause me to move towards the desired food. The material changes, however, must be explained in terms of the formal component, in terms of the intending of the desired object. This formal, intentional component, with its reference to the sensed goal of the appetite, explains the material component of this exercise of these powers, though the two are unified in the operation of the power.

We can see here once again how very central the notion of “form” is to Aquinas’ metaphysics and natural philosophy. Forms not only make a thing be what it is and cause our intentional cognitive relationships with things. The forms we receive through sensation also serve as final causes, as goals of our appetites and actions. Forms thus explain our actions, and they explain why certain material events take place in our bodies. Aquinas’ explanation of things is thus very far from a mechanistic or materialistic picture of the world. Our movements are not primarily explained in terms of mechanistic pushing and pulling among our various body parts. Rather, the action of one body part on another to effect locomotion is primarily explained in terms of formal and final causality brought about by intentional cognition and appetite.³⁰⁵

The way in which each power formally and finally causes the activities of other powers is an important piece of evidence for the unity of the person. We know that the person is unified, that all these powers are my powers, because of the way that powers can move one another to act, as well as impede one another. A sensed form can draw my appetite to desire some object, and this same desire can impede further knowledge of the object, by drawing my attention

³⁰⁴ *In III DA*, lect.16.

³⁰⁵ *ST I*, q.110, a.2; I-II, q.9, a.1 and 2.

wholly into the desire. The ways that the powers influence one another indicates that they are all based in one form or actuality, the principle that makes me what I am.³⁰⁶

I.B. INTELLECTUAL POWERS

We can see how important form is even more when we turn to the final and highest set of powers that human persons have, the powers of intellect and will. Not only are we able to cognize individual things through receiving their forms into our sense powers, but we are also able to cognize the natures of things. When I sense something, I sense an individual material thing, using a material organ, by receiving its form. But we can mentally disregard or abstract (*abstrahere*) from the particular aspects of a thing and just focus on the nature of the thing, that is, what it is to be that kind of thing.³⁰⁷ For example, I can sense a particular tree but I can also consider what it is to be a tree—not what it is to be this particular tree, but what it is to be a tree in general, the attributes that apply to every tree.³⁰⁸ I can mentally abstract from all considerations of particularity and consider things universally. I can also then make decisions and will things on this basis; I can think about and use as reasons for action practical or moral norms that apply to many situations. For example, I think about how I ought to treat other persons in general, or how to perform some sort of task, and make particular decisions on this general basis.³⁰⁹ Our everyday human experience of the world involves categorizing things, reason about procedures for performing tasks, and applying general rules to the situations we encounter. All of these activities are done using our intellectual powers.³¹⁰

³⁰⁶ *ST I*, q.76, a.3.

³⁰⁷ *In III DA*, lect.7 and 8; *ST I*, q.85, a.1.

³⁰⁸ When I use ‘attributes’ in this study, I mean it in a contemporary sense, as referring to any characteristic of a thing or anything that can be predicated of a thing. Attributes in this sense include, in Aquinas’ terms, accidents, proper accidents, genera, and specific differences.

³⁰⁹ *ST I*, q.82, a.4; I-II, q.9, a.1.

³¹⁰ A number of terms regarding the activities of the intellect must be kept separate. Here I just

I.B.1. INTELLECT, LANGUAGE, WILL

Aquinas argues that the operation of these intellectual powers have a few stages. Intellectual cognition presupposes sense cognition; we cannot abstract the natures of things without first having sensed. We never have purely *a priori* cognition or intuition of concepts or ideas. Intellectual cognition requires that I have received some sensory forms, have retained them in the memory, and am able to recall these forms as stable “phantasms” in my imagination.³¹¹ I cannot understand a thing’s nature well if I have just sensed it once. Rather, I must have sensed it multiple times so that I have a well-developed phantasm of the thing built out of all those individual sensations; the phantasm, it must be remembered, is the mental image which is the composite of all the sensed forms one has received from a given thing, through which one sensibly cognizes the thing. I then consider this phantasm when I want to understand the thing’s nature. In this process I seek to understand the thing itself, not the phantasm.

In exercising our intellectual powers we mentally strip away or abstract from all the aspects of the phantasm that have to do with particularity, and we focus on what it is to be this

distinguish the terms as Aquinas does; I follow these usages here. The explanations of this distinction will be clearer in light of the explanation of this whole section. As already pointed out, ‘cognition’, ‘apprehension’, ‘perception’, and their cognates are blanket terms for our mental acts and are used here as such. ‘Knowledge’ (*scientia*), ‘to know’ (*scire*), and their cognates refers to our intellectual grasp of intelligible forms abstracted from things insofar as they are received in the intellect. ‘Understanding’ (*intellectus*), ‘to understand’ (*intellego*), and their cognates refers to our mental directedness of the essences of things themselves; thus we know the forms of things and we understand things and their essences themselves. ‘Acquaintance’ (*notitia*), ‘to be acquainted with’ (*nosco*) and their cognates seem to be used basically in the same sense as ‘understanding’ and its cognates. Aquinas also refers to two processes of what I call, in contemporary terms, ‘thinking’, that is the process of considering old knowledge and producing new knowledge on its basis, “comparing” (*comparatio*) or “composing and dividing” (*compositio et divisio*), and “reasoning” (*ratiocinatio*). See *In VI Eth.*, lect. 3 and 5; *DV*, q.10, a.8; *QQ* 7 q.1, a.4; *ST I*, q.85, a.1, 2, and 5; q.87, a.1. These distinctions were drawn to my attention by Jorge Gracia and Jonathan Sanford.

³¹¹ *ST I*, q.84, a.7, ad 2; q.85, a.1. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 217f.; King, “Scholasticism”, 13-14; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 278f.

kind of thing. Success at discovering this nature fully and in a scientific manner may require a good deal of empirical investigation of particular instances of this kind of thing, in order to have a well-developed phantasm of the thing.³¹² However, even when one's phantasm of a given thing is poorly developed, as when one has sensed the thing only a few times, one can still abstract something of what it is to be that kind of thing. Indeed, we do this all the time; we automatically, though not unconsciously, draw out the universal content from sensed forms, the attributes that make a thing the kind of thing that it is. When I intentionally experience things in the world, I do not just experience them in a sensory manner, but I also experience them as falling into kinds. Human persons always categorize things and this intellectual process colors all of our other experiences and gives rise to language.³¹³

As Peter King points out, this means that, according to Aquinas, more information is received through the senses than we are able to cognize with the senses, which only open us to certain attributes of things. The power of intellect can draw out of the forms received by the senses information about the kind of thing that sensed things are, the universalizable aspects of the forms, the attributes that they share with other members of their kind and that make them be what they are.³¹⁴ This is not to say that there is something universal—that is, applicable to many particular things—contained within real material things or in their forms. According to Aquinas, every material thing and every attribute of a material thing is particular, not universal. However, real material things have real attributes in common with other material things, that is, attributes with the same formal content. Using the power of the intellect we can draw out this content from sensed forms and know it as a universal, that is, as applicable to many. For example, a particular

³¹² *STI*, q.85, a.3 and 5.

³¹³ *In II Post. An.*, lect. 20; *QDSC*, a.10; Haldane, "Active Intellect", 208-209.

³¹⁴ King, "Scholasticism", 16-17.

tree shares such formal attributes with other trees as being a tree, being a plant, being colored, being measurable in height, and so on. The intellect draws out these universalizable forms out of a particular phantasm of a tree, coming to know as universal what exists in particulars in the world, though with the same formal content as it has in the world.³¹⁵ Through the processes of abstraction we are able to take what is only potentially intelligible in things and render it actually intelligible and actually understood.³¹⁶

This process of abstraction involves new sorts of activity and receptivity, over and above the sorts involved in the senses and sensitive appetites. Aquinas argues that we have a power, the “agent intellect” (*intellectus agens*), to draw out of phantasms what he calls “intelligible species” and to form concepts of things.³¹⁷ These “intelligible species” are the intelligible universalized forms of things. These cannot be formed by particular sensible things alone, but require the superior active power of the agent intellect in us. Particular things can only have particular effects; the image of a particular cannot, on its own, generate a concept that applies to all the members of a kind universally. Yet we experience ourselves as having universal knowledge, that is, knowledge that applies to all the members of a kind, as well as knowledge of abstract ideas, such as the ideas of mathematics. The agent intellect is the name of the power that allows us to have this knowledge, to know anything intelligible whatsoever.³¹⁸ This power is one way in which the human person transcends and is nobler than the entire material world, in being able to

³¹⁵ *ST I*, q.84, a.6; q.85, a.3.

³¹⁶ *QDDA*, a.4, ad 4; *ST I*, q.79, a.3.

³¹⁷ *QDSC*, a.10; *DV*, q.10, a.6; *SCG II*, c.76; *ST I*, q.79, a.3. Eberl, “Human Nature”, 343; Haldane, “Agent Intellect”, 205-206; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 133-136; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 307f. Aquinas holds, at *ST I*, q.79, a.4, that the agent intellect receives its power to abstract and conceptualize from God’s intellect and is a participation in God’s intellect; although, as we shall see, there is some phenomenological evidence for this position, this goes beyond what I intend to defend here.

³¹⁸ *In III DA*, lect. 8; *SCG II*, c.75; *DV* q.10, a.6; *ST I*, q.79, a.4.

draw out what is intelligible in and so understand anything in the material world.³¹⁹

Peter King and Robert Pasnau contend that Aquinas' account of the agent intellect is not an explanation of how we are able to abstract a universal content from particular sense images. On their interpretation, Aquinas just observes that we are able to do this and then posits a power to allow for this operation, rather than explaining what the exact mechanism for abstraction is.³²⁰ But as Peter King also points out, this may be the best that we can do at explaining this power to somehow draw intelligible universal content out of the material particular stuff of the world. The human power to abstract universal concepts from particular sense images is indeed mysterious, but we are able to do it. This abstraction does not just passively happen to us; we do it actively, though often automatically, upon sensing something.³²¹

After abstraction, the intellect receives the intelligible form, just as the sensitive powers receive particular forms from sensible things. The intellect includes an active power to abstract and form concepts and a receptive power to receive the intelligible form.³²² The intellect has a sort of potentiality not shared by the other powers, a potentiality to receive universal forms. Just as with the senses, the intellect "comes together" (*convenire*) with its objects and is "conformed" (*assimilatio*) to them in virtue of the received intentional form.³²³ The form of the thing known and the form received and known by the intellect are "the same" (*idem*) in content.³²⁴ The way in which the intellect "becomes" its objects allows for what we can call in phenomenological terms

³¹⁹ *In III DA*, lect.7, n.699; *QDDA*, a.21; *SCG II*, c.79.

³²⁰ King, "Scholasticism", 16-18; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 309.

³²¹ King, "Scholasticism", 30-31. The mysteriousness of intellectual cognition and language is captured especially well in Walker Percy, *The Message in the Bottle*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1954); see also Montgomery, *op.cit.*

³²² *In III DA*, lect. 7, n.675.

³²³ *DV* q.1, a.1; Blanchette, *Perfection*, 270.

³²⁴ *In III DA*, lect. 10, n.740; *DUI*, c.1; *SCG II*, c.78.

the “intentional act” of the intellect, the understanding of the natures of things as they exist.³²⁵

When we understand something in the world, we do not subordinate the thing to the concept that we form of it. Rather, our knowledge is always subordinated to the thing from which the intelligible form is received. We do not first understand our concepts or ideas and then try to fit them back into the world; rather, our concepts are always derived from things and then applied back to them. When we understand the world, the real thing is always the “measure” (*mensura*) of the intellect, since it is the source of the form received by the intellect and since the intellect must conform itself to the received form if we are to understand.³²⁶ In thinking about things and discovering new information, the intellect must always conform itself to the way the world is.³²⁷ We always only understand some not all of what it is to be some kind of thing; there is always more to discover about a thing in terms of what it is. We never fully know the nature of a thing because we only know things insofar as we can abstract the intelligible species from the sense image that we have formed of a thing, and this image always only imperfectly unites us intentionally to the thing.³²⁸ Like the senses, the intellect does not allow cognition of everything that it is to be a thing, just the universalizable features.³²⁹ It is for all of these reasons that, despite the fact that he affirms, as we shall see, the superiority of the intellect over material things, Aquinas is a staunch realist, without any tendency to idealism.

Furthermore, with the intellect we not only understand what things are essentially but we also judge them to exist as other than ourselves, always exceeding our conceptual grasp of them.

³²⁵ *DUI* c.5, n.110-111.

³²⁶ *DV* q.1, a.2.

³²⁷ *ST I*, q.85, a.5.

³²⁸ *In I DA*, lect.1, n.254-255; *In I Met.*, lect.3, n.60; *In II Met.*, lect.1, n.285; *QQ 7*, q.1, a.4. cf. Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 90, 92-93; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 165; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 66.

³²⁹ *DUI* c.5, n.111.

Judgment (*iudicium*), which actively affirms the reality and dynamic existence of things, is the “completion” (*completivum*) of our cognition of some thing. Existence is more fundamental to being a being than what kind of thing that being is since it is the most important actuality, the actuality of every other sort of actuality. The judgment of the intellect is far more powerful than the judgment of the senses, since intellectually we consider what a thing essentially is, not just its sensible attributes; the intellect is capable of judging in an explicit and articulated way that things exist with certain attributes.³³⁰ We receive the forms of things into our intellect and then affirm that the things of which these are the forms indeed exist.

Gilson interprets this as showing our orientation as intellectual beings towards the world of really existing things: we do not just conceptualize things but consider them as existing.³³¹ In the terms I used earlier, the intellect opens us to the real world in a new way. With the intellect we intend “others in themselves” (*alia in se*)³³², or, as Jacques Maritain puts it, “the other as other”.³³³ We understand them while affirming their difference from us; we can understand a thing without reducing it to our understanding because understanding occurs through received intentional forms, does not affect the understood thing, and leads to judging that the understood thing exists. Aquinas’ account of judgment and existence is the subject of many interpretive debates.³³⁴ These are not my concern here because these debates are largely over precisely how

³³⁰ *DEE*, 18 and 20; *In I Sent.*, d.19, q.5, a.1; *In De Trin.*, q.5, a.3; q.6, a.2; *QDPD* q.7, a.2, ad 9; *ST* II-II, q.173, a.2. cf. Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 23-33; Jorge J.E. Gracia, “Thomas Aquinas *On Being and Essence* (ante 1256): Toward a Metaphysics of Existence”, in Jorge J.E. Gracia, et.al., *The Classics of Western Philosophy*, (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 138.

³³¹ Gilson, *Being*, 186-188, 203, 230; *Christian Philosophy*, 41-42. cf. Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 104-105.

³³² *In DC*, lect.18. cf. Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 269.

³³³ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 85. cf. John Milbank, “Scholasticism, Modernism, and Modernity”, *Modern Theology* 22:4 (October 2006): 653; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 65, 71.

³³⁴ These are summarized in Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 23-33.

Aquinas thinks that we cognize existence. Here I am only interested in defending the core of Aquinas' account, on which all the debaters agree, which is that we can, with our intellectual power, cognize both what things are and that they exist.

Intellectually judging that something exists presupposes grasping that one is intellectually conformed to that thing. This is accomplished through two processes of reflecting on our acts. First, we reflect on the causal process that led from the thing to the phantasm to the intelligible species. The intellect knows itself through reflection on its acts, and it can also, through this reflection, become aware of all the stages in the causal process of cognition and the reception of the form from a thing via the various sensitive powers. Second, we return to the particular thing by applying the universal to the phantasm and to the form of the thing in the cogitative power. We affirm that the thing to which the phantasm refers is indeed an instance of the universal known intellectually; we understand it *as* an instance of some nature, which intellectually we know as a universal.³³⁵ In the second way, David Braine and John Wippel point out, we have one holistic experience of things in the world as really existing particulars that are members of some kind in virtue of their nature through the interconnected operations of the sensitive and intellectual powers.³³⁶

The power of the intellect allows us to understand not only the essences of things, but also abstract concepts and principles, such as those studied by mathematics. It allows us to compose and divide concepts to form propositions and arguments, and to reason from causes to their effects and vice versa. These acts often require many acts of abstraction and bringing

³³⁵ *DV* q.10, a.5; *STI*, q.85, a.7; q.86, a.1. cf. Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 104-105, 126-128.

³³⁶ Braine, *Human Person*, 424-425; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 35-39.

together or “interweaving” (*convolutio*) many lines of inquiry.³³⁷ Intelligible forms and the knowledge that we have gained about things, which is formulated in propositions, remain in our intellect, able to be recalled at will.³³⁸ In each of these forms of cognition, we always intend real things in the world; abstracted forms, concepts, and propositions facilitate this intending, but our powers and acts are always oriented toward the things that have ultimately caused our concepts.

The operation of the intellect always uses phantasms; in order to understand things, we must consider their images, both to abstract intelligible forms and to apply concepts back to the world. We never have purely abstract thought separated entirely from sensation and the material structures of the body.³³⁹ Even if we do not have phantasms of what we are intellectually cognizing, we still think using images of something similar. For example, if I think about God, I must use some phantasm as an image to help me think about God, although I cannot have a phantasm of God, Who is not sensible.³⁴⁰ A phantasm need not be a visual image of the thing being considered; it can be an “image” that pertains to some other sense. David Braine and Anthony Kenny contend that one phantasm we often use to think about things is imagined audible words, the “inner discourse” that accompanies our thought.³⁴¹

The power of the intellect allows us to intend things and cognize them in a way superior to the sensitive powers, but it is still entirely dependent on sensation. Our ordinary intellectual experiences never render us unattached to the body and they never render the body superfluous;

³³⁷ *In VII DDN*, lect.2, n.713; *ST*, q.85, a.1 and 5. cf. Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, 39-50; Kretzmann, “Philosophy of Mind” in Kretzmann and Stump, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, op.cit., 138-143; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 325.

³³⁸ *DV* q.10, a.3, 8, and 9; *SCG* II, c.74; *ST* I, q.84, a.2; q.117, a.1.

³³⁹ *ST* I, q.84, a.7.

³⁴⁰ *ST* I, q. 84, a.7, ad 3.

³⁴¹ Braine, *Human Person*, 434, 450-452; Kenny, *Mind*, 97. See also Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 293-294, 448; Pasnau is doubtful as to whether Aquinas would accept inner discourse as a genuine phantasm.

rather, the body and its senses is always necessary to provide the objects for abstraction. Aquinas allows that we can have experiences completely detached from our senses, but these are due either to insanity, and so to some deficiency, or to religious experience caused by a supernatural agent, and so an experience beyond our own natural powers.³⁴² Healthy ordinary intellectual experience always requires the involvement of the sensitive powers.

Our intellectual powers also give rise to human language. Just as the sensitive powers first receive impressions and then form images in the imagination, so the intellect first receives the impression of the intelligible species and then forms words in order to signify our understanding of the world.³⁴³ As David Braine points out, this does not mean that words are primarily representative. Rather, a word “expresses” (*exprimit*) a concept, but since our concepts are received forms, words actually express the things themselves to which all cognition is directed.³⁴⁴ This is in accord with the themes of realism and intentionality that we have seen in Aquinas. Human linguistic ability allows us to form words that are applicable universally to all the members of a kind. Human communication is open-ended, not just oriented to conveying practical information about particulars, but able to refer to all aspects of the world. As Jan Aertsen put it, human persons, in their linguistic and intellectual abilities, have a “transcendental openness”, that is, they can receive all intelligible forms and thus understand anything in or about the world, including the fundamental principles or sources of existence.³⁴⁵

³⁴² *DV* q.13, a.1.

³⁴³ *ST I*, q.79, a.10, ad 3; q.85, a.2, ad 3.

³⁴⁴ Braine, *Human Person*, 398-399 cf. *ST I*, q.117, a.1, ad 1 and 2; I-II, q.93, a.1, ad 2; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 131-132.

³⁴⁵ Aertsen, *Transcendentals*, 105, 108, based on themes in *In III DA*, lect. 7, n.681; *DV* q.1, a.1; q.21, a.1. See also Freddoso, “Good News, Your Soul Hasn’t Died Quite Yet”, *Proceedings of the ACPA 75* (2002): 85, where Freddoso says that openness to truth and beauty are signs of the nature of the spiritual soul, and Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 69, where Smith Gilson calls this stance toward the world a “receptive openness”.

Furthermore, Aquinas contends, we have bodily organs adapted to expressing and facilitating the operations of the intellect; these features of the body reveal that we are unified bodily and intellectual beings. First, the vocal organs are adapted to expressing our thoughts. We need to be able to manifest our thoughts to others and we need to be able to learn from others. Since we are not purely intellectual, we cannot convey our thoughts to others just by thinking. We are intellectual, but we gain all of our knowledge through the senses, for we are bodily too. We are also political and communal beings, and, for this reasons, we must be able to talk. Human speech is an intellectual transformation of animal communication, which uses sound to convey practical information only about particulars. Second, our upright posture allows us greater engagement in the world than if we walked on all fours, because it frees our hands for other uses. This upright posture also orients most of our sensory organs outward toward the world, which allows for greater reception of forms and greater enjoyment of things seen and heard. Third, our hands, which are able to form and manipulate tools and manipulate objects in the world, are able to put our intellectual grasp on the world into practice. Finally, our sense of touch is well adapted to feeling a wide range of qualities, and so building our knowledge.³⁴⁶ Our bodies and our intellectual powers thus are suited or proportioned to one another, and this suggests, as we shall see, something about our fundamental nature.

This openness is also seen in the other intellectual power we have, the will (*voluntas*) or intellectual appetite (*appetitus intellectivus*). Not only are we able to have universal cognition, but we are also able to make decisions freely on the basis of that cognition. The intellect allows us to understand not only what things are, but also universal principles for practical and moral

³⁴⁶ *DR I*, c.1; *In III DA*, lect. 13, n.790; lect.18, n.874; *ST I*, q.91, a.3; q.107, a.1, ad 2. cf. Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 71.

decision making.³⁴⁷ We can understand how to perform specific tasks and moral norms applicable to many situations. The will relates to the intellect in a way that parallels the relationship of the sensitive appetites to the senses. The intellect apprehends some universal norms, and these act as final causes for the will, leading us to apply universal practical norms in our actions. When we exercise the will, we consider these practical norms and make decisions on that basis. These rational norms draw our decision making process so as to know how to act; they do not coerce the will. When we exercise our wills, we are able to consider various norms, and freely decide what to do on that basis.³⁴⁸ The will is not like our vegetative powers, which are oriented to just one particular set of actions. It is not like our sensitive appetites, which are drawn by sensed forms without the possibility of freely deciding whether or not to be so drawn. Just as the intellect is open-ended in what it can know, so the will is open-ended in what it can decide. The intellect is only limited in being oriented to what is intelligible; the will is only limited in being oriented to what is good or desirable; we cannot choose what we do not judge to be good and conducive to our fulfillment, though we often judge wrongly or have a false conception of our fulfillment. Within this broad context, the will is a power to choose freely our goals and the means to reach those goals.³⁴⁹

The will can move the appetites and so move the body to move in particular ways.³⁵⁰ Again, just as with the other powers, this should not be thought of dualistically, as a purely mental power moving a purely material body.³⁵¹ All of our powers are rooted in our form, the principle or source of existence that structures us and makes us living, that is, self-moving

³⁴⁷ *ST I*, q.79, a.11.

³⁴⁸ *ST I*, q. 79, a.11, ad 1; q.82, a.2; I-II, q.9, a.1. cf. Kretzmann, "Philosophy of Mind", 147-148; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 235-241.

³⁴⁹ *SCG II*, c.47-48; *ST I*, q.82, a.1; I-II, q.10, a.2.

³⁵⁰ *In III DA*, lect.15 and 16; *ST I-II*, q.9, a.1.

³⁵¹ Braine, *Human Person*, 131-169.

beings. We are able to use the operation of the will to affect the operations of the appetitive and locomotive powers because each of these powers is rooted in our form, each is an actualization of our fundamentally self-moving nature. I am essentially able to move myself, and this means that I can use one of my powers of self-motion to move one of the other powers. These powers are not isolated things, but further actualizations above and beyond my fundamental actuality, which is my form or soul. For the same reasons, our sensitive appetites and feelings can influence our free decision making process.³⁵² These sorts of efficient self-moving occur in virtue of forms, both my own form that makes me what I am and the forms that I receive. In virtue of received forms we cognize things, are drawn to things, and make decisions about how to act. The will is a power to move ourselves freely; we can freely decide to think, to move from place to place, and, if we are virtuous, to feel in various ways.³⁵³

Like sensitive cognition and appetite, the operations of intellect and will include an emotive dimension. Aquinas describes how feelings of love, for instance, accompany certain acts of the will. But unlike the sensitive powers, these feelings do not involve any changes or movements in the body.³⁵⁴ The operations of the intellect and will can be felt, even though they cannot be imagined or visualized, due to their non-sensory nature.³⁵⁵ Here again we see that those like Peter King and Karol Wojtyła who think Aquinas lacks any account of the subjective or felt qualities of our experience have overlooked this feature of his account.

³⁵² *ST I*, q.82, a.4; *I-II*, q.9, a.2.

³⁵³ *ST I-II*, q.55, a. 1 and 2.

³⁵⁴ *QDDA*, a.19; *ST I*, q.79, a.7, ad 1; q.85, a.5, ad 1; *I-II*, q.11.

³⁵⁵ *ST I-II*, q.11, a.1, ad 1. cf. Blanchette, *Perfection*, 294-295.

I.B.2. INTELLECTUAL IMMATERIALITY

A very important aspect of Aquinas' theory of the intellectual powers is his view that they involve no material organ or processes, but are entirely immaterial.³⁵⁶ These powers are not like sensitive powers, which involve a degree of immateriality insofar as they are intentional, but also require matter. Rather, they are entirely immaterial, not involving material processes or organs except insofar as their operations require sensory data.³⁵⁷

Aquinas' primary reasons for thinking that intellect and will do not operate through a material organ are that they allow us to know universals, to understand any feature of the world, and to reflect on what the intellect is and what we are.³⁵⁸ When we understand something, we consider it through a received universal form; we consider insofar as it has attributes that can be universalized, not insofar as it is a particular thing with particular matter. Material things can only interact with other material things insofar as they are particular; there is a difference in the sort of potential to receive forms that we find in all changes of material things, and the sort of potential to receive universal forms that we find in our own intellects. To understand something insofar as it falls under some universal requires a power that is not the power of a material organ because such a power receives forms that have been stripped of matter and particularity and opens us up intentionally to all the members of a kind. Intellectual receptivity is unlike all material receptivity, and so the intellect and will cannot be facilitated by material organs.³⁵⁹

Peter Geach explains further why the power of the intellect must be immaterial. He argues that the structure of thinking can only be accounted for in logical, not physical terms.

³⁵⁶ *QDDA* a.1; *SCG* II, c.60; *ST* I, q.75, a.2.

³⁵⁷ *In II DA*, lect.5, n.284. cf. Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 219.

³⁵⁸ *DV* q.2, a.2; *ST* I q.75, a.2; q.87, a.1. See Eberl, "Human Nature", 360.

³⁵⁹ *ST* I q.75, a.2. cf. Geach, *God and the Soul*, 38; Hoffman, "Halfway State", 83-86; Klima, "Materiality", 174-179; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 254, 323.

Purely material things cannot engage in logical thinking, though, in the case of computers for example, they can give the appearance of doing so. Genuine logical thought requires cognitively grasping non-material connections among concepts and propositions, and it also requires intentionality. We have already seen the intentional powers are, to the extent that they are intentional, immaterial, according to Aquinas, because of the sort of receptivity to form involved. Still, sensitive and vegetative acts can be analyzed in physical terms and described partly in terms of material causation; such acts are divisible into spatial and temporal parts, and are assignable to some place. None of this applies to acts of thought, which take place all at once; by this Geach means that the grasp of or insight into a concept, a proposition, or a logical connection happens all at once, though acts of reasoning, of discovering these mental entities, or of analyzing them certainly might take time. One just knows some concept, without first noticing one part of it and then another part. Concepts do not have physical parts at all. Furthermore, thoughts are connected to other thoughts in “logical space”, not in physical space. Our power to abstract and know universal concepts and our power to reason logically indicate the immateriality of the intellect. Universal concepts are, metaphysically speaking, forms that were received from material things, but since have had all of their materiality stripped away, and so are immaterial, and must be received by an immaterial power.³⁶⁰

³⁶⁰ Geach, *God and the Soul*, 33-38. Geach uses ‘thinking’ and ‘thought’ to refer to the intellectual acts that Aquinas refers to as ‘knowing’ and ‘understanding’. Pasnau downplays the importance of reasoning in the activity of the intellect at *Human Nature*, 323, pointing out that according to Aquinas, a more perfect intellect than ours would be able to have insight into anything intelligible without having to reason things out in an argument. We have to reason because of the weakness of our intellects; see *ST I*, q.85, a.5. Aquinas contends that, in and of themselves, understanding (*intellegere*), sensing (*sentire*), willing (*velle*), and feeling delight (*delectari*) are not in time; the “movements” involved in such acts are unchanging e.g. understanding some thing does not change if it is genuine understanding. Since only time only has to do with change, on Aquinas' view, such acts are not properly speaking “in time”, and only related to time insofar as they are related to the body, with its material changes. See *ST I*-

As David Oderberg adds, concepts are simple or without parts, in a way that no physical things is simple. There is no way an abstract, simple item like a universal concept could be said to be “located” in a material organ; this would be a sort of category mistake. We can reflect on our concepts, taking them as the objects of our intentional acts of thinking, and this indicates that concepts are, in some sense, “in” our minds. But they cannot be “in” us at all in a material sense, and so the intellect that “receives” them cannot be material. This indicates that thought and other intellectual acts must be explained in immaterial terms, although intellectual acts are certainly correlated with physical events in the brain, as Aquinas himself knew.³⁶¹

David Braine likewise contends that intellectual acts are purely ways of intending the world, without material processes being involved. When we understand something, we intend that thing not in virtue of one of its particular material aspect, but in its entirety. When I understand a tree in virtue of the universal “tree”, I am considering that tree as a whole insofar as it falls under that universal. And unlike sensation, which occurs at a place in me, in a particular material organ, understanding is not so particularized, but is purely intentional, purely a cognitive relation between me the understanding subject and the understood thing. The only material thing that could be cited in an explanation of intellectual acts is my body as a whole. I, a bodily being, perform these acts, but I do not do so with any organ. I must use the powers of material organs, like the imagination or speech, as an aid to these acts, but this aid is not identical to the acts themselves. To say that the intellect is a wholly immaterial power of the human

II, q.32, a.1, ad 1: “...motus dupliciter dicitur. Uno modo, qui est actus imperfecti, scilicet existentis in potentia, inquantum huiusmodi, et talis motus est successivus, et in tempore. Alius autem motus est actus perfecti, idest existentis in actu; sicut intelligere, sentire et velle et huiusmodi, et etiam delectari. Et huiusmodi motus non est successivus, nec per se in tempore.”

³⁶¹ Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 89-92. See *ST I*, q.84, a.7.

person is to say that it is a power not exercised through any particular material organ.³⁶²

The immateriality of the intellectual powers is also posited on the basis of the potentially infinite scope of what can be understood and willed.³⁶³ There is no reason to think that there is a limit to the number of things or the aspects of things that can be understood. Our sensitive powers are limited in their objects; for example, with vision we can only cognize colors and shapes, with hearing we can only cognize sounds, and so on. But the intellect has a completely open-ended scope: anything and everything can, in principle, be understood intellectually; the soul is “in a way all things” (*quoddammodo omnia*).³⁶⁴ This is the “transcendental openness” or “world-openness” of the intellect referred to earlier in this chapter. Fernand Van Steenberghen argues that further evidence for the immateriality of the intellect could be found in that our understanding extends even to what is past, future, and currently absent.³⁶⁵ All of these types of knowledge suggest the way in which the intellect transcends the body and the senses. This complete openness, and the way in which intelligible forms or concepts are grasped, cannot be accounted for by a materialistic theory, and cannot be realized in a material system, such as a computer, although certain aspects of these phenomena can be mimicked by a computer.

Likewise, we can express all things using language. As David Braine notes, to be able to speak and understand a language is to have at one’s disposal an open-ended system of expression. The words of a language can be combined in new and unforeseeable ways. This open-ended possibility of expression is indicative of the openness of the intellect and will, and so of their immateriality, for no material system is so open-ended in its current possibilities.³⁶⁶

³⁶² Braine, *Human Person*, 447-454

³⁶³ *SCG* II, c.69.

³⁶⁴ *DV* q.2, a.2. cf. Blanchette, *Perfection*, 268; Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 91.

³⁶⁵ Van Steenberghen, *Radical*, 71.

³⁶⁶ Braine, *Human Person*, 353-356, 368-371, 377

Aquinas also argues that since intellectual powers can be used to understand any material thing and since understanding material things is the primary purpose of the intellect, the intellect cannot be material. If the intellect were material, this materiality would be an impediment to knowing something about materiality. Aquinas argues for this using an analogy: if the tongue always tasted a particular flavor, this would impede the tongue from tasting other flavors. Likewise, if the power of the intellect were the form of matter, then this materiality would impede the intellect from knowing other material natures. The intellect must lack all materiality so as to be able to receive the form of anything material.³⁶⁷ Robert Pasnau objects that this analogy fails. There is no reason to think that because the intellect is the form of an organ, it cannot receive other material forms; this is not like the tongue always tasting a flavor.³⁶⁸

Aquinas' argument is part of his larger metaphysical commitment to the importance of form, which is grounded, he thinks, in our experience of the world. Intellectually, we seem to be open to receiving the form of anything material, including, as we shall see, our own form through reflection. The sensory powers, which are forms of material organs, are not so open or reflective. The complete receptivity of the intellect means that it cannot be the form of any organ. If the intellect were the form of an organ, being a material form would get in the way of its openness; it would be merely another sensory power. But experience shows us that this is not so. While Aquinas does distinguish between intentional and natural reception of form, as we have already seen, he also links the two. We can intellectually receive forms because of what we are, that is, because of the natural form that we human persons have. This form must be the sort of form that is able to receive other forms intellectually, and that requires immateriality. The

³⁶⁷ *In III DA*, lect.7; *ST I*, q.75, a.1. For objections see Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 132.

³⁶⁸ Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 57.

intellect must be able to stand above and survey, so to speak, the entire material world.³⁶⁹

This open-endedness of the intellect and will, and the fact that human fulfillment requires that we above all fulfill these, our highest powers, means that we can only reach our fulfillment through rational inquiry into the world, free action in the world, and relationships with other persons. Anton Pegis suggests that this openness makes the human person a “spiritual pilgrim” seeking fulfillment through knowledge, free acts, and interpersonal relationships.³⁷⁰ We seek to understand other persons and things even though these others elude our ability to understand them fully or well, and we seek to be perfect and good despite the fact that this too eludes us.³⁷¹ Pegis affirms, following Aquinas, that the human person is marked by a unique sort of temporality: on the one hand, our bodily powers and structures are temporal, insofar as they changing material things like other changing material things; on the other hand, our intellectual powers and acts have a sort of eternity, Aquinas says, insofar as they approach the immediate and unchanging understanding of things which he says is typical of angelic and divine understanding. This eternity, Pegis says, is revealed in one’s personal history of free acts, wherein universal ideas are revealed in particular acts.³⁷² Pegis contends that these acts cannot be explained in terms of material processes, but only in what he calls “existential” terms, such as in terms of liberty, drama, engagement with the world, and self-revelation through free acts.³⁷³

Our intellectual and volitional engagement in the world, as Charles Kahn and Michael Walz point out, also gives rise to cultural, artistic, and technological productions, and to interpersonal relations. To be intellectual and free is to relate to the world in a way different from

³⁶⁹ cf. Haldane, “A Return to Form”, 54-56; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 79.

³⁷⁰ Pegis, *Origins*, 46-47.

³⁷¹ *DV* q.2, a.2; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 184-190; Walz, “Power”, 344.

³⁷² *SCG* II, c.68, 81; *ST I*, q.10, a.5; q.54, a.4 and 5; q.79, a.8, ad 3; q.85, a.1; Pegis, *Origins*, 52. cf. Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 183.

³⁷³ Pegis, *Origins*, 46-58

the way in which material things interact, to have a way of cognizing and modifying the material world different from all other material things.³⁷⁴ Because of the unique stance the human intellect and will have vis-à-vis the world, these powers must be different from all the material things in the world, and so they must be called “immaterial”. But none of these ways of dealing with the world are entirely separated from the body and the material. Rather, intellectual and freely willed acts require the engagement of the material body, since all of our knowledge of the world is drawn from the bodily senses and all of our engagement in the world is bodily.

Intellect and will are also capable of reflecting on and affecting themselves differently than our other powers. No sensitive power can cognize itself. For example, through the power of vision, I know colors, but I am not thereby aware of vision in a visual manner; it is through another power located in another organ, the common sense, that I am aware of my own vision. Likewise, no sensitive power produces the forms that it receive; rather, they must receive these forms from the world, and even the imagination, which can invent new sensitive forms, only does so out of the pieces of received forms.³⁷⁵ But the intellect is able to affect itself, both producing and receiving the forms that facilitate its intentional acts, though it does this through operating on phantasms received from without. Furthermore, the intellect is capable of reflecting on and knowing itself. This requires, as with any act of the intellect, prior sensory information; the intellect can only know itself when it is actualized by some form: the power of the intellect must be acting to be known, since only actual things can be known.

We do not know our intellects with our intellects not by a sort of “inner sight” or “introspection”, that is, through an intentional relationship between myself as subject and my act as object. Rather, we know our intellects through intellectual reflection on the actually working

³⁷⁴ Kahn, “Thinking”, 377-378; Walz, “Power”, 344. cf. Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 223.

³⁷⁵ *STI*, q.111, a.3.

intellect. We do not “look at” ourselves thinking, but we reflect back on ourselves after thinking about something in the world. To be to “reflect” on and “return” to oneself is to be fully self-aware, not at a distance from oneself through an internal intentional relationship.³⁷⁶ There are no interacting “parts” of the intellect that are materially or mechanistically related. When we know ourselves it is as knowers united to and actualized by things in the world in virtue of their forms. Indeed, Aquinas says that the more we know of the world, that is, the more our intellect is actualized by received forms, the better we can know ourselves; having known the world, we reflect on ourselves and come to know what we are. This requires that the intellect be a unique sort of power, the sort that is able to be fully present to itself. This total reflexivity is evidence of the soul’s immaterial nature, for no material thing can so be aware of itself. Again we see that the Thomistic view is contrary to epistemologies that would introduce a gap between me and the world; according to Aquinas, knowledge of the former requires knowledge of the latter, while knowledge of the latter is facilitated by the total openness of the powers of the former.³⁷⁷

The will, likewise, is free with respect to itself. I can freely decide not only what my body

³⁷⁶ On the difference between intentional introspection and non-introspective self-awareness see Braine, *Human Person*, 38-42, 55; Shoemaker, *Personal Identity*, 105; Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 15-21, 269. Lockean philosophy of mind sometimes uses the term ‘reflection’ to refer to introspection; on such a view, our mental states and acts can be either objects of our conscious introspective reflection or objects within us of which we are not conscious. Locke and Aquinas thus use the term ‘reflection’ to refer to different acts; indeed, some Lockeans deny that we have any complete reflective self-awareness in Aquinas’ sense, and that we can be more or less aware of our mental states or of ourselves, as Aquinas, and, as we shall see, the phenomenologists think. On the Lockean view, all of our cognitive acts are like the acts of the senses according to Aquinas: able to be aware of things other than themselves, but not able to be aware of themselves. Awareness of oneself is really just awareness of one of one’s acts, had in virtue of another act. See Locke, *Essay* II.1.4, p.110; see also D.M. Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of Mind*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 323-326. David Braine, in the passage cited above, points out that this is to take the logical analysis of an act and directly read off of that one’s account of what is actually going on in that act.

³⁷⁷ *DV*, q.1, a.9; q.10, a.8 and 9; *SCG* IV, c.11; *ST* I, q.87, a.1. Braine, *Human Person*, 472; Kahn, “Thinking”, 375; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 80-82, 222-223; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 340-344; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 74-78.

will do, but I can will to will.³⁷⁸ These reciprocal abilities of our intellectual powers indicate to Aquinas that they are not material, since no material thing can act on itself in this reflexive way; in material things, Aquinas claims, we only find one part of the material thing acting on another part. Thus, animals (and we at a sensory level) can only be self-aware through one power cognizing another; our intellectual powers, by contrast, are entirely self-reflexive, and so we cognize ourselves in the very act of understanding, and freely change ourselves in the very act of deciding.³⁷⁹ There is thus a perfection to intellect and will not found in material things: with our powers of intellect and will, especially if they are developed by intellectual and moral virtues so as to operate properly, we can be fully in possession of our own powers of acting, able to be more in control voluntarily of our actions than lower animals. At the same time we are more able to know and relate to others insofar as they are others; we do not need to reduce others to aspects of ourselves to be in contact with them, contrary to what Levinas, for example, thinks about

³⁷⁸ *ST I-II*, q.9, a.3.

³⁷⁹ Although Aquinas denies completely reflexive intellectual self-awareness to non-human animals, his account certainly allows that nearly all animals—at least all animals which have the “common sense”, which means all animals that have greater than one external sense—have some level of self-awareness. It is by the common sense that we are aware that we live, are in time, and perform sensory acts, and the common sense is something that we have in common with most other animals, and which functions in the same way in each animal in which it is found. cf. *In II DA*, lect.13, n.390. Aquinas furthermore allows that non-human animals capable of making sounds are aware enough of themselves to be able to signify their feelings to others. cf. *In III DA*, lect.18, n.874: “...oportet etiam quod animal habeat linguam, per quam sonando significet suas affectiones alteri.” Non-human animals do not have language properly speaking because they lack the ability to form universal concepts; nevertheless, they still can form practical and behavioral awareness of particular classes of things for the sake of practical ends, and communicate this to others. For example, Aquinas says that sheep know wolves to be their enemies, and birds know which sorts of straw are useful for building their nests. cf. *ST I*, q.78, a.4. Thus, I see no reason why Aquinas would have any trouble accommodating findings of contemporary zoology that certain animals recognize themselves, or can use signs to refer to themselves in the “first person”. But he would still contend that the sort of self-awareness available to humans through the intellect is entirely different; though he does not explicitly say this, I think, on his theory, it must be held that our intellectual self-awareness is both experienced differently and needs to be explained differently than any non-human animal's sensory self-awareness.

cognition, but can receive their real forms and act on that basis. Our powers of intellect and will thus reveal that we are more in command of and more knowledgeable of ourselves than other material beings, and more in contact with the world as it really is than other material beings.³⁸⁰

The unique ways in which our intellect and will relate to the world indicate that they must be explained as immaterial powers.

II. THE FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Human powers are hierarchically arranged, from vegetative powers wholly implemented in matter to intellectual powers, which are wholly immaterial. By examining these powers, their operations, and the relations among them, we can come to understand what we human persons fundamentally are. We must now examine this core of Aquinas' theory of the human person, his account of what we fundamentally are. Here we shall come to see why further evidence is needed for this theory beyond what has Aquinas and his commentators have offered.

II.A. HUMAN SUBSTANCE AND HYLOMORPHIC PRINCIPLES

Aquinas argues that we cannot account for what we fundamentally are just in terms of a list of powers and the body parts in which these powers are implemented and exercised. This is because we have good reason to think that we are unified beings, not just conglomerations of powers and body parts. This unity is not presented to me as a psychological content alongside other psychological contents like my thoughts and feelings, nor is it based in those contents or in my intentional acts or their objects.³⁸¹ Rather, it is presented to me in the way that my powers

³⁸⁰ *ST I*, q.14, a.1 and 2; q.82, a.3 and 4. cf. Freddoso, "Oh My Soul, There's Animals and Animals", Presentation to Workshop on Aquinas and Contemporary Philosophy, Newburgh, NY, June 25, 2011, available on author's website, 8; Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 270-271.

³⁸¹ This is how Derek Parfit, in a Humean vein, contends our unity would have to be given to us in *Reasons and Persons*, sections 82, 88, and 89. Since Aquinas bases the unity of consciousness in the unity of our powers founded in form, not in the unity of acts or their

work together, underlying all my acts and their contents. My powers can work together in a unified fashion and the operation of one can give rise to or impede the operation of another. When we think and speak about persons, we think and speak about them as unified beings; this is how others are presented to me and how I am presented to myself.³⁸² I can gain and lose many of my powers without ceasing to be what I am; for example, I could lose my locomotive powers through permanent paralysis without ceasing to be a human person. I am not identical to any of my powers; I exercise them but I am not they, though I need them to act, experience, and flourish. My powers must be explained by principles that underlie and give rise to them.³⁸³

Furthermore, although I am unified, I have some powers that are implemented in bodily organs and others that are not. What I fundamentally am thus must underlie and give rise to both kinds of power. I have both material and immaterial aspects, and this must be accounted for in a unified fashion when describing what I am most fundamentally. A deeper account of what I am is necessary because I am not any of my powers or body parts. There is no power that is my “consciousness” or “subjectivity”, for example, such that I could identify myself psychologically with that power or with its contents. Rather, consciousness is “spread out”, so to speak, throughout many of my powers, or rather, I have many powers in virtue of which I am conscious, though each provides a different sort of consciousness. These powers are dependent on and united to various unconscious powers, have unconscious aspects, and are rooted in my human essence, which makes me essentially the kind of thing that can be conscious.³⁸⁴ I, a human person, am conscious in various ways and to different degrees. I understand and sense, but I am

contents, his account is immune to objections based on thought experiments having to do with memories being erased or changed, split brains, etc.

³⁸² *ST I*, q.75, a.4; q.76, a.3 and 4. cf. Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 160.

³⁸³ *QDDA*, a.11 and 12; *QQ IX*, q.2, a.2, ad 2; *ST I*, q.77, a.6.

³⁸⁴ *DV* q.10, a.8; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 195-199, 345, 347.

not identical to my thinking or sensing; rather, these are some of my powers. I have a head and hands, but I am not my head and hands; rather, these are some of my parts. Given all these observations, Aquinas uses his method, as described in Chapter One, to reason from effects back to causes. Having been presented with the powers of the human person, as well as their unity, Aquinas reasons about the principles that underlie and give existence to these effects.³⁸⁵ Just as our powers and their objects are suited or proportionate to one another, so our powers are proportionate to the underlying unified way of being that gives rise to and explains them.

According to Aquinas, what we are underlying and unifying our powers and parts is a substance with an intellectual, bodily, animal, living or self-moving nature.³⁸⁶ Being both intellectual and bodily is our unique way of existing, our unique sort of actuality, which sets us apart from all other living things and explains what we are what we are able to do. A substance is something, which, in virtue of its nature, that is, in virtue of what it is, does not exist in or as an attribute of something else, but exists by itself, and so is able to receive accidental attributes, the nature of which is to exist in substances. We do not normally experience free-floating accidents; rather, we must explain accidents in terms of a substance that underlies and unifies them. A substance is an individual thing (*hoc aliquid*) which has a complete nature of a particular kind; this distinguishes substances from both accidents and “subsistent” (*subsistens*) entities such as the parts of substances, which are individual things but do not have complete natures, since they derive what they are from the substances of which they are parts. Substances are not attribute-

³⁸⁵ This reasoning is laid out in: *In II DA*, lect.1-6; *QDDA*, a.1, 9-12; *QDSC*, a.2; *DV*, q.10, a.1; *SCG* II, c.68-72; *ST* I, q.75-77. The summary of Aquinas’ views on the fundamental nature of the human person which follows is based mainly on these texts.

³⁸⁶ cf. Braine, *The Human Person*, 334-5; Freddoso, “Good News”, 87; Pegis, *Origins*, 33-41, 54; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 77-78, 157-161.

free substrata; rather, they always are of some kind in virtue of their essence.³⁸⁷ They are unified individuals; they are undivided in themselves and separate from all other substances, nor universals or kinds.³⁸⁸ Since the human person is a substance of a specific kind and since this substance displays various features, especially various kinds of actuality and potentiality, it must be explained in terms of underlying metaphysical principles, which account for these features and for the kind of substance that the human person is.

On the Thomistic view, human “substance” should not be thought of as purely “objective” or entirely accessible from an “external” or “third-person” person perspective. As we saw in Chapter One, Max Scheler, Karol Wojtyła, and others have contended that the way in which Aquinas explains the human person as belonging to the category of “substance” leaves out a genuine account of subjectivity. These thinkers argue that, on the Thomistic view, subjectivity is reduced or explained away in terms that are open to anyone’s examination, since “substance” is describable and has a place in a metaphysical theory, which is open to anyone’s examination. But while Aquinas presents the human substance as underlying our conscious subjective acts, he never says that subjectivity is “reducible” in such a way that it could be explained in entirely third-person terms. What it is to be a substance is more than being third-person accessible; it is to be something the nature of which is to exist on its own and that nature can include subjectivity.

The human substance also should not be thought of as purely “subjective”, open only to private introspective “first-person” examination. Rather, what it is to be a human substance underlies and explains both my “third-person” and “first-person” accessible aspects. I have

³⁸⁷ *In V Met.*, lect.9; *QDDA*, a.1; *QDPD* q.7, a.3; *ST I*, q.3, a.5, ad 1. cf. Bazan, “Aquinas”, 114; Gracia, *Individuation*, 267-269; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 48-57; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 212, 232-235. Aquinas cannot affirm that accidents *always* exist in substances because he has to allow that God can sustain accidents free of any substance, as in the Eucharist.

³⁸⁸ *DV* q.1, a.1; *ST I*, q.11, a.1 and 2. cf. Gracia, *Individuation*, 274-277.

aspects that are open to third-person investigation and I also perform acts that are open to my own subjective awareness. What I fundamentally am can only be accounted for in metaphysical terms that differ from terms that split the world into separate first- and third-person domains. As we shall see, neither of the fundamental principles or sources of existence in the human person is subjective or objective in the contemporary senses of these terms. I am not fundamentally a material thing with some supervening subjective properties or states, and I am not an immaterial conscious thing with a material body attached.³⁸⁹

As we have already seen in Chapter One, Aquinas explains what it is to be a human substance in terms of the basic hylomorphic principles, form and matter. These should not be thought of as two originally separate things that are brought together to form a third composite thing, nor are they two attributes of a third underlying substance. Rather, they are two principles, which explain the features exhibited by the human substance in virtue of its nature and the unity of the human substance. The form or soul is the actuality of this substance, the source of its existence and unity; the matter is the potentiality, the source of our ability to change in particular ways and to have integral parts. The form is proportioned to, actualizes, and unifies the matter, making it a human person with human nature. We need both principles to be what we are and to act as we do.³⁹⁰ Anton Pegis explains that although form and matter explain the sort of substance

³⁸⁹ The way in which Aquinas' metaphysics of the person rejects the division between first- and third-person accounts is presented in Lisska, "Intentionality", 151-156, 160, and Haldane, "Philosophy of Mind", 68. Haldane argues that to get beyond the various problematic dichotomies in contemporary epistemology, philosophy of mind, and metaphysics of the person we need to take seriously Aristotelian and Thomistic "psychophysical substantiality". The idea that the true metaphysical account of what we are requires a language which is "alien" to contemporary philosophy and which Aquinas provides is presented in Klima, "Materiality", 180. For accounts of the first-person/third-person or subjective/objective or mental/physical dichotomy see Foster, *Immaterial Self*, especially p.1-13; Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, especially p.28-32; Searle, *Rediscovery of the Mind*, especially p.12-26.

³⁹⁰ *ST I*, q.75, a.1; q.76, a.1.

that we are, they can only be understood as principles or “co-parts” of the human substance.³⁹¹

As Eleonore Stump points out, metaphysical composition of matter and form, potentiality and actuality, is more fundamental to and more explanatory of what a substance is than composition or constitution by physical parts or stuff.³⁹² Form and matter are not “integral parts” in the sense that our organs are integral parts, since they underlie and explain those organs.³⁹³ It can be difficult to grasp what these principles are, Aquinas admits, following Aristotle; what these principles are cannot be strictly defined, but must be grasped by analogy from examples.³⁹⁴ They are not two juxtaposed things, like a light bulb and its socket, to use Richard Swinburne’s metaphor for the relationship between the soul and the body.³⁹⁵ Rather, extending this metaphor, they are more like the light bulb and its ability to light up which makes it actually a light bulb and explains its structure.

When I observe my own body or the body of another person, what I observe is already a composite of matter and form. Each of a person’s organs is what it is in virtue of the power that actualizes it. But my actuality is not the actuality of my hand, or that of any of my other organs. *A fortiori*, my actuality is not any of the particular actions that I perform with my hand. Rather, the actuality of each of my organs and the actions that they perform only make sense in the context of my overall actuality, in the context of what I actually am as a unified human person. For this reason, Aquinas, following Aristotle, calls the soul the “first act” (*actus primus*) of the

³⁹¹ Pegis, *Origins*, 38-39.

³⁹² Stump, *Aquinas*, 113, 209-210, 304; “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism”, 517-518. cf. Jaworski, “Mind-Body Problem”, 184-185.

³⁹³ *DEE*, n.28 Aquinas says the soul can be considered an “integral part” if it is considered in relation to the body considered just as a three-dimensional thing. But this is not the most proper way to consider the soul and the body. In reality, the body is formed by the soul informing matter. We can think of soul and body as two of our parts, but this does not capture fully what these principles are, nor does it best explain what we are. See Klima, “Man”.

³⁹⁴ *In IX Met.*, lect.5, n.1826-1827; Aristotle, *Met.*, IX.6.1048a34.

³⁹⁵ Swinburne, *Evolution of the Soul*, 310.

human body insofar as it is potentially living, and so can be and is actualized. I must logically first actually be a human person before I can perform any actions at all. My “first act”, which is of a specific kind, gives rise to certain powers as well.³⁹⁶

We know about this holistic underlying form because of the unity among the powers and organs that we observe, but we move from vaguely perceiving this unity and nature to knowing it more fully the more we consider the evidence.³⁹⁷ Each of my powers is the actuality of a particular organ, and is further a potentiality to perform some particular action. Likewise my soul is the actuality of my whole body, and is further a potentiality to give rise to my various powers. If my fundamental actuality were the same as my powers, then I would need to be able to always act on these powers. But I can lose a power, as in paralysis, and still remain me, and I can lose the ability to actualize a power currently, as in sleep, and still remain me. What I am most fundamentally underlies my powers, gives rise to them, and explains why I have them, but is different from them. To be a human person it is sufficient that one have all of the five kinds of powers, but none of these powers explains fundamentally what I am. What I am fundamentally is a substance composed of a specific kind of form and matter; having human form and matter is a necessary and sufficient condition for being a human person, though we can only discover this form and matter through an examination of powers. If I am a human person and the material conditions in my body and in my environment are right, then I will have all the human powers, but these powers do not make me a human person. If conditions are wrong—if, for example, I have a defective genetic structure—and I am unable to currently have a power, I will still have the same sort of fundamental actuality, and, if conditions become more optimal for me—for

³⁹⁶ The soul is called the first act of the body at *In II DA*, lect.1. See also *QDSC*, a.11; *ST I*, q.77, a.6; Walz, “Power”, 340-342.

³⁹⁷ *ST I*, q.85, a.3, ad 3.

example, through genetic therapy—I will regain that power. Some of these powers only emerge after some bodily development on my part, and so in order to understand fully what I am and what I am able to do, I need to observe myself over the course of my development and under different conditions.³⁹⁸

Because I have a number of different sorts of powers, some of which involve matter and some of which are immaterial to various degrees, my soul must be a sort of actuality that is apt to give rise to all these different sorts of powers. For this reason, Aquinas makes his most surprising claim about the soul, namely that not only is the soul the form and actuality of the body, but it is also a “subsistent” (*subsistens*) entity, a particular “this something” (*hoc aliquid*) capable of having accidental attributes inhering in it and not in the body, the form-matter composite. This does not mean that Aquinas is taking back his position that the soul cannot be thought of on a par with our integral parts. The intellect, as we have seen, is immaterial, and so cannot be implemented in matter. But it must be the power of something capable of acting apart from matter; it is an accident and must inhere in something, and that something is the soul. The soul is thus an immaterial intellectual subsistent entity capable of having accidental attributes of its own, such as performing intellectual acts. It is not a substance, since it does not have complete human nature, since human nature and all the non-intellectual human powers require matter, and human intellectual acts require matter insofar as they require the senses. So the soul is both the form of the body and a subsistent thing in its own right, though one that is radically incomplete without the body and thus essentially requires and is proportioned to matter.

The soul is not a thing juxtaposed to the body, as in Cartesian dualism, but a thing that is

³⁹⁸ *QDDA* a.12; *ST I*, q.77, a.6, ad 1; q.77, a.8. cf. Koch and Hershenov, “Fission”; Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 96; Walz, “Power”, 343; Wiggins, *Sameness and Substance Renewed*, 2-11, 18-20, 107-108, 241

also the formal cause and actuality of the body conferring on the body all of its powers and its very existence as a human body. The proportionality and unity between form and matter allows Aquinas to explain soul-body interaction, whereas dualists famously fall prey to many strong objections to their theory of interaction. Powers like the intellect that just have the soul as their subject can interact with powers that have the soul-matter composite as their subject, because all of these powers are powers of the one unified substance. Furthermore, all human powers ultimately come from the soul as their “root” (*radix*), that is, the soul gives rise to all of these powers when it is in the right condition: the intellectual powers arise necessarily when the soul exists, and the other powers arise when the soul is informing matter. On Aquinas’ view, the human person’s way of existing is an intellectual way of existing that is lived out in a bodily way. I, a human person, am the substantial composite, and the two principles are not able to act as they are meant to apart from this substantial unity.³⁹⁹ There are many objections to the subsistence of the soul that must be passed over here because they are unrelated to and do not affect the thesis of this study.

Aquinas distinguishes between the power of the intellect and the intellectual soul that makes us what we are. In virtue of the power of the intellect we can understand the world through universals. The intellectual soul is the actuality of the whole human person, the source of all human powers, but it is called an “intellectual” soul because it gives rise to the power of intellect as its highest power.⁴⁰⁰ The intellectual soul is more fundamental to being a human person than the power of intellect. The intellectual soul is our actuality, the source of the human

³⁹⁹ *QDDA* a.1; *QDSC* a.2; *SCG* II, c. 68; *ST* I, q.75, a.2. The following sources capture the fact that the soul, according to Aquinas, is both a form and a subsistent thing, especially well: Bazan, “Aquinas”, 114-117; Freddoso, “Good News”, 87; Gilson, *Christian Philosophy*, 187-199; Klima, “Materiality”; Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust”; Pegis, *Origins*, 38-41; Pegis, *Problem of Soul*, 156-159; Van Steenberghen, *Radical*, 64-66.

⁴⁰⁰ *DV* q.10, a.1.

way of existing as a rational animal. To be a human person is to be an intellectual being that receives information first through the senses and so has a body with all the powers necessary to have a well-sensing body. It is also to be a bodily being, with all that entails, the structure and function of which can only be understood in light of its highest power, the immaterial power of the intellect. Unlike animals, which only cognize in a bodily and sensory way, and unlike angels, who cognize through pure intellectual intuition, we are able to cognize intellectually, but our intellectual cognition is based entirely on sense cognition.⁴⁰¹

Furthermore, the human person is not just an actuality of a specific kind, but also includes a principle of potentiality, matter. “Matter” and “body” can be understood in different ways according to Aquinas. In one sense, “matter” is the pure potentiality that underlies forms in the natural sense, that is, this sort of potentiality is able to receive one substantial form at a time. For example, the same matter cannot simultaneously be formed into a tree and a human person. This sort of potentiality differs from the potentiality of our intellects, which are able to receive potentially infinitely many universalized forms. This is yet another reason why our intellects, despite having potentiality, are immaterial; they have a different sort of potentiality than material potentiality. In a second sense, “matter” is the elemental stuff out of which bodies are formed. A human body is made of certain sorts of elements, which are capable of changing in certain ways and which preexist a particular human person. Matter in the first sense is the correlate of the form or soul, the potentiality formed by its actuality. Matter in the second sense, when caught up in the life of the organism, ceases to exist as separate elements and is formed into an organic structure so as to have new powers it would not have without the soul.

Likewise, what we call “body” (*corpus*) can be understood in a few senses. In one sense,

⁴⁰¹ *ST I*, q.85, a.1.

a body is a composite of form and matter. In another sense, we can think of our bodies as our quantifiable or mathematically describable aspects, what Aquinas calls our three-dimensionality or corporeity. In a sense, matter in this second sense and the soul are two integral parts of the person; each can be considered and explained apart from the other. But this understanding of the body is an abstraction from the way the body actually exists. The body as it actually exists, including its corporeity, is entirely informed by the soul; the body and the soul are not, in reality, two parts of the person, though they can be thought of in this way. Without the human form, the intellectual soul, there is no human person, but only a heap of juxtaposed elements. But without human matter of a certain sort, there is also no human person, because the human soul does not have the proper matter for implementing its powers.⁴⁰² To be a human person it is necessary that one have matter and body in both senses of each.

II.B. DIFFICULTIES, ELUCIDATIONS AND THE NEED FOR MORE EVIDENCE

These principles seem to many contemporary philosophers to be obscure, to do too much, or to be unnecessary and theoretically unmotivated. In this section I examine some of these difficulties. Examining these difficulties will clarify some details of the theory and allow us to see why and where more evidence for this theory is needed.

II.B.1. STANDARD OBJECTIONS

As we saw in Chapter One, there are a number of strong objections to Aquinas' hylomorphic account of the human person. Both "form" and "matter" are seen by many philosophers as confused notions, especially since the human form is supposed to be both a form—which some wrongly interpret as a kind of attribute—and a subsistent thing. Some

⁴⁰² These points about matter and body are presented in *DEE* c.2; *DPN*; *ST I*, q.75, a.5, ad 1; q.76, a.5, ad 1. cf. Klima, "Man"; Whiting, "Living Bodies"; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 298-299.

philosophers think that Aquinas is trying to make the soul do too much and that this leads to an unnecessarily convoluted, inconsistent, or self-contradictory account of what we are. There is also the problem of subjectivity in Aquinas. It seems that in some respects, Aquinas lacks a notion of subjectivity, while in other respects, Aquinas requires us to think that material things have subjective experiences, both of which are problematic to certain philosophers. Furthermore, it is unclear how intellectual acts can be ascribed both to my soul and to me, both of which are called a particular "this something" (*hoc aliquid*), while still maintaining that the person is unified. Some philosophers also contend that everything Aquinas and his commentators observe about the person can be adequately explained in terms of a non-hylomorphist metaphysics, like functionalism or emergent dualism, more clearly than by a hylomorphist metaphysics. Others object that Thomistic hylomorphism is not explanatory at all, but a description of appearances.

Finally, the objection that most shows the need for more evidence in its favor is that, while the theory may be coherent and defensible, there are aspects of it that seem *ad hoc* or entirely unnecessary. Although this theory perhaps does explain our powers, there is no reason to think that it is in fact true.⁴⁰³ Many theories are explanatory without being correct or plausible. We need to be able to see better why Aquinas has good reason based on evidence, and not on *a priori* theoretical commitments to Aristotelianism, to think that his theory is true.⁴⁰⁴

To understand these objections and difficulties in more depth and to clarify further Aquinas' theory, we must now consider these issues in a little more detail. Some philosophers try to make Aquinas' theory a version of non-reductive materialism. Eric Olson, for instance, takes the hylomorphist to be saying that the soul is a configurational or functional "immaterial state"

⁴⁰³ Abel, "Intellectual", 233; Hoffman, "Halfway State", 92; Klima, "Materiality", 163.

⁴⁰⁴ Walz argues this against Pasnau at "Power", 332; see Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 9, 43-44, 51, 406. Anthony Kenny suggests that some of Aquinas' claims about form could never be verified or backed up with scientific observation; see Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 26.

of matter. He also contends that, on the hylomorphist view, there is confusion about who is thinking, my soul or I.⁴⁰⁵ But all of this is not Aquinas' theory. The soul is not just a state of matter, but it is both the actuality of my matter and an intellectual subsistent entity. Far from being the configuration of my matter, it is that which explains and causes that configuration. Furthermore, although we must say that the soul is subsistent because thinking does not occur in the body and we must say that the soul is the "subject" of my thinking, this does not mean that my soul, properly speaking, does my thinking. Thinking is an accident attributed to my soul, but, given the larger metaphysical theory of what the soul and the person are, we must say that *I* do my thinking in virtue of my intellectual powers, which I have in virtue of my soul.⁴⁰⁶ The immateriality and subsistence of the soul explain my intellectual acts, which I perform. We can certainly say, "my mind thinks" just as we can say, "my eye sees", but neither is precise: it is I who thinks with my intellectual powers and sees with my eyes.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁵ Olson, *What are We?*, 174-176.

⁴⁰⁶ *DV*, q.10, a.9, ad s.c. 3. Some object that the soul must be doing by intellectual cognition, since, on Aquinas' theory, the soul can continue to perform acts of intellectual cognition after death, and even retains the intellectual knowledge that I gained during my earthly lifetime. It is not my intention to solve this problem of the separated soul in this study. However, I think that John Haldane, Patrick Lee, and Robert P. George provide a fine solution to this puzzle: in addition to emphasizing our sheer lack of knowledge as to what occurs after death, and what post-mortem thinking might at all be like, they point out that, during our normal, earthly life, I, not my soul, do my thinking. Nevertheless, I do this thinking use powers which are just in my soul as their subject. Thus, after death, the soul can continue to think—not because it was doing the thinking all along, but because, the soul had the "virtual" power to think all along. Just as some of my organs, when removed from the body, retain their powers and can continue to act outside of me, so my soul, when removed, can continue to think while outside of me. The intellectual powers, which belonged primarily to the whole substance during earthly life, are "transferred" to the surviving soul after death. This seems to me a fine solution to this problem, and to the "too many thinkers" problem that it engenders, though it may of course not be the correct solution, and there are probably problems with it. cf. John Haldane, "The Examined Death and the Hope of the Future", *Proceedings of the ACPA* 74 (2000): 245-257; Lee and George, *Body-Self Dualism*, 71-73.

⁴⁰⁷ *ST*, I q.75 a.2, ad 2.

II.B.2. EDUCATION AND EMERGENCE

Some philosophers contend that the soul or the intellectual power, on a Thomistic account, should be construed as “emerging” from a particular configuration of matter; they see Aquinas’ view as a version of the contemporary theory known as “emergent dualism”. On this view, consciousness or the mind “emerges” from a functioning, properly configured brain; the mind is not reducible to the brain but is entirely dependent on it. John Searle explains that “emergence” can be understood in two senses. In the first sense, a feature of something is emergent if it is not reducible to that thing’s physical components, but can only be explained in terms of the causal interactions among those components; the emergent features has causal powers not possessed by the thing’s components. In the second sense, a feature of something is emergent if it is somehow dependent on the thing’s functioning, but has causal powers that cannot be explained in terms of the causal interactions among the thing’s components; the emergent feature is an entirely new substance. Searle holds that consciousness is emergent in the first sense: it is not reducible to the matter of the brain, to particular processes in the brain, or to functions implemented in the brain, but is a new attribute that emerges from and can only be explained in terms of the causal interactions in the brain as a whole.⁴⁰⁸ Others, like William Hasker, hold that consciousness is emergent in the second sense: it can only be explained as an entirely new substance, caused by a brain, but, after the brain has brought it into existence, able to act on its own, in its own non-physical way.⁴⁰⁹ Searle argues that this second sense of emergence is impossible because it is causally inexplicable how an immaterial substance not subject to physical laws could be produced by causal interactions among physical things.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Searle, *Rediscovery of the Mind*, 111-112.

⁴⁰⁹ Hasker, *Emergent Self*, 188.

⁴¹⁰ Searle, *Rediscovery of the Mind*, 112.

As has been said, some Thomists think that Thomistic hylomorphism is a form of emergent dualism. Eleonore Stump contends that intellectual activity emerges from the brain in virtue of the soul, which she takes to be a configuration of matter; acts of cognition are dependent on the configuration and causal interactions of the person and so are emergent.⁴¹¹ Richard Cross goes further than Stump and argues that Aquinas' theory needs to be reinterpreted in a contemporary context such that not only thought, but also the soul is treated as emerging from a body in a particular configuration.⁴¹² Brian Leftow likewise contends that forms of all kinds, on Aquinas' view, emerge from properly configured matter.⁴¹³ These interpreters find Aquinas' account of formal causality, substantial unity, and human powers convincing and superior to most contemporary theories of the person. But they also think that modern science—neuroscience, for example—can plausibly and fully explain these powers as well. These interpretations use Searle's second sense of "emergence".

Aquinas introduces an idea that is in many ways like the idea of "emergence", the idea that certain forms are "drawn out" or "educated" (*educati*) from certain configurations of matter. When elemental matter, with its forms, is combined and configured in certain ways, such that the combined matter has certain dispositions, a new sort of form arises that has causal powers not reducible to the causal powers of the combined elements. This occurs, for example, when elements are joined into new compounds and when compounds are joined together to form organisms with vegetative, sensitive, locomotive, and appetitive powers. The forms that allow for these powers are not reducible to elemental matter, but they are entirely implemented in matter and are only educated when matter is in the proper configuration. The powers of the

⁴¹¹ Stump, "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism", 520-523. A similar point is argued with regard to Aquinas' account of sensation by Cohen, "Immaterial Reception", 194-195

⁴¹² Richard Cross, "Aquinas and the Mind-Body Problem", in Haldane, ed., *op.cit.*, 45-47.

⁴¹³ Leftow, "Souls Dipped in Dust", 120-121.

underlying elements contribute to the powers of the new substance that exists in virtue of the new form, but they are also caught up in the new substance and facilitate acts that they could never perform on their own. Some of these forms, such as the sensitive forms of animals, have a “degree of immateriality”, since they allow for operations that are entirely irreducible to their underlying matter, and can only be explained as acts of the whole organism. Indeed, all forms are “immaterial” in the sense that they are not matter. But they are still entirely implemented in matter and can entirely be accounted for as educed from that matter.

Education is thus very much like emergence, with one notable exception. On the theory of emergence, there are temporally first material structures, which then cause there to be some new attribute, such as consciousness. For example, two animal parents bring into existence an offspring, which is entirely explainable in terms of its matter, until this matter reaches a certain state of development, at which time it causes consciousness to emerge. On the theory of education, there are temporally first material structures, but these merely provide the necessary potentiality for the new actuality or form, which is not caused by those material structures or by causal interactions among them, and which is explanatorily and causally prior to the matter of the thing. For example, two animal parents bring into existence offspring, which can only be explained in terms of both form and matter, not in terms of just matter; however, as part of the process of producing the offspring, they must dispose matter such that it is capable of having the offspring’s form implemented in it. The parents cause the whole offspring, form and matter, though the matter is disposed first and only after that does is the form educed. When matter is in the proper state of potentiality and is acted on by the proper sort of agent, then the right kind of actuality is brought into being, proportional to the potentiality. This can be seen in any process of production of any sort of thing. In any substance, the form is prior to and more explanatory than

the matter; the form, not the matter, accounts for what the substance actually is. No form emerges from matter in the sense of being caused by matter, nor is any form identical to some material state, such as a functional state. Thus, on Aquinas' theory, no sort of consciousness is emergent, a functional state, an extra attribute alongside purely physical attributes, or identical to some material state such as a brain state.

Though Aquinas gives the theory of eduction to account for animal, plant, and inorganic forms, he argues that this theory does not apply to the immaterial and subsistent human soul. Contrary to the positions of the Thomistic interpreters reviewed above, Aquinas would agree with Searle that emergence in the second sense makes no sense: an immaterial subsistent thing cannot emerge from causal interactions among matter. On his own theory, a human soul cannot be educed from the potentialities of matter, even by human parents; rather, it must have an immaterial source.⁴¹⁴ Even though many of the human soul's acts and powers are implemented in matter, it has some acts and powers that entirely transcend matter. Since the human person is a unified substance and thus must have only one form, all of these powers and acts must be dependent on a form that has another origin than other sorts of forms. This form or soul is essentially united to matter, but it is not "encompassed" (*comprehensa*) by or "immersed" (*immersa*) in matter or the body. By this Aquinas means that, unlike in lower substances where the form is entirely implemented in matter, the human form is not so connected to matter, but

⁴¹⁴ These points about eduction of lower forms and the origins of the human soul are found in: *In I Sent.*, d.17, q.1, a.2, ad 2; *DME* n.51-60; *DUI* c.83-85; *QDPD*, q.3, a.9, *respondeo* and ad 9; a.11, ad 1, 7, 12; *SCG* IV, c.11; *ST* I, q.90, a.2, ad 2; q.118, a.1, ad 4; a.2. They are explained in: Bazan, "Aquinas", 1115, 121, 124; Joseph Donceel, "Immediate Animation and Delayed Hominization", *Theological Studies* 31 (1970): 82-84; William Monahan, *The Psychology of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Worcester: Trinity Press, 1935), 23-28, 30-33; Van Steenberghe, *Radical*, 55-57; William Wallace, "Aquinas's Legacy on Individuation, Cogitation, and Hominization" in David Gallagher, ed., *Thomas Aquinas and His Legacy*, (Washington: CUA Press, 1994), 180-184; Wippel, *Metaphysical Thought*, 266-269.

rather it both configures and transcends the body; the body is just part of the whole substance and life of the human person, which is primarily an intellectual way of life. However, likewise the soul is just part of the whole substance and life of the human person, which is also a bodily way of life. The unity and substantiality of the human person must always come first in any account of what we are.⁴¹⁵

Aquinas defends the thesis that God must create each human soul and thus, since the soul confers existence on the body, God creates each human person. God certainly uses preexisting matter to do this, since the human person's matter is disposed to be in the right state of potentiality to receive the human soul by the human parents. This material disposition is still required in order to receive the human soul, though, unlike in lower substances, the human soul is not educed from this disposition, but is created from without.⁴¹⁶ Since God creates the soul in this way, He can dispose the soul in various ways, as when He gives us the agent intellect and the natural law, the orientation of reason to be able to distinguish good and evil.⁴¹⁷ It is not my intention to defend this thesis of divine creation of the soul fully here. Here I defend the idea that, on a Thomistic account, the human soul cannot be explained in materialist, emergentist, or naturalistic terms. In this study, I am most interested in the nature of the soul as a subsistent entity entirely prior and transcendent to the body, not in the origins of the soul or the person.

II.B.3. SOUL AND BODY: CAUSALITY, NOBILITY, MICROCOSM

Here that we see the great difference between the soul and the various integral body parts that make up the human person. Integral body parts operate on one another by pushing or pulling and they contact one another at their external extremities. But the soul “touches” (*tangit*) and acts

⁴¹⁵ *DUI*, c.83-85; *SCG II*, c.68-69; *ST I*, q.76, a.5. cf. Van Steenberghen, *Radical*, 55-57.

⁴¹⁶ *QDPD*, q.3, a.9 and 10; a.11, ad 15; *ST I*, q.90, a.2; q.91, a.1 and 2; q.118, a.2. cf. Eberl, “Human Nature”, 341; Van Steenberghen, *Radical*, 62.

⁴¹⁷ *ST I-II*, q.91, a.2.

on the body via a different sort of contact, Aquinas says, the “contact of power” (*contactus virtutis*) and of formal causality. The soul touches the body “internally” not “externally”; the soul is in “contact” with the body in its entirety as its formal cause, conferring power and existence on it and on every part of it, fully configuring but also transcending it.⁴¹⁸ The soul's relation to the body, that of formal causality, is the relation that all forms have to the material things of which they are forms. In all substances, form and matter are internal to the substance and connatural to one another; there is no problem with their interaction, because of these relations, which are found throughout the material world.

I can have experiences “located” throughout my body; my soul is not located at some particular point of my body such that I would only experience sensations from that point. Rather, my consciousness is, as it were, spread out throughout my body; indeed, I do not have one attribute called “consciousness”, but rather I have many different conscious powers. Because the human person has the kind of soul that both informs and transcends its matter, the human person is also able to make contact intentionally with anything that is, and so, intentionally and formally contain the whole world.⁴¹⁹ The Thomist can affirm that most of our conscious acts and experiences require material processes, such as in the nervous system, but these are just the material cause of these acts and experiences. Much more important is the formal cause: our various kinds of conscious powers and acts must be understood to be primarily caused by our form, which accounts for the whole of what we are and which explains the material processes themselves. Many of our conscious experience and acts are necessarily facilitated by events in our nervous systems, but not caused by them in the sense of the emergentist.

⁴¹⁸ *ST I* q.75 a.1 ad 3, q.76, a.8; *SCG II*, c.56, 72. cf. Pegis, *Problem of Soul*, 142-143.

⁴¹⁹ *DV* q.2, a.2; *SCG IV*, c.11; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 102; Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 142-145; Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 80.

The fact that Thomistic hylomorphism cannot be reduced to any of the contemporary materialist theories of the person, even emergent substance dualism, makes this theory even more unpalatable to some contemporary philosophers. Once again it seems that this theory is in conflict with contemporary science, my last remarks in the last paragraph notwithstanding, and that form is unknowable, unnecessary or *ad hoc*.

The soul's transcendence of matter and its power to know anything is also a source of human nobility (*nobilitas*) or, to use a term used by the phenomenologists, human value. Things are more noble or valuable the more perfect, unified, and immaterial that they are, and the more they are able to contain the forms of things in the world in themselves, and so have control over the world and over themselves. To be noble is to have a desirable feature. Nobility is an important, though not entirely well-worked out aspect of Aquinas' metaphysics of the person, indicating our hierarchical relationship to other creatures, and the hierarchical order among our powers. This insistence on a value-aspect to his metaphysics is another point of contention with some contemporary commentators on Aquinas, who object that value-terms have no place in an account of what there fundamentally is but it is an important component of the theory.⁴²⁰

Aquinas resists any account of the person that would reduce our intellectual soul to the body in any way. Aquinas describes the human intellectual soul as "the horizon and border of the corporeal and the incorporeal" (*horizon et confinium corporeorum et incorporeorum*) because it is both a non-bodily subsistent thing and the form of a body.⁴²¹ Likewise, he says that the soul "exists in the horizon between time and eternity" (*in horizonte existens aeternitatis et temporis*)

⁴²⁰ *In II DA*, lect.7; *In DN*, c.4, lect.3; *DV* q.2, a.2; *SCG* I, c.28; II, c. 62; *ST* I, q.76, a.1. This idea of nobility is explained positively by: Blanchette, *Perfection*, 56, 68, 77-79, 258-263; Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 117-118; Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 231. Its applicability in metaphysics is called into question by: Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 151; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 398.

⁴²¹ *SCG* II, c.68.

in order to emphasize the unique temporality we have in virtue of being both bodily and intellectual, as described in the last section.⁴²² The human person has a bodily nature, but it uses this bodily nature and its senses to “draw closer to what is highest” (*appropinquat ad summum*) and eternal.⁴²³ For this reason, as Anton Pegis puts it, the body is a “vehicle” that conveys our intellect toward what is highest in the world by opening up that intellect to the reception of forms and allowing the person to act morally and interpersonally in the world.

This does not mean that the soul is in the body accidentally, as in the Platonic metaphor of the pilot on a ship; rather, the body is the soul’s “vehicle” essentially, as connatural and necessary to it.⁴²⁴ The human soul has a “spiritual emptiness and poverty” which must be, as Matthew Walz puts it, “filled with forms and friends” to be fulfilled, and such receptivity can only happen in and through the body.⁴²⁵ The human person is both unified and in tension, in various ways. We are a “microcosm” or “little world” (*minor mundus*) because we have all the powers of other creatures in some way.⁴²⁶ We are, as Eleonore Stump puts it, “metaphysical amphibians”,⁴²⁷ “composed of a spiritual and corporeal substance” (*ex spiritali et corporali substantia compositur*)⁴²⁸, having, as Robert Pasnau puts it, “a perplexing dual status”.⁴²⁹

An adequate interpretation of Aquinas, and, more importantly, an adequate account of what we are as human persons, cannot gloss over any of these ideas, though they are quite distant from many philosophies of the person. Aquinas seems to announce some of them quite

⁴²² *In DC*, lect.19; *SCG* II, c.80 cf. Blanchette, *Perfection*, 193-194, 268; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 463; Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 170.

⁴²³ *SCG* II, c.80.

⁴²⁴ Pegis, *Origins*, 41. cf. Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 77-78, 106-110.

⁴²⁵ Pegis, *Origins*, 45; Walz, “Power”, 344.

⁴²⁶ *DMC*; *ST* I, q.91, a.1. cf. Blanchette, *Perfection*, 120-121; Monahan, *Psychology*, 53.

⁴²⁷ Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism”, 514. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 19.

⁴²⁸ *ST* I, q.75, *pr.* cf. Bazan, “Aquinas”, 126.

⁴²⁹ Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 19.

gratuitously, without reason, and some seem to be based purely on a religious view of the world. Furthermore, they may be able to be explained in more basic, naturalistic terms. We need more reasons or better evidence as to why the human person should be explained in these ways.

Although Aquinas insists on the irreducibility of the intellectual soul to anything material or bodily, he rejects Platonic dualism, in which the human person just is the intellectual soul. The human person must have matter; the human person is not a conscious soul experiencing things “through” the body, but the substantially unified composite of soul and matter.⁴³⁰ The soul is not just posited to account for the *qualia* of our experiences or for intentional acts that are irreducible to matter. Though it does account for these, since it accounts for everything that we actually are, it also accounts for features of the human person that contemporary thinkers might explain entirely in material terms, such as the vegetative powers.⁴³¹ Yet, although I am the composite of my soul and matter, and not just my soul, Aquinas still insists that the soul is a privileged or more important part of me, thus giving rise to another potentially problematic point in his theory and another reason why we need more evidence to accept his theory. The intellectual power of the soul can be called the “inward man” (*homo interior*), since it is a more important aspect of the person than the body and its powers. The person is the composite, but it is somehow more the intellectual power of the soul than the other powers.⁴³² This idea of being more one part than others, while still being the whole, seems odd, unnecessary, and potentially self-contradictory.

Aquinas also thinks that some experiences “take place” in the soul, while others “take place” in the form-matter composites that are our organs.⁴³³ This latter fact requires that the formed matter of our bodies can do things such as having conscious experiences that ordinary

⁴³⁰ *ST I*, q.75, a.4. cf. Davies, *Thought*, 211-215.

⁴³¹ Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 88.

⁴³² *ST I*, q.75, a.4, ad 1; Oderberg, “Hylemorphic Dualism”, 96.

⁴³³ *ST I*, q.77, a.5, ad 3.

matter cannot. Miles Burnyeat argues that we cannot accept hylomorphism today because it requires us that we believe in matter that is subjective and can perceive.⁴³⁴ The way in which Aquinas rejects dualism thus leads to more difficulties with his theory, and so the need for more evidence for this theory.

Aquinas would also reject the theory that I can be “reduced” to my form, as Robert Pasnau contends. Pasnau contends that, on a Thomistic view, there is no purely potential principle in me, but that I am just an organized “bundle” of different kinds of actuality.⁴³⁵ It is true that a human person’s matter is given a new actuality by his or her form, but it is not the case that this means that the person is reducible to his or her actuality. The human person has a real potential principle, a material basis that accounts for the person’s passivity and potential, for example, to grow, to be wounded, and to die and for its matter to cease to be informed by its form.⁴³⁶ Just as Aquinas would resist the reduction of his theory to one of the contemporary non-reductive materialist theories, so he would resist other dualist reductions.

Commentators are divided on what the connection is between our experience and the principles of form and matter. Robert Pasnau contends that we have no experiential access to these principles and that we can only know about them through inference or by positing them as explanatory factors.⁴³⁷ Anton Pegis, by contrast, thinks that if we consider our consciousness and our basic existential attitudes and stance in the world, as outlined earlier in this chapter, then we will find that this is a “living metaphysics”. He means that if we consider the human person in this way, then the Thomistic metaphysical principles will be evident in our experience.⁴³⁸ We

⁴³⁴ Burnyeat, “Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind”, 25-26.

⁴³⁵ Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 131-140.

⁴³⁶ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 193.

⁴³⁷ Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 9, 51.

⁴³⁸ Pegis, *Origins*, 54.

need to see whether some experiential evidence for these principles can be found, whether we have some basic experience in which these principles appear in some way.

As we have already seen, many contemporary Thomists appreciate the hylomorphist idea that the soul relates to the body via formal rather than efficient causality; this account avoids the problems of soul-body interaction found in some versions of dualism and non-reductive materialism. But Aquinas also says that the soul moves the body via efficient causality. This does not mean that the soul pushes or pulls on the body, but that it is in virtue of the soul and its powers that the person moves him or herself.⁴³⁹ The soul is not a vitalistic or mechanistic force; it is not a material thing or force at all. Still this seems to be another example of the soul doing too many things. It seems like it would be simpler to consider hylomorphism a kind of compound dualism, in which there are two juxtaposed things, a soul and matter, which interact efficiently with one another.⁴⁴⁰ However, this is not Aquinas' view; rather, soul and matter are substantially unified as formal and material causes.

II.B.4. OBJECTIONS FROM RIVAL CONCEPTIONS OF METAPHYSICS

For Aquinas, the fundamental account of what we are is not an account of things that compose us, but of principles of actuality and potentiality that are operative in all our parts and activities. As Jacques Maritain argues, whatever our scientific account of the matter and material parts that makes up the person, whether it be, for example, a three-dimensionalist or a four-dimensionalist account, we still need a deeper account of the metaphysical principles of the person that explains the powers of the person as they manifest themselves.⁴⁴¹ As was mentioned in Chapter One using the language of P.F. Strawson, we need more evidence why this seemingly

⁴³⁹ See the section on the locomotive powers above.

⁴⁴⁰ Olson, *What are We?*, 176.

⁴⁴¹ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 192-193.

“descriptive” account, rather than a “revisionary” account of parts and things that make us up, can stand as a fundamental account of what we are.

It is not my intention in this study to investigate fully the relation of Thomistic hylomorphism to rival theories. I have spent several pages considering these relations, however, because they are illustrative of the aspects of Aquinas’ theory that are difficult to accept and thus require more evidence. I contend that Aquinas’ theory is in fact the correct answer to the question of what we are, and that he includes so many tensions or dualities in his theory because they are necessary to explain what we are. But I also contend that the theory requires more evidence and that some of that evidence can be found in the phenomenology of self-sensing. Dualists use phenomenal *qualia* and the experience of the *cogito* as experiential evidence for the principles posited by dualism. In a similar way, self-sensing, as described and interpreted by some of the phenomenologists, provides experiential evidence for hylomorphism. (It also helps us to see why the experiences put forward by the dualists do not actually provide evidence for dualism, though this is not a claim I shall be able to defend fully in this study, nor is it necessary for demonstrating my thesis that I do so. The phenomenology of self-sensing shows that the structure of our experience is not like those who posit *qualia* think.) For the hylomorphist, just as for the dualist, the more foundational an experience and the more pervasive it is, the more it indicates our underlying nature. A phenomenological examination of experience reveals that self-sensing is our foundational experience and so the experience that most indicates our nature. I now turn to some phenomenological accounts of this experience.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELF-SENSING

We turn now to an examination of phenomenological descriptions of the experience of self-sensing which provide evidence for Aquinas' metaphysical theory of the person. In Chapter One I examined the methodological background to this examination. In this chapter, I shall summarize the descriptions and interpretations of the experience of self-sensing by Max Scheler, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Michel Henry. My goal here is to describe the various facets of this experience, as these four phenomenologists describe it. Accordingly, I shall, while working through the phenomenological descriptions given by each phenomenologist, compare and contrast their accounts so as to understand the experience itself, allowing the strengths of each account to correct the deficiencies of the others. This will provide us with a unified account of this experience, which in turn will provide evidence for Aquinas' metaphysics of the human person. In this chapter, my account of each phenomenologist's views is not meant to be an automatic endorsement of his views. Rather, I shall first describe each phenomenologist's views in themselves, often drawing upon each one's terminology. Some of the confusions in each one's views will become apparent in these descriptions. I shall then assess and combine each view with the others, according to what I take to be the correct phenomenological account of each layer and example of the experience of self-sensing.

We must distinguish the experiences described by phenomenologists from the description of those experiences that they provide; sometimes a phenomenological description omits or distorts aspects of an experience. Phenomenological descriptions also must be distinguished from interpretations of experience that phenomenologists often give, as well as from the larger phenomenological framework, or description of all of human experience, in which these descriptions and interpretations are often placed. Often the understanding of a given experience,

even if well described in and of itself, is distorted because it is wrongly related to other experiences, or wrongly interpreted in light of other experiences. At other times, a phenomenologist only vaguely describes a particular experience, relying on other aspects of his or her phenomenological framework to fill in the gaps.⁴⁴² These interpretations and frameworks must be distinguished from the metaphysics or ontology which phenomenologists often provide in order to explain their descriptions.⁴⁴³ As we shall see, a given phenomenologist often thinks that one specific kind of experience indicates the fundamental structure of the world. We can take a phenomenologist's descriptions apart from the interpretations that he or she gives. The latter must be critiqued in order to attain the most accurate possible description of a given experience. Describing experience phenomenologically must be understood as bracketing out or abstracting from all scientific, philosophical, or common sense explanations of the experience.

An examination of the experience of self-sensing is difficult because this experience involves numerous "layers" or "aspects". Some of these layers "found" or "constitute" other layers, that is, it is necessary that we experience certain layers of this experience in order to experience other layers.⁴⁴⁴ For example, some of the phenomenologists argue that, experientially, the experience of being aware of our bodies founds, or constitutes, or is a necessary condition for having intellectual experiences. The four phenomenologists presented here disagree in some respects as to what the aspects constitutive of this experience are. Furthermore, we have a number of experiences that can be grouped under the label 'experiences of self-sensing'.

Examining the four accounts together can thus provide a more full account of the experience of

⁴⁴² Spader, *Personalism*, 115-117. The importance of being open to all features of experience in phenomenology is highlighted by Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, 120.

⁴⁴³ As we saw in Chapter One, various phenomenologists use 'metaphysics' and 'ontology' differently from one another and from other philosophers; I mention 'metaphysics' and 'ontology' separately here to cover all the ways in which they are used by phenomenologists.

⁴⁴⁴ Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 51.

self-sensing, but it can also lead to serious confusions as to the structure of the experience. For this reason, each of the phenomenological accounts considered here will be taken as a “case study” of the experience of self-sensing.

Each phenomenologist’s description of this experience will be considered in the context of his overall account of human experience. In considering each account, I shall proceed systematically rather than historically: each of the four phenomenologists considered here underwent a good deal of development in his position on this experience over the course of his career. Since my interest is getting at a unified account of the experience of self-sensing, I shall not consider those historical details, but rather I shall systematize what each phenomenologist held regarding this experience. In working through these accounts, it is necessary always to check the descriptions given against our own experience and against one another. This will allow us to see the ways in which each description is correct, to correct the deficiencies and errors in each description, and thereby to attain an accurate description of this experience.⁴⁴⁵ In this way, the experience itself, with all its layers, will be in plain view by the end of this chapter, and so we will be able to see how it provides evidence for Aquinas’ theory in the following chapter.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁵ cf. Scheler, “Theory of Cognition”, in *SPE*, 137; Henry, *I*, 265; Crowell, “Research Program”, 428; Laoreux, “Hyper- Transcendentalism”, 394.

⁴⁴⁶ The phenomenologists use the terms ‘sensation’/‘sense’ (*Sensation, sensation/spüren, sentir*) and ‘perception’/‘perceive’ (*Wahrnehmung, perception/wahnehmen, percevoir*) with sometimes the same and sometimes different referents. All these terms are used at times with respect to the experience given through our five external senses. ‘Perception’ is generally taken, especially by Scheler, to refer to a broader set of experiences; we have not only external sensory perception, but we also “perceive” the internal contents of our imagination, and sometimes he says that we “perceive” values and essences. Sensations, by contrast, are contextualized within perceptions; we have sensations of *qualia* like colors and sounds, or of bodily states like pain and hunger, but we never have pure sensations. For example, we never directly sense the color red; we only perceive the red of something. Sensation and perception are thus bound up with one another. Merleau-Ponty tends more to refer to our sensory and perceptual experience interchangeably; ‘sensation’ and ‘perception’ there refer to our non-intellectual and external sensory experiences, though he also considers ‘sensation’ to refer

We will also be able to see, though this is not my thesis, how phenomenologists often considered to be opposed to one another in essential respects are actually in accord with one another on key points and can be considered together to gain a deeper understanding of human experience and the work and practice of phenomenology.

Some of the kinds and layers of this experience may seem odd or unfamiliar to some readers; as will become clear, it is not the case that everyone has all of these kinds of the experience of self-sensing. Some of these experiences may seem to be had by the members of particular cultures, but not by the members of others. This is especially the case for the ethical aspects of self-sensing. Others of these experiences might only be had by those who are mentally and physically healthy, but not by those who have various disorders. These restrictions on experience should not be thought of as occasioning objections to my thesis. Even though some of these experiences are only had by some people, they are still experiences that *can* be had by human persons, and so they still can be used as evidence for what we are. It must be emphasized that these studies of the four phenomenologists are case studies of this experience, and not meant, on their own, to be definitive accounts of this experience. I contend that only the combined account, which will gradually emerge as we consider each case study, is a definitive account of this experience.

more to a pure experience of sensory *qualia*, while ‘perception’ refers more to our formed, meaningful non-intellectual experiences of things external to us. Levinas uses ‘sensation’ and Henry uses ‘sensory impression’ in technical senses which will be explained in their proper section; basically, for these thinkers, ‘sensation’ refers to the primary impression or feel we have of something, while ‘perception’ refers to an intentional experience of that thing as object founded upon the sensation. It is in this way that ‘self-sensing’ is used in this section to refer to the foundational experience that we have of ourselves.

I. MAX SCHELER

Max Scheler never uses the term ‘self-sensing’, but he describes a number of experiences that can be included under this label. Scheler lays the groundwork for much of what the other three phenomenologists include under this label, describing, at least in rudimentary form, all the various aspects and kinds of this experience that the later phenomenologists consider. Scheler’s terminology and descriptions will thus prove helpful for clarifying the descriptions given by the other three phenomenologists. At the same time, the other phenomenologists work out many of the aspects of this experience more precisely than Scheler does. Scheler is often somewhat sloppy in his presentation; he often moves back and forth between descriptions of experience, scientific and psychological data, and metaphysical speculation, without rigorously distinguishing between them or adequately explaining each.⁴⁴⁷ What follows is a systematization of Scheler’s phenomenological framework and description of this experience, with a view toward laying the groundwork for the subsequent three accounts.

I.A. VALUE

I.A.1. FEELINGS OF VALUE

According to Scheler, one of the most important ways in which we experience the world is the experience of “value cognition” or “value intuition” (*Wert-Erschauung*).⁴⁴⁸ An “intuition” (*Erschauung*) is any act in which some content is given to me directly. For example, when I intuit what it is to be a triangle, the essence of a triangle is directly presented to me in an intellectual intuition; I directly “see” what it is to be a triangle. This differs from non-intuitive acts in which the content is given mediately, as when I understand something through a representation or symbol of it. For example, when I see the word ‘triangle’, I understand what

⁴⁴⁷ This criticism is made by: Kelly, *Scheler*, 162; Spader, *Personalism*, 9-11.

⁴⁴⁸ *F*, 68, 255. cf. Spader, *Personalism*, 82-83.

this word means, but not at the same time understand what it is to be a triangle essentially; the essence of triangle is not given to me intuitively, but only as mediated by the word.⁴⁴⁹ Scheler contends that representationally mediated understanding of an essence or value presupposes that one has already directly intuited some essence in a way that does not involve the mediation of language or any other representation. Although the experience of value intuition is not the experience of self-sensing, it is nevertheless necessary to examine it here because of its centrality to Scheler's account of human experience as a whole and because of the role Scheler thinks that it plays in self-sensing.

Scheler argues that some of our feelings (*Gefühl*) are intentional; they are not just responses to stimuli, but are directed toward objects of a certain kind.⁴⁵⁰ Through these feelings we “intuit” what Scheler calls “values” (*Werte*).⁴⁵¹ ‘Value’, strictly speaking, cannot be defined beyond the rather unhelpful definition that they are the objects given to us by intentional feelings and that they are the aspects of things in virtue of which those things are felt to be valuable. We can only define the “essence” (*Wesen*) of a thing; essences, or what it is to be some kind of thing, are discovered through intellectual not emotional intuition.⁴⁵² Though ‘value’ cannot be defined, examples of value and value intuition can be given. For example, when I meet a new person, I feel his or her nobility or baseness. When I observe court proceedings, they feel just or unjust. When I walk through a forest, I feel the vitality or the decrepitude of my surroundings.

These values—nobility, baseness, justice, injustice, vitality, decrepitude—are not induced from sensed or intellectually intuited qualities of the encountered thing. They are given as

⁴⁴⁹ *F*, 48. cf. Spader, *Personalism*, 56-57.

⁴⁵⁰ *F*, 66-70, 242-262. ‘Feeling’ and ‘emotion’ are both used here to translate ‘Gefühl’. I use these terms interchangeably for the most natural sounding English.

⁴⁵¹ *F*, 16.

⁴⁵² *F*, 12-15. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 23-24.

qualities existing in things exterior to me, not in my imagined or conceptual representations of things.⁴⁵³ Values are properties of things that are given as irreducible to any other properties or aspects of those things. For example, I feel a person's nobility directly; I do not infer his or her nobility from his or her sensible or intelligible features. Scheler contends that I cannot fully explain the person's value in terms of his or her non-value properties, such as his or her sensible features or material dispositions. Rather, values are presented as features of things that differ from all other features.⁴⁵⁴

Values do not exist on their own, apart from the things of which they are the values. Both values and the sensible and intelligible properties of things only exist in concrete things, like persons. In our natural everyday experience, we experience the values, essences, and sensible features of things as interconnected. Generally we do not directly and consciously attend to values; rather, the feelings in which they are given take place in the background of our consciousness. We consciously experience concrete things as a whole, including their value and non-value aspects. Through phenomenological reflection we can separate out the different sorts of intentionality that are directed towards different features of things. Feeling the value of a thing is necessary for fully understanding that thing and for knowing how to treat it ethically.⁴⁵⁵

Scheler distinguishes the feelings in which values are given from "feeling states" (*Gefühlzuständen*) in which I just feel a mood, like anxiety, or an internal sensation like hunger or fatigue. These feeling-states are not intentional, but just causally associated with the world.

⁴⁵³ *F*, 31.

⁴⁵⁴ *F*, 17, 100-104.

⁴⁵⁵ *F*, 12-15, 20-21, 197-202, 254-255, 415; "Theory of Cognition", in *SPE*, 187; "Three Facts", in *SPE*, 236. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 60-61, 184-185; Kelly, *Structure*, 160-161; Nota, *Scheler*, 35-37; Sanford, "Affective Insight", 166-167.

They do not allow me to intuit values, but only present information about my emotional state.⁴⁵⁶

Scheler argues that values are the first features of things that are presented to us experientially.⁴⁵⁷ When I encounter something, its value is presented to me before I notice its sensory features or understand its essence. Values are experienced passively, as coming to me from things in the world and emotionally affecting me.⁴⁵⁸ Scheler means that we only attentively consider things if we first experience their value. As I walk down a hallway, for instance, I only very minimally feel the value of the walls and lights I pass; at most, I feel their value insofar as I feel that they are things that are beneficial to me, or that would hurt me if I ran into them, or that are uninteresting. I do not feel led to examine these things further. But if I encounter someone I know or find something unexpected, I feel a new value, even if only weakly, and this leads me to stop and consider this newly encountered thing. My response to a thing is guided by the values that I feel in it; I am passive to the values that I feel, but they also drive me toward some action.⁴⁵⁹ Of course, the feeling of values does seem to presuppose that I have some minimal sensory awareness of things, but the feeling of values is a direct intuition of a property of things not reducible to sensation and it always guides sensation to attend to certain things. I am first only aware of my surroundings or “environment” (*Umwelt*) as a perceptible field.⁴⁶⁰ For example, as I walk down the hall, I do not attend to particular things, but I am aware of my general perceptible surroundings. I consciously attend to discrete things within my surroundings only if their value exerts a call on me to attend to them in some way. Things “call” to me in virtue of their values; they present themselves not just as sensory objects, but as having some

⁴⁵⁶ *F*, 256-258; Spader, *Personalism*, 84-86.

⁴⁵⁷ *F*, 17-19, 133, 242-244; “*Ordo Amoris*”, in *SPE*, 110; *R*, 37, 40-41. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 25.

⁴⁵⁸ *F*, 258, 507, 579.

⁴⁵⁹ *F*, 63-68, 341. cf. Arthur Luther, “Hocking and Scheler on Feeling”, *Philosophy Today* 12 (1968): 96.

⁴⁶⁰ *F*, 48, 143-144, 398. cf. Spader, *Personalism*, 52-57.

importance to me that requires of me some response. Ethics is an articulation of these calls.

Whenever I feel a value, I always feel it in relation to other values. Simultaneously with feeling a value, I also feel what Scheler, perhaps misleadingly, calls “preference” (*Vorziehen*) and “placing after” (*Nachsetzen*). In preference, I feel that the value that I am currently feeling is more important than other values; in placing after, I feel that it is less important than other values.⁴⁶¹ There is a hierarchy of values which is an objective feature of the world, but each person also has a personal hierarchy of values, his or her “*ordo amoris*” or “order of love”, in virtue of which he or she prefers certain kinds of value. We ought to bring our own personal order into line with the objective order, in response to the way the world actually gives itself to us, but often we have a distorted *ordo amoris*, through personal choice, error, or the evil or erroneous influence of others.⁴⁶² My *ordo amoris* determines in large part which values I shall respond to, since I generally respond first to what I consider to be higher values. For example, if I prefer the value of pleasure to the value of justice, I shall, in general, pursue those things and situations that give themselves to me as pleasurable, rather than those that give themselves to me as demanding action for bringing about justice. My *ordo amoris* in large part determines the course of my personal history, since it in large part determines what I shall do.⁴⁶³

We also feel values in terms of our fundamental stance toward the world: we are either open to experiencing and responding to the objective order of values, a stance Scheler calls “love” (*Liebe*), or are closed off to and refuse to respond to that order, consistently preferring lesser values to higher ones, a stance he calls “hate” (*Haß*). Because values are our first mode of access to the world, these fundamental stances determine how much of the world I shall be able

⁴⁶¹ *F*, 87-90, 260; *R*, 41. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 30; Kelly, *Structure*, 86; Nota, *Scheler*, 94; Spader, *Personalism*, 86-87.

⁴⁶² “*Ordo Amoris*”, in *SPE*, 99-103; *F*, 104-105. cf. Kelly, *Structure*, 85

⁴⁶³ “*Ordo Amoris*”, in *SPE*, 100-109.

to cognize. I also determine the course of my life through acts, especially acts of response to value, and thus especially through my stances of loving or hating.⁴⁶⁴ A fundamental stance of “hatred” can lead to what Scheler calls “value-deception” (*Werttäuschung*) and “value-blindness” (*Wertblindheit*), in which one fails to feel the true height of a value or is unable to feel a given sort of value at all.⁴⁶⁵ For example, I might, through a stance of “hatred” toward the objective hierarchy of values, and an over-focus on values of pleasure, come to be unable to feel or respond to values of beauty; I will be blinded to the latter value through a habituation to only feel the latter value. In encountering a beautiful painting, for instance, I will only respond to what gives me pleasure in it, not be moved to appreciate and be challenged by its beauty; my appreciation of the painting as a whole will thereby be lessened. But if I have a stance of “love”, I will be open to feeling and responding to values of both pleasure and beauty, each in its proper way and in proper relation to one another.

I.A.2. THE HIERARCHY OF VALUE

We must consider the objective hierarchy of different “modalities” or kinds of values (*Wertmodalitäten*) as Scheler describes it. As Peter Spader points out, Scheler never fully justifies why the hierarchy that he presents is the right one; he never fully describes some experience which assures us that this is the correct hierarchy and that it is ethically normative.⁴⁶⁶ Nevertheless, this hierarchy coheres with Scheler’s broader descriptions of the human person and of experience; his position that this is the correct value-hierarchy is thus justified by the broader context of his overall view of our experience. It is not necessary here to justify this account; my purpose here is to present Scheler’s phenomenological descriptions as a case study of our

⁴⁶⁴ *OEM*, 75; “*Ordo Amoris*”, in *SPE*, 110-111; *F*, 227-230, 260-262. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 64-68; Spader, *Personalism*, 87-89

⁴⁶⁵ *F*, 90-98; *R*, 41, 53. cf. Kelly, *Structure*, 86-87; Spader, *Personalism*, 95-96.

⁴⁶⁶ Spader, *Personalism*, 11, 115.

experience. This section on the hierarchy of values is only important to this study because one cannot understand Scheler's account of self-sensing without understanding the hierarchy.

Readers can dispute particular points of this account of our experience where they do not match readers' experiences; this need not involve challenging Scheler's overall account.

Scheler calls the lowest sorts of values, "values of the agreeable and the disagreeable" (*Werte des Angenehmen und Unangenehmen*), and "values of utility" (*Nützlichkeitswerte*). We experience these values when we feel that something will be pleasurable or painful, or when we encounter or use some instrument that serves to bring about some goal. These are the lowest sorts of values because they are the most localized and material; they are almost reducible to the non-value features of things. I feel the agreeability of something at a particular point on my body and I can control when and where I feel it through material means, such as by applying the right stimulus to my body. The usefulness of some tool is bound to its material state; I feel the usefulness of a working car, but not of a broken car. These values guide us the least in discovering the way the world is, because they tell me more about myself than about the world. The feelings of these values are very similar to the minimally intentional feeling-states. Nevertheless, the feeling of these values is an important aspect of self-sensing.⁴⁶⁷

At a higher level on the hierarchy are what Scheler calls "vital values" (*Vitalwerte*), including the values of health and disease, strength and weakness, the noble (*edel*) and the ignoble (*gemein*). For example, when watching an athlete, one feels his or her strength and vitality. When walking in the mountains, one feels the vitality of the surrounding landscape. When with someone to whom one is erotically attracted, one feels his or her attractiveness. These values have to do with our organic instincts or drives (*Triebe, Dräng*) to flourish and

⁴⁶⁷ *F*, 105-106, 124-126, 585. cf. Alphons Deeken, *Process and Permanence in Ethics*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1974), 211; Nota, *Scheler*, 54.

propagate ourselves. Our drives respond to the vital values we feel by moving us to seek or avoid the things that bear these values insofar as these things are felt to be dangerous or beneficial to us as organisms. These feelings can be felt with other human persons or with non-human organisms in what Scheler calls a “community of life” (*Lebensgemeinschaft*) wherein one feels a shared sense of vitality and strength, such as when one plays a sport with others.⁴⁶⁸

Each modality of value reveals other persons in a distinct way. Through the lowest modality of values, others are presented to me as sources of stimuli to pleasure or pain, or as useful for reaching my goals. If I only feel these values in other persons, I only attend to them as material, sensible objects capable of producing certain effects, without experiencing being in community with them. Through vital values, others are presented to me as human organisms experiencing drives along with me. This sort of community is experienced in, for example, sex, sports, dances, pagan religious events, rock concerts, and political mobs in which everyone feels caught up in the group spirit. Feeling the world primarily in terms of vital values leads to a loss of a sense of one’s individuality and an increase in the experience of having drives in common with others. Being in a community of life is essential for “sympathizing” with others, including non-human organisms, for caring for them, and for having ecological concern.⁴⁶⁹

Each modality of value also reveals some aspect of ourselves. The lowest modality calls our attention to particular parts of our bodies. Vital values reveal our whole bodies; my feeling of my health or strength is not the sum of particular feelings of agreeability all over my body. My vital value is given as a unique kind of value, irreducible to lower kinds. Through vital values, organisms are presented to us as wholes irreducible to their parts.⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ *R*, 126-143; *F*, 106-107, 277-280, 336, 585-588. cf. Deeken, *Process*, 210.

⁴⁶⁹ *CHB*, 167-170, 230-232, 302, 405-406; *FKV*, 54-81; *F*, 526-528, 548.

⁴⁷⁰ *F*, 86, 413; *CHB*, 151-152; *MPN*, 42, 73.

The feeling of higher values lasts longer than the feeling of lower values. A sense of strength or weakness is more permanent than a feeling of pleasure or pain; I can feel an overall sense of strength even though I also feel pain in some part of my body or for some period of time. The feeling of higher values varies less than lower and is more satisfying. To feel and respond to a vital value, for instance by pursuing excellence at some sport, is more satisfying than a momentary sense of pleasure.⁴⁷¹

A third modality of values, which Scheler calls “spiritual values” (*geistigen Werte*), is felt in relation to our rationality. They include justice (*Gerechtigkeit*) and injustice (*Ungerechtigkeit*), beauty (*Schönheit*) and ugliness (*Hässlichkeit*), truth (*Wahrheit*) and falsity (*Falschheit*). Feeling of these values guides our reflective ethical action, artistic pursuits, and intellectual inquiry into the essences of things by calling our attention to what is important in these domains.⁴⁷² It is only because we can feel these spiritual values that the lower two modalities of value have the importance that they do for us. If we were not led to think about the world, lower values would not be important to us in the reflective way in which they are. We would just feel them without thinking about them. For this reason, those who subordinate spiritual values to lower values, using thought only to bring about greater pleasure or vitality, contradict the proper order of values. Spiritual values call us to sacrifice realizing lower values for the sake of higher values. For example, we cannot ethically bring about biological flourishing at the expense of the realization of justice in society. If we were to sacrifice a higher value for the sake of a lower, we would not be properly responding to or realizing either sort of value, even though focusing on higher values means less of our attention is devoted to lower.⁴⁷³ We can use our vitality to realize

⁴⁷¹ *F*, 90-97, 338-342; *MPN*, 28-29.

⁴⁷² *F*, 107-108.

⁴⁷³ *F*, 95-96, 288, 342; *R*, 108-110. cf. Frings, *Person und Dasein*, (The Hague: Nijhoff,

spiritual values; for example, we can use our biological strength to accomplish ethical goals.⁴⁷⁴

The choice to realize one value over another is an important part of each person's history.

Ideally, I should experience myself as on a journey from being wrapped up with lower values to being focused on realizing higher values.⁴⁷⁵

Spiritual values call our attention more about the world than the lower modalities of value, such as to the essences of thing. They reveal others to be rational, ethical agents, with whom we can set up long-lasting rational and ethical communities, such as nation-states, universities, and charitable institutions. These communities are directed towards realizing spiritual values, but they require the feeling and realizing of vital values as well, so that there can be sympathetic bonds among the members of the community.⁴⁷⁶

The highest values are "religious values" (*religiöse Werte*), holiness (*heilige Werte*) and unholiness (*profane Werte*), which are felt through "bliss" (*Seligkeit*) and "despair" (*Verzweiflung*). These values are felt to belong to what Scheler calls the "Absolute" (*die Absolute*), the "religious", or the "divine". We feel ourselves to be contingent, dependent on something beyond us. In feeling these values, we experience our lives and the whole world to be unified. Many people experience the Absolute as a person, God. But others experience the Absolute as empty, or as identical to the world or to the self. Scheler argues that each of us, whether we believe in God or are atheists, feels the world in relation to the "Absolute", to some ultimate foundation for or conception of the world. Our fundamental feeling of bliss and despair, our feeling the holiness or unholiness of the Absolute, is the feeling that is least subject to change and that orients all of our other experiences. Changing it requires a conversion of my entire

1969), 14.

⁴⁷⁴ *MPN*, 54-55.

⁴⁷⁵ *F*, 503, 519-523; *R*, 27-57; *MPN*, 66.

⁴⁷⁶ *F*, 84-85, 96-97, 109-110, 342, 512, 519.

worldview. Because we can feel these values, we can consider the world as a whole and so transcend it. Other values only take on their full significance in relation to the Absolute.⁴⁷⁷ When feeling these values, one relates to the world as a person, which Scheler holds is a higher way of relating to the world than as an organism or an intellect; to be a person is to be a free subject of acts which transcends the world and which can never be objectified, only experienced from a first-person perspective.⁴⁷⁸ Through this modality of value we can join in a community of free persons who transcend the world and feel the Absolute, such as a religion.⁴⁷⁹

I.B. SPHERES AND LAYERS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

As we have seen, these values call our attention to aspects of our experience of ourselves and of the world. Things in the world are given to us experientially in terms of “spheres” (*Sphäre*) that are relative to “layers” or “regions” of consciousness.⁴⁸⁰ As with many aspects of Scheler’s phenomenology, what these are must be grasped through examples; ‘sphere’ resists strict definition. Sense perceived things are given in the sphere of the “outer world”, imagined images and concepts in the sphere of the “inner world”. Some things, such as my friends, are given in the sphere of “other persons”, and other things, such as my body, are given in the sphere of what is “mine”. God or the absence of God is given in the sphere of the “Absolute”. These

⁴⁷⁷ *F*, 108-110, 294-295, 342-343, 585; *OEM*, 163, 167-168, 187, 196-197, 250-251; *MPN*, 88-89; “Absolutsphäre und Realsetzung der Gottesidee”, in *Schriften aus dem Nachlass*, b.1, (Bern: Francke, 1957), 201-202.

⁴⁷⁸ *F*, 380-383, 390-396, 563; *OEM*, 182-194; *MPN*, 36-40. cf. Spader, *Personalism*, 103-106

⁴⁷⁹ *OEM*, 205-211.

⁴⁸⁰ *F*, 143-144; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 300-303; *CPN*, 113-115; *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*, 70-71, cited in Frings, *Mind*, 126-127. cf. White, “Scheler’s Tripartite Anthropology”, *Proceedings of the ACPA 75* (2002): 255-266. ‘Sphere’, ‘layer’, and ‘region’ all are used by different commentators to translate ‘*Sphäre*’, again in an attempt to capture what Scheler means by this term in as natural an English idiom as possible. ‘Sphere’ and ‘region’ capture the idea that things are given as belonging to different parts of the world: for example, some things are given as belonging to the external world, other things are given as belonging to the internal world of the imagination. ‘Layer’ captures the idea that consciousness has constituent aspects, such as consciousness of the body and of the mind.

“spheres” are a framework for experience; everything that I experience fits into one of them and things have meaning and importance only through fitting into a sphere.⁴⁸¹ I can “mis-experience” something by experiencing it in a sphere into which it does not properly belong. For example, I can experience an imagined image in the sphere of the “outer world” and so hallucinate it.⁴⁸² Some of these spheres are ordered to others in certain ways. For example, Scheler argues that we can only experience the sphere of “mineness” if we have first experienced the sphere of “other persons”; an infant comes to experience him or herself as an individual separate from others only on the basis of having experienced his or her mother, or some other person, first.⁴⁸³

I.B.1. LIVED BODY

Each of these spheres corresponds to a “layer” or “region” of human consciousness, each of which is given experientially in some way in self-sensing; what these are will be made clear through examples. Each of these layers accompanies or is an aspect of all of our experiences.⁴⁸⁴ In Scheler’s descriptions, self-sensing corresponds most to the layer of consciousness that he calls the “lived body” (*Leib*). ‘Lived body’ refers to the sensory experience of my body as a whole “from within” which I nearly always have and which is a necessary condition for most of my other experiences. It is a sense of the position of my limbs and their relation to one another and to the surrounding environment.⁴⁸⁵ Feeling vital values first calls my attention to my lived body.⁴⁸⁶ I feel that my body has vital values, such as strength and weakness, and that it has, responding to such values, drives directed towards biological ends, such as drives to flourish,

⁴⁸¹ *F*, 100-104. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 125-129.

⁴⁸² “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 304-307.

⁴⁸³ *F*, 101; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 303; *FKV*, 63.

⁴⁸⁴ For good overview of the layers of human consciousness and self-experience see Sanford, “Scheler vs. Scheler”; White, “Tripartite Anthropology”. Each of the four phenomenological accounts I shall consider in this study includes some notion of layers of consciousness.

⁴⁸⁵ *F*, 144, 398-399; *MPN*, 73.

⁴⁸⁶ *F*, 286-289, 338-339. cf. Frings, *Person und Dasein*, 14.

drives for sex, food, and a vital sense of being with others. I experience these drives as interior “energy” pushing me towards such a goal.⁴⁸⁷

The self-sensing experience that is the layer of consciousness called ‘lived body’ is a sensing of the body as a whole and is not reducible to experiences of sensations of particular parts of my body. I do not add up the pleasures, pains, and kinaesthetic sensations that I feel at any given moment to yield the sense of the lived body. Rather, the unified self-sensed lived body layer of consciousness underlies and allows for the experience of discrete sensations “on” that body.⁴⁸⁸ I only have sensations of particular parts of my bodies and I am only able to locate these sensations “on” my body because I first have a sense of the body as a whole.⁴⁸⁹ Through the lived body I sense my body as a whole and through particular kinaesthetic sensations I sense my particular body parts to some extent, even though I am not, from this “inner” perspective, aware of the exact shape, position, or nature of these parts.⁴⁹⁰

This unified sense of the body allows me to move my body without needing to think about or calculate the exact position of each limb; I experience my body as an “immediate region of control”, where I can be affected through sensation and feeling, and where I can effect movements.⁴⁹¹ The experience of the lived body can be described as an experience of a “schema” of one’s body; this is not a mental or imagined image of one’s body, but a constant sense of the position and powers of one’s body.⁴⁹² Indeed, this self-sensed schema is generally not something that I am explicitly aware of; I “live” in my body without focusing my attention on it, though this experience is constantly present underlying all of my actions. In my natural everyday experience,

⁴⁸⁷ *F*, 131-132; *MPN*, 9.

⁴⁸⁸ *F*, 402-203; *MPN*, 11

⁴⁸⁹ “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 338; *MPN*, 42.

⁴⁹⁰ *F*, 339.

⁴⁹¹ *F*, 130-132; “Three Facts”, in *SPE*, 261-262; *CHB*, 170

⁴⁹² *F*, 417-418; *MPN*, 40.

Scheler says, I am explicitly aware of doing things like putting on my clothes and driving a car; I am not explicitly aware of the particular motions that it takes to accomplish these tasks. The underlying lived body experience facilitates my everyday experience, but reflection is needed for me to become explicitly aware of this constant underlying self-sensing.⁴⁹³ The experience of the body as a dynamic whole moving and developing in a unified way also gives rise to my sense of time. Without the lived body, my experience of the passage of time would be very different than it is or nonexistent. The body provides a sense of stability to the passage of time, which we would not have if we were pure minds or collections of sensations or material parts.⁴⁹⁴

I sense myself as a lived body in relation to the sphere of the “environment” (*Umwelt*), the world insofar as it is given through vital values to my biological drives. In this sphere things appear to me as complexes of properties which contribute to or take away from the fulfillment of my biological drives and which I can affect through physical manipulation; in this sphere of experience, things are not distinguished in a reflective way, but only insofar as they are significant to my vitality.⁴⁹⁵ My experience of the world and of my body as extended in space is dependent on my experience of the relations between my lived body and the environment. This experience of spatiality depends on my experience of being able to move my body. Other senses of space, such as that given visually, presuppose the experience of spatiality given through the motions of my lived body in the environment.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹³ *F*, 132; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 351-352.

⁴⁹⁴ *F*, 418-421; *CHB*, 292-293, 302-303; *MPN*, 51-52.

⁴⁹⁵ *F*, 148, 398-403; *MPN*, 37-38. cf. Kelly, *Scheler*, 46; *Structure*, 28

⁴⁹⁶ *F*, 131, 417; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 331-337. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 186-188; Nota, *Scheler*, 106

I.B.2. RESISTANCE AND THE BODY-THING

The self-sensed lived body layer of consciousness is a necessary condition for the experience of the reality (*Realität*) of things in the world. Not only are things complexes of values and essences, the former accessible to intentional feeling and the latter accessible to intellectual intention, but things exist in reality, as opposed to just having ideal existence in the mind. The reality of a thing, as Scheler understands it, is not reducible to its essence or value. We also do not just habitually and unreflectively assume that things are real, as Husserl thought. Since it refers to a non-essential aspect of things, ‘reality’, like ‘value’, cannot be strictly defined. The reality of a thing is experienced through its “resistance” (*Widerstand*) to a drive or to one’s willed effort.⁴⁹⁷ One aspect of the lived body is the experience of being able to exert “effort” (*Mühe*) through one’s drives and the physical structures of one’s body. When this effort is resisted, we experience, in an unconceptualizable way, the real existence of that which resists us. The experience of being resisted is not reducible to experiences of tactile pressure, but is an experience of a resisting response by a real thing to one’s total effort exerted as a unified organism. Although this resistance is experienced in the self-sensed lived body, it is experienced as coming from outside the body; the existing thing is given as an “effective presence” (*Wirklichkeitscharakter*) able to affect me causally.⁴⁹⁸ The experience of self-sensing or of the lived body is “ecstatic” (*ekstatische*), that is, it reaches beyond experiences just of the body to include experiences of real things other than oneself.⁴⁹⁹

In the self-sensing that is the lived body layer of consciousness, one also experiences the real existence of one’s own body. Whenever one moves one’s body, it is experienced both as

⁴⁹⁷ *F*, 136; “Three Facts”, in *SPE*, 263; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 317-322; *OEM*, 220-221. cf. Kelly, *Structure*, 160-161.

⁴⁹⁸ “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 323.

⁴⁹⁹ *MPN*, 39-41; *CHB*, 77-81

resisting one's effort and as able to be moved immediately from within. There is an aspect of experienced materiality and "dead weight" to the body that must be overcome in order to move it. I do not just experience my body "from within" as a lived body, but I also experience it "from without" as a "body-thing" (*Körper*), examinable by myself or others, for example, through sense perception and medical examinations.⁵⁰⁰ In sensing its resistance and in examining it from without, the body is given as a physical body like other physical bodies, subject to the forces and laws that govern these bodies, such as gravity and decay.⁵⁰¹ Yet my "lived body" and my "body-thing" are not experientially given to me as two completely separate things, as if I had to infer that they are in fact the same thing. Rather, the interconnection between these two ways in which my body is given is also immediately given in experience. Like Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, Scheler considers the experience of touching one body part with another. When I touch one hand to another, I experience each hand partly as belonging to my lived body layer of consciousness and partly as belonging to my "body-thing" layer, but these two layers of the experience are given as essentially interconnected and inseparable in the one experience.⁵⁰² The human person is "given to itself a second time": both as an existing body and as a body conscious of itself.⁵⁰³

In all sensations, I both sense a "thing" (*Sache*) in the external world and have a lived body experience, the experience of an impression of the thing in an organ of my body. The two aspects of the experience of sensation—the one "in" me and the other "outside" me—are presented as connected, the former a "symbol" of the latter, referring me out into the world to the thing that has caused this lived impression. The self-sensing of the lived body is a necessary condition for all my other sense-perceptual experiences: if I did not sense my own body, I could

⁵⁰⁰ *F*, 399-400.

⁵⁰¹ *F*, 132, 136; *CHB*, 164.

⁵⁰² *F*, 68, 153, 400-401.

⁵⁰³ *MPN*, 42

not sense anything else.⁵⁰⁴

“Subjective” and “objective” experiences of my body are thus immediately connected. Indeed, even scientific information about the body can become interconnected with my “subjective” experiences of the lived body. When I have a stomachache, for example, I feel my stomach in a vague and inchoate way. But when I gain some medical knowledge about the stomach, this knowledge can become “functionalized” (*funktionalisierten*) in my further experiences of stomachaches. In the experience of functionalized knowledge, previously “objective” or scientific knowledge comes to inform my “subjective” lived experience such that I come to experience the world through the functionalized knowledge. In the example above, once I functionalize my scientific knowledge of the structure and position of the stomach, I will from then on experience stomachaches in terms of my medical knowledge of the organ.⁵⁰⁵ The lived body is both affected by and underlies scientific knowledge about the body. We cannot understand life without the interior experience of our drives. A physical and chemical description of our bodies cannot account for our feeling of being alive. It cannot account for the way in which the physical structures of our body-thing are automatically taken by us to “refer” to experienced structures in our lived body.⁵⁰⁶

I.B.3. EGO AND SPIRITUAL PERSONHOOD

Though we can isolate and consider on their own lived body experiences, we normally do not have pure lived body experiences. Rather, even in self-sensing, other layers of consciousness are in play, as can be seen in “functionalized” experience, which is affected by the layer of the “ego” or the “psychic” (*psychisch*) sphere. This is our way of relating to the world through

⁵⁰⁴ *F*, 58, 417.

⁵⁰⁵ *F*, 403; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 312-313; *OEM*, 203. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 60; Kelly, *Scheler*, 44-46; *Structure*, 85

⁵⁰⁶ “Three Facts”, in *SPE* 206; *CHB*, 147.

“spiritual values” as intelligible. Whereas at the level of the lived body I sense myself as an organism sharing the feeling of life with other organisms, at the level of the ego I experience myself as an individual self.⁵⁰⁷ In “psychic” experiences, the world is presented not as an “environment” relating to our biological drives but as an “outer world” (*Außenwelt*) of intelligible things relating to the “inner world” (*Innerwelt*) of ideas that is the self-experience of the ego.⁵⁰⁸ In normal ego-experiences, however, we do not just experience ourselves as a region of ideas, but, at the same time, we experience the “lived body” and relate to the world both as an environment and as an outer world, and in relation to other people.⁵⁰⁹ Scheler calls this the experience of the body in relation to the mental experience of the ego the “ego-body” (*Leib-Ich*). Since at the layer of the ego one is focused on ideas and the world as intelligible, the body in relation to the ego is experienced as on the periphery of one’s conscious attention, and especially as that through which one receives the sensations and values about which one thinks.

We experience our bodies not only in terms of biological drives and vital values, but also as organized in terms of thought. For example, we sense our heads as the “place” where thinking goes on; the ego is always experienced as embodied.⁵¹⁰ But we can become so focused on vital experience that we no longer relate to the world as a self-consciously individual thinking ego, as when we are swept up experientially in a life-community or when we are overly fatigued. We can also become so focused on ideas that we lose some of our consciousness as a body, though we never entirely lose the self-sensing of the lived body. Our self-awareness “oscillates” between “ego” lived body self-experiences, though all experiences involve both layers to some degree.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁷ *F*, 374-382.

⁵⁰⁸ *F*, 144.

⁵⁰⁹ *F*, 397.

⁵¹⁰ *F*, 420; *CHB*, 220-221.

⁵¹¹ *F*, 411, 420

Strictly speaking, Scheler thinks, I, a free person, cannot be identified with either the ego or the lived body. I can consider each of these “spheres” as intentional objects. They are ways in which I am conscious of myself and through which I am conscious of my surroundings.⁵¹² But I, a free person, am always the subject of my intentional acts and I am always prior to my experiences, both mental and bodily. Whatever experiences I have and acts I commit, I do not change insofar as I remain the free subject of all these acts. I cannot consider myself as an intentional object, since I am always the subject of my intentional acts. The “spirit” (*Geist*) or “person” (*Person*) layer of consciousness, Scheler contends, is a pure subject of acts; he or she is the one that thinks, feels, and acts. I can never examine myself or another person, as person, as an object, as something observable or conceptualizable, though I can do this with my own and others’ egos and lived bodies.⁵¹³ But I can be completely aware of myself as a personal subject of acts through reflection upon my acts.⁵¹⁴ I can relate to other persons as persons through love or hate, being open or being closed to everything that the other person is.⁵¹⁵ I reveal myself as a person to myself and to others through my acts, including through my acts of self-sensing which accompany all my experiences.⁵¹⁶ I experience self-sensing not just as an isolated experience of a lived body, or of a lived body connected to an ego, but as a unified experience that is mine, in which I also experience myself as a free person.

Persons transcend ego and lived body relations to the world and the environment. According to Scheler, what it is to be a human person, at least experientially speaking, is to be a living thing that also transcends life and its drives. Persons also transcend the entire world; we

⁵¹² *F*, 386.

⁵¹³ *F*, 386-393.

⁵¹⁴ *MPN*, 40.

⁵¹⁵ *F*, 488; *FKV*, 72-74.

⁵¹⁶ *F*, 393-397, 477; *MPN*, 39.

are able to consider anything in the world and the world as a whole. This “world” (*Welt*) includes all the spheres given through lower values, such as the “outer world”, the “inner world”, and the “environment”. To be a person is to be able to relate to the world as a whole in light of the Absolute sphere, that is, through “religious” values. Though I always experience the world as a subject, I am not always reflectively aware of my personhood; quite often I am caught up in bodily or mental experiences. To realize that I am a person requires that I experience myself in a “religious” way, as having an “absoluteness” or similarity to the Absolute insofar as I transcend the world and am the master of all my acts. In experiencing myself as a person, I feel both my own absoluteness and my dependence on the Absolute.⁵¹⁷

Scheler, problematically, thinks that we directly experience the Absolute and even directly intuit that this sphere is occupied by a personal God. This indicates a problem that runs through each of the phenomenologists: the tendency to think that a metaphysics or a theology can be directly read off of one’s experience, without the need for metaphysical or theological reasoning about experience.⁵¹⁸ Each of the phenomenologists whom I consider here tends to do this; this leads to conflicting metaphysics, because each phenomenologist focuses on different aspects of experience. The accounts of experience in each phenomenologist’s work must be separated from the potentially problematic metaphysics. I think that Scheler is correct to say, for the reasons that have been given, that we do experience ourselves, including in self-sensing, as

⁵¹⁷ *OEM*, 193-194; *MPN*, 92-93. The feeling of the Absolute sphere is entirely different from the belief or knowledge that there is a God. Scheler argues that persons would feel the Absolute sphere as a sphere of consciousness even if there were no real God. One would still feel one’s transcendence over the world, the contingency of the world and of oneself, and the world’s and one’s own dependency on the Absolute sphere. If there is, in fact, no God, then this will ultimately yield an experience of the absurdity of the world and one’s own existence, insofar as it is given as dependent on something higher, but without there being anything higher for it to be dependent on.

⁵¹⁸ cf. *OEM*, 183-186; *CHB*, 64-65.

transcending the world, but also as dependent on something Absolute greater than ourselves. He errs in thinking that we directly intuit God, and he provides not good reasons to think that ever do this. At any rate, the question of such an experience is not my concern here; my interest here is solely in the role that the experience of being a person plays in self-sensing.

In all the layers of consciousness, I experience myself in the context of history and a community, and as both an individual and as a member of a community. Other persons are always “with” me, not in the sense of being spatially close to me, but in the sense of being felt as close, as conditioning who I am. As we have seen, each modality of value is felt in relation to other persons; the world is not just a world of things and values, but a “world of persons with whom I exist” (*Mitwelt*) and who are given as having a greater ethical claim on me than I have on myself.⁵¹⁹ As a person, I feel myself as transcending the bodily world into a community of solidarity with other free persons. In addition, I experience the history and tradition of which I am a part not purely as a deterministic force that I cannot resist, but as existing for the sake of facilitating the freedom of persons. I experience myself as historical, but also as transcending history by my freedom and my capacity to experience the highest values with others.⁵²⁰ Even in my lived body self-sensing I feel my freedom, historicity, and communality with others, since all my experiences include my personhood. My drives and ability to exert effort are conditioned by my biological and personal history, but they are also at the disposal of my freedom.

Just as with the relationship between the ego and the lived body, my experience oscillates between the level of the person and that of the lived body. Sometimes I am experientially wrapped up in lived body experiences, and I am less aware of myself as a free subject. For example, I might become completely absorbed in some activity of physical exertion or in trying

⁵¹⁹ *F*, 101

⁵²⁰ *F*, 505, 519-520.

to gratify my sexual drive, and so lose my awareness that I can transcend my drives and freely use them rather than be mastered by them. At other times, I am more fully self-conscious and have greater control over my lived body through effective and deliberate action.⁵²¹

I.B.4. SPIRIT AND LIFE

Running through all these layers of consciousness is an experienced duality, felt in being a person who also has, as his or her “own”, a lived body. Our experiences of ourselves divide into the three layers of lived body, ego, and spirit, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a duality of “mind and life”. These are two different frameworks in terms of which our experience can be understood.⁵²² On the one hand, I relate to the world and feel myself and others in terms of biological drives (*Dräng*) and the resistance of reality. On the other hand, I relate to the world as a free “spirit” or “mind” (*Geist*), freely acting, intuiting essences, and feeling values. Each of these experienced principles requires the other: I cannot intuit essences without the sense of energy provided by my drives, and I cannot freely focus my drives in a personal, moral, and intellectually purposeful way without my spirit. All of my experiences of myself include these two fundamental layers.⁵²³

These two layers reveal the ways in which I am similar to and different from non-human things. Insofar as my experience is based in drives, I am similar to other organisms, and even to inorganic, which present themselves as made up of “points of energy” and which “drive” out into the world to interact with other points of energy. The material structure of all material things is organized to facilitate their drives, the ways they move and exert themselves in the world. But insofar as we are capable of personal acts, we are entirely different from other things: insofar as

⁵²¹ *F*, 479-481.

⁵²² *CHB*, 154.

⁵²³ *OEM*, 183-184; *MPN*, 65-68; *CHB*, 328-331, 401-406. cf. Spader, *Personalism*, 184-187.

we are persons, we transcend the world through knowledge, love, and free action, we are capable of complete self-consciousness, and we can refuse to act just on the basis of our drives. Insofar as we are spirits, we experience a similarity to the Absolute sphere felt to be “above” us.⁵²⁴ As incorporating both spirit and life, we thus experience ourselves as “microcosms”, bearing a similarity to every other sort of thing there is.⁵²⁵

Scheler holds to two questionable positions on these principles of mind and life. First, he argues that our entire experience can be reduced to these two experiential layers. Thus other layers of experience previously described, such as our experiences of ourselves as “body-things” or as “egos” are reduced to interactions between our experiences of ourselves as drives and as spirits. Although such a reduction may explain certain aspects of these other layers, it also eliminates what is distinctive about them, such as the fact that we experience our bodies not just in terms of active drives, but as inert extended matter as well. With this reduction, the experience of the extension of matter is explained away as an application of mental ideas to drives. This leads to the second questionable position: phenomenological reductionism is converted into an ontological reductionism. Scheler argues that all that exists is Being, which has at least two attributes, life and mind. All seemingly particular things are just aspects of Being. Our similarity to other things is reduced to an ontological identity with them insofar as we are all expressions of the attributes of Being. While Scheler argues that the presence of both of these principles in us allows us to reject idealist and materialist accounts of the person, he turns to a pantheism that combines idealism and panzoism.⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴ *MPN*, 41-49.

⁵²⁵ *F*, 396-398; *MPN*, 42-43.

⁵²⁶ These reductionisms are presented throughout *MPN*, and especially in the essay “On the Theory of the Causes of Everything” in *CHB*, 323-366. On Scheler’s arguments against materialism and idealism as accounts of what we are see: *CHB*, 154-162; *MPN*, 88-95.

The problems here are the same as when Scheler directly read off a theology from our experience. These problems show up again with the other phenomenologists, so we must be on guard against them. The source of these problems is to so focus on one small set of experiences as to reduce all other experiences to that set, thus obscuring unique features of other experiences. It is assumed, without reason, that if one experience is a necessary condition for or “constitutes” or “founds” another experience, the founded experience can be entirely reduced to the founding experience. This obscures the wonderful complexity of experience that our lives display. Foundational experiences are then taken to indicate directly what things are ontologically or metaphysically; since everything is given to us experientially, foundational experiences indicate the foundations of everything. This shows an idealist tendency among phenomenologists.

But this is to fail to consider the methods of reasoning necessary for getting at the structure of the world. For example, scientific experience is phenomenologically founded on perceptual experience. But this does not entail that metaphysically the structure of the world as discovered by science is reducible to the structure of the world given in normal perception. To say that it is so reducible, as some phenomenologists say, is to confuse methodologies: there is no reason to assume that the method pertinent to clarifying the structure of experience is the right method for discovering the fundamental structure of the world. As I shall argue more in the section on Levinas, human reason is capable of discovering the real structure of the world, but through non-phenomenological methods. Still, metaphysical reasoning must use evidence, which phenomenology can provide. The important things to keep in mind is that the methods of the two disciplines are different, that we cannot directly draw a metaphysics from a phenomenology, and that we cannot eliminate all our myriad experiences in favor of just a few experiences.

I.C. NATURAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE

As Christoph Moonen has pointed out, Scheler focuses on immediate experience.⁵²⁷ Scheler seeks to return us to an experience of what is “self-given” and “uncontrollable”, rather than what is given indirectly and in a controllable way, as in scientific concepts or mathematical symbols.⁵²⁸ Moonen objects that in our experience, we rarely have purely immediate experiences. Rather, our experience generally includes what he calls a “cogital reserve” or “minimal reflection”; we experience ourselves at some distance from our feeling and sensing, alienated in some sense from ourselves. This allows us to reflect on ourselves. This lack of immediate experience, Moonen contends, should affect how we think about what it is to be bodily.⁵²⁹

But Scheler’s position is more complex than Moonen allows. Scheler does think that our everyday experience of the world and ourselves, as well as the scientific experience of the world and ourselves, do involve this involve distance or alienation from ourselves, not immediate intuition. We experience pure values and essences as “symbolized” and “mediated” by words, images, customs, interests, and so forth.⁵³⁰ We sense our bodies, but we are also at some distance from them; we experience our self-sensing and our functionalized knowledge, for example, to be interconnected and mediating one another.⁵³¹ As persons, we experience ourselves at some distance from our bodies, even while we have the experience of self-sensing “internally” the drives of the lived body. We can, through reflection, come to intuit what is immediately given in experience, though in our everyday experience we are not aware of this. The phenomenological

⁵²⁷ Moonen, “Immediacy”, 413.

⁵²⁸ Scheler, “Phenomenology and the Theory of Cognition”, in *SPE*, 138, 161.

⁵²⁹ Moonen, “Immediacy”, 413.

⁵³⁰ Scheler, “Phenomenology and the Theory of Cognition”, in *SPE*, 143-145. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 184; Kelly, *Structure*, 16-18.

⁵³¹ Kelly, *Structure*, 32.

attitude, the attempt to clarify our experience and return us to the self-given sources of experience, is meant to pry beneath the natural and scientific attitudes. This attitude involves, as John Nota puts it, a “surrender” to the things themselves, so as to experience them most immediately, as they give themselves in our experience, prior to all reflection and all their various interconnections in our everyday experience.⁵³² In this way we can understand the structure of our experience and we can clarify what acts human persons are capable of.⁵³³

Scheler distinguishes three methods for clarifying the structure of our experience. One is the “scientific reduction” (*wissenschaftliche Reduktion*), in which we consider the world insofar as it is controllable by us; this method need not concern us here, because Scheler does not think it can reveal the foundations of our experience. A second method is the “phenomenological reduction” (*phänomenologische Reduktion*);⁵³⁴ here we disregard the reality of things and focus on their essences. We ignore or abstract from experiences of self-sensing, the lived body, and vital values, considering only the human essence and its spiritual and religious values. A third method is the “Dionysian reduction” (*dionysische Reduktion*). Here we set aside all consideration of essence and focus just on the experience of drives, the vital experience of self-sensing, and the sympathetic experience of communities of life.⁵³⁵ The fact that we can reduce our experience in

⁵³² Nota, *Scheler*, 32.

⁵³³ *MPN*, 5-9. cf. Frings, *Mind*, 254.

⁵³⁴ This use of the term ‘phänomenologische’ is somewhat misleading, since Scheler holds that both this reduction and the third reduction, the “Dionysian” reduction are performed by the phenomenologist who seeks to get at the immediately given foundations of experience. Thus we must distinguish the “phenomenological reduction” (*phänomenologische Reduktion*) as a method for considering essences, from the phenomenological attitude (*phänomenologische Haltung*) which seeks to discover and re-experience the immediately self-given foundations of natural or everyday experience, and does so through both the phenomenological and the Dionysian reductions.

⁵³⁵ The three reductions are presented in *CHB*, 99-100, 401-403. These ideas are also spelled out in much greater detail throughout “Theory of Cognition” and “Three Facts” in *SPE*. cf. Guido Cusinato, “Methode oder Techne? Ethic und Realität in der “phänomenologischen” Reduktion

both the “phenomenological” and in the “Dionysian” directions reveals the layers of “mind” and “life” that run through all our experiences.⁵³⁶

The experience of self-sensing, according to Scheler, thus involves several aspects, which can be separated and clarified through the phenomenological attitude. These aspects include the feeling of one’s vital value, in relation to hierarchy of values; the sensing of oneself as a whole organism, as a “lived body”, along with particular sensations located in that body, and an interconnection with one’s environment; the feeling of “drives” for biological goals and the ability to exert “effort”; a sense of the interconnection between the lived body and the body-thing; the experience of reality through resistance to effort and drives; the interconnections between one’s intellectual and personal experiences and one’s body. Each of these aspects accompanies all our other experiences. We must now turn to a different phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, for an account of this experience that in many ways builds on Scheler’s account, correcting flaws in it and developing its important themes.

II. MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

The experience of self-sensing (*se sentant, l’auto-perception*) is central to Merleau-Ponty’s account of our experience. As we saw in Chapter One, Merleau-Ponty argues that we fundamentally experience the world as made up of unified forms or *Gestalten*. These are organized in terms of a focal “figure” (*figure*) set against a “background” or “context” (*fond*).⁵³⁷ For example, the computer screen at which I am now looking appears against the background of and in the context of the surrounding desk; I think about Merleau-Ponty against the background

Max Schelers”, in Christian Bermes, Wolfhart Henckmann, and Heinz Leonardy, eds., *Denken des Ursprungs, Ursprung des Denkens*, (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1998), 83; Frings, *Mind*, 192; Nota, *Scheler*, 154.

⁵³⁶ *CHB*, 87.

⁵³⁷ *SB* 136-137; *PP*, 4-8, 55, 116-117; *VI*, 204-206.

of other associated ideas. Nothing ever appears isolated; everything always appears in a structured relationship with its surroundings, which are not as the focus of my attention, but are given on the periphery of my attention.⁵³⁸ This is the case even in our experiences of ourselves. Underlying our focused reflection on ourselves, we have tacit experiences of self-sensing.⁵³⁹ The world is experienced as “meaningful” (*significative*), that is, coherent and cognizable, because it is structured as *Gestalten* and because it is experienced as harmonizing with our bodily powers.

II.A. BODILY AND PERCEPTUAL EXPERIENCES

Examinations of both normal and pathological experience allow us to see how physical structures and phenomenal experiences are closely interrelated and mutually influence one another. Neither mechanistic physicalism nor idealism can explain the world as it is given to us. Rather, there is an interconnection or “intertwining” (*l’entrelacs*) between the subjective or phenomenal (*phénoménale*) aspects of the world and the objective or scientifically examinable aspects.⁵⁴⁰ This intertwining, which, like much in phenomenology, must be grasped through examples, characterizes much of our experience: I sense the world, but I am a sensible thing in the world as well; I am spatially separated from things, but intentionally connected to them; I am in the world, but the world also comes to be in me intentionally. I, a subject, am given to myself against the objective background of the world; the world is given to me against the background of my self-sensing. I affect the world and it affects me. I harmonize with the world through movement and it harmonizes with my intentionality. Each aspect of intertwining is irreducible to the other aspects, but all the aspects together form a structured coherent whole. Figures and backgrounds can experientially switch places, the figure becoming the background and the

⁵³⁸ *PP*, 62; *VI*, 12, 21.

⁵³⁹ *PP*, 347; *VI*, 145.

⁵⁴⁰ *PP*, 503; *VI*, 49, 133-136.

background becoming the figure, in what Merleau-Ponty calls the “chiasm” (*chiasma*). This figure-background *Gestalt* structure, applied to the subjective and objective aspects of the world as it is given to me, is what Merleau-Ponty means by “intertwining”.⁵⁴¹

II.A.1. THE TACIT *COGITO*

Merleau-Ponty develops a description of the “lived body” further than Scheler did. I have a holistic awareness of my body “from the inside”, which is not derived from particular tactile, kinaesthetic, or proprioceptive sensations, but which underlies and allows for these.⁵⁴² This is an experience of my “body schema” (*schéma corporel*), whereby I tacitly “know” where my limbs are at all times and whereby I am able to exert effort in my body.⁵⁴³ This “schema” is not an imagined or conceptual representation of my body that I must think about in order to move and sense. Rather, it is a non-represented “tacit” (*tacite*) self-sensing of my body; it is “tacit” because it is never normally the focus of my attention, but is a way of being self-aware that underlies my more attentive acts, being experienced peripherally or in the background. I sense my body as having various powers of self-movement, various ways in which I can insert myself into the

⁵⁴¹ *VI*, 130-138. Merleau-Ponty revised his position on this experience frequently over the course of his lifetime. My concern here is not to review that development, but to present a systematic account of self-sensing as he described it, unifying his various discussions on this theme which interested him throughout his career. On this development and the possibility of a systematic presentation of his work see Alphonso Lingis, “Translator’s Preface” to *VI*, liii-liv; Joseph Margolis, “Phenomenology and Metaphysics: Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty”, in M.C. Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty Vivant* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 168.

⁵⁴² *PP*, 63-64, 89-92, 108-111; *VI*, 230-234. cf. Shusterman, “Body”, 151-152; Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 94-95. Merleau-Ponty uses two phrases to refer to the lived body, ‘*corps vécu*’ and ‘*corps vivant*’ to emphasize that the lived body layer of experience includes both a passive sense of one’s body, the “lived” (*vécu*) body, and an active sense of one’s power to move and exert oneself, the “living” (*vivant*) body; on this distinction see throughout Henri Fouda, *Corps vivant et corps vécu : Commentaire épistémique de la Phénoménologie de la perception de Merleau-Ponty*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2011), and Sara Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference*, (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), xxi.

⁵⁴³ *PP*, 113, 454, 511; *VI*, 189.

world.⁵⁴⁴ This is an experience of self which should not primarily be expressed as “*cogito*” or “I think”, but as “I can” (*je peux*); it is an experience of being able to perform a range of actions, and of having a range of powers for sensorimotor interaction with the world, though it is also an experience of the “resistance” of the body, and thus of its “materiality”.⁵⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty calls this experience the “tacit *cogito*” because it is a fundamental sort of self-awareness, as Descartes’ “*cogito*” experience is supposed to be.⁵⁴⁶

This tacit self-sensing is wrapped up with my movements. For example, when I reach out my hand to grasp my pen, I do not mentally calculate the angle of the trajectory of my hand or first imagine my hand moving toward the pen and then seek to reproduce in the world this image, nor do I experience my hand as an intentional object. Rather, I just reach out my hand shaped in such a way that it is able to grasp the pen. I am able to do this because of my body schema or non-intentional sense of my lived body, whereby I experience my hand as the bearer of a certain set of powers. I experience my hand as a structure that fits into the world in a particular way. The physical structures of my hand and the pen have “a vital value” (*une valeur vitale*) for me, that is, an importance and usefulness for my bodily powers.⁵⁴⁷ My hand and the pen are experienced together as *Gestalten*, as figures against the backgrounds of my body-schema and of the perceptual field of the world, and as structured in relation to one another.⁵⁴⁸ All the particular tactile and proprioceptive senses I have of my hand as it reaches for the pen, such as the senses of tension in my wrist and pressure on my fingers, are organized in terms of the sense of the

⁵⁴⁴ *PP*, 86-89; Hansen, “Embryology”, 249; Charles Siewert, “Attention and Sensorimotor Intentionality”, in Woodruff and Thomasson, *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*, 273.

⁵⁴⁵ *PP*, 159, 366, 511 *VI*, 38. cf. Hass, *Philosophy*, 85.

⁵⁴⁶ *PP*, 347, 429, 459, 467-468; *VI*, 145, 178. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 301; Dillon, *Ontology*, 160; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 35.

⁵⁴⁷ *PP*, 61, 91, 150-152, 169. cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 98.

⁵⁴⁸ *PP*, 118-120, 151-156. cf. Siewert, “Attention”, 287.

power of my hand and the holistic way in which it fits into my body schema and the world.⁵⁴⁹

Things outside my body are experienced first through the limits of my “sensorimotor” (*sensorimotrice*) self-sensed powers; I experience a boulder differently than I do a pen because I can move and use the latter but not the former. The world is primarily given to me as meaningful and cohering with my body through my powers, which I constantly tacitly sense.⁵⁵⁰

In addition to self-sensing my natural powers of movement, I also self-sense bodily “habits” or “skills” (*habitudes*). These are the bodily tendencies that I have acquired over the course of my life, which have shaped the natural powers of my body in various ways and which both facilitate my movement and impede other actions, thus channeling and limiting the free exercise of my natural self-sensed powers.⁵⁵¹ For example, I self-sense my hands not just as having natural powers to grasp and point, but also acquired habitual skills to type and write.

Alva Noë, in elaborating on the idea of the body schema, points that this sensing of our own bodies is fallible. On the one hand, I might experience artifacts that are not really parts of my body in my body schema. For example, if I was blind and used a cane to find my way as I walked, I might experience the cane as embodying some of my sensorimotor powers for interacting with the world, and I might even experience tactile perceptions “in” the cane. On the other hand, I might experience in my bodily schema “parts” that do not in fact exist, as in the case of “phantom limbs”. Amputees sometimes “feel” their amputated limbs, and have a sense of the powers that were embodied in that limb.⁵⁵² One might thus object that the bodily schema experience does not seem to tell us much about ourselves; it does not give us good evidence as to the boundaries of our body, for example. This, of course, is not my concern here, but to such an

⁵⁴⁹ *PP*, 107, 170, 173; *VI*, 133-135

⁵⁵⁰ *PP*, 158-164, 300-303, 339, 342, 511.

⁵⁵¹ *PP*, 95, 116, 164-166, 513. cf. Hubert Dreyfus, “Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science”, in *Cambridge Companion*, 145; Shusterman, “Body”, 164.

⁵⁵² Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, (

objection it can be responded that the experience of the body schema is just one kind of self-sensing, and it is interconnected to other kinds of self-sensing, which may present us with better evidence for answering such questions. Furthermore, and more importantly for my purposes in this study, the bodily schema experience does reveal our basic powers, and their interconnection with our materiality. This, as we shall see, is more important for the Thomistic account of what we are than is an answer to the question of what our physical boundaries are.

II.A.2. PERCEPTION

Sense perceptions of things in the world are also founded on the holistic experience of self-sensing, that is, the latter is a necessary condition for the former. For example, my vision is founded on my body accommodating itself to the world and in my overall sense of bodily power; seeing things requires that I move to take up the best relationship with the world for sense perception, often in very subtle and small ways, as in the slight movements of my eyes.⁵⁵³ I experience sense perceptions as meaningful and coherent because they take their place against the background of my experience of my lived body, and the experience of my body moving in and harmonizing with its surroundings. I can take up new perspectives on sensed things with my body, and my tacit self-sensing of this possibility leads to my sensory experience of the world.⁵⁵⁴ For example, I see things as three dimensional rather than just as a two-dimensional flux of color in part because they are given to me as things that I can move myself around or which I can manipulate. I do not imagine the unseen sides of things; rather, they are given practically, as accessible via movement.⁵⁵⁵ Likewise, the periphery of my vision, which is never given as the focus of my attention is also given primarily practically, as a region of my perceptual field which

⁵⁵³ *PP*, 10, 77-83, 243, 248, 259, 262-264; *VI*, 113-117, 138, 210. cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 93.

⁵⁵⁴ *PP*, 246, 352.

⁵⁵⁵ Merleau-Ponty, "Primacy of Perception", in *POP*, 14-15.

could become the focus of my attention were I to turn my gaze toward it.⁵⁵⁶ To sense is not to represent the world to myself, but to be aware directly of the world in a way founded on my movements, my practical possibilities for movement, and my responses to movements coming from the world.⁵⁵⁷ These movements are always present in the background of my attention.⁵⁵⁸

My sense perceiving is always motivated by an “ecstatic” (*extasié*) “desire” (*désir*) or motivation to move outward into the world and cohere with it more perfectly. Merleau-Ponty does not focus on the value component of the world as much as Scheler does, but he does recognize that the world does not just give itself as valueless *Gestalten*. Rather, we experience the world and our place in it as significant, as evoking and responding to “desires” in us for knowledge and for adapting ourselves to the world. Cognition always includes, experientially, an emotive component responding to the world.⁵⁵⁹ Emotion involves the experience of being in a relationship with one’s surroundings and having conflicting or cohering impulses to move.⁵⁶⁰

This does not mean I have infallible cognition of the world through sense perception, but that through moving and sensing I am in “communion” (*communion*) with the world itself, and not just with representations of it.⁵⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty describes my bodily relationship with the world as a “perceptual faith” (*foi perceptive*), a trust in the continued coherence of my sensorimotor relationship with the world. This is not normally an explicit belief, but is lived: I continue to interact with the world in meaningful ways, and this interaction, based in my

⁵⁵⁶ *PP*, 30-59. cf. Shusterman, “Body”, 156-158; Siewert, “Attention”, 278-284.

⁵⁵⁷ *PP*, 241-243, 253-256, 275; *VI*, 226.

⁵⁵⁸ *PP*, xxiii, 257, 470-471; *VI*, 38-39, 154-155, 204. Shusterman, “Body”, 153. For some psychological research that confirms this relationship between sensation and movement see Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 106-112.

⁵⁵⁹ *PP*, 62, 471; *VI*, 3-5, 26-27, 144. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 268; Hass, *Philosophy*, 98; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 188-200.

⁵⁶⁰ *PP*, 99.

⁵⁶¹ *PP*, 5, 246; *VI*, 122, 135, 139. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 159-160; Dillon, *Ontology*, 127-128; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 196.

experience of intertwining with the world, is my faith that the world is and will continue to be coherent and meaningful. I cannot do otherwise than have this faith in the world; it is an experience we can inquire into, but which we cannot fully bracket out so as to consider the world in a less interconnected way, as Husserl wanted to do.⁵⁶²

I fundamentally experience my interaction with the world as a self-sensed background of “motor intentionality” (*intentionnalité motrice*), that is, in terms of being able to direct my body towards things in a way such that my body coheres and harmonizes with them. I sense myself as a system of powers and things in the world as an “inexhaustible” (*inépuisable*) “open totality” (*totalité ouverte*) able to yield ever new perspectives depending on how I fit myself into the world via my movements.⁵⁶³ I experience my body fitting together with the world like two “gears”; I have a “grip on the world” (*emprise sur le monde*) or a way of being in more or less effective contact with the world.⁵⁶⁴ Different people “grip” the world in different ways, and so each person’s sensory experience is somewhat unique, based as it is in the experience of the lived body harmonizing with the world through its powers; different experiences of tacit self-sensing yield different sensory experiences of the world.⁵⁶⁵ Thus, I experience myself as a moving, material, and sensing body; materiality, as we shall see further in the next subsection, is a constitutive layer of my experience. Again, this does not, of course, directly answer the question as to whether all material parts of my body are me, or whether artificial accompaniments to my body such as clothes, tools, or prosthetic limbs, through which I can receive sensations, are part of me, or whether phantom limbs are, properly speaking, “part” of me. These questions are not my direct concern here. What we do discover is that my fundamental

⁵⁶² *PP*, 62; *VI*, 3-5, 26-27. cf. Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 188-200.

⁵⁶³ *PP*, 127, 255, 366-370. cf. Rouse, “Science”, 272.

⁵⁶⁴ *N* 146; *PP*, 293, 311, 353, 514. Hansen, “Embryology”, 240

⁵⁶⁵ *PP*, 412-416; *VI*, 82

experience of myself includes materiality, motion, sensation, a sense of my body as a whole, and a certain connection to the world via materiality, motion, and sensation, as constitutive layers. This is, of course, not a causal account or explanation of experience, but an account of experience as it is fundamentally presented to me.

My awareness of space and time is also based in the tacit self-sensing of the body. I experience my body as the center of my spatial world, as a spatially extended thing all the parts of which are equally close to me, and through which I move in space. My harmony with the world through my movements is the basis of my experience of spatiality.⁵⁶⁶ I experience the passage of time based on the movement of my body, on my bodily rhythms, such as my respiration, and on my development as a person and an organism. The experience of the passing of time is an experience of being affected by myself, of each moment of my life giving rise to the next. It is an experience of being borne along through time by physical forces over which I have no control and which preexist me, as in the experiences of respiring and of aging. But it is also an experience of having a conscious, reflective distance from those processes, of not being entirely swept along by them. My experience of temporality reveals that self-sensing is an experience simultaneously of materiality and of distance from that materiality.⁵⁶⁷

Merleau-Ponty focuses so much on self-sensing that he often overlooks our representational experiences, such as imagination and conceptualization, except insofar as these are rooted in self-sensing. Richard Shusterman points out that often we use representations, as of an imagined body image, to correct problems in our movements. For example, I might study films of skilled dancers and imitate them to improve my own ability at dancing. I am able to consider representations of the human body and “translate” what I see there into actions.

⁵⁶⁶ *PP*, 293; *IS*, 75; *VI*, 46, 113. cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 93.

⁵⁶⁷ *PP*, 494-495; *VI*, 113, 191.

Shusterman worries that Merleau-Ponty overlooks such cases, which are often just as important to my life as more “primordial” experience of the body.⁵⁶⁸ While Merleau-Ponty does not spend much time considering such experiences, he allows for them, but points out that for them to make sense they must be rooted in our lived body experiences. Prior to all reflective experience is the unreflective experience of the perceiving and self-sensing lived body; reflection and representation arise only on the basis of direct contact with things through the lived body.⁵⁶⁹

II.A.3. REVERSIBILITY AND THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TWO HANDS

As we saw in Chapter One, Merleau-Ponty takes a very simple case of self-sensing—the case of one hand touching another—to be the paradigm for all of our self-sensing and, indeed, for all of our experience. Although this experience is not itself the lived body experience that always accompanies us, it allows us to focus on the “intertwining” of the objective and the phenomenal, the active and the passive, the motor and the sensory, that is, the way in each member of these pairs experientially affects and is affected by the other, without being reducible to the other.⁵⁷⁰ When I touch one hand to another, I am aware of both touching and of being touched. To touch one hand with another involves the active motion of the touching hand over the touched hand and the passive receptivity of sensed qualities by the touching hand. But which hand is doing the touching and which hand is being touched seems to switch back and forth as I perform this action, and so the active and passive aspects also switch back and forth.

There is, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “reversibility” (*réversibilité*) between touching and being touched. By this he means that each experientially “slides” into the other and that the powers to touch and to be touched present themselves as affecting and co-determining one

⁵⁶⁸ Shusterman, “Body”, 165-172.

⁵⁶⁹ *PP*, 87-88, 210, 254, 418-419; *VI*, 38-39, 73-74. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 104-105.

⁵⁷⁰ *PP*, 106-107; *VI*, 9, 133-134, 147-148, 155. Dillon, *Ontology*, 139.

another.⁵⁷¹ There is a further “sliding” between not only the touching and being touched of the hands, but between these and the experience of touching the surrounding world as well; the “boundary” between body and world is not experienced as clearly delineated.⁵⁷² The active and passive aspects of my hands are also not given to me as two juxtaposed features, such that the active aspects could be attributed to one part of my hands and the passive to another; rather, each of my hands, every part of my body, and my whole body, are presented as “wholly active and wholly passive”, that is, as at one and the same time, and in each respect, active and passive.⁵⁷³ I also am aware of my hand as having particular experienced *qualia*—the feel of smooth or rough skin, for example.⁵⁷⁴ But I am not just aware of my hand as a conglomeration of *qualia* but as a unified *Gestalt*, which includes the materiality of the hand.⁵⁷⁵ The *qualia* are only experienced in the context of this unified form; indeed, we only experience *qualia* in the context of the lived body and a perceived field.⁵⁷⁶

In this experience, my hands are presented as having a particular “style” (*style*). Merleau-Ponty contends that each thing has its own “style”, its way of moving and presenting itself, which is both similar to the styles of other things and also unique.⁵⁷⁷ The “style” of my hands and my hands’ material structure are organized to facilitate my hands’ sensorimotor powers. When I touch one hand to the other, I almost experience one hand touching the power to touch of the other hand, since each aspect of my hands is experienced as intertwined with the others.

⁵⁷¹ *VI*, 155. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 144; Richard Cohen, “Merleau-Ponty, the Flesh, and Foucault”, in Lawrence Hass and Dorothy Olkowski, eds., *Rereading Merleau-Ponty*, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2001), 279-280.

⁵⁷² *VI*, 147-148. cf. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 78-79, 84-92.

⁵⁷³ *PP*, 496. cf. Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, 94.

⁵⁷⁴ *VI*, 131, 133.

⁵⁷⁵ *PP*, 368; *VI*, 134.

⁵⁷⁶ *PP*, 5-6.

⁵⁷⁷ *PP*, 319, 352-353, 382; *VI*, 139. cf. Cohen, “Flesh”, 282-284.

Through each hand I am aware of something of what the other hand is; each hand “coincides” (*coincide*) with or “becomes” the other hand experientially, but never completely, by harmonizing with the style of the other hand through its movements and sense perceptions. Self-sensing is marked by “indirection”: cognition is never perfect coincidence with intentional objects; my bodily “grip” on the world, even on my own objective body, is always prone to error.⁵⁷⁸ There is always a “gap” between the sensing and the sensed; some aspect of the sensed object eludes by sensing powers, even as there is partial coincidence as well.⁵⁷⁹ This never quite successful coincidence with the objects of one’s sensing is rooted in the way in which we come to know things. We perceive and know objects by “co-existing with” or “living” their *Gestalten*, by trying to match our own movements, based in our own *Gestalt*, to the movements and *Gestalten* of other things, and so “gearing” ourselves into them.⁵⁸⁰

As I touch them together, I am also aware of my hands as material things; the hand that I sense and that with which I sense are presented to me as solid, extended, and weighty things. They are given as things like other things that I can touch, as “massive sacks” in which my powers are contained.⁵⁸¹ I find in my hands structures, like nerves and muscles, which are given as facilitating their power, form, and style, of which I have no “phenomenal”, “lived”, or

⁵⁷⁸ *VI*, 134-135, 147. cf. Cohen, “Flesh”, 284-286; Dillon, *Ontology*, 89

⁵⁷⁹ Hass, *Philosophy*, 78. This is not an explanatory gap between concepts of the physical and concepts of the phenomenal or of *qualia*, as has been discussed in some recent work in the philosophy of mind. Rather, it is an experienced, pre-conceptual, pre-explanatory gap between our experience of sensing and the actual sensed object. There is a good deal of literature on the explanatory gap in philosophy of mind; see, for example: David Chalmers, “Phenomenal Concepts and the Explanatory Gap”, in Torin Alter and Sven Walter, eds., *Phenomenal Concepts and Phenomenal Knowledge: New Essays on Consciousness and Physicalism*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007); Sam Coleman, “Chalmers’s Master Argument and Type Bb Physicalism”, available on author’s website, (2011); Joseph Lavine, “Materialism and Qualia: The Explanatory Gap”, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 64 (1983): 354–61.

⁵⁸⁰ *PP*, 301; *VI*, 100, 188.

⁵⁸¹ *VI*, 134.

“internal” awareness, but which are observable from without.⁵⁸² Yet these structures are not presented as things external to me, but as intertwined with the “phenomenal” or “lived” features of my hands. As we saw in Scheler’s examination of the experience of functionalization, as soon as I know about what my internal organs are and do, I experience myself as having these organs related to my phenomenal experience.⁵⁸³ I experience my body as having a “subterranean” (*souterrain*) or “pre-historic” (*préhistorique*) layer, a layer of structures that are “below” the conscious layer of my lived body, but that affect and intertwine with my lived body.⁵⁸⁴ My body is presented to me consciously as having aspects or structures to which I have no conscious access, but which are still intertwined with those aspects or structures of my body which are consciously presented to me, and which serve to, in part, constitute my experience. As in my examination of Scheler, my interest here is not in whether these experiences of my objective features correctly reveal my anatomy, but in how the layers of experience affect one another.

As I move myself in various ways, I experience my body both as an “amorphous mass” and as differentiated into parts to facilitate my motor powers.⁵⁸⁵ What Scheler called the “resistance” of my body is experienced, for example, in fatigue and bodily pain, when it is difficult to move my body, and in disorders like paralysis in which one cannot move oneself. In such experiences I feel both alienated from and imprisoned in my body.⁵⁸⁶ The “impersonal” aspects of my body are also given in examining biological processes over which I do not have full control such as my respiration. These impersonal and material features of my body are sometimes experienced as “slipping away” toward death, that is, I experience myself and my

⁵⁸² *VI*, 134, 146-147, 248, 260.

⁵⁸³ *PP* 386-387; *VI*, 146: “I will never see my own retinas, but if one thing is certain for me it is that *one* would find at the bottom of my eyeballs those dull and secret membranes.”

⁵⁸⁴ *PP*, 96-97, 459, 464. cf. Madison, *Phenomenology*, 61-63.

⁵⁸⁵ *PP*, 126-127, 375.

⁵⁸⁶ *PP*, 125-127, 512. cf. Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 116-121.

impersonal processes at times as breaking down. But they are also intertwined with my lived body so as to form a *Gestalt* structure. This pre-conscious aspect of the body is also revealed in my awareness that I have been “born”, since I did not create myself and I experience myself as pre-existing my conscious awareness.⁵⁸⁷ I experience myself as vulnerable, as able to be ill, for example. Material changes in my body affect my experiences; because I am, in part, material, I can be causally affected by other material things.⁵⁸⁸ Again, it must be remembered that not every layer or example of self-sensing is experienced at all times or by all people; nevertheless, each of these layers and examples is able to be experienced by human persons, and so they are open to phenomenological investigation.

II.A.4. THE FLESH

My phenomenal or lived body and my objective or subterranean body are given to me as two “sides” or “layers” of a fundamental unity, which has undergone a “split” (*écart*) in my experience, and which “coincide” through all my movements, though never completely.⁵⁸⁹ I experience myself as having intertwined “sedimentary” (*sédimentaires*) or material aspects over which I have no control, and “spontaneous” (*spontanée*) aspects over which I have direct control.⁵⁹⁰ But these are not given dualistically as completely separate, a physical “object” and an experiencing “subject”. Such a separation would not present the meaningful unity and style that I experience in sensing myself. My unconscious material parts and processes submit to and facilitate my conscious acts, and the two can only be understood in terms of reversible intertwining and a unifying *Gestalt*.⁵⁹¹ The emphasis here must be on the *Gestalt* aspect of this

⁵⁸⁷ *PP*, 386, 404, 527.

⁵⁸⁸ *PP*, 121-123, 157.

⁵⁸⁹ *PP*, 93-97, 101; *VI*, 137-138, 201.

⁵⁹⁰ *PP*, 150.

⁵⁹¹ *PP*, 119-125; *VI*, 204-206. cf. Shusterman, “Body”, 161-162.

experience: these intertwined aspects are presented as fundamentally unified, not as juxtaposed and interacting but separate things. Merleau-Ponty calls this unity of significant phenomena, this intertwined *Gestalt* structure, which includes both me as sensing and sensible, and the world as sensible, “the flesh” (*la chair*).⁵⁹²

The world, with all the ways in which it is given, Merleau-Ponty argues, cannot be understood if we start from purely objective, “third-person” processes, nor if we start from purely conscious and subjective “first-person” experiences. But, fundamentally, the world and ourselves are presented in neither way, but as “flesh”, as an “intertwined” unity of the two.⁵⁹³ All of my powers and structures, from my materiality to my freedom are originally given to me as a unified *Gestalt*.⁵⁹⁴ Understanding myself to be originally given to myself as flesh is not a scientific understanding, but a phenomenological understanding rooted in self-sensing.⁵⁹⁵ Merleau-Ponty calls the flesh “ambiguous” (*ambigus*) because of the way in which it defies total reflection and self-awareness, because it “slides” back and forth between its “layers”.⁵⁹⁶ The very “what it is like” of my sensory and bodily experiences includes these various layers, not as entirely separate from one another, but always as intertwined. My fundamental awareness of myself likewise includes all of these intertwined layers presented to me experientially as a *Gestalt*, including the “impersonal” and largely unconscious layer of materiality.

But like Scheler, Merleau-Ponty directly draws an ontology from his phenomenology: he argues that since flesh is the fundamental way in which the world is given to us, then this is the fundamental ontological structure of the world, of which individuals are mere parts. Again as

⁵⁹² *VI*, 127, 139. cf. Calcagno, “Incarnation”, 295-296; Dillon, *Ontology*, 156.

⁵⁹³ *PP*, 121-123; *VI*, 136. cf. Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 66; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 184-186.

⁵⁹⁴ *PP*, 404, 419, 427; *VI*, 233; *IS*, 37-41, 46. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 179, 259.

⁵⁹⁵ *VI*, 233.

⁵⁹⁶ “Primacy of Perception”, in *POP*, 23; *VI*, 69. cf. Alphone de Waelhens, “A Philosophy of the Ambiguous”, foreword to *SB*, xviii-xxvii; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 56, 224.

with Scheler, it must be responded that although the experience of the flesh is surely an important clue as to the ontological structure of the world, one cannot directly read off an ontology from a phenomenology. To so privilege the experience of the flesh in one's ontology is also questionable insofar as it overlooks other experiences we have, such as our experience of individuality and separation from the world, and of transcending the world, which other phenomenologists describe in detail.

II.B. SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

José Luis Bermúdez objects that Merleau-Ponty falls into idealism when he argues that the objective, scientifically examinable features of the world are organized around the phenomenal, lived features. Bermúdez argues that there is no reason to deny that self-sensing is explainable entirely in objective, naturalistic, scientific terms, such as in terms of the workings of our kinaesthetic and proprioceptive receptors, and our nervous system as a whole. He contends that contemporary scientific research has shown how subtle factors about the position and movement of the body are “encoded” by receptor cells and “interpreted” by the brain. He objects to the fact that Merleau-Ponty draws ontological principles from the structure of our experience; Bermúdez objects that science provides us with the correct ontology, while experience only tells us about itself and can ultimately be explained naturalistically.⁵⁹⁷

But Merleau-Ponty objects to a naturalistic reduction of our experience. A “third-person”

⁵⁹⁷ José Luis Bermúdez, “The Phenomenology of Bodily Awareness”, in Smith and Thomasson, eds., *Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*, 300-303, 315. Stephen Priest also accuses Merleau-Ponty of idealism in *Merleau-Ponty*, 170. Bermúdez's is an objection that Merleau-Ponty himself raises at *PP*, 87-88. Consider also Antonio Demasio's interpretation of our lived bodily awareness, which he draws in part from Merleau-Ponty as representative and as emerging from neurological activity; he takes our bodily and emotional consciousness to be perceptions and representation of physical bodily states, rather than as intentional or *Gestalt* structures; see *The Feeling of What Happens*, (New York: Harvest, 1999), especially 347. See Ratcliffe's response in defense of non-intentional lived body awareness in *Feelings of Being*, 19-20, 39, 108-111.

description of the functioning of nerve cells as an explanation of self-sensing leaves out the lived experience itself. I can only understand what nerve cells are for if I first have lived experience. Lived experience is not given as the end product of an objective process, or as a complex of particular kinaesthetic or proprioceptive experiences, but as a holistic structure involving my sensing body and the things that are beings sensed, all unified as a *Gestalt*.⁵⁹⁸ Even non-living physical things, Merleau-Ponty contends, fit themselves into the world in terms of *Gestalten* and powers. The scientific or naturalistic worldview is an abstraction from the concrete and full experience of the world as composed of *Gestalten* in movement, though it is an important abstraction that teaches us many true things about the world. Things have material parts and structures only as one intertwined aspect.⁵⁹⁹ The world is not given as composed of purely “objective” things; it includes significant *Gestalten* that are only given to us in perceptual experience, not in scientific analysis.⁶⁰⁰ These *Gestalten* and their intertwined material parts affect and explain one another, and neither can be reduced to the other.

Merleau-Ponty argues that our experiences of ourselves as *Gestalten* indicate our similarity to all other things, just as Scheler argues regarding our drives. All material things are intertwined material structures and significant ways of moving in the world. Merleau-Ponty offers the example of a drop of oil, which, through interacting with the world, always tends to form itself into a sphere. This formation involves many particular material interactions, but these interactions must be explained in terms of the self-organizing *Gestalt* of the drop, which moves in the world and accommodates itself to its surroundings according to what it is. The way that the oil drop “gears” into its surroundings and adapts itself to them in a structured way cannot be

⁵⁹⁸ *SB*, 129-137; *IS*, 61-62; *PP*, 84-102; *VI*, 205-206.

⁵⁹⁹ *PP* 101; *VI*, 181-182. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 89; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 24.

⁶⁰⁰ *SB* 143; *PP* 246. cf. Rouse, “Science”, 266-271.

fully captured in a mathematical or scientific analysis, but is first a perceived unified *Gestalt*.⁶⁰¹ Likewise, I accommodate myself to the world according to my *Gestalt*, in terms of which all my material interactions with the world and internal processes must be understood. My material parts are taken up and used by my powers to interact with the world; if I lose an arm, for instance, I still retain the powers that were implemented in that arm, but I find other ways to implement them.⁶⁰² My self-conscious movement in the world is similar to though far more complex than the oil drop's unconscious movement. Merleau-Ponty thus improves on Scheler's account of the similarity among things: things are not just similar with respect to drives and interaction with the world, but also with respect to intertwined material and formal structures.

Merleau-Ponty does not eliminate the matter of the world in his account of experience; he is not an idealist and he does not reduce the objective features of the world to the phenomenal features. Still, the "phenomenon" or "form" or "*Gestalt*" is more fundamental to the structure of the world and to our experience than particular material features of things.⁶⁰³ A thing's *Gestalt* is not a part alongside material parts, or a physical configuration, process, or event in which a thing's material parts are caught up.⁶⁰⁴ Rather, it is a structure given differently and prior to the mathematically-considerable material parts, a holistic perceptible and intelligible structure in terms of which the parts must be understood. Merleau-Ponty does not "naturalize" our experience as some, like Joseph Margolis, contend, and he does not "idealize" our experience as Bermúdez contends.⁶⁰⁵ Rather, he contextualizes both the naturalistic worldview and the

⁶⁰¹ *PP*, 90, 311f.; cf. *SB*, 137-145.

⁶⁰² *PP*, 90. cf. Barbaras, "Phenomenology", 222-224.

⁶⁰³ *SB*, 136; *PP*, 250-252; *VI*, 148-149, 154-155. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 85; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 61-68.

⁶⁰⁴ Thus Merleau-Ponty does not understand "form" as Kathrin Koslicki does in *Structure*, 171-188, or as Peter Van Inwagen does in *Material Beings*, 92-94.

⁶⁰⁵ Margolis, "Phenomenology", 174-178.

phenomenalistic worldview in our experience of intertwined flesh.⁶⁰⁶

This account does not directly yield an ontology, but it does constrain which ontologies are consonant with our experience. It does not, in and of itself, rule out the possibility that natural science will be able to explain fully our experience, but it does mean that Bermúdez's naturalism will have to be modified to take into account the holistic formal features of the world. Bermúdez could still object that, since Merleau-Ponty always thinks as a phenomenologist, he is still an idealist: the materiality of things that he describes is actually our experience of materiality. But Merleau-Ponty thinks that the materiality of the world itself is presented to us experientially, not as a mere idea or image in our minds, but as it really is. This is not, however, the only way that the real world gives itself to us experientially, and explanations of the world provided by science or ontology must take all of this into account, or else fail to explain the world fully.

II.C. SUBJECTIVITY AND THE FLESH

II.C.1. VISION AND REFLECTION

We must now examine how the experience of intertwined self-sensing flesh, as especially revealed in the experience of one hand touching another, founds other experiences. Each of my five external senses is experienced as being intertwined with the others. For example, I can look at my two hands touching one another, thus bringing my sense of vision into play. The experience of looking at my hands and of touching my hands are in many ways separate: visual experience is of objects at a distance from me, while tactile experience is of surfaces in contact with me.⁶⁰⁷ But these experiences are also presented as “intertwined”. The visual appearance of my hands and their tactile feel are given as a unity, each disclosing different aspects of my

⁶⁰⁶ *VI*, 153.

⁶⁰⁷ *PP*, 368-369.

hands' "style", and each sense "sliding" into the other.⁶⁰⁸ I do not just see colored shaped patches when I see my hands; rather, I also see their solidity, their texture, even their power of touching, as vision tends toward coincidence with the visible and intertwines with my sense of touch, though never perfectly. Information is "translated" from one sense to another and the body, like all sensible things, is presented as an "intersensory" whole.⁶⁰⁹ I experience my particular senses as arising out of a foundational sensorimotor unity in my lived body and, through my senses, I experience the world as a unified sensory field. But, simultaneously, I experience the world and my senses as given in multiple ways, differentiated through the organs of my body.⁶¹⁰

I am intertwined with the world through my senses, but I am also able to stand back from the world and reflect on it at the same time.⁶¹¹ I differ from things in the world in that I can sense myself. I am, experientially, a "hollow" (*cavité*) in the flesh of the world, a "place" where the formed perceivable structure of the world had "folded in" on itself and created an interior space where reflection and experience can occur, a subjective interiority as opposed to the perceivable exteriority of everything else. I arise out of the flesh of the world insofar as I have matter in common with the rest of the world, and can only be understood against the background of the world. Like everything else, I have a self-organizing form, of which my subjective interiority is a part. But I am a unique part of the flesh insofar as I am separated from everything through experience, especially through the experiences of self-sensing and reflection on myself.⁶¹² Unlike the oil drop discussed earlier, my self-organized interior form is not just a spatial, material interiority, but a subjective, experiencing interiority. My style or way of moving in the world

⁶⁰⁸ *PP*, 369; *VI*, 146.

⁶⁰⁹ *PP*, 262-263, 369-370; *VI*, 136-137, 143-144. cf. Cohen, "Flesh", 281-282; Hansen, "Embryology", 247-248; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 68-69.

⁶¹⁰ *PP*, 259, 277; *VI*, 143. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 200.

⁶¹¹ *IS*, 46. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 7-8.

⁶¹² *PP*, 132, 249-250, 523; *VI*, 147, 233, 267. cf. Madison, *Phenomenology*, 50

involves the ability to “step back” from the world and reflect, while my material parts continue to ensure the preservation of my life and my communion with the world. I sense myself to be a conscious, reflective body that continues to function as an animal body even while I reflect. This unique way of being a body in the world, Merleau-Ponty contends, allows, for example, for our freedom, a freedom which is not that of a pure spirit entirely outside the world and the body, but which is exercised through bodily effort and is influenced by the world.⁶¹³ Self-sensing includes an experience of being at a distance from the world, able to reflect on oneself, but this is always experienced as also intertwined with the body and with bodily experiences.

II.C.2. INTERCORPOREITY

Self-sensing also conditions and provides a paradigm for experiences of other people, especially experiences of intimately touching another person, which Merleau-Ponty calls the experience of “intercorporeity” (*intercorporéité*).⁶¹⁴ When I shake another person’s hand or caress another person, I perceive not only the objective structures of the other person’s body, but I perceive the other person touching and perceiving me back. In a way, I touch the power of touching in the other, in a way similar to my awareness of my own power when I touch my own hand, though to a lesser degree.⁶¹⁵ I do not perceive the other’s subjectivity through inference from his or her sensory appearance and behavior, or through empathy or sympathetic feeling.⁶¹⁶ Rather, I first perceive another’s subjectivity on the model of my own self-sensing. I perceive the other’s unique form and style of moving, and these are given, just as they are in my self-sensing, as intertwined with his or her objective, physiological body. These perceptions occur at the layer

⁶¹³ *PP*, 512-515, 527-528.

⁶¹⁴ *VI*, 141. cf. Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 66.

⁶¹⁵ On the experience of the handshake see *VI*, 142. On the extension of these observations to the experience of the caress, see Dillon, *Ontology*, 146.

⁶¹⁶ For these theories of perceiving other persons see Husserl, *CM* 5.43-44, p.90-99; *Ideas* 2, §43-47, p.170-178; Scheler, *FKV*, 59-81.

of the lived body, motivated by desirous, value-intending movement.⁶¹⁷

I also experience my perceptual field and that of other persons as intertwined; I experience vision differently when I am watching a film, for instance with another, than when I am watching it by myself. I not only experience the film as I see it, but also as seen by another. I experience my seeing of the film as seen by the other person, and, depending on who the other person is, this changes my experience of vision in various ways. For instance, I might be more attentive to certain details of the film when watching it with particular others. The other's perceived world and presence with me intertwines with my own perceived world to form an experienced common "interworld" (*intermonde*). The interworld is not posited or explicitly agreed on with the other person; it is the way that the world is given when I am with others, prior to any reflection on my part.⁶¹⁸ Even my self-sensing is changed by being with others. When I am with others I sense myself not just as sensed by me, but also as sensed by others; frequently, I "feel" myself being seen by others, and I feel myself to be a thing in the midst of the world.⁶¹⁹ Indeed, this does not just occur when one is actually seen by others, but even when one is just in the presence of others, is heard by others, or even when one is under the impression that one is with others when one is in fact not with others.⁶²⁰ An account of this experience thus does not depend on whether or not one is perceiving the world accurately; rather, it is a unique kind of experience of self-sensing available to us that we can self-sense ourselves as being in the "interworld", that is, as being with others

⁶¹⁷ *PP*, 180-181, 406-411; *VI*, 11, 84, 221

⁶¹⁸ The example of watching a film with another person is mine. For the general idea see *PP*, 414-419; *VI*, 140.

⁶¹⁹ This experience of feeling that one is seen by others has been described well by Jean-Paul Sartre in Hazel Barnes, trans., *Being and Nothingness*, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1993), 344-353, but full examination of this interesting experience cannot be made here.

⁶²⁰ I owe this point to David Hershenov.

Indeed, the development of the experience of self-sensing, of awareness of and control over one's body, including tacit awareness, requires being seen by others. Children develop self-awareness through an increase in awareness of the world and of others; experience of others, and experiences like looking in a mirror, are required to intertwine their phenomenal and objective self-awareness.⁶²¹ This development of self-sensing also requires the experience of being part of a culture. Just as one senses oneself against the background of the objective body and the perceived world, so also one self-senses against the background of the cultural world, as conditioned by one's culture's beliefs and customs regarding the body.⁶²²

Merleau-Ponty focuses on our receptive experiences of others, wherein we experience communion with them. As we shall see, Emmanuel Levinas will show how self-sensing opens us up to experiences of other persons of a very different sort. Levinas and Claude Lefort have contended that Merleau-Ponty's account of our encounter with others as entirely based in the intertwining of sense perception does not capture the most important aspects of our encounters with others, especially the experience of being ethically called to serve others. They worry that Merleau-Ponty's account reduces other persons to mere sensible objects, and so does not allow us to encounter others as persons at all.⁶²³ There certainly are aspects of our encounters with others that Merleau-Ponty does not capture, and, along with this, aspects of our experience of self-sensing that he does not capture. But Merleau-Ponty is quite clear that we do encounter others as subjects really different from ourselves, not just as sensed qualities, though, he thinks,

⁶²¹ "Child's Relation", in *POP*, 118-127; *PP*, 105. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 145.

⁶²² *PP*, 404-405; *VI*, 78, 84.

⁶²³ Claude LeFort, "Flesh and Otherness", in Galen Johnson and Michael Smith, eds., *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*, (Evanston: NWU Press, 1991), 11-13; Levinas, Michael Smith, trans., "Intersubjectivity" and "Sensibility", in Johnson and Smith, op.cit., 55-66. cf. Hass, *Philosophy*, 116-121; Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*, 170, 232-238.

this always occurs in the context of the perceived world.⁶²⁴

Still, Merleau-Ponty is not as attuned as other phenomenologists are to the fact that we do not just experience the world as a system of *Gestalten*, wherein things emerge out of a background and always appear against that background, but that we experience things as discrete substances, as individuals in their own right regardless of their surroundings. According to Merleau-Ponty, everything we experience is given as a formed *Gestalt*, as a figure against some background. But we do not experience all structures the same way. The computer on which I type, the desk on which the computer sits, and the plants growing outside the window are given differently than the perceptual relation I have to these things; the computer, the desk, and the plant are given as various sorts of unities, which to varying degrees transcends their background. This is truer of living things than of artifacts; the “meaning” that the computer and the desk have for me is more conditioned by their cultural context than the plant is. The plant presents itself as, to a greater degree than the computer and the desk, a unified individual that has a significance and a value in its own right, and that transcends its perceived and cultural background. This individuality, value, and transcendence over one’s context appears all the more in animals and persons. Scheler has already highlighted the different ways things given to me, focusing especially on the way in which different modalities of value yield different experiences of the individuality and interconnectedness of the things I experience. Merleau-Ponty has captured an important aspect of our experience with his account of intertwining and our experience of the world as a *Gestalt*. But Scheler already offers an improvement on this: things are not just intertwined with me and with their background, but appear as value-laden individuals, demanding of me a response and transcending, to varying degrees, their contexts.

⁶²⁴ M.C. Dillon, “*Ecart: Reply to Claude LeFort’s ‘Flesh and Otherness’*”, in Johnson and Smith, op.cit., 17, 24; Gary B. Madison, “Flesh as Otherness”, in Johnson and Smith, op.cit., 31-34.

II.C.3. THE SPEAKING *COGITO*

Not all of my experiences are sense perceptual. The “desire” or impulse that we have to move out into the world and “coincide” with things, which motivates sense perception, also motivates intellectual cognition and linguistic expression.⁶²⁵ We not only can be aware of the sensible features and style of things, but also of something more, their internal or overall “style” or way of existing in the world. For example, we can, through extended observation of a living thing and its development, grasp its overall form or style, and so come to understand, in a conceptual and linguistically expressible way, what that kind of organism is essentially. Things present themselves as having an intelligible core intertwined with their sensible features.⁶²⁶ This core is not a static Platonic essence, a reality in relation to which the perceived form is an unreal appearance, but is an intelligible organizational Gestalt, which can be “drawn” out of observations of things.⁶²⁷ Our linguistic and intellectual experience is a “sublimation” (*sublimation*) from our sensory experience; to experience the world in such a way is to transform our sensory experience into something “invisible” (*invisible*) and intelligible.⁶²⁸ This experience of the “ideas” contained in things is anticipated at the sensory-motor level, where our movements already express our meaningful harmonization with the world.⁶²⁹ These invisible ideas can be expressed in spoken and written language and other forms of expression, like art; indeed, we never know ideas separated from a sensible basis and sensible expression, for we always think in words or images.⁶³⁰ Thus, the intelligibility of things and our intellectual experience are once

⁶²⁵ *VI*, 144.

⁶²⁶ *N*, 61, 150, 188; *VI*, 144-155, 188.

⁶²⁷ *N*, 150-155; *PP*, 70-71, 451; *IS*, 49-50. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 182-183, 236-237; “Phenomenology”, 224; Madison, *Phenomenology*, 113-114.

⁶²⁸ *VI*, 125-126, 153-155, 180.

⁶²⁹ *PP*, 472.

⁶³⁰ *PP*, 226; *VI*, 102

again intertwined with the world. They appear as figures against the background of the perceptual world, each affecting and being affected by the other.

We can grasp our own intelligible style in an extension of the experience of self-sensing. By considering my sensing and sensible aspects, especially the “gap” between my vision and my visibility, my phenomenality and my objectivity, I become aware of myself as what I am and able to express in words that “style” which I discover there.⁶³¹ I experience myself not just in the experience of the “tacit *cogito*” but also in the experience of “speaking *cogito*” wherein I experience myself as thinking and as able to express that experience in words.⁶³² I experience myself as both understanding and understandable. Because I experience myself as intelligible and sensible, understanding and sensing, I can make contact with the sensible and intelligible elements of the world. Self-sensing is an experiential condition for my experience of the world.

Linguistic experience also involves what Merleau-Ponty calls a “more subtle body” (*corps plus subtil*), by which he means the experience of the “weight” and “resistance” of a linguistic system, like the English language.⁶³³ When I express myself, I find myself “groping” for the right words to use; the English language presents itself to me as a “body” standing in the background of my thinking, out of which I must choose words to express myself. This “body” facilitates my thought, much as my own objective body facilitates my sense perception, but it also presents a resistance to my thinking, inasmuch as I must think within its constraints. Each human language is experienced as an “ideal” linguistic “body” which interacts with the sensible bodies of the world through spoken language.⁶³⁴ Here, Merleau-Ponty is calling our attention to

⁶³¹ *VI*, 249-250.

⁶³² *PP*, 347, 429, 459, 467-468; *VI*, 145, 178. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 301; Dillon, *Ontology*, 160; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 35.

⁶³³ *VI*, 153, 204.

⁶³⁴ *PP*, 209, 217-220; *VI*, 152. cf. Hass, *Philosophy*, 183-192; Shusterman, “Body”, 163-164.

the similarity between the resistance and potentiality that we feel in the actual body and that which we feel in the experience of dealing with a linguistic system. Similar but not identical experiences of resistance, potentiality, and intertwining are had at both the sensory and intellectual levels of our experience. Language is not something purely mental; rather, thought involves reference to actually spoken words; the meaning of words and their audible sound are given as intertwined, and the sounds of words are presented as “containing” their meaning in their “style”. Words present themselves as both wholly perceivable movement and wholly intelligible, in an intertwined way.⁶³⁵ Intellectual experience can only be understood in relation to and in unity with our bodies and their movement in the world, but we must also acknowledge the differences between the two layers of experience as they are presented to us.

These experiences are not, according to Merleau-Ponty, of an entirely different “layer” of experience, as they were in Scheler’s account of the “ego” and the “spirit”. According to Merleau-Ponty, in no respect do I completely transcend the world. Rather, I am a body of a particular sort, moving in the world in a way that involves intellectual and free acts. “Spiritual” experience only occurs in and through bodily and worldly experience, which takes place at a particular time and place, from a particular perspective. For Merleau-Ponty, the “layers” in our experience are not separate but are all intertwined parts of a *Gestalt*. To think that I am able to transcend and survey the world is to falsify my bodily and intertwined way of existing, and so

This body of a language is not a set of background beliefs in terms of which I understand the world; rather, it is a sort of cultural environment in which I find myself, of which I might not be entirely aware, but which affects all my acts of speaking and thinking. On background beliefs see Searle, *Rediscovery of the Mind*, 175f. David Braine wrongly identifies Merleau-Ponty’s idea of a cultural and perceptual background with Searle’s idea of a background of beliefs in *Human Person*, 72.

⁶³⁵ *PP*, 226. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 170-173, 194.

eliminate the only way to make sense of the connection between mind and matter.⁶³⁶

Scheler and Merleau-Ponty agree that our linguistic and intellectual experiences cannot be explained in the same sorts of terms as our sense perceptual experiences. But Merleau-Ponty, by focusing on overcoming idealism and mechanistic physicalism phenomenologically, overlooks the “world-openness” of human experience on which Scheler focuses, as well as experiences of the “Absolute”. If we did not transcend the world and intertwining with the world, and if we did not have an interiority that is experienced as not originating in the world, then we would not be able to theorize and philosophize about the world as we do. Merleau-Ponty is correct in stating that we never experience thought and language entirely apart from the body or on any other experiential basis than sense perception. I do not experience myself, as Scheler says I do, as a spirit able to stand back entirely from the body, though I do experience myself as subject with a degree of absoluteness and transcendence over the world. We are bodily, yet we have transcendence too. We experience ourselves as arising out of the world, and as dependent on the world, and this dependence can be experienced as a sort of religious dependence; I am not the origin of my perceiving and thinking, but rather I find myself perceiving and thinking in dependence on the world.⁶³⁷ But we also experience ourselves as, to a degree, transcending the world, as not just arising out of it but as greater than it. This experience too is somewhat religious, an experience of our dependence on and orientation towards something greater than ourselves. By considering the aspects of our experience that the various phenomenologists focus on, we can see that each has captured an aspect of our self-experience, but that each runs into

⁶³⁶ *VI*, 15, 113, 120, 227. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 313; Dillon, *Ontology*, 101-102; Hass, *Philosophy*, 70, 193.

⁶³⁷ The passage in *VI*, 267 where Merleau-Ponty refers to the flesh of the world as our “mother” has been interpreted as revealing that Merleau-Ponty thought about flesh in terms of religious dependence in Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 238 and Sartre, Benita Eisler, trans., *Situations*, (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1966), 162, 167, 208, cited in Shusterman, “Body”, 177-178.

errors as well, which the others help to correct.

II.C.4. HUMAN EXISTENCE

I experience myself as an intertwined understandable, understanding, perceivable, perceiving, and objective unity in the self-sensing that accompanies and founds all of our other experiences. An essential part of the human experience of self-sensing is understanding one's "style" and expressing it in words. Linguistic expression, with all of the cultural artifacts, such as books, which it engenders, transforms our perceptual experience so that we experience the perceptual world through the lens of language and culture. All aspects of self-sensing and of experience in general are intertwined and mutually affecting. Human experience is never purely perceptual or intellectual, but each already includes elements of the other. My bodily acts always are experienced as having a cultural significance, and my thoughts and cultural expressions have a bodily basis. All my experiences are simultaneously and irreducibly natural or perceptual, and cultural or linguistic. I am intertwined with my community and with history, which I partially determine and which partially determine me, in a meaningful, structured way. Other persons are always present to me, even if just as a sort of background to my acts, an "atmosphere of sociality". I find myself as having both a biological history of development and a free history of acts, in the larger context of natural and human history. Though we can consider these aspects apart from one another, the experience of self-sensing always includes them all.⁶³⁸ All of this is part of the kind of *Gestalt* that is what it is, experientially to be a human person.⁶³⁹

My fundamental experience is not that of Descartes' "*cogito*" in which I am nothing but a

⁶³⁸ *PP*, 101, 520-525; *VI*, 152-155, 212-213, 253. cf. Dillon, *Ontology*, 214-215.

⁶³⁹ *PP*, 101-102, 528-530; *N*, 208. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 8-13; Hansen, "Embryology", 237; Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 136.

thinking thing wholly transparent to my introspective gaze.⁶⁴⁰ Rather, it is of the intertwined “tacit *cogito*” and “speaking *cogito*”, both encountered in self-sensing.⁶⁴¹ In neither experience am I completely self-aware; rather, my self-awareness is wrapped up in and arises from the perceptual and material body and the linguistic and cultural systems I use to express myself, neither of which I ever fully understand. My self-awareness is never a pure interiority disconnected from the world.⁶⁴² The fundamental structure of my experience explains both why I feel a duality between my subjectivity and my objectivity, and why I feel unity with myself and with the world. The world around me coheres with me; fleshly experiences allow me to feel “at home” in the world, with a sense of “wonder” (*étonnant*) at the world of which I am a part.⁶⁴³

Only by understanding these ways in which I am given to myself can an adequate ethics, which respects the human way of existing, be considered.⁶⁴⁴ This concern for ethics and the place that it has in a phenomenology of self-sensing is central for our next thinker, Emmanuel Levinas; in comparison to Levinas (and to Scheler), Merleau-Ponty has not adequately considered the ethical dimension of self-sensing. Although he calls our attention to the experience of self-sensing well, his phenomenological descriptions do not allow for the transcendence over and withdrawal from the world which we experience in self-sensing. He focuses too much on our communion with the world and not enough on the individuality we experience in self-sensing. His ontological interpretation of the flesh is, for these and for other reasons already considered, not adequate to our experience of self-sensing as human persons. Some of these deficiencies in the description of self-sensing that is being built up here can be

⁶⁴⁰ cf. “Primacy of Perception”, in *POP*, 21-22.

⁶⁴¹ *PP*, 347, 429, 459, 467-468; *VI*, 145, 178. cf. Barbaras, *Being of the Phenomenon*, 301; Dillon, *Ontology*, 160; Kwant, *Phenomenology*, 35.

⁶⁴² *VI*, 98-99.

⁶⁴³ cf. Patrick Burke, “Listening at the Abyss”, in Johnson and Smith, eds., op.cit., 92.

⁶⁴⁴ “Primacy of Perception”, in *POP*, 26-27. cf. Carey, “Ethos”, 28-33.

remedied by turning to our next phenomenologist, Emmanuel Levinas.

III. EMMANUEL LEVINAS

Emmanuel Levinas builds on the insights of Scheler and Merleau-Ponty into the experience of self-sensing, but, as was indicated in Chapter One, he takes these insights in new directions, radicalizing the phenomenological method and showing how an examination of our experience can show how we are called to be ethically good. Levinas critiques each of the other phenomenologists considered in this study,⁶⁴⁵ but, I contend, his work is more in continuity with theirs than he allows. My task in this section is not only to outline Levinas' contributions to the phenomenology of self-sensing, but also to show how his descriptions are in continuity with those of the other phenomenologists. As with everything in phenomenology, we must return to the experiences themselves so as to know which descriptions and interpretations are correct. In this way, the conflicts among the phenomenologists will be resolved and we shall see how each phenomenologist is highlighting aspects of our most foundational experience, aspects which we all actually experience as a unified experience. As with the other phenomenologists, it is not my goal here to chart Levinas' development with regard to his views on this experience, but to systematize those views into a coherent account.

III.A. SELF-SENSING AND THE BODY

Levinas agrees with Scheler and Merleau-Ponty that we have self-sensing experiences of the "lived body", that the significance of the world is first revealed through our motions in the world, and that these experiences found our experiences of space and time. He agrees with

⁶⁴⁵ For his disagreements with Scheler and Henry, see "Phenomenon and Enigma", in *CPP*, 62-63; for his disagreements with Merleau-Ponty see "Intersubjectivity", in Johnson and Smith, eds., op.cit., 58-60; "Sensibility" in *ibid.*, 60-66. cf. Thomas W. Busch, "Ethics and Ontology: Levinas and Merleau-Ponty", *Man and World* 25 (1992): 195-202; MacAvoy, "Intentionality", 109; Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 113.

Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of our experience of language, of dealing with the "body" of a linguistic system, and the foundation of our intellectual experiences in our sensory experiences. He furthermore agrees with that we experience our lived bodies and our "body-things" not as two separate things, but as two "sides" or "aspects" of a fundamental unity. I experience my own body and the bodies of others as simultaneously "lived" and "biological". Prior to being conscious, I am material, at a particular place and in a particular position.⁶⁴⁶

III.A.1. SUFFERING AND VIOLENCE

In exploring this layer of our experience, Levinas focuses on experiences of fatigue, illness, torture, and suffering. In fatigue (*la fatigue*) I feel myself to be imprisoned in my body; I experience my body as a weight, as a physical thing I cannot escape, even if I would rather not rest but keep on being active.⁶⁴⁷ In illness and other physical suffering (*souffrance*) I again sense my body as something I cannot get out of, even though I can at the same time reflect on my suffering and wish for escape (*l'évasion*). I sense myself both to be riveted to my body and to the points on my body that are in pain, and to be observing this pain from a somewhat detached viewpoint. I furthermore experience my body to be both lived and something biological and physiological, which can be treated by doctors and cared for by others.⁶⁴⁸ The fact that my body has this duality of being a thing as well as lived, and that I experience this, means that I can also be a victim of physical violence (*la violence*), such as of torture. To be a victim of violence one must be both physically manipulable, and have interiority and so in some sense always elude the

⁶⁴⁶ *EE*, 71-72; *TI*, 162-168, 229, 232, 258; "Ego and Totality", in *CPP*, 39; "Meaning and Sense", in *CPP*, 80-82; "Reflections on Phenomenological 'Technique'", in *DEH*, 99-100; "Intentionality and Metaphysics", in *DEH*, 124-126; "Intentionality and Sensation", in *DEH*, 148-149.

⁶⁴⁷ *EE*, 24-25, 30-32; *TI*, 163-167. cf. Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 5.

⁶⁴⁸ *TO*, 69; *TI*, 233-240; *UH*, 17; "Ego and Totality", in *CPP*, 39. cf. Ciocan, "Embodiment", 5-7; Cohen, "Death", 65-66, 73-74; Marion, *IE*, 92-93.

violence. If I were given to myself as purely interior, I would be beyond the physical manipulation of others, and if I were given to myself as purely physical, I would have no awareness of being attacked and no awareness of simultaneously longing to escape my body and being unable to of escape it. The duality in unity of sensing myself to be a lived body with interiority and an objective body-thing gives suffering its experiential character.⁶⁴⁹

These negative experiences help to show that my intellectual and volitional powers are founded in my bodily powers. Fatigue and illness prevent me from being able to think, and, despite my best intentions, I can succumb to bodily pressures. I can be made to do things through torture or seduction, which I never intended to do; my freedom can be threatened by violence. These instances of succumbing to pressure are not fully explainable in terms of conflicts among internal beliefs or intentions, but through the fact that my willing is always lived in the body.⁶⁵⁰ I am given to myself as both lived and as a physical thing, and so I can be treated and manipulated by others in a way that pertains to this duality in unity.

III.A.2. ENJOYMENT

In addition to these accounts of suffering, which are important examples of self-sensing, Levinas describes the experience of “enjoyment” (*jouissance*) or “love of life” (*amour de la vie*). This is not necessarily an experience of explicit pleasure (*plaisir*), but a sense of fitting into the world, of being nourished and upheld by the world, of having the world at my disposal.⁶⁵¹ I do not, at foundation, experience myself as one that manipulates the world in labor and practical action, or as one who knows the world intellectually, but as a self-sensing lived body who fits

⁶⁴⁹ *TI*, 222-225; *OBBE*, 15, 49, 75; “Freedom and Command”, in *CPP*, 18-20; “Ego and Totality”, in *CPP*, 39.

⁶⁵⁰ *TI*, 164-169, 229-231, 238-239; *OBBE*, 122; “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity”, in *CPP*, 50. cf. Perpich, “Sensible Subjects”, 301.

⁶⁵¹ *TI*, 75-76, 145-146. cf. Peprich, “Sensible Subjects”, 300-301.

into the world and who is nourished and “lives from” (*vit de*) the world.

I sense myself as having “needs” (*besoins*) and these needs being satisfied by the world around me.⁶⁵² For example, I feel the way in which the air surrounds me and invigorates me as I respire, the way the earth under my feet supports me, the way that food and drink fill my mouth and nourish me. I do not feel the things that satisfy my needs first and foremost as tactile, visual, or gustatory sensations, or as clearly defined and delineable intentional objects or values, or as means to some end. Rather, I most fundamentally feel the world as an “element” (*élément*) that sustains and satisfies me; this experience of the world as element is similar to the vital experience of the world as environment in Scheler, the world as “nourishment” (*alimentation*), as a field of vital value corresponding to my drives or needs before being made up of clearly distinguishable things. I first enjoy and am satisfied by the world and feel “at home” in it before thinking about it or reflecting on myself.⁶⁵³ This “enjoyment” remains, even if emotionally I feel depressed or blasé. Even if I am in great pain or about to die, I feel the world as surrounding and upholding me, satisfying at least some of my needs, giving me at least one more moment to hold onto and love my life. As long as I am conscious, this sense of fitting into the world remains, even though this layer of experience is not normally the focus of my attention.⁶⁵⁴

III.A.3. INDIVIDUALITY AND ANONYMOUS EXISTENCE

Following Levinas, Jean-Luc Marion highlights that I first experience myself as an individual in self-sensing. Only I can sense myself as I do and only you can sense yourself as you do. I experience myself as an individual because self-sensing includes an experience of

⁶⁵² *EE*, 61; *TI*, 110-117; *OBBE*, 65-68. cf. Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 118; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 59-63.

⁶⁵³ *TI*, 130, 143-144. cf. Critchley, “Introduction” to Critchley and Bernasconi, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Levinas*, 20; Lingis, “Sensuality”, 222-224; Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 86-88.

⁶⁵⁴ *TI*, 56, 115, 150

subjective interiority and because in self-sensing I am “thrown back” (*rejetée en arrière*) affectively on myself, unable to escape this experience.⁶⁵⁵ Certainly, as Merleau-Ponty pointed out, in our self-sensing we sense our continuity with the world, and this is reflected in Levinas’ account of enjoyment. Indeed, Levinas contends that every aspect of self-sensing requires experienced connections to other persons or things; for example, the experience of enjoyment requires contact with the world. In self-sensing I always experience not only needs that are satisfied by the elements around me, but a “desire” (*désir*) for what is other than and transcendent to me, a desire that cannot be definitely satisfied. “Desire” motivates all of my experiences, including enjoyment, because it experientially propels me outward into the world.⁶⁵⁶ This account of desire goes beyond Merleau-Ponty’s account of desire. According to Levinas, we sense ourselves to be motivated by a desire not just to coincide and be intertwined with the world, but a desire for something that is and always remains transcendent to me.

This notion of “desire” must not be understood precisely in the normal sense of 'desire', as when we say that we desire some specific thing, such as when we desire food, world peace, or to stop smoking. Rather, by using the term 'desire', these phenomenologists are calling attention to a fundamental way in which we are presented to ourselves. At least whenever we are conscious, we always find ourselves in the world, searching for things and persons beyond ourselves; we are never completely self-satisfied or without the impulse to make contact with things other than myself. This sort of desire is found in desires in the normal sense of the term 'desire', but it is also found in activities as basic as breathing and in activities as complex as spiritual searching, where one does not even know what one is searching or longing for.

⁶⁵⁵ *TI*, 53-55, 118; “Ego and Totality”, in *CPP*, 36-37 Marion, *Being Given*, 232, 263-265; *Erotic Phenomenon*, 38-39; *In Excess*, 84, 87-91, 97-98. cf. Cohen, “Death”, 64.

⁶⁵⁶ *TI*, 117; *OBBE*, 79, 66-67, 157-159. cf. Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 108-109, 118; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 5-6, 19

According to Levinas, the human person is oriented towards “transcendence”, that is, towards what exceeds or is better than his or her current situation, and towards what is different from, or “other than”, him or herself. I shall return to this point shortly. But this may seem to some readers to be a trivial point about ourselves and our experience, but the phenomenologists would contend that we oftentimes overlook our fundamental orientation toward what is other than ourselves in theorizing about the human person. One of the goals of many phenomenologists is to call our attention to the most basic ways in which we interact with and exist in the world, since these are often overlooked or explained away, they contend, by scientific or metaphysical theories about what we are or about the nature of the world.

Although I am linked in various ways to things in the world, I also sense myself to be separated from everything around me, open and closed to the world in different respects at the same time.⁶⁵⁷ It is a point of contention between Levinas and Merleau-Ponty as to how separated from the world we sense ourselves to be. According to Merleau-Ponty, I am a “hollow” of subjective interiority in the midst of the world, but I am also entirely intertwined with the world, with a meaning and significance for myself only in the context of the larger world. By this he means that I only experience myself, understand myself, and make sense to myself in the context of the world around me. Levinas contends, rightly I think, that we experience our relation to the world to be more complex than this. I do sense myself as intertwined with and so open to the world in perception and enjoyment, but I also sense myself in solitude and isolation from the world in my subjective interiority. In my unique experience of self-sensing, I experience myself as more than just a part of the world; I experience myself as “transcending” the world in virtue of my self-sensing. There is an aspect of my self-sensing awareness of my individuality that can

⁶⁵⁷ *TI*, 147-151.

never be explained in terms of the structure of the world, even the experienced structure of the world; this is the experience of “isolation” from the world just mentioned. Levinas opposes reducing the human person to something lower than what he or she is, and he sees Merleau-Ponty’s focus on intertwining rather than individuality as potentially reducing the human person to the surrounding world.⁶⁵⁸

One experience of self-sensing that shows how we experience our individuality is the experience of nausea (*nausée*). When I feel nauseous, I feel riveted to myself, unable to focus on anything but my own self-sensing, my own feeling of nausea. At such times I can feel ashamed of myself, my body, and its condition.⁶⁵⁹ Of course, I might not feel this in every case of nausea, but this is an experience that is possible for me. In experiencing being unable to focus on anything but sensing myself feeling nauseous, I nevertheless also long to escape this immanent self-sensing, this feeling of being trapped in feeling myself being nauseous. I desire what is other than me, though I am trapped in myself and even feel myself being weighed down by the “impersonal” material elements in me.⁶⁶⁰ This example brings out an aspect of self-sensing that Levinas thinks important, the experience of alienation (*aliénation*) from and dissatisfaction with oneself in self-sensing. This experience of self-alienation is closely connected to the experience of constantly desiring what is transcendent to or other than me and my current condition; it is an experience of being able to be more than and desiring to be more than just a part of the world, operating in the manner of other material things. Though I am given to myself as both sensible

⁶⁵⁸ *TI*, 148-149; *OBBE*, 57-59; “The Permanent and the Human in Husserl”, in *DEH*, 131-132; “In the Image of God”, in *BV*, 155-156, 162-163; “Intersubjectivity”, in Johnson and Smith, eds., op.cit., 57. cf. Adriaan Peperzak, “The Significance of Levinas’ Work for Christian Thought”, Jeffrey Bloechl, ed. *The Face of the Other and the Trace of God*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 189.

⁶⁵⁹ *OE*, 63-68.

⁶⁶⁰ *OE*, 65. cf. Rolland, “Getting Out”, in *OE*, 33-35; Graham Ward, “On Time and Salvation”, Séan Hand, ed., *Facing the Other*, (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), 157.

and sensing, the two never fully coincide; I always sense myself as somewhat separated from myself. Indeed, Levinas contends, it is because I am somewhat alienated from myself, because my self-sensing always involves an orientation to what is other than me, that I self-sense at all.⁶⁶¹

Other experiences of self-sensing reveal the world not as nourishing me, but as a danger and a menace; because the world nourishes my life, it can also threaten me with loss of life. In such experiences I again feel both my materiality and my subjective interiority.⁶⁶² For example, I sometimes feel “horror” (*d’horreur*) at the world around me, as when I go for a walk at night and am suddenly seized with fear, though not of anything in particular. At such times, the world is given not as a nourishing element, but as a dangerous and threatening “anonymous existence”, the bare experience that “there is” (*il y a*) something. In horror I experience the world to press in around me and to be uniform and threatening to my interiority. The world threatens to reabsorb my interiority into itself, but through self-sensing I am aware of myself as a conscious individual standing against this threat, different from the world as it is presented to me in the experience of horror. I can feel horror at my intertwining with the world, rather than the wonder mentioned by Merleau-Ponty, and, again, I can long to escape this.⁶⁶³ The horror of death is also to some extent an aspect of the experience of self-sensing. I sense death as threatening my interior subjective self-sensing, even as I experience my being riveted to life and loving the continued sustenance of my life. In self-sensing I also feel the slow decay of my body, as in experiences of aging and of being a body that excretes waste and that can fall apart.⁶⁶⁴

At other times, I feel extreme indolence (*indolence*) or boredom (*ennui*); the world is

⁶⁶¹ *OBBE*, 79. cf. Cohen, “Virtue Embodied”, 291; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 148-149; Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 84-85, 123.

⁶⁶² *TI*, 137, 141-142. cf. Perpich, “Sensible Subjects”, 301.

⁶⁶³ *EE*, 60-63; *OBBE*, 162, 176. cf. Patrick Burke, “Listening at the Abyss”, in Johnson and Smith, eds., *op.cit.*, 90-94; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 8-9, 17-18.

⁶⁶⁴ *TI*, 149, 159, 230-236; *OBBE*, 51-53. cf. Marion, *IE*, 94-96.

presented to me as entirely uninteresting and I feel an aversion to existing as myself in my current condition at all.⁶⁶⁵ In boredom I feel the world as an undifferentiated with respect to the lack of interest I feel in it, but I sense myself to be again different from the world. A final example of an example of self-sensing in which I feel trapped in myself and threatened is the experience of insomnia (*l'insomnie*), when I feel unable to escape my own wakeful self-sensing, though I long to go to sleep. In insomnia, I can experience the world around me and my own self-sensing as a burden, as something I long to escape through sleep and a loss of the constant fully conscious self-sensing which I experience in sleeplessness. Sometimes, in experiences of insomnia accompanied by fear of the dark, this experience of being trapped in my constant self-sensing can be joined with the experience of horror mentioned above, and one experiences the night around oneself as an oppressive threat, and one feels an aversion to one's continued self-sensing.⁶⁶⁶ In each of these cases, I sense myself and my body to be fundamentally vulnerable and this colors all of my other experience.⁶⁶⁷ Levinas emphasizes the sense of my materiality and my nutritive functions that comes in self-sensing far more than the other phenomenologists. In this he corrects, as is his goal, the cognitive bias, which they show in describing our experiences.

In each of these cases, escape from the sense of feeling trapped is possible, since I do not just sense myself as a material thing hemmed in by my surroundings, but also as a body that experiences interiority and a desire for transcendence in my self-sensing itself. For example: I can protect myself against the unseen horrors of the night; I can do things to prevent my death, even if only for a few moments longer, and I can enjoy my life; I can allow other things and persons in the world to draw me out of my indolence into enjoyment of or ethical service to the

⁶⁶⁵ *EE*, 26-29; Marion, *GWB*, 131-135; *RG*, 186-194.

⁶⁶⁶ *EE*, 65-67. cf. Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 88-90; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 5,10.

⁶⁶⁷ *OBBE*, 75.

world; I can fall asleep and escape insomnia. Self-sensing does not just rivet me to myself, but points me towards ways of transcending myself, towards ways of achieving what is better than my current situation by directing myself towards what is other than myself.⁶⁶⁸

Still, I rarely, except perhaps in certain forms of deep unconsciousness, escape self-sensing. Even in sleep, a minimal self-sensing remains, that is, a sense of my position, such that I roll or move to find the most comfortable position, and a slight sense of my surroundings, such that sensations affect my dreams, trouble my sleep, and sometimes awaken me.⁶⁶⁹ Of course, my self-sensing is not confined to these extreme and often negative examples; as Richard Cohen points out, Levinas uses extreme examples to highlight features that are also part of our more mundane experiences.⁶⁷⁰ We always sense ourselves, and this sensation involves a disparity with oneself, an experienced non-coincidence of my sensing and my sensible aspects. Self-sensing always is oriented towards and exposed to persons and things outside of and transcendent to me, although it also separates me from persons and things outside me.⁶⁷¹

III.A.4. BEING AND ANONYMOUS EXISTENCE

These experiences of “anonymous existence”, of the fact that there is something, are important for understanding Levinas’ objections to “ontology”, as he calls both traditional metaphysics, scientific philosophy, and phenomenologies that focus only on knowledge and intentionality, such as Husserl's, Heidegger's, and Merleau-Ponty's.⁶⁷² It is also important for understanding his objections to theologies that consider God to be a “being” or that consider us to be “participating” in God, to theodicies, and his objections to totalitarian politics. These

⁶⁶⁸ *OE*, 54-55, 71-72; *TI*, 34-52, 147-151, 163-168. cf. Tengelyi, “Selfhood”, 412.

⁶⁶⁹ *EE*, 69-70.

⁶⁷⁰ Cohen, “Death”, 72.

⁶⁷¹ *OBBE*, 15. cf. Lingis, “Sensuality”, 222.

⁶⁷² *EE*, 101; *TI*, 21-23, 142 “God and Philosophy”, in *CPP*, 153-155, 158-159; *UH*, 13-24. cf. Rolland, “Getting Out”, 29-32; Waldenfels, “Face”, 66; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 62.

arguments, which are among Levinas' most controversial claims, will need to be refuted if I am to be able to join Levinas' phenomenological claims with Aquinas' traditional metaphysics.

Levinas thinks that “being” (*être*), as traditionally understood, is impersonal, reductionistic, and amoral.⁶⁷³ He argues that traditional ontology seeks to understand everything in terms of universal concepts, most fundamentally the concept of “being”, which is thought to apply to all things. In doing so, ontology does not adequately allow for the differences among things, the individuality of things, the ways in which things escape our understanding, or our own self-sensing and subjective interiority. Any intellectual discipline or system that holds that it can arrive at adequate knowledge of the world is, he contends, oppressive, reducing persons and things to less than what they are. Such a system is especially problematic, he argues, in that it reduces persons to facets of a system, and leads to the possibility of thinking that they can be controlled or ignored through the knowledge of them afforded by that system. If we think, for example, that human suffering is adequately explained by some theodicy, then, he contends, we will be less likely to aid others in their suffering, thinking that God will take care of them or that their suffering is deserved. Likewise, if we think that the human person is adequately and completely explained by some theory of physics, biology, or psychology, then we will think of the human person as open to manipulation and control through the techniques that can be developed with those sciences.

Those who promote such systems “totalize” (*totalisent*) us, making us parts of a system, not allowing for the concrete interiority and individuality we all experience as different from the world and the explanations that are pertinent to an examination of the world. We “feel” something of what such a system is like and what its problems are when we experience in

⁶⁷³ Roland, “Getting Out”, in *OE*, 8, 10, 23-29; *EE*, 21-22; *TI*, 24. cf. Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 78-80; Wyschogrod, “Language and alterity”, 188-189.

“horror” the “anonymous existence” of the world, as described above, or the feeling of being trapped in nausea or insomnia, as well as in the real experience of being trapped in a totalitarian society.⁶⁷⁴ Levinas’ understanding of being is in part based on what we saw in Chapter One to be Husserl’s view of “actuality” and “potentiality” as only applying to aspects of intentionality and intentional objects, not to really existing things.

Although the drawing of this parallel between nausea and ontology may seem rather hyperbolic to some readers, the objection is somewhat similar to Wojtyła's objection that was considered in Chapter One. There, we saw that Wojtyła objected to many traditional metaphysical systems as failing to take into account human subjectivity, and reducing everything in the world to its third-person-knowable aspects. However, unlike Wojtyła, Levinas is claiming that such ontologies are not only incomplete accounts of the world, but are immoral, disrespectful to persons in themselves and leading to genuine oppression and ignoring of suffering and evil, because these are explained away.

Levinas contends that the very possibility of building intellectual or political system presupposes a subject that is not totalizable, not reducible to a part of a system, and that is able to build, consider, and question such a system.⁶⁷⁵ In the experiences of enjoyment and the call to ethical service, I escape the uniformity of conceptualizable “being” through experiences of subjective interiority, individuality, and desire for what is transcendent to me. There certainly are aspects of human persons that are conceptualizable, including all of our biological and physical aspects, which are part of the wider, scientifically explainable world. But we also transcend and

⁶⁷⁴ *OE*, 66-71; *EE*, 17-20, 23, 65

⁶⁷⁵ *TI*, 21-26; *OBBE*, 153-162; “Ego and Totality”, in *CPP*, 25-29; cf. Cohen, “Some Notes”, 114-116; Critchley, “Introduction”, 17-18; Marion, *Reduction*, 181-186; Peperzak, “Christian Thought”, 185-186, 189-192; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 1-2, 15-16; Wyschogrod, “Language and alterity”, 188-189.

“overflow” the world and any intellectual system, in the ways already mentioned.⁶⁷⁶

III.A.5. DWELLING, LABOR, REASON

All of this can be understood better by considering further layers of subjectivity beyond enjoyment and self-alienation, which are encountered in normal everyday experiences of self-sensing. We do not just sense ourselves as bodies exposed to the nourishing element or the anonymous, threatening existence of the world around us. Rather, in what Levinas calls the experience of the “dwelling” (*habitation*), we sense ourselves as sheltered from the world; we establish familiar habits and we construct material surroundings to protect ourselves from the threatening sense of the world.⁶⁷⁷ Again, Levinas thinks that these are fundamental ways in which human persons experience themselves as interacting with the world, to which our attention must be drawn. The self-sensing experience of the dwelling involves a further sense of one’s separation from the world and the role of others in one’s self-sensing, over and above the basic level of lived body enjoyment. For example, we allow others to care for us and be hospitable toward us. Our normal experiences of self-sensing include a sense of established routine, safety, and the welcoming of others.⁶⁷⁸ This aspect of our experience is roughly the same as the experience of the “habit-body” described by Merleau-Ponty; this layer of experience gives me a more stable experiential basis on which to confront the world than does enjoyment.⁶⁷⁹ Of course, in normal experience, each of these layers is experienced simultaneously as a unity, but we can, through the phenomenological method, isolate and examine each of these layers on its own.

⁶⁷⁶ *EE*, 51, 76; *TI*, 23-25, 35-40; 47-48, 290-291; “Ego and Totality”, in *CPP*, 28-29; “Work of Edmund Husserl”, in *DEH*, 77. cf. Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 74-80, 108-109; Ward, “Time and Salvation”, 159-161; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 57-58.

⁶⁷⁷ *TI*, 152-154.

⁶⁷⁸ *TI*, 154-156. cf. Caputo, “*Adieu—sans Dieu*”, in Bloechl, ed., op.cit., 276-278, 282-285; Wyschogrod, “Language and alterity”, 194.

⁶⁷⁹ *TI*, 156-158.

The move away from the dangers of collapsing into “anonymous existence” and toward stable self-sensing leads to exerting the effort of “labor” (*travail*). The self-sensing experience of labor is an experience of one’s body as able to grasp and manipulate the world, not just enjoy it, fear it, and be sheltered from it.⁶⁸⁰ The experience of exerting effort involves both a felt “upsurge” of internal “energy” and a feeling of “fatigue”, of having to overcome the resistance of one’s body and of the material world.⁶⁸¹ In labor the world is presented to me no longer as the pure fact that “there is” something or as that which nourishes me, but as composed of manipulable and separate things.⁶⁸² Reason and language also arise on this basis of self-sensing to allow me to avoid the dangers of anonymous existence, so as to allow me to understand things, the better to be able to manipulate and control them, and to separate myself from them. As Scheler and Merleau-Ponty also recognized, rationality is experienced as arising on the basis of more fundamental layers of experience.⁶⁸³

III.B. TRANSCENDENCE

Although labor and reason, which are layers in most experiences of self-sensing, allow some escape from the feeling of being trapped in oneself and from the threat of the anonymous existence of the world, they still do not allow for genuine self-transcendence. By this, Levinas means that they do not allow me to move towards what is other than me, insofar as it is other than me. Labor and reason, our free powers to act and to know, are “totalizing”. Through them, he thinks, I control things and reduce them to concepts that I possess.⁶⁸⁴ Reason and intentionality in general focus on comprehensible and conceptualizable commonalities among

⁶⁸⁰ *TI*, 158, 166; “Ego and Totality”, in *CPP*, 38-39.

⁶⁸¹ *EE*, 31-32, 81-82; *TI*, 160.

⁶⁸² *TI*, 160-161.

⁶⁸³ *TI*, 168-170; “Freiburg”, in *DEH*, 36; “Intentionality and Metaphysics”, in *DEH*, 124.

⁶⁸⁴ *TI*, 161-162, 168; “Language and Proximity”, in *CPP*, 120

things.⁶⁸⁵ To consider the world rationally is to consider the world idealistically, according to Levinas; it is to think that the world maps exactly onto our concepts.⁶⁸⁶ Levinas does not think that only explicitly idealistic philosophies fall into this problematic way of viewing the world; rather, he thinks that any philosophy, theology, science, or political theory that considers our relation to the world only or primarily in cognitive terms reduces the world and other persons to our concepts, and so is a form of “idealism” in this sense. This is the sense of 'idealism' and 'idealistic' that will be used for the remainder of this section on Levinas, since this is the sense with which Levinas uses these terms, not because I endorse this usage.

But Levinas contends that we have a “desire”, felt in self-sensing, to transcend every totality, a desire for “goodness” and the “infinite”, a desire to encounter what is beyond ourselves and our knowledge, and so beyond any reduction of things to concepts or to all-encompassing “being”.⁶⁸⁷ Again, this claim might seem hyperbolic to some readers or not to match some readers' experience. By this sort of “desire” for “transcendence”, Levinas means our orientation towards ways of encountering other persons and things without seeking to comprehend that other person or thing fully and without seeking to manipulate and control that other person or thing. For example, I can have “desires” to be kind to other persons, to be friends with another person, and to sacrifice my life for the sake of another person. All of these desires or tendencies of mine are desires for goodness, for example, for making others' lives and the world better. They are not desires to control or to comprehend others according to some intellectual system, but a desire to come into another sort of contact with what is other than me, insofar as it is really something other than me. I am not kind to or friends with others insofar as I

⁶⁸⁵ *OBBE*, 165; “Language and Proximity”, in *CPP*, 109-113.

⁶⁸⁶ *TI*, 216-218; *OBBE*, 63, 87.

⁶⁸⁷ *TI*, 34, 63; *OBBE*, 158-162; “Philosophy and the Idea of Infinity”, in *CPP*, 56-57. cf. Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 106.

understand them or can manipulate them, but with others insofar as they are real other persons. This relation cannot be understood as a kind of cognitive relation or relation of labor and physical control, but is a relation of another kind. Each of these is also a desire for the “infinite”: the desire to be kind and to be a friend are infinite because these tasks are never complete, but continue to go on over time and always demand more of me than I have yet given to these tasks. The desire to sacrifice myself for another is infinite because it is complete and final, giving all that I am for the other. Thus, many of our relations, indeed all of what Levinas calls our “social relations” involve this sort of desire.

III.B.1. SENSATION AND PROXIMITY

An experience that indicates that the world is not reducible to our concepts, consciousness, or intentionality, in the sense of this reduction explained in the last section, is the experience of sensation. As John Drabinski points out, Levinas is always seeking to discover the origins of our experiences.⁶⁸⁸ Levinas notes that conscious experience does not account for itself, but is conditioned by prior events, to which I do not have direct conscious access.⁶⁸⁹ For example, in sense perception, I might sense some colors or sounds. But by the time I am consciously aware of this perception, some events have already occurred in me: I have already been affected by the perceived thing. Conscious cognition depends on prior passive events that cannot be controlled, that do not enter into experience, and that cannot be adequately represented.⁶⁹⁰ I know that something has happened to me when I have an experience of sense-perception, since I did not invent what I perceive. I experience a sensation as what Levinas calls a “trace” (*trace*), that is, as an effect of a particular kind. A trace is something that indicates that

⁶⁸⁸ Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 6, 19-21, 44-45, 68-69.

⁶⁸⁹ *TI*, 90-93, 135-137; *OBBE*, 62.

⁶⁹⁰ *TI*, 168-170; *OBBE*, 14-15, 68-72. cf. Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 74-78; Llewelyn, “Language”, 119.

it has a prior source, but does not completely reveal what that source is; the source is now absent, and the event whereby the trace was formed is now lost in the past. A footprint is an example of a trace: the shape and regularity of the footprint indicates that it has been formed by some prior event, but one cannot have direct access to that event by examining the footprint, since it is in the past.⁶⁹¹ The experience of sensation is a “trace” because I experience sensation as passive, as having been formed in me not by own volition or imagination, but by some cause to which I do not have direct conscious access. When I see the computer in front of me, for example, I am aware of the computer, but I am also aware that this sense perception of the computer has been formed in me passively by some cause or event to which I do not have direct conscious access. The passivity of sensation indicates to me that there is more going on in sensation than that to which I have direct access, but the experience of sensation does not directly reveal to me the causal mechanisms that brought about the sensation. Sensation thus reveals to me that it has a source that is outside my conscious awareness, but a phenomenological examination of sensation cannot give me conscious access to that source; it is already in the past, since the causal activity that brought about the experienced sensation has already occurred by the time I am aware of the sensation. It must be remembered that this is not a claim about causality as it actually operates, but a phenomenological claim about how it is experienced as operating.

Intentional relationships with things, such as are had in perception and reason, presupposes the non-intentional relationship of “proximity” (*proximité*), the nearness of things to one another, the way in which things affect one another, in a way that is prior to and gives rise to conscious experience. This is a way in which I am in relation to things that is not a cognitive

⁶⁹¹ *OBBE*, 93, 100,140; “Phenomenon and Enigma”, in *CPP*, 66-67; “Meaning and Sense”, in *CPP*, 103-106. cf. Caputo, “*Adieu—sans Dieu*”, 301; Waldenfels, “Face”, 77; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 159-161.

relation or a relation of control. Prior to being conscious of something I am “in proximity” to and affected by it. To be in “proximity” is not necessarily to be spatially close to something, but close to it in the sense that I am “exposed” (*exposée*) to it and its effects, in that it can affect, nourish, or threaten me.⁶⁹² As we shall see more later on, I can find myself in proximity to persons who are spatially very distant, as when I find myself called to help someone far away. I am aware of this proximity and exposure, for example, through the feelings of enjoyment and suffering in self-sensing.⁶⁹³ But I cannot fully consciously be aware of my proximity to other things; rather, I am aware that certain experiences I have, such as sensation, seem to have been passively formed in me by what is other than me prior to my conscious awareness of my relations to these things that are other than me. In the example given in the last paragraph, I am physically exposed to the computer in such a way that a sense perception of the computer can be formed in me; the exposure to the computer is prior to my sensation of the computer. Or I sense the way in which I enjoy or suffer from the world around me, and note that, prior to being able to enjoy or suffer from things, I must be in proximity to them and they must be able to affect me. This is what Drabinski calls an “original” and “material” experience, on the basis of which reflective and intentional experiences are built, but on which one cannot fully reflect.⁶⁹⁴ It cannot be fully reflected on because reflection, as Levinas understands it, is intentional, and thus in reflecting, we generalize, focusing only the features of what happens to me that can be comprehended and directly remembered. But the events of proximity, exposure, and being affected can only be considered through the traces they leave behind, such as experiences of enjoyment, suffering, and sensation. I have always already been exposed to something other me

⁶⁹² *TI*, 136; *OBBE*, 15, 63, 80. cf. Waldenfels, “Face”, 74-76; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 48-50.

⁶⁹³ *EE*, 53-57.

⁶⁹⁴ Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 76.

before I can reflect on this exposure; I am only aware of this exposure in the non-reflective or “tacit” layer of my self-sensing lived body experience, and there only through the effects or “traces” that the exposure leaves on me.

III.B.2. EROS

Another example of a non-idealist experience that involves “proximity” to those other than and transcendent to me is erotic experience, the experience of sexual intimacy with another person. Such an experience involves a sort of self-sensing that differs in important respects from other experiences of self-sensing.⁶⁹⁵ In what Jean-Luc Marion, building on Levinas, calls the experience of “erotic flesh” (*la chair érotique*), I experience my body as being felt by the other person, and his or her body being felt by me. I experience myself as trying to internally live the sensations and the enjoyment of the other person, and I experience my sensations and enjoyment as almost being lived by my partner. In doing so, I experience the individuality of both myself and my partner.⁶⁹⁶ I and my partner try to move toward a unity of lived bodies and of enjoyments in sexual intimacy; this is perhaps the most powerful version of the experience of intercorporeity described by Merleau-Ponty.⁶⁹⁷ I experience the other neither entirely in terms of the enjoyment that comes from the satisfaction of needs, nor entirely in terms of the desire for what is utterly transcendent to or different than me, but in terms of an interplay of advance and withdrawal, a “contact” with the other which is an expression of our affection for one another.⁶⁹⁸ I experience my aroused self-sensing as given to me by the other person, as not originating with me, but as

⁶⁹⁵ *TI*, 258. The quotation from Rilke that is the epigraph to this study expresses the self-sensing of eros particularly well.

⁶⁹⁶ *TI*, 265, 270; Marion, *EP*, 114-115, 126. cf. Irigaray, “Fecundity of the Caress”, in Cohen, ed., *op.cit.*, 231-232.

⁶⁹⁷ *EE*, 43-44; Marion, *EP*, 127.

⁶⁹⁸ *TI*, 257-259, 262; *TO*, 86; “Sensibility”, in Johnson and Smith, eds., *op.cit.*, 64; Marion, *EP*, 138-139, 144. cf. Ciocan, “Embodiment”, 15-16; Ward, “Time and Salvation”, 158-159.

activated in me by the touch or sight of my partner.⁶⁹⁹ As in sensation, these events of proximity to my partner happen prior to my reflective intentional consciousness and without my complete control; once again, exposure to another gives rise to and founds my conscious experience.

In erotic experience, there is a new sort of experience of resistance (*résistance*), different from the resistance to effort displayed by all other material things. The resistance of my body in erotic experience is experienced as my body not wanting to resist my partner and the experience of my partner trying not to resist me. In this way, the existence, importance, and interiority of the other person are given in a different way from any other experience of material things.⁷⁰⁰ At times in erotic experience, I can sense myself yearning to sense what my partner is sensing. This, Levinas contends, is another example of my yearning to “escape” the body I sense myself to be. By this he means that I sense myself striving for complete union with the other person; I sense myself as not wanting to resist the other in the way that material things resist one another, as wanting to transcend or go beyond my normal self-sensing experiences in union with the other. Thus, I sense my materiality in a new way in sexual or erotic experiences, as striving not to resist union with my partner, even though we of course cannot be completely joined together: I can never really sense the self-sensing or the interiority of the other person, even in the most intimate erotic union.⁷⁰¹ Levinas calls this new experience of my materiality the “ultramateriality” of the

⁶⁹⁹ Marion, *EP*, 123. cf. Irigaray, “Fecundity of the Caress”, 233.

⁷⁰⁰ *TI*, 156, 265-266, 276-277; Marion, *EP*, 117-119, 136.

⁷⁰¹ *TI*, 265-266, 276-277; Marion, *EP*, 143-144. Levinas spends some space discussing masculinity and femininity; I leave out a discussion of that here, since it is not strictly necessary for an account of the experience of self-sensing, which is common to all human persons, and because of the controversy in the secondary literature that surrounds the fact that his account is easily open to a sexist interpretation, which is not relevant to this study. For Levinas’ discussions of masculinity and femininity see *EE*, 85; *TI*, 154-158, 257-258, 270; *TO*, 86-89. For the secondary literature on the subject see Tina Chanter, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas*, (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Richard Cohen, “The Metaphysics of Gender”, in *Elevations*, (Chicago: University of

body. My body is capable of not just resisting other persons as other material things do or just intertwining with other persons perceptually and intellectually. It is also capable of striving for a union of self-sensing with another person, of expressing my desire and my affection, and of experiencing another person's affection.⁷⁰²

Erotic experience shows how much our self-sensing finds our experience of space and time: in intimacy, space and time are experienced as entirely oriented around the beloved person, even if the other person is distant in terms of physical space. When I am attracted erotically to another person, I sometimes experience that person as the “center of my world”, of being the high point of the history of my life; I feel “out of place” when that person is not present. Whereas I normally experience my body as the center of my spatiotemporal world, in erotic attraction and intimacy, this self-sensed centrality is displaced onto my partner. Here, of course, as with many issues in phenomenology, we must set aside physical, natural philosophical, or metaphysical theories as to the nature of space and time; here we are considering various ways in which space and time are presented to us experientially. Erotic experience presents us with new experiences of self-sensing, and so new experiences of our bodies, space, and time.⁷⁰³

This experience of self-sensing is similar in important ways to other experiences of self-sensing. In eros, my self-sensing is still the experience of the lived body described above; eros also includes self-sensing my body as sheltered and welcomed by another, and as capable of expressing its interiority.⁷⁰⁴ Sexual experience is bound up with the experience of oneself as a body-thing in a curious way, especially in heterosexual intimacy, in that here the experience of

Chicago Press, 1994); Irigaray, “Fecundity of the Caress”, 239; Gerard Loughlin, *Alien Sex*, (London: Blackwell, 2004), 6-8; Robert Manning, “Thinking the Other without Violence?”, *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 5 (1991): 132-143.

⁷⁰² *EE*, 85; *TI*, 256.

⁷⁰³ Marion, *EP*, 26-37, 129-131.

⁷⁰⁴ *TI*, 257-258.

trying to coincide with another person at the level of the lived body can lead to the conception of a child. The movement toward union, which is an entirely different experience of the materiality and the existence of the other from the normal experience of a material thing, is experienced as bringing about a child.⁷⁰⁵

III.B.3. THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL RELATION

The most important example of proximity and self-sensing for Levinas is the ethical encounter with the “other” (*autrui*), that is, with another human person. When I encounter another person and see his or her “face” (*visage*) and hear his or her speech, I do not just encounter something to be perceived or understood. Rather, the other person presents him or herself as someone with whom I can converse, and someone whom I am “called” (*appelé*) to treat ethically.⁷⁰⁶ I enter into a “social relationship” (*relation sociale*) with the other, a relationship that differs from all other relationships because it is irreducible to a relationship of cognition, and because in it I sense myself to be commanded to act ethically towards this other person.⁷⁰⁷ Levinas does not mean by this that when I encounter other people, they always verbally command me to act ethically toward them; rather, he thinks that, when we encounter others, we sense within ourselves a “command” or “call” to respect the other person. This is how persons are presented to me; unless I encounter another person as someone that I must respect and serve, Levinas thinks, I have not really encountered him or her as a person who is other than me, but I have reduced him or her to some conception of mine. When I meet another person I feel that the other has already made demands on me, that I must not, for example, murder him or her, and that I must, for example, serve his or her needs. This happens, at least to a minimal

⁷⁰⁵ *TI*, 266-269, 271-272; Marion, *EP*, 202-206; Marion, “The Voice Without Name”, in Bloechl, ed., *op.cit.*, 235-240. cf. Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 136-137.

⁷⁰⁶ *TI*, 39. cf. Marion, *IE*, 115-119.

⁷⁰⁷ *TI*, 109.

degree, with every other person I meet. I do not experience these imperatives as propositional beliefs or attitudes given to me, or as some other sort of intentional object, but as a sort of lens through which I encounter the other; the other is presented as requiring that I be good to him or her.⁷⁰⁸ In many respects, these claims may seem to be in conflict with what Scheler, for example, said about ethics involving responding to the value of another person; the relationship between these seemingly conflicting claims will be considered in a later section.

To converse with another person is not to consider the other person as an object of theoretical inquiry; it is, for example, to be directed or entreated or taught by the other.⁷⁰⁹ Conversation requires that I be open and welcoming to the “saying” (*le Dire*) of the other person, that is, I must be open to what they are saying as we converse; I cannot ignore what they are saying right now to reflect on the content of what they just “said” (*le Dit*). When I converse with another person, I find myself commanded to respect him or her, to treat him or her according to the social, not the theoretical, relationship.⁷¹⁰ Again, Levinas is not claiming that this need to respect the other is inferred from something about the other person; rather, he is claiming that this is the fundamental way in which I encounter other persons.

When he or she speaks, the other’s body is presented to me not as a thing or a lived body, but as an “expression”; the other gives him or herself to me in the expressivity of speech and of his or her face. I do not experience another person first as a set of physical features or behaviors, from which I subsequently infer his or her subjectivity and my need to respect him or her. I do not experience the other person primarily as an intentional object at all. Rather, I experience the other’s self-expression in a new way; I experience myself exposed and proximate to the “other as

⁷⁰⁸ *TI*, 78. cf. Marion, *IE*, 116.

⁷⁰⁹ *TI*, 51, 181-182, 202-203.

⁷¹⁰ *TI*, 93; *OBBE*, 5-6. cf. Caputo, “*Adieu—Sans Dieu*”, 284.

such”, as a whole person, not just some thinkable aspect of him or her. In conversation, the whole other, entirely different from me, is given to me, in a way that exceeds every concept I could have of the other, in a way that demands a response of service rather than a conceptualizing thought.⁷¹¹ When I am with others, I talk to them or deal with them as one person to another; I do not, or rather I should not, treat them primarily as an object of thought or perception, Levinas thinks.

I cannot predict what the other will say before he or she says it; the other is in control of the expression he or she presents to me. In conversing with the other, and in being commanded by and serving the other, I feel that my desire for transcending myself is being fulfilled. We have already seen that Levinas thinks that we have a “desire” to transcend ourselves, a “desire” for goodness and for the infinite, in the sense of these terms explained above. I can never fully control or understand the other, because of his or her self-sensing interiority, and, Levinas thinks, when I encounter another person, I find myself called to respect and serve the other. This call gives rise in me to a new desire for goodness. Levinas also contends that this experience of being called to serve the other can never be completely fulfilled; the call gives rise to an infinite desire. Levinas argues that I could never completely serve the other; the other would always have new needs, which I would experience myself as being called to serve. Our primary experience of other persons, in light of the experience of being morally called to serve them, is of being subservient to others, of needing to help and serve them infinitely, not of being equal to them. Levinas does not think that we can spell out the content of our obligations to the other, because we experience them as infinite. In dealing with another person, I am led to desire to serve the other more and more, to keep on respecting and dealing with the other, to be more and more

⁷¹¹ *TI*, 52, 192, 201-209; *OBBE*, 48-51, 80. cf. Llewelyn, “Language”, 132-134; Waldenfels, “Face”, 65; Wyschogrod, “Language and alterity”, 193-194, 200.

morally better than I already am.⁷¹²

I can never say that I have done all that I can do for the other person, and, because of the other's interiority and self-sensing, to which I have no direct access, I can never say that I have comprehended another person and I can never control another person. I properly deal with other persons not when I try to understand them conceptually or when I try to control them, but when I deal with them ethically, when I serve them, when I recognize their interiority and my call to serve them, and when I enter into conversation with them.⁷¹³ The social relationship is deeper than the intertwining of intercorporeity described by Merleau-Ponty: to shake another person's hand in friendship is not just a perceptual and intellectual intertwining with that other, but a gesture of respect, an expression of ethical goodness made towards the other through the body.⁷¹⁴

Just as with sensation, I experience the ethical imperative to serve and respect the other as a "trace". By this, Levinas means I experience this imperative as having been given to me, without having conscious access to the event in which it was given; I did not discover this imperative, or invent it, or infer it from other facts. Rather, when I encounter another person, I always find myself in a state of having been called to be good to others. I experience this call in experiencing the proximity of another person. As Levinas describes the experience, when I encounter another person, I always find that I have already been called to serve this person, and so I have already not done enough for this person; part of an encounter with another person is the experience that I could have done more for this person had I met them earlier.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹² *TI*, 50-52, 63, 198-203; *OBBE*, 37-38, 66; "Meaning and Sense", in *CPP*, 94; "Language and Proximity", in *CPP*, 125-126. cf. Marion, *BG*, 233; Purcell, *Levinas and Theology*, 122-125, 151.

⁷¹³ *TI*, 36-39, 78-79, 200-201; *OBBE*, 159-160; "Ego and Totality", in *CPP*, 43-44. cf. Marion, *IE*, 119.

⁷¹⁴ "Sensation", in Johnson and Smith, eds., op.cit., 64.

⁷¹⁵ *OBBE*, 93, 100, 140; "Phenomenon and Enigma", in *CPP*, 65-66; "Meaning and Sense", in

The ethical imperative, which is always to greater service, also does not just terminate with one other person. Rather, in encountering one person and one ethical call, Levinas contends that I also become aware that there are other people whom I am also called to respect and serve. I experience myself under an ethical command such that I ought not to help just one person to the detriment of others. In perhaps one of his boldest claims, Levinas argues that to encounter one other person, even in the simplest of conversations or the briefest of glances, is to be called to work for justice for all people, because of this call that I find within me.⁷¹⁶

I experience my social relation to the other and the ethical call as a kind of self-sensing. I sense myself as a vulnerable body, capable of enjoyment and suffering. Because I experience myself this way, I find that I am capable of feeling for the suffering and vulnerabilities of others. The deepest sense of my self-sensing is that I can feel and suffer for others. In sensing myself in the proximity of a suffering person, I feel that I have been “substituted” (*substitué*) for others in their suffering. I experience this “substitution”, for example, in feeling pain or sadness at seeing another's pain or sadness, in feeling being called to sacrifice my own food or money to nourish others, and even, in extreme cases, in feeling called to die for another, if necessary.⁷¹⁷ I thus find that my self-sensed individuality allows me to feel for others and so be able to serve them ethically; my self-sensing is, as Levinas puts it, “entangled” (*empêtré*) with that of others. I should not remain complacent in my enjoyment of the world, sacrificing others to my own needs or remaining indifferent to the needs of others, for in my very self-sensing and enjoyment I am

CPP, 102-109. cf. Caputo, “*Adieu—sans Dieu*”, 301; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 152-153, 158-161; Waldenfels, “Face”, 77; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 159-161.

⁷¹⁶ *TI*, 78-79, 241-247; *OBBE*, 16, 157, 161; “Meaning and Sense”, in *CPP*, 103-104. cf. Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 106-109.

⁷¹⁷ *TI*, 35; *OBBE*, 115-118, 126. cf. Bernasconi, “Substitution”; Caputo, “*Adieu—sans Dieu*”, 286-287; Cohen, “Death”, 75; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 223.

called to serve and respect others.⁷¹⁸ I am “awakened” (*réveillé*) by the other; this is the best form of my desire for what is other than myself, and for goodness and for the infinite.⁷¹⁹ I experience the call to serve others in being “exposed” to them or when I am in “proximity” to them, but this does not necessarily mean spatial proximity. In hearing about the victims of a disaster, or in receiving a request for charitable aid in the mail, I can experience the moral call; such experience can awaken in me this feeling for the other which leads me to ethical service.

I can embrace this call and act ethically; I can also refuse this call, though if I do, I still consciously respond to the call I find in me, for the ethical call and other people cannot be entirely evaded.⁷²⁰ I can physically manipulate others, but I can never seize hold of and control their interiority and expressivity; at most, I can seduce, torture, or destroy them. In encountering the face of another person, I experience my freedom and my reason as threats to him or her, since I can use them to cause harm. The other person exerts an “ethical resistance” (*résistance éthique*) which I must choose whether to honor or not, but which commands me; this resistance is not like the resistance of material things’ real existence, nor is it like the welcoming resistance of sex. Rather, it is experienced as a transcendent normative command to help and not harm, which I can nevertheless ignore.⁷²¹ But the other person and the ethical call do not oppose my rationality and freedom; rather, the call invests them with responsibility, allowing me to become good. I find myself called to use my rationality and freedom not to seek to comprehend or control the other person, but to devise ways to serve others and work for justice for all.⁷²²

⁷¹⁸ *OBBE*, 74, 77, 88. cf. Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 180-181; Waldenfels, “Face”, 73.

⁷¹⁹ cf. Tengelyi, “Selfhood”, 410-412.

⁷²⁰ *TI*, 201; *OBBE*, 144-145. cf. Kleinberg-Levin, “Persecution”, 210-219

⁷²¹ *TI*, 199 *OBBE*, 78; “Freedom and Command”, in *CPP*, 19, 21-22.

⁷²² *TI*, 230-231, 244-247; *OBBE*, 140-144. cf. Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity*, 40-41; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 233; and my “Levinas and Thomas Aquinas on Ethical Subjectivity: Common Ground?”, forthcoming in *The Heythrop Journal*.

Thus another layer of the lived body experience of self-sensing is revealed: it is able to “be for the other”.⁷²³ The self-sensing experience of being for the other once again reorients my experience of space and time: I feel these to be structured in relation to other people and their needs.⁷²⁴ It reorients my freedom and my reason: these need not be totalizing, but can be ethically oriented towards justice, “disinterested” and “respectful”, using their calculative and equalizing powers to ensure that everyone is served. It can be useful to consider people rationally, as falling into categories or having essences, but only subsequent to the ethical call, only subsequent to the experience of the call to infinite service, and only because this use of reason can facilitate being just and fair to everyone. Levinas thus argues that theoretical reason and the search for understanding and truth are only good if they are being used in the service of achieving justice for all.⁷²⁵ This use of reason in the service of justice gives rise to ethical theories, for example about what our duties are and what the rights of persons are; these theories can be helpful in thinking about how to make the world more just. But ethical theories only have the normative force that they do because of the prior experience of being called unconditionally and infinitely to serve the other. Any ethical theory that would limit that sense of being called is a “totalizing” theory, Levinas thinks, a theory that diverts us from the very foundation of ethics.

In experiencing being “called” and “substituted” for the other I experience the fact that I have been “created” (*créé*) as an individual subject in the event of the ethical call. The “desire” that Levinas thinks we experience as orienting towards the world is itself something given to us. I would not be a self-sensing subject unless I had received this desire. And this desire, this orientation toward the world, is itself a response to the call to goodness. Since this call founds the

⁷²³ *OBBE*, 76-77; “From Consciousness to Wakefulness”, in *DEH*, 166-167.

⁷²⁴ *OBBE*, 38, 48, 82.

⁷²⁵ *TI*, 50, 244-247, 304-307; “From Consciousness to Wakefulness”, in *DEH*, 166-167.

desire for what is other than me, and that desire leads to self-sensing, and self-sensing founds reason, then the call to goodness is the very foundation of reason, and reason must be used to serve goodness. But although the call to goodness is the foundation of self-sensing, and of all the layers of experience that arise on the basis of self-sensing, we often either deny this or overlook this, especially when we are not around other people. These are some reasons why we can have experiences of self-sensing, such as “enjoyment”, without a sense of the moral call.

The call is not the actualization of a prior potentiality that is experienced in my self-sensing prior to receiving the ethical call; rather, the ethical call is the very origin of my self-sensing. Only I can sense myself, but even more so, only I can sense myself being called to serve. Even though I often ignore it, to be conscious and self-sensing is to find oneself already called to respect and serve others. The call to goodness is given, Levinas contends, as absolute and coming from a source transcendent to me. The ethical relationship to others is, Levinas says, properly called a “religious relation” (*rapport religieux*). I can say, experientially, that it is God Who calls me to be good.⁷²⁶ It is appropriate to use religious language here because of the inescapability and absoluteness of the call, and since it is this call that creates me, experientially, as this ethical subject.

Levinas finally argues, as we have already seen Scheler and Aquinas say, that persons

⁷²⁶ The claim that the ethical call is properly said to be given as coming from God does not entail that God in fact exists; again, claims of phenomenology, including claims of this phenomenological ethics, must be kept separate from claims of metaphysics and theology. Indeed, Levinas contends that the only way we can properly talk about “God” is in terms of ethical command; we cannot make claims as to whether God, in fact, exists. It must be remembered that Levinas is presenting a phenomenologically grounded philosophy. The ethical call is experienced as coming from beyond and prior to our experience, as from an absolute source, which he calls ‘God’. We have this experience whether or not there actually is a God. See *TI*, 80, 105, 293-294; *OBBE*, 104-105; “Language and Proximity”, in *CPP* 114; “In the Image of God”, in *BV*, 158. cf. Adina Bozga, *The Exasperating Gift of Singularity*, (Bucharest: Zeta Books, 2009), ch.5; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 167.

and the ethical call transcend history and the physical world. The ethical call is experienced as coming from God and it is experienced as infinite and inescapable. Persons, as we have already seen, Levinas thinks, cannot be reduced to any system; they cannot be considered as merely instances of some biological species, or as products of some historical period or culture, but as transcending all such systems. The interiority and self-sensing of persons makes each person unique, unable to be understood entirely, unable to be explained on the basis of any system. Likewise, the ethical call cannot be explained as the product of biological processes, or of a particular historical period or culture; it is given to me as absolute, as coming from a source beyond all such systems. Because we find within us an ethical call that is experienced as coming from an absolute source, we are able to judge whether particular cultures or historical periods are moral or not; the ethical call is given as transcending such things, and so is a standard in light of which we can judge them, Levinas thinks.⁷²⁷

III.C. OBJECTIONS AND INTEGRATION WITH OTHER PHENOMENOLOGISTS

Further reflection on Levinas' account of self-sensing will help us overcome some of the disagreements among the phenomenologists and the Levinasian objections to the thesis of this study already raised in Chapter One. It is important to keep two layers of Levinas' project separate, so as to separate what is correct and incorrect in his account. First, Levinas points us toward some fundamental experiences and conditioning events in our lives.⁷²⁸ These claims must be assessed in light of our experience. Second, Levinas interprets these experiences and events to give an account of ethics as "first philosophy". According to Levinas, the foundation of philosophy is not an account of what there is or why there is anything, as in what he calls

⁷²⁷ *TI*, 23, 231, 246-247; "Transcendence and Evil", in *CPP*, 185. cf. Cohen, "Ethical Body", 37-38; Wyschogrod, *Ethical Metaphysics*, 158.

⁷²⁸ cf. Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 49.

ontology. Rather, first philosophy is ethics, that is, the transcendent event of being called ethically to serve others. All other philosophy must be built on this foundation, and any philosophy that goes against this in any way is to be condemned not just as wrong but as evil, subordinating ethical service to mere knowledge. I contend that Levinas' descriptions of our experience and its ethical conditions has much in it that is correct, but his interpretations are in many respects questionable, and can be argued against separately from his phenomenology.

Jacques Derrida and Dominique Janicaud have criticized Levinas for departing from justifiable phenomenological description into the language of religious prophecy and moralistic condemnation. They argue that his position that the ethical call is absolute and prior to all experience and all phenomenological or ontological philosophizing shuts down any debate ahead of time; there is no way to criticize Levinas, to falsify his interpretation of our experience, without becoming, in Levinas' view, "violent" and "totalizing" towards others. Levinas' interpretation of the ethical call separates me too much from other people, and even makes the other person who calls me dominate me in a way that is potentially violent to me and not in accord with my experience of freedom. His account of the social relation is foreign to our ordinary social experiences, which are fundamentally not just of being called by others but of trying to get to know others as well.⁷²⁹ Levinas does often use hyperbolic language as he considers the origins of meaning in our lives, and so his interpretations, as we have already seen, must be translated into more straight-forward terms.⁷³⁰ Here I try to separate Levinas' true claims about human experience from his questionable interpretations of those experience, so as to effect a rapprochement between him and other thinkers who have described aspects of the same experience but who did not interpret their experiences as he did.

⁷²⁹ Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics"; Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 35-49.

⁷³⁰ cf. Cohen, "Death", 72; Drabinski, *Sensibility and Singularity*, 20-21, 25, 68-71, 125-126.

One way in which these can be separated is by noting that Levinas' interpretation of self-sensing and the ethical call is in part based on an incomplete and questionable account of our rational and intellectual experiences. Correcting Levinas' phenomenology on this point is necessary to provide a more accurate phenomenology, to allow his account of self-sensing to be joined with the other three accounts, and to use the experience revealed by this joined account as evidence for Aquinas' metaphysical account of the human person. If Levinas were entirely correct in his account of reason and ontology a metaphysics like Aquinas' would in fact be an attempt to control others, to reduce them to ideas, and to ignore the call to ethical service in favor of theoretical knowledge. There might then be ethical reasons to reject Aquinas' metaphysics, if we agreed with Levinas that ethics must be the foundation of philosophy. As has already been pointed out, Levinas claims that when we consider things rationally but apart from the call to justice, we reduce them to representations and we cannot deal with the transcendent or the "other as other". At best, we can rationally consider how things give themselves to us intentionally and so be led toward the ethical call, which founds reason. Levinas likewise understands "being" in terms of what is actually manifested to intentionality and conformable to a system. In constructing an ontology, we idealize and focus on comprehending things conceptually. Such a system leaves out self-sensing, which can only be felt not comprehended, as well as the event of the ethical call and the encounter with the other, which are always prior to me and never experienced intentionally.

A problem here is that Levinas focuses on only one aspect of our rational and intellectual experiences, and on only one aspect of our experience of "being". I find, experientially, that I can do far more rationally and intellectually than he allows, and that things present themselves to me as "beings" differently than how Levinas understands this notion. Levinas has certainly

phenomenologically elucidated genuine experiences that we have, but he has also problematically limited his account of these experiences.⁷³¹ When we think about and understand the world we do not necessarily reduce things to representational ideas or to just the aspects that are manifested to us. We can intellectually consider things without trying to comprehend them totally. We are able to use intellectual judgment in a way that affirms things' reality as other than me, as Aquinas contends. We can understand things through our ideas of them, without thinking that things are nothing but their idealizable or representable content. We primarily understand real things, not ideas of them; in rational thought, we consider the "other as other", as it actually is. We can even speculatively reach beyond the world as it has perceptually and intelligibly manifested itself to us through metaphysical reasoning from effects to causes, and so discover the causes and essences of things. Reason, if used properly, conforms itself to the world from which it receives its content; it does not reduce the world to one's representations or concepts. Reason is, as Scheler puts it, "world-open", not so as to comprehend the world and reduce it to oneself, but so as to be ever open to receiving the world as it presents itself. Indeed, my reason includes "desire" in Levinas' sense: it is oriented towards the world, towards what is other than me. Rational thought also allows us to consider how to treat things ethically and to be aware of how we are called to treat them, in a way which reason did not invent and to which it finds itself called to obedient; through rationality we can discover the value of things.

Levinas may be correct that the moral call is given as something absolute, that it is felt in self-sensing, and that rationality must be used in accord with this call, but he is wrong about the role we find reason playing in the call's discovery and articulation. Reason, the power to universalize and think things through, is certainly operative when we consider what we ought to do in various

⁷³¹ cf. Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 38.

situations, and when we respond to the ethical calls we encounter in our daily life. We can, using reason, discover new ethical calls and defend the calls already discovered; it takes rational work, not just self-sensing, to know that I am called ethically, even though, once discovered, this call is felt in self-sensing and is found to have always been commanding me, though I did not know it. In this way we can affirm with Levinas that all persons ought to follow the ethical call and that the ethical call is “in” all persons, but still explain how certain persons, such as those who do not have adequate use of their reason, can fail to notice this. Certainly we can and often do use reason immorally, violently, or reductionistically, but we need not do so, as a careful examination of our experience shows.

We see here that just as the phenomenologists can provide evidence for Aquinas’ metaphysics, so can Aquinas’ philosophy can correct deficiencies in the work of the phenomenologists. Aquinas describes some intellectual experiences that Levinas overlooks, such as intellectual receptivity and judgment. Aquinas’ account thereby allows us to correct and enlarge Levinas’ phenomenology of reason. Some of Levinas’ errors arise because he rejects a good deal of pre-modern philosophy without giving it due consideration. He fails to see the ways in which pre-modern philosophers anticipated modern and contemporary problems and provided genuine solutions to these problems, including the problems with which he is interested. Like some of the objectors to Aquinas with whom I have dealt, he wrongly thinks that pre-modern philosophies lack any consideration of our subjectivity. He limits his account of reason to the accounts given, for instance, by the early modern rationalists, the British empiricists, and later thinkers like Kant, Hegel, Bergson, Husserl, and Heidegger, without questioning the great deficiencies in the accounts given by these thinkers, and without turning sufficiently to the more

robust accounts of reason given by earlier thinkers and their contemporary followers.⁷³²

One might object that to use Aquinas' philosophy to correct Levinas', when my ultimate goal is to provide evidence for Aquinas' account, is circular reasoning. But I am not here using Aquinas' metaphysics of the human person to correct Levinas, but his account of our acts, which he himself presents as evidence for his metaphysics. Thus, this use of Aquinas to correct Levinas is not circular in the context of this study: I am not assuming what I set out to find evidence for. All descriptions of our acts and experience can correct and improve upon one another, and so together provide stronger evidence for a metaphysical account.

Just as Levinas' account of reason is truncated, so is his account of "being" and of the ethical call. The being, existence, or actuality of things is not given, first and foremost, as purely comprehensible or as purely manifested to consciousness or intentionality, divorced from all ethical considerations. Nor is it presented first and foremost as a brute "anonymous" fact or system in which we find ourselves trapped and in which freedom and ethics are impossible.⁷³³ Rather, following Aquinas, it can be affirmed that "being", which is what is first given to us when we experience anything, is given as the concrete reality of each thing I encounter. The being or complete reality of each thing is given experientially as similar to, though also different from, the being of other things. I experience things as largely, but not entirely, understandable. I find that things always exceed my understanding, both in that there is always more to discover

⁷³² Levinas' reductionistic understanding of Western philosophy prior to the contemporary period can be seen at: *OE*, 51-52, 69-73; *EE*, 19; "Phenomenon and Enigma", in *CPP*, 71. Yet he draws positively on the history of philosophy and its account of rationality at times, as in *TI*, 49, 90-93, 272. In an interview cited in Bernasconi, "The Truth that Accuses", in Gary Madison and Marty Fairbain, eds. *The Ethics of Postmodernity*, (Evanston: NWU Press, 1999), 24-25, Levinas approvingly cites the early medieval philosopher Dionysius. cf. Richard Cohen, "Bergson and the emergence of an ecological age", in *Ethics, Exegesis, and Philosophy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Rolland, "Getting Out", in *OE*, 7-11.

⁷³³ Objections like these are raised in part by Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, 107-112.

about things and in that I also experience concrete beings as bearing values exerting an ethical call of some sort, which lay a claim on me, and which I both feel in my self-sensing and understand in an articulable way. My normal experience of the world, as Scheler recognizes, involves both an experience of what things are and how I am called to act towards them. The experiences of “anonymous existence”, of comprehensible and controllable “being”, of the intertwined *Gestalt* structures of the world, and even of the “face” of the other person as completely different from me are merely some of the experiences of beings which we can have.

For example, when I first encounter another person, I do indeed feel called to treat this person in certain ethical ways. I do experience the other person as irreducible to any perceptible or intelligible content.⁷³⁴ But I also encounter the person as a thing in the world, capable of being cognized in various ways. Experiences of interior self-sensing and of the social relationship are interconnected in various ways with the perceptual and intellectual experiences that Merleau-Ponty called experiences of “intertwining”. But I find that I experience myself and other persons not as just parts of a larger *Gestalt* but as individuals irreducible to and transcendent over any system.⁷³⁵ For example, I see another person’s perceptible face even as I feel that I am already called to respect and listen to that person, and these form one experience, based in self-sensing. I both understand some of what it is to be a person and understand that persons are not reducible to

⁷³⁴ cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 192. As has already been pointed out, one might object that only the members of certain cultures or groups have an ethical experience like this. It must be remembered that Levinas is not claiming much about the *content* of this ethical call: members of different cultures might experience ethical calls as calling them to do different things. It must also be remembered that even if it is not the case that everyone experiences an ethical call, everyone is still oriented towards the world in virtue of some sort of call, as will be explained below. Also, some persons do experience the ethical call, and so the human person must be the sort of thing that is able to experience such a call. Even if some people never experience such a call, the experience of the call can still be used as evidence for what we are, since it is the sort of thing that we are able to experience.

⁷³⁵ cf. Hass, *Philosophy*, 119-121, 141-144; Marion, *BG*, 196-199.

my understanding of them; I do not just understand things insofar as they fit into a larger system, but I can understand things in and of themselves, with their own individual “significance” or “meaning”, even if I cannot fully comprehend that meaning. The ethical call is given not just in feeling and self-sensing, but it is also sometimes discovered rationally or as embedded within or articulated by the teachings or customs of my community or culture. Likewise, there may be certain cultures in which the ethical call is experienced with a very different content than it is in mine, though even there it may still be experienced as a kind of self-sensing involving feeling for others. I encounter human subjectivity, both in myself and in others, as affected by the world around me and its history, but also as exceeding this world and its history, in the ways that Levinas and Scheler have pointed out. There is an interconnection between the world, other persons, and me, and between my rationality and my self-sensing, that is more complex and messy than either Merleau-Ponty’s intertwining or Levinas’ social relationship.⁷³⁶

The ethical call also is experienced in a far more complex way than Levinas allows. It is true I experience ethical calls as absolute, as coming from a source beyond the world, which we properly call divine and on which I am dependent. But I also experience the ethical call as rationally understandable, as something I must think through and that I can rationally discover, something that is not immediately clear but requires rational development, though it is not given as something that I invent. Furthermore, as Scheler points out, I do not just experience ethical calls from other persons. I experience the value of many things, each of which exerts a call to act in some way. For example, I find myself called not only to respond ethically to other people, but also to animals, plants, and certain artifacts, though not in the same ways.⁷³⁷ It is true, as Levinas

⁷³⁶ cf. Milbank, “Reciprocity, Part Two”, op.cit.; Treanor, *Aspects of Alterity*, ch.7.

⁷³⁷ cf. Barbara Jane Davy, “An Other Face of Ethics in Levinas,” *Ethics and the Environment* 12 (2002): 48; Waldenfels, “Face”, 77; Derrida, David Wills, trans., *The Animal that Therefore I*

contends, improving on Scheler, that the values of things are not just given as objects of intentional feeling, but are given non-intentionally in self-sensing, in feeling for others. For example, I can feel for a suffering animal or plant, as well as for other humans, though not necessarily in the same way; I can feel in my self-sensing the ways in which I threaten or am called to defend or respond to all sorts of things around me.

Yet these claims are not somehow entirely prior to reason; they can be rationally investigated, challenged, or demonstrated. When I encounter another person, I feel that I am called to respect him or her regardless of the perceptual or knowable features of this persons; the value of the person exerts an absolute claim on me, yet this claim addresses itself to me as the value of *a person*, that is, as the value of a certain sort of thing. Indeed, if the ethical call were not available to rational consideration, then I could never know that I was called to serve and I could never respond as a person. If the call to serve that I felt upon encountering a suffering person were not given rationally, I would not know that it was a human person confronting me and calling me. Categorization is already operative in the ethical call; things are originally given to me both in terms of what they are and in terms of how I ought to treat them. This experience includes a self-sensing experience of the proximity of the thing. Normal human experience brings all the layers of experience into play; as Scheler and Merleau-Ponty showed, the normal experience of self-sensing already involves rationality. The normal experience of self-sensing points us toward the need to explain self-sensing metaphysically, by giving an account of the causes of the various kinds of self-sensing. Levinas contends that we first find ourselves called, and reason intervenes subsequently to try to bring justice to all. I contend that ethical calls are given in a rationally distinguishable fashion: the call to serve one person is given differently than

am, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

the call to serve another, and each of these is different from the call to serve suffering animals, differentiated into a hierarchy of value as Scheler described.⁷³⁸

Levinas also is correct that we are not our own creators, but that we experience ourselves to be “created”, with an origin outside ourselves. We sense ourselves to be called already to responsibility prior to any conscious awareness that we have been called. Levinas contends that if I were not called and oriented towards goodness prior to being oriented towards knowledge, I would never go outside myself to seek knowledge. The call is an ethically responsible orientation of my powers toward the world and others. I did not decide to orient myself outward toward the world and toward others, but I find myself “created” in this way. But it could likewise be contended that if I were not oriented first to knowledge of the truth, I could never know when something was a true good; as Aquinas points out, truth itself is a desirable good, and goods must be true goods, known as such in order to be desired. We must know the good in order to pursue it, and this requires reason.⁷³⁹

Marion expands on Levinas’ phenomenology of the call in order to accommodate insights like Aquinas’. Marion argues that the call that founds our subjectivity is experienced in different ways by different people and in different situations. I not only find myself called to serve others; I can also find myself called and oriented to fulfill my own potential, to understand the world, and to love erotically some others.⁷⁴⁰ I find, both in myself and in others, in virtue of my experience of having being called in various ways, an infinite depth of subjective interiority that

⁷³⁸ cf. Marion, *IE*, 117; *ST*, II-II, q.23, a.3; q.26, a.1; Mark D. Jordan, “Theology and philosophy”, Kretzmann and Stump, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, 239; and my “Ethical Subjectivity”.

⁷³⁹ *ST* I, q.82, a.4, ad 1: “...bonum continetur sub vero, inquantum est quoddam verum intellectum; et verum continetur sub bono, inquantum est quoddam bonum desideratum.” cf. *DV* q.1, a.1; *ST* I-II, q.27, a.2

⁷⁴⁰ Marion, *IE*, 118.

requires ever new responses, but which I also come to understand in an ever deeper way.⁷⁴¹ To serve the other is not to ignore my own fulfillment; indeed, to serve the other is to fulfill what I have been created and called to be, as one who is for others.⁷⁴² The tension among the various forms of the call that first orients our powers must be worked out by each person over the course of his or her life. The common element in all of these kinds of experienced calls, and what is clearly, I think, phenomenologically correct in Levinas' account, is that I am oriented towards things and persons outside of me and towards what is good, by something good that is transcendent to me, in a way that demands my response. I experience these calls in self-sensing, but they involve all my powers in a more interconnected way than Levinas thinks.⁷⁴³

We also find that reason is able to inquire into this call and into our origins, and thereby come to affirm this call all the better and articulate it to others. By arguing that reason is unable to investigate the origins of the ethical call, Levinas is forced to say that reason necessarily distorts the very event he is trying to describe. This makes his own philosophical descriptions

⁷⁴¹ Marion, *IE*, 123-125; "Mihi magna quaestio factus sum", *Journal of Religion* 85 (2005), 1-24. Sometimes the phenomenologists claim that their accounts of experience must describe the experiences of any possible experiencing subject, even God. If this were correct, then God could never comprehend the world, since that would not allow for infinite transcendent calls and subjectivities. But to make claims about God's experience and what is possible for God (or other non-human subjects) just on the basis of a phenomenology of our experience is to go far beyond what is warranted by phenomenological evidence. There is nothing logically inconsistent in the idea of God or other intellectual substances both comprehending the world and allowing things to exert ethical calls and be subjects, especially since the human way of understanding the world is not necessarily the only way of understanding it, and since intellectual activity on its own is not necessarily immoral in the way that Levinas thinks. It is conceivable that the sensible and intelligible features of the world can be cognized otherwise than through human senses and intellect, though we cannot conceive what this must be like.

⁷⁴² cf. *ST* II-II, q.25, a.12; Marion, *IE*, 44; Scheler, *F*, 67, 101, 215-216; and my "Ethical Subjectivity".

⁷⁴³ cf. Silvia Benso, *The Face of Things: A Different Side of Ethics*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

suspect.⁷⁴⁴ A position more consonant with experience is that I find myself to be called ethically in an absolute way, but that reason can consider these calls as well, without distorting them. We can find ourselves led to question why we should be good and what the basis for goodness is; this questioning and the answers that we discover rationally can lead to a more ethical life. An account of what and why we are and what our origins and the origins of ethics are—that is, a traditional metaphysics—is necessary to understand our experience, including our ethical experience, fully.

Levinas thus gives many correct descriptions of experiences of self-sensing that we have or can have, but his account can be combined with others' accounts more than he allows. This, then, removes the objection to using Levinas' phenomenology as evidence for a traditional metaphysical account. Before showing how Levinas' and the others' accounts of self-sensing can be used as evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism, a few more aspects of this experience must first be examined. These aspects are described by Michel Henry and they allow for an even more unified account of this experience of self-sensing. Considering Henry's account of self-sensing also allows a response to some last few phenomenological objections to my project.

IV. MICHEL HENRY

As with the other three phenomenologists whom I have covered in detail, we have already seen elements of Henry's phenomenology in Chapter One. There we saw that Henry thinks that the foundation of our experience is “auto-affection” or “self-feeling” (*l'auto-affection*), that is, the feeling of the events of one's consciousness.⁷⁴⁵ There we also saw that by

⁷⁴⁴ *OBBE*, 167-171.

⁷⁴⁵ *EM*, 475-477, 488-489, 517-519, 626-628; *PPB*, 129-134, 195-198; *MP*, 38-39, 81. cf. Gabrielle Dufour-Kowalska, *Michel Henry: Un Philosophie de la Vie et de la Praxis*, (Paris: J.Vrin, 1980), 54; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 48-49, 104-106; O'Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 42-44

‘affection’, Henry, like other phenomenologists, does not mean anything like “tenderness” or “liking”, but rather he means “feeling” and “felt experience”, in the broadest senses possible. In order for anything to be manifested or given to me experientially, I must receive it as an affection or impression in lived experience. Almost all of my experiences seem to be of things outside of me; for example right now I seem to be having a visual experience of a computer and of various books on my desk, all of which seem to me to exist outside of me. Yet accompanying every such experience is the experience of the sensing or feeling of my own experience. I am aware of things in the world because I am, experientially speaking, foundationally felt or lived consciousness; at the foundation of my current visual intentional experience is the “feeling” of that experience and of my current visual impressions. Mere things, like desks and chairs, lack consciousness because they lack an interior life, that is, interior affections (*affections*) and impressions (*impressions*).⁷⁴⁶

The interior experience of “auto-affection” is a purely immanent (*immanent*) experience of ourselves, without any intentional object or content transcendent to the experience of the self as interior affections and impressions. We tend to be caught up in experiences of “the world” (*monde*) and so forget this underlying and very different experience of “life” (*vie*).⁷⁴⁷ Henry’s fundamental distinction here is between experiences of what he calls “transcendent” (*transcendant*) or “worldly” objects, in which there is some gap or difference between my experiencing and that which I experience, and “immanent” lived experiences, in which there is no such gap between my experiencing and that which I experience, between “subject” (*sujet*) and

⁷⁴⁶ *EM*, 259, 482; *MP*, 52-53; *I*, 8-9. cf. O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 94; Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 113.

⁷⁴⁷ *EM*, 262-267; *MP*, 42.

“object” (*objet*).⁷⁴⁸ The latter layer of experience is what Henry means by “auto-affection” or “self-sensing” (*le sentir soi-même*).⁷⁴⁹ Normal experience has transcendent and immanent layers.

IV.A. EFFORT AND MOVEMENT

Henry agrees with the other three phenomenologists on a good deal regarding self-sensing. These points of agreement indicate the core of this experience, as agreed on by all the phenomenologists, and thus the core phenomenological evidence for Thomistichylomorphism. Henry agrees that one of our most fundamental experiences, which accompanies and founds most other experiences that we have, is of the lived body.⁷⁵⁰ We “live”, that is, internally experience, our bodies primarily in experiences of internal effort, movement, and “power” (*pouvoir*).⁷⁵¹ I feel my bodily movements and effort not as things transcendent to me or as objects that I use, but as what I am, as “immanent” to my lived experience.⁷⁵² In my lived body I feel, as Scheler and Merleau-Ponty pointed out, that I am made up of spontaneous “drives” (*pulsiones*) or inclinations to change in various ways, to feel new feelings and take on new abilities, to grow and flourish as a living bodily subject.⁷⁵³ Even sense perception and intellectual understanding involve this sense of power; in these cognitive acts I experience not only things out in the world, but also impressions in my lived body that refer to those things.⁷⁵⁴ Such an experience of bodily effort, as Levinas described, is the foundation of our sense of both freedom

⁷⁴⁸ ‘Transcendent’, as Henry uses the term, has a much wider extension than it does as Levinas uses it. For Henry, anything given not as purely immanent to my self-sensing is transcendent. For Levinas, only that which is entirely other than me, beyond even my intentionality, and which calls me absolutely, is transcendent. See *EM*, 230, 503; *I*, 176. cf. Lavigne, “Paradox”, 377-378; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 50.

⁷⁴⁹ *MP*, 24; *GP*, 21-23; *IATT*, 47. cf. O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 56.

⁷⁵⁰ *PPB*, 5, 130-134. cf. Dufour-Kowalska, *Michel Henry*, 102.

⁷⁵¹ *EM*, 475, 646; *PPB*, 52-55, 77-81; *MP*, 6; “Soul”, 110.. cf. Dufour-Kowalska, *Michel Henry*, 109; Marion, *IE*, 86.

⁷⁵² *PPB*, 58-61.

⁷⁵³ *MP*, 39-40; *PV4*, 33. cf. Jarvis, “Concept of Life”, 369; O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 88, 185.

⁷⁵⁴ *EM*, 464, 501; *PPB*, 110-111; *I*, 90; *MP*, 12; “Soul”, 111.

and weakness. I experience my body as able to be moved at will, yet this ability is limited by the material resistance of my body, which I also feel. These feelings of power and “non-power” (*non-pouvoir*) are given as a unified feeling of internally limited spontaneity. For example, when I run, I feel myself able to move my legs quickly, but only to a certain extent.⁷⁵⁵

Henry also takes up the idea from the other phenomenologists that we experience the reality of things through their resistance to our bodily efforts.⁷⁵⁶ For example, when I reach out to grasp a cup of water to take a drink, I experience the weight and contours of the cup, which resist, ever so slightly, my efforts to grasp and lift the cup, and I feel the resistance of the slight viscosity of the water in my mouth. In each case, I feel these resistances as modifications and limitations of my sense of bodily power and non-power. My bodily feeling of power and non-power can also be developed through habituation.⁷⁵⁷

Objective experiences of the body, such as a medical examination of the body, are founded on the lived experience of the body. My organs and particular muscular or kinaesthetic sensations only take on their full significance in the context of the holistic sense of my lived body. Thus the human bodily subject is not reducible to or fully explainable through medicine or the natural sciences, for it is “immanent” life and effort that animate and give meaning to all “transcendent” presentations of the objective body.⁷⁵⁸ In lived body experiences, I feel that I am a causal agent, able to effect changes in myself and in the world, and I feel the causal power of other things in and through my lived body. I do not experience my bodily effort as an impersonal or subconscious “force” in me; rather, I experience it as “personal”, as “me”, with all my

⁷⁵⁵ *PPB*, 33, 106; *I*, 252; *PC*, 121-122. cf. O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 202-204.

⁷⁵⁶ *PPB*, 35-36; *LB*, 19; *I*, 211-212. cf. Lavigne, “Paradox”, 382-383.

⁷⁵⁷ *PPB*, 106-107.

⁷⁵⁸ *PPB*, 4, 132-133, 186-189; *LB*, 45-46, 138-139; *IATT*, 35-52; *I*, 232-239. cf. O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 111.

subjective uniqueness. The lived body is simultaneously a sense of one's causal power and one's unique personality, and of one's active spontaneity and one's passivity.⁷⁵⁹

Thus far Henry is in agreement with the other phenomenologists. Yet as we will see, Henry thinks that there are more layers to self-sensing than the other phenomenologists have described. For example, whereas the “touching-touched” (*toucher-être touché*) experience of one hand touching another, the experience of enjoyment, and the experience of intertwining are important layers of the lived body experience, there are more fundamental layers, Henry contends, which found and condition the more apparent layers.⁷⁶⁰

IV.B. AUTO-AFFECTION

The more foundational layer of bodily self-sensing on which Henry focuses most of his attention is “auto-affection”. Henry argues that fundamentally we sense ourselves without any distance between the sensing and the being sensed. In all other experiences, including all other experiences of self-sensing, I experience the content of the experience and my own experiencing of that content as diverging from one another. This is clearest in intentional experience: when I perceive, understand, or feel some object, that object is given as other than or transcendent to my experiencing self, even though it is also received by my intentional powers. I see the books on my desk as outside my body; I experience the mathematical facts that I know as intentional objects of thought different from me and my own thinking powers; I feel the beauty of the paintings on my walls as a property of those paintings existing outside of me.⁷⁶¹

This gap between my received content and myself can be seen in some kinds of self-

⁷⁵⁹ *PPB*, 163-164; *I*, 258.

⁷⁶⁰ Henry and Levinas use ‘enjoyment’ with different senses: for Levinas, ‘enjoyment’ refers to the self-sensing experience of being nourished by the world, and so includes; for Henry, it refers to a purely immanent feeling of pleasure. Henry contends that enjoyment in his sense is foundational to enjoyment in Levinas’ sense.

⁷⁶¹ *EM*, 14-19, 73, 78, 84, 392-393; “Soul”, 109, 112.

sensing. When I touch one hand to the other, the sensing and the being-sensed diverge from one another, though I try to make them coincide. Each, according to Henry's analysis of this experience, is presented as somewhat other than my experiencing self, able to be considered by me.⁷⁶² Even in the non-intentional experiences of enjoyment in Levinas' sense and of being called by the other, there is a gap in my experience and in my sense of myself.⁷⁶³

IV.B.1. IMMANENT LIVED EXPERIENCE

None of these experiences accounts for the fact that I experience things as given to and received by me, Henry thinks. None of the accounts of these experiences quite describe what it is experientially to be a subject and to have subjective interiority; rather, they focus on experienced things or on the relation between the subject and those things. I am given to myself in a different way from the way in which anything else is given to me, as having an immanent interior conscious life.⁷⁶⁴ The purely "immanent" layer of experience underlies all of our experiences, Henry thinks; it is the layers of experience in which "appearance itself appears" (*l'originel apparaître à soi de l' apparaître*).⁷⁶⁵

This foundational layer of experience is most apparent in feelings like joy (*joie*) and suffering (*souffrance*). When I suffer, I do not experience a gap between my suffering and myself; rather, I feel suffering as a "tonality" or "modification" of my fundamental lived consciousness. It is true that I often suffer "over" or "about" something, such as the death of a loved one. But this intentional component presupposes and includes the purely immanent feeling of suffering; without this, there could be no experience of intending something outside me

⁷⁶² *PPB*, 59-62; *I*, 191, 234-237, 300; "Soul", 108-109.

⁷⁶³ *MP*, 39, 131; *EM*, 70, 546, 583, 717. cf. O'Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 108.

⁷⁶⁴ *EM*, 37, 43, 73, 150-152. 163-164; *MP*, 134; "Soul", 112-114.

⁷⁶⁵ *GP*, 22.

through the feeling.⁷⁶⁶ We have experiences of feeling without intentionality, but we never have an intentional act without a felt, lived experience. As Marion interprets Henry's point, in auto-affection we experience the identity “of the affected with the affecting”, that is, the identity of myself as consciousness affected by a feeling or impression with that feeling or impression.⁷⁶⁷

All experiences have as their foundational layer purely immanent “auto-affection”. When I see a tree, for instance, I am normally aware of the tree as something outside me; I “receive” the visual form of the tree against the “background” or “horizon” of the surrounding perceptual field. But this experience of receiving content from a source transcendent to me requires that I sense myself receiving the visual impression of the tree in a purely immanent way. I experience the impression of the tree not as something outside me, but as a purely immanent modification of my interior lived experience. I most foundationally experience myself sensing the tree; I, insofar as I feel myself to be my consciousness, “become” the experience of sensing the tree and its background. Only on that basis am I aware of the tree as a thing outside of me.⁷⁶⁸ Even abstract theoretical thought requires that I experience myself thinking and feeling the impression of the theoretical subject matter not as the object of intentional thought, but as a purely immanent content, without gap between the thinking and the content being thought; when I think, I am, experientially, the experience of thinking.⁷⁶⁹

Henry argues that it is necessary for us to have this layer of purely immanent experience in order to explain experience at all. Objects transcendent to me and intentional acts that are directed toward them, the background and context of my intentional objects, and even the sense

⁷⁶⁶ *EM*, 459-465, 475, 479-483, 491, 648-649.

⁷⁶⁷ Marion, *BG*, 231.

⁷⁶⁸ *EM*, 463, 498-506; *MP*, 55-57.

⁷⁶⁹ *PPB*, 145; *GP*, 22; *I*, 129, 136. cf. Laoureux, “Hyper-Transcendentalism”, 393-394; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 82.

that there is a world at all, are phenomena that are given to me and that I receive. What I experience cannot remain something outside me, but must be received into my lived experience; I, again insofar as I feel myself to be my conscious life, must “become” my experiences if I am to be conscious of them, that is, if they are to be experiences at all. Things outside me, which I intend, are experienced subjectively not insofar as they are transcendent but only insofar as they are received by me in immanent experience.⁷⁷⁰

This layer of experience is difficult to describe, Henry says, because we normally speak and think about things given as outside of us and about our experiences of them.⁷⁷¹ When we think about our experience, we are generally thinking about memories or other representations of experience. Dan Zahavi interprets auto-affection as the “what it is like” to have an experience.⁷⁷² As Michael Kelly responds, this may reduce auto-affection to an intentional object. The qualitative “what it is like” of an experience can, on many accounts, be considered intentionally, remembered, and conceptualized.⁷⁷³ None of this is true of auto-affection, which can only be experienced immediately as it occurs, not remembered or represented. If I were to recall some feeling or experiencing, I would not be recalling that numerically same feeling but a representation of that feeling; this requires that right now, as I recall that representation, I have a purely immanent auto-affection of that representation which differs from the earlier auto-affection which I attempt to represent.⁷⁷⁴ Zahavi’s interpretation is correct only if ‘what it is like’ refers to purely immanent self-sensing, not something that can be represented or intended.

⁷⁷⁰ *EM*, 512-519; *MP*, 77-78. cf. Calcagno, “Incarnation”, 297-298; James Hart, “Michel Henry’s Phenomenological Theology of Life”, *Husserl Studies* 15 (1999): 184; Marion, *BG*, 11, 330

⁷⁷¹ *EM*, 168.

⁷⁷² Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 111-112.

⁷⁷³ Kelly, “Dispossession”, 272-273.

⁷⁷⁴ *PPB*, 171; *MP*, 73-77; “Speech and Religion”, 228-231.

IV.B.2. IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT EXPERIENCE

Immanent experience is, as Henry says, “invisible” (*invisible*), as it can only be felt, never grasped as an intentional object “visible” (*visible*) to sense perception, intellectual understanding, or intentional feeling.⁷⁷⁵ This does not mean that it is a meaningless flux of sensations and feelings; rather, it is always presented as a form of understanding, at least a form of understanding oneself. To be a human subject is fundamentally to experience oneself as one who understands, Henry contends.⁷⁷⁶ Even at the fundamental layer of experience in auto-affectivity, experience is intelligible, even though not intentional. If we did not first feel our intellectual acts in a purely immanent way, we could never understand anything at all or ever experience anything as meaningful. Things are meaningful and understandable for me because I receive them into my immanent lived experience and there feel them. I can think about what I have not received, the transcendent thing, only because I have received some content into my lived consciousness and my lived consciousness has become that content impressionally or affectively. Self-sensing or auto-affection is thus the most fundamental way in which we understand (*Arch-intelligibilité*).⁷⁷⁷

I cannot capture and hold onto my immanent experience in words, but I can suggest it through description in such a way that you, my interlocutor, are led to discover this layer of your

⁷⁷⁵ ‘Visible’ and ‘invisible’ here have different meanings than they did for Merleau-Ponty. For Merleau-Ponty, ‘visible’ means “perceptible by the senses”, whereas ‘invisible’ means “intelligible” or “linguistically expressible”. For Henry, ‘visible’ means “able to be taken as a transcendent intentional object”, whereas ‘invisible’ means “only feelable in immanent lived consciousness, not able to be intended”. See *EM*, 438, 444, 543; *MP*, 77.

⁷⁷⁶ A sentence like this indicates how difficult talking about our fundamental lived experience can be: this sentence could be interpreted as meaning that we fundamentally experience ourselves through some intentional content, such as the concept of understanding. But that is not what Henry means; he means that auto-affection is an experience of understanding, an intelligible experience, even though entirely non-intentional and non-conceptual.

⁷⁷⁷ *EM*, 43, 307, 434, 552; *MP*, 49, 52, 86; *I*, 374; “Soul”, 100. cf. Bozga, *Exasperating Gift of Singularity*, ch.6; Marion, *IE*, 90; Ratcliffe, *Feelings of Being*, 59.

experience as something purely felt by you. This sort of expression is possible because auto-affection underlies the experience of speech and language. I experience language as meaningful because it evokes immanent auto-affective experiences, although I generally also experience language as evoking intentional experiences as well. But these intentional experiences also only are meaningful to me because they are received in immanent lived experience.⁷⁷⁸

The fact that we rarely experience only this layer of experience has led some to object that Henry is talking nonsense when he describes this layer; all our experiences seem, *prima facie*, to be experiences of things in the world.⁷⁷⁹ Henry acknowledges that we experience transcendent objects, but he also claims that these experiences are impossible without immanent experience. Without the latter I would just be one more thing among the things in the world, and my subjectivity and intentionality would just be an anomaly, a strange layer incomprehensibly tacked on to an otherwise worldly material thing related spatially to other such things.⁷⁸⁰ Henry often disregards the intentional layer of our experience as “unreal” (*irréel*) or “abstract” (*abstraite*), as opposed to the felt “reality” (*réalité*) of lived experience.⁷⁸¹ Henry thinks that our everyday experience is problematic, since in this experience we are caught up in what he takes to be “unreal”. The phenomenological method of bracketing out the idea that we relate to what is other than us, returns us to what is “real”, immanent affections and impressions. Thus,

⁷⁷⁸ *EM*, 443, 549; *PPB*, 164; *MP*, 87, 97-99; *I*, 129, 136, 301, 367; *PC*, 94, 97; *PV4*, 336; “Speech and Religion”, 220-223. cf. Marion, *EP*, 181-183; Jarvis, “Concept of Life”, 371-372; Laoureux, “Hyper-Transcendentalism”, 393-394.

⁷⁷⁹ cf. Jarvis, “Concept of Life”, 368. Interestingly, Henry argues that this wonder whether we are talking about anything at all, and questioning whether we are just playing games with language, is a necessary step in phenomenological inquiry; we must constantly question ourselves in this way to make sure that we are really staying true to experience; see *EM*, 12.

⁷⁸⁰ *EM*, 479, 483, 490; *PPB*, 97; *MP*, 134. cf. Laoureux, “Hyper-Transcendentalism”, 390.

⁷⁸¹ *EM*, 94; *PPB*, 204.

phenomenologically clarifying experience turns us from our “unreal” to our “real” selves.⁷⁸²

Since, as I think, phenomenology is supposed to describe all of our experience, I must object to this aspect of Henry’s phenomenology. If our experience were reduced to nothing but our immanent subjectivity, without relation to anything else, it would indeed be nonsensical, being nothing like experience in all its fullness. But the fact that Henry interprets our experience wrongly does not entail that we do not have immanent auto-affective experiences. Henry rightly calls attention to our interiority and so highlights the radical difference between living subjects and all other things. At the foundation of experience, according to Henry, the living subject is superior to the world not because he or she transcends and surveys it, but because he or she is immanent, withdrawn from the world, having an interior life that is different from events in the world and that is the very basis of those worldly events ever being experienced.⁷⁸³ Worldly events would have no importance to us did we not have an importance and a way of being given different from that of the world.⁷⁸⁴

The idea that auto-affection is the fundamental layer of experience bears some resemblance to Scheler’s idea that we are “spiritual persons” outside the world, surveying it and acting into it through the body. Both are interpretations of our experience of being in some sense superior to or separate from the world. For both Scheler and Henry, this experience is the condition for the possibility of human action in the world. Both the “spiritual person” and “auto-affection” are described as never ceasing to be what they are: if Scheler is right, then I always experience myself as *this* acting person, and if Henry is right, then I always experience myself as

⁷⁸² *EM*, 392; *MP*, 91-97; *IATT*, 148-151, 164-166.

⁷⁸³ *EM*, 93; *PPB*, 189; *I*, 225, 236.

⁷⁸⁴ *EM*, 165-166; *PPB*, 4; *IATT*, 61.

this auto-affection. This experience is the fundamental experience of being an individual.⁷⁸⁵

Likewise, for both Scheler and Henry, this fundamental layer of experience changes with each of its acts: for Scheler, I *am* my various acts, even as I remain the same spiritual person; for Henry, I *am* my impressions and affections, even as I remain the same auto-affective lived consciousness. By this they mean that my consciousness changes with each act, or impression and affection, which it performs or receives. In this way, I can say that at one moment, I, insofar as I am my consciousness, *am* my conscious affection of joy, while, at a later moment, I *am* my conscious affection of suffering, even while I am the same consciousness; consciousness *is* its modifications, on these views. Scheler's spiritual person and Henry's auto-affection can never be experienced as objects, only as subjects. But Henry's analysis has some advantages over Scheler's. Henry recognizes that, at the fundamental layer of experience, I am passive as well as active, and I experience myself, even while experiencing myself as separate from and superior to the world, as bodily. I am not a pure actor, executing acts of movement and cognition *through* my body, but I experience myself fundamentally *as* a body.⁷⁸⁶ Still, as we shall see more later, Scheler too has some advantages over Henry: I also experience myself, at this level of experiencing my separation from and superiority over the world, as free and transcendent to the world, not just as a subjective interiority.

IV.B.3. THE ORIGINAL BODY AND THE PATHOS OF AUTO-AFFECTION

This fundamental bodily experience Henry calls the "original body" (*le corps originnaire*) or "flesh" (*la chair*).⁷⁸⁷ Even though this layer of experience is given as purely immanent to me,

⁷⁸⁵ *EM*, 337, 684; *PPB*, 102; *MP*, 53, 61; *IATT*, 104, 119; *I*, 225, 236; "Speech and Religion", 230-232. cf. Calcagno, "Incarnation", 299

⁷⁸⁶ Regarding the comparisons made in this paragraph: For Henry see *EM*, 93, 198-203, 530, 557-560; for Scheler see *MPN*, 39. cf. Laoureux, "Hyper-Transcendentalism", 389.

⁷⁸⁷ *PPB*, 129; *I*, 232. cf. Dufour-Kowalska, *Michel Henry*, 102. Though Henry takes the term

it has several distinguishable aspects. At this layer of experience, I sense myself to be both affections and impressions, and “power” or the “I can” experience described above. I sense myself simultaneously as able to exert effort and as the recipient of affections and impressions.⁷⁸⁸ Henry calls both of these “bodily” experiences because they are experiences of being able to move and sense myself; they are not conceptual or abstract thoughts about myself.⁷⁸⁹ Each of these aspects of the experience is received passively. I constantly experience affections and impressions over which I have no control and which I cannot escape; I am “riveted” to my lived consciousness, as Levinas also noted. Even the feeling of having bodily powers that I can freely exercise is first passively received: I do not invent this feeling, but it is has always “already” been given to me, prior to any self-awareness.⁷⁹⁰ In Levinas, this experience was considered in light of experiences of being alienated from ourselves, of desiring what is other than ourselves, and the anguish and boredom with oneself that this engenders. But focusing on that aspect of our experience, Henry contends, obscures what is even more fundamental, the non-self-alienated experience of self-sensing. We feel ourselves feeling and that can never be escaped, nor, fundamentally, are we driven to escape it, contrary to what Levinas contends. Even in the experiences that Levinas takes to be “escapes” from the self, like the social relationship, there is still purely immanent self-sensing, because this is a necessary

‘flesh’ from Merleau-Ponty, he means something different by it: Merleau-Ponty means by ‘flesh’ the experience of being intertwined with the world in a structured way; Henry means the purely immanent experience of auto-affection. It is not entirely clear whether Henry realizes that he is using the term to refer to a different experience from Merleau-Ponty, since he criticizes Merleau-Ponty’s usage as if he and Merleau-Ponty meant the same thing; see *EM*, 260, 376, 390, 480. cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 97.

⁷⁸⁸ *EM*, 475-476.

⁷⁸⁹ *EM*, 215.

⁷⁹⁰ *EM*, 471-478, 530, 604, 658; *MP*, 132; *IATT*, 42.

condition for all experience.⁷⁹¹

Auto-affection thus “suffers” (*souffre*) itself; by this, Henry means that it is experienced as “pathos”, as constantly being in a state of receptivity, with new content constantly being given to me, without my control and without my being able to escape. He does not mean that it is necessarily a negative or painful experience, just that it is passive.⁷⁹² This constant sense of passivity is the foundation of my sense of being an individual, as well as my sense of the unity of my consciousness. My consciousness is unified because it is fundamentally received in this way; it is not a conglomeration of sense-data or other contents received piecemeal from without, but unified lived modifications of my self-sensing.⁷⁹³ Self-sensing underlies my sense of time, which I would never experience were it not first passively received.⁷⁹⁴ It also underlies my sense of being “situated” (*situ  *) in space. My awareness of space does not begin with an experience of being an extended body placed in an environment, but with an experience of being able to move myself and of being situated in myself through auto-affection, such that, relative to myself, I never move away from myself. Things extended in space cannot be experienced or have experiences if there is not a more fundamental power underlying it.⁷⁹⁵

IV.B.4. ORGANIC AND OBJECTIVE BODY

This fundamental self-sensing founds the more straight-forward experience of the lived body, which has been described by the other phenomenologists. The experience of the “original body” allows for the experience of the “lived” or “organic body” (*le corps organique*), in which I experience the positions of my limbs, their extension in space, their movements, and my

⁷⁹¹ *I*, 77. cf. O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 80.

⁷⁹² *EM*, 471-475, 658-659; *MP*, 81. cf. Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 49; O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 55-56.

⁷⁹³ *EM*, 530; *MP*, 12.

⁷⁹⁴ *EM*, 188, 368-369, 467; *MP*, 20-42, 51.

⁷⁹⁵ *EM*, 272, 336-349, 368-369, 426, 609, 613; *PPB*, 60, 109-110, 126, 191.

affections and impressions as differentiated and located at different points on my body. I have this experience of my body only on the basis of fundamentally feeling it in a purely immanent way.⁷⁹⁶ For example, the vital values described by Scheler are first felt immanently and only on that basis are they felt as intentional objects by my spatially-extended lived body.⁷⁹⁷

Likewise, the experience of the “original body” allows for the experience of myself as a “body-thing” or “objective body” (*le corps chosique*) intertwined with my “lived body”. Like everything that I experience, I fundamentally experience the objective body as an immanent impression. The experience of the intertwining of the lived and objective bodies, as when I touch myself with my hand, could never give rise to consciousness did I not first and foremost feel and sense myself to be a lived bodily consciousness. Likewise, my perceptual and intellectual intertwining with the world around me could not give rise to consciousness if I did not have the underlying experience of auto-affection.⁷⁹⁸ Immanent affections and impressions underlie and make sense of the physiological differentiation of bodily feelings and sensings, and of bodily organs; the parts of the objective body that are presented to us in sense perception or in medical examination would not have the meaning that they have for us did we not have a more fundamental experience of self-sensing.⁷⁹⁹ I experience myself fundamentally as the power that animates my lived and objective body, that makes it alive and not just a material thing with consciousness tacked on; the sense of my “original body” unifies my subjective and objective experiences of myself.⁸⁰⁰ It gives rise to my experience of growing and developing, which

⁷⁹⁶ *EM*, 606-611; *PPB*, 129-132; *I*, 232-239.

⁷⁹⁷ *EM*, 612-622; *IATT*, 108.

⁷⁹⁸ *PPB*, 60-62, *I*, 233-234.

⁷⁹⁹ *PPB*, 112; *IATT*, 38-42.

⁸⁰⁰ “Soul”, 109-114. cf. Racette, “Philosophy of the Body”, 91.

underlies any biological interpretation of these phenomena.⁸⁰¹ These experiences also explain why we experience our bodies not just as what we are, but also as things that we have and use: my fundamental experience of auto-affection is a bodily experience, but I also experience my body as an objective thing, as something transcendent to my immanent consciousness.⁸⁰²

IV.B.5. ABSOLUTE AND CONTINGENT LIFE

I experience auto-affection as something “absolute” (*absolue*) in the following ways. Every affection or impression, taken in itself and without relation to anything else, is given as complete: in each feeling and sense impression, taken as such, there is the experience that it could last forever, that it is as full an experience as it could possibly be. The feelings of suffering or joy, for example, considered in themselves, are complete, not needing explanation beyond themselves, Henry contends. Each feeling or impression, insofar as it is experienced in auto-affection, gives itself as unexplainable in terms other than in terms of itself. Such an explanation of auto-affection in terms of something other than auto-affection would require making auto-affection an intentional object, which it is not. This would reduce the experience of immanence, which underlies every experience of transcendence, to something transcendent, and so lead to a vicious explanatory circle and a distortion of this experience. Auto-affection is experienced as desirable and good, since there would be no body, experience, or world for me without it.⁸⁰³

Yet although I experience my self-sensing as in some ways absolute and self-sufficient, I also experience it as given to me, as contingent, dependent, and thus in some ways incomplete. I am not the origin of my lived consciousness. But, Henry argues, it cannot be given to me from the world: on the contrary, auto-affection is the condition for the world being given at all. Rather,

⁸⁰¹ *PPB*, 219, 221, 34-42; *PV4*, 33. cf. O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 88.

⁸⁰² *PPB*, 196.

⁸⁰³ *EM*, 307-309; *PPB*, 219; *I*, 318-320; *PV4*, 39. cf. Dufour-Kowalska, *Michel Henry*, 117-124; Jarvis, “Concept of Life”, 364.

I experience my life as given to me “from within”. Life or auto-affectivity as such is given as absolute, but my own affections and impressions are contingent instances of experiences that exceed my experience of them. This is not to say that I experience myself as part of some larger trans-individual subject; I am indeed given to myself as an individual living person. I experience my life as given to me by “absolute life”, by life considered non-contingently, which is something I find given in my own experience but not as identical to me.

Thus, there is an even deeper layer to my experience than my auto-affection, which Henry calls my “birth” (*naissance*) or “incarnation” (*incarnation*), the event in which at every moment I receive my life or in which life gives itself to me. Henry argues that the experience of life is thus to be interpreted as a religious experience, an experience of absoluteness, contingency, and dependence on that which is greater than me, and absolute life is experienced as God.⁸⁰⁴ Life as such need not exist in me and is experienced as something greater than me, as not limited to its experienced existence in me. But it does exist in me; it is given to me at every moment. At every moment I am made to be this individual living person. In being incarnated I find myself “called” to live, to grow and flourish, to understand myself and others. In arguing that self-sensing has a religious dimension, Henry is in accord with Scheler and Levinas.⁸⁰⁵

IV.B.6. BEING WITH OTHERS

This experience of being my “life” of auto-affection but also of this life being greater than my own experience and as being given to me allows for my experience of other people.

⁸⁰⁴ Just as in the other phenomenologists, Henry says this is not an assertion that God does in fact exist, but rather it is a description of the absoluteness and contingency of my life, and of the experiences presupposed by the religious, specifically the Christian, worldview. *EM*, 306-335; *MP*, 120; *PPB*, 3, 189; *IATT*, 1, 53-57; *I*, 168, 225, 236, 349-359; “Speech and Religion”, 232, 237. cf. Calcagno, “Incarnation”, 291-292; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 48-49; O’Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 177.

⁸⁰⁵ *EM*, 669-673; *IATT*, 181-190; “Speech and Religion”, 236.

According to Henry, I fundamentally experience other people as fellow contingent living subjectivities, who receive “life” just as I do. Each of us fundamentally experiences ourselves in auto-affection as a unified individual subjectivity, but also as contingent and given to ourselves. Just as my auto-affection allows for experiences of the world, so the shared sense of immanent life allows for the experience of being in community with others.⁸⁰⁶

When I am in a community with other people, I feel my communality with the others; I feel that I am with others in some particular community. This felt experience of being with others as living subjectivities based in immanent self-sensing is not inferred from perceptions or thoughts about other people, but is rather the experiential basis of knowing other people.⁸⁰⁷ This is a deepening of the work of the other phenomenologists who note that we have a fundamental sense of other people that is irreducible to other ways of knowing. I can feel this sense of community even with those spatially distant to me. I feel a sense of community, for example, with those who are interested in the same things as me, even with those I have never physically met. I always feel the importance to my life of those whom I love or those with whom I am concerned; they are always, at least in the background, “on my mind”.⁸⁰⁸ This sense of community is felt even when I am all alone; Marion contends that it is a sense of expecting to meet and be with others. I constantly sense, in my self-sensing, a desire of my own and a call from others to join with them in community.⁸⁰⁹ In describing how community with others is first experienced in self-sensing, Levinas and Henry point us toward the same experience, even though Levinas interprets this as an experience of an absolutely transcendent other and Henry interprets it as an experience without transcendence.

⁸⁰⁶ *MP*, 103-108; *I*, 346-347; “Speech and Religion”, 237.

⁸⁰⁷ *MP*, 108-111.

⁸⁰⁸ *MP*, 114-115.

⁸⁰⁹ Marion, *ER*, 35-37.

Without this fundamental immanent sense of being with others there could be no genuine expressions of community in the world.⁸¹⁰ Genuine culture can arise because we experience language and art, for instance, as rooted in shared auto-affection, because certain words and images evoke certain self-sensed affections and impressions. The symbols, words, and customs of a culture are rooted in and arise out of a shared sense of being together in a community.⁸¹¹ We also can ethically respond to one another because of our shared immanent sense of life, suffering, and being given to ourselves.⁸¹² We can have erotic and sexual contact with others because of the fundamental sense of bodily passivity that we share. To encounter another person in erotic attraction is to encounter that person almost exclusively through immanent connections of desire and feeling with the other person.⁸¹³ This does not mean that I directly know the other person's interior life, as if I knew precisely what he or she was thinking, but I do feel a deep connection with the other person, which cannot be reduced to an intentional relationship or a relationship of the sort I have with objects given as transcendent to me.⁸¹⁴ I can have this shared sense of life because my own experience of lived auto-affection is first given to me as exceeding me and as able to be elsewhere than in me. To reduce this experience to biological or physical connections among people is to reduce a subjective and immanent experience to an object, ignoring the subjective conditions for the possibility of experiencing objects.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹⁰ *LB*, 19; *IATT*, 257. cf. O'Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 143, 153-154.

⁸¹¹ *LB*, 14; *PPB*, 219-222. cf. Jarvis, "Concept of Life", 365-366; William McBride, "Tendencies in Marxology and Tendencies in History", *Ethics* 92 (1982): 317; O'Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 20-21, 143, 173-177.

⁸¹² *PPB*, 210-222; *IATT*, 254. cf. O'Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 95; Tengelyi, "Selfhood", 412.

⁸¹³ *EM*, 455; *PPB*, 213-218; *MP*, 131-134; *I*, 288, 297, 300. cf. Marion, *ER*, 112-120.

⁸¹⁴ *MP*, 116.

⁸¹⁵ *PPB*, 5-7; *IATT*, 34-42.

IV.C. OBJECTIONS AND INTEGRATION WITH OTHER PHENOMENOLOGISTS

Henry's religious interpretations of "absolute life" point towards some problems with his thought. Responding to these problems and considering some other objections will overcome some final obstacles to using the phenomenology of self-sensing as evidence for hylomorphism. Henry goes well beyond what is phenomenologically warranted in some of his claims regarding the absolute and religious character of the experiences of incarnation and auto-affection. Henry thinks that by phenomenologically clarifying this experience, we will attain a direct experience of God as the life that gives me my life and gives to life its absolute character.⁸¹⁶ Indeed, Henry argues that the experience of auto-affection is an experience of the Christian Trinitarian God. The relationship between my life and absolute life, the fact that we generally overlook this fundamental layer of experience, and the effort to recover it, are interpreted as experiences of being a "son of God" intimately related to Christ, the primary "Son of God", forgetting this "sonship" through sin and immersion in "the world", and recovering this through a "second birth".⁸¹⁷ The fundamental structure of our experience is thus supposed to be Christian, though perhaps of an unorthodox sort, since God, on this account, only immanent to my experience, not also transcendent to me.⁸¹⁸

Although Henry gives some theologically and philosophically interesting interpretations of Christianity and of our experience, this fails as a purely phenomenological account. It is correct to say that we have a layer of experience that is auto-affective and that this is experienced as contingent in some senses and absolute in other senses. But, as Marion argues, we cannot then

⁸¹⁶ *EM*, 306-335; *MP*, 120; *PPB*, 3, 189; *IATT*, 1, 53-57; *I*, 168, 225, 236, 349-359; "Speech and Religion", 232, 237. cf. Calcagno, "Incarnation", 291-292; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 48-49; O'Sullivan, *Michel Henry*, 177.

⁸¹⁷ This theological interpretation is explained throughout *IATT*, especially in chs. 5-9.

⁸¹⁸ cf. Calcagno, "Incarnation", 301-302.

go on, on that basis alone, to make claims about what the giver of this experience is like exactly, without drawing on non-phenomenological resources, such as divine revelation or natural theology; Marion argues that in the experience of being given to ourselves, the giver does not appear.⁸¹⁹ Dominique Janicaud rightly argues that Henry is smuggling in principles and arguments that properly belong to theology, not phenomenology.⁸²⁰ When doing phenomenology we must stick to what is given; there is no reason why we cannot take what is given in phenomenology and interpret it theologically, but we must keep the two disciplines separate, be clear on when we are doing each, and not distort one to support the other.⁸²¹ For my purposes here, the experience of absoluteness and contingency in auto-affection must be considered apart from the interpretation. These experiences do not preclude metaphysical examination of a sort that Henry does not endorse.

The problems with Henry's theological phenomenology point us toward another, deeper problem with Henry's account. Henry argues that an ontological account of what there is must be an account of purely immanent life. He argues that only immanent life is real, and that anything that I seem to experience as outside me is "unreal" and a "projection" of lived consciousness, an "abstract positing" rather than something really experienced.⁸²² Ontologically, he says, there are only subjectivities that have been incarnated by absolute life. He goes so far as to say that, in terms of an ontology in which the only reality is subjective interiority, our feelings are never caused by events in the world, but the opposite is in fact true: feelings are the occasion for our projection of perceived or understood worldly events.⁸²³

⁸¹⁹ Marion, *BG*, 85-88, 296-299.

⁸²⁰ Janicaud, *Phenomenology*, 76-86.

⁸²¹ cf. *Ibid.*, 99-103.

⁸²² *EM*, 94, 237, 242, 501-519; *PPB*, 204; *MP*, 11, 49, 134. cf. Lavigne, "Paradox", 381.

⁸²³ *EM*, 563-564.

As an account of certain aspects of our experience this may work: we often experience the world as colored by our affective states.⁸²⁴ But to assert that this works as an account of what there is ontologically is to go far beyond the phenomenological evidence, to prioritize one layer of our experience such that other layers are not given their due, and to draw an ontology out of that wrongly prioritized experience.⁸²⁵ This practice of drawing an ontology directly from phenomenology, and of focusing on one experience to the detriment of others, has been a problem with each of the phenomenological accounts that we have considered. The issue here is not with using phenomenology as evidence for an ontology; rather, the problem is so focusing on one experience that both the phenomenology and the ontology are distorted. We cannot directly draw our ontology from our phenomenology, without rational reflection on the phenomenology to discover its intelligible and unifying aspects, and we also cannot ignore phenomenological evidence when searching for the true ontology.

Our experience is far more complex than Henry allows; it is conditioned by many sorts of things and events. Although I can sense myself in a purely immanent fashion, this layer of experience is normally interconnected with other layers of my experience. I experience myself as a power of world-openness and receptivity to impressions and affections, but I also experience these impressions and affections as coming from things outside of me. Experientially, I am not just immanent self-sensing life, but I am also self-sensing life intertwined with the world. I do not just feel community with other people, but I experience other people as transcendent to and calling me. I experience both of these, in different ways, in my self-sensing, as Marion points out, unifying the positions of Levinas and Henry.⁸²⁶ Levinas is correct that I have experiences of

⁸²⁴ Marion, *ER*, 114. cf. Lavigne, "Paradox", 380.

⁸²⁵ cf. Lavigne, "Paradox", 384-386.

⁸²⁶ Marion, *IE*, 111, 118-119. cf. Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 192-193.

transcendent calls and Henry is correct that I have experiences of immanent interiority, but neither is correct that these experiences are so sundered from our other experiences as they would make out. There is no phenomenological or ontological reason to say that things that seem to be outside of me are mere “projections” of my immanent life: indeed, if the only real thing is my immanent life, it is unclear why I would ever project in this way and so forget what I am.

It is not clear what reality would be like if there were no “visible” things transcendent to me, but just “invisible” living subjectivities, for I never experience my auto-affective life entirely disconnected from what is transcendent to me. The distinction between our natural everyday experience and our phenomenologically clarified experience must be kept clear. Naturally, all these layers of our experience are bound up with one another; phenomenologically, we bracket out some layers so as to focus on others, but this does not mean that only the layers discovered to be foundational are “real”. A focus on the “real” layer of affectivity may even make us forget that it is a reflective, intentional process of phenomenological reasoning which allows us ever to grasp this immanent layer of self-sensing in the first place.⁸²⁷ Phenomenology should not be interpreted as removing a “faulty” natural experience and substituting a more “pure” or “correct” experience for it; rather, it clarifies experience as it really is, that is, natural experience.

Furthermore, the practical consequences of this ontology seem unlivable. Henry argues that every ethical, practical, and interpersonal problem we encounter arises because we want to be more than just auto-affective life; we want to go out from ourselves into the world. We ought to just live our experiences without wanting to go beyond this, accepting each impression and

⁸²⁷ The importance of the “*epoché*” or “bracketing” for returning us to the “real” layer of experience by “reducing” experience to what is given purely immanently, and the view that phenomenologically clarified experience is superior to natural experience, in Henry’s understanding is highlighted at EM, 392 and MP, 81-83, 91-97. cf. Leask, *Being Reconfigured*, 86; Marion, *RG*, 3, 239; *BG*, 11, 330; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 70-71.

affection as it comes. If we realized our true nature and relationship to God, we would not have the problems that we do.⁸²⁸ It is not clear how one could ever live in such a way or even what it would mean to live in such a way. Jean-Louis Chrétien suggests that the idea that we should experience life without any reference to the world, without any possibility of experientially escaping from ourselves and interacting with the world, is a description of hell, not an ideal.⁸²⁹

If what I am experientially really includes immanent self-sensing *and* other layers of self-sensing that include what is transcendent to me, then experiences of self-alienation, self-forgetfulness, and longing for escape become much more understandable and positive dimensions of human life than they are on Henry's account.⁸³⁰ Henry uses the phenomenological method to bracket out everything but the fundamental impressional and affective "matter" of experience. But, as Husserl for example points out, in our everyday experience, we experience this "matter" as "formed" by intentionality, by references to transcendent things. My immanently experience visual impression of a tree, for example, is, in my normal experience, just one layer of my larger intentional experience of the tree transcendent to me.⁸³¹ The other accounts of self-sensing we have examined help us to see that this is not a "false" or "unreal" experience, as Henry would have us believe. For example, the experience of being called to ethical service by a transcendent other person is an experience that is crucial for my experience of myself.⁸³²

Henry has distinguished and described an important component of human experience: our self-sensing interiority and our being with others in that interiority. My experience always includes this interiority, which is given to me differently than any transcendent object. I

⁸²⁸ *EM*, 604, 666; *MP*, 132-133; *IATT*, 171-214. cf. Kelly, "Dispossession", 276-278.

⁸²⁹ Jean-Louis Chrétien, "La vie sauve", *Les études philosophiques* 51 (1988): 37-49. cf. Jarvis, "Concept of Life", 363.

⁸³⁰ cf. Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 81-82; Zahavi, *Self-Awareness*, 134, 154.

⁸³¹ Husserl, *Ideas 1*, 203-207. cf. *MP*, 22-23, 41-42; Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 56.

⁸³² cf. Jarvis, "Concept of Life", 374.

experience the history of my interior life as separate from, more important than, and irreducible to the history of external events.⁸³³ Yet I do not experience them as completely divorced from one another. My interior history and life is affected by the outside world, and, as Levinas pointed out, I can be forced to do things by exterior forces; my interior life can be causally affected by the outside world. My lived experience is intertwined with the objective features of the world in curious ways: for example, my lived experience explains my bodily physiology in one way, but my bodily physiology explains my lived experience in another, and these explanations are unified on the model of my intertwined self-sensing, as Merleau-Ponty pointed out. I experience myself both as part of the world and as outside the world, withdrawn from the world in interiority and transcendent to the world as a freely acting and intending person, all of which is founded in self-sensing.⁸³⁴ I experience my own life as certain, but I also experience, through what Merleau-Ponty calls “perceptual faith”, the existence of the world as certain.⁸³⁵ I experience myself as “called” and “created” or “incarnated”, that is, as not the origin of myself or my experience, in several ways: my self-sensing is given to me “from within”, as Scheler and Henry describe; the content of my perception and understanding is given to me in intertwining with the world, as Merleau-Ponty points out; my orientation toward what is other than me is given to me as from an absolute transcendent other, as Levinas says. All the layers of experience are interconnected; they are *my* experiences, and they are unified by their foundation in self-sensing.

Each of these thinkers highlights ways in which our foundational experience is conditioned by that which is beyond experience. This points to the need for providing an explanation for our experience; our experience is not self-explanatory or founded on nothing but

⁸³³ *EM*, 166, 491, 552, 664; *IATT*, 61.

⁸³⁴ *PPB*, 4-8. cf. Mullarkey, *Post-Continental Philosophy*, 60.

⁸³⁵ cf. Jarvis, “Concept of Life”, 371-374.

itself. In order to understand ourselves and our experience we need a metaphysics of the human person that starts with but goes beyond phenomenology and that discovers what we are by intellectually discerning what it is that explains and unifies this experience. We need to give an account of what is necessary and sufficient to be the sort of thing that has experiences in the way that we do. Phenomenology and the ontologies and metaphysics that are directly drawn from it are not enough for a full account of what we are. Experience as described by phenomenology demands a metaphysical account of what things really and essentially are, beyond and underlying experience. Our experience also reveals that we are capable of intellectually discovering, at least to some limited extent, the reality and essences of things, including ourselves. We must thus now turn to a consideration of the concluding argument of this study, wherein the experience of self-sensing, according to the four accounts of it considered here taken together, will be seen to be evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism.

CHAPTER FOUR SELF-SENSING AS EVIDENCE FOR THOMISTIC HYLOMORPHISM

The time has at last come to demonstrate the thesis of this study, the claim that the experience of self-sensing, as described by our four phenomenologists and synthesized in the last chapter, is evidence for the Thomistichylomorphist metaphysics of the human person. This thesis is an answer to the question of why one should believe this account of what we are to be true, and, more particularly, to the question of whether there can be any experiential evidence given for this account. In addition, the experience of self-sensing, as phenomenologically described, opens up some answers to the objections have been raised to the coherence or acceptability of hylomorphism and to the possibility of giving any experiential evidence for it.

This claim will be demonstrated over the three parts of this chapter. In the first and most important part I demonstrate my thesis. This part begins with a summary of the phenomenology of self-sensing, and then briefly considers how to think metaphysically about this phenomenology. Next, I show how this phenomenology provides evidence for particular fundamental principles of hylomorphism. Finally, I consider how the phenomenology of self-sensing can be integrated with Aquinas' own account of our self-awareness and his account of human powers, which was considered in the first part of Chapter Two. In the second part of the chapter, I show how phenomenologically supported hylomorphism can respond well to objections to hylomorphism.⁸³⁶

⁸³⁶ The argument of this chapter will rely heavily on the explanations and summaries presented in the last three chapters; this chapter puts together the pieces that were presented in those chapters. For this reason, many of the points in this chapter will not be footnoted, as they will be recapitulations and summaries of points made earlier. The reader should refer to the relevant sections of earlier chapters for the full explanation of these points, as well as the references and notes pertaining to them. Of course, new points and quotations made in this chapter will be explained and footnoted here.

I. SELF-SENSING AS METAPHYSICAL EVIDENCE

I.A. SUMMARY OF THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SELF-SENSING

A brief review of the various aspects of self-sensing is in order here, before seeing how it is evidence for hylomorphism. Self-sensing, as we have seen, has many experiential layers and comes in many kinds, and underlies all of our other experiences. It includes an experience of our bodies as lived or experienced from within. At the same time it includes an experience of our bodies as material things, as vulnerable to manipulation and as available to perceptual and scientific examination. These two layers are given intertwined with one another, that is, in self-sensing I experience myself as both sensing and sensible. My material “objective” body is organized so as to facilitate self-sensed inner powers to sense and move. My self-sensed body is able to both actively move itself and passively receive sense impressions and affections. I experience these impressions and affections as both purely immanent to my lived experience and as split from me in various ways, including through the split between lived and objective bodies.

Other experiences of self-sensing include experiences of enjoyment and suffering. In self-sensing, I find myself in proximity to things, materially affected, nourished, and harmed by them prior to being conscious of them. Self-sensing both separates me from the world as a unique individual and places me in continuity with other material things. Furthermore, I sense my body as a bearer of drives to which things in the world respond. Things in the world and my own material body resist my self-sensed bodily efforts. Things in the world are also given to me through felt values, which call my attention to them and which command me to act in various ways. I sense myself to be called, ethically and in other ways, by what is transcendent to me. Self-sensing is experienced in relation to the Absolute or divine sphere of experience.

My self-sensing has both absolute and contingent aspects. Each of the affections and

impressions that I self-sense are as full as they could be, but they are also given to me. I sense myself as given to myself, as “created” or “incarnated”, not as my own origin. I find that I transcend the world intellectually and am able to withdraw from world in immanent interiority, but even in these experiences I sense myself to be bodily and contingent. Self-sensing is always oriented toward the world and affected by others, most markedly in ethical and erotic experience.

In self-sensing we find that our experiential lives are founded on what is beyond us in various ways and that they are also stratified into different layers, not all of which are given to direct attention. Self-sensing is conditioned by the world, the Absolute, other people, and my own history and materiality. Self-sensing is oriented towards understanding with a desire to move beyond my immediate experience to discover the real structure of the world that is proximate to me. The structure of self-sensing indicates the need for an intellectual inquiry into what unifies all of our disparate experiences and layers of experience. Phenomenology itself tells us a great deal about what we are and what we are able to do, but it is insufficient to tell us definitively what we are. Every phenomenologist’s attempt to show that some particular experience of self-sensing is foundational or paradigmatic for the rest of our experiences and directly indicates what we are, has failed. We do have experiences of being a spiritual personal subject of acts (Scheler), of intertwining with the world (Merleau-Ponty), of having been called to responsibility by the face of the other (Levinas), and of being incarnated as immanent auto-affection (Henry). But, as we have seen, none of these is absolutely foundational to our other experiences. ‘Self-sensing’ refers more to a family of related experiences, which are jointly foundational to other experiences, than to one unified experience.

Still, we sense ourselves to be unified, not as bundles of disparate experiences. Phenomenology cannot account fully for this unity of our experienced and non-experienced

aspects, though it indicates the need for such a unifying account. As I have already argued in responding to objections to Merleau-Ponty, we cannot look to science to provide this account of our unity and of what we are. Since our scientifically describable structures are just one intertwined part of how we are given to ourselves in self-sensing, we need an explanation that also goes beyond and accounts for both the phenomenological and scientific evidence as to what we are. In short, we need a metaphysical account of ourselves. Although phenomenology does not directly indicate which metaphysics is true, it does provide evidence for a metaphysics.

I.B. INITIAL METAPHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF SELF-SENSING

In order to demonstrate that the metaphysics for which phenomenology provides evidence is Thomistic hylomorphism, we must recall the method of doing metaphysics and natural philosophy put forward by Aquinas, as was discussed in Chapter One. In order to discover what something essentially is, we begin with what is most apparent to us about that thing. In reasoning about ourselves, we begin with our acts and their objects, which are normally the focus of our attention. We then reason about these apparent effects, asking what the intelligible core that unifies and explains them is, reasoning from a substance's accidents to its essence. In the case of the human person, we begin with our actions, passions, and qualities.⁸³⁷

Such a method can be successful in achieving its aims because effects are proportioned or similar to their causes. We reason about the apparent features of a thing in order to discover the underlying essence that gives to them and is proportioned to them. Such reasoning does not allow us to grasp the essential principles of a thing in themselves; rather, we grasp them through the mediation of the accidents that are apparent to us. We can understand the essences of things, even of ourselves, to some extent, though never perfectly. We can understand that the definition

⁸³⁷ *QDSC*, a.11, *respondeo*.

‘rational animal’ refers to our essence, but we do not know fully what it is to be a rational animal.⁸³⁸ We grasp the various aspects of things together, as a *Gestalt*, as Merleau-Ponty would say: appearances and effects, such as our acts, appear against the background of the substantial essence, and the substantial essence appears expressed in the appearances and effects. An essence is not an underlying reality, in comparison to which the accidents that flow from it are unreal. Rather, the whole substance with its essence and all of its accidents is real and the whole composite is explained by the essence. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter Two, Aquinas thinks that all of our various aspects are proportioned or suited to one another; for example, our form and matter, our essence and principle of individuation, and our acts and their objects are all proportioned to one another.⁸³⁹

Even in these underlying philosophical principles, Aquinas’ thought is supported by phenomenology. It is here supported by Merleau-Ponty’s position that all of our experience is of *Gestalten*, of harmonizing with the world, and of the intertwining between our various aspects. It is supported also by Scheler’s position that lived body experiences are indicative of and suited to things in the world, and by Levinas’ view that our experiences bear meaningful traces of prior events. The phenomenologists give us reason to think that the world harmoniously coheres with us. The world is not given as composed of things completely separated from one another, which we must put together through reasoning. Rather, we find ourselves to be united within ourselves and united to the world, though each of these unities is of a different sort from the others. Phenomenology helps to support Aquinas’ theoretical method. We begin to do metaphysics by observing what is apparent and thinking about this in a deeper way, but what is experientially

⁸³⁸ *In I DA*, lect.1; *In VII DDN*, lect.2; *ST I*, q.29, a.1, ad 3, q.77, a.1, ad 7; q.79, a.1, ad 1. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 165-170.

⁸³⁹ *DEE*, c.1, n.11, 19, 47; *ST I*, q.77, a.3; I-II, q.51, a.1.

apparent indicates something true about the world and about how to proceed in philosophy.

The method to discover the correct metaphysics of the human person is not to posit abstract principles that could account for our experiences. Any metaphysics *could* explain our experiences, but the goal of doing metaphysics is to discover what is true. In using the method that I follow here, one seeks to discover which metaphysics is supported by and explains our experiences, assuming that what we are and what we experience are proportional to one another. The reader can verify or reject the conclusions reached by such a method for him or herself by considering phenomenologically his or her own experiences of self-sensing and then reasoning about these experiences according to the Thomistic method. Of course, as has already been said, some experiences may have been mis-described by the phenomenologists and the reader ought to correct such descriptions. Other experiences may not be had by all human persons, but only by the members of certain groups; although not all readers will be able to verify the descriptions of such experiences, these experiences still help to indicate what we essentially are.

Some of our experiences present themselves as indicating powers that are more accidental than others. As was explained in Chapter Tow, some of our attributes, including our powers, are “proper accidents” (*propria*), that is, they follow directly from the human essence: any healthy human person will have such proper accidents. This is as opposed to other accidental attributes, such as one’s particular skin color, which one does not have just in virtue of having the human essence, but in virtue of this and some other causes.⁸⁴⁰ I contend that ‘being a self-sensor’ refers to a proper accident or set of proper accidents, since it founds our other experiences, and since, as we shall see, it reveals all of our powers. Self-sensing is evidence for what we are essentially.

We can thus inquire into what we must be like in order to have these experiences; we can

⁸⁴⁰ cf. *QDSC*, a.11, *respondeo*, ad 4.

ask what foundation, proportional to these experiences, gives rise to them. In this way, we can first reach a few general metaphysical conclusions. The experience of self-sensing first of all does not support any metaphysical explanation of what we are in terms of purely material or immaterial parts or principles. We experience ourselves as material things and as lived, experiencing things; we experience these two layers to be mutually explanatory and irreducible to one another. One might object that the materiality here experienced is not real matter, but just “matter as experienced”. It must be responded that this is the primary way in which real matter is given to us. By inquiring into matter as it gives itself to us experientially, intertwined with our lived aspects, we eventually reason to scientific accounts of what matter is. Self-sensing points us toward an account according to which we are both material and immaterial in some way.

Furthermore, our experiences of ourselves in self-sensing (and of other things in other instances of sense perception) do not reveal these material and immaterial aspects to be just two sets of properties alongside one another. I do not experience myself as a set of lived experiences juxtaposed to a separate material thing, nor do I experience my materiality as entirely “below” or “standing behind” my lived experience. Rather, I experience my materiality and my lived experience to be intertwined; I experience my material parts to be organized so as to facilitate my lived experience. This was seen in the descriptions of each of the four phenomenologists. Merleau-Ponty calls attention to this feature of our self-sensing above all in his account of the experience of two hands touching and being touched. Scheler notes how particular sensations and values of agreeability and disagreeability are organized in terms of a prior holistic sense of my lived body and vital value, which are sensed to be essentially interconnected with my objective body. Levinas describes erotic resistance, in which my materiality is transformed by my arousal by and desire for union with another, and so is given as interconnected with and

expressive of my subjective interiority. Henry describes the experience of the power of the original body, which animates my objective body.

I also experience some aspects of my materiality as escaping my conscious attention, as in the experiences of vulnerability and suffering that Levinas describes: I have material aspects that can be manipulated by others and that affect my conscious life, but that are not given as lived. However, even here my materiality is experienced to be interconnected with and oriented towards my lived experience. I also find in self-sensing that some layers of my lived experience transcend experientially my materiality. I sense myself as able to withdraw from or transcend a sense of my body. These experiences are nevertheless given as united with my material aspects, and as still bodily in the sense that they are experienced as passive, vulnerable, affective, and impressional, even though they are experienced as intellectual and free as well. Self-sensing thus is evidence that what I essentially am is something both material and immaterial, where the material is organized in terms of the immaterial, not all of the material is animated in a conscious way, and something of the immaterial transcends this composition. I am the composite of the two, but I am somehow also the immaterial power that underlies the composite and animates it; my experience is unified, yet it has a duality as well. Self-sensing thus points towards something at least like the account of the human person that we find in Thomistic hylomorphism.

This is but a first gesture towards demonstrating my thesis. It is not my intention here to reconstruct Thomistic hylomorphism through metaphysical reflection on the phenomenology of self-sensing. Rather, I shall now show how this phenomenologically clarified experience can be used as evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism, as an already formulated metaphysical theory. It may be that, without presupposing the work of Aquinas, one can reason to Thomistic hylomorphism just by reflection on self-sensing. But this would go well beyond what I am

attempting here: here I only intend to show how the phenomenology can be used as evidence for the already formulated theory of Thomistic hylomorphism.

I.C. EVIDENCE FOR THOMISTIC HYLOMORPHISM

I.C.1. EVIDENCE FOR THE FUNDAMENTAL HYLOMORPHIST PRINCIPLES

I.C.1.a. EVIDENCE FOR THE SUBSTANTIALITY, UNITY, AND LIFE OF THE HUMAN PERSON

To be a human person, according to Thomistic hylomorphism, as we have seen in Chapter Two, is to be a unified bodily, living, and intellectual substance. I have various powers, but I am not identical or reducible to any of these powers; I underlie these powers since I am substance, that is, as we saw in Chapter Two, a unified individual thing with a nature such that I exist on my own, not as an attribute or part of another substance.⁸⁴¹ None of my powers is my consciousness; rather, my consciousness is “spread out” among my powers. Yet these powers and my conscious life are fundamentally unified in the specific sort of living thing that I am. I have a specific sort of actuality, which makes me the kind of substance that I am and which is manifest in all my powers and acts.

Self-sensing is evidence for this basic account of what we are. We sense ourselves as moving in and harmonizing with the world in a particular way, as Merleau-Ponty especially emphasizes. This self-sensed motion is closely connected with my sensory and intellectual intertwining with the world. I move through the world as a self-sensed lived body, driven by desires to be in better contact with the world and understand it better. These desires come in different forms responsive to different values and calls, as Scheler and Levinas highlight. Through feeling values, I sense the layers of my subjectivity. As I move in the world, I find that I

⁸⁴¹ For the sense in which I am identical to my essence, insofar as I am the sort of thing that I am, see *DEE* c.1, n.49.

have a unique “style”, a human way of harmonizing with or “gearing into” the world that runs through my other powers, acts, and experiences.

The hylomorphist can use this account in support of the basic Thomistic account of what we are. What we are must be proportional to the experience of being a self-sensing desirous and cognitive self-mover. On the basis of this experiential evidence I can reason that I must be, at least in part, a particular sort of self-mover, one that has cognitive and appetitive powers. The experience of having a specific style that runs through all my acts also provides evidence that what I am is more fundamental than my particular powers and acts. I am not just an ever-changing flux of acts or of material particles, but something that remains stable and unified through changes. I find experientially that I can lose body parts, and gain new habits and powers, while retaining the same fundamental way of harmonizing with the world. This supports the hylomorphist view that I retain over time the same fundamental actuality and that I thus remain the same substance over time, though I also am capable of changing.

In self-sensing we experience ourselves as individuals, though not as isolated monads cut off from other persons and things. Rather, we also experience our self-sensing as shared with and affected by other persons and organisms in various ways. We sense ourselves as sensible and intelligible bodies in the world, as material things harmed and nourished by things in the world around us, and as deteriorating back into that world through excretion, aging, illness, and death. All of this can be taken by the hylomorphist as evidence for the sorts of living thing that we are and the sort of actuality and unity that we exhibit. Self-sensing is evidence that we are individuals, that is, as we saw in Chapter Two, unified beings that remain essentially the same over time, are undivided from ourselves, but distinct from other things. It is also evidence that we are intimately connected to the world, and that we share a good deal in common with other

persons, organisms, and substances in general. Furthermore, these kinds into which we fall are not just abstract groupings into which we can be placed, but really part of what we are, for we can feel and sense our commonality with other members of our kind.

Thomistic hylomorphists argue that my conscious acts are unified and “mine”, but are not unified entirely through one specific sort of act. There is no power that underlies all the other powers; rather, the powers are unified by inhering in the substance that I am. This is supported by the phenomenology of self-sensing. Scheler describes how I self-sense myself as a spiritual person, the free subject of my acts and experiences; I experience my acts and experiences as mine. Yet my experience of myself as the subject of my acts is not an experience of a static content that accompanies all my other experiences and it is not an experience of a particular kind of act. Rather, my experience of myself as a subject of acts changes depending on what act or experience I am currently performing or undergoing. I remain the same subject even as I wholly live and express myself in my acts and experiences. Henry improves on this account of my basic subjectivity: at the foundational level of this unified, changing lived consciousness I always sense myself as bodily and passive, not just active and subjective. The unity in diversity of my conscious life can also be seen in the other layers of my experience which I self-sense. Scheler distinguishes ego experiences from lived body experiences; Merleau-Ponty distinguishes the experience of the “speaking *cogito*” from that of the “tacit *cogito*”; Levinas distinguishes the enjoyment layer of self-sensing from the laboring and reasoning layer. Consciousness is unified but also disparate, coming in many kinds or different conscious powers.

These experiences give us reason again to think that we are fundamentally unified with a nature that makes us not only self-movers but conscious subjects. We have reason to think that we are essentially the sorts of things that are able to be conscious because at the foundation of all

of our experiences we sense ourselves to be the same persisting subject, yet the substances that we are, are not identical to consciousness: there is more to being a human substance and having human unity than consciousness. We have not evidence that we are purely conscious thinking things, for we live our consciousness in disparate ways. These experiences provide evidence that I am the sort of thing that is the subject of all my acts, but that also must act through various powers that are not identical to what I am essentially and which are ordered to one another in definite ways. My unity and persistence over time are not given as explicit contents of consciousness of which I am directly aware, but in the unity and unchanging style of my conscious powers, which allow me to experience contents of consciousness at all.⁸⁴²

Phenomenology also indicates that what I am cannot be accounted for in purely “first-person” or “third-person” terms. I am not a pure subject; indeed, the phenomenology of self-sensing indicates that subjectivity itself comes in many kinds. My subjectivity is presented to me as intertwined with my objectifiable materiality. I am furthermore not purely a thing open to third person examination such as scientific examination, though there are features of me that can be examined from a third-person perspective. The experiences of the flesh elaborated by Merleau-Ponty and of vulnerability to violence described by Levinas especially indicate how I have both a material body and a subjective interiority, which are two “sides” of a basic unity. Insofar as I must be proportional to the experience of self-sensing and able to give rise to it, I must be a unified sort of thing with a kind of actuality that underlies both my first-person and third-person features. Indeed, the experience of self-sensing gives me reason to think that the division between first- and third-person aspects is an inadequate distinction in general; self-sensing indicates that a better distinction is between first-person self-awareness, tacit self-

⁸⁴² This is in part a response to the objections inspired by Derek Parfit considered in Chapters One and Two.

awareness of various kinds, objectifiable materiality, and perhaps other layers of the world.

These layers are lived in different ways and this is evidence for Aquinas' position that I am a unified bodily-intellectual being, which has a fuller control over and knowledge of some aspects of myself in virtue of my intellectuality than over other aspects, such as my sensible appetites.⁸⁴³

There is also evidence in self-sensing for what Aquinas says about the specific sort of value or, in his terms, "nobility" (*nobilitas*), which we and each of our powers display. There is experiential evidence for including an account of nobility in a metaphysics of the human person, thus helping to overcome objections like that of Anthony Kenny and Robert Pasnau that this aspect of the Thomistic theory is obscure and irrelevant for doing metaphysics.⁸⁴⁴ Self-sensing includes experiences of value and of being called; things, including myself, give themselves as valuable and as exerting ethical calls. I sense my layers of consciousness and types of acts as responding to and corresponding to different modalities of a hierarchy of value; for example, my intellectual acts are given to me as more valuable than and cognizant of higher values than my vital drives. I must, as Scheler says, prefer values rightly if I am to reach fulfillment as a human person; in Aquinas' terms, I must subordinate my body to my intellect and to my responsible free will. What I must be, in order to self-sense, must have a value aspect; essentially, I am not morally neutral or value-free. I am something that can be called ethically by the values of things and that is a bearer of values as well, not just something that moves and is actual in particular ways. Indeed, what I am and the ways in which I appear are not understandable apart from these values and calls; thus, metaphysics itself must have an ethical dimension if it is to adequately describe what we and other things in the world are.

⁸⁴³ *ST I-II*, q.56, a.4 and 6; q.58, a.2.

⁸⁴⁴ Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, 151; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 398.

I.C.1.b. EVIDENCE FOR FORM AND MATTER

The cornerstone of Thomistic hylomorphism is the account of form and matter. We have already seen how phenomenology provides some evidence for this account earlier in the chapter, but here this will be considered in a more focused way. The layers of consciousness experienced in self-sensing provide evidence here, as do the experiences of intertwining and of our *Gestalt* structure. In the experience of one hand touching the other, I experience myself as both sensing and sensed, as a lived or phenomenal body and as an objective or material body. My hands are given to me as the bearers of sensory and motor powers, which organize the material structures of my hands. I know what my material structures are for, and why they are organized and structured as they are, because I have a lived experience of their powers. My hands and, *a fortiori*, my whole body, are given to me as *Gestalten*: my objective body and my lived body are given as figures and backgrounds to one another. This is evidence that what I am in some way includes material and immaterial aspects, so as to be able to give rise to this experience.

It could be objected that I experience many things, including the way in which my sensory acts intend their objects, as *Gestalten*, but we would surely not want to say that each of these *Gestalten* is a hylomorphic entity in the same sense. But I also sense myself as a unified individual and as a unique “hollow” in the midst of the world, set apart from the world by my self-sensing interiority. As we have already seen, self-sensing is evidence for the Thomistic position that we are substances, not mere attributes or parts of a larger whole. The *Gestalt* formed by my lived and objective bodies, and that formed by my intentional acts, are given very differently. There is no reason to think that this is evidence that, for example, I and the objects of my sense perception together are a unified hylomorphic substance. The self-sensing experiences of being individual and being a *Gestalt* together are evidence that I am both an individual

substance and have material and immaterial aspects. Not all substances need be like this; there is nothing in the notion of substance to exclude purely immaterial substances. But I am given to myself in such a way that I have good reason to think that I am a hylomorphic substance, that is, a substance composed of form and matter.

The experience that indicates that I am both material and immaterial runs through all of the experiences in which I self-sense my powers. In each self-sensing of one of my powers, I am aware that the power itself involves events happening “below” the level of consciousness in what Merleau-Ponty calls the “subterranean” layer of my experience; these events are connected to the conscious aspects of my powers. My powers are not given as wholly conscious; rather, my powers and acts are given as having conscious and unconscious aspects. I self-sense my power to move my hands, for example, but in that self-sensing I am aware that some aspects of this power fall below my conscious awareness, such as tiny movements in my muscles. I self-sense myself as nourished by the world, but there is a good deal to acts of being nourished that falls outside my conscious experience, such as the chemical reactions involved in digestion. Furthermore, as Levinas points out, my experience indicates that there have been events prior to my experiences that gave rise to those experiences but that I can never consciously recall. These events include both events of physical interaction with the world and events of being called and oriented towards the world. In order for me to have experiences like this, what I am cannot be structured in terms of a first-person part and a third-person part. Rather, I must be structured in terms of matter and a part or principle that is sensed as an underlying power, that gives rise to my consciousness, and that accounts for all that I am able to do and for my basic structure and functioning, both conscious and unconscious.

I sense myself first as a whole, and my individual parts and powers are only given as

having the significance and value that they have for me in virtue of their experienced place in this overall unity. As was pointed out in the last section, there is experiential evidence for human substantiality and unity in the way in which our powers are given as unified and persisting over time. As Scheler points out, this holistic sense of the lived body is closely related to mental experience in what he calls the experience of the “ego-body”, the experience of my body as the place of my mental experiences. Merleau-Ponty and Levinas have also highlighted how intellectual experiences arise on the basis of and as expressed in my overall sense of my body. Henry describes the experience of the “original body”, the immanent self-sensing of my power to move, sense, feel, and understand that underlies the experience of the extended lived body and of the objective body. My self-sensing is spread throughout my whole body, not confined to one part of my body: I do not experience my self-sensing just in my brain, for example, but as spread throughout my body. Nevertheless, I also experience self-sensing to be facilitated by material processes that partially fall outside my lived experience; these materially causative processes, the Thomist and the phenomenologist can both affirm, include processes in the brain, but these processes must be understood as organized by a holistic form that relates to my body as a whole. I do not experience the power that underlies my body as a physical force or event, but as what underlies and accounts for all the drives and forces in my body. Our bodies would not have the significance for us that they do did we not have this underlying holistic sense of power animating, organizing, and giving meaning and value to our material bodies. This power is thus both bodily and intellectual: we experience our bodies as intimately connected to our intellectual powers and we experience our intellectual and sensory powers as just two expressions of our fundamental power or way of moving in the world.

All of this is evidence for the hylomorphist theory of form and matter. The experience of

power underlying my matter, the way it confers structure, function, and value on our material parts, and the way in which it unifies our intellectual and bodily aspects, is all evidence for the principle of form.⁸⁴⁵ My experience of self-sensing is evidence that there is more to me than just my material parts: I have a form in terms of which my matter is organized, in virtue of which I move myself, and in virtue of which I have a conscious subjective interiority. I not only sense particular powers in me, but, as we saw in the last section, I also experience the unity of these powers as well. There is thus experiential evidence that all these powers are rooted in one form.

The experiential evidence for my form is given to me quite otherwise than how my material parts are given to me; there is experiential evidence that there are different sorts of metaphysical principles in me. Many of my material “integral parts” can themselves be self-sensed as including a material structure and an underlying power. Even those parts that I cannot self-sense, such as my material organs, give themselves to me perceptually and intelligibly as having a materiality organized by an internal power. My eyes, for example, with all their specialized cells, are organized so as to facilitate my power of vision, both the conscious aspects of this power and the unconscious physiological aspects. Indeed, all things in the world that I perceive or understand are presented to me as having this *Gestalt* structure of material parts organized by an internal power. The self-sensed internal power, which is evidence for the principle of form, is never given as a part alongside material parts, or as an event like other physical events; rather, it underlies, organizes, and explains these phenomena. On the basis of this evidence, then, form can never be understood as one of my parts on the model of my other parts. It is rather an underlying metaphysical principle, given in its own unique way. My whole

⁸⁴⁵ The “powers” that we self-sense and the “powers” of Thomistichylomorphism are thus closely and complexly interrelated, but are not the same. The sense of power is evidence for both our Thomistic powers and our form, in different ways, as laid out in this section.

body, including all of its integral parts, is explained through its underlying material and formal causes, as indicated by the intertwined way in which they are given. There is also evidence here that, as Aquinas says, my form is the formal, efficient, and final cause of my body. I self-sense my material parts as organized by the underlying power (formal), as moving in virtue of this power (efficient), and as existing for the sake of this power and its exercise (final).

That things besides me are given such that they invite explanation in terms of hylomorphic principles and such that they are able to be my intentional objects is evidence for a key aspect of hylomorphism. It is evidence that I am a hylomorphic thing like other hylomorphic things around me. The relationship between my form and matter, evidence for which is given in self-sensing, is just one case of a more widespread phenomenon, which occurs even in things incapable of self-sensing. I am able to come into intentional contact with and intertwine with things because we are all hylomorphic. All things in the world are given as sensible and intelligible; these aspects of things are rooted in their forms, which I receive in my intentional powers, and which in turn are rooted in my form. My form gives me a receptive subjective interiority, whereas the forms of things like a tree do not have such an interiority, but both the tree and I are organized by our forms, and are given as such. Phenomenology provides evidence for the ways in which form makes me both an individual and united with things in the world.

Self-sensing is also evidence for the principles of form and matter because I sense myself to be, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, “wholly active and wholly passive”. I can actively move myself and passively receive things and forms of things from the world. I sense myself as able to express my basic powers in the words “I can”; I sense myself as the free agent of my acts, but also as vulnerable and dependent on things around me, with only a limited freedom. In my interior subjective life, I sense myself to be called to responsibility, knowledge, and action in the

world, and, even in my active aspects, as given to myself. All of this is evidence for the Thomistic position that I have an active formal principle and a passive material principle that are unified and together underlie and give rise to my powers. My active principle is expressed in all that I do and am; it is the root of my “style” of being in the world. Yet it is proportioned and united to my passive matter, not infinitely active. Self-sensing is evidence for the Thomistic position that I am free but also bodily, and that I am not the source of myself.

I also experience myself as being a lived body, but also as “having” a material body. I experience myself both as identical to and as at a distance from my body, as Henry points out. This supports what Aquinas says about the body and matter. As a composite of matter and form, I am my body, but considered as a composite of elements, a quantifiable structure, or as a purely passive principle, I have a body and matter, and I can take these as objects of my intentional intellectual power. Intellectually, Aquinas says, we have immediate command over our bodily movements, for the two powers are unified in virtue of one form. The material “flesh” (*caro*) of our bodies can be an “instrument” (*instrumentum*) of reason, though it also has its own tendencies in virtue of our other powers, such as our appetitive powers, which resist the command of reason.⁸⁴⁶ These ways in which the body can be understood are supported, for example, by the experience of the two hands, wherein I at once experience my hands as matter structured around and unified with certain powers, and at the same time as a weight and resistance underlying those powers. They are also supported by the experiences of violence and illness described by Levinas, wherein I experience my body as resisting my conscious efforts in virtue of some of its powers and in virtue of its elemental materiality, which can be manipulated by others. We see here reason to say that I both am and have a body, in different respects, but

⁸⁴⁶ *ST* I-II, q.56, a.4, ad 2; q.58, a.2. Of course, Aquinas means something different by ‘flesh’ than either Merleau-Ponty and Henry meant.

that I cannot be identified with my matter, neither in the sense of my material elements nor in the sense of pure potentiality. In such experiences, as well as in the experience of bodily self-movement that gives me a sense of my spatiality, we have some evidence for Aquinas' position that every material body is at a place (*locus*) that is in part discovered through its movements.⁸⁴⁷

In sensing myself, I am aware that I biologically and personally develop over time and that I have a place in the surrounding natural and cultural world. I always sense myself as a cultural and historical being as well as a living being, as being with other people and as being responsible to and for them. I never experience my body as a purely material thing; rather, my materiality is given in self-sensing as intertwined with other aspects, such that my body always is given as also having a cultural and personal significance. I sense my development over time, for example, in the experience of aging, which includes biological, personal, and interpersonal aspects. As Henry points out, I sense myself as both a causal and a personal agent. I self-sense my body as having intellectual, ethical, and interpersonal significances, as being the site of my free and responsible actions. I also experience my unified development through sensing my body as a "habit-body" (Merleau-Ponty) or a "dwelling" (Levinas). I experience my body as having taken on abilities over time, as being able to take on new abilities, and of being a shelter for my interiority against the world.

These features of my fundamental experience of self-sensing provide further evidence for hylomorphism.⁸⁴⁸ My form, which organizes and bestows powers on my matter, and which accounts for my unique way of moving through the world, makes me a unified biological and a

⁸⁴⁷ *In IV Phys.*, lect.6-7.

⁸⁴⁸ See especially the discussions of the elaborations on the basic hylomorphist metaphysics by Charles Kahn and Anton Pegis in Chapters One and Two for the cultural and historical dimension of the person in hylomorphism. On the importance of development over time for the hylomorphist metaphysics see Koch and Hershenov, "Fission and Confusion".

personal being. My form is the basis not only of the unity of my powers at a given time, but also of my unified and goal-directed development over time, both my natural biological development and my development as an intellectual person.⁸⁴⁹ My development involves taking on habits, especially virtuous habits which perfect my powers, and which have an effect on my body, not just my intellect and will, according to Aquinas.⁸⁵⁰ Since my form is also the basis of my cognitive powers, in any change I experience, I also experience the passage of time. According to Aquinas, sensing oneself and other things, feeling some appetite, and having thoughts about practical matters, memories, and plans always involve an awareness of the passage of time.⁸⁵¹ Time-consciousness is a fundamental component of consciousness according to both Aquinas and the phenomenologists.

The self-sensing experiences of eros, being called ethically, and bodily expressivity further support the Thomistic position that what I and my body essentially are cannot be explained purely in terms of matter. I sense my body as something through which I seek union with another, as feeling for and being called to substitute itself for another, and as expressive of my intellectuality, interiority, and ethical value. The matter of the human body thus facilitates powers and interconnections with the world, which go beyond the powers of normal matter.

⁸⁴⁹ The Thomistic account, as supported by phenomenology, and especially as supported by the phenomenological account of intertwining, requires that our biological history and the narrative history of our personal lives not be understood separately, but as intimately interconnected and mutually influencing. This is yet another way in which Thomistic hylomorphism emphasizes the unity of all our various aspects. In this, the Thomistic account opposes, for example, the account of David DeGrazia, *Human Identity and Bioethics*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), chs.2 and 3, which treats biological and metaphysical continuity and development completely separately from the narrative structure of our personal, conscious lives, which is considered “non-metaphysical”. On the Thomistic account, especially as supported by phenomenology, these two aspects of our lives must be treated as interconnected and as part of the final metaphysical account of what we are.

⁸⁵⁰ *ST I-II*, q.50, a.1.

⁸⁵¹ *In IV Phys.*, lect.17; *ST I-II*, q.23, a.2 and 3; q.57, a.6, ad 4; *II-II*, q.49, especially a.1, 6, 8.

All of this is evidence for Aquinas' account of the form and matter that make us up. Our material parts are organized by our form, which gives rise to our active and passive powers, and accounts for the sort of body that we are and that we have. This account of what we are explains how we can in some circumstances experience our bodies as utterly resistant to our efforts, and in other circumstances find that this resistance almost gives way before the advances of another person. I am able to be so receptive to others because my form is able to be affected by the other's form, and the human form is the root of human actuality, unity, subjective interiority, and value. It is because our bodies are not just conglomerations of elemental matter, but are composed of matter formed in a specific way giving rise to specific powers, that we have these wide-ranging but unified experiences of self-sensing. My body is able to be affected by the form of another person or thing that is proximate to me, even prior to my conscious awareness of it. In the experiences mentioned here we find some of the deepest evidence that the human person is not just material and not just a composite of first- and third-person principles but a unified substance composed of matter and form.

I.C.1.c. EVIDENCE FOR THE SUBSISTENCE OF THE SOUL

The experience of self-sensing is also evidence for the Thomistic position that the human form or soul is itself, along with the composite person, a subsistent thing. It must be recalled from Chapter Two that some things are "subsistent" (*subsistens*) but not complete substances, that is, they are individual things, not attributes of other things, but do not have a complete nature in and of themselves. Rather, they derive what they are from the substance of which they are a part and the complete nature of that substance. As we have already seen, in self-sensing, there is a layer that is experienced as "prior to" our bodies. Scheler describes this as the experience of being a spiritual person, in which we experience ourselves as transcending the world and our

bodies, able to survey them all through freely-executed intentional acts, having an infinite openness to receive intentionally all that there is in the world, as well as an openness to God. By becoming more aware of this layer of my experience, I can become more in control of my actions. Henry describes this as the experience of auto-affection and of the “original body”, in which we experience ourselves as an interiority more immanent than all our transcendent acts and our sense of being a body extended in space, into which we can withdraw subjectively. This is an experience not just of the power that underlies our body, but a self-sensing of this power separately from and not intertwined with the body. It is also an awareness of our capacity to be open and receptive to the world for the sake of understanding it.

Merleau-Ponty describes something of this experience of transcending the body as well when he considers the experience of intellectually considering and speaking about the world, and the experience of the “speaking *cogito*”, that is, the experience of being aware of oneself in a fully articulate way. In these experiences I rise above perceptual and bodily experiences to consider the “style” of things in linguistic, conceptual terms. But Merleau-Ponty thinks, wrongly as we have seen, that there is no way to transcend the material world fully in our experience; Scheler’s phenomenology corrects this account. Scheler points out that our intellectual openness requires that we be able to consider the world as a whole via intentional feelings of the divine or of the absence of the divine, and through the essential insight into the structure of the whole world that results. Levinas corroborates this in his account of how we sense ourselves under an Absolute call to responsibility and as having a desire for infinite goodness. We are always called beyond mere bodily needs to an ethical attitude of responsibility and self-sacrifice that transcends, but must still be expressed in, the body. There is thus an aspect to us that transcends the body entirely, including the powers that are felt in the body. In these cases of self-sensing we

most sense ourselves to be free, responsible, intellectual persons.

There is thus a layer of self-sensing that is separate from sensing ourselves as having an intertwined lived and objective body. Nevertheless, this is still given to me as an experience of myself. I sense myself as a body animated by an underlying power, but I also experience myself at a distance from my body, even as alienated from my bodily self-sensing. Once again, there is a unity and a duality to our experience. We self-sense our powers as both intertwined with and prior to the body, though these two layers of experience are, in normal experiences, given as unified. Even at the transcendent layer of experience, in which I sense myself as having control over my body and being intentionally open to the world, I sense myself as not only active but passive and vulnerable as well. I still sense myself as historical, though differently than I so sense myself in the body, for through my intellectual and free power of world-openness, I can grasp unchanging essences and ethical calls, and have feelings that have a certain absoluteness. There is a dimension of eternity to this layer of experience. I also still sense myself to be related intimately to other persons, as well as to the Absolute sphere of experience. Finally, it is in focusing on this layer of experience that I most self-sense my contingency and givenness, my being “called” and “created” by the Absolute.

It must be recalled that the experience of the “Absolute” described in various ways by different phenomenologists is an experience of a “sphere” of experience that transcends the world and is given in feelings of holiness or unholy, in ethical calls, and in our ability to consider the world as a whole. The Absolute is not identical to God in the Thomistic sense; the Absolute is a sphere of experience in terms of which one might have many different kinds of experiences, such as religious experiences, absolute ethical experiences, or experiences of the absence of God. We experience this transcendent sphere whether or not we believe in God or

have religious experiences; we experience ourselves as given to ourselves from this sphere, whether or not there is in fact a God that created us. This is a phenomenological account of our experience. By contrast, Aquinas' account of God is a metaphysical and theological account of what he takes to be the real thing that is experienced in genuine experiences of the Absolute, though he does not use that term. In this study, I only intend to find evidence for Aquinas' metaphysics of the human person, not for his philosophy of God. I am interested here in the experience of the Absolute only insofar as it provides such evidence. In a later section I shall consider the similarities between the phenomenologically described experiences of the Absolute and certain virtues and vices oriented towards or away from God, such as the virtue of religion, that Aquinas describes. Again, my intention here is to provide evidence for his account of the person; since both the phenomenologists and Aquinas highlight the religious dimension of the person, it is necessary for me to consider these accounts. For all the thinkers involved, the human person is, and can only be understood as, a religious being, as long as 'religious' is understood very broadly as meaning "relating to the Absolute in some way". This is the case even if it turns out that there is in fact no God or if it turns out that we can never know whether God exists.

The experiences described above can be taken by the hylomorphist as evidence for the position that the soul is not only the form of the body but also a subsistent entity in itself. If what we are essentially must be proportionate to our acts, then what we are must account for the experience of being separate from, prior to, and transcendent over our bodies. My form must be not only intertwined with matter, but it must be a subject of some acts and powers in its own right. Here I use 'subject' in the Thomistic sense described in Chapter One, meaning something able to receive attributes. In the phenomenology of self-sensing we thus have evidence that the human soul or form is a subsistent entity but also is the form of the body.

We have experiences that point to the fact that the soul is in “contact” with the body not though the external contact of one material thing with another, but through the “contact of power” (*contactus virtutis*). By this contact, our formal powers internally organize and account for the functioning of our material parts, and our free choices and intellectual knowledge are immediately expressible through actions in the body.⁸⁵² The transcendent layer of experience is, in normal experience, given as separate from our bodily experiences, but as a layer of experience unified with the bodily layers of experience. We have experiential evidence here for the idea that the human form is not entirely immersed in the body but also transcends it.⁸⁵³ We have experiential evidence that some of our powers are fully rooted in the composite of form and matter, but others, like our intellect and free will, are rooted in our form alone and are exercised by form “moving” (*movente*) the body.⁸⁵⁴

It is thus primarily due to our self-sensing of our intellectual, linguistic, ethical, and volitional powers that we have evidence that our forms or souls are subsistent and in some sense separate from our bodies. But this layer of self-sensing is also, as Levinas and Henry especially point out, an experience of my individuality and unity. I experience the exercise of all of my powers, including all the impressions and affections of which I am conscious, to be unified in this fundamental layer of self-sensing. Thus there is evidence here that all of our powers, not just intellect and will, are ultimately rooted in, that is, caused and explained by, the soul; they all affect one another, especially at this fundamental layer of self-sensing.⁸⁵⁵ As Aquinas contends, the person is a composite of soul and matter, but the soul is also in a way “more” the person than

⁸⁵² *ST I* q.75 a.1 ad 3; *SCG II*, c.56.

⁸⁵³ *ST I* q.76, a.1, ad 4; a.3. cf. Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust”, 131-132, 138; Van Steenberghen, *Radical*, 57.

⁸⁵⁴ *ST I-II*, q.50, a.1.

⁸⁵⁵ cf. *ST I*, q.76, a.3.

is the body; the soul is the “inward man” (*homo interior*).⁸⁵⁶ This is supported by the experiences of transcendence over the body and of auto-affective immanence, which is the fundamental experience of my own personhood. I experience my body as both me and, in the term used by Anton Pegis, as the “vehicle” of my transcendence, of my intellectual and ethical activity.⁸⁵⁷

Although the layer of self-sensing being considered here is given not as intertwined with our matter, in the sense of ‘intertwining’ explained by Merleau-Ponty, it is still given as closely connected to the body, insofar as it is an experience of powers that are always expressed through the body. I experience my intellectual activity as dependent on sensory information and as needing to be expressed through the body, such as through speech. The self-sensing experience of transcendence over the body is not evidence that we are purely immaterial, accidentally connected to a body, or merely juxtaposed to a body, as in the theories of Cartesian dualism, idealism, or compound dualism. Rather, the experience of self-sensing is evidence for the Thomistic hylomorphist view that our souls transcend but are naturally in contact with our bodies as their form and the root of all their powers. There is thus experiential evidence that I am a unified substance that is the subject of all my acts and experiences, but also that I have a duality between myself as a subsistent immaterial entity able experientially to withdraw from and transcend the body and myself as a body that is a composite of matter and form.

This layer of experience also provides evidence that our souls are dependent on or even created by some immaterial cause, or at least that material and biological causes cannot account for all that we are. This was already seen to some extent in the discussion of the relationship between Thomistic hylomorphism and emergent dualism in Chapter Two. We experience this transcendent layer of self-sensing as irreducible to our material, objective aspects; indeed, we

⁸⁵⁶ *ST I*, q.75, a.4, ad 1.

⁸⁵⁷ Pegis, *Origins*, 41. cf. Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 77-78, 106-110.

experience it as what gives us access to the material world in the first place and as entirely open to receiving the material world. Intellectual experience arises on the basis of sensory data, but it also involves an experience of being open to the world in a way that goes beyond sensory openness to the world. Furthermore, I experience this intellectual transcendence over and orientation toward the world as given to me; before I ever experience anything, I am oriented towards and opened to the world. My body is organized and only makes sense in terms of the underlying powers and at least some of these powers are given as entirely transcendent over the body. My powers are given to me in self-sensing as not only transcendent over my material structures in a functionalist way, but as prior to my body, as that in virtue of which and for the sake of which my body is organized. The intellectual powers are even given as entirely transcending the body. This experience of irreducibility to and priority over all that is material in us and in the world, joined to the experience of being given to ourselves and of dependence on the Absolute, provides us with some experiential evidence that our souls, this deepest aspect of ourselves that is given in self-sensing, cannot be explained in purely material terms.

Of course, this does not establish Aquinas' position that our souls are created by God, but only that we are given to ourselves as irreducible to purely material causes. As has been said in Chapter Two, just what this means goes beyond the scope of this study, and would require a good deal more metaphysical reflection on the phenomenological data, as well as on non-phenomenological sources of evidence. Further examination of experiential evidence and metaphysical reasoning would need to be undertaken to establish whether Aquinas' claim that we can only account for our origins by positing a special creative of God is justified. This goes beyond the scope of this study, since here I am only interested in providing evidence for Aquinas' account of human nature as such. Thus here we have experiential evidence that no form

of materialism, even the most non-reductive materialism, can explain everything that we are.

In addition to the experience of intellectual and free transcendence over the body, we can distinguish in our self-sensing some other experiences of transcendence. These provide evidence for the Thomistic position that there are degrees of immateriality among our powers and that our soul rises above matter to various degrees in its different powers. The experience of “enjoyment” or of the world as nourishing me and fulfilling my needs described by Levinas is an experience in which our materiality is most clearly given to us in experience. In this experience we sense ourselves receiving material things into ourselves. We sense ourselves as vulnerable to and just barely rising above the level of the “anonymous existence” of the material world, which threatens us with physical forces and into which we can decay. Such an experience indicates some features of our vegetative powers, though the experience itself involves the operation of some of our sensitive and appetitive powers. In this experience, in which some of my vegetative powers, as well as of my sensitive and appetitive powers, are given to me, I sense myself as a material thing only slightly different from other material things in virtue of my self-sensing.

This differs from full-fledged experiences of sense perception in which I experience myself as intentionally immersed in the world, receiving things in an intentional rather than material manner, and as diverging from my own objective material body through sensation, as in the experience of the two hands. These experiences are evidence for the “degree of immateriality” (*gradus immateriale*) that Aquinas attributes to our sensitive powers as opposed to our material vegetative powers.⁸⁵⁸ Vegetative powers are powers that non-living things do not have, but they are still wholly implemented in matter. Sensitive powers, in virtue of their “degree of immateriality” and consequent intentionality, transcend matter to some extent but are still

⁸⁵⁸ *In II DA*, lect.5, n.284; *QDDA* a.13. cf. Deely, “Immateriality”, 297.

intertwined with matter. Human intellectual powers transcend the body entirely, though they are dependent on matter insofar as they are dependent on the senses. Human intellectual understanding of the world is, as Merleau-Ponty puts it, a “sublimation” from sense perception, or, as Aquinas says, it requires abstraction from sense perceptions. These degrees of immateriality are supported by experiences of different degrees of intertwining with and transcendence over our material objective bodies, ranging from the most material experiences of vulnerability to the most immaterial experiences of subjective transcendence.

We thus have experiential evidence both for the hylomorphic unity of the human person and for the subsistence of the soul. We find that consciousness “slides” between these two ways in which we are given to ourselves. In these two ways we find ourselves in continuity with other spheres of experience, and so experience ourselves as a “microcosm” (*minor mundus*). We have features in common with the lowest material elements, with the highest sphere of experience, the sphere of the Absolute, and with everything else in between. Aquinas shares such a view, in that he sees the human person as the “horizon” (*horizon*) and “border” (*confinum*) between time and eternity, between the corporeal and the incorporeal.⁸⁵⁹ We are “metaphysical amphibians”, to use Stump’s phrase,⁸⁶⁰ not purely material or immaterial, but substances that unify both and that have features in common with and in relation to all the other spheres of the cosmos. This account of what we are is supported by the many kinds and layers of self-sensing.

Our most foundational experience provides us with evidence for the somewhat convoluted view of Thomistic hylomorphism. Any metaphysics that would reduce one of our features in an effort to be clearer, simpler, or to solve various *aporiae* or problems would deny

⁸⁵⁹ *In DC*, lect.19; *SCG* II, c.68, 80; *ST* I, q.91, a.1. For further explanations of these passages see: Blanchette, *Perfection*, 120-121, 193-194, 268; Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 463; Pegis, *Problem of the Soul*, 170.

⁸⁶⁰ Stump uses this phrase in “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism”, 514

some way in which we are given to ourselves. The metaphysician must be true to the complexity of the human person, unwilling to simplify it for the sake of his or her theory. We can only understand the essential principles of things to a small degree, and so there are bound to be *aporiae* and other difficulties left even when the true metaphysics has been discovered.

Some might object that self-sensing actually provides evidence against many of the things that Aquinas says about our nature and powers. We must now turn to an examination of how self-sensing can be analyzed adequately in terms of the account of human powers that Aquinas distinguishes. Since the phenomenological account of self-sensing is bound up with all the details of the accounts of the four phenomenologists that we have discussed, we must consider these in more detail, so as to see how they fit with Aquinas' account of the human person. First, however, we must consider some important parallels between Aquinas' accounts of our experiences of ourselves, and the phenomenological accounts of self-sensing.

I.C.2. PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND THOMISTIC ACCOUNTS OF SELF-EXPERIENCE

As we saw in Chapter One, Aquinas presents a few positions on the various experiences we have of ourselves. Some might object that the phenomenologists' accounts of self-experience are radically different from Aquinas'. We must thus see whether and how the two accounts of self-experience are compatible and, more importantly, whether and how they are in accord with one another.⁸⁶¹ We must see if each account can be translated into the terms of the other account and if there are experiences or acts described by one account, which the other cannot handle. If there is some serious conflict here, then we must inquire whether Aquinas or the phenomenologists have been more true to our experience. Such conflict could be an impediment

⁸⁶¹ Aquinas does not use terms like 'self-experience' or 'self-sensing', but he does say that each one of us "senses ourselves" (*sentit se*) and "experiences in ourselves" (*experitur in seipso*). See *In DSS*, lect.18; *DV* q.10, a.8.

to using phenomenology as evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism and could lead us to see places where the argument of the last few sections has been in error. We have already seen some objections in this regard. We saw in Chapter One that Peter John Olivi contended that Aquinas has no account of direct self-awareness or introspection, even excludes the possibility of such direct self-awareness, and that, according to Aquinas, all self-awareness comes about as a result of reasoning back from awareness of other things. We also saw in Chapter One that Karol Wojtyła has contended that Aquinas' theory excludes subjective interiority and has no way to take it into account. If any of these objections were correct in their assessments, there would be serious difficulties with using the phenomenology of self-sensing as evidence for the Thomistic account. At the very least, if we wanted to retain this experience as evidence for hylomorphism, we would have to make major changes to the theory of hylomorphism.

I contend that Aquinas' description of our self-experience is compatible and in accord with the phenomenologists' description. We have already examined briefly in Chapter One the various things that Aquinas says about our self-experience; we have also seen throughout Chapters One and Two some responses to the above objections. A further comparison of Aquinas and the phenomenologists on this issue reveals some important similarities between the two accounts of self-experience and definitively overcomes the objections.

I.2.a. SENSORY AND ACTUAL INTELLECTUAL SELF-COGNITION

Aquinas' most extended treatment of our experience of ourselves is in the *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate*, where self-experience is described in terms of the soul's knowledge of itself, of which there are a number of different forms:

... one can have two sorts of cognition concerning the soul...in one, (1) one's soul cognizes itself according to that which is proper to it; in the other, (2) the soul is cognized insofar as it is common with all souls. It is by that cognition (2) which it has commonly

concerning every soul that it cognizes the nature of the soul; the cognition (1) which it has concerning the soul according to that which is proper to it is a cognition of the soul as it has being in this individual [human person]. Through this cognition (1) it is cognized whether the soul exists, as when one perceives that one has a soul; through the other cognition (2) it is known what the soul is and what are its proper accidents. A distinction must be made in the first sort of cognition (1) because cognizing something is (1a) habitual and (1b) actual. In the case of actual cognition (1b), by which one considers him or herself in actuality to have a soul, I say that the soul is cognized through its acts. In this one perceives that one has a soul, and lives, and exists, because one perceives oneself to sense and to understand, and to exercise other works of life of this sort...No one perceives oneself to understand except from that one understands something...But in the case of habitual cognition (1a), I say that the soul sees itself through its essence; that is, because its essence is present to itself, it is able to give rise to an act of cognition of itself...that the soul might perceive itself to exist and pay attention to [the fact] that it is driven to itself does not require some habit, but for this the essence of the soul alone suffices, by which it is present to the mind; from this acts proceed by which one actually perceives oneself.⁸⁶²

In this passage, Aquinas considers a set of experiences similar in many respects to the

⁸⁶² *DV*, q.10, a.8 (my translation): “...de anima duplex cognitio haberi potest ab unoquoque...Una quidem, qua cuiusque anima se tantum cognoscit quantum ad id quod est ei proprium; alia qua cognoscitur anima quantum ad id quod est omnibus animabus commune. Illa igitur cognitio quae communiter de omni anima habetur, est qua cognoscitur animae natura; cognitio vero quam quis habet de anima quantum ad id quod est sibi proprium, est cognitio de anima secundum quod esse habet in tali individuo. Unde per hanc cognitionem cognoscitur an est anima, sicut cum aliquis percipit se habere animam; per aliam vero cognitionem scitur quid est anima, et quae sunt per se accidentia eius. Quantum igitur ad primam cognitionem pertinet, distinguendum est, quia cognoscere aliquid est habitu et actu. Quantum igitur ad actuale cognitionem, qua aliquis se in actu considerat animam habere, sic dico, quod anima cognoscitur per actus suos. In hoc enim aliquis percipit se animam habere, et vivere, et esse, quod percipit se sentire et intelligere, et alia huiusmodi vitae opera exercere...Nullus autem percipit se intelligere nisi ex hoc quod aliquid intelligit...Sed quantum ad habituale cognitionem, sic dico, quod anima per essentiam suam se videt, id est ex hoc ipso quod essentia sua est sibi praesens est potens exire in actum cognitionis sui ipsius...quod percipiat anima se esse, et quid in seipsa agatur attendat, non requiritur aliquis habitus; sed ad hoc sufficit sola essentia animae, quae menti est praesens: ex ea enim actus progrediuntur, in quibus actualiter ipsa percipitur.” What Aquinas means by ‘cognize’ (*cognoscere*), ‘know’ (*scire*), ‘perceive’ (*percipere*) ‘understand’ (*intellegere*), their cognates, and terms referring to related mental acts was explained in Chapter Two.

experience of self-sensing. He distinguishes a number of different ways that we can cognize our own souls and so our own natures. On the one hand, (2) there is knowledge of what the soul is, that is, what its nature, the nature that every human soul has, is. I did not quote the lengthy discussion of this sort of cognition, which follows the quotation above. This sort of cognition requires reflection on one's acts; we discover what we specifically are through reasoning about what we do and what the objects of our acts are. This is an application of the method of doing metaphysics and natural philosophy already discussed at length. This process of discovery involves, as in the cognition of things outside of us, apprehending receptively one's universalized nature, and then judging that this nature exists in oneself and in others.⁸⁶³ Understanding oneself in this way involves an experienced divergence from oneself: one understands oneself through a concept or internal "word", formed in virtue of one's reflection on oneself, which expresses what one understands oneself to be.⁸⁶⁴

More importantly for the purposes of this study, there are the two sorts of non-philosophical self-cognition (1) considered in the passage quoted above. These do not require philosophical methods, but are experiences that all human persons frequently have. The first of these kinds of self-cognition is (1b) "actual" self-cognition, the explicit awareness one has that one exists, lives, has a soul, and performs various acts. In our normal experience, we are primarily aware of the objects of our acts, such as the things we see, think about, or desire. But although our conscious attention is normally fixed on things in the world, at the same time as being aware of those things, we are aware that we are intending these objects. As was explained at length in Chapters One and Two, we are aware of our acts in two different ways. We are aware of our acts of sense perception, as well as the fact that we are alive, through the power of

⁸⁶³ Ibid. cf. *QDSC*, a.10, ad 8.

⁸⁶⁴ *DV*, q.4, a.2.

the “common sense” (*sensus communis*).⁸⁶⁵ The senses, which operate in and through material organs, are not fully self-reflective; I do not see with my eyes that I see, but I am aware that I see by another sensory power, which Aquinas calls the “common sense”. But the intellect, being entirely immaterial, is also fully self-aware. I am aware that I understand something in the very act of understanding that thing. I do not need a second intentional act, as in the case of the senses, to be aware that I am aware. Intellectual activity is fully self-conscious; the more immaterial a power is, the more fully and interiorly self-reflective it can be. Through the intellect I also can be fully aware of my sensory acts, to a degree that is not open to my common sense acts of self-awareness, for I can intellectually understand anything that is actual and therefore intelligible in me.⁸⁶⁶ Through these intellectual acts, I have “actual self-cognition”. In being aware of my acts, I am aware of myself as that which underlies my acts, and as an existing, living, animated, ensouled being. I do not, at this stage, have a philosophical account of what all this means, or a universalized account of the nature of the soul, but I do have actual, explicit not tacit, self-cognition.

There are some parallels between Aquinas’ account of actual self-cognition and some of the phenomenological accounts of self-sensing. As Merleau-Ponty describes the experience, there is a gap between myself as sensing and myself as sensed. Levinas emphasizes that self-sensing always requires that something outside me first have acted on me. These phenomenological accounts, which show how there is an experiential gap in my self-sensing, support Aquinas’ account of our sensory self-awareness, in which there is a gap between the power that senses, the common sense, and the powers that are sensed. Aquinas certainly does not give nearly as robust an account of self-sensing as do the phenomenologists, hence some of the

⁸⁶⁵ *In II DA*, lect.13, n.390.

⁸⁶⁶ *SCG IV*, c.11; *ST*, I, q.87, a.3 and 4. cf. *DV*, q.2, a.2.

need for this study. But what he says does not conflict with what they say. There are even some particular details of this experience of self-sensing that both mention: for example, both Aquinas and the phenomenologists describe how in the experience of sensing that one exists, one is also thereby aware of the passage of time.⁸⁶⁷

This parallel between Aquinas and the phenomenologists continues at the intellectual level of self-experience. Scheler describes how, at the spiritual person level of consciousness, we are entirely aware of our own acts: in executing a free act, I am immediately thereby aware of that act of execution. Merleau-Ponty describes the experience of the “speaking *cogito*”, in which my self-awareness is more explicit and focused than my sensory self-awareness. The latter is experienced as tacit and peripheral to my attention, while the former is nearly completely reflexive and articulated in language. According to both Scheler and Merleau-Ponty, I am not aware of myself in isolation from the world and from my other acts, but am aware of myself in and through my acts, as the executor of my acts. Aquinas agrees with this description.

I.2.b. HABITUAL SELF-COGNITION

Besides actual self-cognition, Aquinas describes (1a) “habitual self-cognition”. Unlike in actual self-cognition, habitual self-cognition does not require that I be exercising an intentional act for it to occur. Aquinas says that the essence of the soul always is “present to itself (*sibi praesens*) and is “driven to itself” (*in seipso agatur*). This self-cognition is “habitual” not in that it is a habit we have to acquire, but in that it is always with us and is neither an explicit act of cognition nor a pure potentiality for cognition, but an actuality midway between these two. It is an actualization of what we are to a certain degree, but not to the degree of our intentional acts.

⁸⁶⁷ For Aquinas see *In DSS*, lect.18: “...si aliquando aliquis sentit se ipsum esse in aliquo continuo tempore, non contingit latere illud tempus esse: manifestum est autem quod homo vel aliquid aliud est in quodam continuo tempore...”

Aquinas argues that nothing can be known except insofar as it is in act. Our habits can only be actually known insofar as we exercise them in acts; for instance, I can only know that I habitually know math by recalling this knowledge through an actual act of cognition. Yet just having the habit is itself a sort of cognition insofar as having a habit allows one to know actually that one has that habit whenever one chooses to think about it. Having a habit is already in and of itself a sort of cognition of the habit.⁸⁶⁸

The soul itself has this sort of habitual self-cognition. As a purely immaterial principle, the soul is self-reflexive and self-present even when it is not attending to anything else, even without having received any forms from the outside world. One constantly “perceives” (*percipit*) that one exists and lives, that one is an individual, and “what occurs in one’s soul” (*quid in anima sua agatur*). Aquinas says that we would not be aware of any of our acts did we not first experience them occurring within us.⁸⁶⁹ This constantly underlying self-cognition is infallible; one cannot be in error as to whether one lives or exists, or as to what occurs in one’s soul.⁸⁷⁰ This self-cognition is not an understanding of oneself through a concept, and is thus very different from all other acts of self-cognition according to Aquinas. This constantly present self-cognition can be actualized, and so made the focus of conscious attention, at any time in an act of actual self-cognition.⁸⁷¹ This habitual self-cognition is an underlying awareness of one’s very power to be actually self-cognizing and to cognize anything else.⁸⁷² Indeed, perhaps most surprisingly, Aquinas says that:

...the acquaintance by which the soul is acquainted with itself is not

⁸⁶⁸ *DV* q.10, a.9; *ST I*, q.87, a.2.

⁸⁶⁹ *SCG II*, c.76: “...non enim aliter in notitiam harum actionum venissemus nisi eas in nobis experiremur”.

⁸⁷⁰ *DV*, q.10, a.8, ad 1 and 2; *ST I*, q.87, a.1. cf. Smith Gilson, *Metaphysical Presuppositions*, 76.

⁸⁷¹ *DV*, q.10, a.8, ad 11, ad s.c. 8.

⁸⁷² *DV*, q.10, a.8, ad s.c. 1.

in the genus of accident inasmuch as according to that by which it is cognized habitually, but inasmuch as according to the act of cognition which is a certain accident; thus Augustine says in *De Trinitate* book 9, that acquaintance is in the mind substantially according to which the mind is acquainted with itself.⁸⁷³

Reflection on the experience of habitual self-cognition reveals that this constant presence of the soul to itself is not an accidental feature of what we are, but is part of the substantial nature of the soul. What it is to be a human soul, at the most essential level, is in part to be acquainted with oneself; Aquinas emphasizes that this self-acquaintance is receptive: one “perceives” oneself and is “driven” to oneself. In our normal experience, we think of self-acquaintance in terms of explicit acts of self-cognition. But Aquinas here shows that these acts of self-cognition require that it part of the very nature of our souls to be habitually self-acquainted. The essential nature of the soul enters into all of its acts,⁸⁷⁴ and so something of our habitual self-cognition is actualized in every intentional and reflective act of cognition we perform. We can be explicitly aware of this habitual self-cognition in each of our acts of knowing; in any act I perform I can discover at its foundation the habitual self-awareness from which the act springs and which allows the act.

Elsewhere, Aquinas expands on this: the soul is not just essentially self-cognizing, but is essentially understanding (*intelligere*)⁸⁷⁵ and cognitive acquaintance (*notitia*)⁸⁷⁶ in general.

Ordinarily, when we speak of understanding or acquaintance, we mean an act of a cognitive

⁸⁷³ *DV*, q.10, a.8, ad 14 (my translation): “notitia qua anima seipsam novit, non est in genere accidentis quantum ad id quo habitualiter cognoscitur, sed solum quantum ad actum cognitionis qui est accidens quoddam; unde etiam Augustinus dicit quod notitia substantialiter inest menti, in IX de Trinitate, secundum quod mens novit se ipsam.” What Aquinas means by ‘acquaintance’ (*notitia*) is explained in Chapter Two, along with an explanation of other terms that he uses to refer to our various kinds of mental acts.

⁸⁷⁴ *QDSC*, a.11, ad 8.

⁸⁷⁵ *QDSC*, a.11, ad 14.

⁸⁷⁶ *QQ* 7, q.1, a.4.

power, which is not identical to what we or our souls are essentially. But, Aquinas contends, in a sense the soul itself *is* self-cognition, understanding, and acquaintance in general, and, since the soul is our actuality, we are essentially beings that self-cognize and understand. Just as we are said to be essentially living or self-moving, so we are essentially understanding and acquainted with ourselves; these are our essential ways of existing.⁸⁷⁷ I cannot become actually aware of this fundamental layer of what I am except through reflection on my acts, but this layer, which is in part habitual self-cognition, is always there as long as I exist, providing for the possibility of such acts. We are essentially understanders and self-cognizers, though to actualize this in explicit self-cognition or cognition of another requires an intentional act that is not identical to what we are essentially. Insofar as I am an intellectual soul I am always entirely present to myself, but insofar as I am bodily and sensory there is a gap in my self-cognition.⁸⁷⁸

These accounts of self-cognition help to explicate what it means to say that we are essentially bodily-intellectual beings. Having habitual self-cognition and self-presence is an ability to enter upon acts of self-cognition and on Aquinas' account these are necessary conditions for being a human person. But someone could be a human person and have this habitual self-cognition and self-presence, but never be able to self-cognize actually if, for example, a material defect such as a genetic disorder prevented him or her from being able to sense or imagine, and so provide data for the intellect. Thus a Thomistic hylomorphist could affirm that such a person is still essentially an understander and a self-cognizer, in virtue of his or her soul, even if he or she never actually understands anything or cognizes him or herself.

This account of habitual self-cognition, including the consequences of this account for

⁸⁷⁷ *In DC*, lect.18; *QQ* 7, q.1, a.4; *ST* I, q.4, a.2, ad 3. cf. Milbank and Pickstock, *Truth in Aquinas*, 20, 31, 34; Te Velde, *Participation and Substantiality*, 265-272.

⁸⁷⁸ cf. *SCG* IV, c.11.

the theory of what we essentially are, is well supported by Henry's account of our auto-affective foundational layer of experience. Henry describes how the very foundation of our experience is an infallible self-awareness of oneself as existing and living. One is aware at this level just of what occurs in auto-affection; it is a purely immanent felt experience, without intentional acts, an experience of the world-open powers that allow for those acts.⁸⁷⁹ Henry's description of the foundational layer of experience is evidence for Aquinas' position that, as we have seen, there is a desiring and emotive aspect to intellectual and volitional operations. Our mental acts involve a desire-driven world-openness and a unified rootedness in the self-experience of habitual self-cognition. We are often not explicitly aware of this layer of experience, but it is necessary for and founds all our other experiences.

Henry's phenomenology of auto-affection corresponds closely to Aquinas' account of habitual self-cognition. Habitual self-cognition can never be the direct object of one's awareness, for then the self-cognition would cease to be habitual and would be actual. Henry, as well as Merleau-Ponty, points out that we have tacit, peripheral, felt, and invisible experiences that are just like this. We can, through phenomenological bracketing, become aware of this sort of self-awareness, wherein the soul is aware of what happens to it in an immanent, non-intentional, receptive way. Henry's phenomenology thus supports what might be otherwise obscure in Aquinas, but which is important for his account of self-cognition. On this phenomenologically-supported account, we can see how the soul has both first- and third-person features, and how it is essentially intellectual, not just the subject of an intellectual power.⁸⁸⁰ The soul is its self-cognition and world-openness, but it is also a subsistent entity that forms the body and provides all of the body's scientifically-examinable physiological powers.

⁸⁷⁹ *EM*, 438, 444, 543; *MP*, 77.

⁸⁸⁰ *ST I*, q.79, a.1, ad 1.

The phenomenologists thus provide evidence that supports and even clarifies what Aquinas says about self-cognition. At the same time, Aquinas' account of self-sensing could itself correct some problems in the phenomenologists' accounts, without proving the core of their accounts wrong. For example, we have seen that Henry has been criticized for denying that things transcendent to us are real and affirming that only immanent auto-affection is real. Aquinas' account of habitual and actual self-cognition can help us see how we do indeed have transcendent acts of awareness rooted in immanent self-experience, but that these two are not as sundered as Henry would have them, but are related in clearly describable ways. Our full normal experience includes both layers: I have one layer of experience in which I habitually experience just the soul, and I have another layer of experiences in which I experience acts, objects, and the body. The second layer is founded on the first in that the first is an experience of a necessary condition for having the power to experience the second. But in order to experience the first actually, I must have experiences of the second sort. Both the world transcendent to me and my immanent essence are necessary for and in some sense found my experience, in different ways.

Some experiences are more explicitly immanent and others are more transcendent to my self-sensing. For example, Aquinas mentions feelings that are felt entirely "in the soul", such as emotions I feel when listening to certain sounds, whereas other feelings are felt "in the body", such as physical pain;⁸⁸¹ Henry too describes how some feelings are felt in a more immanent way than others.⁸⁸² Furthermore, I have, as has already been said, experiences of withdrawing reflectively from experiences of the body into pure lived experience; these are acts that come

⁸⁸¹ *ST I*, q.77, a.5, ad 3: "...quaedam sentit cum corpore, idest in corpore existentia, sicut cum sentit vulnus vel aliquid huiusmodi, quaedam vero sentit sine corpore, idest non existentia in corpore, sed solum in apprehensione animae, sicut cum sentit se tristari vel gaudere de aliquo audito."

⁸⁸² cf. *EM*, 459-465, 475, 479-483, 491, 648-649.

very close to a pure experience of the layer of habitual self-cognitive experience, but they still involve acts of the intellectual power, not just one's essential self-presence.

Henry errs in thinking that all my experiences are purely immanent. He forgets that, as Aquinas points out, for our experience to have explicit actual content, we need external objects. Henry also errs in that he thinks that we could achieve some state of consciousness wherein we are directly or only aware of our immanent auto-affection. Aquinas admits that this layer of experience is important but he shows how it is only a layer of experience. We are never explicitly or actually aware of our habitual self-cognition only and as such; actual self-cognition requires reflecting from our objects and acts back to our underlying essence. In this reflection, we can indeed become aware of the underlying habitual layer of experience, which is a real layer of our experience, not merely something posited. This reflection parallels the work of the phenomenological reduction in Henry. Even for Henry, awareness of the immanent aspect of experience requires a methodological reduction from intentional experience to this immanent experience. Henry glosses over this process at times; having discovered the foundation of experience, he proceeds to dismiss the road that led him there. Aquinas, by contrast, realizes that a full account of our experience and of what we are requires that we acknowledge and retain in our final account all levels of experience. The Thomistic hylomorphist thus can use what is true in Henry's phenomenological description as evidence for this metaphysics, while rejecting what is false or misleading in Henry's interpretation of this experience. Henry's work, taken on its own, would lead to a sort of dualism or idealism, identifying me with my auto-affection. But joined together with evidence from the other phenomenologists and Aquinas' metaphysical reasoning, his work allows an experiential defense of aspects of hylomorphism. An metaphysics that is adequately proportional to a full phenomenology of our self-sensing must involve

multiple principles, unified and correlated in the right ways. Our experience does not all reduce to one layer of experience or consciousness; rather, it includes clearly separate layers of materiality, intertwining of the sensing and the sensed, and transcendence over the body. For this reason, the correct metaphysics of the person must account for each of these layers with different, though unified, principles.

Aquinas even allows us to recognize what is true in Henry's contention that we need to withdraw from intentionality to a purely immanent self-awareness in order to be ethically good. Aquinas holds that greater "self-possession" (*compos sui*) or self-control, through reason and will, over one's acts leads to one being a more ethically good person; greater self-control makes one, for example, more able to relate to God.⁸⁸³ Henry, as we have seen, agrees with all this. But although Aquinas would allow this much to Henry, he would contend that self-possession makes me a better person also because it allows me to perform better actions in the world. Henry is wrong to make ethical goodness entirely about one's interior state.

My immanent or habitual self-cognition is identified with the soul, not with the whole human person. What I am fundamentally is not just immanent auto-affection, but a soul joined to matter; my soul does indeed "perceive" itself immanently, but it is also the form of my body: it is accessible in both a "first-person" way as Henry describes, and in "third-person" terms, as, for instance, Merleau-Ponty's idea of intertwining supports. I am, at foundation, as Henry himself admits, both a causal agent and a fully personal agent. To be a complete, fulfilled, good human person I need my soul with its immanent self-cognition, and I need my powers in my body whereby I relate to things in the world; I find that my essence, my form, and my powers are all gifts (*dona*), and all are important: my essence is important because it is what gives rise to and

⁸⁸³ *ST* I-II, q.4, a.4; q.55, a.4; II-II, q.157, a.4, ad 1.

unifies all my powers, and my powers because they allow me to achieve the goals for the sake of which I exist and so become fulfilled and good.⁸⁸⁴

All of this allows us to overcome definitely Wojtyła's objection that Aquinas lacks an account of subjectivity. He clearly does have such an account in his careful delineation of the many ways in which we are aware of ourselves, and especially in his accounts of the self-reflexivity of intellectual acts and of the habitual self-cognition of the soul being of the very essence of the soul. This discussion also allows us to overcome Olivi's objection that Aquinas lacks an account of direct self-awareness. He does have such an account, but the self-awareness that he acknowledges is not explicit philosophical self-knowledge. We do not innately know what we are essentially and there are several different ways in which we cognize ourselves. With this complexity, Aquinas' account is far more phenomenological and true to experience than Olivi's account is.

I.C.3. SELF-SENSING AND THE THOMISTIC ACCOUNT OF HUMAN POWERS

Self-sensing, as phenomenologically described, is evidence for the basic principles ofhylomorphism and is in accord with and supports Aquinas' own account of self-cognition. There is one further relationship between the two accounts that must be considered in order to show more definitively that self-sensing is evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism. This is the relationship between the accounts of various layers and kinds of self-sensing described by the phenomenologists and the kinds of powers that Aquinas distinguishes. Aquinas and the phenomenologists distinguish different kinds of human acts and experiences, but they do so on different bases. Aquinas distinguishes them on the basis of the sorts of objects towards which they are directed. The phenomenologists distinguish some acts and experiences on the basis of

⁸⁸⁴ *QDSC*, a.11, ad 11.

their intentional object; on this basis, for example, Scheler distinguishes the feeling of values from the intuition of essences. They also distinguish experiences in virtue of founding or being founded by one another, that is, on the basis of whether one experience or layer of experience is a condition for another to be experienced.

I.C.3.a. TRANSLATING PHENOMENOLOGY INTO A THEORY OF POWERS

We must consider whether acts and experiences delineated on one theory can be “translated” into the other theory. Aquinas’ account lacks explicit accounts of many of the experiences described by the phenomenologists, such as, for example, the experience of value feeling. Still, it may be that his account can accommodate these experiences. Likewise, as we have seen, Aquinas distinguishes some acts not accounted for by the phenomenologists, such as the act of intellectually judging whether something exists. If the two accounts are not compatible, then this will be an obstacle to using phenomenologically-described experience as evidence for hylomorphism; at best, both accounts could be seen as pointing to the fundamental hylomorphic principles, but we would be left with two incompatible accounts of human acts and experience. In this section, I shall consider a few potential disagreements with Aquinas’ account of our powers that could be raised by a phenomenologist. I contend that there is no fundamental disagreement between the Thomistic account of our powers and the harmonization of the four phenomenological accounts presented above. Aquinas can non-artificially accommodate the experiences of self-sensing. If the phenomenology of self-sensing can be shown to be in accord with Aquinas’ account of our powers, then this will be further evidence for the thesis of this study. It will show that a causal account of our powers and a phenomenological account of our experiences are in accord, and that together they point to the hylomorphist account of what it is to be a human person.

In bringing together the phenomenological descriptions with Aquinas' account of powers, I shall draw not only on Aquinas' account of human powers as outlined in Chapter Two, but also on his account of our habits (*habitus*). Habits are ways in which our powers or nature can be disposed toward certain actions or ends. Many of our powers require habituation in order to be exercised effectively; many of our powers can be used to perform many different kinds of actions and to reach different ends, and these are actualized such that we have a tendency to perform one sort of action and reach one sort of end.⁸⁸⁵ For example, our appetites tend to become habituated toward some way of feeling, leading to some way of acting. The appetite of anger, for instance, can become habituated such that one develops the vice of cruelty or the virtue of clemency.⁸⁸⁶ In each case, the appetite of anger is altered so that it tends to be exercised in a particular way. Some habits perfect powers, whereas others dispose them to be exercised to a defective or excessive degree. Some of the habits that perfect powers, such as the perfections of the appetites, make one a better person ethically because they orient one only toward good acts, and these are called virtues; other perfective habits, such as the perfections of the memory, do not necessarily make one a better person ethically.⁸⁸⁷

The fact that Aquinas places his discussion of most of our acts and habits in the context of a discussion of ethics helps to support the notion, put forward by the phenomenologists, that ethics or an account of value must be part of the fundamental account of our experience, of what we are, and of what there is in the world. Their account of these issues in turn supports Aquinas' own metaphysics, which includes ethical notions like "nobility" and "goodness". However, regardless of their ethical status, examining habits is helpful for better understanding our powers

⁸⁸⁵ *ST I-II*, q.49, a.1-4; q.51, a.1.

⁸⁸⁶ *ST II-II*, q.157, a.1; q.159, a.1.

⁸⁸⁷ *QDV*, q.1, a.1 and 2; *ST I-II*, q.55, a.1-4; q.56, a.1.

and what we essentially are, since they reveal the various ways in which our powers can be developed, and so help us better understand those powers themselves, which in turn helps us understand our essences more clearly. Some of the types of experience described by the phenomenologists correspond not to a power in Aquinas' account, but to one of the habits he describes. This is in accord with the phenomenology of self-sensing, since we sense our bodies and our powers to have been formed through habits.

We have already seen some ways in which the layers and kinds of self-sensing fit together with Aquinas' account of human powers. For example, in the last section we saw how the experiences of intertwining, of the lived body, and of auto-affection fit into the Thomistic account. As David Braine and John Haldane have mentioned, the idea of the lived body fits well with Thomistic hylomorphism.⁸⁸⁸ On a Thomistic account, I am not merely a conscious mind or brain commanding the body separate in some sense from it; rather, I am my body and my consciousness is spread throughout my body in virtue of the form that makes my body what it is. The human person, indeed all material things, cannot be understood just in terms of material and efficient causes; rather, they must be understood primarily in terms of formal causality. Formal causality, Haldane especially contends, helps to explain well the sorts of lived body self-sensing that we experience. When we want to move our bodies, we do not first form an image of an action and then efficiently cause our bodies to mirror that image; rather, we are able to just freely move and sense with our bodies. There are material processes that help to facilitate the immediacy with which we move our bodies, but this does not negate the fact that we experience and effect our bodily movements immediately.

Aquinas' account of movement bears important similarities to Merleau-Ponty's.

⁸⁸⁸ Braine, *Human Person*, 70-73, 283-286, 309; Haldane, "Breakdown", 57-58; "Insight", 42. cf. Anscombe, "On Sensations of Position", 55-58.

According to both thinkers, sense perception leads to appetite and desire, which lead to the movement of the body; this movement is often carried out for the sake of further sensation, such as for the sake of the continuation of pleasurable sensations or the cessation of painful ones.⁸⁸⁹

Merleau-Ponty's account of intellectual understanding, which arises out of sensation and intertwines with the world in a non-sensory way, is furthermore consonant with the Thomistic account of abstraction, formal identity between the knower and the known object, and our openness and receptivity to the world. Thus, on many of the main points, the phenomenological description of our experience fits clearly into the Thomistic account of our powers.

In order to fit the two accounts together, translation of vocabulary is needed, as is reflection on the various aspects of experiences highlighted by each account. There does not seem to be anything artificial about importing phenomenologically-described experiences into the Thomistic account. We can legitimately divide up our experiences in different ways, as long as we are clear on the principle of distinction. We can, for example, legitimately describe our experience of some sensible object, as the phenomenologists do, as divided into pre-conscious sensation events, intentional acts of sense perception, awareness of the sensory field, lived body self-sensing, and auto-affective impressions. We can also legitimately describe the same experience, as Aquinas does, in terms of the affection of the sense organ by the medium, the actualization of the sense power by the form of the sensible object, the joining of sensory forms by the common sense, the self-cognizing of the common sense, and an intellectual awareness of all these events. Each account brings out different aspects of the same experiences. We must be careful to be sure that we have identified the correct parallels in each account, but this can be done by carefully attending to the features of the experience as it actually happens and to the

⁸⁸⁹ *In III DA*, lect.16, n.836-839.

principles of distinction and interpretation of acts and experiences used by each account. Each account also points us back to the hylomorphic principles.

Indeed, Aquinas himself provides us with a model of considering the same experience in different ways, in his analysis of different kinds of dreams. Different kinds of dreams can be distinguished on the basis of the different kinds of powers and intentional objects involved; for example, some dreams involve the common sense and its judgment of the existence of things, as in lucid dreams, whereas other dreams involve only the imagination. But we can also consider dreams experientially; thus, Aquinas distinguishes experienced features of dreams had during a fever from experienced features of other sorts of dreams. This is a different sort of analysis, a sort of “phenomenological” analysis of the dream, from an analysis of powers involved. Finally, Aquinas distinguishes these different sorts of dreams on the basis of physiological and causal differences among these kinds of dreams. However, these different analyses of dreams are taken to cohere with one another; the different sorts of accounts are unified in terms of the fundamental account of our powers and our basic principles. Aquinas thus provides a model for translating different accounts of the same experience into one another.⁸⁹⁰

⁸⁹⁰ *ST I*, q.84, a.8, ad 2: “...sensus ligatur in dormientibus propter evaporationes quasdam et fumositates resolutas, ut dicitur in libro de Somn. et Vig. Et ideo secundum dispositionem huiusmodi evaporationum, contingit esse ligamentum sensus maius vel minus. Quando enim multus fuerit motus vaporum, ligatur non solum sensus, sed etiam imaginatio, ita ut nulla appareant phantasmata; sicut praecipue accidit cum aliquis incipit dormire post multum cibum et potum. Si vero motus vaporum aliquantulum fuerit remissior, apparent phantasmata, sed distorta et inordinata; sicut accidit in febricitantibus. Si vero adhuc magis motus sedetur, apparent phantasmata ordinata; sicut maxime solet contingere in fine dormitionis, et in hominibus sobriis et habentibus fortem imaginationem. Si autem motus vaporum fuerit modicus, non solum imaginatio remanet libera, sed etiam ipse sensus communis ex parte solvitur; ita quod homo iudicat interdum in dormiendo ea quae videt somnia esse, quasi diiudicans inter res et rerum similitudines. Sed tamen ex aliqua parte remanet sensus communis ligatus; et ideo, licet aliquas similitudines discernat a rebus, tamen semper in aliquibus decipitur. Sic igitur per modum quo sensus solvitur et imaginatio in dormiendo, liberatur et iudicium intellectus, non tamen ex toto. Unde illi qui dormiendo syllogizant, cum

However, there are experiences of self-sensing described by the phenomenologists for which it is perhaps not so clear how the two accounts could be in accord. Considering these experiences gives rise to a few objections to the thesis of this study. Answering these objections will draw out further features of Aquinas' account of the human person that are highlighted by drawing upon phenomenology and that are themselves indicative of what we essentially are. This examination will allow us to see all the better how phenomenology can be used to provide evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism.

I.C.3.b. LEVINASIAN ENJOYMENT

A first such experience, which seems not to be able to fit with the Thomistic account, is “enjoyment”, as described by Levinas. In enjoyment things are given to me insofar as they fulfill my needs and nourish me. At this level of experience, things are not distinguished or considered theoretically in terms of appearance or natural kind, or practically in terms of their usefulness. Rather, they are just “lived from” and “enjoyed” as fulfilling of one’s needs. This description presents a problem for integrating this experience into the Thomistic account of human powers. Enjoyment seems to involve the exercise of the vegetative, appetitive, and locomotive powers, but only some of the sensitive powers. Sense perception is involved in enjoyment only insofar as sense perception fulfills our needs and is an immersion in the world. It seems that Aquinas’ account is unable to handle such an experience, because, according to Aquinas, sensation involves not only receptivity, but also active judgment. Judgment of things’ goodness or evil is required, according to Aquinas, for one to respond appetitively to things. Yet in enjoyment we are appetitively oriented toward the world prior to sensation.

It must be remembered that “enjoyment” is a layer of experience and not a full-fledged

excitantur, semper recognoscunt se in aliquo defecisse.” Cf. *ST I*, q.86, a.4, ad 2; *DV* q.12, a.3, ad 1; q.28, a.3, ad 6.

experience in and of itself. We cannot sense unless we are immersed in a world that fulfills our needs. But the phenomenological order of foundation among layers of experience is not the same as the causal or temporal order among acts and experiences. As we saw in Chapter Two, Aquinas also thinks that we have vegetative and appetitive needs that are fulfilled by the world; the vegetative powers are a necessary condition for the exercise of the sensitive powers. He also thinks that our powers are oriented toward the world in various ways prior to conscious apprehension. We are in need of fulfillment by things vegetatively, appetitively, and cognitively. Attaining the goals of our powers produces pleasure or enjoyment, even if only to a minimal degree. Thus certain aspects of Levinas' account of enjoyment are already present in Aquinas. Furthermore, Levinas' denial that at the level of enjoyment we distinguish things theoretically or practically does not conflict with Aquinas' contention that appetitively responding to things requires a prior judgment about the goodness or evil of the thing for me. Sensory judgment is not an explicit and articulate intellectual judgment; it is merely an experience of things as differentiated. Enjoyment in Levinas' sense requires awareness of the differentiation among things, since at this level we respond to fulfilling and threatening things differently. Thus "enjoyment" in Levinas' sense must include "judgment" in Aquinas' sense of distinguishing between things and being actively cognitively aware of their existence in reality. Levinas' account of enjoyment is a description of a layer of our experience in terms of the phenomenological order among such layers. It treats this layer as holistic, since this is how it is experienced; Aquinas' account, by contrast, emphasizes the aspects of this holistic experience insofar as they are causally and intentionally related to the world in different ways. Levinas is correct in his analysis of the phenomenological order, but Aquinas is correct in his analysis of the causal order.

Levinas might object that this analysis of enjoyment in terms of various acts and powers destroys the nature of this experience. In fact, he argues that enjoyment cannot be understood in terms of “act” or “potency” in the Aristotelian sense.⁸⁹¹ Enjoyment is pure immersion in the world, without any sense of being directed towards certain goals; it is the pure sense of satisfaction at having needs and having them fulfilled. But we cannot identify the phenomenological and causal orders, and we cannot identify experience as it is given with the underlying metaphysical explanation. Enjoyment is a layer of experience that brings into play several of our powers; even Levinas acknowledges that enjoyment involves eating, breathing, desiring, and sensing. These powers are directed towards certain ends, but this does not mean, as Levinas thinks, that we experience our powers, as described by the Aristotelian tradition, in a utilitarian manner. Actualizing potencies is not necessarily done once and for all; potencies are not all means to self-serving ends. Contrary to what Levinas thinks, the human substance, as Aquinas and other Aristotelians understand it, is not static but dynamic, allowing for and directed to ever-greater fulfillment.⁸⁹² Many of our powers require that we constantly re-actualize them. For example, the powers of nutrition and intellectual cognition are not fulfilled once and for all by one act of eating and one act of seeing; rather, we are driven to eat again and again, and cognizing itself is an activity that is an ongoing immersion in the world and constant actualization of our powers.⁸⁹³ The metaphysics of act and potency that Aquinas uses is broader than Levinas allows; it can accommodate experiences of constant fulfillment by and immersion in the world. Enjoyment can be accommodated by Aquinas’ account of our powers, but this account also provides a causal analysis of enjoyment not available on a purely phenomenological

⁸⁹¹ *TI*, 112-113.

⁸⁹² Cf. *ST I-II*, q.3, a.8; q.30, a.4.

⁸⁹³ *In IX Met.*, lect.4 and 5. cf. *Met.* IX.6 and 7, especially 1048b34.

account. Phenomenological description only deals with experience, but it indicates that there is more to our acts, powers, and essence than just what we experience. Given that phenomenology only deals with experience, it can be expected that the account that it yields will differ from Aquinas' causal account, but this does not entail an incompatibility between the two. Rather, as we have seen, the phenomenology itself provides evidence for Aquinas' account of our essential principles, and, as we are seeing now, is in accord with his account of our powers.

I.C.3.c. SCHELERIAN DRIVES AND VALUE-FEELING

These lines of response allow incorporation of two features of Scheler's account into Aquinas' that seem, *prima facie*, to be at odds with the Thomistic account: biological drives and intentional value feeling. Aquinas seems to describe no powers that account for these experiences. Aquinas distinguishes sensitive and volitional appetites, which respond to things, and sensitive and intellectual apprehensive powers, which cognize and judge things, but he mentions no feeling-intuition of the value of things. He mentions vegetative and appetitive powers, but no biological drives that propel us out into the world. Furthermore, Aquinas and Scheler seem to make contradictory claims about the order of our acts. For Aquinas, sense perception is prior to felt responses; for Scheler, the feeling of values guides sense perception, and insight into values or essences does not require the mediation of sense perception.⁸⁹⁴ For Aquinas, I do not desire something unless I first apprehend it with my senses; for Scheler, I first have drives that impel me to look for those things that fulfill them.

Once again it must be remembered that different orderings among our acts and experiences have different principles; for this reason, different orderings can each be correct and not in conflict with one another. Scheler is correct according to the order of phenomenological

⁸⁹⁴ *OEM*, 199-200.

foundation that I first self-sense, for example, a drive for food when I am hungry, and then I go to look for some food. The drive is experienced as an orientation toward the world that I already have prior to actually apprehending any food. Indeed, Aquinas agrees that we are oriented prior to any apprehension towards certain goods that fulfill us, such as health, which requires food.⁸⁹⁵ But Aquinas is correct that my acting on and experiencing these drives or requires a prior apprehension, even if only a minimal one. In order to go to look for food, I have to know about food and know that food is the sort of thing that can be found. I cannot consciously look for food if I am not aware that there is such a thing as food. My drive is oriented by the form of food that is in my sensory or intellectual powers. Since I first received this form when I was an infant and have since retained it in my memory, I am now always able to seek food and experience this drive. Sometimes I may feel a drive very strongly without being quite aware what I am seeking, but there is always some cognized form that orients and directs a drive. I never feel a strong drive for nothing at all; indeed, it is not even clear what that would mean. Thus, in his account of drives, Scheler is correct in his description of our experience, but Aquinas is also correct regarding the causal order among our powers.

Scheler's value feeling can only be related to Aquinas' appetitive and apprehensive powers in a rather complex fashion. In value feeling, I experience the value of some thing or situation as the intentional object of my feeling; this felt value guides my further attitude and action toward or inquiry into that thing or situation. In Aquinas' causal account of my powers, I first sense things with my external senses and then the received sensory forms are gathered together by my common sense. I judge the good or evil of this sensed thing using my cogitative power, with the help of my intellectual powers. My appetites then respond to these apprehended

⁸⁹⁵ *ST I-II*, q.94, a.2.

forms, which in turn determines my further attitude and action toward or inquiry into that thing.

In order to see how these two accounts are compatible, it must be noted that the terms ‘sense’, ‘feel’, and their cognates are often used very loosely by Aquinas and the phenomenologists. Thus, what is “felt” according to Scheler may be “sensed” according to Aquinas. Furthermore, Scheler uses the phenomenological method of bracketing to isolate and consider precise aspects of our experience, whereas Aquinas analyzes our acts as they normally occur, not as they can be phenomenologically clarified. To see whether the accounts are compatible, we must compare the structures of experience as each philosopher presents them. To this end, we must recall a few further aspects of Aquinas’ account.

First, sensory apprehension can immediately lead to an appetitive response, such that some sense perceptions themselves are felt, for example, to be enjoyable or depressing. Second, appetites themselves are intentionally oriented towards the value—in Aquinas’ terms, the good or evil—of things. For example, love is felt towards something insofar as it is good and hatred towards something insofar as it is evil. These appetites are directed towards things as they are in themselves; I love a thing as a whole, not just some aspect of the thing, though I love it because it is good. The value of a thing, or, in Aquinas’ terms, its kind of good and evil, are experienced as distinct from the thing, as both Aquinas and Scheler note, but, in the final metaphysical analysis, are really identical to the thing.

Third, appetites themselves bring about a sort of experiential knowledge, which Aquinas calls knowledge by connaturality. When I have an appetitive, or, in contemporary terms, an emotional response to a thing, I attain a new sort of knowledge of it, knowledge not had via the senses or the intellect. As Jacques Maritain emphasizes, when I love, I come to know the object

of my love through that love in a felt and intimate way.⁸⁹⁶ This “knowledge by connaturality” is facilitated by virtue. For example, a person who has the virtue of chastity has a felt knowledge of the people to whom he or she is sexually attracted, and of how to comport him or herself towards those people, which the unchaste person does not. This is because the chaste person has properly developed his or her appetitive response to things insofar as they have, in Scheler’s terms, a sexual value. To experience something as connatural to me is to experience its proportionality to me, the way it fits with my powers and essence.⁸⁹⁷ When I love another human person as a friend, or when I love God, I gain an experiential, appetitive, connatural knowledge of that person. In loving my friends, I feel for them and I feel what is good or evil for them; I feel drawn out of myself towards serving them. The same can be said when I desire something for myself, in what Aquinas calls the “love of concupiscence”: through love I feel drawn toward that thing, and I gain a felt intimate knowledge of the loved thing that I did not previously have.⁸⁹⁸ In these three ways, Aquinas allows that we intentionally grasp values through feeling.

As for the order of powers, again it must be said that causally, we must first have some sensitive access to things before we can feel their value. Our feelings only arise when we apprehend a thing; they do not spontaneously arise in response to nothing. But often the sense perception is not the focus of our conscious attention, or the resulting appetitive response to value is more strongly felt than is the initial sense perception of the valuable thing. Aquinas is correct on the causal order of powers and acts, and Scheler’s phenomenology is also sound. We often experience ourselves having insights without an experience of sense perception, but this does not mean that the insight is not causally dependent on sense perception.

⁸⁹⁶ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 277-280, 288-289, 312-313. cf. McInerney, *Maritain*, 171-2.

⁸⁹⁷ *SCG* II, c.77; *ST* I, q.1, a.6, ad 3; II-II, q.45, a.2; q.151, a.1, 2, 4.

⁸⁹⁸ *ST* I-II, q.26, a.4; q.28, a.2 and 3; q.65, a.5.

Scheler and Aquinas are also in accord on the idea of the *ordo amoris* and the stances of love and hate. According to Aquinas, values are felt only after the “judgment” of the goodness or evil of the apprehended thing by the cogitative power, influenced by one’s virtuous or vicious state. According to Scheler, values are felt as determined by one’s preference, order of loves, and fundamental stance toward the world. These layers of experience occur in the background of one’s conscious attention. Although judgment is required causally for the feeling of values, it need not be experienced as the focus of one’s attention before the value is felt; we can make judgments in a tacit, background, or assumed way. Experientially, our intentional feelings guide our attention and cognition. Indeed, Aquinas holds that the mind (*mens*) is “drawn by human affection to intend those things for which one has an affection” (*ex affectu hominis trahitur mens eius ad intendendum his ad quae afficitur*).⁸⁹⁹ But these feelings are founded on prior acts, on which we do not normally focus: acts of preference and love or hate, in Scheler’s terms, and of judgment and habituation to virtue or vice, in Aquinas’ terms. They also causally presuppose acts of sensory apprehension. And the way in which we perceive, judge, and feel things can be affected through functionalization of certain beliefs, in Scheler’s terms, or through habituation of our memory, imagination, and cogitative power, in Aquinas’ terms.⁹⁰⁰ Our habitual beliefs change the way in which we experience and deal with the world. Despite their terminological differences, Scheler and Aquinas are here describing the same experiences, the same ways of being oriented toward and receptive to things in the world.

Scheler’s account of the hierarchy of value and value-feelings could be used to expand Aquinas’ own account of our feelings. Aquinas discusses our sensitive appetites at length, but his

⁸⁹⁹ *ST II-II*, q.166, a.1, ad 2. cf. *In I Met.*, lect.3, n.53-54; *In III DA*, lect.16, n.836.

⁹⁰⁰ For Scheler: *F*, 403; “Idealism and Realism”, in *SPE*, 312-313; *OEM*, 203. For Aquinas: *ST I-II*, q.50, a.3, ad 3.

discussion of the felt aspect of the operation of intellectual powers like the will and of religious feeling is sparse. Scheler's rich account of these feelings, which, at least in essentials, is in accord with Aquinas' account of the human person, could be mined for insights into expanding this account. Furthermore, Aquinas does not analyze with the same detail as Scheler the ways in which we feel particular values; Scheler's phenomenological method can be used to analyze our appetites so as to note their various aspects, for example, to focus just on the value-intending aspect. The Thomistic account certainly can be interpreted plausibly as including the idea that everything has a value; as we have seen, the "nobility" of our various powers is an important part of Aquinas' account of our powers. As we have also seen, the value of a thing is in some sense identical in reality, if not in experience, with the thing itself, according to Aquinas, though Aquinas does not use the term 'value'. But Scheler's account could help expand the Thomistic account of types of value and the relationship between values and their bearers. Of course, there are important disparities between Scheler and Aquinas' accounts, such as that Scheler thinks that we can directly intuit God, whereas Aquinas rejects such a notion. But these are disagreements not over fundamentals of what we are and what we are able to do, but over details about the exercises of our powers.

One way in which Scheler's account of the hierarchy of value and value-feeling could be incorporated into Aquinas' account, which is necessary for this study, regards vital value. Aquinas holds that we not only feel love and other appetites for things outside us, but for ourselves and for our own bodies.⁹⁰¹ Expanding on Aquinas' account, we can reason that in loving my body, I must connaturally feel my body's value, and loving my body presupposes that I perceive it and judge and feel its value. To love my body is to be concerned for its well-being

⁹⁰¹ *QDV*, q.2, a.9; *ST* II-II, 1.26, a.5.

and flourishing; thus loving my body must in part be loving and therefore feeling my vegetative powers and drives. And indeed, all of our bodily parts and powers have what Aquinas calls “natural love” (*amor naturalis*) for their goals, that is, a tendency towards and affinity for those goals.⁹⁰² The feeling of this natural love, via one’s appetites, must then also be, in Scheler’s terms, the feeling of one’s drives and vital value.

I.C.3.d. LANGUAGE AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

These points about how value-feeling has a place in Aquinas’ account of human powers can also help harmonize what Aquinas and the phenomenologists say about our interpersonal relationships. Aquinas models his main account of how we know other people on his account of how we know anything at all. As with other things, we abstract the universalized form of “human person” from some person that we are sense perceiving, judge that this is an existing human person, and so come to understand that this is a human person.⁹⁰³ Likewise, when we want to know what another person is thinking or feeling, we consider “bodily signs” (*corporalia signa*), such as their expression or their speech, which indicate their interior state.⁹⁰⁴ We also know others through their similarity to our interiority; knowing what it is like to be a human person from within, we know somewhat what it is to be another through their similarity to ourselves.⁹⁰⁵

This account of how we know others has been misinterpreted by Ramazan Erturk as an instance of the theory of analogical knowledge of other minds.⁹⁰⁶ According to this theory of how we come to know other people, which was mentioned in Chapter Three, I first note a

⁹⁰² *SCG* II, c.82; *ST* I-II, q.26, a.1, ad 3.

⁹⁰³ cf. *QDM*, q.16, a.8, ad 3. cf. *ST* I, q.84, a.1; q.88, a.2.

⁹⁰⁴ On corporeal signs being used to know another person’s interior state, see *QDM*, q.16, a.8; on speech see *ST* I, q.107, a.1, ad 1 and 2. cf. Pasnau, *Human Nature*, 356-358.

⁹⁰⁵ *ST* I, q.88, a.1, ad 1.

⁹⁰⁶ Ramazan Erturk, “Thomas Aquinas on Knowledge of Other Minds”, *The Journal of International Social Research* 3:11 (Spring 2010): 280-282.

relation between my own interior state and my exterior bodily signs. I then note similar bodily signs in others and reason that they too must have the same interior states. This theory was rejected by the four phenomenologists considered in this study as inadequate to describe and account for the intimate knowledge we have of others.

Aquinas' account bears only a superficial resemblance to this theory. On Aquinas' theory, I first come to know others because it is the function of my intellect to draw out of sensed forms their intelligible content; thus I am able to understand intellectually that someone is a person on the basis of my sense perceptions of him or her. Second, I do not have to reason analogically from observed bodily signs to interior mental states, as if these were completely separate from one another. Rather, exterior bodily signs and interior mental states are united according to the formal and material causality by which many of our aspects are united. When feelings are sufficiently strong, they just "have in exterior appearance some indication" (*in exteriori apparentia habet aliquod indicium*) through which they are apprehensible.⁹⁰⁷ Some of these physiological signs are so subtle that they escape our notice, but they are still part of the overall manifestation of the feeling.⁹⁰⁸ Some of them are readily apparent; for example, we can see in the face of another person that he or she is alive.⁹⁰⁹ Likewise, speech is not a representation of our interior mental state entirely separate from that state; rather, to speak is to express (*exprimere*) or manifest (*manifestare*) "what condition we are in internally" (*quales sumus intrinsecus*).⁹¹⁰ We do not have to think about the sounds of speech and then reason analogically to the internal meaning-content; rather, the internal content is expressed in the words. The only reasoning required is the abstraction from sensible things that we naturally perform upon sensing anything,

⁹⁰⁷ *QDM*, q.16, a.8, *respondeo*

⁹⁰⁸ *QDM*, q.16, a.8, *respondeo* and ad 1, 2

⁹⁰⁹ *SCG* II, c.85, 88.

⁹¹⁰ *DR* I, c.1; *ST* I, q.107, a.1, ad 1.

using the knowledge of the language being used possessed by the listener. No analogical reasoning or projection of my own self-experience onto others is required to know other people.

Here, some experiential evidence from Merleau-Ponty is helpful and shows how Aquinas is in accord with the phenomenologists on experience of other persons. Merleau-Ponty describes how our phenomenal or lived bodies are “intertwined” with our objective bodies. These are two sides of a fundamental unity. When we apprehend others, we apprehend their intelligible “style” on the basis of our sensory awareness of them. Their interior and exterior states are given as two “sides” of a fundamental unity; their facial expressions and speech are the exterior expression of their intellectual aspect. I can know something of the lived interiority of others through their exterior objective appearance because I too have lived and objective “sides” and I relate to the world through my own structure. To sense something is not to receive a representation of the surface qualities of the thing, but to enter into “communion” with the thing itself, to be “intertwined” in a certain sense with the world.⁹¹¹ For both Aquinas and for Merleau-Ponty, we are always already involved with the world in certain definite ways. This account of how we perceive others supports the account given by Aquinas: according to Aquinas we make contact with real things, including other people, through receiving their forms.

It might be objected that Merleau-Ponty’s account of language is in conflict with Aquinas’. Aquinas holds that words are signs that signify interior concepts, and only through concepts express things in the world; Merleau-Ponty holds that words directly express the style of the world. Aquinas holds that we produce an interior mental word or concept prior to a spoken word, whereas Merleau-Ponty holds that we always search for words in the “body” of an already existing human language, which already expresses the world, and only thereby understand the

⁹¹¹ *PP*, 5, 246; *VI*, 122, 135, 139.

world. Experientially, we do not first conceive words internally and then express them in speech; rather, we frequently experience ourselves “thinking out loud”. Aquinas seems to introduce unnecessarily an internal word as mediator between the spoken word and the thing expressed.⁹¹²

These positions are not in conflict. Concepts, according to Aquinas, are forms whereby the intellect is united to intelligible things in the world. Since concepts are formally identical to the things of which they are concepts, spoken words do express the world, but only insofar as it is conceptually known.⁹¹³ Likewise, Merleau-Ponty must admit that although words do express things, they do so in virtue of human intertwining with those things. Aquinas’ notion of the internal word corresponds to Merleau-Ponty’s notion of intertwining with the intelligible style of things, not to his notion of linguistic expression. Aquinas’ position is consonant with Merleau-Ponty’s idea that human persons are essentially expressive. Language is the proper end product of the exercise of our intellectual powers. The process of expressing thought in speech is experienced as a single act, that is, we do not first think and then infer how to express this thought in the body, but rather speech is the “proper work of reason” (*proprium opus rationis*).⁹¹⁴ Speech presupposes the activity of intellect and free will, since it presupposes an understanding of the world and a free decision to manifest that understanding. Meaningful, intentional speech presupposes the intellectual or auto-affective layer of experience considered in the last section; human expressivity is not just bodily, but is interior as well. The internal word is indicative of our interior transcendence over the body. External speech expresses not only the world, but also

⁹¹² A similar objection is raised by Sokolowski, *Phenomenology*, 273-303.

⁹¹³ *In I PH*, lect.2; *DV*, q.7, a.1, ad 14. cf. Daniel DeHaan, “Linguistic Apprehension as Incidental Sensation in Thomas Aquinas”, *Proceedings of the ACPA* 84 (2010): 183-184.

⁹¹⁴ *ST I*, q.91, a.3, ad 3; *SCG IV*, c.41. cf. Alfred Leo White, “Perception, Language, and Concept Formation in St. Thomas”, *Proceedings of the ACPA* 84 (2010): 204.

one's interior understanding, intentions, and dispositions toward others.⁹¹⁵ However, this does not mean that we necessarily first experience a thought, then a conscious decision, and last external speech; all three are frequently given as one experience or act. But when we distinguish our powers in terms of their objects, then we must distinguish the act of the intellect, the act of the will, and the external speech act.

Aquinas argues that it is indicative of our nature that we produce words, since the internal word indicates that we are essentially understanders and the external word indicates that we are both intellectual and animals. We express our understanding not only through spoken words but through gestures and deeds as well, by which we also manifest ourselves and express the world to one another.⁹¹⁶ Aquinas' account of bodily expressivity further indicates that we are interpersonal beings, for speech only exists to manifest some meaning to another. Indeed, our speech, which is a self-manifestation to another person, must be governed by the virtue of justice, since we owe one another the truth as "social animals" (*animales sociales*).⁹¹⁷ Aquinas' account of language is thus supported by Levinas' description of our experience of the social relation: in speaking to another, I find myself called into society with the other, and this is an ethical call to speak truly to the other. Others are revealed to me not just as objects of perception and understanding, but as those with whom I am bodily in society and to whom I owe certain acts. We are naturally both communal and individual, as both Aquinas and Scheler affirm and, since we are also rational and linguistic animals, we must therefore form politically governed communities wherein we work for justice. Still, for Aquinas as for other phenomenologists besides Levinas, the social relationship still requires and presupposes intellectual activity, but

⁹¹⁵ *SCG* IV, c.11; *ST* II-II, q.72, a.2; q.109, a.3, *respondeo* and ad 2; q.110, a.1

⁹¹⁶ *ST* II-II, q.72, a.1; q.109, a.1, ad 3; a.2, *respondeo*.

⁹¹⁷ *DV* q.9, a.4, ad 13; *ST* II-II, q.109, a.3, *respondeo* and ad 1; q.114, a.1, ad 1.

practical rather than theoretical reasoning.⁹¹⁸

When speaking about particular human linguistic systems (*linguae*) Aquinas emphasizes that the purpose of any language is to refer the human mind to some knowledge of the world; the external word exists to signify truths known about the world, to order the world through commands, to express one's appetitive state, or to bring about some state in another person, such as pleasure through jokes. These different sorts of speech acts require different grammatical forms in different languages.⁹¹⁹ Aquinas thinks that the various words of different particular languages can obscure or better reveal some truth, can ornament and dignify the expression of the truth, and that the sounds we make can affect the appetites in various ways. He emphasizes that we choose words to express understood truths in accord with the customs of our culture; words are signs within a cultural linguistic system, which, through human invention, signify or call to mind intelligible forms. We can order sounds and visible figures to express these different sorts of intentions.⁹²⁰ What Aquinas says is thus in accord with what Merleau-Ponty says about thinking and speaking in terms of human languages. Different languages are different ways of "gearing into" the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, because they signify different sorts of things about the world. As David Braine and Anthony Kenny plausibly argue, it is in accord with what Aquinas says about needing phantasms to think that we always think using the words of a human language, though this should not be taken as meaning that intellectual thought is nothing but interior "speech".⁹²¹ Furthermore, the experience of the "body" of a human language that

⁹¹⁸ *DR* I, c.1; *In Pol.*, pr.; *ST* I-II, q.90, a.1 and 2; q.95, a.1.

⁹¹⁹ *ST* II-II, q.76, a.1; q.110, a.2

⁹²⁰ *In III Sent.*, d.39, q.1, a.2, qc.1, *corpus*; *In III DA*, lect.18, n.874; *QDP*, q.10, a.1, ad 8; *ST* II-II, q.45, a.2, ad 2; q.72, a.1, ad 1; q.91, a.2; q.176, a.1 and 2; III, q.60, a.7.

⁹²¹ Braine, *Human Person*, 434, 450-452; Kenny, *Mind*, 97.

Merleau-Ponty mentions is not evidence for the materiality of the intellect,⁹²² for human language presupposes world-openness, which is evidence for the immateriality of the intellect. The passivity of the intellect and the passivity of the body are experienced very differently from one another, and so need to be explained by different metaphysical principles.

There are other ways in which we know other people that involve self-sensing besides through perception and language. We must see whether Aquinas' account of our powers can include and be supported by the phenomenological descriptions of these. One such way in which we know others is through the feeling of vital values, leading to a "community of life", as described by Scheler and Henry. In such interpersonal experiences, as in sexual experiences or experiences of being part of a mob, I feel the submergence of my individuality in a sense of life shared with others. I primarily experience my vital drives rather than my intellect or spiritual personhood. A second such way in which others are experienced in self-sensing is when I suffer violence, as Levinas describes it. In this experience, I sense myself as both a material thing able to be causally acted upon by other material things, and as having an interiority wherein I feel suffering but cannot be touched materially by others. A third such sort of interpersonal contact comes in erotic experiences, as described by Levinas and Henry, in which one seeks to merge one's body with another person and seeks not to resist materially that other. A fourth such sort of contact is when, upon seeing the face of another person, I feel ethically called to serve that person and to sacrifice myself for that person, and, more generally, when I feel any call or orientation that has been given to me prior to my conscious awareness or decision. We have already seen that these experiences provide evidence for our fundamental principles, but we must see whether they fit with an account of our powers as well.

⁹²² *VI*, 153, 204.

These sorts of interpersonal contact can be accommodated to Aquinas' account of powers in similar ways to many of the other experiences of self-sensing. We have already seen the role that knowledge via feeling and connaturality plays in Aquinas' understanding of our knowledge of other people and the ways in which value-feeling can fit into Aquinas' account of powers. These powers are at play in these four forms of interpersonal contact, as are a few others.

First, Aquinas describes acts in which we focus entirely on bodily and appetitive experiences, rather than on the intellect with its greater degree of awareness of oneself as an individual, such as acts resulting from the habits of lust and drunkenness.⁹²³ These acts and habits often involve being with others and experiencing bodily appetites together. The fact that Aquinas allows that we have these experiences, along with his account of knowledge by connaturality, provides a place in his account of powers for the experiences of communities of life and some aspects of erotic experience. As I have said, my interest here is just in what we are able to do and what this reveals about what we are, not in whether our powers, habits, and acts are morally good or not. Since we can have these experiences and since our consciousness, for both phenomenology and Thomistic hylomorphism, is not based in a single power such as the intellect, we can also perform what Scheler calls the "Dionysian reduction". We can consciously bracket out most awareness of our intellects and just experience our appetites. Likewise, if we are virtuous and self-controlled, we can bracket out the influence of our appetites on our thinking in what Scheler calls the "phenomenological reduction".

Second, Aquinas' description of the sense of touch, which we have already examined to some extent in Chapter Two, allows us to understand both erotic and normal resistance in Thomistic terms. In touch we experience the contact of material things with our skin, and we

⁹²³ *ST* II-II, q.150, a.1 and 4; q.153, a.1 and 2.

experience some of their qualities, such as their temperature and texture.⁹²⁴ Touch, as Aquinas understands it, includes some aspects of the non-erotic self-sensing experience of resistance. Aquinas notes that I experience my own body, like all bodies, as having tangible qualities. Indeed, he says that these qualities are our very “substance”, that is, what we fundamentally are, insofar as we are animals. Animals need the sense of touch in order to maintain the right balance of tangible qualities in themselves; I need the right balance of moisture, temperature, and other tangible qualities and their elemental matter in me in order to survive.⁹²⁵ Although I sense all these qualities immediately upon touching them, touch does not just occur on the surface of my skin. Rather, Aquinas notes that we can experience the tangible qualities even through our clothing or other material instruments. These qualities are sensed not just in the skin, but in all of our “flesh” (*carnis*), that is, in all of our body.⁹²⁶ We ultimately experience the sense of touch deep within ourselves in the heart according to Aquinas, though we, with our better understanding of physiology, would say in the nervous system and brain.⁹²⁷ Our flesh is experienced as a “medium” (*medium*) through which tactile sensations are transmitted. Touch is thus experienced both on contact, and in terms of a deeper experience of the whole body.⁹²⁸

This analysis of the sense of touch is supported by and provides a place in the Thomistic account for experiences of resistance. The resistance of other material things is felt not just upon contact with the skin, but through the whole body; as Scheler says, things resist my whole body and its drives. But this rootedness of touch in the whole body also allows a partial tactile and

⁹²⁴ *In II DA*, lect.23, n.534-541.

⁹²⁵ *In II DA*, lect.22, n.524, 529.

⁹²⁶ *In II DA*, lect.22, n.518, 525. Of course, Aquinas means something different by ‘flesh’ than either Merleau-Ponty and Henry meant.

⁹²⁷ *In II DA*, lect.22, n.518. This correction tohylomorphism is made as early as Francisco Suárez, *In II DeA*, disp.6, q. 6.

⁹²⁸ *In II DA*, lect.22, n.525-528.

erotic receptivity of another tangible body into the medium of my flesh. Since my power of touch is also rooted in my form, in which all my other powers are rooted, this receptivity is not just felt in terms of the sense of touch, but can involve appetites of love, desire, and pleasure, intellectual and connaturally felt awareness of the interiority of the other person, and intellectual judgments of the existence of the other person. These powers, distinguished because they are directed to different aspects of the other person, cooperate through their unity in my form to bring about erotic experience. My erotic and tactile receptivity, insofar as it conduces to my flourishing and, at times, to reproduction, is experienced as pleasurable.⁹²⁹ Thus there is a place in Aquinas' account of human powers into which erotic experience can be fitted, though it is also because the sense of touch is structured in this way, with an exterior and an interior aspect linked to my appetitive powers, especially to pleasure and pain, that I can suffer violence and torture. Touch is always felt in a way relevant to the maintenance of my life.⁹³⁰

Third, the act of the "love of friendship", as we saw in Chapter Two, in which we seek another person's good not for our own sake, but for the other person's sake, allows for the experience of feeling for the other and feeling substituted for the other described by Levinas. In addition, Aquinas describes how we find within ourselves an ethical law that has been put into us in virtue of the orientation of our powers toward certain ends and towards what is good, including towards helping other people and being in a just community with them. We must rationally consider these ways in which we are oriented and freely act in accord with the law within us if we are to be good.⁹³¹ Aquinas also describes other calls that can be put into us, such as when charity, the ability to love God and others with divine love of friendship, is infused into

⁹²⁹ These points are discussed throughout *ST* II-II, q.153.

⁹³⁰ *ST* II-II, q.151, a.3, ad 3.

⁹³¹ *ST* I-II, q.92, a.1; q.94, a.1 and 2.

us.⁹³² Furthermore, Aquinas contends that we have infinite desires, since we are rational beings, and can consider ends that are good in themselves, and worth pursuing ever more and more and to an ever greater degree. Among such desires could be the desire for virtue, and so the desire to serve others is infinite, as Levinas says; however, Aquinas also says the desire for health and bodily well-being is infinite, and thus we can see that Aquinas also accounts for Levinas' observation that enjoyment is also motivated by desire for what is infinite.⁹³³

Aquinas thus allows for the experience described by Levinas that various calls and orientations have been put into us prior to our conscious awareness or decision. But he also supports the correction of Levinas that we considered in Chapter Three as phenomenologically truer, that reason must be involved in the discovery and articulation of these calls.⁹³⁴ In this same vein, Aquinas frequently discusses our orientation toward knowledge and service of God; he argues that the virtue of serving God, religion (*religio*), is among the highest of our virtues and discusses how the exercise of this virtue involves bodily movements, such as prostration, and how it brings about affective states, such as joy (*laetitia, delectatio*) and sorrow (*tristitia*).⁹³⁵ The fact that we can develop the virtue of religion presupposes that we have an underlying orientation towards others and toward the Absolute sphere, since we can have other habits by which we deny the existence of God, have problematic attitudes towards the divine, and so on.⁹³⁶

Phenomenological analyses of our general orientations toward the Absolute in general, as

⁹³² *QDC*, a.1; *ST II-II*, q.23, a.1 and 2.

⁹³³ *ST I-II*, q.30, a.4: "...concupiscentia non naturalis omnino est infinita. Sequitur enim rationem, ut dictum est, rationi autem competit in infinitum procedere. Unde qui concupiscit divitias, potest eas concupiscere, non ad aliquem certum terminum, sed simpliciter se divitem esse, quantumcumque potest...Semper enim concupiscentia finis est infinita, finis enim per se concupiscitur, ut sanitas; unde maior sanitas magis concupiscitur, et sic in infinitum; sicut, si album per se disgregat, magis album magis disgregat."

⁹³⁴ See my "Ethical Subjectivity in Levinas and Thomas Aquinas".

⁹³⁵ *ST II-II*, q.81, a.1, 2, 6, 7; q.82, a.4; q.84, a.2.

⁹³⁶ The vices opposed to religion are described in *ST II-II*, q.92-100.

opposed to toward God particularly, are thus in accord with what Aquinas' account.

Aquinas' remarks on this subject are well-supported by the positions of Scheler and Henry that, in our self-sensing experience we find ourselves oriented toward the Absolute. We do not just consider God intellectually, but our dependence and service is experienced in our self-sensing affective and locomotive powers. Aquinas' observation that religious attitudes and acts bring about both joy and sorrow also brings together Scheler's description of the feeling of the Absolute as a feeling of "bliss" with Levinas' description of the experience of being called to serve others as involving a feeling of one's own unworthiness and guilt. Aquinas shows that we can simultaneously feel joy before God, sorrow at our failings (*defectus*), and a movement to act more in accord with what is religiously and ethically good.⁹³⁷ The descriptions of our experience given by Scheler and Levinas can thus be seen to be in accord, and not in conflict as they at first seem, in light of their harmonization in terms of Aquinas' account.

The various sorts of interpersonal relationships described by the phenomenologists that are rooted in our self-sensing can thus be accommodated to Aquinas' account of human powers; there is no conflict here that would prevent using self-sensing as evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism. Indeed, the contrary is the case: the phenomenological accounts call our attention to and support various features of Aquinas' account of our powers.

I.C.3.e. EXPERIENCES OF REALITY AND EXISTENCE

The way in which we are aware of reality or existence is a final possible point of disagreement between Aquinas and the phenomenologists. Scheler and Henry hold that we experience the reality of things through their resistance to our self-sensed bodily drives and effort, not through sense perception or intellectual intuition. According to Aquinas, as we have

⁹³⁷ *ST* II-II, q.82, a.4.

seen, the reality or existence of things is discovered through judgment, first of the senses, and then, more properly, of the intellect. It seems at first that these two accounts are at odds with one another, since they argue that reality or existence is experienced in such different ways.

However, Aquinas can accommodate the experience of resistance, and, indeed, the descriptions of this experience provide evidence for and elucidation of certain features of his account.

Furthermore, Aquinas expands on the work of the phenomenologists so as to show other ways in which we experience the reality of things, which are not in themselves in conflict with the phenomenologists' accounts.

First, Aquinas holds that each sense judges or distinguishes its objects, and that this involves some awareness of their reality. All sense perception is rooted in touch in that touch is a necessary condition for other senses since touch has to do with the proportion of different material qualities in things, and this is required for all the other senses.⁹³⁸ We have already seen how 'touch' for Aquinas refers to a broader range of acts than it does for Scheler and Henry. On the Thomistic account, touch includes an awareness of the resistance of things to one's movements. The judgment of objects involved in touch thus must involve an experience of their reality insofar as they are in contact with and causally impinge upon me.⁹³⁹ Thus the Thomistic account is thus able to include the experience of reality through resistance in its account of touch.

Second, as we have seen, Aquinas thinks that our appetites intend things insofar as they are real; we desire and hate, for example, real things, not our images of things. Through our appetites and their interaction with the world we have an experience of the reality of things. In particular, through what Aquinas calls our irascible appetites, such as anger and hope, we experience difficulty (*difficultas*) in attaining (*adispiscendus*) or avoiding (*fugiendus*) things and

⁹³⁸ *In III DA*, lect.17, n.849, 858-860; lect.18, n.865-871.

⁹³⁹ cf. *In III DA*, lect.17, n.860.

so these things require effort or struggle (*pugna*) to attain or avoid.⁹⁴⁰ In his account of our appetites, Aquinas thus includes an account of some of our experiences of resistance and effort. We have already seen that our appetites to some extent are experienced as what Scheler calls “drives”. The Thomistic account can thus be interpreted as in accord with Scheler: we experience reality through our felt drives.

Third, for Aquinas, we are aware of the reality or existence of things through intellectual judgment, an affirmation that some received form in fact exists in things. The experience of existence is not just passive as it is according to Scheler and Henry, but involves an active affirmative intellectual movement toward the existing thing. This affirmation is based in and follows upon the union of my intellectual power with the form of the existing thing. Knowledge of existence is thus based in contact with things, and so Scheler and Aquinas are fundamentally in agreement on this topic, though Aquinas goes beyond Scheler in allowing that we are aware of existence or reality intellectually, not just through our feelings and drives. As we have already seen in discussing how these thinkers are in accord on value-feeling, judgment can be involved in our experience without it being the experienced focus of our attention. Sensitive perception and appetite immediately lead to the operation of the intellect, which includes judgment of existence and so is part of our natural everyday experience of the reality of the world.

I.C.3.f. THE HARMONY OF PHENOMENOLOGY AND THOMISTIC PHILOSOPHY

We can thus see how each of the experiences described by phenomenology can be accommodated by Aquinas’ account of powers. This accommodation is not an arbitrary or falsifying analysis of the one unified experience of self-sensing, but is an analysis according to the principled distinction of powers presented by Aquinas. Self-sensing is also still a

⁹⁴⁰ *ST I-II*, q.23, a.1.

fundamental experience when analyzed according to Aquinas' account. Some might object that self-sensing so analyzed turns out not to be fundamental, since various aspects of it must be attributed to different powers, and so is no longer strong evidence for our nature. But we have seen that this experience, when analyzed according to Aquinas' account of powers, reveals important aspects of each kind of powers, and thus is still evidence for our nature. In this way we can better see that, once the potential difficulties have been considered, there is no conflict between the phenomenology of self-sensing and Thomistic hylomorphism.

This discussion also provides my final reply to the phenomenological and Thomistic methodological objections discussed in Chapter One. Some phenomenologists argue that metaphysics goes beyond what is experientially knowable, and some Thomists argue that phenomenology is engaged in a problematic project, basing itself on what is experienced in "pure consciousness", which is already a false way of looking at the world. We have seen here that Aquinas' metaphysics is grounded or at least can be grounded in experience. And far from being a phenomenology of pure consciousness, the phenomenology of the four authors considered here actually requires, as we saw at the end of the last chapter, an underlying metaphysics to unify and explain the experiences it describes. On an adequate phenomenological account, there is no "pure consciousness", but rather there are various layers of consciousness, all of which require and point towards metaphysical explanation. Joining phenomenology to Thomistic metaphysics helps overcome tendencies toward idealism in phenomenology; phenomenology and metaphysics, and the methods pertinent to each, complement one another. Of course, many phenomenologists and Thomists will not assent to the synthesis of phenomenology and Thomistic metaphysics made here. Still, I have shown that this synthesis is possible and that it can provide replies to the objections that can be raised to it.

This then concludes my account of how the phenomenology of self-sensing is evidence for the Thomistic hylomorphist metaphysics of the human person. The foregoing part of this chapter is a partial fulfillment of the aspirations of those thinkers reviewed in Chapter One who anticipated a joining of phenomenology and Thomistic metaphysics, especially those like David Braine, John Haldane, and John Milbank who explicitly have called for a synthesis of the phenomenology of self-sensing and Thomistic metaphysics. We must now see how this account of hylomorphism supported by phenomenology can help responses to the various objections to hylomorphism, which have been raised in recent philosophical literature.

II. RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS

Most objections to hylomorphism center on the notion of “form”. We have seen that many have argued that it is ambiguous whether a form is a thing or a property, that hylomorphists attempt to do too much with the notion of form, that the notion of form is *ad hoc*, that it is a notion without connection to our experience, that it is unclear or unknowable whether form is real, that its unity with matter is incomprehensible, that form is superfluous and everything that it is supposed to explain can be explained through some version of idealism, dualism or materialism, and that the Thomistic notion of form falls into a “too many thinkers” problem. I contend that, bolstered by evidence from phenomenology, hylomorphism has good replies to these objections.

II.A. RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS REGARDING FORM

II.A.1. RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS REGARDING THE NOTION OF FORM ITSELF

As we have seen, when supported by our fundamental experience of self-sensing, there is good reason to say that form is both a subsistent entity and a principle causally responsible for all the powers of the human person. We experience our bodily parts as animated and structured by

an underlying sense of our powers. But we also have a layer of experience in which we self-sense these underlying powers separately from any sense of our bodies. This underlying self-sensing is also a sense of our “world-openness”, including our openness to our own bodies. This simultaneous duality and unity exhibited by our fundamental experience gives us a reason to say that our form or actuality, that is, that which is responsible for making us what we are and for the powers that we have, is not simply a state or attribute of our bodies, but is both the actuality and total power of our bodies, and something subsistent and in some way separate from our bodies.

This opens a response to other parts of this objection. Hylomorphists are justified in arguing that form is responsible for many of our aspects, based on the fundamental self-sensing experience of our many powers and their unity. We sense ourselves as having many powers and we sense our powers to be unified, and, despite this unity, we experience some powers as bodily and some as non-bodily. Ultimately, all these powers must be rooted in some principle, if we are to explain our experience metaphysically. This principle must have the characteristics that are attributed to form, as we saw earlier in this chapter. The experiential evidence from phenomenology helps to justify the complexity attributed to our form by the hylomorphists. Form is not posited *ad hoc*: there is evidence that there must be just such a principle in us.

Furthermore, the phenomenological evidence allows us to see in just what sense form is real. Self-sensing provides evidence for form as the hylomorphists have described it. But we always experience this form, even insofar as it is subsistent, in unity with our bodies. We are unified human persons, but in order to explain how we are given to ourselves, there must be the principle of form as a real principle that is causally responsible for what we are. Forms are really existing things, but not in the same sense as composite human persons or our body parts; we experience this difference in the different ways in which these various items are given.

What formal causality is and what the unity between form and matter is like are furthermore clarified and supported by phenomenological evidence. The phenomenologists describe the intertwining of our phenomenal and our objective aspects, and the way in which we are given to ourselves as *Gestalten*. The union between form and matter is manifested here, as well as in the way in which all things are first given as such *Gestalten*. To a certain extent we self-sense our forms, our matter, and the union between them; we experience the “contact of power” between our forms and our matter. This is not to say that hylomorphism can be directly drawn from our experience; no metaphysics can be drawn out from our experience directly without engaging in metaphysical reasoning. But it is to say that hylomorphism is closely tied to our experience, and that our experience, properly considered, furnishes the evidence regarding which we can reason metaphysically and so come to the position of hylomorphism.

Hylomorphism does not begin with an abstract consideration of “likely candidates” for what I am, such as my brain or my whole human organism, and then seek to justify that one of these candidates is in fact what I am by considering various problems and thought experiments, as many contemporary philosophies of the human person do.⁹⁴¹ Rather, as Anton Pegis has contended, hylomorphism is a “living metaphysics”, the principles of which impinge upon our lived experience, and which is closely based on an account of our experience.⁹⁴² This is apparent when we see how phenomenology provides experiential evidence for hylomorphism. Phenomenologically supported hylomorphism provides reasons to reject what I called in Chapter One the “abstract method” of doing metaphysics, in favor of a method that follows closely the ways in which the world is given. We see here the affirmative answer that this theory provides to

⁹⁴¹ For a review of this method and a summary of its application in several contemporary theories of materialism see Zimmerman, “Material People”, especially 491-493.

⁹⁴² Pegis, *Origins*, 54.

the question as to whether there is an experiential evidence for hylomorphism and the shape of the response that this theory offers to any objections.

II.A.2. RESPONSES TO OBJECTIONS FROM IDEALISM, DUALISM, AND MATERIALISM

As we have seen, some contend that these experiences can be explained idealistically, dualistically, or materialistically. Here I can only consider these claims briefly and in little detail. An immense amount of work has been done on the many versions of these theories of what we are. I do not have the space in this study to consider adequately the details of these theories and it is not necessary that I do so in order to demonstrate the thesis of this study. An important next step in the line of inquiry initiated by this study would be to consider the relationship between phenomenology and other philosophies of the person. I shall briefly contend here that a much better case can be made for hylomorphism than for other philosophies of the person on the basis of the evidence of phenomenology of self-sensing.

On the idealist and dualist side, one could argue that the phenomenologists have only presented us with an account of our experience; this is an objection that we have already seen a few times over the course of this study. There is nothing, then, in the experience of self-sensing that could not be explained in terms of a purely experiencing, immaterial thing. Even the “objective” material body presented in self-sensing experiences of vulnerability or intertwining is still just the objective material body insofar as it is experienced and so can be explained idealistically. In a dualistic manner, one could contend that all experience, with all of its layers, is had by an immaterial mind, though a mind that is intimately and causally connected to a body.

But this is to ignore the way that matter is given to us experientially. The only way in which we are aware of matter is through experience. We have experiential reasons to say that our material and intellectual aspects are very different. There is an aspect of us that is given as a

material weight, as extended in space and mathematically measurable, as causally related to other material bodies, and as passive in a way that is different from the passivity of intellectual experience. These experientially-given material features can be confirmed by scientific inquiry. The evidence of experience thus points away from idealism. We have experiential evidence that there is more to us and to the world than our experience, and that matter is one of the ways in which the world exceeds our experience. Many of our powers are given to us as unities that include conscious experiential and unconscious material aspects; we cannot understand our powers, the way they operate, and the way that they are experientially presented to us as *Gestalten* unless we understand them to be hylomorphic unities.⁹⁴³ As we have seen, we furthermore have experiences that correspond to the different senses of ‘matter’ and ‘body’ mentioned by Aquinas. We even have reason to say that our matter is in fact at least partially “subjective”, contrary to Miles Burnyeat who thought this an indefensible feature of hylomorphism,⁹⁴⁴ since in self-sensing we feel our bodies to have powers animating them. This last point could also be used against a dualistic theory of the person, in which I am an immaterial thinking thing related to a material thing through some other sort of causality than formal causality. My experiential and material features are given as intertwined not separate, parts of a single *Gestalt*. They are not merely functionally coordinated with one another through efficient causality, as, for example John Foster contends in his defense of a dualist theory of embodiment.⁹⁴⁵ Phenomenology clarifies and rigorously analyzes our qualitative experience, and reveals it to include an intertwining and unity with our materiality; dualism and idealism would gloss over this, and introduce an artificial distinction into our experience, especially our

⁹⁴³ This is the central argument of Lee and George, *Body-Self Dualism*, ch.1.

⁹⁴⁴ Burnyeat, “Aristotelian Philosophy of Mind”, 18, 24-26.

⁹⁴⁵ Foster, *Immaterial Self*, 262-266.

experience of self-sensing. All of this is not to answer idealism and dualism definitively, but to point out that the weight of experiential evidence, at least from the experience of self-sensing, points away from these theories.

On the materialist side, some argue that experience will be ultimately explainable in materialistic and scientific terms. We have already seen that some philosophers who work on the phenomenologists, such as Jose Luis Bermúdez, take this line: the phenomenologists describe experience well, but this experience must ultimately be explained in physical, neurological terms.⁹⁴⁶ Science seems to explain well the world as we can consider it, and so we must look to science for our ultimate account of what we are. On some such views, phenomenology would be of only very limited worth is discovering what we are. The powers that we sense in ourselves would, ultimately, just be processes or events in which our material parts are caught up. On some version of materialism, experience can be explained in emergentist terms. On the emergentist view, my consciousness emerges from a properly functioning body or brain as a new property of me or as a new substance, but it is entirely dependent on physical events in my body or brain. On this view, experiences of self-sensing emerge from a functioning nervous system but are entirely dependent on the functioning of that nervous system, the functioning of which is entirely describable by natural science, not phenomenology.⁹⁴⁷

Thomistic hylomorphism as supported by the phenomenology of self-sensing gives us some reasons to reject these views, though many materialists will probably find these reasons unconvincing. In self-sensing we do not sense our phenomenal or lived features as mere attributes alongside or juxtaposed to our material features. Rather, as has been pointed out, there is an ordered hierarchy among these features of our experience. Our sensory and motor powers

⁹⁴⁶ Bermúdez, “Bodily Awareness”, 300-303, 315.

⁹⁴⁷ See the discussions of these theories in Chapter One and the sources cited there.

are self-sensed as underlying and giving rise to our bodily structure, even as they are supported by our underlying matter. In self-sensing, as in all sense perception, we experience whole unified things as intentional objects when we receive their forms; we do not just experience phenomenal *qualia* or other attributes of these things. In self-sensing I do not just sense the phenomenal attributes of my skin; rather, I experience my body as a moving and sensing whole. Furthermore, in self-sensing we are aware of ourselves as transcending the body and the material world volitionally, ethically, culturally, and intellectually. Our cognitive powers unite us with real things in the world, not just with some of their attributes or with representations of them.

Some other versions of materialism strive to take into account some of the phenomenological evidence about self-sensing. Alva Noë, for example, draws on the work of Merleau-Ponty. He contends that consciousness arises not solely from the workings of a brain or nervous system, but that it is rather something that we perform or “enact” in our interactions with the world.⁹⁴⁸ Conscious experience, and our nature as conscious beings, intimately involves the world and our intertwining with it. Noë is thus able to take into account much of what Merleau-Ponty says about intertwining and “gearing” into the world, about the importance of our habits for our conscious experience, and about the close interplay between our material and experiential aspects.⁹⁴⁹ We must understand ourselves not just in terms of physiology and neurology, but in terms of a certain “mode of being”, a human way of interacting with and moving in the world; scientific examinations of the human person are just one “mode of encounter” with the world, while perception is another, all of which must be understood in terms of our actual human interaction with the world.⁹⁵⁰ Noë even shows, in accord with Levinas, how other people are first

⁹⁴⁸ Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, 60, 64.

⁹⁴⁹ This is the focus of all of his *Out of Our Heads*, but see especially 39, 75-78, 117-128, 142.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 45, 75, 119, 127, 146.

and foremost given to us ethically, rather than as objects of theoretical examination.⁹⁵¹

Nevertheless, Noë fails to take into account other aspects of the phenomenology of self-sensing. He does not account adequately for our sense of subjective interiority, for the receptivity and auto-affection of the fundamental layer of consciousness, or for the way in which, in intellectual experience, we sense ourselves to transcend and be separate from the world.⁹⁵² This is because he focuses too much on our experience of intertwining with the world. Finally, Noë gives no reasons why his account of intertwining demands a materialistic account of what we are; indeed, materialism does not adequately take into account the many layers of experience that are given to us. A Thomist can agree with Noë about all he says regarding our intertwining with the world, including the idea that our actual consciousness only arises through our interaction with the world. But this does not entail that we are purely explainable in terms of our materiality. Certain layers of our intertwining with the world and of our self-sensing can only be explained in terms of non-material principles, because of the different ways in which these layers are given to us.

We have seen how these features of our experience of self-sensing provide evidence for the principles ofhylomorphism. These features also give us reason to reject the various forms of materialism. Matter, including its scientifically-explainable features, is given to us in our self-sensing, but we are also thereby given to ourselves as entirely irreducible to those features. Indeed, in self-sensing experiences of eros and the ethical call we experience our matter itself as given in a way irreducible to its scientifically-explainable features or to its phenomenal qualities. Scientific explanation, such as is done in neurology or biochemistry, must be taken as really explaining some aspects of what we are, but not all of what we are. Our experience of self-

⁹⁵¹ Ibid., 33-34.

⁹⁵² Noë reduces our self-sensing of our individuality and our intellectual activity to modes of intertwining with the world; cf. Ibid., 75, 91, 106, 120.

sensing bears out the claims of Thomists such as Jacques Maritain that scientific findings must be reflected on philosophically and incorporated into a broader account of our powers and essential principles, which themselves explain and unify the scientific findings.⁹⁵³ There are experiential reasons to think that our forms and intellects have not emerged from matter but came from some immaterial source, such as God.

Phenomenologically supported hylomorphism is a theory that accounts for our unity and the importance of matter in what we are, but without the reductionism that is found in idealism, dualism, and materialism. The latter three theories are reductionistic because they hold that what we are is explainable just in terms of some account of the physical or the mental, or of the subjective and the objective. But phenomenology shows and hylomorphism affirms that these aspects must be explained in terms of a deeper account of substantiality and subsistence, actuality and potentiality, and formal and material causality, which cannot be assimilated to an account of the physical or the mental. Rather, as phenomenology and hylomorphism both show, there are layers of experience and features of other persons and things insofar as they are other than us that cannot be considered in objectifiable or subjective terms. Thomistic hylomorphism even affirms that we cannot understand ourselves except in relation to living things, such as animals and purely intellectual substances, that are not understandable in physical or mental, first-person or third-person terms, but only in terms of different kinds of actuality, potentiality, and the other principles of hylomorphism, which other theories do not take into account adequately and foundationally.⁹⁵⁴ Hylomorphism allows for aspects of the world and of experience that cannot be captured on an idealist, dualist, or materialist worldview. It allows for features of the world and of ourselves that could never be captured in an account based in

⁹⁵³ Maritain, *Degrees of Knowledge*, 192-196.

⁹⁵⁴ *ST I*, q.85, a.1.

scientific observation or introspection, such as the nearly infinite interior depths of being a person. It also accounts for how all these features of the world and of ourselves are interrelated. Phenomenology thus provides evidence that hylomorphism is more than just a “middle way” between dualism and materialism, capturing the best aspects of each, as some Thomists have contended; it rather is a theory that overcomes the problematic dichotomies assumed by each of the reductionistic theories by delving deeper into the structure of the world and of ourselves. Indeed, hylomorphism often differs from these other theories in terms of methodology as well: whereas the other theories often abandon an account of our experience for theoretical reasons, hylomorphism always sticks closely to what is given, and only reasons on that basis. Thus, this study can be seen as an exploration of a way of doing metaphysics that differs from the way of doing metaphysics practiced by many contemporary metaphysicians. This response to the objection is far too cursory and may be rather dissatisfying to some readers, but it indicates the main lines that a phenomenologically supported hylomorphist response to idealism, dualism, and materialism ought to take.

II.A.3. RESPONSE TO THE “TOO MANY THINKERS” OBJECTION

The last objection to form mentioned above was the “too many thinkers” objection. Eric Olson, as we saw in Chapters One and Two, has contended that on the Thomistic hylomorphist view it is not clear what does my thinking, whether it is the composite of soul and matter, or just the soul; thus it is not clear which one is me. It seems possible that there are multiple beings having my thoughts, or that that every time I seem to have one thought, there are actually two thoughts occurring, my soul’s and my composite’s; Dean Zimmerman calls the latter version of the problem the “too many thoughts” problem. According to Zimmerman’s version of this problem, the two thinkers or thoughts would be experientially or “internally” indiscernible; the

positing of “too many thinkers” is an implication of some metaphysical theories not an experiential claim.⁹⁵⁵ But surely there are strong experiential reasons to say that there is just one of me and only one instance of each of my thoughts. Since hylomorphism seems to posit too many thinkers—the soul and the unified person—it is implausible.⁹⁵⁶

The phenomenology of self-sensing gives us the resources to begin to respond to this objection. We have seen that, in the fundamental experience of self-sensing, we experience ourselves to be bodily, on the one hand, and as transcending and able to withdraw from the body, on the other, though these two kinds of self-sensing are given as unified. Our fundamental self-sensing experience is, as we have seen throughout this chapter, both dual and unified; hylomorphism is a metaphysics that accounts for this experience. According to hylomorphism, I am the composite of soul and matter. Yet I have a layer of experience that transcends this, and that is reflected in the metaphysics too. My experience is not just given as a single undifferentiated layer but has multiple layers. It is my experience itself that is somewhat problematic; my layered experiences justify Aquinas’ position that we human persons are on the border of the corporeal and the incorporeal, the temporal and the eternal. The “too-many thinkers” objection takes the soul and the composite to be posited, third-person-analyzable things. On one account of this objection to hylomorphism, it begins with an account of some possible entities that are “candidates” for being me and tries to figure out abstractly which of these entities is me. On another account of this objection, it begins with an account of what is thinking according to this theory, that is, the person, and then objects that another thing, the soul,

⁹⁵⁵ Zimmerman “Material People”, 497.

⁹⁵⁶ This problem is compounded by the problem of the immortality of the soul, which Aquinas says can continue to think after the death of the composite. This possibility intensifies the problem as to whether I am my soul or the composite of soul and matter. As I said in Chapter two, the problem of the immortality of the soul is a problem which I do not take up here as it is not necessary to do so in order to demonstrate the thesis of this study.

seems to be doing this thinking too. Hylomorphism, by contrast, begins with the way in which I am given to myself and reasons that this requires explanation in terms of the hylomorphic principles if we are to be true to our starting point. This requires that the soul is not an integral part of the composite, but a subsistent entity that is my formal cause, that is, the principle that makes me. On this theory, I am the unified starting point, and these principles are discovered in the process of accounting for how I am given and coming to understand myself. I, not my soul, do my thinking, though my thinking is an act that must be explained through a power of my soul, which is in turn a principle of me. The soul is not a separate substance, though my self-sensing experience of thinking indicates that the soul is in some sense separable from the body. The very experience of thinking, phenomenologically analyzed, indicates this duality in unity found in the hylomorphist account.⁹⁵⁷ Seen in this light, the too-many thinkers objection is misplaced, though of course this will not satisfy those who hold to a different conception of metaphysics.

II.B. RESPONSES TO METHODOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS

This brings us back to the first methodological objection posed in Chapter One, the objection that Thomistic hylomorphism gives us the wrong sort of answer to the question “what are we?”. When we ask this question in contemporary metaphysics, we want an account of the fundamental things or integral parts that make us up; plausible answers to the question on this view include the views that we are brains, animals, conglomerations of particles, material gunk, or immaterial souls. Hylomorphism, by contrast, tells us about metaphysical principles and

⁹⁵⁷ Nothing in this account precludes the soul from existing and thinking after my death. I am now a thinker in virtue of a power of my soul. (Again, this is not my focus in this study.) Though this soul will exist and think after death, it is not the case that, properly speaking, my soul rather than me is doing my thinking now, or that I am my soul. Rather, my soul is my formal principle, a subsistent entity, that in virtue of which I do my thinking, and something that can exist and think after my demise. The very structure of my experience indicates these complexities and potential ambiguities in the correct accounts of my thinking and of what I am. See my explanation, following Haldane, Lee, and George, in Chapter Two.

various sorts of causality, actuality, and potentiality. Hylomorphism might seem to some to be a mere “description” of the world as it presents itself and as we believe it to be, in Peter Strawson’s terms, rather than a “revisionary” or “prescriptive” explanation of what we are.⁹⁵⁸ It might seem to use the wrong method for doing metaphysics, and not to tell us about the necessary structure of the world, as some think metaphysics ought to do, but only about some contingent facts.

Again, phenomenologically-supported hylomorphism provides us with a reply to this objection. An account of the integral parts that compose or constitute things is inadequate as a metaphysics, even if it seriously revises a descriptive account of our beliefs about the world. Integral parts must be considered in terms of their causality, actuality, and potency; we must account for what they are, why they exist, and why they exercise the powers that they do. Furthermore, we have experiences such as self-sensings of our *Gestalt* structure that indicate that we cannot be accounted for entirely in terms of integral parts. This structure cannot be accounted for in terms of parts alongside our integral parts, but only in terms of principles of another metaphysical order than our integral parts. For this reason, metaphysics cannot be just an account of fundamental things or parts, but must take into account the issues on which hylomorphism focuses and to which phenomenology calls our attention. For this reason also the claims of hylomorphism are not threatened by the claim of science: hylomorphism must integrate the claims of science into itself, but it belongs to the metaphysician to put together the claims of science and the evidence of experience into a coherent whole. The hylomorphist’s main goal is to understand the fundamental structure of reality, even if only partially, not to solve particular

⁹⁵⁸ P.F. Strawson, *Individuals*, 9-11. cf. Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, x; Sider, *Four-Dimensionalism*, xiv-xv. This formulation of this objection to hylomorphism was raised to me by Neil Williams.

philosophical problems, though hylomorphism certainly does the latter as well.

This does not make hylomorphism purely “descriptive”: hylomorphism delves beneath the surface of our ordinary beliefs about and experiences of the world to seek the fundamental structure of the world. Likewise phenomenology is not “descriptive” in the sense of just working out our “common sense” experience of the world; rather, it inquires into the structure of these experiences, often revealing layers of experience that would be overlooked on a more common sense approach. Phenomenology is “descriptive” in the sense that it is just an account of what we actually experience, not an explanation of why we have such experiences. Hylomorphism, including its phenomenologically-supported variety, is not purely “revisionary” either. A “revisionary” metaphysics, which seeks to explain away, for instance, actuality and potency, in favor of an account of some set of integral parts obscures the way in which the world is given to us and substitutes a purely conceptual world for the way in which the world is actually given. Phenomenologically-supported hylomorphism remains “descriptive” to the extent that it refuses to explain away the way in which the world is given in favor of an abstract account of the world, but it is certainly “revisionary” in the sense that it reasons metaphysically about what is given in order to seek explanatory principles. This theory recognizes that all features of the world, the contingent and the necessary, must be considered in an account of what there is and what we are.

II.C. RESPONSE TO AN OBJECTION FROM EXPERIENCE

One final objection must be considered. One could object that we have no such experience as self-sensing that accompanies all our other experiences, as the four phenomenologists have described it. This objection does not directly threaten my thesis: my thesis here is that self-sensing as the four phenomenologists describe it is evidence for Thomistic hylomorphism. Even if those phenomenologists are wrong in their descriptions of experience,

their work could still be seen as supporting Aquinas' conclusions, though then this evidential relation would be devoid of philosophical worth. This study would then merely be tracing a relationship between the claims of two schools of philosophy, not elucidating our actual experience and nature. One who would deny that we have experiences of self-sensing must do the phenomenology to back it up. Phenomenology is thought of by its practitioners as a science: earlier claims can be rejected or revised in light of new discoveries and new analyses of our experience. Thus, one could try to show phenomenologically how the phenomenology of self-sensing is wrong. One could then reflect metaphysically on the new findings and so come to new conclusions about what we are. But I find it unlikely that such a phenomenology would succeed. I have striven to draw the descriptions of the phenomenologists back to our own living experience, and the descriptions seem, at least to me, to be fairly accurate. I persist in my claim that this phenomenology provides evidence for Thomistichylomorphism, and that this claim is not just of historical interest, but provides insight into what we human persons are.

III. CONCLUSION

If I have been successful in this study, I have first and foremost shown that the phenomenology of self-sensing reveals to us an experience that is evidence forhylomorphism. I have given contemporary metaphysicians some reasons to takehylomorphism seriously and perhaps even to be convinced of its truth. I have also opened up a new conjoining of phenomenology and metaphysics, a method of doing metaphysics, which I think could be quite fruitful for progress in the field and for recovering insights from past thinkers that are sometimes overlooked in contemporary debates. The method and the theory that I have laid out here presents us with an account of what we human person essentially are, but it does not claim that we are nothing but what the theory presents. Phenomenologically-supportedhylomorphism

allows that part of what the human person is a subjective interiority of infinite depth, which, like everything else, exceeds the claims of any human theory. In our current state, we can only know a little of what any essence is, but this does not preclude our being perfectly well known by someone else or by ourselves were we to undergo a change in our cognitive powers. This theory thus allows for all of our mysteriousness and all the ways in which we fail to understand ourselves, but it also allows for all of the ways in which we do understand ourselves and in which we find ourselves to be understood. In this study, I hope that, above all else, I have called attention to the varied and surprising range of our experience and what this reveals about us, and have displayed, at least to some small degree, the glory of being a human person.

ABBREVIATIONS OF TITLES

Abbreviations are for the version of a text that were cited and primarily used. For bibliographical information, including other versions of the works cited, see the bibliography below.

Aristotle

DA *De anima*
Met *Metaphysics*

Henry, Michel

EM *The Essence of Manifestation*
I *Incarnation*
IATT *I Am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity*
GP *The Genealogy of Psychoanalysis*
LB *La Barbarie*
MP *Material Phenomenology*
PC *Paroles du Christ*
PPB *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*
PV4 *Phénoménologie de la vie, Tome 4: Sur l'éthique et la religion*

Husserl, Edmund

CM *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*
Crisis *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*
EJ *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*
Ideas 1 *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology, Book 1: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*
Ideas 2 *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology, Book 2: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution*
Ideas 3 *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology, Book 3: Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences*
IP *The Idea of Phenomenology*
LI *Logical Investigations*
OPCT *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*

Levinas, Emmanuel

AT *Alterity and Transcendence*
BV *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures*
CPP *Collected Philosophical Papers*
DEH *Discovering Existence with Husserl*
EE *Existence and Existents*
TI *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*
TO *Time and the Other*

<i>OBBE</i>	<i>Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence</i>
<i>OE</i>	<i>On Escape</i>
<i>UH</i>	<i>Unforeseen History</i>

Marion, Jean-Luc

<i>BG</i>	<i>Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness</i>
<i>EP</i>	<i>The Erotic Phenomenon</i>
<i>GWB</i>	<i>God Without Being</i>
<i>IE</i>	<i>In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena</i>
<i>RG</i>	<i>Reduction and Givenness</i>

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice

<i>IS</i>	<i>The Incarnate Subject</i>
<i>POP</i>	<i>The Primacy of Perception</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>
<i>N</i>	<i>Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France</i>
<i>SB</i>	<i>The Structure of Behavior</i>
<i>VI</i>	<i>The Visible and the Invisible</i>

Peter John Olivi

<i>In II S</i>	<i>Commentary on Book II of the Sentences</i>
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Scheler, Max

<i>CHB</i>	<i>The Constitution of the Human Being</i>
<i>F</i>	<i>Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values</i>
<i>FKV</i>	<i>On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing</i>
<i>MPN</i>	<i>Man's Place in Nature</i>
<i>OEM</i>	<i>On the Eternal in Man</i>
<i>R</i>	<i>Ressentiment</i>
<i>SPE</i>	<i>Selected Philosophical Essays</i>

Suárez, Francisco

<i>In II DeA</i>	<i>Commentaria una cum quaestionibus in libros Aristotelis de anima, liber II</i>
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Thomas Aquinas

N.B.: Some of Aquinas' works are divided into books; these are abbreviated as e.g. Book Two of *Sentencia libri de anima* is abbreviated as *In II DA*, Book Three as *In III DA*, and so on.

<i>DEE</i>	<i>De ente et essentia</i>
<i>DMC</i>	<i>De motu cordis ad magistrum Philippum de Castro Caelii</i>

<i>DME</i>	<i>De mixtione elementorum ad magistrum Philippum de Castro Caeli</i>
<i>DOO</i>	<i>De operantibus occultis naturae ad quendam militem ultramontanum</i>
<i>DPN</i>	<i>De principiis naturae ad Fratrem Sylvestrem</i>
<i>DR</i>	<i>De regno ad regem Cypri</i>
<i>DSS</i>	<i>De substantiis separatis</i>
<i>DUI</i>	<i>De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas</i>
<i>DV</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i>
<i>In DA</i>	<i>Sententia libri de anima</i>
<i>In DC</i>	<i>Super librum de causis expositio</i>
<i>In DDN</i>	<i>In librum beati Dionysii de divinis nominibus expositio</i>
<i>In De Trin</i>	<i>Super librum Boetium de trinitate</i>
<i>In DMR</i>	<i>Sententia libri de memoria et reminiscencia</i>
<i>In DSS</i>	<i>Sententia libri de sensu et sensato</i>
<i>In Eth</i>	<i>Sententia libri ethicorum</i>
<i>In Met</i>	<i>Sententia libri metaphysicae</i>
<i>In PH</i>	<i>Expositio libri Peryermeneias</i>
<i>In Phys</i>	<i>Commentaria in octo libros physicorum</i>
<i>In Pol</i>	<i>Sententia libri politicorum</i>
<i>In Post An</i>	<i>Expositio libri posteriorum analyticorum</i>
<i>In Sent</i>	<i>Scriptum super sententiis</i>
<i>QDDA</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de anima</i>
<i>QDM</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de malo</i>
<i>QDPD</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia dei</i>
<i>QDSC</i>	<i>Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis</i>
<i>QDV</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus</i>
<i>QQ</i>	<i>Quaestiones de quolibet</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa contra gentiles</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>

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