

Subsistent Parts
Aquinas on the Hybridism of Human Souls

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*To the memory of Balthazar Barbosa Filho,
who first inspired me to pursue this path.*

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Abbreviations

For Aquinas:

<i>CBT</i>	<i>Commentary on Boethius' De Trinitate</i>
<i>CDA</i>	<i>Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima</i>
<i>CM</i>	<i>Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics</i>
<i>CPA</i>	<i>Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics</i>
<i>CS</i>	<i>Commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard</i>
<i>CT</i>	<i>Compendium of Theology</i>
<i>DEE</i>	<i>De Ente et Essentia</i>
<i>DME</i>	<i>De Mixtione Elementorum</i>
<i>In 1 Cor.</i>	<i>Commentary on Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians</i>
<i>QDA</i>	<i>Quaestiones de Anima</i>
<i>QDPD</i>	<i>Quaestiones Disputatae de Potentia Dei</i>
<i>QDSC</i>	<i>Quaestio Disputata de Spiritualibus Creaturis</i>
<i>QQ</i>	<i>Quaestiones de Quodlibet</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
<i>TSS</i>	<i>Treatise on Separate Substances</i>

For Aristotle:

<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Categories</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>De Anima</i>
<i>DGC</i>	<i>De Generatione et Corruptione</i>
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metaphysics</i>
<i>PA</i>	<i>Posterior Analytics</i>
<i>Phy.</i>	<i>Physics</i>

Abstract/Résumé

In this dissertation I argue for the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' hybrid view of human souls - that is, the idea that human souls, and only human souls, are at once substantial forms and subsistent things. I contend that the best way to understand the ontological status of human souls according to Aquinas is by means of the concept of 'subsistent parts'. Since Aquinas characterizes souls as parts of substances, I propose a mereological analysis of the different types of part in Aquinas, and I conclude that souls should be seen as *metaphysical parts* of substances. An influential contemporary view holds that Aquinas' doctrine is inconsistent on the grounds that nothing could be an abstract (form) and a concrete (subsistent) at the same time. I respond to this view by denying the widespread notion that substantial forms are purely abstract entities. I hold that the best way to make sense of Aquinas' twofold approach to human souls is by saying that substantial forms possess an element of concreteness which is accounted for by the fundamental relationship between form and being. Finally, I address the question of taxonomy: how can we classify Aquinas' view of the soul-body relation in light of the concepts that are currently used in philosophy of mind. I argue that the notion of a subsistent part entails the concept of 'part-dualism', which I present as standing midway between substance-dualism and nonreductive materialism, and also as being ontologically richer than property-dualism. I conclude this dissertation with a refutation of the idea championed by some prominent scholars that the existence of the soul is sufficient for the existence of the person.

Dans cette thèse, j'argumente en faveur de la consistance philosophique de la position hybride défendue par Thomas d'Aquin sur l'âme humaine - c'est-à-dire, l'idée que les âmes humaines sont à la fois des formes substantielles et des choses subsistantes. Je soutiens que la meilleure façon de comprendre le statut ontologique des âmes humaines selon saint Thomas, c'est par la notion de *partie subsistante*. Lorsque saint Thomas caractérise les âmes comme des parties des substances, je propose une analyse méréologique des types distincts de partie selon Thomas d'Aquin, d'où je conclus que les âmes doivent être conçues comme des *parties métaphysiques* des substances. D'après une interprétation contemporaine influente, la position thomiste est inconsistante car rien ne peut pas être à la fois une chose abstraite (une forme) et une chose concrète (un être subsistant). Je réagis à cette interprétation en récusant la notion très répandue que les formes substantielles sont des choses purement abstraites. J'affirme qu'on doit comprendre l'explication double de Thomas d'Aquin sur l'âme humaine en disant que toutes les formes substantielles possèdent un élément de concrétude qui est expliqué par le rapport fondamental qui existe entre les concepts de forme et d'étant. Finalement, j'aborde le problème de la taxonomie: comment doit-on classer la conception thomiste du rapport entre l'âme et le corps à la lumière des concepts qui sont utilisés actuellement par la philosophie de l'esprit. Je maintiens que la notion de partie subsistante implique le concept de *dualisme de partie*, que je présente comme étant à mi-chemin entre le dualisme de substance et le matérialisme non-réductionniste, et aussi comme étant ontologiquement plus riche que le dualisme de propriété. Je conclus la thèse avec une réfutation de l'idée défendue par des commentateurs selon laquelle l'existence de l'âme est suffisante pour l'existence de la personne.

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Introduction

In this dissertation I examine Thomas Aquinas' theory of the human soul. My goal is to propose an interpretation of Aquinas' account that shows the philosophical consistency of his position. In order to do so, in the first part I explain what are the key elements of Aquinas' view, and I analyze the arguments that allow him to advance his main theses. In the second part, I deal with some of the most influential treatments of Aquinas' anthropology in contemporary scholarship - some accusing Aquinas of putting together an incompatible set of claims, others defending the consistency of his view in ways that I do not consider fully satisfactory.

My primary purpose in the dissertation is to advance my own interpretation of what I call Aquinas' 'hybrid' - or 'twofold' - account of the human soul. I intend to give a solution to the seeming inconsistency of Aquinas' view that remains faithful to the basic insights of his metaphysics, specially with respect to what he has to say about the interaction between the concepts of form and being. At the same time, in the manner of recent Thomistic scholarship, I wish to be able to address with my treatment of Aquinas' anthropology at least some of the concerns of contemporary philosophy of mind.

What characterizes Aquinas' twofold account of the human soul is the idea that human souls, and only human souls, are at once substantial forms and subsistent entities. Every soul, insofar as it is a soul, is a substantial form, which means that it is a general property of souls that they exist in the portions of matter of which they are the forms. Nevertheless, Aquinas also believes that, unlike other kinds of soul, the human soul is capable of existing on its own; it is, in other words, a subsistent thing. The challenge, therefore, consists in explaining how the human soul is capable of independent existence when substantial forms are said to exist in the parcels of matter that they inform.

The theory that human souls are subsistent substantial forms has received different explanations. It is not uncommon to find scholars who claim that with the death of the body the soul, because it subsists, becomes an unusual sort of substance.ⁱ

ⁱ This kind of account is proposed by Abel (1996). I take issue with his approach in chapter 6 (6.1).

Since substantial forms are parts of substances, this would mean that when the body ceases to exist the soul undergoes a transformation from part into whole. If one follows this sort of approach, one has to admit that for Aquinas being a substance is a necessary condition for having separate existence. However, in my view, when adopting this reading one fails to grasp the complexity of Aquinas' ontology, which I claim makes room not only for subsistent substances and nonsubsistent parts of substances, but also for subsistent parts of substances. Hence, one of the central aspects of the view I want to defend in the dissertation is the notion that for Aquinas human souls are subsistent parts of human composites. The consequence is that when a soul ceases to exist in a body and starts to exist on its own it does not lose its status as a part.

Another widespread interpretation of Aquinas' twofold account is that the human soul's subsistence is an exception to a metaphysical rule that holds that to be a form is to be enmattered. According to the scholars who adopt this strategy, even though under normal conditions souls are said to exist in bodies, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the idea that under special circumstances a human soul may exist without a human body.ⁱⁱ By contrast, the interpretation I develop throughout the second part of this dissertation is that the best way to make sense of Aquinas' philosophical anthropology is by viewing the subsistence of the human soul as resulting from its nature as form. This approach, however, does not entail that every form subsists simply by being a form. What it means is that a human soul subsists to the extent that it is maximally a form. In order to advance the view that subsistence is an effect of form, I need to do away with the notion that being a substantial form is equivalent to being the configurational state of a parcel of matter.

The view I propose is that the human soul is a subsistent part of the human substance. When claiming that the soul is not an unusual sort of substance but a part, it is important to specify exactly what kind of part the soul is, given that Aquinas, like most medieval thinkers, distinguishes between several types of wholes and parts. I hold that the human soul stands to the ensouled body as a metaphysical part. Even

ⁱⁱ This is the position defended by a group of scholars whom I refer to as the 'Saint Louis School'. I argue against their reading of Aquinas in chapter 5.

though the term ‘metaphysical part’ is not found in Aquinas’ texts, some expositors of Aquinas’ philosophy claim that the term is able to capture what he has to say about the role played by the soul in the composition of the human substance.ⁱⁱⁱ

Anyone interested in studying Aquinas’ theory of the human soul must at some point address the question of where to situate Aquinas in the contemporary debate between dualists and materialists. Here the options are many. Some are led by the idea that the soul, just like any substance, is said to exist on its own, and hold that Aquinas must be seen as a bona fide substance-dualist, since the claim that the soul is capable of outliving the body is in a way characteristic of substance-dualism. Others, like Richard Swinburne, think that Aquinas is closer to what we nowadays call ‘property-dualism’, since in Swinburne’s view Thomistic souls are non-universal properties of individual substances.^{iv} Finally, we find those who want to claim that, even though Aquinas explicitly endorses a theory of the soul’s subsistence, it is possible to make his account of the soul-body relation compatible with nonreductive versions of materialism. Scholars who defend this type of approach find support for their view in the thesis that the soul is the substantial form of the body, and also in the idea that what defines nonreductive materialism is the claim that mental states are implemented in matter.^v

In chapter 7 I examine each of these attempts, and I explain why I think they are not successful. My strategy is to identify for each of the above categories a foundational claim, and to show how those claims are incompatible with some indispensable feature of Aquinas’ anthropology. I contend that in order to do justice to Aquinas’ hybrid account of the human soul we need to introduce a new label, which I call ‘part-dualism’. I present what I consider to be the main characteristics of part-

ⁱⁱⁱ One prominent scholar who applies the notion of metaphysical part to Aquinas is Robert Pasnau. For this, see Pasnau (2011), section 1.3. Note that since the terminology is recent, scholars still disagree as to how to define metaphysical parts. In chapter 3, subsections 3.6 and 3.7, I present my own definition of metaphysical parts, and I explain how it relates to the definition of the substance of which it is a part.

^{iv} This position is developed in Swinburne (1997), ‘New Appendix C’, pp. 330-332.

^v The first scholar to propose this kind of reading was Eleonore Stump. For her first attempt to describe Aquinas as a soft materialist, see Stump (1995). For a revised version of the same ideas, see Stump (2003), chapter 6.

dualism, and I conclude the thesis with a discussion of how part-dualism approaches the relation between soul and person.

The dissertation is divided into two parts. Part 1 is mostly expository. It is there that I introduce the main components of Aquinas' twofold account of the human soul. I analyze the arguments used by Aquinas in support of his central theses, and I occasionally deal with different readings of the arguments as found in the secondary literature.^{vi} It is also in Part 1 that I develop some important points that are later used in Part 2 to help me advance my own reading of Aquinas and also to show in which ways I think the views proposed by other scholars are wrong. So, for instance, in chapter 3 I introduce the thesis that the human soul is a subsistent part, which later in chapter 7 is used as the basis for the view that Aquinas must be regarded as a part-dualist. In chapter 4 I propose an analogy according to which substantial forms are characterized as metaphysical antennas, and this analogy reappears in chapter 5 when I advance my interpretation of how the concepts of form and being are related.

Unlike Part 1, Part 2 is mainly analytical. The purpose of chapter 5 is to give a solution to Anthony Kenny's objection that Aquinas' hybrid view of human souls is self-cancelling since nothing can be both abstract and concrete. My strategy is to show that substantial forms are not abstract entities, and that every substantial form, not only human souls, contains an element of concreteness on which Aquinas builds his theory of the soul's subsistence. In chapter 7 the central question is to determine the kind of dualism that follows from Aquinas' characterization of human souls as subsistent substantial forms. In chapter 6 I examine how some leading scholars try to defend the consistency of Aquinas' twofold account of the human soul. I use material from Part 1 as well as from chapter 5 to show why I think one should not subscribe to their interpretations.^{vii}

^{vi} For information regarding the general structure of Part 1, see the introduction to Part 1 on page 1.

^{vii} An introduction to Part 2 can be found on page 129.

Part 1**THE ELEMENTS OF AQUINAS' TWOFOLD ACCOUNT OF THE HUMAN SOUL**

In Part 1 of this dissertation, I examine the foundations of Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul. Part 1 is divided into two main sections, each of which consisting of two chapters.

In Section 1, I examine one side of Aquinas' twofold account, namely, the idea that the human soul, like any other type of soul, is the substantial form of a body, and therefore, is said to inhere in the parcel of matter which it informs. The first section of Part 1 is thus entitled 'The Soul's Inherence in the Body'. First, I look at how Aquinas begins his treatment of the soul's relation to the body by describing the soul as the first actuality of a portion of matter. Next, I examine how Aquinas refines this doctrine of actuality by characterizing the soul as a substantial form.

In Section 2, which is called 'The Human Soul's Independence from the Body', I address the other side of Aquinas' hybrid account, that is, the notion that the human soul, unlike other types of soul, is a *subsistent* substantial form, which means that the human soul, and only the human soul, is capable of rising above the limitations imposed by matter to such a degree that it is able to survive the demise of the body which it informs. The first chapter of section 2 is devoted to the analysis of two essential features of the human soul - namely, immateriality and subsistence. It is there that I develop the idea that the best way to understand Aquinas' account of human souls is by means of the concept of *subsistent parts*. In the subsequent chapter of section 2, I examine the connection between Aquinas' theory of subsistence and the third essential feature of the human soul, that is, its incorruptibility. I conclude Part 1 with an examination of Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul's immediate creation by God, which I think is the cornerstone of Aquinas' theory of the human soul.

Apart from providing a detailed analysis of the main ingredients of Aquinas' philosophical anthropology, my goal in Part 1 is also to set the stage for Part 2, where I take issue with what I consider to be the most relevant interpretations of Aquinas' theory of the human soul in the contemporary scholarship.

Part 1, Section 1

THE SOUL'S INHERENCE IN THE BODY

Chapter 1

Gesturing Towards the Theory: The Soul as Actuality

The first section of Part 1 centres around the idea that the human soul is the substantial form of the human body. In the present chapter, I begin to examine this first element of Aquinas' twofold account of the human soul by focusing on the preliminary notion that the soul is the actualizing principle of the human body.

1.1. A First Approach to the Topic: The Prologue of *ST* 1a Q75

Aquinas' account of the human soul in *ST* 1a begins with question 75, which marks the start of Aquinas' treatment of human nature, after having examined both the angelic nature (1a QQ50-64) and what he calls the 'corporeal creature' (*creatura corporalis*, 1a QQ65-74). The investigation of this new subject matter takes place according to the methodological instructions of Q44, where - after analyzing the divine attributes and the distinction of the divine persons - Aquinas considers the procession of creatures from God. It is held there that the study of creation should be divided into three main sections: first, one must examine the production of creatures; second, the ways in which creatures are distinguished; third, their conservation and government. As regards the distinction of creatures, Aquinas says that the investigation is itself threefold, insofar as creatures are distinguished, (i) in general, (ii) according to good and evil, and (iii) according to the division between spiritual and corporeal beings. Therefore, what is commonly seen as Aquinas' treatise on human nature (1a QQ75-102) is actually part of a broader topic, which is the study of creation according to the distinction of beings into spiritual and corporeal.¹

In the prologue of Q50, Aquinas points out exactly where in the study of the procession of creatures from God the investigation of human nature is situated.

¹ Aquinas often uses the prologues to account for the order in which topics are addressed in *ST*. For the division of the study of creation, see the prologue of Q44. For the different ways in which the distinction of creatures is considered, see the prologue of Q47.

Besides giving rise to an investigation of, on the one hand, purely spiritual creatures, and, on the other, purely corporeal creatures, the distinction between spiritual and corporeal beings will also bring about the study of a third kind of creature, whose nature is at once spiritually and corporeally composed - namely, human beings.² As it stands, Aquinas' claims in Q50 seem broad enough to avoid a commitment to any particular position regarding the ontological status of those elements - spiritual and corporeal - of which human nature is said to be composed. Unfortunately, the same caution is not present in the prologue of Q75.

As usually is the case in *ST* when a new subject matter is introduced, the discussion of Q75 is prefaced by some general remarks that must have been intended by Aquinas first and foremost as a way to call the reader's attention to the change in topic.³ However, in the particular case of Q75, the prologue itself is not free of exegetical difficulties. On the contrary, it even seems to clash with what we take to be Aquinas' most considered views. When compared to the noncommittal characterization of Q50, the prologue of Q75, instead of helping us understand the position he is about to develop, ends up misleading the reader into thinking that Aquinas will put forward in the subsequent articles a conception of human nature which, as a matter of fact, he never defends in his mature writings. I quote below what I regard as the challenging parts of the prologue of Q75:

Having considered spiritual and also corporeal creatures, we now consider the human being, who is composed of a spiritual and a corporeal **substance** (*ex spirituali et corporali substantia componitur*)... Now it is the theologian's role to consider the nature of human beings with reference to the soul (*ex parte animae*), not with reference to the body -

² Cf. *ST* 1a Q50, prologue: "*creatura composita ex corporali et spirituali, quae est homo*". The study of a purely corporeal creature (*creatura pure corporali*) includes both inanimate and animate beings, so one may wonder why Aquinas calls some animate creatures - those endowed with nonrational souls (either vegetative or sensitive) - 'purely corporeal', as he explicitly does in the prologue of Q50. The idea seems to be that not only inanimate creatures like rocks can be said 'purely corporeal', but also those that, though equipped with a soul, do not possess a subsistent soul, and hence cannot experience any sort of incorporeal existence. Later on, I will examine in more detail the distinction between a subsistent form (*forma subsistens*) and material forms (*formae in materia*), which is at the basis of this discussion.

³ It is important to remember that in medieval manuscripts, where space was of great value, there were no titles, neither new paragraphs nor even breaks between articles, making the prologues even more relevant in terms of keeping the reader aware of what is being discussed.

except insofar as the body has a relation to the soul (*nisi secundum habitudinem quam habet corpus ad animam*).⁴

Let me mention what I think the problems with this passage are. While in Q50 Aquinas introduces the composition of human nature in very neutral terms, saying that a human being is a *creatura composita ex corporali et spirituali* - without specifying the ontological status of those elements which human beings are made of - in Q75 Aquinas goes one step further, since he seems to endorse the view that both the spiritual and the corporeal elements of human beings are in themselves substances.

As we have seen in the quotation from the prologue of Q75, human beings are there said to be *ex spirituali et corporali **substantia** componitur*. If we take this occurrence of the term 'substance' to mean exactly what it means when ascribed to a particular human being - when we say, for instance, that Socrates is a substance - then we find textual support for the view, defended by some, that Aquinas is a substance-dualist.⁵ In this case, both body and soul would be on a par with the soul-body composite substance as regards their ontological categorization.

One consequence of the view described above is that man as a composite entity has no essential unity, being rather the result of a combination of two independent substances of opposite natures - body and soul. As I will try to show throughout this dissertation, that is not what results from a close analysis of Aquinas' texts. When Aquinas holds that the theologian's role is to focus on the soul rather than on the body, the reason for it cannot be that for Aquinas the soul - qua substance - is identical to the human person, and that the body may be discarded as another independent substance whose union with the soul in a human being is only accidental, and hence not expressive of human personhood. While that is precisely

⁴ The emphasis in the quotation is mine. Translations of Aquinas' texts are usually mine, unless otherwise specified.

⁵ Explicit descriptions of Aquinas' philosophical anthropology as exhibiting dualism of substance are to be found in Hoffman (1990), Swinburne (1997) and Hasker (1999). Abel (1996) also characterizes Aquinas as a substance-dualist, even though he does not make use of the label, since he contends that, for Aquinas, souls are substances of a unusual sort. In Part 2, chapter 6, subsection 6.1, I discuss Abel's reading of Aquinas' hybrid account of human souls. In chapter 7, subsection 7.1, I address the similarities and dissimilarities between Aquinas' account and different versions of substance-dualism (both classic and contemporary). In subsections 7.3 and 7.4, I advance my reading of Aquinas as a part-dualist, which I distinguish from substance-dualism as well as from nonreductive materialism.

what a substance-dualist would say about the nature of human persons, Aquinas does not think of human beings in those same terms.⁶

One might simply say that Aquinas' words in the prologue of Q75 consist in an infelicitous turn of phrase that does not do justice to Aquinas' most considered view on the human soul. Alternatively, we may use Aristotle's idea that the term 'substance' is said in many ways to show that the passage from the prologue can also be interpreted in a way that does not entail the equation of soul with person. In *CM*, Aquinas writes the following:

The term *substance* is used at least of four things... for there are several senses in which some speak of substance... Now the first of these senses is that in which a thing's essence (*quod quid erat esse*), i.e., its quiddity (*quidditas*), essential structure (*essentia*), or nature (*natura*), is called its substance... The fourth sense is that in which 'the subject', i.e., a particular substance, is called a substance.⁷

Therefore, the term 'substance' (*substantia*) may signify either (i) the particular substance which is the subject of both essential and accidental attributes, or (ii) the element in that particular substance which is responsible for its being the kind of thing it is - namely, the substance's essence.

By applying sense (ii) of 'substance' to the passage from the prologue of *ST* 1a Q75, one can claim that what Aquinas is actually saying is that the *essence* of human beings is composed of both a spiritual and a corporeal element. When so understood, the prologue of Q75 becomes as neutral in terms of ontological commitments as the prologue of Q50. What is more, one can say that by having a "mixed" essence, so to speak, human beings are placed - according to the division of creatures into spiritual and corporeal - midway between those things that possess a purely spiritual essence and those that are endowed with a purely corporeal essence. According to this alternative reading, Aquinas' statement could be paraphrased - without any serious

⁶ For a contemporary defence of substance-dualism, and the identification of the human soul with the human person, see Alvin Plantinga's "Materialism and Christian Belief" (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, 99-141).

⁷ Cf. *CM*, book VII, lesson 2, 1270-1273. I quote from the English translation of John P. Rowan (1995) with the division of paragraphs of the Marietti edition. Since, for our present purposes, we do not have to worry with the two other senses of 'substance' described by Aquinas in the text, I just omitted them from the quotation.

violation of the Latin text - in the following manner: 'human beings are made of an essence which is both corporeal and spiritual'.⁸

One consequence of this reading of the prologue of Q75 is that so far we still do not know anything about the actual ontological status of those elements of which human beings are composed. However, from the fact that Aquinas contends that it is the role of the theologian to study human nature *ex parte anima*, and that the body should be considered only in its relation to the spiritual element of man, we can gather that those two principles which the human essence consists of are not on a par with each other. The soul, one may say, is the principal element in a man's essence. That is why the theologian should focus his investigation on it, considering the body only to the extent that it is perfected (or acted upon) by a soul. Still, this does not mean that man *is* his soul, as the substance-dualist wants. In order to understand how Aquinas conceives of the soul's predominance over the body we have to proceed to a careful analysis of the texts - from *ST* as well as from other later works - where Aquinas addresses the metaphysics of human nature.

1.2. The Soul as a Body: The Presocratic Mistake

The opening article of *ST* 1a Q75 deals with the following question: 'Is the soul a body?' (*Utrum anima sit corpus*). Even though the terms 'soul' and 'body' seem to be mutually exclusive, and that one might consider it a truism that souls - regardless of what one takes them to be - are *not* bodies, Aquinas has both historical and philosophical reasons for starting his investigation by undertaking what, at first sight, seems like an obvious question.

⁸ In his translation with commentary of *ST* 1a QQ75-89, Robert Pasnau translates the crucial sentence of the prologue of Q75 in the following manner: "Having considered spiritual and also corporeal creatures, we should now consider human beings, who are composed of a spiritual *and* corporeal **nature**" (cf. 2002a, p. 2; the italics are his, whereas the emphasis in bold is mine). In his text, 'nature' translates *substantia*, and Pasnau decides to do so because he wants to avoid giving his reader (what he rightly thinks would be) the false impression that Aquinas is a substance-dualist (cf. p. 220). Even though my opinion is that he makes the right choice (as we have seen in the passage from Aquinas' *CM*, 'nature' and 'essence' are used interchangeably as one of the proper senses of *substantia*), still he does not give the right explanation for his decision, which would be to show, as I have done above, how 'substance' can be said in many ways. In a word, in Pasnau's commentary the solution seems *ad hoc*, whereas it does not have to be when properly accounted for.

First of all, the discussion is *philosophically* relevant because, despite the fact that Aquinas does not himself endorse the thesis of the corporeality of the soul, still he conceives of the soul as being intimately connected to the body. Hence, one should expect a careful account of how this connection takes place. Moreover, when we think of the genesis of the error of ancient naturalists, what Aquinas wants to hold is that those thinkers were misled into ascribing a corporeal nature to the soul precisely because of the narrow link by which, according to Aquinas' hylomorphism, the soul-body relation is characterized. With that in mind, in Q75a1 Aquinas starts developing the conceptual apparatus that will allow him to account for the essential unity of human beings as composites of soul and body.

A second aspect to be considered is that, from Aquinas' perspective, a survey of the history of philosophical ideas suggests that the identification of the soul with a body of some sort is not such an uncommon approach. On the contrary, according to Aristotle's report in *DA*, this position was the standard view among Presocratic philosophers. Furthermore, later ancient thinkers, like Epicurus, have also regarded the soul as a kind of body.

According to Epicurus, the totality of reality is made up of atoms and the void. Bodies - the objects of our sensory experience - are collections of different sorts of atoms, while the void is the only incorporeal element of reality, the function of which is to serve as a region through which atoms move. On this ancient view, only corporeal things - that is, things that are composed of atoms - are capable of either acting on something else or being acted upon by something else. Thus the soul, although it exists in a body, is also a sort of body, the only difference being that the former is made up of atoms of a finer variety. Accordingly, Epicurus contends that, "The soul is a body made up of fine parts distributed throughout the entire aggregate".⁹ Therefore, on the Epicurean tradition, what distinguishes the soul from the body is only the sort of atoms of which each one is composed.

As regards the Presocratics, Aquinas says that they all share a common strategy when accounting for the soul, which is to gain knowledge of the soul's very nature by

⁹ Cf. "The Surviving Letters of Epicurus" (in Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson, 1988, 1st edition, 5-32), p. 10.

means of that which is more evident to us. The features that most evidently distinguish ensouled things (*animata*) from unensouled things (*inanimata*) are movement and cognition, so that the ancient naturalists believed that by getting to know what produces movement and cognition in things they would consequently come to know the soul's essential structure.¹⁰ While sharing this basic approach, they also differed in two respects: first, some tried to gain knowledge of the soul by focusing exclusively on cognition, whereas others focused on the nature of movement instead; second, each philosopher ascribed the cause of those two vital activities to different principles, even though for most of them these principles were either one or a combination of the four basic elements of ancient physics - namely: fire, air, earth and water.

Democritus, for instance, whose atomist account of reality served as the basis for Epicurus' own materialist view of the soul, believed that the soul was made of fire due to his idea that the soul's most salient feature was to be moved, and that, among the elements, fire was the most suited to account for a thing's mobile nature. The basic assumption among those ancient naturalists who focused on the soul's relation to movement was that nothing moves unless it is itself moved. Therefore, the soul's ability to produce motion in the world cannot be separated from its own mobility. Since, for Democritus, every item in the natural world is composed of atoms of different shapes, he thought that the soul would have to be made of atoms the shape of which was most suited to movement - namely, round atoms.

Other ancient physicalists, instead of addressing the soul's ability to produce motion and to be moved, prefer to focus on the soul as a principle of cognition. Here again, what causes the differences among philosophers is that they use distinct

¹⁰ Cf. *CDA* I.3, nn. 32-33. As we will see, the same point is made in *ST* 1a Q75a1c. Both in *CDA* and in *ST*, Aquinas points out that the soul (*anima*) is that by which ensouled things (*animata*) differ from unensouled things (*inanimata*). Even though the remark seems dispensable due to its obviousness, Aquinas is entitled to make it because the Latin term *animatum* frequently means 'living', so that Aquinas' actual goal - in this case not an obvious one - is to contend that the soul is that by which living things differ from nonliving things. This much, apparently, the ancient physicalists were able to see, and that is why they tried to gain knowledge of the soul's essence by means of two vital activities, cognition and movement. Still, Aquinas' view is that they were unable to provide a proper account of the soul because of their limited view on the nature of causes, which led to a confusion between material and formal causes. For the ancient naturalists' inability to distinguish the material cause from the formal cause, which for Aquinas was due to their incapacity to separate the intellect from sensory faculties, see *CDA* I.2, n. 18.

principles to account for the soul's intrinsic nature. So, while Empedocles thought that the soul resulted from all four elements together with two principles of a distinct nature - love and hate - Heraclitus believed that the soul was a kind of vapour, intermediate between air and water. Be that as it may, what is philosophically relevant if we are to learn something from past mistakes is the extent to which the Presocratics agreed in their view of the soul as a principle of cognition. While they differ in identifying the soul with this or that basic element, they concur in what motivates the identification of the soul with one (or more) of the elements. According to Aquinas, what inspires the association of the soul with the elements is actually a glimpse of the truth on the part of those philosophers.

To begin with, the Presocratics were right when they conceived of the soul as a principle of vital activities such as movement and cognition. Moreover, when thinking of the soul as a principle of cognition, they were right in believing that cognition is brought about by means of a likeness of the thing cognized in the one cognizing. It is a well-known axiom of Thomistic epistemology that the object of cognition must, in some sense, be in the cognizing subject, and that this presence is effected by means of a likeness (*similitudo*) of the external object.¹¹ Nevertheless, the Presocratics were wrong in thinking that the likeness of the object cognized must exist in the cognizer according to the object's 'natural being' (*esse naturale*) - which, for Aquinas, is like saying 'according to the same kind of being it has in itself' (*secundum idem esse quod habet in seipsa*).

For Aquinas, this is the kind of confusion that leads to ascribing a corporeal nature to the soul. Since the soul is a principle of cognition, and because cognition is understood in terms of 'like being known by like', the Presocratics thought that to have knowledge of the external world the soul had to be composed of the same elements which external objects are made up of. In a nutshell, the Presocratic thesis is as follows: the soul must be a body - that is, an aggregate of elements - if one is to account for the soul's ability to know other bodies.

¹¹ Cf. CDA I.4, n. 43: "*Cognitio fit per similitudinem rei cognitae in cognoscente*".

In Aquinas' view, the Presocratic confusion does not lie in accepting the dictum that 'like is known by like' (*simile simili cognosci*), but rather in misrepresenting it in such a way that it takes the likeness of the thing cognized to exist in the cognizer 'according to natural being' (*secundum esse naturale*). Aquinas' exact criticism is that the ancient naturalists were unable to distinguish between a thing's mode of existence *in a cognitive power* - say, the intellect or one of the sense organs - and the object's mode of existence *in itself*, that is, independently of the subject's ability to grasp it in any sense. In sum, Aquinas believes that the Presocratics were led to hold on to a poor metaphysical position - i.e., that the soul is a body, being composed of whatever elements one regards as the basic principles of reality - due to a mistake in epistemology - i.e., that to be known a thing has to exist in the knower according to the same mode of existence it has outside the knower.

Aquinas holds that the key to a correct approach to the concept of 'soul' (and, more generally, to a precise notion of essence) lies in the recognition that forms do not have to exist in and outside a knower according to the same mode of being. To that extent, it is reasonable to say that Aquinas' own account of the soul and its close relation to the body relies, as regards its fundamentals, on the idea that forms - as that by means of which both being and cognition is acquired - have the capacity to exist in more than one way, adapting, as it were, to the different media in which they are realized.

1.3. The Soul as the Actuality of the Body

Aquinas' account of the human soul is of a hybrid nature, since it contains two essential elements - i.e., the soul is at once a substantial form and a subsistent thing - the properties of which - inherence and independence - seem to be at odds with each other. What we find in *ST* 1a Q75a1 is a preparatory account of the first element of Aquinas' twofold conception - not yet the complete theory that the soul is the substantial form of the body, but the incipient view that the soul stands to a body as its actualizing principle.

As we will see, the conclusions that are drawn by Aquinas in this first article of Q75 are incomplete due to the broadness of its argument. What is held there with respect to the soul is not true of souls alone but applicable to forms in general, either substantial or accidental. Therefore one can safely say that it is only in Q76 that Aquinas will be able to claim - in keeping with his hylomorphic metaphysics - that the soul is to the body as a substantial form is to a given parcel of matter.

One of the objections raised in the text against the view championed by Aquinas that the soul cannot be a body makes reference to a Presocratic-like approach to the nature of cognition, while two other objections focus on a view of the soul as the body's mover.¹² The first objection of the latter kind assumes that the soul is responsible for moving the body, and claims that something can only produce motion when it is itself in motion, for the simple reason that nothing gives to another that which it does not possess.¹³ Since everything that 'produces-motion-and-is-in-motion' is a body, the soul itself must be a body.¹⁴ Another objection of the same kind will add that between mover and moved there must be contact, which is something that can only occur between bodies. Since the soul moves the body, and hence makes contact with it, it must itself be a body.

¹² Though present here and there in Q75, the assessment of the view that the soul is the body's mover is prevalent throughout Q76, where Aquinas will mention it in almost every article, making it clear that such an explanation of the way soul and body unite in a human being is regarded by him as the main opponent of the view that the soul is the substantial form of the body. Aquinas' rejection of this rival doctrine will be clearer as we advance in our exposition.

¹³ I am following Pasnau's suggestion (cf. 2002a, pp. 221-222) and translating the passive forms *motum* and *moveatur* as intransitively active instead of as passive. Hence the statement "*Non autem est movens non motum*" is rendered "But it does not produce motion unless *in motion*" (instead of "unless *moved*"). And the major premise "*Nihil possit movere nisi moveatur*" is similarly rendered "Nothing can produce motion unless it is itself in motion". The reason for this alternative translation is that, when Aquinas rejects the objector's claim that the soul has to be a body in order to produce motion, he is agreeing with the objector's idea that 'nothing gives what it does not have' (*nihil dat alteri quod non habet*), at the same time that he denies the conclusion drawn from it by distinguishing between the soul's being *essentially* in motion - that is, moved by another - and its being *accidentally* in motion - i.e., that though unmoved, the soul is not completely motionless.

¹⁴ In his own argument, the objector admits the possibility of something producing motion without being itself in motion (First Mover), but remarks that the kind of motion produced by such a motionless mover would be everlasting and continuous - features that do not belong to the motion of living beings of which the soul is the source. While in the objector's model there is room only for either a motionless mover or moved movers, Aquinas in turn will add a third category to his system - namely, things that are neither completely motionless nor essentially moved, thus distinguishing souls from God as well as from bodies.

Influenced by a Presocratic understanding of the prerequisites for cognition, another objection will claim that the soul can only know bodies if it is itself a body. Since cognition requires the presence of a likeness of the cognized in the cognizer, and because there cannot be any likeness between a body and a nonbodily thing, the soul has to be a body in order to cognize other bodies. As I have mentioned above, Aquinas does not want to challenge the view that cognition requires a likeness of the thing cognized, but only the way that those who advocate the soul's corporeality account for the presence of such a likeness in the cognizer.

Aquinas' reply to those who defend the soul's corporeality begins with a sort of methodological claim. He says that in order to investigate the nature of the soul we have to start by presupposing that the soul is 'the *first* principle of life in things that are alive around us'.¹⁵ I say that this is a claim that has to do with method because, by assuming that living things possess an immanent first principle of life, Aquinas is setting the parameters of the discussion. The regulative idea is that any good explanation - one which is based on intrinsic principles - of what makes a thing be alive must at some moment come to a stop, and not go on ad infinitum.

Hence, regardless of whether the soul really is the first principle of life in living things, what Aquinas is assuming at this point as a basic requirement is that there must be a first principle by reference to which life is accounted for among living beings. We should also remark that the underlying idea in Aquinas' reasoning is that one will only be able to put a stop to the process of searching for explanatory principles of life once one becomes aware of the need to move from *material* causation to *formal* causation. If one remains at the level of material explanations there is always the possibility of postulating some further organism which is simpler than - and thus at the basis of - the material structure that we are currently examining. As I have suggested, this is the kind of error that Aquinas ascribes to ancient naturalism - namely, the inability to see beyond material explanations, and the consequent notion that the soul itself has to be made of whatever is regarded as the basic constituents of reality.

¹⁵ Cf. *ST* 1a Q75a1c: "*Ad inquirendum de natura animae, oportet praesupponere quod anima dicitur esse primum principium vitae in his quae apud nos vivunt*". The italics in the English translation of the passage are mine.

Here is where we should think of Aristotle's investigation on the nature of substance in *Met.*, book VII. After several unsuccessful attempts to determine what substance is, Aristotle decides, in chapter 17, to take a different starting point. He says that because substance is a principle and a cause, he has to address it from this standpoint.¹⁶ According to Aristotle, the notion of substance is introduced as an attempt to answer questions of the type 'Why is x what it is?'. However, for the Stagirite, this sort of question can only make sense when formulated in the following terms: 'Why is x a y?'. This is exactly the kind of question we ask, for instance, when we want to know why these bricks and stones make up a house and not something else. Aristotle's point is that when we ask why such and such a whole is obtained from such and such elements, what we are really looking for is the cause by reason of which a given parcel of matter becomes some determinate thing. What we are seeking, says Aristotle, is the *form* of the thing, and this form is the *substance-of* the individual thing.

According to Aristotle's understanding of it, what a formal explanation does is to account for the fact that a certain material whole possesses a definite structure, that its elements are configured in this way rather than in any other way. In Aristotle's own example, the syllable 'ba' cannot be reduced to its elements, 'b' and 'a', because the elements themselves are not sufficient to explain why is it that in this case 'b' and 'a' make up 'ba' instead of 'ab'. What Aristotle says is needed is a principle that answers for the particular configuration of the material constituents; a principle that is itself immaterial insofar as it cannot be reduced to any of the material components of the whole. Therefore, when one talks about what gives the material elements a precise arrangement one is not thereby considering some additional element, but something of a different nature, the introduction of which accounts for aspects of the thing that are left unexplained if one restricts oneself to the level of pure materiality.

¹⁶ Note that in *Met.*, book VII, Aristotle does not deal primarily with the notion of substance as it denotes a particular thing like the individual Socrates. He is rather using 'substance' (*ousia*) to talk about the immanent principle by means of which the individual Socrates is said to be a particular substance of a given kind - i.e., a *tode ti*. Since book VII presupposes the results that are previously obtained in *Cat.* (where 'substance' is said primordially of the individual), but also aims at complementing those results by undertaking an investigation of the intrinsic constitution of substances, in the central books of *Met.* *ousia* will refer to the 'substance-of' the individual. A detailed study of the distinct approaches to substance in *Cat.* and in *Met.* VII can be found in Michael Wedin's book (2000).

Inspired by Aristotle's remarks on what kind of immanent principle the essence - that is, the 'substance-of' a particular substance - is, Aquinas holds that living things must have an immanent first principle by means of which the presence of life in them is accounted for. To avoid an infinite regress in the chain of explanatory principles of life, Aquinas contends that this immanent principle cannot be composed of any matter. This is where the methodological claim turns into a positive doctrinal statement, seeing that Aquinas will equate that first principle of life with the soul. The same statement that establishes the limits of the investigation with its implication that we should not devote too much attention to purely material explanations of life also works as a provisional definition of the soul: the soul is the first principle of life in living things.

As Aquinas explains in *CDA* II, definitions can occur in more than one place in an argument. While some definitions function as conclusions in demonstrations, others play the role of a first premise (*principium*). The well-known example taken from Aristotle's *PA* is that of thunder, the definition of which varies according to the role it plays in a demonstration: thunder is concluded to be a 'continuing sound in the clouds' by means of a premise in which it is held that thunder consists in 'fire's being extinguished in a cloud'. Guided by Aristotle's words in *PA* regarding the role of definitions in demonstrations, Aquinas will interpret *DA* II as an attempt to demonstrate one definition of soul - as the first actuality of a body - on the basis of another definition of soul - as the first principle of life among living things. This same idea will then be transported to *ST*, where in Q75a1 Aquinas adopts the strategy of proving that the soul is the first actuality of a body by relying on its initial definition, according to which the soul is the living body's first principle of life.¹⁷

As I have briefly mentioned before, Aquinas to a certain extent justifies the connection between 'being alive' and 'having a soul' by means of a fairly obvious

¹⁷ For passages from *PA* on the role of definitions, see *PA* I.8, 75b30-32, and *PA* II.8-10. For Aquinas' use of the theory in his *CDA*, see book II.1, n. 212. For Aquinas' interpretation of how one definition of soul serves as the basis for demonstrating another definition of soul, see *CDA* II, lessons 3-4. It is important to note that by admitting two sorts of definitions, those that can be demonstrated and those that function as a first premise in a demonstration, and by holding that the characterization of the soul as a first principle of life falls in the category of those definitions that play the role of first premises, Aquinas is committing to the view that the very acceptance or rejection of the idea of there being a first principle of life lies at a foundational level, and will therefore mark off very different - and maybe even incommunicable - approaches to the metaphysics of human nature.

semantic remark that our calling living things 'animate' (*animatae*) and nonliving things 'inanimate' (*inanimatae*) suggests that *anima* (that is, 'soul') is what makes a thing be alive. The fact that the term *animatus* has its origin in *anima* indicates that something is living precisely insofar as it is ensouled. This sort of linguistic link cannot, however, excuse one from having to provide an argument showing the connection between the presence of life in a living being and its possessing a soul which, contrary to what the Presocratics thought, is itself incorporeal.

Even though the acceptance of a first principle of life in living things lies at a foundational level of Aquinas' philosophical anthropology, this does not mean that this initial definition of the soul as the first principle of life in a living body cannot be supported by some kind of argument. All it means is that, because of the basic position it occupies in relation to the definition that will be subsequently introduced, the argumentative strategies that are employed in its defence have to be of a different nature. Therefore, when rejecting the view of those who defend the corporeality of the soul, Aquinas advances - while positing that the soul is the first principle of life in living things - a *reductio ad absurdum* of the view that reality is solely composed of organisms about which the only sort of explanation available are those based on material causation.

Before advancing his negative argument, Aquinas explains his strategy by saying that, since 'life is displayed above all by two operations: cognition and movement' it is necessary for a proper account of the soul to be able to explain how the soul can be a cause of those two central functions of living beings.¹⁸ What the objections to Aquinas' view propose is that one can only account for the soul's capacity to generate movement and cognition in living things so long as one regards the soul as a corporeal thing. In order to prove them wrong, Aquinas makes use of an argument that shows how the thesis that the soul is a body has unacceptable consequences.

The argument begins with a caveat: not just any principle of vital operations will be said to be a soul. If that were the case, an ear - as the instrument through which the

¹⁸ The quoted passage is Aquinas' paraphrase of Aristotle's *DA* I.2, 403b25-27: "There are two qualities in which that which has a soul seems to differ radically from that which has not; these are movement and sensation". I am quoting from W. S. Hett's English translation (Aristotle, 1936).

function of hearing takes place - would have to be a soul. The notion of soul can only belong to whatever is considered the *first* principle of life in the living. A body cannot be a first principle of life since, if that were so, we would have to say that the very notion of 'being a body' included the condition of 'being alive', in which case every body - inasmuch as it were a body - would be living. As a consequence, the very idea of a nonliving body would become a contradiction in terms. But the existence of nonliving bodies is evident to everyone, given that we are all aware of physical beings that, because they do not possess an internal principle of movement, are dependent on the action of other beings to travel from one place to another. That is the kind of existence enjoyed by a rock, for instance.

Since there are both living and nonliving bodies around us we have to conclude that some bodies are living not because they are simply bodies, but because they are *such* bodies, that is, bodies of a specific kind. Now that which makes a body be such - that is, of this rather than of that kind - is said to be its 'actuality' (*actus*). Therefore, since a body is living insofar as it is such a body, we have to say that the soul, if it is to be the first principle of life in a body, cannot be itself a body, but rather the *actuality* of a body.

This is how Aquinas proves that the soul is the actuality of a body by means of the assumption that there must be a first principle of life in living things, and that this principle is a soul. One should notice how in the argument 'actuality' is used by Aquinas in precisely the same sense that Aristotle, in *Met.* VII.17, speaks of 'substance' as that which accounts for the precise configuration of the material elements of a physical thing. Even though all one is entitled to conclude in Q75a1 is that the soul is the actuality of the body, what is being presupposed is that by introducing the concept of 'soul' one establishes a shift from material to formal explanations, and that the soul, therefore, must be the form of the body.

The argument, however, works on the condition that we accept that there has to be a first principle of life in that which lives. And this seems to be reduced to a question of philosophical taste: some people do not seem to mind infinite regresses. Be that as it may, what can be said with certainty is that Aquinas' argument relies on the assumption that one will be convinced that the demonstration of an infinite regress

in the reasoning of those who think that the soul is a body is enough to show the absurdity of this view.

The regress comes into play in Aquinas' argument to show that 'being a body' and 'being an actuality' are mutually exclusive properties. Suppose we ask what it is that makes the physical structure x an instance of the kind F . In the Aristotelian-Thomistic idiom, we want to know what it is that 'actualizes' x . If one says that x is actualized by the occurrence of y , while y is itself a corporeal thing, we must then ask for that which is responsible for the actualization of y . If someone answers ' z ', where z is just another corporeal thing, the question will be raised still another time. The moral here is that we can only put a stop to the process once we come to think of the actualizing principle of bodies as being itself nonbodily, since for every bodily thing there is always an actualizing principle which is responsible for the arrangement of its material parts. Therefore, *if* there is a first principle of life, *then* this principle has to be of a nonbodily nature.

Even though there are no occurrences of the word 'form' (*forma*) in the *corpus* of Q75a1, I have nonetheless drawn a parallel between Aquinas' text and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* VII.17, where the Greek philosopher explicitly holds that the kind of cause we are looking for when we speak of 'substance' (*ousia*) is no other than the form (*eidos*), which is responsible for turning a parcel of matter into a determinate thing.¹⁹

Aquinas has limited himself, up to this point, to the notion of actuality, whose association with the soul is obtained through the soul's being described as the first principle of life in a living body. As Aquinas has shown in the argument above, bodies - taken simply as bodies - are neutral with respect to being living and being nonliving. That which makes a body living is the fact that it is *such* a body, and this is accounted for by means of the notion of 'actuality'. Since Aquinas shows that the actuality of a body - on pain of an infinite regress in the search for explanatory principles of life -

¹⁹ See *Met.*, VII.17, 1041b7-9: "Therefore what we seek is the cause, i.e., the form, by reason of which the matter is some definite thing; and this is the substance of the thing". I quote from Ross' English translation revised by Jonathan Barnes (Aristotle, 1995, vol. 2).

cannot be corporeal (that is, composed of material elements), it follows by disjunction that the notion of actuality has to be on the side of form.

As a consequence, one is allowed to say that the concept of form is to some extent presupposed in the reasoning of Q75a1. So, when Aquinas concludes that the soul is the actuality of a body, he is at the same time suggesting (or gesturing towards the view) that the soul is the form of the body. What characterizes the broadness of this opening article is that, even if the notion of form is to some extent presupposed, we cannot yet be sure of whether Aquinas is thinking of the soul as a *substantial* form or as an *accidental* form. An evidence of how broad the proposed argument in favour of the incorporeality of the soul as a first principle of life is is that, after concluding that the soul is not a body but the actuality of a body, Aquinas draws the following analogy: “Just like heat, which is a principle of heating, is not a body, but a certain actuality of a body”.²⁰

By drawing the analogy between the incorporeality of the soul - which is the first principle of life in a living body - and the incorporeality of heat - which is the first principle of heating in a hot body - Aquinas is suggesting that, for the purposes of the argument of Q75a1, soul and heat are on a par with each other with respect to their status as the actualities of bodies and, therefore, as incorporeal things. What is more, the fact that Aquinas says that a body is living (and thus *ensouled*) to the extent that it is *such* a body shows that for the moment he is willing to leave open the possibility that the soul might be an accidental rather than a substantial form.²¹ That does not mean, however, that Aquinas is seriously considering the possibility that the soul may be united to a body only accidentally. Instead, the motivation behind his procedure consists in an effort to make, during the course of his reasoning, as few presuppositions as possible, which gives his argument a very general look.

²⁰ These are the concluding lines of the *respondeo* of Q75a1: “*Anima igitur, quae est primum principium vitae, non est corpus, sed corporis actus: sicut calor, qui est principium calefactionis, non est corpus, sed quidam corporis actus*”.

²¹ In *ST* 1a Q76a4c Aquinas distinguishes a substantial form from an accidental form in the following manner: “An accidental form does not give being absolutely (*esse simpliciter*), but only being such (*esse tale*), as heat does not make its subject be absolutely, but only be hot (...) A substantial form, on the other hand, gives being in an absolute sense, so something is said to be generated absolutely through its addition and, through its removal, to be corrupted absolutely”.

Chapter 2

Specifying the Theory: The Soul as Substantial Form

In this second chapter, I examine how Aquinas moves from the preparatory view of the soul as an actualizing principle to the theory of the soul as the substantial form of a body - which means not only that the soul is an intrinsically immaterial principle (it is not itself a body) but also that it acts on the body as an immanent principle (it inheres in the body). In the second part of the chapter, I analyze some of the arguments that are used by Aquinas against what he takes to be the Platonic and the Averroistic ways of accounting for the soul's influence on the body.

2.1. From Actuality to Form

So far Aquinas has not explicitly held the view that the soul relates to the body of a living thing as its substantial form. As I have attempted to show in subsection 1.3 of the previous chapter, when arguing for the soul's status as the actuality of a body on the basis that the soul is a first principle of life among living things, Aquinas does presuppose the idea that the soul is a form. In order to stress the importance of that presupposition, I have introduced Aristotle's discussion on the nature of substance in *Met.* VII.17, with the aim of showing how Aquinas' reasoning in Q75a1 resembles that of Aristotle, insofar as both philosophers are looking for a principle that will allow us to explain why a given parcel of matter at a certain period of time is arranged in this particular way and not in any other way - without falling prey to an infinite series of explanatory principles.¹

As Aquinas puts it in *SCG* II.65, what one needs is a principle of unity, something that is capable of binding the material elements together so as to bring about a determinate whole. In the hylomorphic tradition, this is precisely what form is: something that can exist in matter as in a subject² (therefore the notion of

¹ Later in chapter 5, we will see how for Aquinas the role of substantial form is not merely explanatory but ontological. This will be a central aspect of my interpretation of the consistency of Aquinas' twofold view of human souls.

² Cf. *SCG* II.65, n. 2: "*corpus autem non potest esse forma: quia corpus non est in altero sicut in materia et subiecto*".

inherence, which is characteristic of substantial forms), and which is responsible for giving matter a determinate type of being.³ As I have suggested, given the generality of Aquinas' reasoning - an indication of which is the proposed analogy between the soul and the form of heat - it is still undetermined in Q75a1 if the soul is to be conceived of as a substantial or as an accidental form; that is, if the soul is to be responsible for equipping the body with absolute being (*esse simpliciter*) or rather with being such (*esse tale*).

In Q76a1 Aquinas starts moving in the direction of an explicit defence of the view that the soul is the substantial form of the body. Aquinas asks there whether the intellectual principle (*intellectivum principium*) is united to the body as its form. The expression 'intellectual principle' appears earlier in Aquinas' treatment of the soul, when he addresses in Q75a2 the human soul's subsistence.⁴

One thing to notice is that this intellectual principle which Aquinas refers to is not the same as the intellect itself. The intellect is a specific capacity of the human soul - it is that through which we engage in acts of intellection - whereas the intellectual principle is the very source of that capacity for thought, at the same time that it is the source of 'lower-ranked' capacities, like sensation and all vegetative powers, like growth, reproduction, nutrition and the like. Therefore, the expression 'intellectual principle' signifies the human soul as a whole, and not just its intellectual power. Even so, by making use of it Aquinas wants to emphasize that feature of human souls that sets them apart from other types of soul.

Q76a1 is the longest article in Aquinas' treatise on human nature, and the fact that it presents six objections to the main thesis is not only an indication of how important Aquinas deemed the topic, but also of the plurality of interpretations of Aristotle's hylomorphic psychology that were available in Aquinas' time. One of the

³ Aquinas characterizes form as a principle of unity in *SCG* II.65, n. 4, where he claims that, "*Omne autem divisibile indiget aliquo continente et uniente partes eius*". Hence, given the doctrine of the convertibility between being and unity (cf., for instance, *ST* 1a Q11a1), form must also be a principle of being, which is exactly what Aquinas holds in *ST* 1a Q76a4, where he distinguishes a substantial form from accidental forms on the basis of the kind of being that each provides matter with (see chapter 1, footnote 21 for the quotation).

⁴ In chapter 3, I examine Aquinas' argument for the human soul's subsistence in Q75a2, as well as the reasons for using the expression 'intellectual principle' as a substitute for 'soul' (see subsection 3.2).

most controversial aspects of the Aristotelian doctrine in *DA* is the thesis of the separability of the intellect.⁵ Accordingly, the first objection against viewing the human soul as the substantial form of the body in Q76a1 will hold that the intellect's separability rules out the intellectual principle's union with the body as its form. Reversing the logic of this first objection, a second objection contends that the union of the intellectual principle with the body as its form would go against the intellect's capacity for knowing all things, since the nature of a form is always contracted when realized in matter.

A third objection explores yet another harmful consequence for intellection of the thesis that the human soul is the substantial form of the body. If something is at once a receptive cognitive capacity and the actuality of a corporeal organ, it will receive its information materially and individually, since, as Aquinas himself repeatedly says, 'that which is received exists in its receiver in keeping with the mode of the receiver' (*receptum est in recipiente secundum modum recipientis*). Assuming that the intellect receives its information immaterially and universally, it follows that the intellectual principle cannot be the substantial form of the body. The general point Aquinas wants to make with these first three objections is that the confusion between the notions of 'intellect' and 'intellectual principle' will necessarily lead to a mistaken view of what the soul is and how it relates to the body.

A fourth objection is in an important sense different from the first three insofar as it works under the assumption that 'intellect' and 'intellectual principle' signify distinct things. It also explores in a compelling way some ideas that are characteristic of Aquinas' own thought, as, for instance, the distinction between essence (*essentia*), power (*virtus*) and operation (*operatio*), which Aquinas inherits from Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.⁶

⁵ Aristotle's thesis is presented in the famous fifth chapter of *DA* III, where it is held that, "Intellect (*noûs*) is in this sense separate (*chôristos*), impassive and unmixed, since it is essentially an activity" (430a17-18, I quote from Hett's translation, with a few modifications).

⁶ In the prologue of Q75 Aquinas attributes the origin of this division to the work *Celestial Hierarchy*, whose author the medievals (including Aquinas) wrongly thought was St. Dionysius the Areopagite, therefore investing it with great authority. In chapter 11 of this short treatise, it is held that, "One clearly observes that, for reasons beyond this world, there is within all divine intelligences the threefold distinction between essence, power and operation." I quote from Colm Luibheid's English translation (in Pseudo-Dionysius, 1987), with some emendations.

The objection begins with the uncontroversial idea that capacity (*potentia*) and action (*actio*) belong to the same thing, since that which is capable of acting is the very thing that acts.⁷ If intellection - as an action or operation of the soul - occurs to some extent independently of the body, then the intellectual capacity (*potentia intellectiva*) - as a capacity of the soul - must also be independent of the body. Operation and capacity are identical with respect to their subject, which means that both intellection and intellectual capacity exist in the human soul as in its essence. Now a power - in this case, the intellectual capacity - cannot be more abstract or simpler than the essence from which it is derived.⁸ So, if the capacity is itself independent of the body, then the same must be true of the essence from which the said capacity derives. For that reason, the human soul - given its status as the *principium intellectivum*, i.e., as that in which the intellectual capacity exists - cannot be the actuality of a body.

The remaining two objections have in common the fact that they rely on mistaken views on the nature of form. Hence they both draw false conclusions about the human soul by combining these misconceptions about form with claims that Aquinas himself endorses. The fifth objection states that the intellectual principle cannot be a form because it has being in its own right (*secundum se esse*), whereas a form, as that by which a thing exists (*quo aliquid est*), cannot possess an act of being that belongs to it in its own right.⁹

The sixth objection contends that the intellectual principle cannot be a form since it is incorruptible, which means that it is able to remain in existence after the corruption of the body. But a form cannot exist without the portion of matter which it

⁷ The objector's claim relies on Aristotle's doctrine, as presented in *Met.* IX.8, that the notion of actuality is in several senses prior to that of potentiality. According to one of these senses, actuality is prior to potentiality as regards the knowledge of their notions, since one comes to know what a given potency is by apprehending what its actuality means. In Aristotle's example, we understand what 'being capable of building' means by becoming familiar with that which builds, that is, by getting to know builders and their work (cf. 1049b13-17). The underlying idea is that potentiality and actuality are the same as regards their subject, i.e., that the thing that has the potentiality for x-ing is the very thing that becomes in actuality a x-er.

⁸ Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a1, obj.4: "*Sed virtus sive potentia non potest esse abstractior vel simplicior quam essentia a qua virtus vel potentia derivatur*". Although this axiomatic statement is here used to support the objector's thesis, Aquinas himself endorses it, which can only make the objection more interesting.

⁹ *Ibid.*, obj.5: "*quia forma est quo aliquid est; et sic ipsum esse formae non est ipsius formae secundum se*".

informs, given that to be united with matter belongs to a form in its own right, and whatever belongs to a thing in its own right will always belong to it.

The purpose of those two objections is to emphasize the apparent incompatibility between being a form and having an act of being of its own. Later in chapter 4, I propose an analogy according to which forms are seen as metaphysical antennas, the aim of which is to help us understand how Aquinas conceives of the relation between substantial forms in general and the act of being. This analogy will be the starting point for a solution to the problem of the seemingly contradictory nature of Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul.

Now that we have an idea of what is at stake in Q76a1, it is time to look at how Aquinas builds up his positive answer. He begins, as usual, by stating his conclusion, namely, that the principle of intellectual operation has to be the form of a human body.¹⁰ In order to get to this conclusion, Aquinas puts forward an argument that, according to his own words, is a paraphrase of Aristotle's proof in *DA* II.2.¹¹ Let us see how the argument works, and what are its main presuppositions.

Aquinas' argument includes a major premise in which the notions of 'being a form' and 'being a first principle of operation' are made equivalent. The premise is as follows: 'That by which a thing first operates is a form of that to which the operation is ascribed'.¹² In this premise the reader will identify three elements: (i) an underlying subject, i.e., that to which the operation is attributed; (ii) a form, which is that by means of which the operation is said of the subject; (iii) the operation itself. On the one hand, while the operation is what allows us to recognize the form's presence in

¹⁰ Aquinas is not always helpful when it comes to avoiding misinterpretation of his words. This is how the first sentence of his answer reads: "*Necesse est dicere quod **intellectus**, qui est intellectualis operationis principium, sit humani corporis forma*" (my emphasis). Even though Aquinas makes use of the term 'intellect' in his answer, he is not there referring to intellection as the specific capacity of the human soul, but rather, as I have underscored above, to the human soul as a whole insofar as the latter is the source of human intellectual operation. In fact, the intellect as a power is not, for Aquinas, the form of a body, so the challenge lies in showing how a soul which is able to accommodate an intellectual capacity can at the same time be the form of a body. The twofold nature of Aquinas' account of the human soul is, therefore, a consequence of his intent to provide space for both of these features.

¹¹ The exposition of his argument for the human soul's being a substantial form ends with the following statement: "*Et haec est demonstratio Aristotelis in II de Anima*".

¹² Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a1c: "*Illud enim quo primo aliquid operatur, est forma eius cui operatio attribuitur*".

the subject, on the other hand, the form is what accounts for the attribution of that operation to the same subject. That which is first in the order of being is second in the order of apprehension.

It is somewhat discouraging that the examples given by Aquinas to illustrate his major premise are all instances of accidental forms, even though it is Aquinas' goal to hold that a soul stands to a potentially living body as its substantial form. He thus says that because a body is the subject of the action of healing by means of health, it must be said that health is to a body as form is to a parcel of matter.¹³

The major premise in Aquinas' argument is accounted for by the following idea: 'nothing acts except insofar as it is in actuality, and so it acts through that by which it is in actuality'.¹⁴ If something is said to operate through that which is its principle of actuality, and since it has been shown in Q75a1 that the notion of actuality cannot be explained on the basis of the body's material constitution, it follows that whenever something acts it does so by means of a form, because that which is a principle of actuality has to be a form. The general presupposition behind this account is that form and matter play basic explanatory roles in reality, with the consequence that if matter cannot tell us why some physical beings are living whereas others are nonliving, then form has to do the job.¹⁵

¹³ We may ask why Aquinas, when characterizing the soul as a form, insists in giving examples that are instances of accidental rather than substantial forms, while we know that he wants to think of souls as forms the presence of which produces *esse simpliciter* and not *esse tale*. In *DA* II.1, after providing a general characterization of what the soul is, Aristotle says the following: "Suppose that an implement, say an axe, were a natural body; the substance of the axe would be that which makes it an axe, and that would be its soul" (412b11-13). Commenting on that passage, Aquinas holds that, "Since man-made forms (*formae artificiales*) are accidents, and these are better known to us than are substantial forms - for they are closer to the senses - it is therefore appropriate for Aristotle to clarify the notion of soul (*rationem animae*), which is a substantial form, through a comparison to accidental forms" (*CDA* II.2, n. 235). I think that the same explanation can be applied to Q76a1. There is a methodological reason behind the frequent mention of accidental forms to elucidate the soul's being a substantial form: following Aristotle, Aquinas thinks that we are more familiar with accidental forms than with substantial forms. Therefore, it is more helpful to give examples of the former than of the latter, despite the fact that this practice can cause the less attentive reader to confuse the two notions.

¹⁴ Cf. Q76a1c: "*Nihil agit nisi secundum quod est actu; unde quo aliquid est actu, eo agit*".

¹⁵ This seems to be the point Aristotle makes in that well-known passage from *DA* III.5, when he contends that, "In every class of objects, just as in the whole of nature, there is something which is their matter, i.e., which is potentially all the individuals, and something else which is their cause or agent in that it makes them all - the two being related as an art to its material" (430a10-14).

The minor premise in the argument is a restatement of that definition of soul which in Q75a1 served as the basis for proving that the soul is the first actuality of a body. The premise is the following: ‘the soul is the first thing through which a body lives’.¹⁶

With its two premises at our disposal, we can reproduce Aquinas’ argument in Q76a1 in the following way: [P1] ‘That by which a thing first operates is a form of that to which the operation is ascribed’. [P2] ‘The soul is the first thing through which the body lives’. [C] ‘Hence, the soul is a form of the body’. What is assumed by [P2] is that to be living means to have a capacity to perform a certain number of vital activities or operations, so that to be a first principle of life is equivalent to being a first principle of vital operations.

I would like to draw attention to one aspect of this argument. I have remarked above that the argument’s major premise included three components: the underlying subject, the form, and the operation. By taking a closer look at the passage where the argument is found, we realize that after advancing its second premise, Aquinas promotes a subtle switch as regards the underlying subject, which in [P2] is the body - that which is made living by the soul. In an attempt to make clear what the assumption behind [P2] is - i.e., that a principle of life is ipso facto a principle of vital operations - Aquinas states that, “the soul is that through which we first carry out any of these operations of life”.¹⁷

In [P2] the subject to which life is ascribed is the body. However, when Aquinas spells out what is presupposed in [P2], the underlying subject becomes the living substance as a whole, that is, the *ensouled* body. Thus, Aquinas says that the soul is that through which we are nourished, through which we acquire sensory knowledge, etc. The puzzling aspect of the argument in Q76a1 is noticeable when Aquinas concludes that, since the soul is that by which those activities that are

¹⁶ Cf. Q76a1c: “*Primum quo corpus vivit, est anima*”.

¹⁷ The emphasis is mine. Even though the Latin in the quotation does not contain a pronoun, the verb is conjugated in the first person of the plural - *operamur* - which makes the English translation correct, and explains the remark regarding the change of underlying subject, given that no mention to the body is made. The whole passage reads as follows: “*Id quo primo operamur unumquodque horum operum vitae, est anima: anima enim est primum quo nutrimur, et sentimus, et movemur secundum locum; et similiter quo primo intelligimus*” (cf. ST 1a Q76a1c).

expressive of human life are brought to actuality, the first principle through which we - i.e., human beings - engage in acts like intellection is the substantial form of the *body*.¹⁸

As we have seen, [P1] states that if something functions as the first actualizing principle of a thing's operative powers, it must stand to that thing as its form. The premise assumes that there is a numerical identity between that to which the operative powers belong and that to which the form belongs. In other words, for the argument to work the underlying subject has to be one and the same in both cases. However, while Aquinas holds, on the one hand, that the soul's role as a form is performed on the body, he claims, on the other hand, that the thing whose vital operations are brought to a state of actuality by the soul is the whole human being. As a result, the only way to protect the argument against the charge of equivocation is by endorsing the identity between the body and the human being as a whole, claiming that, for Aquinas, it is ultimately wrong to say that a human being *has* a body. The argument is kept intact when we accept that for Aquinas a human being *is* his body.¹⁹

According to this approach, it is wrong to ascribe any sort of actuality to the body prior to its union with the soul. While we can distinguish the concept of body from that of soul, and think of the body as pure potentiality, in reality such a separation cannot take place, in the sense that there cannot be a body which is endowed with some sort of actuality independently of its union with a soul. Unlike other medieval philosophers, Aquinas does not accept the notion of a 'form of corporeity' (*forma corporeitas*), that is, a form that would be responsible for providing the body with a

¹⁸ Cf. Q76a1c: "*Hoc ergo principium quo primo intelligimus, sive dicatur intellectus sive anima intellectiva, est forma corporis*".

¹⁹ This is the view defended by Gyula Klima in "Thomistic 'Monism' vs. Cartesian 'Dualism'" (2007). He contends that, "The term 'body', being the most generic term immediately under the term 'substance', signifies in a human being the same substantial form as do the other terms subordinated to it, including the most specific term 'man'. Therefore, in this sense of the term 'body', we cannot really say that a human being *has* a body; rather we have to say that a human being *is* a body, a living, sensitive, reasoning body" (p. 99). A similar position is championed by Bernardo C. Bazán in "La corporalité selon Saint Thomas" (1983), where he writes that, "Il n'y a pas d'opposition entre l'âme et le corps. La corporalité est une détermination conférée au composé humain par l'âme rationnelle qui est sa forme substantielle. Le corps est, si l'on veut, l'âme visible" (p. 407). Later in chapter 7, when comparing Aquinas' account of the soul-body relation with different versions of substance-dualism, I explain how Aquinas accepts the claim that 'I am identical to my body' (see subsection 7.1). In subsection 7.2, I show how the endorsement of this view does not make him a materialist.

basic set of properties prior to its union with the soul. Aquinas believes that the body's actuality as a whole comes from one single substantial form, so that if the body in question is a human body, one has to say that this body is completely actualized by the intellectual soul, and that once this soul departs, there is no more body - except in the equivocal sense in which a human corpse is said to be a human body.²⁰

If we accept Aquinas' doctrine of the unicity of the substantial form, as well as his idea that a substantial form is responsible for supplying a potentially existing thing with absolute being (*esse simpliciter*), we are led to the view, elegantly described by Bazán, that the living body is no other than the 'visible soul'. According to this characterization of Aquinas' account, a human being is identical to his body, so long as by the term 'body' we understand the *living* body - that is, the body under the actualizing influence of its substantial form. What explains the equivalence of the notions of 'body' and 'ensouled body' is that having a soul is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for a body to be actually existent. For Aquinas, the very idea of a body that is capable of performing any basic operation independently of the soul's presence in it is preposterous.

Aquinas' argument in Q76a1 contains two important presuppositions. First is the view that, since the activities of which the soul is said to be the first actualizing principle are themselves expressive of human life in such a way that without them a human being simply cannot exist, the form which is responsible for bringing them to actuality must be a *substantial* form. After all, Aquinas believes that a substantial form differs from an accidental form insofar as the former gives its subject - i.e., a potentially living body - absolute being (*esse simpliciter*) instead of being such (*esse tale*).

Second is the notion that, even though an underlying subject may possess several actualizing principles - given that it can have various vital activities - such a plurality of principles does not amount to a multiplicity of souls or substantial forms. As Aquinas recalls in *CDA* II, "For those [living beings] in which more than one

²⁰ For Aquinas' theory of the unicity of substantial form in *ST* 1a, see Q76a4; for parallel texts, see *SCG* II.58, *QDA* 9, *QDSC* 3, *CT* 90. As regards the issue of ontological separability in the soul-body relation, in chapter 7, subsection 7.3, I distinguish between unilateral and bilateral separability, and I claim that in Aquinas' view there is only room for unilateral separability, which means that while the soul may survive the loss of its body, the opposite cannot occur.

principle is present, each is a part of their soul (*pars animae*), and that soul takes its name from the most important part, whether that is the sensory or the intellective".²¹

What Aquinas is driving at is that not every actualizing principle is itself a soul, even though every actualizing principle is *of* a soul. An actualizing principle which is not a *first* actualizing principle is not a soul but a *power* (or part) of the soul. For that reason, a variety of actualizing principles does not entail a multiplicity of souls, but only a complex of powers within the soul itself. This doctrine relies heavily on the notion that a soul is that which gives being unconditionally, so that - since unity is consequent upon being - wherever there is more than one soul there is also more than one being. Therefore, whoever wants to claim that a human being is more than just an accidental unity will have to concede that the intellective soul is a man's only soul, even if by means of its intrinsic complexity he is capable of performing a variety of vital operations.

2.2. Form as an Inherent Principle

Before addressing the problems involved in the Platonic and Averroistic accounts of the soul-body relation, Aquinas provides still another reason for holding that the soul - more particularly, the intellective soul - is the form of the body. What motivates Aquinas to refine his case is that, because the main argument in Q76a1 relies on the characterization of the soul as a first principle of actuality, some interlocutor might suppose that the notion of 'being the form of *x*' is equivalent to 'being the principle of actuality of *x*'. That could lead to the idea of some *y* that is both ontologically separate from *x* and the proper form of *x*. Alternatively, Aquinas wants to show that the union of soul and body in a composite being which is unqualifiedly one requires the inherence of the soul in the body. In other words, being the substantial form of *x* requires not

²¹ Cf. CDA II.4, n. 270: "*In quibus vero insunt plura, quodlibet est pars animae; sed illa anima denominatur a principiori, vel sensitiva, vel intellectiva*".

only that *y* be the actualizing principle of *x*, but also that *y* and *x* cannot exist simultaneously and yet separately.²²

In SCG II.56 Aquinas deals with the ways in which something of an intellectual nature could be joined to a physical body. He distinguishes between two sorts of contact - of quantity (*quantitatis*) and of power (*virtutis*) - claiming that, while there cannot be contact of quantity between a physical and a nonphysical entity, there can be contact of power between the two.²³ Even though Aquinas concedes that an intellectual substance may be united to a physical body through contact of power, he does not want to think of the union of soul and body in those terms, since he believes that unity through contact of power cannot produce something that is 'unqualifiedly one' (*unum simpliciter*).²⁴

According to Aquinas, there are three ways in which the term 'unqualifiedly one' can be understood: it may refer either to the indivisible, or to the continuum, or to the 'one in reason' (*ratione unum*). The union of soul and body cannot be regarded either as something indivisible or as a continuum. Since a human being is a composite substance, it cannot be said that the kind of unity enjoyed by its parts is indivisible; on the contrary, the very notion of corruption is defined by the separation of the formal principle from its material companion. Neither can the union of soul and body be characterized as a continuum, given that "the parts of a continuum are parts of quantity" (*partes continui quantae sunt*), which means that the type of union of which one of the parts is nonphysical (i.e. the soul) cannot constitute a continuum.

²² A similar account is proposed by Pasnau (2002a), who claims that "Aristotle's argument [namely, Aquinas' paraphrase of Aristotle's argument in Q76a1] doesn't all by itself nail down just what kind of unity is entailed by the relationship of form to matter" (pp. 241-242).

²³ In an instance of contact of power, one thing is able to act upon another without there being physical contact between their 'quantitative extremities' (*quantitatis ultimis*). In Aquinas' own example, it is according to this broader notion of contact that we say that a person in sorrow is able to 'move' us (cf. SCG II.56, n. 5, "*secundum quem modum dicimus quod contristans nos tangit*"). Aquinas lists three differences between the two types of contact: (i) in contact of power the indivisible can 'touch' the divisible; (ii) instances of contact of power extend to the whole thing 'touched', while contact of quantity is limited to the extremities; (iii) in contact of power, the 'touching' agent can penetrate the thing acted upon, and is said to inhere in that thing, whereas in contact of quantity, the agent is extrinsic to the thing acted upon.

²⁴ Cf. SCG II.56, n. 7: "*Quae autem uniuntur secundum talem contactum [per contactum virtutis], non sunt unum simpliciter. Sunt enim unum in agendo et patiundo: quod non est esse unum simpliciter*".

It remains, therefore, that soul and body are unqualifiedly one inasmuch as they make up something which is one in reason. It is important to note, however, that the notion of 'being one in reason' does not here refer to the union of two things that, though ontologically separate, can be thought of as forming some kind of unity - like a pair of pants and a jacket can form a suit.²⁵ What Aquinas has in mind is the stronger unity that holds good of any pair of principles when they constitute something which apart from being ontologically one is also one according to the definition of its parts. Aquinas' position is that the only way in which soul and body can constitute a composite which is unqualifiedly one (as that which is one in reason is unqualifiedly one) is if it is conceded that one of them has the character of form while the other plays the role of matter.²⁶

This brief analysis of *SCG* II.56 confirms that the main reason behind Aquinas' use of the form-matter model to explain the soul-body relation in a human being is his conviction that the best way to account for the essential unity of man as a composite substance is by saying that the soul of any living creature is not only a first principle of actuality, but also something that inheres in the actually living body. We must note that for Aquinas the unqualified unity of man is something that any good metaphysic must account for. It is precisely this central aspect of human nature that neither the Averroistic nor the Platonic model is capable of preserving.

As I have mentioned above, in his second argument for the thesis that the soul is the form of the body, Aquinas' goal is to rule out a possible interpretation of his first argument according to which the role of form is equivalent to being the actuality (or perfection) of the body. Since such a conception is compatible with the view that the form is ontologically separated from that of which it is the actualizing principle, it could ultimately lead to a view of human nature according to which souls act upon bodies as their perfection without being an actual part of them.

²⁵ The example of the suit will reappear in chapter 7, when I introduce the notion of part-dualism.

²⁶ That Aquinas is thinking of the notion of 'being one in reason' in the stronger sense described above (that is, the sense in which ontological unity is presupposed) is clear from the way he concludes *SCG* II. 56, n. 13: "*Si autem substantia intellectualis sit forma corporis, oportet quod esse eius sit sibi et corpori commune: ex forma enim et materia fit aliquid unum simpliciter, quod est secundum esse unum*" (the emphasis is mine). It follows that, according to the strong sense of 'being one in reason' proposed by Aquinas in *SCG* II.56, that which is *ratione unum* is also *secundum esse unum*.

With the aim of showing that in human beings the intellectual principle is an immanent part of the living human body - and that the unqualified unity of man depends on such a view - Aquinas advances a premise that he regards as self-evident: "Each one of us experiences that it is oneself who thinks".²⁷

Aquinas believes that those who account for the conjunction of soul and body in any other way than through the form-matter model will have a hard time explaining how the action of thinking belongs to the particular human being who - supposedly - is conscious that it is himself who engages in the activity of thinking. Aquinas explains that there are three different ways in which an action can be ascribed to a subject: (i) with respect to the subject's whole self (*secundum se totum*), as when a doctor is said to heal; (ii) with respect to a part of the subject (*secundum partem*), in the way that one sees through one's eyes; and (iii) by accident, as when the white is said to build, insofar as the builder happens to be white.

Aquinas immediately rules out option (iii), that the activity of thinking could be ascribed to a human being by accident. It is precisely as humans that we are said to think, and 'humanity' is predicated of individual men essentially, not accidentally. We are thus left with the two exclusive alternatives: either men have the ability to produce thoughts by means of their whole selves, or through some part of their nature. According to Aquinas, the first position was endorsed by Plato, to the extent that he identified the whole human being with his intellectual soul.²⁸ Aquinas, by contrast, believes that a man's thoughts are not the product of his whole self, but that the intellect - the capacity through which men have the ability to think - is rather a part of human nature.

In order to account for the view that the activity of thinking belongs to man with respect to a part of his nature and not with respect to his whole self, Aquinas draws on a further intuition, which he describes as follows: "It is the very same human

²⁷ Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a1c: "*Experitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse qui intelligit*". I follow Robert Pasnau (2002a) and translate *intelligere* in this particular context as "to think".

²⁸ The idea that thought is produced by means of a man's whole self and that such a self is identical to his mind is a central tenet of substance-dualism. In Plato, such a view is most explicitly found in *First Alcibiades*, whose authenticity however is sometimes questioned by recent scholarship. For the passage from this dialogue where the thesis of the identity between mind and self is defended, see footnote 35 below.

being who perceives himself both to think and to sense".²⁹ Since the activity of sensing does not take place without the body's contribution, Aquinas concludes that thinking cannot be the product of a man's whole self, which self would be identical with the intellective soul. Because introspection tells us that sensing and thinking are the same as regards their subject, and given that sensing depends on the body for its functioning, we have to conclude that thinking takes place in man by means of a part of human nature - the intellective soul - which together with the body makes up the whole human person, to whom both activities are ascribed as to their ultimate subject.

The above analysis does not by itself count as an argument for the thesis that the intellective soul is the substantial form of the body. All it shows is that if we accept the two psychological data described above, then we have to concede that the soul is an immanent part of that of which it is the actualizing principle. We must note, however, that the argument above does not operate on its own, but in tandem with Aquinas' paraphrase of Aristotle's argument, which is employed as a proof for the soul's status as the form of the body. The supporting argument seeks to make clear that being the form of *x* not only means being the principle of actuality of *x* but also being joined to *x* so as to constitute with it a whole which is unqualifiedly one. While the first argument points up the soul's role as a source of actuality, the second argument emphasizes the soul's inherence in the body, which is something Aquinas arrives at by resort to two facts about our own psychological makeup.

After showing that for the soul to be a form means for it to be an inner source of actuality, Aquinas examines two alternative ways of accounting for the conjunction of soul and body. His goal is to show that neither the Platonic nor the Averroistic model is capable of explaining how the composite of soul and body constitutes a whole

²⁹ "*Ipse idem homo est qui percipit se et intelligere et sentire*". Even though Aquinas uses here the verb 'to perceive' (*percipio*), while in the former case (cf. footnote 27) he used the verb 'to experience' (*experior*), it seems clear that both stand for the same sort of awareness, in which a person is capable of consciously experiencing that (i) it is herself who entertains her own thoughts, and (ii) that she is the ultimate subject of two distinct activities - i.e., thinking and sensing. Aquinas believes that through some sort of introspection - the details of which are never provided - a person is able to get hold of these two psychological data. These "facts" are then used to account for a thesis regarding the nature of the intellect - that it is a part (or power) of man's nature rather than his whole self. The compatibility of this account of the nature of the intellect - which, according to Aquinas, is the only view that provides theoretical support for the two intuitions described above - with the form-matter model itself counts as an evidence in favour of the view of the soul as the form of the body.

whose unity is not simply accidental, like that of a rider and his horse, but essential.³⁰

2.3. Against Non-Hylomorphic Models

What characterizes the Averroistic anthropology is the thesis that the union of soul and body in man is brought about by means of intelligible species, which - according to this view - possess two underlying subjects, namely, the possible intellect and the phantasms that exist in the corporeal organs. It is thus claimed by the Averroistic school that the intelligible species are responsible for combining the possible intellect with each and every living human body.

Since intellective cognition is said to produce knowledge of the immaterial and universal, philosophers like Averroes were led to the view that the only kind of soul that could inhere in a human body as its form was the sensory soul, whose cognitive content is conveyed in the form of phantasms - which, in turn, are not completely devoid of matter. According to this view, what distinguishes human beings from nonrational animals is the fact that human bodies are connected to a separate intellect, numerically the same for all mankind, by means of which they are able to entertain thoughts and engage in intellective cognition. To show that the thoughts that I have are truly *my* thoughts, and that I constitute with the separate intellect some sort of whole, Averroes comes up with the thesis that intelligible species - i.e., the likenesses through which we think - exist both in the separate intellect and in the phantasms that are produced by my sensory soul in its relation to the external world.³¹

³⁰ A thing is accidentally one when its unity involves some sort of qualification. If we think of the ways in which the 'unqualifiedly one' is spoken of in *SCG* II.56, it is not difficult to see, first, that the unity formed by a rider and his horse is not indivisible - since we can separate one from the other without harm to their respective acts of being (that is, they do not cease to be what they are when separated from one another); second, it is clear that the union of rider and horse does not involve physical continuity between the two members; last, we cannot even say that a rider and his horse are 'one in reason' (I have in mind the expression in its weaker sense, which is not accompanied by ontological inseparability), since I can most certainly think of a rider independently of his horse.

³¹ Pasnau suggests that a good way to make sense of Averroes thesis that the intelligible species are responsible for tying the numerically many human bodies to one and the same separate intellect is by picturing a 'flow of information' from our bodily senses into the separate intellect, and back from the intellect into our cognitive apparatus (cf. Pasnau, 2002a, pp. 242-243).

According to Aquinas' refutation of the Averroistic position, the thesis that the same intelligible species can exist in two distinct subjects is not sufficient to account for the intuitive conviction that this given thought is actually my thought, despite the view proposed by Averroes that the intellect which is responsible for producing that thought is not exactly my own, since I share it with every other human being. Aquinas builds his refutation on a comparison between the intellect and the senses.

The analogy, adapted from Aristotle's *DA*, consists in saying that phantasms are to the intellect the way colours are to sight.³² As a result, the species of phantasms (*species phantasmatum*) must be in the possible intellect in the same way that the species of colours (*species colorum*) are in sight. Now we do not say that a wall is able to see just because it contains the colours the likenesses of which are reproduced in sight in the form of a sensible species. Instead of saying that the wall sees, we say that it is seen. By analogy, rather than saying that a man thinks due to the presence of the species of phantasms in the possible intellect, we should say that the same man - or the phantasms that are produced by the action of his sensory soul - are being thought of.³³ In other words, just like the redness of the wall does not entail that the wall sees red, but only that some cognizant agent endowed with the power of sight can see the red of the wall by the presence of a likeness of that red in his sensory apparatus, so the presence of a phantasm of *x* in a human being *Z* cannot account for *Z*'s ability to think of *x*. All that is entailed by the Averroistic model is that the ontologically separate intellect can think of *x* on *Z*'s behalf given *x*'s occurrence in *Z*.

To those who try to find coherence in the Averroistic account by saying that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with its main thesis, namely that what unites mind and body is a flow of information from the senses into the mind, Aquinas' reply - so I think - would be that it is wrong to explain the union of intellectual soul and body on the basis of a flow of information, because it is the very union of soul and body that

³² The origin of the comparison is *DA* III.7, where Aristotle says the following: "The soul never thinks without a mental image (*phantasmatos*). The process is just like that in which air affects the eye in a particular way, and the eye again affects something else; and similarly with hearing" (431a16-17). I quote from W.S. Hett's translation (Aristotle, 1936).

³³ The possible intellect is here understood according to the Averroistic model, that is, as an ontologically separate entity, and not, according to Aquinas' system, as a passive power of the rational soul, which, in turn, exists as a part of a human being, inhering in a body.

makes the flow of information from the senses into the intellect possible. Instead of explaining the intuition that human beings have first-person authority over their thoughts, the Averroistic model seems to confuse *my* thoughts - that is, the fact that *x* is being thought by me - with thoughts *of me* - i.e., that the *x*-ness in me (in the form of a likeness) is being thought by some separate mind.

What is more, if each human being - as a compound of body and sensory soul - is further united to the separate intellect so as to constitute a being which is unqualifiedly one as a result of that intellect's ability to think numerically different thoughts that are individuated in virtue of their origin in different subjects (which have numerically different phantasms), then, by the same line of reasoning, we would have to admit that a mind-reader (granting, for the sake of the argument, that some of the events reported by parapsychology are genuine) would constitute with his numerically different subjects several composites, each making up a whole with unqualified oneness, given the flow of information from them to him.

After rejecting Averroes' account of the soul-body relation on the grounds of its inability to provide theoretical support for our basic intuitions about our own mental lives, Aquinas moves on to a critical examination of the Platonic solution to the question of the unity of man.

Let me start by remarking that the Platonic thesis that 'a human being thinks with his whole self' is incompatible with Aquinas' thesis that 'the soul is the form of the body' inasmuch as the former rejects that which the latter approves, namely, that soul and body come together in a human being as an essential unity. In Aquinas' view, the Platonic approach to the metaphysics of human constitution is sufficiently strong to guarantee that soul and body constitute some kind unity, but also sufficiently weak to make room for the idea that the conjunction of soul and body is not essential to the human person.³⁴ When arguing against the Platonic mover-moved model, Aquinas wants to show the inefficacy of this account, to the extent that those who rely on the notion that the soul is united to a human body as its mover are not capable of

³⁴ In *ST* Aquinas addresses the relation between the human person (*persona humana*) and her soul in 1a Q75a4. This and other parallel texts will be discussed in chapter 3, when I deal with the criteria for substancehood (3.1), and when I explain the ontological status of the soul (3.5 and 3.6). I also refer to some of those texts in chapter 7, when I discuss the kind of dualism defended by Aquinas (7.1 and 7.3).

accounting for the fundamental belief that it is this individual human being who thinks.³⁵

Aquinas gives four arguments against the Platonic mover-moved model, all of which depend on the presupposition that human beings are somehow aware that thinking is an activity of the soul-body composite, and that such an experience conveys a basic truth about our own mental life. The first argument holds that, since the intellect can only move the body through appetite, it does not follow that a given individual thinks because he is moved by his intellect, but rather the opposite, that he is moved by his intellect because he thinks, for the reason that the operation of the appetitive powers presuppose the action of the intellect.

The second argument makes use of a distinction between two types of action - immanent and transcendent - and it contends that if we accept the mover-moved model we have to admit that intellection is not the kind of action that stays within the agent - that is, an immanent action - but, like the action of heating, which proceeds from a heating agent to a heated subject, the sort of action that passes into another - that is, a transcendent action. If this were the case, one would have to conclude that the individual human being thinks only to the extent that he is acted upon by his intellect. This would lead to a multiplication of thinking subjects, since the action of thinking would then be ascribed both to the intellect - which acts upon the individual - and to the individual himself, who is the subject of the intellect's operation.

One could protest, however, that the argument assumes the idea - which Plato does not have to agree with - that the intellective soul, instead of being identical to the human being, is actually a part of his nature, more precisely the formal aspect of an

³⁵ In *DA* I.3, 406b25-28, Aristotle ascribes to Plato the idea that the soul is united to the body by being the cause of the body's movement. The textual reference provided by the Stagirite is the *Timaeus* (cf. 34c-37c). Even though Aquinas wants to show the futility of the mover-moved model (the word he uses to describe Plato's solution is *vanus* - that is, "pointless"), one has to admit that Aquinas' disagreement with Plato ends up being a dispute over principles, since what Aquinas takes to be a basic truth - i.e. that it is the soul-body composite that is responsible for its intellectual activity - Plato, on his side, seems to deny. The common reference when it comes to Plato's idea that man thinks through his whole self, and that this self is identical to the soul, is *First Alcibiades* - which some view as one of Plato's earliest works, while others consider to be an unauthentic work. In any case, in this dialogue its author holds that a man is identical to that which uses and rules over the body - namely, the soul (cf. 129E-130C). This passage ends with the following conclusion: "But since neither the body nor the combination of the two is man, we are reduced, I suppose, to this: either man is nothing at all, or if something, he turns out to be nothing else than soul". I quote from W. R. M. Lamb's translation, in Plato (1979).

essence which is composed of a formal and a material element. If there is no genuine distinction between myself and my soul, then one can still claim that my soul moves the body to which I am here-and-now linked without giving way to the idea - which is the object of Aquinas' criticism - that intellection is a transcendent action, for the sole reason that there are not two entities - myself *and* my soul - but only one.³⁶

Aquinas' third argument against the Platonic model relies on the idea that intellection is the kind of operation that occurs without a corporeal organ. He claims that one ascribes the action of a mover to the thing moved only as to an instrument. That is how, for instance, one says that the action of cutting wood, which is properly ascribed to a woodworker, also belongs to the saw, to the extent that the saw is the instrument with which a woodworker cuts his wood. Hence, if thinking belongs to an individual human being as the action of an intellectual soul that moves him, it follows that the individual is only the instrument through which the action of thinking takes place. But according to Aquinas' account of intellection, thinking takes place without a corporeal instrument.³⁷

The fourth argument presented by Aquinas is somewhat more elaborate than the previous three, for it distinguishes two ways in which the mover-moved model could be understood. In a first way, one could take the intellect to be a part of a whole of which the person - say, Socrates - would be still another part. In this sense, we cannot say that the activity of thinking belongs to Socrates - who, just like the intellect, is a

³⁶ In a paper entitled "A Compound of Two Substances", Eric T. Olson says that any sort of dualism which is not substance-dualism needs to tackle the "problem of the thinking soul" (p. 75), which is precisely the idea that if soul and person are not the same, then there will be in the human being two thinking things, namely the compound of soul and body and the rational soul itself. Olson believes that no analog of the problem arises in substance-dualism, since it does not distinguish between soul and person (p. 77). What I am saying above is that, if Plato really is a substance-dualist, then the objection that intellection becomes for him a transcendent action is not a good one, for the reason that if there are not two distinct entities to begin with, intellection cannot be the type of action that passes from one thing into another. For Olson's paper, see Corcoran, ed., 2001, 73-88.

³⁷ Just like the second argument, this one also presupposes the distinction between self and soul, which is actually rejected by Plato based on what we assume to be his view that the intellectual soul is identical to the human being. Nonetheless, the very idea of an identity between person and soul is questioned by Aquinas when he resorts to that reflexive experience by means of which one becomes aware that it is the same subject that both thinks and senses. Therefore, as I claim later in chapter 7 (subsection 7.1), Aquinas' real objection against substance-dualism on the Platonic model is that it entails a wrong view of sensation.

part of a larger whole - anymore than we say that a hand sees as a result of the eye's seeing.³⁸

In a second way, the intellectual soul would be a part, and the person, Socrates, would be the whole constituted by the intellect and the rest of Socrates, namely his material components. If Socrates is the whole of which the intellect is a part, and if the intellect is joined to Socrates' other parts only as a mover (and not as their form), then the person cannot be unqualifiedly one, but rather a whole whose qualified unity relies on the causal activity of one part over the others. But if Socrates is not unqualifiedly one, neither is he a being in an absolute sense, since, as Aquinas often puts it, 'something is a being according as it is one' (*aliquid est ens, quomodo et unum*).

The second version of the fourth argument is intended to show that if we take the person to be a composite of soul and body, and regard the soul simply as a mover of the body, then the kind of unity that results from such a whole will not be sufficient to account for what Aquinas takes to be the fact that it is one and the same person who both thinks - through her intellect - and senses - through her sensory faculties. One way to present Aquinas' objection is to say that, instead of being a subject that both senses and thinks, the human person, according to this version of the Platonic model, is an aggregate of a thinking subject and a sensing subject.

However, if the Platonic mover-moved model is not properly described by neither of the two versions of Aquinas' fourth argument, but consists in the view that the intellectual soul, instead of being a part of some whole, is itself a whole and therefore a person, then it will not have to face the problem of how the activity of thinking belongs to the person, for the simple reason that person and intellectual soul

³⁸ It is hard to understand why would someone come up with the idea that soul and person are two distinct parts of which some further whole is constituted. If the person is neither the whole nor the soul, what would it be - some material part of the whole, like, say, the heart or the brain? For what reason? Or is it the case that Aquinas is here thinking of the Averroistic model, on the basis of which one may propose the following threefold distinction: first, there is the intellect, which is a separate substance; second, the sensory soul, which inheres in the body; third, there is the body. In this case, the separate intellect, by means of information provided by the sensory soul through the body, would join the sensory soul (which would in some sense be identical to the person) as a part, and constitute a whole with the ensouled body. Accordingly, just like Aquinas has said in his refutation of Averroes, one will not be able to say that that which is responsible for the formation of phantasms - i.e., the sensory soul, which in this case would be the person - thinks, but only that it is thought by the separate intellect, which would be regarded as an *extrinsic* part of the person.

would be identical. Nevertheless, it will not escape the charge of failing to provide support for the unified experience that Aquinas believes we all have of sensing and thinking - assuming, with Aristotle and Aquinas, that sensation requires bodily input.

After rejecting two non-hylomorphic accounts of the union of soul and body, Aquinas concludes that the best way to safeguard the essential unity of the human composite is by means of the Aristotelian notion that the soul is the substantial form of the body. Since the hylomorphic model may lead us to think that every type of soul relates to the body it informs in exactly the same way, Aquinas completes his answer in Q76a1 by pointing to a doctrine of grades of nobility among forms. Aquinas' idea is that different types of form enter into different types of relation with matter: while some forms are completely immersed in matter, others are able to rise above matter by means of operative powers that are not subject to material constraints.³⁹

Before turning to the next section, I would like to see how Aquinas responds to the objections formulated in Q76a1 against the thesis that the intellectual soul is the form of the human body. As mentioned earlier, the first objector claims that the intellectual soul cannot be the form of a body on the basis of the Aristotelian thesis that the intellect is separate. Aquinas thinks that this strategy reveals a confusion between the intellect as a power - that is, as a proximate principle of intellection - and the intellectual soul itself, which, insofar as it accommodates not only the intellectual power but also other capacities, consists in a remote principle of intellection. Hence, Aquinas argues that while the human soul is separate as regards its intellectual power, it is also the form of a body with respect to that which the intellectual power belongs to.⁴⁰

The second and third objections have both claimed that the intellectual soul cannot be the form of the body because of the nature of intellectual cognition. If the intellect is capable of knowing all things, it cannot be united to the body in any possible way, since this union would entail some kind of determination on the part of the intellect. What is more, since the intellect apprehends the forms of the things it

³⁹ In chapter 4, subsections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, I examine in detail Aquinas' theory of the different grades of nobility among substantial forms.

⁴⁰ More on the distinction between the soul as a remote principle of intellection and the intellect as a proximate principle of intellection will be said in chapter 3, subsection 3.2.

knows immaterially and universally, it cannot be tied to the body as its form, because every receptive power receives its information according to its mode of being. Even though the assumptions made by both objections about intellectual cognition are in tune with the Aristotelian-Thomistic viewpoint, what disproves their conclusion is that, just like in the first objection, they confuse the intellect as a power with the intellectual soul as a whole. As Aquinas contends, for the intellect to be able to know all things, and for it to apprehend its objects immaterially and universally, it suffices to say that the intellectual power, and not the soul as the source of distinct powers, is not the actuality of a body.

In order to remove the confusion displayed in the first three objections, Aquinas has to invoke the distinction between the soul as a remote principle of intellection and the intellect as a power of the soul. The fourth objection, being more refined than the first three, anticipates the error of identifying the intellect with the intellectual principle but still claims that the latter is not the proper form of a body. The idea behind the objection is that a power cannot be more abstract than its source. Therefore, if the intellect is separate, then the principle from which the intellectual power derives must also be independent from the body. In other words, the intellectual power cannot possess a perfection which the intellectual soul lacks, insofar as the former originates in the latter.

Aquinas responds to this idea by resorting to his theory of the hierarchy among forms. He says that the conclusion would indeed be true if the intellectual soul were the kind of form which is “immersed in corporeal matter or completely subsumed by it”.⁴¹ Because of its capacity to surpass the limitations imposed by corporeal matter, the intellectual soul is capable of accommodating a power which it does not share with the body.

The fifth objection touches on the subject of our next chapter - Aquinas’ theory of the human soul’s subsistence. The objection holds that whatever subsists cannot be the form of a body, for the reason that to be a form is to be that ‘by which’ (*quo*) something exists. To this Aquinas replies that even though what truly exists is the

⁴¹ Cf. Q76a1ad4: “*Humana anima non est forma in materia corporali immersa, vel ab ea totaliter comprehensa, propter suam perfectionem*”.

composite of soul and body, and that in this sense the soul - as the act of the body - is that by which the human person exists, still it must be said that the human soul - given its subsistent nature - has a different relation to its act of being than other forms.⁴²

The final objection turns to the idea that if the human soul were by its essence the form of the body, it would have to be joined to the body at all times, a conclusion that is at odds with the soul's incorruptibility. Hence, being incorruptible and being the form of the body must be mutually exclusive properties. Aquinas' reply invokes the notion of an aptitude on the part of the soul towards the body. The human soul can be by its essence the form of the body and exist for some time in a disembodied state, so long as it maintains what Aquinas describes as a 'natural inclination for being united to the body' (*inclinacionem naturalem ad corporis unionem*).

Aquinas' replies show that one must not mistake the intellect as an operative power of the soul for the intellectual principle, which only in a remote sense is a cause of intellection, and which relates to the body as its substantial form. With this distinction in hand, Aquinas is able to say that there is no contradiction in claiming that while the intellect is separate and capable of operating without the body, the intellectual soul is the form of a body. Even so, what still needs to be explained is how a soul which is by its essence the form of a body is able to accommodate a power which the body has no share in.

As we started to see in his reply to the fourth objection, the key to a solution lies in a theory of grades of excellence among forms. The concept of form has to be broad enough to make room for different modes in which matter can be informed. Even though Aquinas wants to hold the uniqueness of the human soul, the best way to describe his theory is not by emphasizing the opposition between the intellectual soul and other forms. The different grades of perfection can be grasped all the way from nonliving substantial forms to the human soul, which means that the movement from being totally immersed in matter to immateriality is not abrupt but gradual.

⁴² In chapter 5, I put forward my reading of how Aquinas' general theory of forms makes room for a specific type of form, the human soul, that at once informs the body and subsists. In chapter 6, subsection 6.2, I examine Gyula Klima's attempt to explain the thesis that the human soul is both that 'by which' (*quo*) something exists and that 'which' (*quod*) exists by means of a metaphysically noncommittal treatment of the topic. I use the position I advance in chapter 5 to show that Klima's solution falls short of being a proper account of Aquinas' twofold approach to human souls.

Part 1, Section 2

THE HUMAN SOUL'S INDEPENDENCE FROM THE BODY

Chapter 3

From Immateriality to Subsistence

In the previous section of Part 1, I have examined the first side of Aquinas' twofold account of the human soul, in which it is held that every type of soul - including the rational soul of human beings - is the substantial form of a body. Given Aquinas' non-Platonic understanding of forms, we have seen that it belongs to a soul not only to be the actualizing principle of a potentially living body, but also to inhere in the body which it actualizes. The idea that the soul is essentially the form of a body, and that a form is something that, under normal conditions, exists in a subject, could lead us to think that a soul can never be separated from the body without ceasing to exist.¹

That, however, is not Aquinas' approach. At least, that is not the way he conceives of the *human* soul. That is why we do not talk of a hybrid conception of souls in general, but only of a hybrid account of the human soul in particular. What distinguishes Aquinas' view of the human soul from his approach to nonrational souls is precisely his theory of subsistence, which I begin to examine here in all its complexity.

My plan for section 2 is to investigate what I call Aquinas' 'psychological tripod' - i.e., the three fundamental features that distinguish the human soul from all other types of soul. These features are: immateriality, subsistence and incorruptibility.² It is by means of the tripod that Aquinas will vindicate his twofold conception of the human soul. Again, what I label the twofold conception of the human soul is the view that a human soul is at once the substantial form of a body and, to a certain extent, a

¹ See, for instance, *CDA* II.1: "By 'soul' we understand that through which what has life is alive, and so soul must be understood as something existing in a subject" (n. 220). Also: "Form is united to matter by itself (*per se*), as its actuality; and matter's being united to form is the same as matter's existing in actuality" (n. 234).

² As we will see throughout this chapter, immateriality can be said in two ways, one which is common to every type of form, and another which is exclusive to the human soul. It is only the second type of immateriality that belongs to the psychological tripod.

particular thing (or, as I prefer calling it, a ‘this something’).³ The discussion proposed in chapters 3 and 4 centres around the three necessary attributes of the human soul, their interdependence, as well as their relation to the soul’s definition as the form of the body. As I hope will become clear, it is Aquinas’ goal to establish among the elements of the tripod a kind of logico-ontological dependence, according to which one element serves as the basis for proving the other. In this way, immateriality will entail subsistence, while subsistence will lead to incorruptibility. Even so, according to my reading of Aquinas’ doctrine of the soul, the notion of subsistence functions as the main concept which the other two elements - immateriality and incorruptibility - ultimately rely on.⁴

The first two articles of *ST* 1a Q75 are the ones in which Aquinas formulates the most central tenets of his philosophical anthropology. Each article is responsible for establishing one of the two basic pieces of Aquinas’ hybrid account of the human soul. While Q75a1 proves that the soul is not a body but rather the first actualizing principle of a body, Q75a2 will argue for the human soul’s subsistent status. According to such a view, then, it can be said that while the human soul shares with the less perfect types of substantial form the characteristic of being a form of some matter (*forma materiae*), still, unlike nonrational souls as well as substantial forms of nonliving substances, the human soul is not, precisely speaking, a material form (*forma materialis*) - that is, a form whose being is wholly immersed in, or subsumed by, matter.

In an attempt to explore the paradoxical aspect of the above characterization, some contemporary critics of Aquinas’ twofold account of the human soul have said that, according to Aquinas’ description, the human soul is at once an abstract entity,

³ The expression ‘this something’ translates the Latin *hoc aliquid*, which, in turn, translates the Greek term *tode ti*, which was first introduced by Aristotle to characterize both individual substances and - in a qualified sense - their substantial forms. For Aristotle’s use of the expression, see *Met.*, book VII, chapter 3 (1029a28), where he holds that matter cannot be a substance insofar as the two traits that are thought to belong above all to substances are separability (*to choriston*) and being a ‘this something’ (*to tode ti*).

⁴ As I will later explain, it is my position that, even though Aquinas demonstrates the human soul’s subsistence from its immateriality, such a demonstration is mainly a *factual* proof, insofar as it does not tell us why it is that the soul subsists. Hence, the notion of subsistence remains the most fundamental feature of the soul, and one must find an additional proof by means of which it is established not only *that* the soul subsists but above all *why* it subsists. A demonstration of the reason why the human soul subsists has to rely on the most basic principles of Aquinas’ metaphysics.

insofar as it functions as the configurational state of a parcel of matter, and something concrete, since it is the subject of intellectual activities like thinking and willing. Since something cannot be at the same time a state and a subject, Aquinas must, they say, abandon one of the two elements of his hybrid account.⁵

3.1. The Concept of Subsistence and the Criteria for Substancehood

In order to continue with my investigation of the fundamentals of Aquinas' twofold conception of the human soul - which will ultimately serve as a basis for my analysis of the most relevant contemporary assessments of Aquinas' anthropology in Part 2 - I proceed to an exposition of how Aquinas conceives of the human soul's separability from the body. I begin by studying *ST* 1a Q75a2, where Aquinas develops an argument for the human soul's status as a subsistent thing which is based on what we may call the soul's 'operative immateriality'.

In Q75a2 Aquinas asks whether the human soul - which has been proved in article 1 to be the actualizing principle of a potentially living body - is something subsistent.⁶ The concept of subsistence is first introduced by Aquinas in *ST* 1a Q29, a text whose primary interest is the diversity of the divine persons. In the second article of that question, Aquinas asks if the term 'person' (*persona*) signifies the same thing as 'hypostasis', 'subsistence' (*subsistentia*) and 'essence' (*essentia*).

Aquinas begins his reply by reminding us that the notion of substance (*substantia*) can be taken in two ways: in one sense, it signifies a thing's quiddity (*quidditas rei*); in another, it designates a subject that exists as a particular instance in the genus of substance. According to the former sense, it is named 'essence' (*essentia*), whereas, according to the latter, it is named 'suppositum'. Inasmuch as it designates the suppositum, 'substance' is also referred to by three distinct terms, each of which exploring a different aspect of what it is to be a substance. These terms are: 'thing of nature' (*res naturae*), 'subsistence' (*subsistentia*) and 'hypostasis'.

⁵ The above is a summarized version of Anthony Kenny's criticism of Aquinas' anthropology as found in his *Aquinas on Mind* (1993). In Part 2, chapter 5, I focus on the details of his objection and present my solution to it.

⁶ Cf. *ST* 1a Q75a2: *Utrum anima humana sit aliquid subsistens*.

Given my present interests, the discussion in Q29a2 is relevant not only because it sheds light on what is meant in Q75a2 by the term ‘subsistence’, but also insofar as it sets the criteria for substancehood. Therefore, a thing will be properly called a ‘substance’ if and only if it meets the following conditions: first, it has to be a thing of nature; second, it has to be a hypostasis; third, it has to subsist. As regards the first condition, one must understand that *res naturae* is a technical expression used by Aquinas to pick out things that are subsumed under some common nature, or, to say the same in contemporary idiom, tokens of any natural type. The second condition for substancehood - i.e., being a hypostasis - refers to a subject’s capacity to underlie accidental attributes. Last, being a subsistent thing is a feature that is intended to pick out those entities that are capable of existing by themselves (*per se*) and not in another (*in alio*). According to Aquinas, a person is something that, besides fulfilling all the above requirements, is also of a rational nature.⁷

By taking into consideration what is said about substances and persons in Q29a2 we put ourselves in a better position as to what Aquinas is actually thinking of when he asks in Q75a2 whether the human soul is something subsistent. According to Q29a2, something is said to subsist when it is capable of existing by itself and not only in another. In other words, a subsistent thing is something endowed with independent existence.⁸ Therefore, when Aquinas asks if the human soul is something subsistent what he wants to know is if the human soul - despite being the substantial form of a human body - is also capable of existing independently of the body for whose actualization it is responsible. Given that souls have been generally defined as substantial forms of bodies, and since a substantial form is something that exists in the thing to which it gives absolute being, it would seem that the human soul - with

⁷ Aquinas ends his reply in Q29a2c with the following words: “*Quod autem haec tria nomina significant communiter in toto genere substantiarum, hoc nomen persona significat in genere rationalium substantiarum*” (“What these three names signify in common to the whole genus of substances, the name ‘person’ signifies in the genus of rational substances”). Throughout Q29 Aquinas is working with the Boethian definition of person, according to which a person signifies ‘an individual substance of a rational nature’ (*rationalis naturae individua substantia*).

⁸ A subsistent thing does not have to exist by itself, independently of other things, throughout each and every instant of its existence. All that is required is that it has the capacity to exist by itself, and that such a capacity is actualized at some particular point of its existence.

respect to its mode of existence - is analogous to the snub, which, in Aristotle's famous example, can only exist *in* a nose.⁹

Snubness consists in a concave-like configuration of *the nose*. Therefore it depends upon its subject - the nose - both with respect to its existence, since there can be no concavity in the nose if there is no nose to begin with, and with respect to its definability, given that every mention of 'snub' contains an implicit reference to the nose.¹⁰ Insofar as the soul has been defined as the substantial form of *the body*, it bears at least a partial resemblance to the snub and to everything else that, like the snub, cannot be defined without reference to some material substratum. The soul depends on the body as regards its definition, since our knowledge of souls includes some reference to bodies as potentially living things. Still, when one asks whether the human soul subsists, one wants to know if the soul is rather *wholly* dependent on the body: if, besides being dependent on the body with respect to its knowability, the soul also depends on it as regards its existence. What Q75a2 examines is whether the human soul can be to a certain extent a 'this something' (*hoc aliquid*), which possibility seems to rely on a particular doctrine according to which the notions of definitional independence and existential independence are not mutually implicated.

The objections to Aquinas' thesis in Q75a2 will explore the apparent incompatibility between the concept of subsistence - as presented by Aquinas in Q29a2 - and the general definition of the soul as the substantial form of the body. The main intuition behind what is held in the objections is the following: how can a thing whose very essence consists in endowing a potentially living body with unqualified being exist by itself, independently of that same body? Accordingly, the first objection

⁹ In *Met.* VI.1, Aristotle introduces the notion of snub by saying that, among things defined, some are like snub - the definition of which is bound up with matter, since 'snub' means a concave *nose* - while others are like the concave, the definition of which does not rely on sensible matter. In *CM*, Aquinas gives the following definition of 'concave': "that whose middle curves away from the ends" (book VI, lesson 1, n. 1157). In *Met.* VII.5, Aristotle describes snubness as the kind of attribute which cannot be spoken of apart from the thing of which it is an attribute, namely the nose (1030b30-31).

¹⁰ In the passage from *Met.* VII.5, Aristotle mentions an awkward consequence of trying to define terms which, like 'snub', contain a reference to something else. If snubness is defined as 'concavity in a nose', then whenever one uses the expression 'snub nose' one would actually be saying the same thing twice, that is, 'concave nose nose'. This leads the Philosopher to claim that only things that are included in the category of substance are properly definable. Everything else will be defined 'by addition', that is, by reference to its proper subject - i.e., the term without which it cannot be spoken of (cf. 1031a1-14).

states that the human soul cannot subsist because it is not, properly speaking, a 'this something'. What is a 'this something' is not the soul but the composite of soul and body, so that only the latter can properly be said to subsist. The idea is that being a 'this something' is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for subsistence. In the objection's implied semantics, the terms 'substance', 'this something' and 'subsistent thing' are interchangeable, since they all signify inseparable features of one and the same thing.

Another objection contends that a thing is capable of subsisting if and only if it possesses an operation of its own. Aquinas himself holds the view that operation follows being¹¹, so that the fact that something is capable of operating on its own will be a criterion for a thing's subsistent nature. However, because the objection denies that the soul operates on its own, it will on that account reject the soul's purported subsistence.¹² A third objection also insists on the parity between operation and being, claiming that the soul's subsistence requires its having an operation apart from the body to which it is naturally united. Since, according to the objection, not even intellectual cognition can occur without the body - given that intellectually cognizing (*intelligere*) is something that does not take place without a phantasm, the occurrence of which is dependent on bodily input - the human soul cannot exist on its own, but only in the body.

What is common to the above objections is that they all want to defend - either by means of the notion of being a 'this something', or through an emphasis on a thing's

¹¹ Cf. *ST* 1a Q75a2c: "*Eo modo aliquid operatur, quo est*".

¹² The rejection on the part of the objector of the soul's operating on its own is based on Aristotle's claim in *DA* I.4, according to which "To say that the soul gets angry is as if one were to say that the soul weaves or builds a house. Perhaps it is better not to say that the soul pities, or learns, or thinks, but to say rather that it is the man who does these things with his soul" (408b12-15). In *CDA* I.10, Aquinas advances the following comment on the passage: "For if someone were to say that the soul gets angry, and, in virtue of operations of this sort, is moved, then this is as if someone were to say that the soul itself weaves or builds or plays the harp. For the soul is the cause of these movements: the disposition for building, weaving and playing is in the soul itself, and things of this sort come from the soul. But just as it is better to say that it is the builder who builds, not the craft, even though it is through the craft of building that the builder builds, so perhaps it is better to say that the soul does not feel pity, or learn, or intellectualize, but that a human being does so, through the soul. And he says "perhaps" (*fortassis*), even for intellectual cognition (*intelligere*), because he is speaking under an assumption [i.e., that the soul is moved in virtue of its operations]" (cf. n. 152). I quote from Robert Pasnau's English translation of Aquinas' commentary on the *De Anima*. Aristotle's text is quoted from Hett's translation (Aristotle, 1936).

operative powers - the idea that subsistence, among natural beings, can only pertain to the compound of matter and form. The shared belief here is that parts of substances can neither operate on their own nor exist as particular instances of determinate kinds. Therefore, they cannot exist on their own.

3.2. The Human Soul as the Principle of Intellectual Operation

As usually is the case in Aquinas' writings, he begins his answer to the question of the human soul's subsistence in Q75a2 by stating his final conclusion: "It must be said that the principle of intellectual operation (*principium intellectualis operationis*) - which we call the soul of a human being - is an incorporeal and subsistent principle". To fully comprehend what is at stake at this point of the text, we have to distinguish between two senses of incorporeality and also between two senses in which the soul itself can be approached.

As regards the passage quoted above, Robert Pasnau remarks that, "it is noteworthy that Aquinas casts the reply not in terms of the human soul, nor in terms of the human intellect, but in terms of the *principle of intellectual operation*".¹³ Even so, we still have to realize that Aquinas does think that by stating something with respect to this 'principle of intellectual operation' he is at the same time saying something about the nature of the human soul itself, unless we assume that the conclusion of his *respondeo* has no bearing on the very topic of the article, which would be absurd. According to Pasnau's interpretation of Aquinas' use of the expression 'principle of intellectual operation' in place of 'human soul', what motivates the change is the fact that Aquinas, in Pasnau's words, "wants to beg as few questions as possible", since, up to this point, Aquinas "is not entitled to assume that the intellect is a part of the human soul". Therefore, according to Pasnau, Aquinas' conclusion can only be that the intellectual principle, "whatever it turns out to be, is nonbodily and subsistent".¹⁴

¹³ Cf. Robert Pasnau's translation with commentary of *ST* 1a QQ75-89 (2002a, see Bibliography, 'Primary Sources for Aquinas'), p. 226. The emphasis is the author's.

¹⁴ The quotations above are all taken from Pasnau (2002a), p. 226.

The critical part of Pasnau's interpretation of the text comes to light when he states the following: "If Aquinas could assume that the intellect is just a part of the soul, then he wouldn't need to prove that the intellectual principle is not a body. *For he has already proved in the previous article [Q75a1] that no soul is a body*".¹⁵ In my view, Pasnau misinterprets both what is being proposed in the *corpus* of Q75a2 as well as the transition from Q75a1 - where it is held that souls in general are not bodies but first actualizations of bodies - to Q75a2 - the main thesis of which is that the human soul, though a substantial form of a body, is something subsistent. As I have just suggested, an appropriate understanding of these issues requires a distinction between two senses of being incorporeal, and also between two senses of being a principle of intellectual operation.

Aquinas' main goal in Q75a2 is to show how the human soul is capable of existing on its own, and, as a consequence, of being subsistent. What Aquinas wants to establish is that, even though the human soul does not have specific (or definitional) completeness, insofar as a true definition of the soul will necessarily have to include a reference to the body, it does have existential completeness, which is to say that not only the human composite but the substantial form of the human being as well is what one calls a 'this something'.¹⁶

In his *CDA*, Aquinas explains the conditions that have to be met if something is to be called a 'this something'. The analysis belongs to a context in which Aquinas considers the three senses in which something is a substance: either as matter, or as form, or as the compound of form and matter. Matter is substance because it is potentially a 'this something'; form is substance insofar as it is that because of which something actually is a 'this something'. The form-matter composite, on the other

¹⁵ *Ibidem*. The emphasis in the quotation is mine.

¹⁶ In *ST* 1a Q29a1 ad5, Aquinas writes the following: "The soul is a part of the human species; and so, although it may be separate, still since it retains its nature of unibility (*natura unibilitatis*), it cannot be called an individual substance, which is the hypostasis or first substance, as neither can the hand nor any other part of man. Thus neither the definition nor the name 'person' belongs to it". Even though the quotation has much more material for one to dwell on, all that has to be retained from it at this point is how Aquinas thinks that the human soul, on the one hand, as a part of the human species, is definitionally incomplete, and, on the other hand, insofar as it may exist separately, is existentially complete. Aquinas is therefore going against the first objection of Q75a2, according to which definitional and existential completeness always come as one-piece.

hand, is a ‘this something’ to the extent that it satisfies two conditions (the conjugation of which, as will become clear, is not entirely necessary for a thing to be a ‘this something’): among natural things, only the composite substance is (i) complete as regards its species, and (ii) complete as regards its being.¹⁷

The soul, being of the nature of a substantial form, and being thus incomplete in its species (it is only part of the species of that of which it is the form), is rather that by virtue of which the composite thing is called a ‘this something’. The form, in other words, by bringing the material component to actuality, actualizes the composite itself. Nevertheless, after having characterized the form-matter compound as that which better suits the notion of being a ‘this something’, Aquinas adds the following qualification:

Separate substances, although they are not composed of matter and form, still are each a ‘this something’, since they are actually subsistent and complete in their nature. Now a rational soul can in one respect be called a ‘this something’, inasmuch as it can subsist on its own. Yet, because it does not possess a complete species, but is more part of the species, the soul is not entirely suited to being a ‘this something’.¹⁸

As we have seen above, while the first objection to the thesis of the human soul’s subsistence in Q75a2 states that a man’s soul cannot subsist because it is not a ‘this something’, Aquinas, on his part, defends the idea that, though the soul cannot, strictly speaking, be a ‘this something’ (but only in a qualified and restricted sense), still it is able to exist on its own. Unlike what is contended in the objection, it is not the case that only what is a ‘this something’ in the strict sense is subsistent.

Despite Aquinas’ claim for the human soul’s subsistent nature, there is still a sense in which the soul - in relation to both composite and separate substances - is imperfect, given that, unlike the other two, it does not possess a complete species of

¹⁷ CDA II.1, n. 215: “*Substantia dividitur in materiam et formam et compositum. Materia quidem est, quae secundum se non est hoc aliquid, sed in potentia tantum ut sit hoc aliquid. Forma autem est, secundum quam jam est hoc aliquid in actu. Substantia vero composita est, quae est hoc aliquid. Dicitur enim esse hoc aliquid, id est aliquid demonstratum quod est completum in esse et specie; et hoc convenit soli substantiae compositae in rebus materialibus*”.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*: “*Nam substantiae separatae, quamvis non sint compositae ex materia et forma, sunt tamen hoc aliquid, cum sint subsistentes in actu et completae in natura sua. Anima autem rationalis, quantum ad aliquid potest dici hoc aliquid, secundum hoc quod potest esse per se subsistens. Sed quia non habet speciem completam, sed magis est pars speciei, non omnino convenit ei quod sit hoc aliquid*”.

its own. In other words, it is of the nature of the human soul to be a part.¹⁹ However, what Aquinas wants to emphasize in the passage above is that, unlike matter, which is also a part of the human species, and unlike other substantial forms (some of which are also souls, as, for instance, the souls of brute animals), the human soul is capable of completeness with respect to its being.

Let me now return to my reading of Aquinas' text in opposition to Pasnau's. According to my interpretation, the *corpus* of Q75a2 should be divided into two main sections: one in which Aquinas explores a sense of incorporeality which is common to both the intellective soul and other types of soul (in which part nothing really new is stated in relation to Q75a1), and another, more important section, where Aquinas deals with a sense of incorporeality which is proper to human souls, and which will serve as the basis for his proof of the soul's subsistent nature.²⁰

I want to point out that the distinction between the two senses of incorporeality is intended to disprove Pasnau's claim that, if Aquinas were to assume that the intellect is a power of the soul (something which is demonstrated only in Q77), then he would not need to trouble himself with proving that the soul is incorporeal, given what is accomplished previously in Q75a1. Some scholars, like Pasnau himself, seem to confuse the first sense of incorporeality with the second sense of the term, leading the less attentive reader into thinking that the proof for the human soul's subsistence is based on the first sense in which the soul is immaterial - a sense according to which

¹⁹ The human soul, which is a special type of part of the human composite, can also be regarded as a whole when we consider it as accommodating a number of different operative powers, all of which are said to issue from the soul, being thus parts of the soul. In subsection 3.7, I examine the type of parthood that belongs to the soul in its relation to the individual human being. Evidently, there is no contradiction in speaking of the soul as being both a part and a whole, just like there is no contradiction in saying that a province is, in one sense, a whole, insofar as it gives unity to a number of different cities, and, in another sense, a part, inasmuch as it constitutes, together with several other provinces, a country.

²⁰ Throughout this chapter the terms 'immateriality' and 'incorporeality' will be used interchangeably as synonyms.

not only every soul (rational and nonrational), but also every form (substantial and accidental), is said to be immaterial.²¹

The other distinction that I regard as central to a proper understanding of Aquinas' text involves two senses in which the expression 'principle of intellectual operation' (*principium intellectualis operationis*) can be spoken of. Despite the fact that Aquinas - as Pasnau holds - does not want to presuppose his whole logic of essence and powers, which will only begin to come to light in Q77, still, when he refers to the soul as a 'principle of intellectual operation' he is to some extent anticipating that very logic, even if the exact terms that compose his final theory are not explicitly present in Q75a2.

The intellect is a principle of a certain operation of the soul. Now every operation, as a second actuality, presupposes a first actuality, which is nothing but a potentiality for that same operation. This potentiality, or this principle of operation, can itself be divided according to two levels of being in potency. Hence, when we talk of a principle of operation what we have in mind can be either a *remote* or a *proximate* principle of operation. Whereas the remote principle is only a first potentiality with respect to the operation, the proximate principle is a second potentiality (or first actuality, depending exclusively on the point of view we adopt,

²¹ In *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, Pasnau writes the following with respect to an alleged compatibility between Aquinas' doctrine of the soul and nonreductive materialist accounts of human nature: "Its [the human soul's] incorporeality alone is not inconsistent with materialism, because all forms are incorporeal" (cf. Pasnau, 2002b, p. 71). According to him, the incompatibility with materialism will only arise when one conjoins incorporeality and subsistence. However, one must realize that the incorporeality which is common to all forms is not the kind of incorporeality that most appropriately characterizes the human soul - the type of incorporeality which Aquinas uses to demonstrate the human soul's incorruptibility. As Father McCabe puts it, "St. Thomas did not think that the soul is immortal because it is immaterial. He held that the soul of Fido is immaterial and that the number 2 is immaterial. His argument is not simply that the soul is not material but that it subsists immaterially inasmuch as it operates immaterially" (in Kenny, ed., 1969, 297-306), p. 302. What distinguishes Fr. McCabe's approach to immateriality from Pasnau's is the idea - which I think is correct - that there is a sense in which immateriality does not have to be *joined* to subsistence, insofar as the former, when properly ascribed to the human soul, is *constituted* by the latter. With respect to the incompatibility between Aquinas' hybrid account of the soul and nonreductive materialism in philosophy of mind, see Part 2, chapter 7, subsection 7.2.

that is, that of potentiality or of actuality), being, therefore, closer to the operation itself.²²

Once we apply the general metaphysical distinction between a remote and a proximate principle of operation to the terms involved in Q75a2, the result is that while the human soul, taken as a whole, is a remote principle of intellection, the intellect itself, as a power of the soul or first actuality, is the proximate principle of man's intellectual operation. All that is presupposed here is (i) that the concepts of soul and intellect are somehow related, and (ii) that the metaphysical distinction between the two levels of potentiality (and of actuality) can be used to clarify the relation between the human soul and the intellect. Note that the psychological theory concerning the soul and its powers does not come into play, despite the fact that it will be indeed required, as Pasnau claims, for a *complete* understanding of the relation between soul and intellect.

As I have said above, Pasnau thinks it is remarkable that Aquinas uses the expression 'principle of intellectual operation' to state his position in Q75a2, a text whose subject matter is supposed to be the soul as a whole. He explains Aquinas'

²² The distinction between a remote and a proximate principle of intellection is based on the Aristotelian doctrine of grades of actuality and potentiality, which is endorsed by Aquinas. In *DA* II.1, Aristotle writes that "matter is potentiality, form actuality; and actuality is of two kinds, one as, e.g. knowledge, the other as, e.g. reflecting" (412a10-11). At 412a23-26, Aristotle elaborates on the example with an analogy, saying that having the knowledge is like being asleep, while the action of reflecting on a problem is like being awake. Later on, in II.5 Aristotle claims that there are different kinds of both potentiality and actuality (cf. 417a22). He uses as an example the case of a knower, and the different senses according to which we can say that a man is a knower. We can speak of a man as a knower (i) either in the sense that he belongs to a class of things that are capable of acquiring knowledge; (ii) or in the sense of someone who has acquired some specific kind of knowledge, say, of grammar; (iii) or also in the sense of someone who is reflecting on or making use of that piece of knowledge he happens to possess. According to Aristotle, both senses (i) and (ii) refer to potential knowers, though relative to different uses of potentiality. While sense (i) consists in a first potentiality, sense (ii) refers to what is traditionally characterized as a second potentiality (or a first actuality). The man who is a knower according to sense (iii) - i.e., the man who is reflecting on something - is a knower in the most proper sense of the term, and the type of actuality possessed by him is characterized as an instance of second actuality. With respect to the ambivalence of sense (ii), i.e. the fact that it can be described both as a second potentiality and as a first actuality, one has to keep in mind that insofar as it is, say, "more actual" than sense (i), it can be referred to as a first actuality, whereas inasmuch as it is "more potential" than sense (iii), it can be referred to as a second potentiality. When Aristotle, and Aquinas after him, use the notion of first actuality to define the soul, saying that it is the first actuality of a potentially living body, what they mean is that the soul's presence in a body produces in the subject a capacity to engage in the various vital activities that characterize the different types of ensouled beings; a capacity which is more actual than the pure potentiality of uninformed matter but also more potential than the actuality of a soul's specific operative powers.

move in terms of a deflationary account according to which Aquinas' main goal is to beg as few questions as possible. Contrary to what Pasnau holds, my suggestion is that we can already see in the opening sentence of Q75a2 an anticipation of Aquinas' theory of the soul's powers, insofar as it is implicitly held that both the soul as a whole and the intellect as a power of the soul can be considered, according to different senses of the expression, 'principles' of intellection: the former as a remote principle, the latter as a proximate one.

By reason of this relation between soul and intellect, which we arrive at simply by distinguishing between grades of potentiality, Aquinas maintains that the proximate principle of intellection is that "which we call the soul of a human being" (*quod dicimus animam hominis*). In this phrase, the use of the verb *dicimus* indicates neither an unfounded popular attitude nor, as Pasnau defends, a viewpoint which Aquinas is merely allowing his reader to adopt. Rather, it reveals Aquinas' own position. Given that the intellect stands to the soul as its most developed capacity, it is acceptable to call the soul of a human being an intellect, insofar as we tend to name a whole by reference to its uppermost part. Although Aquinas is not presupposing in its completeness his theory of the relation between the intellect and the rational soul, he is at the very least pointing towards it.

3.3. Two Senses of Immateriality and the Intellect's Absolute Universality

I have mentioned how the *corpus* of Q75a2 should be divided into two main sections if we want to disallow the charge of useless repetition in the transition from Q75a1 to Q75a2. This segmentation of the text corresponds to the distinction between two senses of immateriality, and the way these are ascribed to the human soul. In its first section, Aquinas considers the kind of incorporeality that pertains to the soul as a whole (and which is thus extendable to the soul's noblest part, i.e., the proximate principle of intellectual operation). In its second and most relevant section, Aquinas examines the sort of incorporeality which is exclusive to the human intellect and based on which the other less developed operative principles of the soul are called 'material'.

Aquinas' answer to the question of the human soul's subsistence begins with the attribution to the intellect of a kind of incorporeality which it shares with the whole soul - that is, with the human soul insofar as it accommodates the principles of other operations that are also vital to human life, like the nutritive and the sensitive capacities. According to this first sense, is incorporeal everything which is not made up of corporeal elements. Now, because such a notion of incorporeality extends to the proximate principle of intellection as well as to the remote principle of intellection, it is correct to say that this first notion of incorporeality is applicable, for instance, to the operative principle of sight, which - though the actuality of a corporeal organ - is not itself, *qua actuality*, corporeal. This notion of a *shared incorporeality* is in line with what is previously stated in Q75a1 - where Aquinas claims that no actuality is a body, with the sole difference that what is there said of the soul as a whole is here distributed to the soul's different operative principles, be they intellectual or not.

Since Q75a1 deals with souls in general, while Q75a2 focuses specifically on the case of the human soul, the argument advanced by Aquinas in the latter article will not resemble the one presented in the former. While the first explores the idea that no body can be the actuality of another body - otherwise we would have to accept an infinite regress in the series of explanatory principles of life - the second, because it is interested in the distinguishing mark of human souls (i.e., their rational nature), will consider an intentional aspect of our intellects and from there move on to a conclusion regarding their metaphysical constitution.²³

Even though Q75a1 proves that no soul is a body, Aquinas feels the need to provide in Q75a2 a supplementary argument for the thesis that the intellectual soul of human beings is incorporeal in that first, shared sense of incorporeality (i.e., of not being composed of corporeal elements) insofar as this additional argument - from

²³ In a paper entitled "Aquinas and the Content Fallacy" (1998), Pasnau regards the argument for the immateriality of the intellect as flawed, inasmuch as it contains what the author calls "a content fallacy", which is to conflate two distinct types of facts: (i) facts about the content of our thoughts, and (ii) facts about the form our thoughts take in our minds. The fallacious reasoning would then consist in a move from the intentional - i.e., the aboutness of a thought - to the intrinsic qualities of the object in question.

intentionality to constitution - will also play a central role in the second section of the text, where Aquinas deals with the *exclusive* sense of incorporeality.

Aquinas' argument for the shared incorporeality of the intellect - that is, for the thesis that the intellect, just like the other parts of the soul, is not made up of any corporeal elements - is the following. Through intellect, says Aquinas, men can know the natures of all corporeal things. Therefore, the intellect cannot be itself corporeal. The auxiliary premise is immediately provided: when a cognizant agent has the capacity to know more than one type of thing (say, things of the types *x* and *y*), he cannot possess any of these things (i.e., neither *xs* nor *ys*) in his internal constitution. And the reason for that is that, for Aquinas, the presence of something in a cognitive power - be it intellectual or sensory - according to natural being (*esse naturale*) blocks the presence in it of other things according to intentional being (*esse intentionale*).²⁴

In other words, our intellects are in potentiality with respect to the reception of likenesses (or versions: *similitudines*) of the substantial forms of all corporeal things that exist outside our own souls. Now, the intrinsic immateriality of the intellect is derived from the universality of its apprehensive capacity on the basis of the idea that the presence of a thing's form according to natural being in the inner constitution of the cognitive power impedes the manifestation of other forms of things in the same cognitive power according to intentional being by limiting the knower to the apprehension of that very thing out of which his cognitive power is made. Given that the intellectual power of human beings is from the start assumed to be potentially unlimited in its scope, it has to be immaterially constituted.²⁵

²⁴ The above is a paraphrase of the following passage: "*Homo per intellectum cognoscere potest naturas omnium corporum. Quod autem potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura: quia illud quod inesset ei naturaliter, impediret cognitionem aliorum*" (cf. *ST* 1a Q75a2c).

²⁵ At this point someone could ask, "If cognition is about reception of *forms* why is it that the intellect, insofar as it is capable of knowing all things, has to be immaterial?". To this we should reply that, while the main argument consists in that the possession of a form according to natural being prevents the presence of other forms according to intentional being, the idea behind this is that the occurrence of a form according to natural being presupposes the existence of some matter whose role is to be naturally informed by that very form. Since the intellect - because of the presupposed universality of its scope - cannot possess any form (of some corporeal thing) according to natural being, it follows that it has no matter in its metaphysical structure, given that there can be no uninformed matter.

Despite the fact that the argument begins with a precise reference to the intellect and its unlimited apprehensive capacity, the examples Aquinas provides to elucidate his point corroborate the idea that the conclusion is indeed applicable to the pre-intellective principles of operation as well. In an attempt to present some factual evidence for the thesis that the determination imposed by some form according to *esse naturale* restricts the reach of a subject's cognitive capacities according to *esse intentionale*, Aquinas says this: "A sick man's tongue, infected with a jaundiced and bitter humour, is insensible to anything sweet, and everything seems bitter to it".²⁶ Again, the idea is that insofar as his tongue is informed by the accidental form of bitterness according to natural being, every bit of information that is acquired through it by the faculty of taste will provide the subject with the same intentional content, namely bitterness.

In a parallel text from *CDA*, Aquinas mentions the example of sight: if the eye is to be able to see all colours the pupil cannot itself be coloured. If the pupil were naturally informed by some colour, it would not be able to apprehend other colours: it would see everything through that determinate colour.²⁷ In other words, the occurrence in the eye of a colour according to the kind of being it has outside the eye - say, in the wall - would prevent the eye from apprehending other colours, not according to the being they have outside the cognitive organ, but according to the being they acquire once in the cognitive recipient.²⁸

The conclusion of this first section of Aquinas' answer in *Q75a2* is that the intellective power is not a body - it is not something composed of corporeal elements. As we have seen, this result is not exclusive to the intellective power: it can be

²⁶ Cf. *ST* 1a *Q75a2 corpus*.

²⁷ Cf. *CDA* III.7, nn. 677-680.

²⁸ When arguing for the incorporeality of the intellect in *CDA* III.7, Aquinas formulates his point in somewhat different terms: "For everything that is in potentiality to something and is receptive of it lacks (*caret*) that to which it is in potentiality and of which it is receptive. For instance, the pupil of the eye, which is in potentiality to colours and receptive of them, lacks all colour. Now our intellect cognizes intelligible things in such a way that it is in potentiality to them and capable of being altered by them (*susceptivus eorum*), like a sense is in relation to its objects. Hence the intellect lacks all those things that it is naturally suited to cognize. Hence, since our intellect is naturally suited to have intellective cognition of all sensible and corporeal things, it must lack all corporeal nature, just as the sense of sight lacks all colour because it is capable of cognizing colour" (cf. n. 680).

extended to the soul as a whole, inasmuch as none of its vital powers is itself a body.²⁹ The pre-intellective powers of the soul are actualities of the body - some of them, like sight or hearing, are the actuality of a determinate part of the body, while others, like touch, are spread throughout the whole body. In this sense, insofar as the other operative principles of the soul relate to the body as its actuality, the kind of incorporeality which is attributed to the intellective soul in the first section of Q75a2 is the very incorporeality which is ascribed to the soul as a whole in Q75a1 - i.e., the incorporeality which is common to every actuality - even if the argument advanced by Aquinas ends up proving more than just that. Incorporeality understood as 'not being made of corporeal elements' is an attribute of souls as such, despite the fact that the argument of Q75a2 - which is based on the intellect's capacity to know the natures of all corporeal things - focuses on the type of soul whose utmost operative principle is the intellect.

I will add that this kind of shared incorporeality in and of itself entails a certain unlimitedness: sight, for example, is able to apprehend *all* colours. Still, there is also a certain restriction involved: sight (at least immediately) can *only* see colours; its apprehension of other things (like shapes) is always mediated by its perception of colours. This restrictiveness of the senses takes us to the second sense of incorporeality, the one which, according to Aquinas, is an exclusive property of intellects.

In addition to being incorporeal in the sense of lacking corporeal elements in its constitution, the intellect is also incorporeal insofar as its operation - intellection - is not performed by a corporeal organ. Accordingly, the exclusive sense of immateriality means *operational autonomy* - i.e., the operative principle's capacity to perform its proper function independently of any corporeal organ. What is being ruled out by

²⁹ That is why I call it the 'shared sense of immateriality', since it is applicable to the soul as a whole, being therefore distributed among the soul's various vital powers, which, precisely as actualities, cannot be of a corporeal nature. Accordingly, when I mention the incorporeality of some sensory operative principle I am not thereby referring to the sense organ itself - like the tongue, in the case of the sense of taste - which is obviously corporeal, but to that principle which is responsible for bringing the sense organ into a state of actuality. Hence, the sensory operative principle is not corporeal in the way the sense organ is, but neither is it incorporeal in the double sense in which the intellective principle, thanks to the unrestrictedness of its apprehensive capacity, is incorporeal.

Aquinas is not only that the intellect might *be* a body, but that it might *use* a body while performing its distinctive operation.

The reason offered by Aquinas to account for the intellectual principle's double incorporeality has to do with the qualified unlimitedness of the sense powers, and the fact that the type of universality that characterizes the intellect's apprehensive capacity is, by contrast, absolute universality. The point Aquinas wants to make is that the organ of sensation imposes a limitation of its own, insofar as it determines the scope of its actualizing principle - the sense power - to some particular aspect of things. Sight, for instance, by being performed by an organ - the eye - has its apprehensive capacity limited to the reception of accidental forms of colours. And the same is true of all the other sensory operative principles, each one being restricted to the apprehension of some accidental feature of nature - odours, textures, tastes, sounds, etc. What guarantees the absolute universality of our intellectual activity - its capacity to know the quiddities of all corporeal things - is precisely its double incorporeality: the fact that it is neither composed of corporeal elements nor the actuality of some corporeal organ.

The shift from the shared notion of incorporeality to the exclusive notion of incorporeality takes place in the text immediately after Aquinas' claim that, "Every body has some determinate nature; therefore it is impossible for the intellectual principle to be a body". Since the type of limitation imposed by corporeality extends not only to the case in which something is materially composed, but also when something performs its proper function by means of a corporeal instrument, Aquinas goes on to add the following remark:

It is likewise impossible for it [the intellectual principle] to intellectually cognize through a corporeal organ, since the determinate nature of that corporeal organ would prevent the cognition of all corporeal things; as when a certain determinate colour not only in the pupil of the eye, but even in a glass vase, makes the liquid in the vase seem to be of that same colour.³⁰

³⁰ Cf. Q75a2c: "*Et similiter impossibile est quod intelligat per organum corporeum: quia etiam natura determinata illius organi corporei prohiberet cognitionem omnium corporum; sicut si aliquis determinatus color sit non solum in pupilla, sed etiam in vase vitreo, liquor infusus eiusdem coloris videtur*".

Besides being composed of no corporeal elements, the intellective principle of the human soul is accompanied in its distinctive operation by no corporeal organ. Hence, even though the soul of which the intellect is a part is defined as the actuality of a body, the intellect is not itself the actuality of some part of that same body. That is how Aquinas conceives of Aristotle's suggestion in the *De Anima* of a separation of the intellect: to be separated, in the intellect's case, consists in possessing an operation in which the body plays no instrumental role.³¹

The transition from shared incorporeality to exclusive incorporeality amounts to a progression from qualified unlimitedness to absolute universality.³² Since in both cases limitation comes from matter (either from being materially composed or from using a material instrument), the argument which exclusive incorporeality is based on

³¹ Aristotle's suggestion appears first in *DA* II.1 when the Philosopher writes the following: "It is clear from this that the soul is inseparable from its body, or at any rate that certain parts of it are - if it has parts; for the actuality of some of them is the actuality of the parts themselves. Yet some may be separable because they are not the actualities of any body at all" (413a4-6). Aristotle will then specify what part of the soul he is referring to in II.2: "In the case of the mind and the thinking power nothing is yet clear; it seems to be a distinct kind of soul, and it alone admits of being separated, as the immortal from the perishable" (413b24-29). The main disanalogies between the soul's sensory powers and its intellective power, as well as the consequent assertion of the intellect's separateness, will be advanced by Aristotle in *DA* III.4.

³² Absolute universality comprises both *horizontal* and *vertical* universality: while the former consists in the unlimitedness of the apprehensive power's scope, the latter amounts to the universality of the very object of apprehension. The absolute universality of the intellect is characterized both by its capacity to know all things (horizontal) and by its capacity to know natures (vertical). The unrestrictedness which results from the apprehension of quiddities can be described by the fact that once we grasp a thing's nature our knowledge of it does not concern an aspect of the thing but precisely what the thing is. Since the substantial form provides a thing with absolute being, by apprehending a thing's quiddity (in which the substantial form is contained along with undesignated matter) the intellect acquires absolute knowledge of the thing to which the quiddity pertains. It would be then nonsensical to claim that the intellect is also limited given that it can only know quiddities. Aquinas does not present a fine distinction between horizontal and vertical universality in the argument of Q75a2, an evidence of which is the fact that while in the beginning of the text he describes the intellect's universality by claiming that, "by means of the intellect man can know the natures of all corporeal things (*naturas omnium corporium*)", later on he explains the unlimitedness of the intellect's apprehensive capacity by saying that, were the intellect the actuality of a corporeal organ, "the determinate nature of that corporeal organ would prevent the cognition of all corporeal things (*omnium corporum*)". David Ruel Foster, in "Aquinas on the Immateriality of the Intellect" (1991), claims that the argument from universality to immateriality can only work when we think in terms of vertical universality, given that, according to him, it is only with respect to this sort of universality that the intellect is properly distinguished from the pre-intellective powers of the soul. On Foster's reading of Aquinas' epistemology, the capacity to know all corporeal things is not a prerogative of the intellect, since the internal senses can also know all corporeal things, though only in a limited sense of *knowing* - i.e., one which does not include vertical universality.

is the same as that from which shared incorporeality is obtained. Accordingly, we can take the notion of exclusive incorporeality to be a corollary of the notion of shared incorporeality. In other words, given the strength ascribed by Aquinas to the premises of his argument it is not enough to say that the intellectual principle - in order to have absolute universality - is not some material structure. One must also say that it cannot be some form *using* a material structure to carry out its proper function. With the aim of highlighting the role of matter in restricting the reach of a cognitive principle's apprehensive capacity, I propose the following reconstruction of Aquinas' argument:

(P1) Through intellect one is capable of apprehending the natures of all corporeal things. (P2) Matter in general limits form and whatever is under that form - namely, its different powers. (P3) In the particular case of a cognitive faculty, the limitative effect of matter on it consists in constraining the range of the cognitive principle's intentionality - i.e., that about which it has some sort of knowledge. (C) Therefore the intellect - insofar as it possesses an absolutely unrestricted apprehensive capacity - cannot contain any matter, either with respect to its internal constitution or with respect to its instrumentality.³³

Evidently, the most controversial premise in my account of Aquinas' argument is (P3), and the difficulty in understanding it is very well portrayed by Pasnau's notion of a 'content fallacy': how can one jump from a premise about *esse intentionale* to a conclusion about *esse reale*? In other words, how is it that the presence (or absence)

³³ The sketch above does not take into consideration Foster's objection (see previous footnote), and focuses on what seems to be Aquinas' goal in Q75a2, namely, to move from universality of scope to complete immateriality. Even though vertical universality does belong to intellect as its distinguishing mark (after all, quiddities of material objects are the proper object of the intellect, cf. Q84a7c), Aquinas believes that horizontal universality is sufficient to establish the intellect's immateriality. It is based on horizontal universality that he builds his proof both in Q75a2 and in CDA III.7 (see note 28). Foster's reasoning consists in that, if the intellect has a capacity to apprehend the quiddities of all things, and if our knowledge of quiddities is abstracted from information gathered by the senses, one must concede that the internal senses (in which sensible forms of extramental things are processed and preserved prior to the abstractive operation of the intellect) also know all corporeal things, though not in the same sense that the intellect knows them. An evidence against Foster's argument is that Aquinas never presents the internal senses in that way, but rather focuses on their proper functions. Second, the flaw in Foster's reasoning consists in fallaciously moving from the intellect's *potentiality* to know all corporeal things to the internal sense's *actually* possessing the (sensible) forms of all corporeal things, which is absurd. The potentiality of the human intellect to know all things is never fully realized, and one of the reasons for this is the fact that it depends in its earthly life on information provided by the senses (external and internal), which are both horizontally and vertically limited.

of matter in a cognizant subject can affect the intentionality of the subject's thoughts?³⁴ Aquinas seems to think that the very notion of matter, with its application to a subject whose nature is to be cognizant, is sufficient to account for the move either from intentionality to constitution or from constitution to intentionality.

Matter is a metaphysical element of reality the nature of which consists in restraining in one way or another that which it constitutes. The nature of a cognitive faculty is to represent external reality and to generate some sort of cognition of it by means of its representations. Therefore, when matter becomes a constitutive part of a cognitive faculty it is only natural - thinks Aquinas - that the limitative role of matter is performed upon the cognitive faculty's capacity to represent (i.e., its ability to take in the likenesses of extramental things). For that reason, Aquinas will claim that, "the character of cognition is inversely correlated with the character of materiality".³⁵

In a similar vein, Aquinas holds that the nature of a noncognizant being is more contracted than the nature of a cognizant being inasmuch as the latter is capable of receiving other forms in addition to its own form, while the former possesses only its own form. The explanation proposed by Aquinas to this is that the contraction of form has its origin in matter, and that the more immaterial a form is the more it approaches a kind of infinity. Once matter is viewed as the limiting element of reality, whereas forms as such are supposed to contain an intrinsic inclination towards infinity, one can conclude that, "the mode of immateriality accords with the mode of cognition".³⁶

³⁴ For a little bit on Pasnau on content fallacy see footnote 23.

³⁵ Cf. *ST* 1a Q84a2c: "*Ratio cognitionis ex opposito se habet ad rationem materialitatis*".

³⁶ Cf. *ST* 1a Q14a1c: "*Cognoscentia a non cognoscentibus in hoc distinguuntur, quia non cognoscentia nihil habent nisi formam suam tantum; sed cognoscens natum est habere formam etiam res alterius... Unde manifestum est quod natura rei non cognoscentis est magis coarcta et limitata: natura autem rerum cognoscentium habet maiorem amplitudinem et extensionem...Coarctatio autem formae est per materiam... [F]ormae secundum quod sunt magis immateriales, secundum hoc magis accedunt ad quandam infinitatem, Patet igitur quod immaterialitas alicuius rei est ratio quod sit cognoscitiva; et secundum modum immaterialitatis est modus cognitionis*". In Q7a1c, Aquinas distinguishes the perfection of formal infinity from the imperfection of material infinity: "Matter is in a way made finite by form, and form by matter. Matter is made finite by form, inasmuch as matter, prior to the reception of its form, is in potentiality to many forms; but on receiving a form it is terminated by that form. Form is made finite by matter, inasmuch as form, considered in itself, is common to many; but when received in matter, form is determined to a particular thing. Now matter is perfected by the form by which it is made finite; hence 'infinite' as attributed to matter has the character of something imperfect... Form, on the other hand, is not made perfect by matter, but rather its amplitude is contracted by matter; therefore 'infinite', regarded on the part of form not determined by matter, has the character of a perfection".

In Q75a2, Aquinas argues for the complete immateriality of the intellectual principle based on its horizontal universality. Pasnau points to a possible flaw in Aquinas' reasoning, claiming that it is not evident how one can jump from a premise regarding the intellect's intentional content to a conclusion regarding the intellect's intrinsic constitution. In order to throw some light on Aquinas' argument, I have presented (P3) as a particular application of a more general premise (P2), in which matter's limitative role is introduced. The charge of introducing a fallacious premise will not be dissolved if we assume - wrongly, I believe - that immateriality is in and of itself responsible for a subject's cognitive nature.³⁷ Some things are immaterial in an obvious sense (abstract entities, for instance, like the number 4), without being - for that particular reason - in any sense cognizant. The important thing to note is that the limitative influence of matter is a function of the nature of its receiver. Hence, when matter is received in a cognitive subject, its limiting effect will act upon the subject's ability to take in the likenesses of extramental things, given that its nature as a cognizer consists in cognizing by means of likenesses (either sensible or intelligible).

3.4. On Proving Subsistence in Two Ways

In Q75a2, Aquinas derives the subsistent character of the human soul from the distinctiveness of its intellectual operation. Insofar as the human intellect cannot perform its proper operation by means of a corporeal organ, it is said to possess an operation of its own. Now, since a thing operates according to its mode of being, only that which possesses being on its own is capable of operating on its own. Hence, given that the human soul does operate on its own when it engages in acts of intellectual cognition, it must be said that the human soul, insofar as it is a mind or an

³⁷ When Aquinas writes that, "the immateriality of a thing is the reason why it is cognitive" (cf. Q14a1c; for the Latin text see footnote 36), one is led to think that immateriality in itself is what distinguishes a cognizant being from a noncognizant thing. I am not sure if Aquinas has an answer to why some beings are able to cognize while others are not, other than the obvious one that some things possess cognitive souls (some purely sensible, others intellectual as well) while others do not. Hence, it is only when we assume the cognitive nature of a subject that we are allowed to say that immateriality is the reason why it is cognitive, in the sense that the more immaterial it is the less limited it will be in its capacity to take in other forms.

intellect (*mens vel intellectus*), does possess a being of its own and is something subsistent.³⁸

Aquinas' argument for subsistence can be presented in the following manner: (P1) Whatever has an operation of its own subsists. (P2) The human soul does possess an operation of its own. (C) Therefore the human soul subsists. In order to account for (P1), Aquinas advances an auxiliary premise: (P_{AUX}) A thing operates in the same manner that it exists.³⁹

Both (P1) and (P_{AUX}) make clear that Aquinas uses the distinctive character of the human soul's intellective operation as a channel through which one gains access to the human soul's mode of being. In other words, the argument moves from the way human souls *behave* to the way they *exist*. However, it is because the soul has a certain type of *being* that it is capable of *acting* in some particular way: operation follows being, and not the other way around.

Based on the way Aquinas conceives of the relation between being and operation, one can raise a question regarding the type of proof that takes place in Q75a2. Making use of the medieval technical jargon, one can say that the proof for subsistence offered by Aquinas constitutes what is called a demonstration *quia* (that is, 'of the fact'), rather than a demonstration *propter quid* (i.e., 'of the reason why').⁴⁰ Hence, the type of knowledge that is produced when one proves the subsistence of the human soul on the basis of its capacity to operate on its own is only factual, not causal

³⁸ In the subsequent article (Q75a3), which deals with the ontological status of the souls of brute animals, Aquinas uses the same line of thought so as to reach the opposite conclusion - namely, that animal souls do not subsist insofar as they do not possess any operation of their own. In the *corpus* of the article, Aquinas explains that an answer to the question regarding the status of animal souls is a function of the way one understands sensory activity. Hence, those who claim that sensory activity belongs exclusively to the soul will have to admit that animal souls are subsistent as well, while those who believe with Aristotle that sensation occurs with some modification to the body (and that every operation of the sensitive soul belongs to the composite of soul and body) will claim that animal souls can only exist in another (*in alio*), but never by themselves (*per se*).

³⁹ *Eo modo aliquid operatur, quo est.*

⁴⁰ Aquinas addresses the distinction between demonstrations *quia* and *propter quid* in CPA I.23. In his English translation of Aquinas' commentary, Richard Berquist translates the Latin expressions *demonstratio propter quid* and *demonstratio quia* as 'why-demonstration' and 'fact-demonstration', respectively. The main difference between a why-demonstration and a fact-demonstration is that while the former proceeds from cause to effect, reproducing thus the order of nature, the latter proceeds from effect to cause. Both proceed from what is better known, only that while why-demonstrations proceed from what is so in an unqualified sense, fact-demonstrations proceed from what is better known to us.

knowledge. By means of a fact-demonstration of the soul's subsistence we get to know *that* human souls subsist rather than *why* they subsist.

The human soul's subsistence is a necessary condition for the soul's possessing an operation of its own. According to the Aristotelian conception of scientific knowledge, a why-demonstration is a faithful reproduction in the realm of discourse of what takes place at the level of nature: its premises represent that which in nature is the cause of what is represented in the conclusion.⁴¹ Aquinas' proof of subsistence constitutes only a fact-demonstration since in it the soul's subsistence is derived from a premise the priority of which is only in the order of knowledge, not in the order of being. The possession of an operation of its own is not a genuine cause of subsistence, but a criterion for recognizing subsistence in things.

According to the Aristotelian notion of how scientific knowledge is generated, it is fair to say that fact-demonstrations are supposed to trigger why-demonstrations. Knowledge is built on observation, and observation informs us about that which is better known and more evident to us.⁴² Once we get to know *that* something is the case by means of a fact-demonstration, we begin searching for the reason why that of which we have factual knowledge is the case.

Aquinas proves the factual truth regarding the human soul's subsistence based on the exclusive immateriality of its intellectual operation, which is actually a consequence of its subsistent character. He never advances a why-demonstration of the human soul's subsistence. At least he never presents it as a why-demonstration of subsistence. Hence, one has to gather it from information provided elsewhere. When one asks about the reason why the human soul subsists, one is actually interested in knowing what is it in the metaphysical constitution of the human soul that makes it different from other types of souls and substantial forms. To be sure, the fact that the intellect is capable of operating independently of the body of which the soul as a

⁴¹ In *PA* I.2, Aristotle defines a why-demonstration in terms of its premises, saying that it is the kind of demonstration whose premises are "true, first and immediate, more known than, prior to, and causes of the conclusion" (71b20-23). Given that in a why-demonstration the premises are the causes of the conclusion, its premises are more known than, and prior to, the conclusion not in relation to us and according to the order of knowing, but rather absolutely and according to the order of being.

⁴² "I call prior and more known to us what is nearer to the senses, whereas things that are further from the senses are prior and more known in an unqualified way" (cf. *PA* I.2, 72a3-5).

whole is the substantial form already sets the human soul apart from other types of soul and other substantial forms. However, its distinctive operative capacity is only a consequence of its subsistent nature (i.e., of the fact that it has being by itself and not in another). The question becomes whether there is some more fundamental metaphysical truth that could account for the human soul's possession of being by itself, and that could ultimately tell us *why* the human soul subsists.⁴³

A full account of the human soul's subsistence - i.e., a why-demonstration of its possession of being by itself and not in another - is only fully achieved when Aquinas presents his doctrine of the human soul's incorruptibility. In my view, therefore, an explanation of the human soul's incorruptible nature will count at the same time as a why-demonstration of its subsistence.

Souls in general have been defined as substantial forms of bodies. Now human souls are more precisely distinguished by what I have called the 'psychological tripod': the set of properties that comprises immateriality, subsistence and incorruptibility. As I have already suggested, these three main properties of the human soul are all interconnected: immateriality leads to subsistence (in the way that the observation of an effect leads to the positing of its cause), while subsistence finds its full explanation when the soul's incorruptible nature is properly accounted for. As we will see in chapters 4 and 5, Aquinas' allegiance to the psychological tripod involves a concept of substantial form that, notwithstanding its origin in Aristotelian metaphysics, goes well beyond what is explicitly held by the Stagirite with respect to the nature of forms.

Before embarking on our discussion of Aquinas' approach to the notion of form as such (and its relation to the doctrine of a gradation of being), as well as of the last element of the psychological tripod (i.e., incorruptibility), I still have to explore the consequences of the doctrine of subsistence to the ontological status of the human soul.

⁴³ Joseph Owens explores this topic in at least two of his papers: "Soul as Agent in Aquinas" (1974) and "Aquinas on the Inseparability of Soul from Existence" (1987). In the 1974 paper, Owens defends the idea that the Aristotelian notion of soul - as presented in the *De Anima* - is itself open to two different approaches, one in terms of form, the other in terms of Aquinas' own notion of being (*esse*). According to Owens, it is the "existential approach that dominates the metaphysical thinking of Aquinas" that functions as the basis upon which a why-demonstration of the human soul's distinctive status is built (cf. p. 41 and pp. 63-64).

3.5. The Human Soul as a Subsistent Part of Man

In this subsection, I begin to examine the ontological status of the human soul mainly in light of Aquinas' replies to the objections to the thesis of the human soul's subsistence in Q75a2. I focus on how Aquinas contends that the notion of 'this something' applies to the human soul without entailing that the soul is a full-blown substance.⁴⁴

The notion of 'this something' (*hoc aliquid*) plays an important role both in Aristotle's theory of substance and in Aquinas' discussion of the human soul's hybrid nature. Aristotle employs the notion of 'this something' as a criterion against which a thing's aptitude for being a substance is measured. It is then according to the notion of 'this something' that the three regular candidates for being a substance - matter, form and the composite - have their suitability for the position assessed.⁴⁵ Since the notion of 'this something' occupies a prominent position in Aristotle's discussion on the nature of substance, and given the natural association between the concepts of substancehood and subsistence, it is not surprising that Aquinas has to face an objection in which the interdependence between being subsistent and being a 'this something' is explored.

According to Aquinas, an objector to the thesis of the human soul's status as a subsistent thing may hold that the soul can only have being in another, never by itself, since subsistence belongs exclusively to what is a 'this something', and being a 'this

⁴⁴ I have already presented a brief and preparatory analysis of the ontological status of the human soul when discussing Aquinas' main goal in Q75a2 (see subsection 3.2). There, the text I use to explain Aquinas' account is *CDA* II.1, n. 215, which deals with the conditions a thing has to fulfill in order to be a 'this something'.

⁴⁵ For the use of the concept of 'this something' in its relation to substancehood in Aristotle, see *DA* II.1, 412a6-11 (the passage which *CDA* II.1, n. 215 comments on), and *Met.* VII.3, 1029a20-33. In the passage from *Met.*, Aristotle rejects the substantiality of matter exclusively on the grounds that matter cannot by itself be a 'this something', so that the whole discussion of book VII from then on will centre on form's suitability for being a substance. However, in contrast to *Cat.*, chapter 5, where Aristotle says that the primary meaning of 'substance' is that which is neither said of a subject nor is in a subject (cf. 2a13-15), throughout *Met.* VII, *ousia* does not mean the individual substance but the 'substance-of' the individual thing. Accordingly, the only way in which a form can be a 'this something' for Aristotle is as that *by which* the composite is a 'this something'. Aquinas, on the other hand, in the particular case of the human soul (which is nevertheless a substantial form), envisages a different sense in which the rational soul is to be considered a 'this something': a sense that does not depend on the very substantiality of the matter-form compound.

something' - among natural things - is a privilege of hylomorphic compounds. The idea behind the objection is that subsistence, substancehood and 'this somethingness' are all interchangeable attributes: it is not possible for a thing to have one of them and fail to have the remaining two.

In his reply to this objection, Aquinas adopts the strategy of distinguishing two senses of being a 'this something': a strict sense in which the substancehood of its bearer is implied, and a broad sense in which subsistence does not entail substancehood. Aquinas therefore rejects the objection by asserting that not every subsistent thing is a substance. In this sense, his ontology will necessarily be richer than his objector's, insofar as it will involve the idea of particulars (i.e, 'this somethings') that are not substances. Given the importance of Aquinas' reply, I quote it in its entirety:

This something can be taken in two ways: first, for anything subsistent; second, for that which is both subsistent and complete in the nature of some species. The first way excludes the inherence of an accident and material forms. The second also excludes the imperfection of a part. Hence, a hand can be called *this something* in the first way, but not in the second. Therefore, since the human soul is a part of the human species, it can be called *this something* in the first way, as something subsistent, but not in the second way. In the latter way only what is composed of soul and body can be called *this something*.⁴⁶

The first, broad sense of 'this something' is tantamount to being subsistent - that is, to having being in and of itself. When taken in this way, the term is intended to establish a contrast with the dependent status of those things whose being is brought about only in another. As instances of ontologically dependent entities, Aquinas mentions the case of accidental forms, whose being consists in inhering in a substance, as well as of those substantial forms the being of which is completely subsumed under matter.

⁴⁶ Cf. ST 1a Q75a2 ad1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod hoc aliquid potest accipi dupliciter: uno modo, pro quocumque subsistente: alio modo, pro subsistente completo in natura alicuius speciei. Primo modo, excludit inhaerentiam accidentis et formae materialis: secundo modo, excludit etiam imperfectionem partis. Unde manus posset dici hoc aliquid primo modo, sed non secundo modo. Sic igitur, cum anima humana sit pars speciei humanae, potest dici hoc aliquid primo modo, quasi subsistens, sed non secundo modo: sic enim compositum ex anima et corpore dicitur hoc aliquid".

The second, strict sense of ‘this something’ reduces the scope of the expression by advancing an additional condition: not only must the thing possess being by itself in order to be a ‘this something’, it also has to be complete as regards its species. Given its stricter application, when taken in its second sense the expression *this something* is supposed to rule out not only accidental forms and nonsubsistent substantial forms, but also that which despite possessing being by itself is not what Aquinas calls a ‘thing of nature’ (*res naturae*).⁴⁷ Not being a thing of nature is the type of imperfection that, according to Aquinas, characterizes all those things - subsistent or not - that share the ontological status of a part.

Based on the two senses of ‘this something’ presented in Q75a2 ad1, I think it is appropriate to say that Aquinas is suggesting a tripartite division of sublunar reality into (i) full-blown composite substances, (ii) subsistent parts of composite substances, and (iii) nonsubsistent parts of composite substances.⁴⁸ Now, among natural things, forms are always parts of substances. Yet the concept of form as such is undetermined with respect to subsistence or nonsubsistence, given that there are both subsistent and nonsubsistent forms. According to Aquinas, the human soul consists in a subsistent substantial form, which is to say that the human soul is a subsistent part of man.

What distinguishes Aquinas’ approach to the concept of ‘this-somethingness’ from that developed in the objection is that the latter seems to think that existential completeness - i.e., the capacity to have being in and of itself - can only obtain when accompanied by specific completeness - i.e., the capacity to underlie some natural kind. Hence, if we follow the objection, every subsistent thing is ipso facto a thing of nature. In the ontology presupposed by the objection there is no room for subsistent parts: something is either a substance or a nonsubsistent part of some substance.

⁴⁷ In *ST* 1a Q29a2, when discussing the Boethian concept of personhood, Aquinas advances the conditions a thing has to meet in order to be a substance. One of the conditions states that to be a substance a thing has to be a ‘thing of nature’, which means that it has to underlie some natural kind, “as this particular man is a human natural thing” (*sicut hic homo est res naturae humanae*, cf. Q29a2c). As regards the criteria for substancehood in Q29, see subsection 3.1.

⁴⁸ The issue regarding the sort of ontology that obtains from Aquinas’ hybrid account of the soul will reappear in chapter 6, subsection 6.1, when I discuss a reading of Aquinas’ theory of soul that contends that the human soul is, for Aquinas, a unusual sort of substance. The consequences of this ontology to the formulation of a Thomistic account of the soul-body relation will be explored in chapter 7, subsection 7.3, when I introduce the notion of ‘part-dualism’.

Aquinas, on the other hand, thinks that the two types of completeness - specific and existential - are really separable, in the sense that existential completeness (and *only* existential completeness) can take place without specific completeness.⁴⁹ It is this very separability that leads Aquinas to come up with two senses in which a thing is to be called a 'this something': one which is exclusive to substances, another which extends to subsistent parts of substances. According to Aquinas, it is only in the broader sense in which a subsistent part is said to be a 'this something' that the human soul is a 'this something'.⁵⁰

Whatever is a 'this something' in the strict sense of the term is ipso facto a full-fledged substance. The human soul, by contrast, insofar as it possesses an imperfection which obtains from its being a part of a substance, cannot be itself a substance. In *ST* 1a Q29a2, Aquinas presents the criteria according to which something is a substance. There, as we have seen above in subsection 3.1, it is held that in order for a thing to be a substance, it has to fulfill three necessary conditions: first, it has to subsist; second, it has to be a hypostasis; third, it has to be a thing of

⁴⁹ There cannot be specific completeness without existential completeness, which means that substancehood is a sufficient condition for subsistence, although not (in Aquinas' system) a necessary one.

⁵⁰ It is very important to note that Aquinas' broader sense of being a *hoc aliquid* is not equivalent to the Aristotelian characterization of form as a *tode ti*. While Aristotle's characterization encompasses all substantial forms, Aquinas' notion is exclusive to human souls. Aquinas' idea in Q75a2ad1 is that, insofar as there are some parts of substances that are able to subsist, there must be some nonsubstantial entities to which the notion of 'this something' is ascribed. This same position is defended in Aquinas' *CDA* II.1, n. 215, where he holds that, "A rational soul can in one respect be called a 'this something', inasmuch as it can subsist on its own. Yet because it does not have a complete species, but is more part of a species, the soul is not entirely suited to being a 'this something'". One must consider that the above remark is made in a context where Aquinas is commenting on the following passage of Aristotle's text: "We say that substance is one genus among existent things. Included in this, first, is matter, which in itself is not a 'this something'; there is next the shape or form in virtue of which there is said to be a 'this something'; third, there is the compound of the two. Now matter is potentiality, whereas form is actuality" (*DA* II.1, 412a6-10). It is clear then that Aquinas' remark is an addition to the text, and that it reflects his own doctrine and not a mere interpretation of Aristotle's text. When Aristotle, in the *Metaphysics*, explicitly calls the form a *tode ti* (see, for instance, V.8, 1017b23-26, and VII.3, 1029a27-33), Aquinas explains such an attribution by saying that form is that by which something is; or that it is that which causes a thing to be actual (see *CM* V.10, n. 904). When commenting on *Met.* VII.3, Aquinas says that, "Now even though form is not separable nor a 'this something', it nevertheless becomes an actual being by means of the composite itself; and therefore in this way it can be both separable and a 'this something'" (cf. *CM* VII.2, 1293). This suggests that Aquinas himself is aware that his conception of the human soul's being a 'this something' is not entailed by (though he wants to say it is at least compatible with) Aristotle's characterization of form as a *tode ti*.

nature.⁵¹ What Aquinas wants to hold is that, even though the human soul is a subsistent thing (and most likely also a hypostasis), it is not a thing of nature.

With respect to the first condition, as I have stressed in subsection 3.4, one comes to know that the soul subsists by virtue of the fact that it has an operation of its own. Since operation follows being, and given that Q75a2 argues for the soul's having an activity of its own, the human soul is said to have being by itself, and not only in another (namely, the body). Hence, the human soul does subsist.

In addition to being subsistent, a substance must be a hypostasis, which consists in a thing's capacity to underlie accidental properties. Even though there are passages that might lead one to think that the soul cannot be a hypostasis, given Aquinas' emphasis on the connection between being a hypostasis and having a material constitution⁵², there is still good evidence for the view that the soul, though immaterial, is a hypostasis. That the soul is indeed conceived by Aquinas as underlying accidents is strongly suggested by the fact that he describes the different operative powers of the soul - the vegetative, the sensitive, and the intellective - as proper and per se accidents that flow (*fluant*) from the soul's very essence.⁵³

The third condition a thing has to meet in order to be a substance is being a thing of nature. According to Aquinas, this consists in underlying some common

⁵¹ One has to bear in mind that Q29a2 distinguishes two senses of substance, one which signifies the essence of a thing, another which signifies the subsistent subject that exists in the genus of substance. While the latter refers to the Aristotelian notion of primary substance as it is presented in *Cat.*, ch. 5 (i.e., that which is neither said of a subject nor is in a subject), the former expresses the notion advanced by Aristotle throughout *Met.*, VII (i.e., of substance as the 'substance-of' an individual substance). So when I say that according to Aquinas the soul is not a substance, what I have in mind is the second of the two senses presented in Q29a2, and it is to this sense only that the three conditions mentioned above apply.

⁵² On the link between being a hypostasis and being material, see for instance *ST* 1a Q29a2ad5, where Aquinas states that, "The individual composed of matter and form underlies the accidents by reason of its materiality". That does not mean though that only material beings are hypostases, but rather that among material things it is materiality that explains their capacity to underlie accidents. Hence, supposing that there is an element that stands to the soul as matter to what is material, that element will be regarded as that from which the soul's capacity for being a hypostasis originates.

⁵³ For Aquinas' characterization of the soul's powers as proper accidents, see Q77a1ad5 and Q77a6c. In the first text Aquinas defines a proper accident as a feature of the thing that is not part of its essence but is caused by the essence of the thing. For Aquinas, a *proprium* is the kind of attribute that falls midway between essence and accident, hence it would be interesting to know whether Aquinas accepts that the soul may have, in addition to proper accidents, accidents of a regular kind (i.e., that do not emanate from the thing's essence). If not, then the soul would be a hypostasis of a different type than material beings, since it would only underlie proper accidents.

nature, as, for instance, “this man is a human natural thing” (cf. Q29a2c). A full-fledged substance, in other words, is a token of some natural type. The point Aquinas repeatedly makes is that ‘soul’ - unlike ‘man’ - does not designate a natural kind, since it only refers to a part of a species, i.e., human nature. Hence being a soul does not amount to being a token of some type, but only - awkward as it may seem - to being a token of a part of a type. It is human beings that have a species of their own. Human souls denote parts of species, and, therefore, are not truly substances.⁵⁴ Since Aquinas ends Q29a2 by saying that, “What these three names [i.e., subsistence, hypostasis and thing of nature] signify in common to the whole genus of substance, the name ‘person’ signifies in the genus of rational substances”, one has to conclude that what functions as criteria for substancehood are also criteria for personhood. Hence, the human soul, by the very fact that it is not a substance, is not a person either.⁵⁵

After having shown that human souls are not substances, since they are not *by themselves* subsumed under any natural kind, we have to inquire into the type of subsistent part the soul is. This is a particularly important task given the frequent use Aquinas makes of a comparison between the human soul and a hand when discussing the ontological status of human souls.⁵⁶ What now has to be determined is the real import of the claim that the human soul is a subsistent part of human persons. One may ask if the human soul is subsistent to exactly the same extent that a hand is said to

⁵⁴ The idea that not every token is a token of some type, but that some tokens are tokens of parts of types translates the view that not every subsistent thing is a substance, which, in turn, results from the doctrine that existential completeness need not be accompanied by specific completeness. In the next chapter I hope to explain how Aquinas is able to account for the split between the two sorts of completeness.

⁵⁵ In *ST* 1a Aquinas denies that the human soul is identical to the human person in at least two places: Q29a1ad5, “The soul is a part of the human species...Thus, neither the definition nor the name ‘person’ belongs to it”; and Q75a4ad2, “Hence a hand or a foot is not called a hypostasis or a person; nor is the soul alone so called, since it is a part of the human species”. A parallel text can be found, for instance, in *QDSC*, article 2, where Aquinas states the following: “Now the soul, although it is incorruptible, is nevertheless in no other genus than the body because, since it is a part of human nature, to be in a genus or in a species, or to be a person or hypostasis, is not characteristic of the soul, but of the composite” (cf. ad16; I quote from the English translation by Mary C. FitzPatrick). More on the relation between soul and person will be said in chapter 7, subsections 7.1, 7.3 and 7.4.

⁵⁶ The example of the hand is mentioned in relation to the human soul’s subsistence in at least four places in *ST* 1a: Q29a1ad5; Q75a2ad1 and ad2; and Q75a4ad2. The fact that the analogy with the hand never appears in the *corpus* of Aquinas’ own answers, but always in the replies to the objections, may say something about why the analogy is first conceived. It may well be that its role is simply to correct some common misinterpretation of the doctrine of the soul’s subsistence, and not to actually introduce any positive thesis regarding the soul or other parts of the human being.

subsist. If the answer were positive, as some believe it to be, the consequences of holding that the human soul subsists would not be as significant as one might have thought.

3.6. A Taxonomy of Parthood: The Soul as a Metaphysical Part

In what follows, I propose an analysis of the parthood of the human soul that is compatible with the view that the type of subsistence that belongs to the soul is not identical to the one ascribed to bodily parts of the human compound, despite the repeated use of the analogy between the soul's subsistent status and the hand's. Accordingly, when Aquinas divides the notion of 'this something' into two senses, claiming that in the first (and broader) of these senses - the one which rules out both the inherence of accidental forms and substantial forms that are completely subsumed under matter - the human soul as well as the hand can be called 'this somethings', he is not thereby reducing the soul's aptness to have being by itself to the minimal kind of subsistence that can be ascribed to hands, feet, eyes, and any other integral part of the individual human being.

Let me begin by mentioning that Aquinas' mereology, like all medieval accounts of parts and wholes, is not free of ontological commitments. In this sense, Aquinas' systematic account of parts and wholes derives from his desire to understand the ultimate nature of material things. One can say then that despite the fact that for Aquinas building up a mereological theory is not a basic desideratum, one still finds within his hylomorphic approach to material reality some valuable, well-organized remarks regarding the way in which different sorts of parts and wholes interact.⁵⁷

The world around us is basically composed of two sorts of wholes, natural substances and artifacts. While in the case of a natural substance its completeness

⁵⁷ Most of what I say with respect to Aquinas' taxonomy of parthood relies on his *CM* book VII, lessons 9-10, which comment on Aristotle's *Met.* VII.10, an extremely difficult chapter whose primary concern is with the relation between parts of definitions and things defined (i.e., wholes), as well as with the parts which 'substance' consists of. Given that both 'part' (*to meros*) and 'substance' (*ousia*) are said in many ways, the chapter is far from straightforward. The most relevant texts concerning the different senses of parts and wholes in *ST* 1a are Q8a2 ad3 and Q76a8. For recent accounts of medieval mereology, see Henry (1991), who devotes a chapter to Aquinas, and Arlig (2011).

comes from the action of a substantial form that actualizes its material parts and thus turns them into one determinate thing (i.e., a 'thing of nature'), artifacts are constituted by the action of an accidental form, given that, unlike natural substances, in the case of artifacts the material parts already have actual being prior to the composition of the artifact itself.

My interest here will be restricted to the case of natural wholes, i.e., substances composed of a given parcel of matter and a substantial form. From the very notion of a composite substance two different kinds of wholes are acquired, insofar as a form-matter composite can be considered in two distinct ways, either as a universal or as a singular thing. Therefore our classification of parts will vary according to the type of composite whole we have in mind - i.e., the universal, like man and animal, or the singular, like Socrates and Callias.⁵⁸

When we take the composite whole in its universality its parts are usually called 'parts of the species' (*partes speciei*)⁵⁹, where 'species' stands not only for the thing's formal principle, but for the essence of the thing, which is, according to Aquinas, ultimately composed of form and matter: not of this form and this matter, but of form and matter taken universally. On the other hand, when we consider the composite substance in its singularity its parts are called 'parts of the individual' (*partes individui*), in which case the substance is said to be composed of this substantial form and this quantitatively determined parcel of matter.⁶⁰

In addition to the parts of the species and the parts of the individual, the composite can also be considered with respect to the 'parts of the definition' (*partes definitionis*). Even though only the parts of the species - and not of the individual - are

⁵⁸ Cf. *CM VII*, lesson 10, n. 1490: "*Sciendum tamen, quod hoc compositum, quod est animal vel homo, potest dupliciter sumi: vel sicut universale, vel sicut singulare. Sicut universale quidem, sicut homo et animal. Sicut singulare, ut Socrates et Callias*".

⁵⁹ The parts of the species are sometimes referred to as 'parts of the essence' (*partes essentiae*). See, for instance, *ST 1a Q8a2 ad3*, where Aquinas proposes a twofold division of 'part' into parts of the essence and quantitative parts (*partes quantitativas*), the latter also being sometimes called 'integral parts' (*partes integrales*) or 'bodily parts' (*partes corporis*).

⁶⁰ Cf. *CM VII.10*, n. 1491: "*Sic igitur patet quod materia est pars speciei. Speciem autem hic intelligimus non formam tantum, sed quod quid erat esse... Est enim materia pars compositi. Compositum autem est tam universale quam singulare*". See also n. 1492: "*Materia communiter sumpta est pars speciei, haec autem materia determinata est pars individui*".

mentioned in the definition, the parts of the definition are not exactly identical to the parts of the species, but are rather derived from them.⁶¹

The categorization of parts finds its fundamental division in the distinction between parts of the individual and parts of the species, which results from the two ways in which the composite substance can be considered - either as a universal or as a particular thing. The parts of the species belong to the universal composite, as well as the parts of the definition, since the latter are derived from the former by means of a mental operation, and are thus also called 'parts of the intelligible expression' (*partes rationis*), which means that they result from an intellectual effort to talk about those very parts that belong to the thing in its universal characterization.

Now the parts of the individual - those that belong to the substance in its singularity - can be further divided into two kinds. First there are the 'integral parts' (*partes integrales*) of the individual composite. These are the parts the sum of which constitutes the substantial whole as we experience it in reality. The integral parts of the individual substance are both logically (*secundum rationem*) and ontologically (*secundum rem*) posterior to the whole of which they are the parts. They are logically posterior, since one cannot know what the part is without referring to the whole (e.g., one cannot know what a hand is without knowing what a human being is). They are also ontologically posterior, given that the part cannot exist without the whole, whereas the whole can exist without the part (e.g., a man can exist without a hand, but a hand cannot exist without the man of which it is the hand).⁶²

The integral parts of the composite can also be referred to as 'bodily parts' (*partes corporis*), so long as we do not take these bodily parts to be purely

⁶¹ Cf. *CM VII*, lesson 9, 1463: "*Sed dicendum est, quod partes definitionis significant partes rei, in quantum a partibus rei sumuntur partes definitionis; non ita quod partes definitionis sint partes rei*". In the quotation, the expression *partes rei* stands for the parts of (the essence of) the thing. An evidence that the latter are not identical to the parts of the definition is that while the parts of the definition are predicated of the thing defined - as in 'man is rational' - the parts of the essence cannot be predicated of the thing of which they are the essence: we cannot for instance significantly say 'man is form'.

⁶² In *CM VII*, lesson 10, Aquinas speaks of some integral parts that, though not ontologically prior to the whole, in the sense of being capable of existing apart from it, are at least simultaneous with the whole, since "Just as the parts themselves cannot exist without the whole animal, neither can the entire animal exist without them. And parts of this kind are the principal parts of the body, in which "form" - that is, the soul - first exists, namely, the heart or the brain" (cf. 1489).

material parts (*partes materiales*), which, according to Aquinas, are the parts into which every compound is corrupted.⁶³ Material parts are responsible for the elemental constitution of a composite substance, and, unlike integral parts, they do not include in their notion a reference to the substantial form of the whole, that is, the soul. Hence, the whole of which they are the parts is the unensouled body (i.e., the dead body), or at least the live body when considered in abstraction from its life-giving principle.

The integral (or bodily) parts, on the other hand, are properly characterized by reference to the soul, so that just like the actually existing body as a whole contains in its definition a reference to the soul, in a similar fashion each integral part of the body includes in its definition a reference to the part (or power) of the soul which is responsible for the actualization of that bodily part.⁶⁴ Therefore the integral parts of a substance are parts of the ensouled body, so that each integral part is itself a compound of an undetached parcel of matter and a part of the soul.

According to what has been said so far, the composite substance in its singularity - i.e., as this ensouled body - is composed of integral parts, which are both logically and ontologically posterior to the substantial whole. These integral parts of the composite substance, just like the whole of which they are the parts, are themselves composed of a material and a formal element. In addition to this sort of

⁶³ Cf. *CM VII*, lesson 9: “*Quaecumque significant aliquid compositum ex materia et forma, ut solum aut aereus circulus, hujusmodi corrumpuntur in partes materiales*” (cf. 1479). The material parts, which are not to be identified with the bodily (or integral) parts of the composite, are not “purely material” in the sense of being uninformed, given that there is no actually existent uninformed matter, but only in the sense that their definition does not rely on the substantial form of whole live body. After the destruction of the composite substance, the material parts are made actual by their own substantial forms, which, during their presence in the substance, were completely subsumed under the substantial form of the whole, namely, the soul. In this sense, material parts - those into which the composite is corrupted - seem to be both logically and ontologically independent from the whole.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, lesson 10: “*Si aliquis bene definiat cujuscumque animalis partem, non potest eam bene definire nisi per propriam operationem. Sicut si dicatur quod oculus est pars animalis per quam videt. Ipsa autem operatio partium non existit sine sensu vel motu vel allis operationibus partium animae. Et sic oportet quod definiens aliquam partem corporis, utatur anima*” (cf. 1485, the emphasis is mine). According to Aquinas, then, no integral part of an animal - like a hand, an eye, or a foot - can be defined without a reference to the soul, which will ultimately account for the operation by which that bodily part is characterized.

part, when regarded as a singular thing, the substantial whole will also be said to consist of what can be called its ‘metaphysical parts’.⁶⁵

The integral parts of the composite substance, as we have seen, are either posterior to the whole of which they are the parts, or, as is the case with some special parts of the live body, like the heart and the brain (which, according to Aquinas, are primary receivers of the actuality transmitted by the soul), simultaneous with the whole, inasmuch as the whole cannot persist if those parts are not preserved. Metaphysical parts, on the other hand, are said to be logically prior to the whole which they constitute, given that the very definition of the whole contains an indispensable reference to these parts.

Another feature that separates metaphysical parts from integral parts is that the former are necessary parts, in the sense that the whole cannot subsist without them, while the latter are contingent, given that the whole can continue to exist even with the loss of several of its integral parts. Even though Aquinas does concede that some integral parts are necessary for the preservation of the whole (an animal cannot subsist without a heart or a brain), the very explanation of their being simultaneous with the whole is set in terms of a dependence of these special integral parts upon the whole’s main metaphysical part, namely the soul. Hence, if some integral parts are necessary

⁶⁵ Even though the expression ‘metaphysical part’ is not itself present in Aquinas’ texts, it does have a recent history in Aquinas scholarship. What is more, its definition is founded on what Aquinas says about the kind of parthood that is proper to souls, so that by incorporating it into the exegesis of Aquinas’ work one is better able to give a fitting account of how he conceives of the relation between soul and person. In her book *Aquinas*, Eleonore Stump writes that, “Hands and souls are parts of substances, although they represent different sorts of parts. A hand is an integral part, a matter-form composite which contributes to the quantity - the spatial extension - of the whole substance of which it is a part. A soul, on the other hand, is not itself a matter-form composite, and the spatial extension of a whole human being does not derive from the immaterial soul itself. *A soul is thus not an integral part, but a metaphysical part*” (Stump, 2003, p. 42, my emphasis). Despite the fact that Stump distinguishes the two sorts of parts, she does not provide a positive characterization of the notion of a metaphysical part, but limits herself to saying that, unlike integral parts, a metaphysical part is neither a matter-form composite nor something that contributes to the quantitative aspect of a composite substance. Another scholar who makes use of the concept of metaphysical parts is Robert Pasnau. He justifies the use of the concept in the following manner: “But suppose we could show that something about a substance changes independently of its integral parts, or endures after all its integral parts have ceased to exist, or simply cannot be explained in terms of its integral parts. Then we would have reason to suspect there are constituents of substances that are not any of its integral parts. These are what I will call the *metaphysical parts* of a substance” (Pasnau, 2011, p. 7). According to Pasnau’s use of it, the term is supposed to include not only essential parts, “but also accidental forms and perhaps other accidental, metaphysical entities (if there be others)” (*ibidem*, footnote 6).

for the existence of the whole, this must only be the case because these parts are, in relation to whole, primary receivers of the actuality that the soul as a first principle of life endows the whole with.

That the metaphysical parts of a substance are not reducible to either its integral parts or to the parts of its species is evident from the following: just like integral parts, metaphysical parts belong to the individual; but unlike integral parts, metaphysical parts are not themselves matter-form composites, and hence do not have any impact on the individual thing's spatial extension. In the manner of the parts of the species, metaphysical parts are responsible for the determination of the thing's essential being; but contrary to the parts of the species, metaphysical parts do not belong to the individual composite in its universal characterization: they belong to the individual as such. Therefore, metaphysical parts stand to the individual composite in the same way that the parts of the species stand to the universal composite.

3.7. Metaphysical Parts and the Definition of the Individual as Such

It is an Aristotelian thesis that a definition belongs primarily not to the individual as such but to the individual in its universal characterization - i.e., to the individual insofar as it is subsumed under some natural kind. In this sense, given that a definition is the logical counterpart of the thing's essence, it is an Aristotelian idea that the essence does not reveal the individual in its individuality, but only those features that are common to all members of the species, and without which a thing would cease to exist. Hence, commenting on Aristotle's *Met.* VII.10, Aquinas writes that "there will be a definition, which is the intelligible expression of the essence, only of that which is the same as its own essence. Now things of this kind are universal and not singular".⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Cf. *CM VII*, lesson 10, n. 1493. Aquinas' text is commenting on *Met.* VII.10, 1035b31-35: "A part may be a part of the species (i.e. the essence), or of the compound of form and matter, or of matter itself. But only the parts of the species are parts of the definition, and the definition is of the universal". In *Met.* VII. 4, Aristotle is even more straightforward when he writes that, "There is an essence only of those things whose formula (*logos*) is a definition (*horismos*). Now we have a definition (...) where there is a formula of something primary; and primary things are those which do not involve one thing's being said of another. *Nothing then which is not a species of a genus will have an essence*" (1030a6-12, the emphasis is mine).

On the one hand, it is true that Aquinas generally accepts the Aristotelian doctrine that essences belong primarily to individual substances only to the extent that they are subsumed under a common nature, and not as individuals, so that by grasping a thing's essence one comes to know only those attributes of the thing that feature in the account of its species. On the other hand, there seems to be some space in Aquinas for a less rigorous characterization of essences, according to which they can be ascribed to individuals as such, yielding, therefore, knowledge of the individual *in its individuality*.

In chapter 2 of *DEE*, Aquinas addresses the question of how essence is found in composite substances.⁶⁷ After contending that the definition of natural substances includes not only form but also matter, Aquinas explains that the matter which appears in a definition is not exactly the matter which is responsible for the individuation of material substances. While the individuating matter is 'designated matter' (*materia signata*) - i.e., matter under determined dimensions; that which can be pointed to, as in this portion of matter - the matter that figures in a definition is 'undesignated matter' (*materia non signata*). With respect to the former, Aquinas writes that, "This kind of matter [designated matter] is not part of the definition of man as man, but it would enter into the definition of Socrates, if Socrates could be defined".⁶⁸

The opposition between the definition of man as man and the definition of Socrates consists in the distinction between the individual as a member of some species and the individual as such. Based on the quotation, it would seem that only the former is genuinely definable. However, just some lines below, Aquinas writes the following: "It is clear, therefore, that the difference between the essence of Socrates and the essence of man lies solely in what is designated and not designated".⁶⁹ If

⁶⁷ The division of chapters follows the Roland-Gosselin 1948 edition of *DEE*. My quotations are drawn from Armand Maurer's translation (1968, second revised edition). Though the product of Aquinas' early career - between 1252 and 1256, according to Torrell (1996) - this short treatise is of special value given that, besides his commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, this is Aquinas' only work whose interest is mainly metaphysical and not theological.

⁶⁸ "*Haec autem materia in diffinitione hominis, in quantum est homo, non ponitur, sed poneretur in diffinitione Socratis, si Socrates diffinitionem haberet*".

⁶⁹ "*Sic ergo patet quod essentia hominis et essentia Socratis non differunt nisi secundum signatum et non signatum*".

there is a sense in which one can speak of the essence of Socrates as Socrates, and not just as a member of the human species - a sense, ultimately, in which Socrates' essence is not identical to Plato's - then what the first quotation must mean is that, though there is no definition of Socrates in a primary sense (given that definitions are properly of species), there is still a less precise (but by no means spurious) sense in which individuals as such can be defined.

The idea that there may be a definition (and therefore an essence) of the individual as such is repeated in Aquinas' *CBT*.⁷⁰ In question 5, article 3, Aquinas distinguishes two modes of abstraction: of form from matter, and of a whole from its parts.⁷¹ According to Aquinas, we cannot abstract a whole from just any of its parts. There are parts upon which the being of the whole depends, and these are the parts from which a whole cannot be abstracted insofar as they are necessary for fully understanding the whole's nature. Parts of this first sort are called 'parts of the species'. Now there are also parts on which the essential nature of the whole does not depend, and these are called 'parts of matter': parts the loss of which keeps the nature of the whole intact, even though its physical extension is altered. Aquinas elucidates the distinction between essential and accidental parts by focusing on the case of human nature:

It is an essential characteristic of man that there be found in him a rational soul and a body composed of the four elements. So man cannot be understood without these parts and they must be included in his definition; so they are parts of his species and form. But finger, foot, and hand, and other parts of this kind are outside the definition of man; and thus the essential nature of man does not depend on them and he can be understood without them. For whether or not he has feet, as long as he is constituted of a rational

⁷⁰ Aquinas' *CBT* comprises a short, literal commentary on Boethius' text as well as a series of six questions divided into several articles, in which Aquinas advances his own views on various issues that are addressed in Boethius' text, ranging from the limits of human knowledge to the division of theoretical sciences. It is considered by most scholars that Boethius' work is simply the occasion for Aquinas' development of his own insights on philosophy, so that the opusculum should be taken less as an exegetical work than as an original contribution to the topics touched upon by the Roman philosopher. Though also an early work, the *CBT* was composed when Aquinas was already a master of theology, during his first period of teaching in Paris, in the years 1257-58, or at the beginning of 1259. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use Armand Maurer's translation of qq. 5-6 (1986, fourth revised edition).

⁷¹ Given my present interests, I consider only the second type of abstraction, of a whole from its parts.

soul and a body composed of the elements in the proper mixture required by this sort of form, he will be a man. These parts are called parts of matter: they are not included in the definition of the whole, but rather the converse is true.⁷²

After accounting for the distinction between parts of the species and parts of matter - which, as we have seen, later in *CM VII.10* is presented in terms of a contrast between the specific parts of the universal composite and the integral parts of the singular composite - Aquinas, similarly to what has been said in *DEE*, makes room for a third kind of part in addition to the parts of the species and the parts of matter. Accordingly, Aquinas speaks of *this* soul and *this* body as determinate (*signatae*) parts of man which, though not included in the definition of man, are nonetheless essential to this particular man. Aquinas writes the following about this third kind of part:

These indeed are parts of the essence of Socrates and Plato, but not of man precisely as man; and therefore the intellect can abstract man from these parts. And this is the abstraction of the universal from the particular.⁷³

We can thus classify the main kinds of part of a composite substance in the following manner: (i) The *parts of the species* are those parts that pertain to the composite in its universal characterization, so that the composite itself cannot be properly defined without a reference to these parts. In the case of an animated material substance, the parts of its species are body and soul; not determinately considered - as this body and this soul - but only according to a general description. (ii) The *integral parts* of a composite substance are those parts that do not enter into the definition of their whole, but are themselves defined by reference to the whole of which they are the parts. Unlike the parts of the species, integral parts belong to the individual as such. Examples of such parts are hands, arms, feet, nails, internal organs,

⁷² *"Similiter etiam per se competit homini quod inveniatur in eo anima rationalis et corpus compositum ex quattuor elementis, unde sine his partibus homo intelligi non potest, sed haec oportet poni in diffinitione eius; unde sunt partes speciei et formae. Sed digitus, pes et manus et aliae huiusmodi partes sunt post intellectum hominis, unde ex eis ratio essentialis hominis non dependet; et homo sine his intelligi potest. Sive enim habeat pedes sive non, dummodo ponatur coniunctum ex anima rationali et corpore mixto ex elementis propria mixtione, quam requirit talis forma, erit homo. Et hae partes dicuntur partes materiae, quae non ponuntur in diffinitione totius, sed magis e converso".*

⁷³ *"Hae enim partes sunt quidem partes essentiae Sortis et Platonis, non autem hominis, in quantum homo; et ideo potest homo abstrahi per intellectum ab istis partibus, et talis abstractio est universalis a particulari".*

and anything whose presence or absence alters the physical extension or mass of a substance. (iii) The *metaphysical parts* of a substance are those parts that, unlike the parts of the species, do not pertain to the essence of the composite insofar as the latter shares with other things of the same natural kind a common nature; in other words, they are not parts of the composite in its universal characterization. However, unlike the integral parts of the individual substance, the metaphysical parts of the composite are those parts that feature in the essence of the singular as such. In this sense, even though one can abstract from this particular soul in order to know what man is, one cannot abstract from this soul if one wishes to know what this particular human being is, whereas nothing prevents one from knowing Socrates in his individuality while abstracting from his integral parts, like his feet, eyes or hands.⁷⁴

That there is conceptual space for the notion of metaphysical parts in Aquinas is also evidenced by his suggestion in *DEE* of a threefold consideration of essences. As mentioned above, according to Aquinas, the essence of a natural substance includes both form and matter, and not only form. Using the example of human nature, Aquinas holds that the term 'man' (*homo*) signifies the whole essence of the human species insofar as it does not completely exclude that from which it abstracts. Hence, even though designated matter is abstracted from the essence of man, still the former is not completely excluded from the latter, since the essence of man does include undesignated matter - that is, flesh and bones, or body, instead of this flesh and these bones, or this body.

⁷⁴ As regards the concept of metaphysical parts, two things must be noted. First, we should probably accept a distinction between those metaphysical parts that are essential to the individual and those that are accidental to it. To be sure, both have to do with getting to know the individual as such, except that, while the first consist in that without which the individual would cease to be that particular individual, the second - though expressive of the thing's individuality - are those nonphysical parts the loss of which does not entail loss of identity. Hence, while Peter's soul is an essential metaphysical part of him, any accidental form - like Peter's knowledge of ancient Greek - is an accidental metaphysical part of him. Given this clarification, we can say that the different operative powers of the human soul - which are described by Aquinas as proper accidents of the soul - are *metaphysical subparts* of the human being: they are metaphysical parts of a metaphysical part, namely the soul. The second aspect to be noted is that, even though the body - that is, this living body - enters into the characterization of the individual as such, it is not a part of the individual, but actually denotes the whole individual. The reason for this is that the very notion of an individual, actually living body already includes a reference to the soul as a life-giving, metaphysical part of it. The other part of this whole (when taken in isolation from its life-giving principle) is simply an aggregate of material parts - i.e., those parts (which are not to be identified with the integral parts the whole) into which the composite is corrupted.

Besides being considered in its totality, an essence can also be regarded in the mode of a part when one takes into consideration only that by which the thing to which the essence belongs is the kind of thing it is. This is how a man's essence is signified by the term 'humanity' (*humanitas*), which considers only the formal part of the human essence - i.e., that by which a man is a man. Hence, with respect to the signification of the term 'humanity', Aquinas writes that, "Since the concept of humanity includes only that which makes man to be a man, its meaning clearly excludes or prescind from designated matter".⁷⁵

The idea is that, unlike the term 'man', 'humanity' excludes that from which it abstracts.⁷⁶ Accordingly, by abstracting from designated matter, the term 'humanity' does not include in its concept any reference whatsoever to matter, not even indeterminately. In Aquinas' technical jargon, when an essence is signified with precision from its material element, it is being signified not as a composite, but as a form, which he calls 'form of the whole' (*forma totius*), since the thing signified is the formal element of the whole composite essence.⁷⁷

An essence can be approached in two ways when ascribed to the composite substance in its universal characterization (i.e., to Socrates as man, not to Socrates as Socrates): either as a whole, without completely excluding designated matter from its notion, or as a part, when one focuses on the essence's formal element, which Aquinas labels 'form of the whole'. In addition to these two senses, an essence can also be approached not as something common to all members of a species, but insofar as it

⁷⁵ Cf. *DEE*, chapter 2: "*Cum ergo humanitas in suo intellectu includat tantum ea, ex quibus homo habet quod sit homo, patet quod a significatione eius excluditur vel praeciditur materia designata*".

⁷⁶ Aquinas distinguishes in chapter 2 of *DEE* two sorts of abstraction, with or without precision (*praecisio*). Precision is a type of abstraction by which we exclude something from a notion. The concept of humanity results from abstracting with precision the notion of designated matter from the definition of man. On the other hand, abstraction without precision does not mean to exclude that which is not determinately included in a notion; it means to include something in a notion, though only indeterminately. Hence, by abstracting without precision the notion of designated matter from the human essence, the concept 'man' signifies a compound of form and matter in which the latter is found only indistinctly, i.e., as undesignated matter.

⁷⁷ See *DEE*, ch. 2: "*Nomen autem significans id, unde sumitur natura speciei cum praecisione materiae designatae, significat partem formalem. Et ideo humanitas significatur ut forma quaedam, et dicitur quod est forma totius*".

belongs to the individual as such.⁷⁸ In this way, the essence means neither a whole nor the form of the whole, but rather what Aquinas calls ‘form of the part’ (*forma partis*). Like the form of the whole, the form of the part does not signify a form-matter composite, but only the formal element of a composite. However, unlike the form of the whole, the form of the part does not signify the formal element of the universal composite, but rather the formal element of the singular thing as such. Hence, instead of signifying that which makes man to be man, the form of the part signifies that which makes this man to be this man. What is designated by the form of the part is the singular substantial form which is responsible for turning a potentially living portion of matter into this actually living thing. In sum, my point is that the technical notion of *forma partis* creates the required conceptual space for the introduction of the notion of metaphysical parts of substances.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ As we have seen, properly speaking, a definition is of the species. Hence the essence, as the ontological counterpart of the definition, is expressive of the individual in its affiliation to some natural kind. In this sense, the parts of the essence, in the case of a human being, would be rational soul and human body. The definition of the individual as such, on the other hand, would have to contain the individual’s main metaphysical part, namely, this rational soul, and this potentially living body, which is the aggregate of material parts. When Aquinas, following Aristotle, denies that there is a definition of the individual, what he is truly rejecting is that there may be a definitive account of the individual expressing the totality of his individual features. This, however, is not necessary for there to be a true definition of the individual as such. It is likely that our account of the individual as such will have to include, in addition to the above mentioned parts, those integral parts that, according to Aquinas, are primary receptors of the actuality infused into the body by the soul - like the brain, for instance. (With respect to this last point, see *CM* VII.11, 1530-1531.) The presence of those special integral parts (which Aquinas describes as being simultaneous with the whole to which they belong) in the definition of the individual whole would prevent the undesirable conclusion that, for instance, a severely mutilated human being is not a human being. So long as the principal part of the body (whichever that part may be) is kept living by means of the rational soul’s actualizing power the human being is still there.

⁷⁹ The distinction between ‘*forma partis*’ and ‘*forma totius*’ is maintained by Aquinas in his mature works (see, for instance, *SCG* IV.81 and *CT* I.154). In these later texts, the distinction appears in a context where Aquinas examines the doctrine of resurrection and the requirement of a numerical identity between the individual before death and after resurrection. In *SCG* IV.80, Aquinas mentions several objections to the idea that through resurrection there occurs the restoration of the numerically same substance. According to one of the objections, it is impossible that the numerically same thing be preserved whenever one of its essential principles cannot be numerically the same. In *SCG* IV.81, Aquinas replies to the objection by saying that none of man’s essential principles yields completely to nothingness in death, for the preservation of his rational soul is sufficient for the permanence of both his corporeity and his humanity. Leaving aside the difficult details of his solution, what is worth mentioning here is that Aquinas, maintaining the distinction introduced in his early works, characterizes the rational soul of the individual as a ‘form of the part’, a principle through which the humanity of this individual is distinct from that of another member of the humankind, in opposition to the ‘form of the whole’, which he identifies with the formal principle of the universal composite, that which two individuals of the same kind are said to share.

The importance of having discussed, in the last two subsections of this chapter, the several senses of ‘part’ - with the conclusion that the human soul is neither an integral part of the individual nor a specific part of the universal composite, but a metaphysical part of the individual composite - is that it clears the path towards the idea that the soul, insofar as it is a distinct kind of part, possesses a distinct kind of subsistence, which is not shared by any of a human being’s integral parts. Hence, when Aquinas compares the subsistent status of the soul with that of a hand, his goal is not to equate the minimal sense in which a hand subsists (namely, in that it has an operation which is peculiar to hands) with the ontologically-laden sense in which a human soul subsists (namely, in that it is capable of separate existence). His goal is to emphasize the idea that to defend the subsistent nature of the soul is not necessarily to subscribe to the view that the separate soul is a full-blown substance. Aquinas thinks that it is possible for some parts of substances to exist without their wholes and yet preserve their status as parts.⁸⁰

In the next chapter, I consider Aquinas’ theory of the incorruptibility of the human soul, inasmuch as it will allow us to fully appreciate the distinctive features of the human soul’s subsistence. Even though Aquinas possesses a concept of form which is broad enough to accommodate the hybrid nature of the human soul, it is ultimately by means of his theory of how the act of being is received in the human soul that its independence from the body is established.

⁸⁰ More on the analogy between the soul and the hand, as well as on the separability of the soul as a part will be said in chapter 7, subsections 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4.

Chapter 4

From Subsistence to Incorruptibility

In the previous chapter, I attempted to show how Aquinas thinks of the human soul as a subsistent, metaphysical part of the human being. On the view I began to develop there, what is most characteristic of the human soul is its capacity to survive the death of the material whole to which it belongs without thereby becoming itself a whole, that is, a substance. I contended that - even though the soul has being by itself, and not only in another - it is not, properly speaking, a substance since it cannot satisfy one of the necessary conditions for being a substance.

Besides being a subsistent thing, every substance needs to be what Aquinas calls a 'thing of nature' (*res naturae*). According to the medieval idiom, the locution 'thing of nature' picks out things that not only subsist but, more importantly, fall under some natural kind. A full-blown substance is complete both with regard to its existence and with respect to its species. Since the human soul can only be defined by reference to some other thing which is actualized by it, the human soul is not said to belong to a species in and of itself, but only by virtue of something else, namely the individual human being of which the soul is the substantial form. To put it in different terms, the human soul - though existentially complete - lacks completeness of species.

Even so, Aquinas wants to hold that the soul of a human being is in some sense a 'this something' (*hoc aliquid*). This is only possible to the extent that Aquinas disconnects the two senses of completeness that are proper to substances - existential and of species - thereby allowing for two different ways in which a thing can be a 'this something'. In the present chapter, I examine what is it that enables Aquinas to perform such a move. We want to know how Aquinas accounts for the idea that existential and specific completeness are not mutually implicated. Given that the separability between the two notions of completeness creates the basis for the concept of 'subsistent parts', in examining the split between the two senses of completeness we are at the same time investigating the conditions under which the notion of subsistent parts is realized.

As we shall see, it is by means of his doctrine of the reception of being by the human soul - a doctrine that, according to Aquinas, does not violate the notion of form as form - that Aquinas is able to explain how is it that the soul, though not an instance of some natural kind, is capable of existing independently of the body.

4.1. The Hybrid Nature of the Human Soul Under Scrutiny

I begin by looking into a central text from Aquinas' *QDA* where he addresses the question of how the human soul can be at once a substantial form and a 'this something'.¹ The fact that Aquinas formulates the question regarding the twofold nature of the human soul in the way that he does is an evidence of his awareness of the tension created by his controversial position. By claiming that the human soul is a substantial form and a 'this something' Aquinas is endorsing the view that the human soul's propensity for inhering in a body is not at odds with its capacity to exist independently of that same body.

For reasons of space, I do not consider all the objections that are advanced against the view that the human soul is both a form and a 'this something'. It suffices to say that the objections of *QDA* 1 come in three kinds: first, there are those that simply expose the incoherence of holding the two views at once; second, there are those that, assuming the incoherence of the twofold view, claim that the human soul must be a substantial form; third, there are those that, while assuming the inconsistency of the hybrid view, say that the human soul can only be a 'this something', never a form. Before examining Aquinas' main reply, let me mention one instance of each kind of objection.

The first kind of objection - whose goal is to expose the inconsistency of holding that the soul is at once a form and a 'this something' - is best illustrated by the following reasoning. If the soul is a 'this something' it has to be an individual thing, since universals exist only in the mind. Being an individual, the soul is individuated

¹ The first question of *QDA* asks "*utrum anima humana possit esse forma et hoc aliquid*" (whether the human soul can be a form and a 'this something'), and question 2, which is also relevant for our present purposes, asks "*utrum anima humana sit separata secundum esse a corpore*" (whether the human soul is separated from the body with respect to its being).

either by itself (*ex se*) or by some other thing (*ex aliquo alio*). Supposing that the soul, being the form of the body, is individuated by something other than itself, then the body of which it is the form must be the soul's individuating principle. It thus follows that, by being separated from the body the soul loses its individuality. But this cannot be the case if the soul is a 'this something' - i.e., something that is said to exist by itself, and not only in another.

If the soul, on the other hand, is individuated by itself, it is either a pure form (*forma simplex*) or something composed of matter and form. If the soul is a pure form, it follows that two individual souls differ from one another only on account of their formal nature. But, since diversity of form entails diversity of species, it follows that numerically different souls are also specifically different, and so are the men to which each soul belongs. If, however, the soul is not purely formal, but composed of matter and form, it follows that a soul as a whole (*secundum se totam*) cannot be the form of a body, since matter cannot play the role of form. Hence, it is not possible for a human soul to be at once a form and a 'this something'.²

The objections that state that the soul cannot be a subsistent thing but only the form of a body rely on the idea that, if the soul were something that could exist by itself, the composite of soul and body would possess only a minimal kind of unity. It would thus have the nature of an accidental being - i.e., something that is not one in the most fundamental sense, but only derivatively, like Socrates and his cloak are said to be one by accident. Since what is most fundamentally one are substances, if the soul is a subsistent thing, a human being - who is composed of a soul and a body - will not be a substance, but a mere aggregate of substances (or of a substance and an accident). Humans, however, are substances. Hence, the soul cannot be a 'this something', but simply the form of a body.³

The objections that defend the view that the soul is only a 'this something', not a form, explore the idea that the act of being (*esse*) that belongs to the soul cannot be shared with the body, so that the soul, while being a subsistent thing, cannot be the

² The above is a paraphrase of *QDA* 1, obj. 2. Other objections that explore the inconsistency of the twofold view are objections 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9.

³ For this line of argumentation, see *QDA* 1, objections 1, 3 and 10.

form of a body.⁴ The general idea behind this kind of objection is that if x is the sort of thing that is the substantial form of y , then x must have an act of being which it shares with y , so that by means of this shared existence x and y are said to be parts of some z , which is itself a full-fledged substance. However, and so the objection goes, in the case where x stands for a human soul and y for a body, there cannot be any sharing of one and the same act of being, given that soul and body are opposite sorts of things - one being incorporeal and incorruptible, the other corporeal and corruptible. Therefore, since whatever can be brought about by one principle does not require two, the soul, which has its own act of being, does not need to share its existence with the body.⁵ In other terms, the soul is a subsistent thing, not the form of a body.

In the *sed contra* of *QDA 1*, Aquinas advances two arguments: one in favour of the soul's being the form of a body, another for the soul's being a subsistent thing. Since a 'thing of nature' derives its species from its form, and given that a man is a man because he is a rational being, it must be said that the rational soul of man is the form of the human body. On the other hand, because whatever operates on its own exists on its own, the soul must be something subsistent, since its intellectual activity does not take place by means of a bodily organ.

However, providing arguments for both sides of the dilemma is not enough: we still lack reasons for believing the dilemma to be merely an apparent one. In other words, what we need from Aquinas is an argument showing that the property 'being a substantial form' is not incompatible with 'being a subsistent thing' - at least when the subsistent thing in question is not regarded as a full-blown substance, but only as a subsistent part of some substance.

Aquinas begins his answer to the question "whether the human soul can be at once a form and a 'this something'" by noting that parts of substances are not substances. He claims that, properly speaking, the locution 'this something' signifies individual instances in the genus of substance - i.e., particulars that not only subsist

⁴ This line of reasoning is developed in *QDA 1*, objections 13-18.

⁵ For the idea that whatever can be brought into being by means of one principle does not require an additional principle, see *QDA 1*, objection 16.

but also by themselves belong to some natural kind.⁶ Parts of substances are not substances because if x is a part of a substance z then, even though x may subsist to some degree⁷, x is only said to belong to a species s by means of z , that is, insofar as x is a part of z .⁸ In Aquinas' jargon, since x does not belong by itself to s , x lacks completeness of species; or, equivalently, x does not fully participate in the nature of some species.⁹

4.1.1. Against Ancient Materialism

Having distinguished substances from their parts, Aquinas argues against the views of Empedocles, to whom the soul is a harmony (*harmonia*), and Galen, who held the similar view that the soul is a combination of elements (*complexio*).¹⁰ For Aquinas, those two doctrines share the undesirable consequence that the human soul,

⁶ Cf. QDA 1, *responsio*: "*Individuum autem in genere substantiae non solum habet quod per se possit subsistere, sed quod sit aliquid completum in aliqua specie et genere substantiae*".

⁷ When x is a part of a substance z , x may subsist either in the strong sense of subsistence, according to which x is said to subsist_{strong} iff x is capable of existing by itself, or in the weak sense, according to which x is said to subsist_{weak} iff x does not exist in another as in a subject. While the human soul is said to be a subsistent part of a human substance in an absolute sense which comprises both senses of subsistence, a human being's integral parts - like his hands, head or hips - are said to subsist only in the weak sense. An integral part, unlike an accident (think of Socrates' whiteness, for instance), does not exist in Socrates as if Socrates were its underlying subject, even though Socrates' head (which is an integral part of him) can only exist by reason of Socrates' own existence.

⁸ Hence Aquinas will say that parts of substances belong to a species only 'by reduction' (*per reductionem*), that is, by reference to some other thing which belongs to that same species not by reduction but by itself (*per se*). Cf. QDA 1, *responsio*.

⁹ When distinguishing substances from their parts, Aquinas writes the following (also in QDA 1, *responsio*): "*Quia licet non sint in alio sicut in subjecto, quod proprium substantiae est, non tamen participant complete naturam alicujus speciei*".

¹⁰ Aquinas discusses the views of Empedocles and Galen at length in SCG II. 63-64. There he claims that these two conceptions are closely related to Alexander of Aphrodisias' view that the human disposition to intellectually cognize is consequent upon a certain mixture of elements in the human body. According to Aquinas, Alexander's view results from his inability to understand how a subsistent thing endowed with an intellective capacity could also play the role of the substantial form of a body (cf. SCG II. 62). Aquinas' main argument in SCG II against these views (which argument also appears in QDA 1) is that every power of the soul (vegetative, sensitive or intellective) exceeds the passive and active qualities displayed by the elemental composition of bodies. Moreover, the notions of combination and harmony both admit a variation of degree. But the soul, since it is a substantial form, does not accept a more and a less (e.g., Socrates' soul is neither more, nor less, human than Plato's). Therefore, the soul is neither a combination of elements nor a harmony.

as form, cannot in any sense whatsoever be a 'this something'. He contends that in reducing the soul to a mere combination (or harmony) of material elements one is by that very fact limiting the soul to the basic qualities of corporeality. In other words, the notions of combination and harmony run counter to the idea that a form may go beyond those qualities that stem from elemental composition out of fire, air, earth and water.

Aquinas' first step towards proving that some substantial forms can subsist^{strong}¹¹ consists in showing that, unlike what is assumed by the views of Empedocles and Galen, the very concept of soul contains the idea of transcending the qualities that nonliving bodies possess by virtue of their elemental composition.¹² Not even the life-giving principle of plants - in Aquinas' idiom, the 'vegetative soul' (*anima vegetabilis*) - can be completely reduced to some elemental mixture, since in activities like growth and nutrition, which are characteristic of vegetative souls, the elemental qualities (i.e., hot and cold, moist and dry, rare and dense, heavy and light)¹³ play only an instrumental role, the principal role being played by the soul itself.¹⁴

More reason there is for supposing then that the sensitive souls of animals and the intellective souls of men cannot be reduced to the basic qualities of matter, since while it belongs to sensitive souls to receive the forms of extramental things without matter, it is under the power of intellective souls to receive forms not only free from matter but also free from any material, individuating conditions. Leaving aside the details concerning the specific activities that belong to each kind of soul, the general point Aquinas wants to make is that each and every living substance - regardless of the

¹¹ See footnote 7 above.

¹² The same strategy is adopted in the following parallel texts: *SCG* II.62, *SCG* II.68, *QDSC* a.2, *ST* 1a Q76a1 and *ST* 1a Q78a1.

¹³ For a list of elemental qualities, see for instance *SCG* II.68. The four elements out of which every corporeal thing in the sublunar world is composed are substances whose substantial forms are described as occupying the lowest place in the scale of forms. The forms of the elements are hence characterized as being 'wholly immersed in matter' (*totaliter immersae materiae*).

¹⁴ This idea is drawn from Aristotle's *DA* II.4 (416b17-30). In *QDSC* a.2, Aquinas goes even further and says that some substantial forms of nonliving things, like the forms of some mineral bodies, also have activities that exceed the qualities of the elements. As examples, he mentions a magnet's capacity to attract iron and a sapphire's capacity to cure an abscess. These qualities of some nonliving bodies, thinks Aquinas, are a consequence of the influence of heavenly bodies upon those things. Apparently, then, only the forms of the elements are, for Aquinas, totally embedded in matter.

level of complexity that characterizes the sort of life it possesses - is equipped with operative powers that require as their source some principle that is itself capable of exceeding the elemental qualities. If the soul were a combination, or a harmony, of elements, as Galen and Empedocles wanted, it would not be capable of accommodating the capacities that, according to Aquinas, are found in every kind of ensouled being. Hence the very notion of soul must entail the ability to surpass those qualities that belong to bodies as such.

4.1.2. *A Hierarchy Among Forms*

The second step in Aquinas' account of how the human soul can be both a substantial form and a 'this something' consists in championing the idea of a hierarchy among forms, such that the higher a form is the more it is capable of going beyond the limits of corporeality.¹⁵ Insofar as sublunar reality is concerned, the opposite extremes in the hierarchy of forms are taken up, on the one side, by human souls and, on the other, by particular instances of elemental kinds.¹⁶

Aquinas thinks that the hierarchical order according to which the substantial forms of lower bodies are organized can be inferred from the observation of the various operations that characterize those forms. Hence, particular instances of element-kinds are substances the substantial forms of which occupy the lowest place in the gradation of forms, given that those substances do not seem to possess any operation that could not be accounted for in its totality by resort to the given mixture of the active and passive qualities that constitute each elemental kind.¹⁷

¹⁵ The idea of an order among forms as a key to understanding the human soul's twofold nature is not only present in *QDA* 1, but also in *SCG* II.68, *ST* 1a Q76a1 and *QDSC* a. 2.

¹⁶ By restricting the debate to sublunar reality one is considering only those forms that are responsible for informing what Aquinas calls 'lower bodies' (*inferiora corpora*), which means leaving out the forms of celestial bodies, as well as the angels, whose purely formal nature is not tied to any body.

¹⁷ Let us assume with Aristotle that the element-kind 'water' is composed of the active quality cold and the passive quality moist. Every particular instance of that kind - as, for instance, that puddle of water by my doorstep - can only possess operative powers that are consequent upon a certain mixture of the qualities cold and moist. (For Aristotle's characterization of the four basic elements of corporeal reality, see *DGC*, II.3).

One rung above on the scale of forms are the forms of compounds, which are the forms of those bodies that are brought about by a given combination of different elements. Although their activities are often reduced to the basic dispositions of matter, Aquinas thinks that mixed bodies sometimes produce effects that are caused by a power that is communicated to them by some celestial body. Therefore, says Aquinas, “Magnets attract iron not because of heat or cold or any quality of this sort, but because they participate in some fashion in celestial power (*ex quadam participationis virtutis caelestis*)”.¹⁸

Higher up than the forms of mixed bodies are plant souls, which, according to Aquinas, display a certain likeness not only to celestial bodies, but also to the movers of those celestial bodies, for the reason that, unlike nonliving compounds, plants are said to possess an internal principle of motion, which allows them, for instance, to move to a bright spot. What Aquinas wants the reader to understand when he distinguishes between unensouled compounds and things equipped with vegetative souls is that the upward movement in the hierarchy of forms, rather than being merely a movement away from the limitations of matter, is above all a process in the direction of the higher principles of reality.¹⁹

One step above plant souls are animal souls, which, like the former, are said to resemble the movers of celestial bodies to the extent that they also have their own principle of motion. However, unlike plant souls, animal souls display a likeness to those substances that move the higher bodies not only in their capacity to produce motion, but also in their ability to acquire knowledge. Still the souls of nonhuman animals do not rise above the dispositions of matter to a maximum degree, given that the kind of knowledge that is peculiar to them is of material things and tied to material

¹⁸ Cf. *QDA 1, responsio*.

¹⁹ In some parallel passages (see *SCG II.68, ST 1a Q76a1, and QDSC a. 2*), Aquinas describes the hierarchy of forms by claiming that “the higher a form is the more it surpasses matter in its being” (*quanto forma est nobilior, tanto in suo esse superexcedit materiam*, cf. *SCG II.68*). However, in the text from *QDA 1*, he says that “among the forms of lower bodies one observes that the higher a form is the more it is like and approximates higher principles” (*Invenitur enim inter formas inferiorum corporum tanto aliqua altior quanto superioribus principiis magis assimilatur et appropinquatur*). My guess is that, when Aquinas presents in *QDA 1* the order of forms as a movement towards higher principles, he seems to have in mind something like the Aristotelian notion of final causality as advanced in book XII of the *Metaphysics*.

conditions, since through sensation one can only know the singular, not the universal. Hence the cognitive powers that ensue from nonhuman animal souls are all connected to some corporeal organ.

Among sublunar beings, the uppermost place in the order of forms is occupied by the human soul, insofar as it is said to possess an operation - intellectual cognition - which the body has no share in. Hence the intellective soul of human beings is closest to the higher substances inasmuch as its ultimate mode of knowing, unlike that of nonhuman animals, is free from material conditions, which allows them to cognize things in their universality. In the gradation of substantial forms of lower bodies, the human soul is said to possess the most eminent kind of operation. And since by knowing how something operates we get to know its mode of being, it is held that the human soul must possess an act of being of its own.²⁰

There is, however, a sense in which the human soul does not resemble immaterial substances. Despite its capacity to acquire knowledge that is free from material conditions, the very acquisition of this type of knowledge by the human soul presupposes information that is gathered by the soul's sensitive powers, which rely on the body. On that score, Aquinas concludes his analysis of the hierarchy of forms by claiming that the human soul "is constituted on the boundary line between corporeal and separate substances".²¹

4.1.3. The Human Soul as a Borderline Case

The idea that the human soul - being the highest expression of what form is among sublunar entities - lies on the boundary line between the corporeal and the spiritual is itself accounted for by means of a duality in the human soul's nature. On the one hand, the human soul possesses an operation - intellectual cognition - that transcends the dispositions of matter since it is effected without a corporeal organ. In this sense, since it has an operation of its own, it must have an act of being of its own.

²⁰ Cf. QDA 1, *responsio*: "*Sic igitur ex operatione animae humanae modus esse ipsius cognosci potest*".

²¹ Cf. QDA 1, *responsio* (last sentence): "*Manifestum est quod ipsa [anima humana] est in confinio corporalium et separatarum substantiarum constituta*".

In other words, the human soul must subsist_{strong}: it must be capable of independent existence. Insofar as it subsists, the human soul approaches the reality of spiritual substances. On the other hand, because the human soul's intellective operation relies on data provided by the senses, it cannot meet, without divine assistance, the requirements of its own nature when separated from the body.²² It is precisely by reason of this partial dependence of the human soul on the body - it does not depend on the body as an instrument for its most characteristic operation, but it does depend on bodily input to the extent that it elaborates on information provided by the sense powers - that we call the human soul a *subsistent part*.

Even though the soul is a particular which is capable of existing on its own, its very subsistence is not sufficient to elevate it to the status of a full-blown substance. Substances - material or immaterial - are complete in their own natures: they have in their own internal structure everything that they need to meet the requirements of their species. The human soul, by contrast, must be united to a human body so that it can achieve its own perfection, which is to produce acts of intellective cognition. With this in mind, Aquinas contends that "the soul is naturally united to the body in order to complete the human species".²³

The conception that forms are organized according to a hierarchical order is something that Aquinas borrows from Neoplatonic writings, such as the anonymous

²² Hence Aquinas writes that "a thing is not complete in nature unless it possesses those things which are required for the proper operation of that nature" (Cf. *QDA* 1, *responsio*: "*Non enim aliquid est completum in specie nisi habeat ea quae requiruntur ad propriam operationem ipsius speciei*"). In *CDA* I.2, Aquinas distinguishes two ways in which the soul may depend on the body for its operations - as an object or as an instrument - and claims that the intellective soul relies on the body not as its instrument, but only as its object. He writes: "There is a kind of operation that needs a body not as its instrument, but only as its object. For intellective cognition does not occur through a corporeal organ, but needs a corporeal object... Therefore, since phantasms do not occur without a body, it follows that intellective cognition does not occur without a body - but in such a way that the body serves as the object, not as the instrument... Hence the intellect is a subsistent form, while the other powers are forms in matter." (Cf. nn. 19-20: "*Aliqua autem operatio est, quae indiget corpore, non tamen sicut instrumento, sed sicut objecto tantum. Intelligere enim non est per organum corporale, sed indiget objecto corporali... Cum autem phantasmata non sint sine corpore, videtur quod intelligere non est sine corpore: ita tamen quod sit sicut objectum et non sicut instrumentum... Et ideo intellectus est forma subsistens, aliae potentiae sunt formae in materia*").

²³ Cf. *SCG* II.68. I quote the whole sentence, and the emphasis is mine: "*Quia tamen ipsum intelligere animae humanae indiget potentiis quae per quaedam organa corporalia operantur, scilicet imaginatione et sensu, ex hoc ipso declaratur quod naturaliter unitur corpori ad complendam speciem humanam*".

Liber de Causis and Pseudo-Dionysius' *De Divinis Nominibus*. Therefore, in SCG II, when explaining the idea that a subsistent entity like the human soul can be joined to a body as its form, Aquinas holds that his twofold account of the soul is in conformity with Pseudo-Dionysius' doctrine of how different kinds of creature are closely connected in such a way that divine wisdom leaves no gaps between them.²⁴ As the author of *De Divinis Nominibus* claims, "divine wisdom has united the ends of higher things with the beginnings of the lower".²⁵

When compared to the spiritual substances, the human soul - which though of an intellective nature is not properly a substance - is said to be of the lowest class of intellectual beings. The human body, however, constitutes the most developed type of physical structure among sublunar bodies - i.e., bodies that are made of various mixtures of the four basic elements. Therefore, the very generation of a human being out of a soul and a body corroborates the idea that, "the lowest in the higher genus touches the highest of the lower genus".²⁶

Aquinas takes the idea that human souls, as subsistent substantial forms, are on the borderline between the spiritual and the corporeal to be a corollary of the Neoplatonic theory of the hierarchy of forms.²⁷ It is his conviction that, when coupled with the Pseudo-Dionysian idea of an absence of gaps between distinct types of being, the doctrine of the hierarchy of forms will include the concept of a substantial form that is capable of transcending the limitations of corporeality in that it can exist independently of the body without ceasing to be a part. Aquinas' point is that human souls bridge the gap between material forms - i.e., forms that cannot exist without the portions of matter that they inform - and those higher forms that, because they are complete in their own species, are also substances in their own right, like the angels.

²⁴ After refuting in SCG II.68 one of the arguments against the idea that the soul, though subsistent, can be united to the body as its form, Aquinas concludes that, "*Hoc autem modo mirabilis rerum connexio considerari potest*".

²⁵ Cf. *De Divinis Nominibus*, chapter 7, as quoted by Aquinas in SCG II.68: "*Divina sapientia coniungit fines superiorum principiis inferiorum*".

²⁶ Cf. SCG II.68: "*Semper enim invenitur infimum supremi generis contingere supremum inferioris generis*".

²⁷ The expression 'subsistent substantial form' is taken from Bazán's "The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas' Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism" (1997).

In an effort to make sense of Aquinas' account of the nature of the human soul, some scholars claim that, when establishing the twofold status of the soul, Aquinas begins by taking one of the two sides of his view as a self-evident starting point and then moves on to proving the other by means of an argument.²⁸

However, Aquinas' line of reasoning in *SCG* II.68 goes against the idea that any of the two elements of his hybrid view might be predominant over the other. Rather, Aquinas seems to take both aspects of the human soul - its subsistence and its status as a form - as standing at the same level of importance, which makes his argumentation move in both directions - that is, from being the form of a body to being a subsistent thing, and from its subsistence to its being the substantial form of a body. Hence, one can say that Aquinas adopts a *neutral* stance towards the elements that make up his twofold account of the human soul. In other words, his starting point is neither Platonic nor Aristotelian.

Once we take a closer look at *SCG* II.68, we see that, when presenting the gradational arrangement of forms, Aquinas' argument moves from the human soul's status as a form to its being a subsistent entity. After all, it is only because the human soul is a form that the consideration of how the hierarchy of forms is measured according to a form's capacity to transcend the basic qualities of the elements is relevant to the analysis of the human soul's own nature. In this case, Aquinas assumes that the human soul is a substantial form of a particular kind - i.e., a form that is equipped with an operation in which the body takes no part - in order to demonstrate that it must be something subsistent, that is, something with its own act of being.

Nevertheless, Aquinas also adopts the opposite strategy when, in the same chapter of *SCG* II, he says that the conclusion that the soul is a subsistent intellectual entity which is united to the body as its form can be shown to be true from a consideration of the conditions that have to be met in order for a thing to be a

²⁸ For a defence of such a view, see Brian Leftow's "Souls Dipped in Dust" (in Corcoran, ed., 2001, 120-138) as well as his "Soul, Mind and Brain" (in Koons & Bealer, eds., 2010, 395-415). Leftow distinguishes two ways of approaching Aquinas' theory of the human soul. He thinks that one can attribute to Aquinas either a *Platonic* view of the soul, according to which the soul is assumed to be a subsistent thing and then proved to be the form of the body, or an *Aristotelian* view, on which the soul is assumed to be the substantial form of the body and then proved to be a subsistent thing. I will deal in more detail with Leftow's reading of Aquinas in Part 2, chapter 6, subsection 6.4.

substantial form.²⁹ In this case, Aquinas assumes that the human soul is a subsistent entity and then goes on to show that such an assumption is not incompatible with what it means to be a substantial form.

Aquinas holds that two conditions have to be met for x to be the substantial form of y . First, x will stand to y as its substantial form if and only if y 's substantial being is the result of x 's presence in y . Second, x will stand to y as y 's substantial form if and only if x and y are joined together by means of one and the same act of being. As we will see in more detail in the following subsection, Aquinas thinks that nothing prevents a subsistent entity such as the human soul to be united to the body by means of the same act of being, provided that they do not relate in exactly the same way to the act of being that they both share.

4.2. The Soul as an Incorruptible Form: Reception and Transmission of the Act of Being

Aquinas deals with the topic of the human soul's incorruptible nature in several works that correspond to different moments of his career.³⁰ For reasons of space, however, I take into account here only three of those texts: *SCG* II.55, *QDA* 14, and *ST* 1a Q75a6. Since, in my opinion, it is in *QDA* that Aquinas develops the most careful version of his doctrine of the soul's incorruptibility, I pay special attention to that text, using the other two only when they help illuminating some aspect of *QDA* 14.

When examining Aquinas' texts on the topic, my primary aim is not so much to master the subtleties of his doctrine of the human soul's incorruptibility. Instead, I am more interested in considering how the arguments used by Aquinas to prove the human soul's incorruptibility can also be employed to support Aquinas' twofold conception of the human soul. Hence, my plan for this subsection is to determine in what way the concepts that are brought into play by Aquinas to account for the soul's immortality can assist us in reaching a more intimate appreciation of the notion of subsistent substantial forms.

²⁹ Cf. *SCG* II.68, n. 3.

³⁰ In the early works: *CS* II.19.1; *CS* IV.50.1.1. In the middle works: *QQ* X.3.2; *SCG* II.55; *SCG* II.79-81. In the mature works: *QDA* 14; *ST* 1a Q75a6; *CT* 84.

4.2.1. Corruption ‘per se’ and Corruption ‘per accidens’

Aquinas’ favourite argument for the human soul’s incorruptibility begins with a distinction between two modes of corruption - through itself (*per se*) and by accident (*per accidens*). These are not two modes in which one and the same subject can go out of existence. Rather, each of these notions applies to a different type of thing: while to be corrupted *per se* belongs only to composite substances, to be corrupted *per accidens* is an exclusive feature of nonsubsistent forms (both substantial and accidental).

Corruption by accident takes place when a thing’s being corrupted *per se* entails something else’s being corrupted *per accidens*. Accordingly, the whiteness of the wall is corrupted by accident because, when the wall itself collapses - i.e., when the wall ceases to exist *per se* - the wall’s whiteness (as well as its hardness, roughness, etc.) by that very fact can no longer be. Hence, while the wall is corrupted through itself, the whiteness of the wall is corrupted by accident, since whitenesses of walls are the type of thing that depend upon walls to exist.

According to Aquinas, generation and corruption relate to a thing in the same way that existence relates to a thing, given that generation and corruption denote the way in which a thing acquires and loses existence, respectively. Thus, says Aquinas: “That which has existence through itself can be generated or corrupted only through itself”.³¹ In this sense, whatever is said to subsist - i.e., to have being on its own - will

³¹ Cf. *ST* 1a Q75a6 c: “Unde quod per se habet esse, non potest generari vel corrumpi nisi per se”. It becomes clear from the above that the distinction between corruption *per se* and *per accidens* is not the same as the distinction between substantial and accidental change, given that only the latter and not the former can occur in the same subject. It is interesting to note though that *SCG* II.55 - which is parallel to *ST* 1a Q75a6 - presents the distinction between modes of corruption as a distinction between ‘absolute corruption’ (*corruptio simplex*) and ‘relative corruption’ (*corruptio secundum quid*). Unlike the distinction advanced in *ST*, the distinction between absolute and relative corruption denotes two ways in which one and the same thing can be corrupted, either through the loss of its substantial form (in which case we have an instance of absolute corruption) or through the loss of an accidental form (in which case what we have is an instance of relative corruption). As far as the discussion of the soul’s incorruptibility goes, both types of distinction (on the one hand, between corruption *per se* and *per accidens*; on the other hand, between corruption *simplex* and *secundum quid*) complement each other. While the former highlights *what* corruption in general is *about* - i.e., the loss of being - the latter stresses *how* corruption generally takes place - i.e., through the separation of the form from the thing which is said to be corrupted.

only be subject to corruption through itself, and never through the corruption of something else.

Now, according to Aquinas' hierarchy of beings, among sublunar creatures we find two sorts of subsistent entities - namely, composite substances and human souls (which are metaphysical parts of human substances). It is Aquinas' view that, while subsistent things - qua subsistent - can only undergo corruption *per se*, it is only those subsistent things that are also composite substances that - qua composite - can really be subject to corruption. Human souls, as I have said many times, are subsistent substantial forms. Hence, on the one hand, insofar as they are subsistent, they cannot undergo corruption *per accidens*; on the other hand, inasmuch as they are forms alone, and not composites of form and matter, they cannot undergo corruption *per se*. Therefore, the human soul must be altogether incorruptible.

Once we know that human souls - in contrast to composite substances and nonsubsistent forms - are liable to neither corruption *per se* nor corruption *per accidens*, what remains to be seen is how exactly Aquinas argues for the human soul's absolute incorruptibility. The first thing to be noted is that, according to Aquinas, the argument for incorruptibility applies not only to human souls but to anything which is at once subsistent and a form alone.³²

4.2.2. *The Incorruptibility Argument*

Aquinas' major premise is the following: "Whatever belongs to a thing through itself cannot be taken away from it".³³ The gist here lies in the notion of *per se*

³² In Aquinas' arithmetic, 'subsistence + being a form alone = incorruptibility'. If we restrict our scope to low-ranked beings, on top of whose hierarchy human beings are, only human souls meet the two conditions that are expressed on the left side of the equation above. If, however, we extend our scope to high-ranked beings as well, then angels - intellectual substances that do not have matter in their metaphysical constitution - will also be included on the list of incorruptible beings. Celestial bodies, according to the physics of Aquinas' time, were also considered to be incorruptible, but for different reasons - namely, because of the distinctive type of matter which they were thought to be composed of. Hence, 'subsistence + being a form alone' is a sufficient condition for incorruptibility, but not a necessary one.

³³ Cf. QDA 14, *responsio*: "Quod per se consequitur ad aliquid non potest removeri ab eo". The same idea is stated in slightly different terms in SCG II.55: "Quod per se alicui competit, de necessitate et semper et inseparabiliter ei inest".

predication: if a predicate p is attributed *per se* to a subject S , then p is said to belong to S of necessity, which means that p cannot be removed from S without the subject's ceasing to be the kind of thing it is. An example of *per se* relation between subject and attribute would be as follows: the predicate 'round' is said of a circle through itself, whereas the same predicate is said of a bronze coin only by accident. Thus, one can think of a bronze coin whose shape is not round, whereas in the case of a circle, one cannot separate roundness from it without destroying the very notion of what 'being a circle' is.³⁴

While the argument's major premise consists in a general principle in which the truth of a logical relation is stated, the argument's minor premise, on the other hand, has to do with Aquinas' own metaphysical doctrine. Accordingly, the metaphysical concepts of 'form' and 'being' will take up the positions of the variables in the sentence ' S is_{per se} P ', which will thus lead to the following statement: "Form is_{per se} existent", or, in other words, "Form has being through itself".³⁵

Form possesses being through itself, and since it has been said that whatever is predicated of something through itself cannot be separated from its subject, Aquinas draws the conclusion: "Being cannot in any way be separated from form".³⁶ Despite the appearance to the contrary, it does not follow from the argument above that every form - precisely as form - is incorruptible to the extent that one cannot remove being from it, just like one cannot separate roundness from a circle. What the argument is saying though is that, unlike composites, forms are not prone to corruption *per se*, only to corruption *per accidens*. If, nonetheless, there is a form which is not subject to corruption *per accidens* either, then that form, and only that form, will be altogether incorruptible, since - in virtue of a form's having being through itself - forms are in general not liable to corruption *per se*.

One must note that the argument can only work under the assumption of a hylomorphic interpretation of generation and corruption. It is because corruption is

³⁴ The example above is taken from *SCG* II.55. In *QDA* 14, Aquinas mentions as examples of *per se* predication the relation that holds between 'man' (taken as a subject) and 'animal' as well as that between the subject 'number' and the predicate 'being odd or even'.

³⁵ Cf. *QDA* 14, *responsio*: "*Esse per se consequitur formam*".

³⁶ *Ibidem*: "*Esse a forma nullo modo separari potest*".

understood as the separation of form from matter that it is held that nothing but matter-form composites can undergo corruption *per se*. Insofar as form is a principle of generation and corruption, it will be said that form is not subject to either generation or corruption except *per accidens*. To say the same in different terms, form is generated or corrupted only to the extent that the composite substance of which it is the form is itself generated or corrupted.

Moreover, it must be said that, insofar as Aquinas' philosophy is concerned, the hylomorphic interpretation of generation and corruption is only complete with the introduction of the concepts of act and potency, which are to be understood in their relation to the concept of being. Hence, with respect to the event of a substance's generation *per se*, matter functions as that principle which is pure potentiality towards the possession of being. Form, on the other hand, is said to be in actuality to being since it is that principle by means of which the composite substance actually exists. With that picture of generation and corruption in mind, one understands why it is claimed that forms do not undergo generation or corruption *per se*, but only accidentally.³⁷

Aquinas' incorruptibility argument has shown that no form is corrupted *per se*. Since corruption consists in the withdrawal of form, which is that principle by means of which the composite receives its act of being, only matter-form composites undergo corruption. Still, forms undergo corruption *per accidens*, which means that they do not exist apart from the composites of which they are the forms. A corollary of Aquinas' argument is that if there are subsistent forms - i.e., forms that are not merely that by which a composite exists, but that possess an act of being of their own - then those very forms, by being resistant to corruption *per accidens*, will be altogether incorruptible.

In *SCG* II.79 Aquinas lists three ways in which a form can be corrupted. First, a form can be corrupted through the action of its contrary (*ex actione contrarii*); second,

³⁷ Hence, after having drawn the conclusion that being cannot be separated from form, Aquinas writes the following: "*Corrumpuntur igitur composita ex materia et forma per hoc quod amittunt formam ad quam consequitur esse. Ipsa autem forma per se corrumpi non potest; sed per accidens, corrupto composito, corrumpitur in quantum deficit esse compositi quod est per formam*" (cf. *QDA* 14, *responsio*).

by the corruption of its subject (*per corruptionem sui subiecti*); third, by the failure of its cause (*per defectum suae causae*). Of these three modes of corruption, the first one does not apply to souls since it does not apply to substantial forms, but only to accidental forms, which are the sole ones that do possess contraries. Thus, in Aquinas' example, the form of heat ceases to exist in a given subject by means of the action of the form of cold, which is somehow able to overcome its contrary, so that the subject which was once hot becomes cold.

As regards the third mode of corruption, it is Aquinas' view - as we will see in the next subsection of the present chapter - that God is the immediate cause of the human soul's existence. Therefore, it is altogether impossible for it to go out of existence by reason of a defect in its cause, given God's absolute perfection. What could happen though is that the soul go out of existence because God decides to annihilate it. However, God's capacity to annihilate human souls does not go against the human soul's incorruptible nature, since to be corruptible means to be susceptible to passing away on its own, in the natural course of things, and not by means of supernatural intervention.³⁸

The second way in which a form can be corrupted applies to substantial forms as well as to accidental forms, and is tantamount to what Aquinas calls in *SCG* II.55 'corruption *per accidens*'. In this case, the corruption *per se* of the subject - i.e., of that to which a form belongs - entails the corruption *per accidens* of its substantial form as well as of its accidental forms. Nevertheless, Aquinas thinks that when the subject in question is a human being the corruption of the subject does not result in the accidental corruption of his substantial form, since in this case the substantial form - namely, the human soul - is a *subsistent* form. Hence, in none of the three ways in which a form can be corrupted can the human soul cease to exist.

A substantial form that is not a human soul is for Aquinas susceptible to accidental corruption because, unlike a human soul, it is not a 'form that has being in itself' (*forma habens esse in se*), but merely 'that by which something has being' (*quo*

³⁸ On the meaning of 'corruptible' see *QDA* 14, ad19 (my emphasis): "*Illud quod est ex nihilo vertibile est in nihil, nisi manu gubernantis conservetur. Sed ex hoc non dicitur aliquid corruptibile, sed ex eo quod habet in se aliquod principium corruptionis*".

aliquid est). Accordingly, even though the incorruptibility argument states that one cannot separate being from form, still this does not prevent nonsubsistent forms from undergoing corruption *per accidens*, since one can separate being from the composite of which those forms are the forms and without which they cannot persist. Subsistent forms, on the other hand, are wholly incorruptible, since, insofar as they are forms, they cannot be corrupted *per se*, and, insofar as they are subsistent, they cannot be corrupted *per accidens*.

Aquinas' argument for the human soul's incorruptibility - as presented in *SCG* II. 55, *ST* 1a Q75a6 and *QDA* 14 - does not, however, count as a proof of the human soul's subsistence. It actually relies for that matter on those texts where it is shown that since the soul has an operation of its own it must have being of its own.³⁹ Hence, the immediate conclusion of the incorruptibility argument is that forms in general are not subject to corruption *per se*. Now, besides its main conclusion, which follows directly from its major and minor premises, what can also be drawn from the incorruptibility argument as a corollary, once we assume the validity of the subsistence argument - and therefore the reality of subsistent forms - is that, as far as the human soul is concerned, we have a form that not only does not undergo corruption *per se*, but that is absolutely incorruptible - i.e., a form to which not even corruption *per accidens* can apply.

However, as I have suggested above in the previous chapter⁴⁰, the subsistence argument is only a fact-demonstration, not a why-demonstration, since it moves from a truth regarding the soul's operation to a truth regarding the soul's very being. But operation follows being, not the other way around. Hence, in order to advance a why-demonstration of the human soul's subsistence - which will ultimately back up the thesis of the human soul's absolute incorruptibility, since the latter relies on the subsistence argument - one has to resort to something which, unlike the soul's mode of operating, is ontologically prior to the soul's very subsistence. It is my suggestion that such a thing can only be obtained in Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul's immediate

³⁹ See, for instance, *ST* 1a Q75a2 and *QDA* 1. Call the argument presented in these two texts the 'subsistence argument'.

⁴⁰ See subsection 3.4, "On Proving Subsistence in Two Ways".

creation by God - a doctrine that lies at the boundary between Aquinas' metaphysical thought and his theology.

4.2.3. Forms as Metaphysical Antennas: The Transmission-Reception Metaphor

Before considering Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul's creation, let me dwell on the topic of the soul's incorruptibility for a little longer and introduce a metaphor which I think will help us grasp the difference between subsistent forms and nonsubsistent forms to the extent that their relation to being is concerned.

The idea is that we think of the concepts of being and form in terms of the more familiar notions of a signal and an antenna. The way Aquinas understands the concept of being (*esse*) is very similar to the way we think of a signal as an impulse which displays the following two characteristics. First, a signal has a source in which it is produced and from which it is first transmitted. Second, a signal makes use of certain devices we call 'antennas', which are responsible both for transmitting it - in the fashion of secondary causes, given that they are not the original source of the signal, but are simply propagating it - as well as for receiving it. My suggestion is that we think of Aquinas' concept of being as a sort of impulse that emanates from God and that is received in things by means of forms. In this sense, forms are said to be a sort of metaphysical device that receives being from its original source and then transmits it to substances - i.e., entities that are said to exist *per se* insofar as in each substance there inheres a form.⁴¹

According to Aquinas, therefore, the role played by forms is twofold, since they are responsible for the reception of being as well as for its subsequent transmission to substances, which are the eventual receptacles of the impulse. However, Aquinas does not think that all forms are alike in their role as, say, 'conveyors of being'. Basically, Aquinas conceives of two sorts of forms: first, there are forms that do not

⁴¹ In *QDA* 14 ad.4, Aquinas says that being follows upon form but not in the way that an effect follows upon the power of its agent, which means that forms communicate being to the things of which they are the forms without themselves being responsible for the production of being. I quote the original passage: "*Esse comparatur ad formam sicut per se consequens ipsam, non autem sicut effectus ad virtutem agentis*".

retain for themselves the impulse that they receive from the original source of being. All the being that these forms receive is transmitted to the substances in which they inhere. These are precisely the forms that Aquinas labels 'nonsubsistent forms' (or 'material forms'): forms that are merely that *by which* something has being. Second, there is a type of form which is capable of retaining for itself the impulse it receives from the first cause of being. Yet, apart from retaining the being it receives from God, such a form - inasmuch as it is a form - can also transmit to the composite of which it is a part the same being it receives by sharing it with the composite. This second type of form is what Aquinas calls 'subsistent forms': forms that have a being of their own and that are not merely that through which something else has being.

While in the first case being is channelled into the composite through the form, in the second case it is infused into the form and then communicated to the composite. These two different ways in which forms relate to being result from an ambiguity in the 'reception-transmission' pair of concepts. As I just said, according to Aquinas, a form's role of receiving being and then transmitting it to the substance of which it is the form can be performed in two manners, both of which - thinks Aquinas - are compatible with the concept of form. In other words, though the concept of form stipulates that every instance of it - every individual form - be capable of transmitting being to a composite substance of which the form is a part, the same concept is neutral as regards a form's ability to retain the impulse it receives from the first cause of being. Hence, there is no inconsistency in the idea that a form may retain the being it receives as long as it be capable of sharing that same being with the substance it informs. Since the concept 'form' is neutral with respect to the retainment of being, Aquinas states that it is not as form, but rather as a subsistent thing, that the human soul is able to possess a being of its own. Still, what is most important is that being a form is not incompatible with being a subsistent thing, given that the transmission of being by a form does not exclude a form's capacity to retain being for itself.⁴²

⁴² As regards a form's capacity to retain the being it receives from God, Aquinas makes the following clarification: "Although a soul through its essence is a form, nevertheless something may belong to it insofar as it is the kind of form it is, namely, a subsistent form, which does not belong to it insofar as it is form" ("*Licet anima per suam essentiam sit forma, tamen aliquid potest ei competere in quantum est talis forma, scilicet forma subsistens, quod non competit ei in quantum est forma*", cf. QDA 14 ad10).

Ultimately, what makes the notion of 'subsistent form' possible is the idea that one and the same act of being can be shared, so that, even though the soul is its primary receiver, it also extends to the whole composite. As I have mentioned in the first section of this chapter, one of the objections to the idea that the human soul is at once a subsistent thing and the substantial form of the body states that soul and body cannot share the same act of being since they belong to opposite kinds of thing - one is incorporeal whereas the other is corporeal.⁴³

Aquinas responds to this sort of objection by saying that, even though the human soul is a subsistent form, it is necessary that there be a single act of being which is shared by the soul and the whole composite. If the contrary were true, one would have to admit that a human being - as an ensouled body - is not a substance, but a mere aggregate of substances. Aquinas thinks that one cannot refute the idea that the same act of being is shared by soul and body simply by pointing out that soul and body - as parts of the human composite - belong to opposite kinds. What makes the objection unsuccessful is that soul and body do not belong by themselves to any genus, but only 'by reduction' - that is, to the extent that both soul and body are parts of a substance that itself belongs to a species and a genus.

Since soul and body, as parts of the same substance, belong - 'by reduction' - to the same species and genus (namely, the human species and the animal genus), there is nothing wrong in supposing that both share the same act of being. Now, if the soul were not only a subsistent thing but also a full-blown substance (i.e., something complete in its own species), it would be false to say that the act of being that belongs to the soul is also communicated to the body, because in that case one substance (the human soul) would be part of another substance (the human being), which is unacceptable for Aquinas.⁴⁴

In sum, a subsistent substantial form is a form that not only is capable of retaining the act of being it receives from God but also of transmitting this same act of

⁴³ Cf. *QDA* 1 obj.13. For a previous discussion of it, see subsection 4.1, pp. 88-89.

⁴⁴ Another way of replying to the objector's claim that the soul, since it is incorruptible, cannot share its act of being with the corruptible body consists in saying, according to the teaching of faith, that in the beginning the body was incorruptible, and that the necessity of dying resulted from sin. For this sort of reply, see *QDA* 1 ad5.

being to the portion of matter in which it inheres as its substantial form. The retainment-and-transmission of the act of being by the form occurs insofar as one and the same act of being is shared by the soul and the body. The sharing of the act of being is made possible by the fact that neither soul nor body is a substance (hence they do not belong to opposite kinds). Both are parts of one substance (hence they belong, 'by reduction', to the same genus and species), though only one of them - the soul - is a *subsistent* part, since it is in the soul that the act of being is first received and retained.

4.3. On Creating Human Souls

The importance of closing this initial set of chapters with an analysis of the particular conditions under which the human soul comes into being is justified by my suggestion that it is only with the theory of the human soul's immediate creation by God that Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul achieves its completion. I would like to defend the idea that the theory of the human soul's creation is the most fundamental aspect of Aquinas' twofold conception of the soul as a subsistent substantial form. In this sense, while the doctrine of the soul's creation stands, in the order of knowing, as the endpoint of our exposition, it is certainly the starting point of Aquinas' account of the human soul's distinctive nature in the ontological order. Hence, it is only with the doctrine of the soul's creation that one is able to appreciate the theory of the human soul's subsistence in its fullness. However, since the argumentation here reaches a foundational level, one should be aware that henceforth the discussion will be rooted at the very divide between faith and philosophy.

4.3.1. The Making of Nonsubsistent Substantial Forms and the Proper Subject of Generation

In order to come to grips with Aquinas' account of the production of human souls, it is best to start with a brief examination of what he has to say with respect to the generation of nonsubsistent substantial forms.

One of Aquinas' most detailed treatments of how forms come into being is found in *QDPD* 3.⁴⁵ In the eighth article of that question - the topic of which is creation as the first effect of the divine power - Aquinas asks whether creation is mingled with the works of nature (*utrum creatio operi naturae admiscetur*). Given that creation means to produce something out of nothing, the topic under examination is whether in the productions of nature there is something which is made from nothing.⁴⁶

One idea that is used to support the claim that creation is really involved in the works of nature is that, since natural forms (*formae naturales*) have no matter as a constituent part, they cannot be made from matter. Therefore, since forms are made - i.e., their existence has a beginning in time - they have to be made from nothing, which is to say that they have to be the product of divine creation.⁴⁷

Aquinas argues against this sort of opinion by focusing on the notion of generation and by clarifying the role played by form in it. He notes that those who believe that natural forms are the product of divine creation can be divided into two groups, each being led to a mistaken view about forms because of a distinct type of error.⁴⁸

The first view that Aquinas criticizes states - on the basis of a misconception regarding the notion of matter - that in nature nothing is made by a natural generator except in that it is drawn from another thing in which it (i.e., the thing made) exists latently. Relying on Aristotle's *Physics*, Aquinas associates this view with Anaxagoras, according to whom what is said to come into being through the action of nature

⁴⁵ According to Torrell (1996), the *QDPD* dates from the first year of Aquinas' stay in Rome, 1265-66, before the composition of the *Prima Pars* of the *ST*, which was completed by September 1268, when Aquinas leaves Rome for Paris. Other parallel texts that deal with the production of forms are: *SCG* II. 86; *ST* 1a Q45a4, a8; Q65a4; Q110a2; *CM* VII.7, n.1423-1431.

⁴⁶ As regards creation as a divine effect, Aquinas writes the following: "Thus, through his [i.e., God's] action he produces the whole subsistent being, without anything pre-existing (*nullo praesupposito*), since he is the principle of all being and [acts] according to his whole being (*utpote qui est totius esse principium et secundum se totum*). And because of this he is able to make something from nothing and this action of his is called creation" (cf. *QDPD* 3.1). I quote from Susan Selner-Wright's translation of *QDPD* 3 (see Bibliography, 'Primary Sources for Aquinas', *On Creation*, 2011).

⁴⁷ For the idea that a natural form, or at least some part of it, is the result of creation, see *QDPD* 3.8, obj. 4, 6, 7 and 11. Since Aquinas argues against the position that creation is involved in the acts of nature, he will refute this sort of objection on the grounds that it relies on a misconception about generation.

⁴⁸ The same argumentative strategy is adopted, though in a condensed form, in *ST* 1a Q45a8.

already exists in the material substratum, though only in a state of latency.⁴⁹ For Aquinas, however, to say that natural forms pre-exist in matter means only that matter is in a state of indeterminacy as regards the actual possession of this or that form, and not that natural forms are latently present in the material substratum.

The second type of error regarding a form's coming into existence arises from ignorance about the very nature of form. According to this view, which Aquinas ascribes to Plato and Avicenna, the role of nature in generation is restricted to disposing matter to the reception of a form. Since, unlike creation, the operation of nature must always proceed from some pre-existing element - and because this element has to be matter given its nature of pure potentiality - the holders of this view claim that form - which has no matter in its constitution - must come from an agent which is capable of making something out of nothing. Since, for these thinkers, form must always come from a supernatural agent whose action presupposes nothing, it follows that every operation of nature is accompanied by a distinct act of creation by virtue of which form is made to exist in the parcel of matter for whose disposition nature was responsible.

Aquinas intends to show that the Platonic notion of a supernatural 'giver of forms' (*dator formarum*) becomes superfluous once we adopt the idea - call it the 'law of similarity' - that every natural thing produces its like. According to the law of similarity, the role of a natural generator consists in making that which is *potentially* like itself to be *actually* like itself. As an alternative to the Platonic theory of a supernatural *dator formarum*, the law of similarity contends that the substantial form of the thing generated is produced by the action of a natural generator since that which is acquired by the thing generated through natural generation is already found in the natural generator in a state of actuality.

Yet one should not think that the substantial form which is actually in the generator and only potentially in the matter of the thing generated is the proper subject of generation. For Aquinas, that the Platonists are incapable of realizing that "being is

⁴⁹ Cf. *Phy.* I.4, 187a36-37. According to Aristotle, Anaxagoras' mistake stems from his failing to provide an accurate distinction between the concepts of actuality and potentiality. For more on Anaxagoras' mistake, and the notion of potency as latency (and of matter as a storehouse of latent forms), see chapter 5, subsection 5.3.1, when I address Aquinas' theory of eduction.

not univocally predicated of the natural form and the thing generated" is a sign of their lack of knowledge about what it is to be a form.⁵⁰

Since the form-matter composite - because it is a subsistent thing capable of existing by itself and not in another - is what is said to be properly and *per se*, while the substantial form of that composite is only that by which the composite exists, Aquinas contends against the Platonist that what is made properly and *per se* is the composite, whereas its form is simply that whereby the composite is made.⁵¹

Aquinas concludes his investigation of whether creation is mingled with the works of nature by saying that in nature nothing comes from nothing, so that there is no need to posit with the Platonists a supernatural giver of forms who brings natural forms into being out of nothing.⁵² The form-matter composite, which is the proper subject of generation, is not made from nothing but from the potency of matter. Now the composite's coming into being from matter is accounted for by its substantial

⁵⁰ Cf. *QDPD* 3.8, *respondeo*: "*Forma enim naturalis non dicitur univoce esse cum re generata*". The 'thing generated' is the form-matter composite, of which 'being' is predicated properly and *per se*. Given the idea that 'being is the terminus of coming to be' (*esse est terminus factiones*), Aquinas is able to derive the principle that 'that which is made is said to come to be in the same way that it is said to be' (*unumquodque autem factum, hoc modo dicitur fieri quo dicitur esse*). Since it is the composite and not its substantial form that is said to be properly and *per se*, it is only the composite that is said to be generated in the proper sense: "*Unde illud quod proprie fit per se, compositum est*".

⁵¹ The form is that "*per cuius acquisitionem aliquid [that is, a composite] dicitur fieri*" (cf. *QDPD* 3.8, *respondeo*). Hence, as Aquinas writes in *ST* 1a Q45a8 ad1, "Forms begin to be actual when the composite things are made; not as though they [i.e., the forms] were made in an absolute sense, but only qualifiedly" (*Formae incipiunt esse in actu, compositis factis, non quod ipsae fiant per se, sed per accidens tantum*). In *ST* 1a Q45a4 Aquinas addresses the question whether 'to be made' and 'to be created' belong properly to composites and subsistent things. There Aquinas claims that 'to be made' and 'to be created' belong to whatever 'being' belongs. In addition, he states that being belongs properly to whatever is subsistent - whether it is a form-matter composite or a subsistent form, like the human soul. Hence to be made and to be created do not belong properly to nonsubsistent forms, since those forms are not said to be in the same sense that composites and subsistent forms are said to be. Aquinas concludes by saying that, rather than exist, nonsubsistent forms are said to *co-exist*, so that, instead of being properly generated, they are said to be *cogenerated*. Cf. *ST* 1a Q45a4c, last sentence: "*Sicut igitur accidentia et formae, et huiusmodi, quae non subsistunt, magis sunt coexistentia quam entia; ita magis debent dici concreata quam creata. Proprie vero creata sunt subsistentia*".

⁵² It must be noted that the fact that creation is not mingled with the works of nature does not entail that God's work is not involved in the operations of nature. After all, every natural thing is properly said to be a creature. In *QDPD* 3.7 Aquinas explains the several senses in which God operates in nature: (i) he gives the natural thing its power to operate; (ii) he continuously maintains that power in being; (iii) he applies the natural power to action; (iv) in every natural action God is the principal agent, whereas the natural thing acts only as an instrumental agent, since the natural agent's power can only operate by the divine power. For a detailed exposition on the matter, see *QDPD* 3.7, *respondeo*.

form's capacity to be educed into actuality from matter by the action of a natural generator in which - given the law of similarity - the same form (*specifically* the same but not *numerically* the same) already exists in actuality. That a substantial form actually exists in a portion of matter constitutes the endpoint of a composite substance's process of generation.⁵³

So far we have seen that nonsubsistent substantial forms are neither created from nothing nor the proper subjects of a natural process of generation. The Aristotelian-Thomistic account of generation holds that forms are *cogenerated* - i.e., their coming into being supervenes upon the generation of a composite substance - while the generation of the composite is explained in terms of a form's being educed into act from the potency of matter by the power of a natural generator. However, this is not the only way in which Aquinas conceives of the coming into being of a form. Unlike nonsubsistent substantial forms, the subsistent souls of human substances are not made from matter, but by a distinctive act of divine creation.

4.3.2. *The Coming Into Being of a Subsistent Form: Creation vs. Transmission*

In *ST* 1a Q110 Aquinas examines how angels act on bodies. In the second article of that question, he asks whether corporeal matter obeys the will of an angel. In his answer, Aquinas claims that angels cannot rule over matter without some sort of mediation, saying that the action of informing matter can only occur in two ways: either immediately from God or by means of a corporeal agent.⁵⁴ Whereas subsistent forms act on (that is, *inform*) matter by being immediately produced by divine agency, nonsubsistent forms, as we have just seen in 4.3.1, come into being with the composite through the action of a natural generator.

⁵³ See, for instance, *CM* VII.7, n.1423: "*Formae enim proprie non fiunt, sed educuntur de potentia materiae, in quantum materia quae est in potentia ad formam fit actu sub forma, quod est facere compositum*". In chapter 5, subsection 5.3.1, I compare two different ways of reading Aquinas' theory of education: (i) what I call the 'standard' reading, which I say relies on an excessively literal interpretation of the verb *educere* when applied to a form's capacity to pre-exist in matter, and (ii) what I call the 'alternative' reading, which seeks to interpret Aquinas' theory in a way that is compatible with texts where Aquinas says, for instance, that the act of being is 'educed' from nothing by God.

⁵⁴ Cf. *ST* 1a Q110a2: "*Omnis informatio materiae vel est a Deo immediate, vel ab aliquo agente corporali; non autem immediate ab angelo*".

In *QDPD* 3.9 Aquinas presents the question regarding the human soul's production in the form of the following dilemma: Is the rational soul of man brought into being by creation or by the transmission of the semen?⁵⁵

Although Aquinas mentions a large number of objections against the idea that the human soul is created - twenty nine in total! - the kind of difficulty that arises from the doctrine of the human soul's creation can be summarized by the following objection. Even before being perfected by a rational soul, the human embryo has some vital operations, since, for instance, it is the sort of thing that grows and takes in nutrition. The embryo, therefore, is a *living thing*. Now, since the soul is the life-giving principle of everything that lives, one has to admit that the embryo has a soul. But given that the embryo cannot receive an additional soul - because then the same body would possess two souls, which is impossible - the very soul that is in the semen when it issues forth and that is propagated with it must be the rational soul of the fully developed human being.⁵⁶

Aquinas begins his answer by contemplating what he regards as two extreme solutions to the question of the soul's coming into being, neither of which is adopted by him. On the one hand, there is the view that the soul of the generated is propagated from the soul of the generator, just like a child's body is said to be propagated from the parent's bodies. On the other hand, there is the view that rational souls are created all at once at the beginning of the creation of the world, apart from and prior to the production of bodies. Aquinas' strategy is to refute each of these two opposing views and to adopt the one that lies midway between them, according to which each human soul is created by God simultaneously with the natural generation of the body into which that soul is infused. As regards the two views that he rejects,

⁵⁵ "*Utrum anima rationalis educatur in esse per creationem, vel per seminis traductionem*". Parallel discussions of how human souls come into being are to be found in *ST* 1a Q90 and Q118, as well as in *SCG* II.86-90.

⁵⁶ Cf. *QDPD* 3.9, obj. 9: "*Embryo antequam anima rationali perficiatur, habet aliquam operationem animae; quia augetur et nutritur et sentit. Sed operatio animae non est sine vita. Ergo vivit. Vitae vero corporis principium est animae. Ergo habet animam. Sed non potest dici quod adveniat ei alia anima; quia tunc in uno corpore essent duae animae. Ergo ipsa anima quae prius erat in semine propagata, est anima rationalis*". The importance of this objection to the discussion on the human soul's coming into being and on the exact timing of ensoulment is evidenced by the fact that Aquinas' reply to it is even longer than the *respondeo*.

Aquinas tells us that, besides being condemned by the Church, there are also philosophical reasons for doing away with them.⁵⁷

Aquinas comes up with three arguments in support of the idea that human souls, instead of being produced through the dissemination of the semen, are the result of direct divine agency.⁵⁸ The first argument relies on the distinction between the human soul and other substantial forms, which Aquinas usually calls ‘material forms’. Material forms are nonsubsistent substantial forms, which is to say that they do not possess an act of being of their own, but that their being is the being by which something else - i.e., that of which they are the form - subsists. Nonsubsistent substantial forms are called ‘material’ because the being that they receive is not retained by them, but rather transmitted to the parcels of matter in which they inhere and without which they cannot persist.

The human soul, on the other hand, is a subsistent form, which is to say that it is not merely that by which something else subsists, but it possesses an act of being of its own: the human soul is capable of retaining the being it receives from God, so that the being it transmits to the composite substance is actually its own being, which it shares with the composite of which it is a subsistent part.

As I have indicated before, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the idea that one and the same act of being is shared by the soul and the composite, since the soul is not itself a full-fledged substance. For this reason, it is not the case that one and the same act of being gets to be shared by two distinct substances, which is impossible according to Aquinas. Instead, the sharing of the act of being takes place between a

⁵⁷ Regarding the position of the Church, Aquinas quotes *De Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus*: “*Animas hominum non esse ab initio inter ceteras intellectuales naturas, nec simul creatas credimus, sicut Origenes fingit; neque cum corporibus per coitum seminantur, sicut Luciferiani et Cyrillus et aliqui Latinorum praesumptores affirmant. Sed dicimus corpus tantum per coniugii copulam seminari, ac formato iam corpore, anima creari et infundi*”. With respect to the philosophical reasons for rejecting the two condemned views, Aquinas first deals with the thesis that the soul is propagated with the semen in *QDPD* 3.9, and next in 3.10 he tackles the view that the soul is created apart from the body together with other spiritual beings.

⁵⁸ Of the three arguments devised by Aquinas, the first one plays a leading role, while the other two are somewhat auxiliary: assuming that the reader has been convinced by the first, what they do is to provide an extra boost to the thesis that the rational soul is made by God without the mediation of natural agents.

substance and one of its parts - more precisely, its only subsistent part, namely the soul.

Since being is properly ascribed to the intellective soul as to a subsistent thing, which is not the case with other substantial forms, it must be held that the human soul does not come into being in the same way that other substantial forms do. Nonsubsistent substantial forms are only *cogenerated*: they are not, properly speaking, made, given that they are nothing but that by means of which something else is made. Human souls, by contrast, are said to be properly and *per se* made.

Against the backdrop of the distinction between subsistent and nonsubsistent forms, Aquinas presents his argument for the human soul's creation in the following manner. That which is properly and *per se* made is made either from matter - as in the case of a composite substance - or from nothing. What is not itself material cannot be made from matter. But the soul is not material. Hence it cannot be made from matter. Since, on the one hand, the soul must be properly and *per se* made, because it is something subsistent, and, on the other, it cannot be made from matter, because it is not itself materially composed, it follows that the soul has to be made by God, to whom the power to create from nothing solely belongs.⁵⁹

Aquinas' second argument against the view that the human soul is produced by means of the dissemination of semen holds that a corporeal power - like the power contained in the semen - cannot be the efficient cause of an incorporeal power - i.e., the human soul's intellective power - since an agent must always be superior to that

⁵⁹ It must be noted that Aquinas is not claiming in his argument that *any* immaterial thing is made from nothing by a distinctive act of creation. Rather, he is saying that immaterial things *that are properly made* are made from nothing. Hence nonsubsistent substantial forms - which are called 'material' not in the sense of being materially composed (which they are not), but because they always exist in matter - are not made from nothing to the extent that they are not what is properly made. It is only when conjoined with subsistence that immateriality entails creation *ex nihilo*, given that only subsistent things are properly and *per se* made (see *ST* 1a Q45a4). Since among substantial forms only the human soul is both subsistent and immaterial, it follows that only the human soul is created from nothing. The claim that 'immateriality & subsistence → being made from nothing' is derived from the following premises: (P1) 'Immateriality & Subsistence → Incorruptibility' and (P2) 'Incorruptibility → Being made from nothing'. We know (P1) from Aquinas' incorruptibility argument (see footnote 32 and subsection 4.2.2), whereas (P2) is supported by the following argument:
(P2.1): What is properly made is made either from matter or from nothing.
(P2.2): That which is made from matter is made from matter subject to contrariety.
(P2.3): That which is made from matter subject to contrariety is corruptible.
∴ (C): What is incorruptible must be made from nothing.

upon which it acts.⁶⁰ Given that an immaterial power is superior to a power which is embedded in matter, it follows that the human soul, as a subsistent form that has an act of being of its own, cannot be brought into existence by seminal power.

Aquinas' third argument relies on the idea that every form that comes into being through a natural process of generation is educed from the potency of matter by a natural generator. Since the human soul is said to be capable of operating independently of the body, it cannot have its origin in corporeal matter, given that anything that originates in matter is to some degree limited by matter.⁶¹

Although Aquinas thinks that the human soul, unlike nonsubsistent substantial forms, is not the product of natural generation but the result of immediate divine causation, in his replies to the objections of *QDPD* 3.9 he goes on to explain what the precise role of the seminal power in human generation is.⁶² Despite the fact that in human generation the natural generator is not directly responsible for the production of the substantial form of the generated thing, that does not mean that the generator plays no role at all in the ensoulment of the composite, since, as Aquinas often says, "in nature nothing is superfluous".⁶³

According to Aquinas, in human generation the seminal power is responsible for 'giving matter its final disposition' (*disponendo materiam ultima dispositione*), which is something that takes place in preparation for the actual ensoulment of the parcel of matter out of which the living composite is made.⁶⁴

Aquinas elaborates on the idea that the active power in the semen does not extend to making the rational soul but is restricted to disposing matter. He contends that the kind of disposition given by the seminal power to matter is such that by the action of the semen matter becomes a body perfectible by a human soul. Aquinas

⁶⁰ "*Agens oportet esse praestantius patiente*". The idea is drawn from Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* XII.16.

⁶¹ A similar point is advanced in *ST* 1a Q90a2 ad2, whereas the *corpus* of the article contains a compact version of the first argument of *QDPD* 3.9.

⁶²As regards the role of the semen in human ensoulment, see *QDPD* 3.9 ad 2, 5, 6, 11, 20 and 21.

⁶³ "*Nihil sit otiosum in natura*". The motto, quoted by Aquinas in several places throughout his works, comes from Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*, IV.11, 691b5.

⁶⁴ Cf. *QDPD* 3.9 ad 2.

adds that such a capacity to act on matter prior to its informing can only belong to the semen through the mediation of a rational soul, that is, insofar as the semen acts as an instrument of the generator's soul. The idea is that the soul of the generator is capable of communicating to the semen something of its own nature, so that the semen can prepare matter for the reception of the human soul.⁶⁵

As regards the semen's capacity to act on matter as an instrument of the generator's soul, Aquinas claims that even though there is no soul in the semen when it issues forth, still there is in it a 'power of soul' (*virtus animae*), the origin of which is in the soul of the generator, and which is channeled through the semen into a portion of matter because of a spirit that is contained in the sperm due to its foamy nature.⁶⁶

As I have said above, the most relevant objection to the view that the human soul is created by God out of nothing relies on the idea that the embryo performs some vital activities - which are themselves indicative of a soul - prior to its being perfected by a rational soul, since none of the activities that are carried out by the embryo are expressive of a *rational* soul. Given that one and the same body cannot accommodate more than one soul, it follows that the soul by means of which the embryo effects its vital activities is the rational soul, and that such a soul is produced through a natural process, with the propagation of the semen.⁶⁷ To see how Aquinas responds to it, we have to examine his account of the complexity of human generation.

4.3.3. *On the Life of the Embryo and the Complexity of Human Generation*

Aquinas' account of the life of the embryo begins with the exposition of what he takes to be the most relevant opinions of his time on the topic.⁶⁸ According to one view, the fully developed human soul, just like the human body, progresses from the semen in which it exists virtually (*virtualiter*). The idea is that the soul is present in the

⁶⁵ Cf. *QDPD* 3.9 ad5.

⁶⁶ Cf. *QDPD* 3.9 ad11.

⁶⁷ See footnote 56 above.

⁶⁸ Cf. *QDPD* 3.9 ad9. Aquinas lists six different approaches to the problem of the life of the embryo and the timing of ensoulment. He rejects the first five opinions and presents the sixth as his own. For a parallel, condensed discussion of the subject, see *ST* 1a Q118a2 ad2.

semen from the beginning of generation (though not in actuality), and that it reaches its perfection gradually, so that in the early stages of its development the living thing is capable of effecting only the most basic activities of life.

Before rejecting the above opinion, Aquinas considers two ways in which it could be interpreted. On the one hand, it could mean that the soul, according to its very nature, is in the semen since the beginning, but that it does not yet display all its perfections due to the lack of the appropriate bodily organs. On the other hand, it could mean that there is in the semen from the beginning some power (*virtus*) which is later transformed into a soul through the action of nature.

According to Aquinas, none of these alternatives is acceptable. The first is rejected on the authority of Aristotle, who claims that the semen is only in potentiality to the sort of body that has a soul. As a result, when it is held that the semen is potentially living, one should not understand by this that the soul is already present in the semen, though not in actuality, but rather that the semen altogether lacks a soul.⁶⁹

The second alternative - i.e., that the semen has a power that gradually evolves into a soul - is rejected on the grounds that substantial forms, because they do not admit of a more and a less, are not brought to actuality continuously but rather instantaneously (*in instanti*).⁷⁰

⁶⁹ The text Aquinas relies on is *DA* II.1, 412b25-26. The Latin text of Aristotle from Aquinas' commentary is as follows: "*Est autem non abiciens animam, potentia ens, ut vivat; sed quod habens. Semen autem et fructus, potentia tale corpus est*". Aquinas comments on this passage in the following manner: "For an object is said to be something potentially in two ways: in one way when it does not possess the principle of its operation; in a second way when it does possess that principle but is not functioning in accord with it. But a body whose actuality is the soul has life in potentiality in the second way, not the first. This is why he says that a body "being potentially living" - i.e., potentially having life - whose actuality is the soul, is said to be in potentiality for life not in such a way that it "casts off soul" [*abiciens animam*] - i.e., is lacking the principle of life that is soul - but so that it possesses a principle of this sort. It is true, however, that seed [*semen*] and fruit (in which the seeds of the plant are preserved) are in potentiality for this sort of living body that has soul. For seed does not yet have soul, but is in potentiality for soul and thus is in potentiality as something that "casts off soul" (cf. *CDA* II, lectio 2, n. 240; I quote from Pasnau's English translation).

⁷⁰ Hence the idea that 'a form does not come into being in matter until the final instant of an alteration' (*Forma vero non incipit esse in materia nisi in ultimo instanti alterationis*). When Aquinas states that substantial forms do not admit of more and less (*Nulla forma substantialis suscipiat magis et minus*) what he means is that the production of a form in matter does not involve, on the part of the form, a continuous movement from imperfection to perfection. For Aquinas, it is only matter that is subject to gradual alteration to the extent that it can be more or less disposed to the reception of a given form. For a discussion of the idea that substantial forms do not take on degrees of more and less in Aquinas, see *DME*, n.13; in Aristotle, see *Cat.*, 5, 3b32-4a7.

Another opinion regarding the life of the embryo has it that there is in the semen at first a vegetative soul, and that later, while this soul remains, a sensitive soul is induced by the action of a generator, and that finally a rational soul is brought into being by an act of creation. According to such an opinion, there are three souls in man, each of which having a different provenance: the vegetative, the semen; the sensitive, the generator; and the rational, God.

As someone who believes in the unicity of the soul, Aquinas obviously rejects this view. His argument is based on the distinction between substantial forms and accidental forms. While the latter makes something be such, the former makes its subject be unconditionally. Hence, while the addition (or removal) of a substantial form causes its subject to be generated (or corrupted) unconditionally, the addition (or removal) of an accidental form causes its subject to be generated (or corrupted) only in a certain respect. In this sense, what would follow is that after the addition of the vegetative soul through the action of the semen, the sensitive and rational souls would be united to the body only accidentally, because if the first form - i.e., the vegetative soul - gave being unconditionally, those that came after it, finding a subject already constituted in substantial being, could only be joined to the body so as to make it be in a certain respect, not unconditionally.⁷¹

⁷¹ I list below the three remaining opinions that are rejected by Aquinas as regards embryonic life. The third opinion is a slight variation of the one just mentioned above, in that it claims that the vegetative soul in the semen is brought to perfection in the sensitive soul through the action of nature, while the sensitive soul is brought to perfection in the rational soul by divine creation. Hence, it is claimed that the rational soul is partly 'from without' (*ab extrinseco*) - insofar as it results from a divine act of creation - and partly 'from within' (*ab intrinseco*) - given its origin in the vegetative and sensitive souls. Now, if we assume that, according to such a view, the rational soul is really distinct from its predecessors, then we return to the second opinion, and to the problem of the plurality of substantial forms. If, on the other hand, there is no real distinction between them, so that the rational soul is simply the ultimate perfection of the vegetative and the sensitive souls, then the same problem of the first opinion reappears, namely, that substantial forms are brought into actuality by degrees. The fourth and fifth opinions have in common that they both assert that there is no soul in the embryo. The fourth opinion claims that the embryo has no soul until it is perfected by the rational soul, so that the operations it performs prior to its ensoulment are due to the mother's soul. However, so Aquinas objects, living things differ from nonliving things to the extent that the former are self-moving, i.e., they possess an intrinsic principle of movement. Hence, if the embryo is capable of performing some vital activities, this must be due to an intrinsic, not extrinsic, principle of operation. The fifth opinion has it that, since the embryo has no soul until the infusion of the rational soul, its vital operations must be performed by means of a formative power (*vis formativa*) that exists in it. Aquinas rejects this last view on the basis that the embryo, even prior to its final perfection, displays different vital activities, which therefore cannot originate in one power only. Hence, it must have a soul which is not yet the rational soul.

Aquinas' own view on the life of the embryo is that, prior to the infusion of the rational soul, there already is in the embryo a soul which is responsible for those basic activities that the embryo is said to perform, like growing and taking in food. It does not follow, however, from the view Aquinas proposes that there is more than one soul in the same body. According to Aquinas, when the rational soul is brought into being in the body by a divine act of creation, the pre-rational soul by means of which the embryo performs its elementary operations is 'cast aside' (*abiecta*).⁷²

Aquinas believes that what we refer to as the generation of a human being is actually a complex process that involves many particular instances of generation and corruption. In the natural process of a living substance's generation, different substantial forms appear and are cast off, until one reaches - in the case of a man's coming into being - the moment in which a rational soul is infused into a properly disposed body.

The idea that the generation of a human being contains many generations and corruptions results from Aquinas' attempt to reconcile two theses on the nature of substantial forms with what we can call the 'empirical evidence' that the embryo is a living thing. On the one hand, Aquinas contends that substantial forms are such that: (i) they do not overlap, that is, one substance cannot have more than one substantial form at the same time; (ii) their coming into being in matter is never gradual but instantaneous. On the other hand, there is the fact that the embryo, even before the advent of the rational soul, performs certain basic operations that are distinctive of living things.

Aquinas summarizes his position on the life of the embryo and the beginning of human life as follows:

And so it is that through the formative power which is in the sperm from the beginning, the sperm form is cast off and another form is induced, which in turn being cast off, another is induced. And in this way the vegetative soul is first induced; then, it being cast off, a soul which is at once sensitive and vegetative is induced; and, this being cast off,

⁷² Aquinas' own view on embryonic life is presented in the last part of *QDPD* 3.9 ad9.

another soul which is at once rational, sensitive and vegetative is induced, not through the [seminal] power, but by the creator.⁷³

In Aquinas' view, human generation involves the coming into being and the corruption of many substantial forms. The vegetative and sensitive souls - which inform the body after the seminal power has disposed it to the reception of a soul, but prior to the creation of the rational soul - are said to be educed into actuality from the potency of matter through the action of the seminal power, which in turn operates as an instrument of the generator's soul. Hence, insofar as the vegetative and sensitive souls are concerned, the natural generator is said to be the efficient cause of their coming into being. However, the same is not true of the rational soul, to the extent that its arrival is due to divine creation. Therefore, not only is human generation a complex process, insofar as it includes the arrival and departure of many substantial forms, it is also in a way *heterogeneous*, to the extent that it involves the presence of different efficient causes - namely, the begetter and God.

One aspect of Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul's production consists in that it comes into being by means of a divine act of creation. This is what enables Aquinas to hold that the human soul is a genuine receptor of the act of being, which is transmitted to it directly from God in the moment of its creation. Hence the doctrine of the human soul's creation is what ultimately accounts for its subsistent nature: a man's soul has being on its own because it is immediately created by God, who is the ultimate source of all being.

The second aspect of Aquinas' doctrine consists in that the human soul is not created apart from the human body, but rather in that same body. The thesis that the soul is created in tandem with the natural generation of the body in which it inheres allows Aquinas to avoid the undesirable conclusion that soul and body possess each a different act of being. As Aquinas contends, "the creator gives being to the soul in the body and the generator disposes the body to be a sharer in this being through the soul

⁷³ Cf. QDPD 3.9 ad9: "*Sic ergo per virtutem formativam, quae a principio est in semine, abiecta forma spermatis, inducitur alia forma; qua abiecta, iterum inducatur alia: et sic primo inducatur anima vegetabilis; deinde ea abiecta, inducatur anima sensibilis et vegetabilis simul; qua abiecta, inducatur non per virtutem praedictam sed a creante, anima quae simul est rationalis et sensibilis et vegetabilis*".

united to it".⁷⁴ Hence, while the thesis of the soul's immediate production by God accounts for the soul's subsistence - i.e., the fact that it has an act of being of its own - the thesis of the soul's creation in the body and not apart from it accounts for the idea that soul and body are not two complete, independent entities, but rather complementary parts of one substance.

4.3.4. Creation in the Body and the Principle of Proportionality

In *QDPD* 3.10 Aquinas advances four arguments in favour of the view that, instead of being created apart from their bodies at the beginning of the world, human souls are rather created *in* human bodies. Aquinas' first argument relies on the idea that God creates things in their state of natural perfection (*in sua perfectione naturali*), according to the requirements of each thing's species.⁷⁵ Now because the human soul does not by itself constitute a complete species - it is a part of human nature - it follows that it cannot achieve the perfection of its nature apart from the body, which is the complementary part of the human species. Hence the soul is not created apart from the body, but in the body.⁷⁶

The second argument used by Aquinas is said to come from Avicenna, and is based on the idea that while formal differences are responsible for diversity of species, material differences produce numerical diversity within one and the same species.

⁷⁴ Cf. *QDPD* 3.9 ad20. The whole reply reads as follows: "*In homine non est duplex esse, quia non est sic intelligendum corpus esse a generante et animam a create, quasi corpori acquiratur esse separatur a generante, et separatim animae a create; sed quia creans dat esse animae in corpore, et generans disponit corpus ad hoc quod huius esse sit particeps per animam sibi unitam*". (The emphasis in the original is mine. The English translation is S.C. Selner-Wright's.)

⁷⁵ In *QDPD* 3.16 Aquinas discusses the extent to which God's effects can be necessitated. Aquinas will hold that any necessity that might arise in divine works is 'from the form which is the end of operation' (*ex forma, quae est finis operationis*). The example he gives of this 'necessity of the end' (*necessitas finis*) is as follows: "We might say that if God intends to make a human being, it is necessary and due that he confer a rational soul and an organic body on him, without which a human being cannot be". Hence, given the very notion of what a human being is, it is required that, when God freely chooses to create a human being, he must produce a rational soul in such-and-such a body. This is what is meant by the phrase 'the requirements of each thing's species'.

⁷⁶ The same argument is presented in *ST* 1a Q90a4, *corpus*: "*Manifestum est enim quod Deus primas res instituit in perfecto statu suae naturae, secundum quod uniuscuiusque rei species exigebat. Anima autem, cum sit pars humanae naturae, non habet naturalem perfectionem nisi secundum quod est corpori unita. Unde non fuisset conveniens animam sine corpore creari*".

Hence, because souls are immaterial things, it would follow - if they were actually created apart from bodies - that every difference among souls would have to count as a difference in species. That is to say, it would not be possible to distinguish souls numerically within a species. Therefore, if we are to preserve the idea that two souls can be specifically the same but numerically different, we have to admit that souls are created in bodies, so that the bodies in which they are created constitute the material element on which the numerical distinction among souls is based.⁷⁷

Aquinas' third argument relies on the thesis of the unicity of the soul - the notion that, for instance, in a human being it is one and the same soul which is at once vegetative, sensitive and intellective. The argument holds that, since the vegetative and sensitive powers of the soul can only originate in the body - given that they are the acts of certain parts of the body - it follows that the human soul can only be created in the body.⁷⁸

In the first argument for the soul's creation in a body Aquinas holds that, because the soul can only achieve the perfection of its own nature when united to the body, it has to be created in the body, since God creates things in their state of natural perfection. In the fourth argument, however, Aquinas begins by assuming - for the sake of the discussion - the opposite view: that the soul is not a part of a substance but rather a complete substance of a spiritual nature, something that by itself possesses the perfection of its species. In this case, argues Aquinas, it would be impossible to give a good reason for the soul's embodiment. In other words, Aquinas thinks that if one

⁷⁷ The argument does not assume that immaterial entities created apart from bodies are not numerically distinguishable at all, so that those who say that souls are created separately would have to subscribe to some sort of monopsychism. What the argument is saying is that, once we assume the view of separate creation, every case of numerical distinction becomes ipso facto an instance of specific distinction. Hence, since souls are not themselves material, one has to admit that they are created in bodies in order to preserve the idea of numerical distinction *within one and the same species*. See, for instance, *ST* 1a Q50a4, where Aquinas holds that each angel, as an immaterial entity which is created separately, constitutes a species of its own, so that it is impossible for two angels to belong to one and the same species.

⁷⁸ Since the soul is one in essence but multiple in power, and because some of its powers are the acts of some bodily parts, it follows that the human soul is more truly a soul when embodied than when separated from the body. Hence, not only does Aquinas have to defend the resurrection of the body as a means to restore the soul's perfection, but it is also crucial for him to explain why is it that the human body perishes when it is of the nature of the human soul - which is itself incorruptible - to be united to a body. I will briefly touch upon this when discussing the fourth argument in favour of the soul's creation in a body.

rejects the premise that it is in the soul's nature as a part to be united to the body, then one cannot provide a proper cause for the fact that - in this life at least - souls exist in bodies.

First, it cannot be said that the soul was joined to the body by the soul's own proper motion. Since it is not in the soul's power to abandon the body when it so wills, by the same token it is not acceptable that the soul voluntarily decide to be united to a body at some point after having been created apart from it. Second, if one assumes that God creates human souls apart from bodies, one cannot then claim that they are united to bodies by God's own volition. For if, on the one hand, it is said that God joins a soul to a body for the soul's own perfection, there is no reason why he would have created them without bodies. Now if, on the other hand, the joining of the soul to a body is not for the sake of the soul's perfection but is rather a way of punishing the soul for its sins, it follows that the production of composite substances is accidental and not the result of God's first intention.

The view that human souls are embodied as a punishment for sin was proposed by the Christian theologian Origen in his work *Peri Archon*. Aquinas rejects it on the basis that it relies on the false assumption that human souls are of the same nature as angels, so that both would have to be created in the same fashion. Aquinas responds to such a view by claiming the following: "Even though soul and angel agree in intellectual nature, they differ in that the angel is a nature complete in itself, which thus could be created in itself. The soul, on the other hand, the perfection of whose nature lies in its union with the body, must be created not in heaven but in the body of which it is the perfection".⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Cf. *QDPD* 3.10 ad10: "*Angelus et anima convenient in natura intellectuali, differunt tamen in hoc quod Angelus est quaedam natura in se completa, unde per se creari potuit; anima vero, cum perfectionem suae naturae habeat in hoc quod corpori unitur, non debuit in caelo, sed in corpore cuius est perfectio, creari*". In *ST* 1a Q75a7, Aquinas investigates whether the soul belongs to the same species as the angel. Aquinas concludes that it cannot be the case that the soul and the angel belong to a single species, and in his answer to the problem he refutes Origen's idea that the difference between angels and human souls is merely accidental, stemming from free will and sin. Aquinas also discusses Origen's view on the distinction of creatures in *ST* 1a Q47a2, the topic of which is whether the inequality of things is from God. On Origen's view, God first created rational creatures, which were all equal. While some of those creatures decided to turn to God, others decided to turn away from him, both from their own free will. While the former were then made angels, the latter were bound to bodies according to the level of their sin. Against Origen, Aquinas will claim that both the diversity and the inequality among creatures is the result of divine wisdom, and not of creaturely wickedness.

Although Aquinas rejects Origen's notion that souls are united to bodies as a consequence of sin, he does accept the somewhat similar view that the bodies in which human souls are created in this life are corruptible because of sin, and not merely by reason of their material constitution. One of the objections to the thesis that the soul is created in the body states that things that are one in inception depend on each other in being. Now the soul cannot depend on the body in its being, since it remains when the body corrupts. Hence it cannot begin to exist simultaneously with the body.⁸⁰

The idea behind this objection is that the beginning and the end of the life of a creature must be proportional to one another. Therefore, from the fact that the soul is capable of outliving the body, one would have to conclude that in the beginning the soul was created before the body.⁸¹ While in his reply to the objection in *QDPD* 3.10 Aquinas seems to reject the necessity of a proportionality between beginning and end, in some parallel discussions in *ST* 1a Q90a4 and Q118a3 it looks as though Aquinas accepts the principle of proportionality, which leads him to adopt the quasi-Origenian theory that bodily death is imposed on human beings as a consequence of sin.

In *QDPD* 3.10 Aquinas replies to the objection by claiming that, although the soul depends on the body for its beginning, given that it can only acquire the perfection of its nature when joined to a body, it does not depend on the body for its end, since it is created in the body as a subsistent part of the human composite. Because of that, after the dissolution of the body the soul remains in existence, though not according to the fullness of its nature.⁸² The soul - we may add - persists as a part, and as such it aspires to be rejoined to the body at some later stage.

⁸⁰ Cf. *QDPD* 3.10 obj16: "*Ea quorum una est inceptio, videtur quod secundum esse debeant ad invicem. Sed anima secundum esse suum non dependet a corpore, quod patet ex hoc quod corrupto corpore manet. Ergo nec anima simul incipit cum corpore*".

⁸¹ For a defence of the proportionality between beginning and end, see *ST* 1a Q90a4 obj3: "*Finis proportionatur principio. Sed anima in fine remanet post corpus. Ergo et in principio fuit creata ante corpus*". Also Q118a3 obj3: "*Finis rei respondet eius principio. Sed anima intellectiva remanet, destructo corpore. Ergo incoepit esse ante corpus*".

⁸² Cf. *QDPD* 3.10 ad16: "*Quod licet anima dependeat a corpore quantum ad sui principium, ut in perfectione suae naturae incipiat, tamen quantum ad sui finem non dependet a corpore, quia acquiritur sibi esse in corpore ut rei subsistenti: unde destructo corpore, nihilominus manet in suo esse, licet non in completionem suae naturae, quam habet in unione ad corpus*".

In later treatments of the same objection in *ST*, Aquinas does not abandon his basic view that the soul is united to the body as a subsistent part, with the consequence that human souls depend on the body for their beginning but not for their end. Nonetheless, what makes Aquinas' later approach interesting is the attempt to reconcile his conception of the human soul as a subsistent part of human substances with the principle that the end is proportional to the beginning.

Accordingly, in Q90a4 ad3 Aquinas states the following: "The soul's persistence after the body happens as a result of a defect of the body, i.e., death. Such a defect was not due when the soul was first created".⁸³ Hence the picture drawn by Aquinas is one in which the soul's subsistence coexists with the principle of proportionality insofar as, in the beginning of the world, the bodies in which the first human souls were created were themselves unencumbered by the defect of corruption. Also in *ST* Aquinas provides us with the reason why human bodies began to pass away: "The soul's persistence without the body occurs because of the corruption of the body, which is consequent upon sin".⁸⁴

Although Aquinas does not accept Origen's doctrine of the soul's embodiment, he adopts a similar view when accounting for the apparent disproportion that involves the joining of a subsistent soul and a perishable body. We may speculate about why Aquinas, on the one hand, rejects sin as the cause of embodiment, while, on the other hand, he ends up adopting the view that the incorruptible soul is joined to a perishable body as a result of sin.

Origen's view that souls and angels were first created equal - and that human souls were later joined to bodies as a result of their turning away from God - works under the assumption that, like angels, human souls are full-fledged spiritual substances: subsistent immaterial entities that are by themselves complete in their species. In other words, according to the Origenian view, human souls are not subsistent parts of human substances, but rather substantial wholes that are united to

⁸³ *"Quod animam remanere post corpus, accidit per defectum corporis, qui est mors. Qui quidem defectus in principio creationis animae, esse non debuit"*.

⁸⁴ Cf. *ST* 1a Q118a3 ad3: *"Quod anima remanet sine corpore, contingit per corporis corruptionem, quae consecuta est ex peccato"*.

bodies only accidentally. From Aquinas' perspective, what disproves the view that embodiment is caused by sin is the principle on which it is based: that being united to the body is not in the soul's own nature.

By contrast, Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul is founded on the principle that human beings, as soul-body composites, display the most fundamental type of unity among material beings. Therefore, embodiment has to be regarded as the soul's natural condition: not in the sense that the human soul cannot survive without the body, but that as long as it is without the body it is deprived of its natural perfection. But, as we have seen, Aquinas does not completely reject Origen's idea. However, instead of introducing sin to explain embodiment, what Aquinas does is to incorporate the notion of sin to account for the disproportionality between the ideas that, on the one hand, the soul is created in the body, and, on the other hand, the same soul is able to keep on living without the body. The principle of proportionality requires that, if a subsistent soul is created in a body, then that body must be capable of accompanying the soul throughout its immortal life. Accordingly, if in the state of innocence men were immortal with respect to their souls as well as to their bodies,

with the withdrawal of original justice - which follows upon sin - men became subject to bodily death.⁸⁵

With the above analysis of Aquinas' theory of the human soul's coming into being I conclude Part 1. My goal in this last subsection has been to show how Aquinas' theory of the human soul's immediate creation - in opposition to the view that nonsubsistent substantial forms are cogenerated with the composite substances of which they are part - is used to support his twofold account of the human soul as a subsistent substantial form. While the view that the soul is a subsistent thing finds its ultimate expression in the theory that the human soul's production is the result of a divine act of creation, the notion that the soul is at the same time the substantial form of the body is most fundamentally conveyed by the idea that the soul is not created apart from the body but in the body.

⁸⁵ In *ST* 1a Q97a1 Aquinas explains the cause of human immortality in the state of innocence. He claims that a thing may be incorruptible due to one of three possible causes: matter, form, or the efficient cause. He associates human immortality in the state of innocence with the operation of the efficient cause, which is remotely God and proximately the human soul. He states it as follows: "For a man's body was indissoluble not by reason of any intrinsic vigour of immortality (*per aliquem immortalitatis vigorem in eo existentem*), but by reason of a supernatural force given by God to the soul, by means of which the soul was able to preserve the body from all corruption so long as it remained itself subject to God". Later in *ST* 1a-2ae Q85a5 Aquinas explains how bodily death resulted from original sin: "The withdrawal of original justice has the character of punishment (*rationem poenae*), just like the removal of grace has. Hence death and all consequent bodily defects are punishments of original sin. And although the defects are not intended by the sinner, nevertheless they are ordered according to the justice of God, who inflicts them as punishments". Even so, Aquinas does not believe that the theory of human immortality in the state of innocence counts as a good philosophical reply to the objection that, given the required proportionality between matter and form in composite substances, it would have been appropriate for the human soul, since it is itself incorruptible, to be joined to an incorruptible body (cf. *ST* 1a Q76a5 obj1). Aquinas says that instead of addressing the problem, the doctrine of immortality in the state of innocence rather evades the objection. He proposes the following explanation for the disproportionality between form and matter in man: one finds two conditions in matter, one which is chosen because it is appropriate to the form, the other which follows of necessity from a prior disposition. In this sense, for instance, the craftsman chooses to make a saw out of iron because it is suited for cutting hard things. However, that the teeth of the saw will eventually become rusty and dull follows of necessity from a prior disposition of the matter. In a similar fashion, the rational soul of man must be joined to a body that has a balanced complexion, which is something that is required for the implementation of the sense powers. Yet it follows from this, because of a necessity on the part of matter, that such a body is of a corruptible nature. (Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a5 ad1; for the whole discussion on the kind of body that fits the human soul, see the *corpus* of the same article.)

Part 2**AQUINAS' ACCOUNT OF THE HUMAN SOUL WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY TRADITION**

In the three chapters that constitute Part 2 of this dissertation I provide a critical assessment of some of the most relevant contemporary interpretations of Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul. I advance, in light of the contemporary debate, my own positive reading of the consistency of Aquinas' anthropology, as well as an account of how I think we should categorize Aquinas' treatment of the soul-body union.

I begin, in chapter 5, by addressing both negative and positive reviews of Aquinas' anthropology that focus on the Thomistic concept of form. I present Anthony Kenny's objection to Aquinas' twofold account of human souls, which, in my view, relies on a misinterpretation of Aquinas' approach to substantial forms. Next, I take issue with what I call the 'Saint Louis school': a group of scholars who, while agreeing with Kenny's reading of Thomistic forms, defend nonetheless the coherence of Aquinas' thesis. I contend that in order to defend the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' account one has to abandon the notion that substantial forms in Aquinas are configurational states of matter. Since I reject the metaphysically deflated notion of formal causality that stems from this interpretation of forms as abstract particulars, I maintain that substantial forms as such have an element of concreteness that allows for Aquinas' theory of human souls as subsistent forms.

In chapter 6, I assess some alternative attempts to show how Aquinas' hybrid account of the human soul might hold together. I advance a critical examination of four prominent positions that are found in the recent literature on Aquinas. My goal there is to emphasize the aspects that separate each of these solutions from the one I advocate in chapter 5, spelling out why I think they are less successful in their endeavour to prove the philosophical coherence of Aquinas' theory of the human soul.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I examine how Aquinas' account of the human soul contributes to the contemporary debate on the mind-body problem. In order to situate Aquinas' position in the discussion, I introduce the label *part-dualism*, which I distinguish from both substance-dualism and soft (or nonreductive)

materialism. To explain how part-dualism views the relation between soul and person, I also consider the use made by some scholars of the contemporary thesis that ‘constitution is not identity’, and why I think we cannot ascribe such an idea to Aquinas - at least not so far as *metaphysical* constitution is concerned.

Chapter 5

The Concreteness of Form & The Subsistent Soul

The purpose of this chapter is, first, to challenge the negative stance adopted by Anthony Kenny vis-à-vis Aquinas’ twofold view of the human soul. Even though I take issue with Kenny’s argument, I also intend to draw a positive lesson from his criticism of Aquinas’ hybrid account. Such a lesson will then take me to my second objective, which is to refute the widespread interpretation advanced by some renowned scholars according to which souls - and substantial forms in general - are structural states of matter.

5.1. Kenny’s Argument: The Human Soul as an ‘Abstract Doer’

Kenny’s treatment of Aquinas’ theory of the human soul is found in his book *Aquinas on Mind*. In the second chapter of the book, after endorsing the relevancy of studying Aquinas’ psychology to contemporary philosophy of mind, Kenny contends that the Thomistic doctrine of the human soul’s subsistence - understood in the strong sense of ‘being capable of existing on its own’ - stands as an exception to Aquinas’ own general thesis that substantial forms can only exist in the things of which they are the forms. He thus claims that, “There are serious philosophical difficulties in the identification of soul with form; or, to put the point in another way, it is not clear that the Aristotelian notion of ‘form’, even if coherent in itself, can be used to render intelligible the notion of ‘soul’ as used by Aquinas and other Christian philosophers”.¹

In Part 1 of this dissertation (specially in chapter 4, when examining Aquinas’ *QDA* a.1), I have argued that one cannot regard Aquinas’ doctrine of the human soul’s

¹ Cf. Kenny (1993), p. 28.

subsistence as a fortunate exception to a not-so-rigorous general rule about the inherence of forms.² I have claimed that the only way of doing justice to the complexity of Aquinas' view is to present it as the result of a distinctive approach to the notion of substantial form, based on which substantial forms come in several kinds that are arranged according to different levels of perfection. In this sense, instead of being described as an exceptional case to which a general rule regarding the inherence of forms in matter does not apply (which in turn invites the charge of inconsistency), the human soul should be characterized as the uppermost manifestation of the notion of form as such among lower beings.³

In saying that it is unclear whether the Aristotelian notion of substantial form can be used by Aquinas to explain his own notion of soul, Kenny is assuming that Aquinas, though himself a first-order philosopher, does not expand on Aristotle's conception of substantial form - which is in itself a questionable assumption, to say the least. Be that as it may, what has to be shown is that Aquinas possesses a concept of form which is wide enough to make room for both *material* forms (forms that cannot exist without the parcels of matter they inform) and *subsistent* forms (forms that can endure the loss of their material counterpart). Most importantly, one has to show that the broadness that characterizes Aquinas' notion of substantial form is not obtained at the expense of its consistency.

Kenny advances his objection to Aquinas' view of the soul in the last two chapters of his book, which deal, respectively, with the nature of the human soul and with the mind-body relation. Kenny's argument centres around the first two articles of *ST* 1a Q75, where, as we know very well by now, the following theses are presented:

(T1) *The soul is not itself of a bodily nature but the first actuality of a body.*

(T2) *The soul is something subsistent.*

² Even scholars who, unlike Kenny, defend the consistency of Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul sometimes fall into the same mistake of describing Aquinas' stance on the soul as an exception. See for instance Jason Eberl's "Aquinas on the Nature of Human Beings" (2004), p. 342.

³ Hence, while at one end of the spectrum we find the view (in my opinion, erroneous) that human souls are exceptions to a general thesis about the nature of substantial forms, at the other end of the spectrum we find the view that the human soul is the utmost expression of what it is to be form, so that it is rather nonsubsistent forms (i.e., forms that cannot persist without the parcels of matter they inform) that fall short of being maximally form. For a defence of the latter view, see Lawrence Dewan's "St. Thomas, Form and Incorruptibility" [in Dewan (2006), chapter 10].

On Kenny's interpretation, one finds in Aquinas' text two different pairs of contrasting terms in play: first, the pair concrete/abstract; second, the pair physical/nonphysical.⁴

Kenny then makes use of the proposed pairs of contrasting terms to show how, in his own words, the first two articles of Q75 (or, according to my sketch of Kenny's objection, T1 and T2), "cancel each other out".⁵ On Kenny's reading, T1 must be given the following interpretation: to say that the soul is incorporeal means that it is *abstract*, and not concrete.⁶ Now with respect to Aquinas' argument for T2, Kenny explains it as follows: whereas in *ST* 1a Q75a1 the soul is said to be incorporeal in the sense that it is something abstract, in article 2 it is said to be incorporeal in the sense that it is a *nonphysical* part of the human being. What is more, this nonphysical part of the human being is also characterized as a *doer* - i.e., an agent with no bodily organ.

The problem with Aquinas' hybrid approach to the human soul, according to Kenny's interpretation, is that *no agent can be an abstraction*: the notion of an 'abstract doer' contains a contradiction in terms. If *x* is part of *y*, holds Kenny, then *x* cannot be an abstraction when *y* is something concrete.⁷

What I have just presented corresponds to Kenny's objection to Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul as it is developed in chapter 11 of *Aquinas on Mind*. There, as we have just seen, the argument intends to point out an inconsistency within the

⁴ Cf. Kenny (1993), p. 136.

⁵ *Ibidem*. Kenny originally introduces the distinction between two pairs of contrasting terms in order to make sense of Aquinas' use of the expression 'material forms', which, in Kenny's opinion, seems as paradoxical a notion as the oxymoron 'triangular quadrilateral', given that in standardhylomorphism matter and form are intended as opposing concepts. In my opinion, as I hope will become clearer in the following pages, Kenny's difficulty in coping with Aquinas' concept of 'human soul' stems from a preliminary difficulty in coming to grips with the notion of 'material form'.

⁶ *Ibidem*. Kenny justifies the claim that the soul is an abstract and not a concrete thing by means of Aquinas' own assertion that the soul is not a body but the *actuality* of a body. Obviously then, it all hinges on how one interprets the notion of actuality. On Kenny's view, if some *x* is the actuality of some *y*, then *x* stands to *y* as any other property of *y*, like its shape, colour, weight, etc. In Aquinas' idiom, we can say that on Kenny's view substantial forms enjoy the same ontological status as any accidental form.

⁷ Even though Kenny does not present it this way, his objection seems to be rather twofold: first, no abstraction can play the role of an agent, hence the very notion of an 'abstract doer' is preposterous; second, no abstraction can be part of something concrete. That the objections are really distinct is clear from the fact that some authors will deny the second part of the objection - hence accepting that abstractions can be part of substances - while agreeing with the first, that abstractions are not doers. An example of this is found in Kit Fine's "Things and Their Parts" (1999), which I consider later on in this chapter in connection with my refutation of the Saint Louis school's thesis.

concept of 'human soul' - which contains, according to Kenny's characterization of Aquinas' theory, an element of concreteness as well as an element of abstractness, both of which cannot be made compatible.

However, later on in chapter 12 of his book, Kenny extends his criticism to the more general notion of 'form'. Thus, in a context where he is analyzing *ST* 1a Q76a1, Kenny contends that Aquinas' philosophical anthropology is in general permeated by a tension between two different ways of understanding the notion of form.⁸ Here, I quote the passage in its entirety:

First, there is what we may call the abstract notion of form. Whenever there is a true sentence on the pattern 'A is F', we can speak of the form of F-ness; an accidental form or a substantial form as the case may be. If A is hot, there is such a thing as the hotness of A; if A is an animal, there is such a thing as the animality of A. Thus, the hotness, or heat, of a hot body is what makes it hot, and that is an example of an accidental form. The substantial form in a human being may likewise be introduced as being, *truistically*, that by which a man is a man, or that which makes a man a man. In each of these cases the 'makes' is the 'makes' of *formal causality*, as when we say that it is a certain shape which makes a piece of metal a key, or a certain structure which makes a molecule a DNA molecule. *If the soul is a form in this sense, then it is no more a concrete object than a shape or a structure is.*

But besides the abstract notion of form, there is the notion of form as an agent. In these passages it is clear that Aquinas thinks of the human soul as being causally responsible for the various activities which make up a human life. And here the causality is *efficient causality*, the sort of causality for which nowadays the word 'cause' is commonly reserved, as when we are told that it is the yeast that causes the bread to rise or that DNA molecules cause the synthesis of proteins. *It is this kind of relationship that is suggested when we are told that the soul is the principle of life.*⁹

After distinguishing between the two senses in which the term 'form' is used, Kenny closes his analysis with the following remark: "The two notions of form seem to be different from each other and impossible to combine, without confusion, into a

⁸ For my detailed analysis of *ST* 1a Q76a1, see Part 1, chapter 2.

⁹ Cf. Kenny (1993), p. 149. The italics in the quotation are mine.

single notion".¹⁰ Hence, according to Kenny's reading, not only is Aquinas' concept of human soul inconsistent, but so is his general notion of form. Or more precisely: it is because Aquinas has an inconsistent concept of form that his notion of human soul cannot help but be inconsistent as well.

For reasons that will become clear in the subsequent pages, my reply to Kenny's objection focuses more on his treatment of formal causality as the type of causality that is ascribed to abstract entities like shapes and structures. Having said that, I believe that neither Kenny's abstract notion of form nor his notion of form as an agent is present in Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul as a subsistent substantial form. That being so, to say that the soul is a substantial form does not mean to say that the soul qua form is something abstract. As I will attempt to show, every substantial form contains an essential element of concreteness that prevents it from being reduced to a mere abstraction. Moreover, to say that the human soul is something subsistent - a *hoc aliquid* of sorts - does not mean to say that it is a 'nonphysical doer', that is, an immaterial entity that exercises efficient causality over its material substratum. The requirements of subsistence are not as strong as Kenny seems to suggest.¹¹

5.1.1. *Kenny's Positive Lesson*

After presenting Kenny's main objection against Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul, I would like to call attention to what I regard as a positive lesson to be drawn from Kenny's analysis. Even though one does not need to agree with Kenny's reading - and I personally think we should not agree with him - there is still something to be learned from his treatment of Aquinas' philosophy of human nature. Such a

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ When Kenny holds that substantial forms in general - be them human souls, nonrational souls, or even nonliving forms - can be considered, in one sense, as abstract entities, and, in another sense, as non-physical doers, he is actually wrongly attributing to substantial forms features that belong, respectively, to accidental forms and to spiritual substances. On the one hand, it is accidental forms, and not substantial forms, that are abstract entities. On the other hand, it is spiritual substances (i.e., angels), and not substantial forms, that are non-physical agents, even though, I must add, substantial forms do have an element of concreteness that excludes their reduction to the status of mere abstractions.

'positive lesson' would be directed at those who believe that we can accept part of Kenny's criticism while denying the consequences he draws from it.

One must realize that Kenny's objection is an 'all-or-nothing' affair: one either buys into the whole package or rejects the whole thing. On the one hand, if forms are what Kenny says they are, then there is no way one might defend the human soul's subsistence (where subsistence is coupled with being a substantial form of the body). On the other hand, if one seeks to defend the consistency of Aquinas' twofold theory of human souls, then one has to propose an interpretation according to which substantial forms are not to be viewed as mere abstract particulars.

Based on the above, Kenny's objection is to be regarded as a true challenge for the present-day Thomist. In order to show, therefore, that Aquinas' account of the human soul as a subsistent substantial form is not a contradiction in terms, one has to be able to explain how Kenny's "abstract notion of form"¹² is a misinterpretation of Aquinas' metaphysics. In other words, one needs to show that Kenny's rejection of Aquinas' philosophical anthropology rests on false metaphysical presuppositions.

As I have mentioned, however, one finds among scholars of Aquinas those who think (with Kenny) that one must regard Thomistic forms as abstract entities, while holding (against Kenny) the consistency of Aquinas' account of the human soul. In the next section, I will refer collectively to those who defend such a view as the 'St. Louis school'. The related thesis according to which substantial forms are a kind of abstract entity - more specifically, configurational states of matter - I will call the 'St. Louis conception of substantial form'.¹³

In order to avoid confusion, let me recapitulate the main points of the debate. First, there is Kenny's view, according to which Aquinas holds an ambiguous concept

¹² Cf. Kenny (1993), p. 149.

¹³ The first scholar to promote the idea that Aquinas' hybrid view of human souls, while internally consistent, is also compatible with an interpretation of forms as states of matter was Eleonore Stump, whose affiliation to St. Louis University explains the labels above. It goes without saying, however, that these titles are intended to be humorous, and do not mean to suggest any sort of relation between the philosophical position they refer to and St. Louis University as an institution. For Stump's conception of substantial form, see her paper "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism Without Reduction" (1995) and her book *Aquinas* (2003), specially chapters 1 and 6. For how her position influenced a number of young scholars, see Christopher Brown's *Aquinas and the Ship of Theseus* (2005), chapters 3 and 4, and Jason Eberl's "Aquinas on the Nature of Human Beings" (2004).

of 'form', which generates a complex notion - 'human soul' - whose terms are mutually cancelling: if the soul is an abstract thing, it cannot meet the criteria for being an agent, whereas if the soul is a nonphysical doer, it cannot at the same time be a property of some concrete substance. Since Aquinas is not ready to forgo any of the parts of his twofold view, Kenny concludes that the Thomistic notion of human soul is contradictory. Second, apart from (and in opposition to) Kenny's view, we find those who hold *at once* that Aquinas' notion of the human soul as a 'subsistent substantial form' is philosophically coherent *and* that substantial forms are mere states of matter.

In the following pages, I seek to prove both views wrong. First of all, to the extent that Kenny's view is concerned, I suggest that it is incorrect to assume that Aquinas possesses an ambiguous concept of form which then vitiates his notion of human soul. As I have mentioned earlier, I think that neither Kenny's abstract notion of form nor his view of form as a concrete thing is championed by Aquinas. Having said that, one can to some extent think of Kenny's remarks as being partially correct, insofar as they underscore that if substantial forms are abstract entities, then, since for Aquinas souls are substantial forms of bodies, human souls cannot be substantial forms, but rather have to be assimilated to spiritual substances, like angels.

To the extent that I accept the strength of Kenny's objection, it is my goal to refute the Saint Louis conception of substantial form - i.e., the view that substantial forms are to be reduced to configurational states of matter. First, I wish to show that the thought that substantial forms are states of matter (and hence abstract entities) is at odds with Aquinas' characterization of the human soul as being a subsistent entity which by its very nature is capable of surviving the loss of its material complement.¹⁴ Second, I wish to point out a main feature of Aquinas' concept of form, which, when correctly understood, rules out the idea that substantial forms are configurational states of parcels of matter.¹⁵

¹⁴ In other words, if forms are abstract entities, like the St. Louis school wants, then Kenny's conclusion seems to be inevitable, namely, that "the impossibility of a form without matter is a logical impossibility" [cf. Kenny (1993), pp. 150-151].

¹⁵ In taking issue with the St. Louis conception of substantial form, I do not wish to deny by any means that the substantial form of *x* bears some relation to the configurational state of the bits of matter that make up *x*. The focal point of my criticism is the *complete identification* of the substantial form with the configurational state (or shape) of the parcel of matter.

5.2. The Saint Louis Conception of Substantial Form: The Soul as a Configurational State of Matter

In his book *Aquinas and the Ship of Theseus*, Christopher Brown holds that the best way of interpreting Aquinas' concept of form is by means of Eleonore Stump's notion of configuration.¹⁶ According to such a view, when Aquinas talks about form what he has in mind is the *configurational state* of a given parcel of matter. Since forms come in two kinds, namely, substantial and accidental, one should accept the following distinction: whereas substantial forms configure prime matter, accidental forms configure an already existing substance.¹⁷ Hence, a *substantial* configuration is that arrangement of material parts by means of which the configured thing is distinguished from other kinds of material beings. By contrast, an *accidental* configuration is that state of the material components by means of which a material substance is said to be different from other substances with which it shares a given substantial configuration.

In Stump's treatment of Aquinas' metaphysics, a material substance is matter organized - or configured - in a certain fashion, where the configuration of matter is something dynamic rather than purely static. Accordingly, Stump contends that, "This dynamic configuration or organization is what Aquinas calls 'form'".¹⁸

Stump believes that a Thomistic theory of things should be articulated by means of the maxim that 'to be is to be configured'.¹⁹ On that account, the notion of configuration will not be restricted to composite substances alone but will apply to anything that properly is a being - whether material or immaterial. Now if that is so, the notion of a *configurational state* will hold good not only of those things that possess a material substratum which the form is said to be a state of, but also of things that are without matter. In the particular case of Thomistic immaterial substances (the

¹⁶ Cf. Brown (2005), p. 57.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 73.

¹⁸ Cf. Stump (2003), p. 36. According to Stump, the configuration of matter is something dynamic since it goes beyond the thing's mere shape or spatial location, including also the causal relations among its material constituents. The reader might also want to check Stump (1995), where it is held that, "By 'form' Aquinas means an essentially configurational state" (p. 509).

¹⁹ Cf. Stump (2003), p. 37. In other words: "Everything which exists in reality is configured in some way" (*Ibidem*).

angels), Stump contends that the configurational state is not a state *of matter* (since there is no matter to begin with), but an ‘organization of properties’.²⁰

In his criticism of Aquinas’ hybrid account of the human soul, Kenny called attention to an ambiguity in the Thomistic notion of form: forms in Aquinas can mean either something abstract (i.e., the *F*-ness by means of which *A* is *F*) or something concrete (i.e., a nonphysical agent).²¹ Even though Stump does not agree with Kenny’s claim that Aquinas’ notion of form is inconsistent, she also sees a similar ambiguity in the Thomistic concept of form.

According to Stump, there are, on the one hand, forms that are said to be forms in the sense that they ‘give a configuration to something’.²² It is in this first sense, for instance, that Fido is said to have a substantial form, insofar as he is a portion of matter which is configured as a dog - i.e., a piece of stuff that has the shape of a dog and displays the causal relations that are proper to canines. On the other hand, there are forms that, even though they do not configure something else (i.e., they are not *configurers*), are said to be forms because they are themselves configured. In the

²⁰ *Ibidem*. If *y* is a configurational state, then there must be some *x* which is configured by *y*. However, *x* need not be some sort of stuff or a piece of some stuff. One can think of *x*-under-*y* as an organized set of properties in virtue of which this immaterial thing (i.e., that to which the given set of properties belongs) is distinct from other immaterial things. In this way, Stump believes she is able to preserve the intuition that every configuration is the configuration *of* something without thereby limiting the characterization of form as configuration to those forms - like the human soul - that are the substantial forms of some parcel of matter. Now, because angels are forms that are also substances in their own right, Stump holds that immaterial substances are *configured* (i.e., they are individual things with a given set of characteristics) without being *configuring* (in Aquinas’ idiom, they are not the actualizing principle of a body). In contrast, Stump holds that human souls as well as other forms of material things are *configurers* - i.e., they are the principle of organization of some parcel of matter. However, since Aquinas believes that human souls in particular are subsistent forms, Stump contends that human souls, and only human souls, are *configured configurers* - i.e., they are at once a principle of configuration as well as an individual under a given configuration. For her use of the expression ‘configured configurer’, see Stump (2003), pp. 200-203, and (1995), pp. 514-517.

²¹ Cf. Kenny (1993), p. 149. For my previous discussion of Kenny’s objection, see section 5.1 above.

²² Cf. Stump (1995), p. 514. We have to be careful when interpreting Stump’s claim that forms *give* a configuration to matter. She surely does not wish to ascribe any concrete influence to form; rather, given her view that forms are *states*, she adopts a view very similar to Kenny’s, according to which for a form to be a principle or a cause simply means for it to be an *explanation*. As Christopher Brown puts it, “For Aquinas, if *x* is a principle or cause of *y*, *x* is an ultimate explanation of some feature of *y*” [cf. Brown (2005), p. 72]. As Kenny reminds us, it is only in this ontologically deflated sense of ‘cause’ that something can consistently be said to be a cause and something abstract. Hence, if we seek to ascribe to forms a type of causality which - though certainly not identical to efficient causality - is stronger than the Saint Louis *epistemic* interpretation of formal causality, then we should begin by rejecting the characterization of form as a configurational state.

second sense of 'form', something is a form if it is an immaterial entity with a given set of properties by means of which it is different from other immaterial entities.

Stump, therefore, identifies an ambiguity in the concept of 'form' since we can speak of things that are forms (i) because they configure some matter, but also (ii) because they exist under some configuration. However, to complicate matters even further, Stump acknowledges that Aquinas' theory of things makes room for a third sort of entity - the human soul - which is a form but cannot be reduced to any of the senses of 'form' described above. By treating the human soul as a 'configured configurer' Stump seeks to make clear that the human soul, on account of combining elements from both senses of 'form', cannot be fully equated with either sense of the term. To put it in different words, in the particular case of the human soul, being a form is neither reduced to being the configurational state of some matter - since the soul is said to *subsist* - nor equivalent to being an immaterial, self-contained bearer of a given set of properties - since the soul is said to be the *actualizing principle* of the body.

We know that, for Kenny, the two senses of form - as configurer and as configured - are impossible to combine, with the result that, on his view, Aquinas' concept of human soul displays a contradiction in terms. Stump, by contrast, believes that Aquinas' account of the human soul is philosophically coherent. As I have mentioned before, what is distinctive of the Saint Louis account of the human soul is its attempt to integrate the idea that substantial forms are essentially configurational states of matter with the idea that the human soul is capable of existing without its usual associate, namely the body. But how could a configurational state of some matter exist without the matter it configures?²³

When discussing the ambiguity in the concept of form, Stump resorts to the maxim that 'to be is to be configured' in order to account for Aquinas' ascription of the notion of form to immaterial substances, like the angels and even God. Despite the fact that angels are not configurers of matter, they can be called 'forms' since they are themselves configured. In this case, the issue consists merely in finding a way of

²³ Stump formulates this question in Stump (2003), p. 204. Her answer is advanced in pp. 206-208. For how the question is originally stated in Aquinas, see *QDA* a.1, and my discussion of it in Part 1, chapter 4, section 4.1.

attributing the notion of configuration to entities that are not composed of any sort of stuff.²⁴ The question regarding the twofold status of the human soul, however, is of a different nature. Since the soul is a substantial form, and substantial forms have been defined by Stump's school as configurational states of matter, in order to defend the plausibility of the soul's subsistence it is not enough to hold that the soul (somewhat like the angels) is itself an immaterial, configured thing - which in turn could be justified by the claim that human souls are also bearers of sets of properties. What is more, it has to be shown that a configurational state can exist without the matter it configures.

Stump believes that Aquinas proposes, in her words, "the peculiar and perplexing view that there can be an essentially configurational state with nothing that is configured".²⁵ Moreover, unlike Kenny, she thinks that, though 'peculiar and perplexing', such a view is not *incoherent*. For Stump, therefore, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the idea that states can exist without that which they are the states of.

5.2.1. Thomistic Substantial Forms and Neo-Aristotelian Mereology

Before examining how Stump and her followers account for the claim that configurational states can survive the disappearance of the matter which they configure, I wish to say a few things about the motive behind the Saint Louis school's interpretation of substantial form as an essentially configurational state.

In his paper "Aquinas on the Nature of Human Beings", Jason Eberl seeks to provide "an analytic formulation of Aquinas' account of human nature" which will enable him to draw a comparison between Aquinas' philosophical anthropology and other accounts in contemporary analytic philosophy.²⁶ Given his intent to "translate Aquinas' account into more contemporary metaphysical terms", Eberl says with

²⁴ Which Stump succeeds in doing by claiming that, "For Aquinas the ability of matter to be configured is just a consequence of the fact that matter has being, and what is fundamentally configured is not matter but being" (1995), p. 513.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ The quoted passage is from Eberl (2004), p. 347.

respect to Aquinas' treatment of the human soul as a substantial form, that the best way to understand the Thomistic concept of soul is by thinking of it as a "principle of organization for material particles".²⁷

In his effort to explain how this 'principle of organization' works in the composition of material beings, Eberl finds in Kit Fine's neo-Aristotelian mereology a contemporary equivalent to Aquinas' notion of the soul as a substantial form.²⁸ In light of the Saint Louis school's attempt to use Kit Fine's approach to the Aristotelian notion of form to explain to an analytic-friendly audience Aquinas' theory of soul, in the following paragraphs I examine briefly Fine's mereology so we can determine how useful this comparison is for clarifying the way in which substantial forms can persist without matter.

In "Things and Their Parts", Kit Fine outlines a theory of material constitution - called the 'theory of embodiment' - which is intended to solve puzzles about the relation of parts and wholes by having recourse to elements of Aristotelian hylomorphism. In the author's own words, what separates his theory from others is that it "takes seriously the idea that there is both a formal and material aspect to most material things".²⁹ By advancing his theory of embodiment, Fine seeks to provide an alternative to what he describes as standard mereological theories, according to which a whole is identical to the mere sum of its integral parts. Fine invites the present-day philosopher to "take the bold step" and accept a "new kind of whole", which is more than just the mereological sum of its parts. Fine calls this sort of whole 'rigid embodiment'.³⁰

²⁷ The two quotations are taken from Eberl (2004), p. 359 and p. 361, respectively. In view of Eberl's affiliation to what I call the 'Saint Louis school', I have to recall my previous observation that the notion of 'principle' in passages such as the above is not intended to suppose any sort of active engagement on the part of the form in the organization (or configuration) of the material particles that make up a given substance. All that is required by those scholars who subscribe to the characterization of form as a configurational state is that the form might function as an explanation for the arrangement of the material particles of a substance. See footnote 22 above.

²⁸ Stump also turns to Kit Fine's mereology when discussing Aquinas' concept of form. See Stump (2003), p. 36, n. 5. For Eberl's discussion of the parity between Aquinas' and Fine's accounts, see Eberl (2004), pp. 363-364.

²⁹ Cf. Kit Fine (1999), p. 62.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 65.

A rigid embodiment is such that, “Given objects a, b, c, \dots and given a relation R that may hold or fail to hold of those objects at any given time, we suppose that there is a new object - what one may call ‘the objects a, b, c, \dots in the relation R ’”.³¹ According to Fine’s neo-Aristotelian mereology, in a rigid embodiment “the components and the relation do not come together as coequals, as in a regular mereological sum”.³² For that reason, even if we take R to be a part of the whole, it will not be a part in the same sense that a, b, c, \dots is said to be a part. Accordingly, instead of denoting the whole by the term ‘ $a, b, c, \dots + R$ ’ - which would amount to considering R an actual component of the whole - Fine designates a rigid embodiment by the expression ‘ $a, b, c, \dots / R$ ’, where the symbol $/$ is meant to indicate the asymmetry between the two kinds of part. While ‘ a, b, c, \dots ’ stands for the *matter* of the whole, ‘ R ’ stands for its *form*.

Leaving the details of Fine’s account to one side, what is most important to our present purposes is that, according to his theory of embodiment, the formal aspect of a whole - which Fine calls the ‘principle of rigid embodiment’³³ - is no more than a *relation* that holds among the material objects that make up a rigid embodiment.³⁴ When examining the consequences of his theory for our comprehension of material constitution, Fine admits that the form of the whole - i.e., the relation that holds among the material components of the embodiment - can be viewed as a genuine part of the embodiment. He then goes on to add that, according to his theory, “there will be an intensional or conceptual element to the identity of many material objects”,

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

³⁴ One example given by Fine of a rigid embodiment is a bunch of flowers. Such a whole is analyzed into its material aspect - i.e., a given number of flowers - and its formal aspect - i.e., the relation of ‘being bunched’. See Fine (1999), p. 65.

making clear that, on his view, the formal element of the whole is of an intensional nature.³⁵

Even if Fine disagrees with black-and-white theories such as Kenny's, according to which abstract entities cannot in any meaningful sense be part of concrete things, he nowhere seems to leave room for the much stronger position adopted by the Saint Louis philosophers, who claim that abstract entities (in their idiom, *configurational states*) can exist independently of the concrete substances of which they are parts. As a matter of fact, Fine's characterization of forms as relations testifies to the impossibility of there being forms without a material substratum. Once we embrace Fine's perspective on forms, Kenny's remark that forms without matter are a logical impossibility seems to the point. After all, it is a shared intuition that a relation cannot persist without its *relata*.

The conclusion I draw from this brief analysis is that, by using Fine's neo-Aristotelian mereology as a means of presenting Aquinas' theory of forms in analytic-friendly language, the Saint Louis philosophers, contrary to their original intent, end up providing the reader with reason for *doubting* the consistency of Aquinas' notion of subsistent substantial forms. Therefore, if we wish to account for the consistency of Aquinas' hybrid view of human souls, it seems inevitable that we abandon the characterization of substantial forms as configurational states of matter.

5.2.2. Shoemaker's 'Brain-State Transfer' Procedure and Stump's 'Subsistent States'

In spite of the above-stated evidence to the contrary, Eleonore Stump thinks that there can be what I would like to call 'subsistent states' - i.e., configurational states of matter that can survive the dissolution of their material substratum. In other words, Stump believes that the 'of-ness' of configurational states is not an essential property of

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 73. As I have suggested before, Fine does not agree with Kenny's idea that abstract entities cannot be part of concrete wholes (cf. footnote 7 above). According to Fine, forms are intensional in nature and, though they do not compose the wholes of which they are the forms in the same way as the material elements of a whole, they do play a role in the identity of the whole. Although Fine does not seem to have Kenny in mind, his opposition to Kenny's general way of thinking is revealed when he claims, for instance, that "the divide between the concrete and abstract realms is not as great as it is commonly taken to be" (cf. p. 73).

them. In order to argue for the philosophical plausibility of subsistent states, Stump makes use of Sydney Shoemaker's Brain-State Transfer (BST for short) thought experiment.³⁶

Before I move on, let me sum up my objection to Stump's treatment of substantial forms as configurational states. For Aquinas, human souls are by their very nature substantial forms of bodies. However, not only are human souls substantial forms, they are *subsistent* substantial forms, which means that they are forms that are capable of surviving the dissolution of the matter they inform. Now, according to Stump, Aquinas' concept of substantial form is best described by means of the notion of configurational state. However, a configurational state cannot exist on its own, apart from that of which it is a state. Hence, if human souls are indeed substantial forms that can also exist on their own, then Stump's view that forms are states cannot prevail.³⁷

Let us see now how Stump uses Shoemaker's BST thought experiment to defend her notion of 'subsistent states'. Recall that her goal is to find some support for the 'peculiar and perplexing view' according to which configurational states can exist with nothing that is configured. What she claims is as follows:

Shoemaker thinks that it is possible for there to be a brain-state transfer device which transfers a person's brain states from one body to another and thereby preserves an individual person in being through a succession of bodies. Shoemaker's brain states are presumably configurational states, since there is an interval, however small, in which the states are in the process of being transferred and so are no longer in the first body and not yet in the second, and yet the states don't go out of existence in this interval. On Aquinas's view, the interval may be much longer, and in that interval the configurational state can continue to operate, since it is itself something configured.³⁸

³⁶ For Shoemaker's BST thought experiment see his "Personal Identity: a Materialist's Account" [in Shoemaker & Swinburne (1984), pp. 67-132].

³⁷ Call it the "*of-ness* argument". The same objection can be found in William Hasker's *The Emergent Self* (1999), p. 168: "A 'configurational state' must be a state *of something*" (the italics are the author's). However, because Hasker does not examine Aquinas' text directly but assumes Stump's work to be a faithful version of Aquinas' theory of soul, he winds up attributing the objection to Aquinas himself.

³⁸ Cf. Stump (1995), pp. 516-17. See also Stump (2003), p. 208.

First a methodological remark. Stump ascribes to Aquinas a theory of forms that allows for the notion of 'subsistent states' - i.e., configurational states of matter that can go on living without the matter they configure. Even though she recognizes the paradoxical nature of such a view, she believes that this supposedly Thomistic position is not philosophically inconsistent. However, because in this regard intuition is definitely against her - since nearly everybody at a pre-philosophical level would admit that they think of states as the sort of thing that cannot exist without that of which it is a state - it is up to her to provide us with good reasons to believe that in this matter our intuitions actually fail us.

Assuming that we are right when we say that it is Stump's task to show us that our intuitions are deceiving as regards the existence of subsistent states, we may ask: how satisfactory it is (from a dialectical point of view) to have recourse to a philosophical thought experiment when one's goal is to prove that in a particular matter our intuitions are wrong? Is the mere conceivability of a state of affairs enough to guarantee its possibility? It seems to me that when we are arguing for the meaningfulness of a given concept - specially when that concept is counterintuitive in its nature - more is needed than the mere resort to some philosophical fiction.

However that may be, I would like to focus on a more important remark, which has to do with the very content of Shoemaker's thought experiment. On my view, contrary to what Stump supposes, Shoemaker's BST-procedure does not support the idea that there can be subsistent states. It actually works under the opposite premise, namely that every state is the state of some subject.

According to Stump, the BST-procedure is compatible with the notion of subsistent states since, during the interval in which a brain state is being transferred from one body to another, that given brain state - because it does not cease to exist - exists on its own. In other words, it *subsists*. However, the fact that a brain state in the process of being subjected to a body-transfer does not exist *in a body* does not entail that the same brain state exists *in no subject whatsoever*. In fact, according to the BST hypothesis, brain states exist either in a body or - if they are in the process of being transferred from one body to another - in some device that carries them in an encoded

fashion from the first body to the next. To use Shoemaker's idiom, the existence of a state always involves the presence of some *mechanism*.

When presenting his hypothesis of a BST-procedure, Shoemaker observes that what he has in mind is "the possibility of a device which records the state of one brain and imposes that state on a second brain by restructuring it so that it has exactly the state the first brain had at the beginning of the operation".³⁹ As the author emphasizes, "the BST-procedure does not involve the transfer of any bodily organ, or of any matter at all, from the one body to the other"⁴⁰. Nevertheless, that does not mean that there has to be some moment in the body-transfer process during which a brain state exists on its own. According to Shoemaker, what is transferred by means of the BST-procedure is *information*. Hence, for the thought experiment to work one has to assume the presence of a physical device of some sort which is capable of converting into a particular format information gathered from the first body (call it 'the donor'), then storing that information, and finally transferring it to the other body (call it 'the receptor'). As Shoemaker concludes, "The mechanism in which the mental states of a person are realized does not include just the person's body or brain; it also includes the BST-device".⁴¹

Accordingly, all that Shoemaker supposes regarding the status of brain states in the BST hypothesis is that they exist either in the donor, or in the receptor, or in some transferring device which is no less a bearer than the bodies between which the brain state transfer takes place. But then, because on Shoemaker's view brain states never exist without some mechanism that bears them, it is safe to conclude - contrary to what is held by Stump - that there are no subsistent states in Shoemaker's BST-procedure. Therefore the use of Shoemaker's thought experiment is of no avail when one's goal is to argue for a theory of subsistent configurational states.

³⁹ Cf. Shoemaker, (in Shoemaker & Swinburne, 1984), p. 108.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 110.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 110-111.

5.2.3. Configuration, Harmony and Substantial Form

After having argued against the Saint Louis conception of substantial form on the grounds that its defenders make inappropriate use of certain theses that are found in contemporary metaphysics, I would like next to consider an element of Aquinas' own theory of soul that seems to clash with the view that souls - or, for that matter, substantial forms in general - are configurational states of bodies. The element that I have in mind here is Aquinas' rejection of the view that the soul is a sort of harmony of a substance's material components.⁴²

As we have seen earlier in Part 1, the view that the soul is a harmony is ascribed by Aquinas, following Aristotle, to Empedocles.⁴³ According to this view, since the human body is made up of elements with contrary qualities, the soul must consist in the harmonious state that follows upon the very blending of those contrary elements into one proportionate whole, namely a substance.⁴⁴ In this sense, because the harmony which the soul consists in is not just another component that is added to the blend, one may say that the soul *emerges* from the manipulation of material elements - where the precise moment of emergence is equivalent to the finding of the right proportion of the material components of a substance.⁴⁵ By treating the soul as a harmony or a *complexio*, what the ancient philosophers had in mind was a theory of the soul as an 'emergent state' - i.e., as something that is not *reduced* to the material

⁴² Aquinas' refusal of the view that the soul is a harmony is found in SCG II.64. For my previous exposition of it in Part 1, see chapter 4, subsection 4.1.1.

⁴³ Cf. QDA a.1, *responsio*; SCG II.64. For Aristotle's discussion of it, see DA I.4, 407b27-408a28.

⁴⁴ As regards this ancient conception of soul, it is helpful to check Aquinas' discussion of Alexander of Aphrodisias' view in SCG II.62. Alexander claims, à la Empedocles, that the possible intellect in a human being is consequent upon a particular kind of mixture of the material elements that constitute the human body.

⁴⁵ I am thinking of emergence here in the following manner: a feature of a whole is *emergent* when it cannot be completely accounted for by the properties of the integral parts of the whole - neither when those parts are taken distributively nor when they are taken collectively.

components of a whole but, at the same time, *results* from the manipulation of those material components.⁴⁶

My goal is to suggest that the similarities between the ancient doctrine of harmony and the contemporary theory of configurational states are strong enough to recommend a straight rejection of the latter based on Aquinas' explicit refusal of the former. The common aspect that links both theories is the idea that substantial forms are emergent states. In other words, the theories of harmony and of configuration seem to share the misconception that substantial forms *follow upon* (or are the products of) the manipulation of matter. On this view, a substantial form is identical to the organizational state of the material elements that compose some concrete substance. Hence one will say that a given mixture of elements is harmonious, or that some configuration is indeed productive of a new substance, when the action of manipulating material elements gives rise to properties that are not shared by any of the material components of the configured thing.

Eleonore Stump presents Aquinas' alleged emergentism by claiming the following about substantial forms: "The configuration of the whole will sometimes confer features, such as causal powers, on the whole which are not shared by the components of the whole".⁴⁷ When examining the quotation, however, the reader has to recall that, according to the proponents of the configuration theory, a substantial form (which they call the 'principle of configuration') is simply a *state* of matter - i.e., an abstract particular that cannot exist independently of its material substratum, and that as such cannot be the source of any causal power. For that reason, the term 'confer', as used in the quoted passage, cannot imply any strong sense of causality - as if a configurational state were able to actively give rise to the emergent properties of the whole. What is meant (at least that is the only interpretation which I think is compatible with their own approach to forms as states of matter) is that the substantial form of a substance is that emergent state by recourse to which one manages to

⁴⁶ According to this conception of soul, it is fair to say that souls *supervene* upon the generation of concrete substances through the active power of some agent that manipulates matter. Notice that on this view the soul can only be a principle of organization in that ontologically deflated sense according to which any sort of explanation is a principle.

⁴⁷ Cf. Stump (2003), p. 197.

explain how a composite substance may possess properties that are not shared by its material parts.⁴⁸

One must bear in mind that, when Aquinas rejects the ancient doctrines of *complexio* and of harmony, he is not dismissing them simply as inaccurate theories of soul, but rather as defective formulations of what substantial forms are. In other words, it is not because some substantial forms are souls that they cannot be emergent states of material wholes; it is precisely as *forms* that substantial forms are not configurational states that emerge from the manipulation of material elements. Hence, when discussing Galen's theory of the soul as a *complexio*, Aquinas makes use of Aristotle's idea that a substance has no contrary and does not admit of a more and a less to conclude that since the soul is a substantial, not an accidental, form it cannot be either a *complexio* or a harmony of material elements.⁴⁹

It is not very easy for a contemporary reader to grasp the supposed force of an argument that states that a soul (to the extent that it is a substantial form) cannot be a harmony of material parts because substantial forms do not admit of a more and a less. However, the point Aquinas wants to make is that, unlike accidental forms, substantial forms are not subject to variations of degree, in the sense that, while it is true that two brown-haired men can each have a different shade of brown hair, it is not possible for those two men to display different levels of humanity. Now, since harmony is a kind

⁴⁸ The same sort of characterization of the relation between a substantial form and the emergent properties of a substance is adopted by Christopher Brown. He presents Aquinas' view that some substantial forms are at a higher level of perfection than others in the following manner: "For Aquinas a kind of substantial form is the more perfect to the extent that the features, powers and operations it confers on a substance are - to use a contemporary idiom - 'emergent', that is, are features of a substance that cannot be said to belong to any of the integral parts of the substance that is configured by that substantial form" [cf. Brown (2005), p. 75]. The caution we had when reading Stump's text is also applicable to Brown's use of the term 'confers', since according to his own formulation of what he calls the 'intrinsic principles' of a substance (i.e., substantial form and prime matter), a substantial form is a principle in the metaphysically deflated sense of being an explanation of some feature of the substance it configures. For Brown's view of Aquinas' notion of 'principle', see footnote 22 above.

⁴⁹ Cf. SCG II.63. For Aristotle's characterization of substance as that which has no contrary and does not admit of a more and a less, see *Cat.*, ch.5, 3b 24, 32. The idea Aristotle has in mind is that, if something is for instance a man, then there cannot be some other kind of substance that stands to man as its contrary. Moreover, if something is a man - or any other kind of substance for that matter - then there cannot be another man who is more, or less, a man than the man in question. Accordingly, neither can substantial forms have contraries nor admit of variation of degree, since, if they did, then so would the substances of which they are the substantial forms.

of proportion of contrary elements, there is nothing to prevent it from being just the sort of fluctuating notion that Aquinas wants to deny of substantial forms.⁵⁰

Aquinas uses another argument against the theory of harmony whose application to the contemporary theory of configuration seems more palpable. According to Aquinas, an intuitive way of understanding the theory of harmony is by taking the soul to be the mode in which the material elements of a substance are arranged.⁵¹ For Aquinas, it is characteristic of a substantial form (and therefore of a soul) that it exists as a whole in each part of that of which it is the form. Hence, since the various parts of the body display different modes of composition, it would follow that each part of the body possesses a different soul or substantial form, which is obviously false for Aquinas, who champions the unicity of substantial form.

It is one thing to say that the *human soul* cannot be a configurational state on the basis that the notion of ‘subsistent states’ - as we have seen above - makes no sense, while Aquinas explicitly holds that the human soul is capable of separate existence. However, what Aquinas is saying in the present argument is that *substantial forms in general* (and not only those forms that are also human souls) cannot be configurational states, since each part of the body possesses its proper arrangement of sub-parts, which would entail a plurality of states and, therefore, a multiplicity of substantial forms.

In addition to the above, when discussing in *ST* 1a Q76a8 whether the soul exists as a whole in each integral part of the body, Aquinas is explicit in his refusal of the view that substantial forms are configurational states. In the passage I quote

⁵⁰ An important aspect of Aquinas’ argument against treating the soul as a harmony is that, by doing so, one ends up reducing the soul to the second-rate category of accidental forms. For that, see *SCG* II.63: “*Complexio, cum sit quiddam constitutum ex contrariis qualitibus quasi medium inter eas, impossibile est quod sit forma substantialis: nam substantiae nihil est contrarium, nec suscipit magis et minus. Anima autem est forma substantialis, et non accidentalis: alias per animam non sortiretur aliquid genus vel speciem. Anima igitur non est complexio*”. The same conclusion applies to the theory of harmony, cf. *SCG* II.64: “*Intenditur etiam et remittitur: sicut et complexio. Ex quibus omnibus ostenditur quod anima non sit harmonia, sicut nec complexio*”.

⁵¹ Cf. *SCG* II.64. The precise expression used by Aquinas to denote such a formulation of the theory of harmony is *ratio compositionis*. I follow the English translation of *SCG* II by James F. Anderson, who proposes “mode of composition” for *ratio compositionis*. Putting questions of translation aside, the idea Aquinas wants to convey is that, according to the harmony theorists, the soul is not the concrete composition itself but the particular state of being composed in such-and-such a way.

below, not only does Aquinas say that a configurational state (which he calls a ‘form that is composition and order’) cannot be a substantial form, he also adds that a form that is mere configuration is no more than an accidental form. The passage reads as follows:

Now a substantial form is not only the perfection of the whole, but also of each part of the whole. For since a whole consists of parts, a form of the whole that does not give being to each of the parts of the body is a form that is composition and order, just like the form of a house. Such a form is an accidental form. The soul, however, is a substantial form. Therefore, it must be the form and the act not only of the whole, but also of each of its parts.⁵²

It is interesting to see that Aquinas compares a ‘form that is composition and order’ (in contemporary idiom, a ‘configurational state’) with the form of a house. As we know, in Aristotelian-Thomistic hylomorphism forms of artifacts are accidental forms, since they presuppose a receptor - the subject they inform - that already has some sort of substantial being prior to its being informed by the accidental form. Therefore, by proposing an analogy with the house what Aquinas is suggesting is that configurational states, instead of being substantial forms, are rather consequent upon the substantial form, since they presuppose that the substantial form is already present as a cause of composition in each and every part of the parcel of matter of which configurational states are the order and mode of composition.

I have said above that the proponents of the configuration view, to the extent that they think of substantial forms as emergent states, hold that substantial forms follow upon the manipulation of material elements. Now based on what Aquinas says in the aforementioned passage, we can conclude that it is rather the other way around: the arrangement of parts which is characteristic of a substance follows upon the imposition of a substantial form on a given parcel of matter. In sum, the idea that substantial forms are configurational states of matter seems to mistake what is in fact an effect for a cause, leading thus to an insufficient characterization of the causality of

⁵² Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a8c: “*Substantialis autem forma non solum est perfectio totius, sed cuiuslibet partis. Cum enim totum consistat ex partibus, forma totius quae non dat esse singulis partibus corporis, est forma quae est compositio et ordo, sicut forma domus: et talis forma est accidentalis. Anima vero est forma substantialis: unde oportet quod sit forma et actus non solum totius, sed cuiuslibet partis*”.

substantial forms, according to which forms - in a metaphysically deflated sense of causality - are mere explanatory principles of the organization of a substance's material parts.⁵³

5.3. Understanding Substantial Forms

After having advanced a criticism of the theory that Thomistic substantial forms are best understood as configurational states, I would like to propose my own interpretation of Aquinas' concept of form. One has to keep in mind as a regulative principle the idea that, on Aquinas' view, subsistent souls are essentially substantial forms of bodies. As we have seen, the main problem with the theory of configurational states is that the very notion of 'subsistent state' is inconsistent, so that, if Aquinas had truly held the view that substantial forms are configurational states, he would have been required to forgo the claim that human souls are substantial forms. In my view, the key to a solution lies in the realization that - unlike what Kenny thought to be the case - substantial forms as such contain an element of concreteness that favours the notion of a substantial form that can at once exist as a 'this something'. In a nutshell, the idea consists in eliminating the apparent opposition between being a form and being a subsistent thing by boosting up (in comparison to other contemporary readings of Aquinas) the notion of substantial form.

5.3.1. Aquinas' Theory of Education: the Standard vs. the Alternative View

I begin by examining a tricky part of Aquinas' hylomorphic metaphysics, namely the view that substantial forms are *educed* - or drawn out - from the potency

⁵³ I know of at least one passage where Aquinas is straightforward in his rejection of the view that substantial forms are emergent states, namely *ST* 1a Q29a2 ad5. There, when considering the relation between substantial form and a thing's subsistence, Aquinas argues as follows: "That a thing is able to subsist on its own is something that belongs to it by reason of its [substantial] form (*ex proprietate suae formae*), which does not accrue to the things subsisting (*quae non advenit rei subsistenti*), but gives actual being to matter so that it may subsist as an individual". Again, the point Aquinas wants to make is that, as a *giver of being*, the substantial form must be a cause in some ontologically strong sense, and not, as the configurational state theory supposes, an effect of matter's being brought into some mode of composition.

of matter. The importance of considering the doctrine of eduction is that this is a central part of Aquinas' theory of forms that has been given an interpretation - which I call the 'standard view' - according to which a substantial form is merely that which *accounts for* the being of a substance, being thus devoid of any element of concreteness. What we have to examine is whether Aquinas' theory of eduction provides support for the characterization of forms as abstract particulars, despite all the evidence we have gathered up until now against such a view. Even though the theory of eduction concerns only what Aquinas calls 'material forms' - i.e., substantial forms that are not subsistent - the point I want to make is that if the distinction between material substantial forms and human souls (which are subsistent substantial forms) is presented as a distinction between mere explanatory principles of being and subsistent entities, then the differences between them become too big to fit into a single, coherent concept.

As we have seen in chapter 4, the theory of eduction belongs to Aquinas' doctrine of the generation of natural substances, and is used to refute the position of those philosophers - like Plato and Avicenna - who believe that not only the rational soul but any kind of substantial form is created out of nothing by some supernatural agent. Aquinas rejects the idea of mingling creation with the works of nature by claiming that, since 'being' is not univocally predicated of forms and composite substances, the former are not generated in the same sense that the latter are. Given that substances are beings in the proper sense of the term, they are the genuine subjects of generation and corruption, whereas form - which is not properly speaking a being but a principle of being (i.e., that *by which* some substance is a being) - is said to be 'cogenerated'. Now the cogeneration of form is explained by means of the idea that the substantial form is that through the acquisition of which some substance is generated. In order to explain the generation of a natural substance in matter through the cogeneration of a material form, Aquinas holds that a nonsubsistent substantial form is 'educed from the potency of matter' (*de materiae potentia educatur*).⁵⁴

⁵⁴ For Aquinas' discussion of these topics, see *QDPD* 3.8, or *ST* 1a Q45a8 for a summarized view of the same position. The above paragraph is a summary of my previous examination of Aquinas' treatment of the coming into being of material forms, cf. chapter 4, 4.3.1.

The way one interprets Aquinas' characterization of substantial forms as 'principles of being' is a function of how one understands Aquinas' idea that forms are cogenerated by being educed from matter. Even though Aquinas is explicit in his denial of a Platonic approach to the production of forms, according to which forms are themselves the proper subjects of a creative act, still he wants to preserve a very intimate relationship between the notions of form and being. Those, therefore, that characterize formal causality as an intrinsically abstract notion by reducing form to a mere explanatory principle are actually overlooking what is supposed to be Aquinas' most personal contribution to the notion of form, namely its status as a *conductor* of being, or, as I have put it earlier in Part 1, as a 'metaphysical antenna'.⁵⁵

Let me now explain what I take to be the 'standard view' of the eduction theory. We know that for Aquinas those things that come to be in the proper sense are either substances or subsistent things.⁵⁶ Substantial forms, by contrast, are neither substances in their own right nor necessarily subsistent, though some substantial forms - namely, human souls - do subsist. However that may be, there is still an obvious sense in which nonsubsistent substantial forms, to the extent that they are not without a beginning, first do not exist while later they do exist. In order to account for this obvious, though not proper, sense of 'coming to be', Aquinas introduces the idea of cogeneration. Since composite substances are said to be made from matter (in opposition to those things, like the human soul, that are made *ex nihilo* by divine agency), Aquinas thinks that the best way to describe the origin of nonsubsistent forms is by means of the notion of eduction.⁵⁷

I call the 'standard view' of the eduction theory a common reading of Aquinas' treatment of the origin of forms which is grounded on what I regard as an overly literal

⁵⁵ See chapter 4, 4.2.3.

⁵⁶ See for instance *ST* 1a Q45a4c: *Fieri autem ordinatur ad esse rei. Unde illis proprie convenit fieri et creari, quibus convenit esse. Quod quidem convenit proprie subsistentibus: sive sint simplicia, sicut substantiae separatae; sive sint composita, sicut substantiae materiales.*

⁵⁷ It is extremely important to keep in mind that the theory of eduction appears in a context where Aquinas' main goal is to stay away from the Platonic notion that forms are themselves made. Hence, in *QDPD* 3.8, Aquinas says the following: "It is not properly said that form is made in matter, but rather that it is educed from the potency of matter" (*Et sic non proprie dicitur quod forma fiat in materia, sed magis quod de materiae potentia educatur*).

interpretation of Aquinas' text. My criticism is that by proposing too literal an interpretation of what *eductio* means in that context, the defenders of the standard view fall into the same error concerning the nature of matter that Aquinas ascribes to Anaxagoras, and which consists in assuming that matter is the sort of repository where forms exist latently.⁵⁸ In short, the standard view is wrong in identifying potency with latency.

I think of Christopher Brown and Bernardo C. Bazán as two proponents of the standard view. As we have seen above, Brown is also a defender of the configurational state theory, which thinks of forms in general as abstract entities and the human soul in particular as a subsisting state, so it is only natural that he tries to use the eduction theory to support his own interpretation of Thomistic forms. Brown suggests the following as an explanation of what Aquinas means by the eduction of forms from matter:

Material substantial forms originate by way of a natural process, and not a miraculous one. But neither are material substantial forms *generated*... Rather than being generated, Aquinas thinks that material substantial forms are 'educated' (*educitur*) from matter. For now we can note that by 'education' Aquinas means the drawing out of a substantial form from matter that is 'in potency' to a way of substantial being; substantial forms that are not currently configuring some matter *can* come to configure some matter through the actions of agents extrinsic to that matter manipulating it in various ways.⁵⁹

The close relation between an overly literal interpretation of the eduction of forms from matter and a characterization of forms as configurational states becomes clear in Brown's text. Brown takes the eduction terminology at face value, that is, as denoting an actual *drawing out* of forms from matter, where matter is thought to be in potency to a certain form because it already possesses to a certain extent - though not in complete actuality - that form. The standard interpretation of the eduction of forms centres around the idea that substantial forms pre-exist in matter in a state of latency, from which they are brought into actuality by some agent (i.e., the efficient cause

⁵⁸ In *QDPD* 3.8, Aquinas sums up Anaxagoras' mistake as consisting in the belief that "nothing was made by another except in that it was drawn from another thing in which it was latent" (*nulla res fieret aliter nisi per hoc quod extrahebatur a re alia in qua latebat*).

⁵⁹ Cf. Brown (2005), p. 76. The italics in the quotation are the author's.

performing the eduction) whose influence upon matter results in a certain configuration of material parts. According to this formulation of the standard view, the eduction of forms from matter must be understood as the emergence of a configurational state from the manipulation of matter.

This interpretation of the eduction theory, which I consider to be a contemporary version of Anaxagoras' mistaken view regarding the potentiality of matter, seems to have its origin in a misunderstanding of Aquinas' claim that forms are not themselves generated. As I have suggested above, by saying that forms are not made 'properly and per se' Aquinas does not wish to challenge the obvious sense in which every form has a beginning.⁶⁰ That is why he says that forms, though not generated, are cogenerated - i.e., they come to be with the coming into being of that which is properly said to be made, namely the composite substance.⁶¹

However, Brown thinks that the claim that forms are not generated entails viewing the eduction terminology in a way that is compatible with the idea that forms have no beginning. Notice, for instance, how in the aforementioned passage he talks of *material* forms as not currently configuring some matter but at the same time being able to come to configure some matter. By putting things this way, he seems to suggest that even when forms are not actually configuring some matter they are nonetheless already present in matter to a certain extent. But since material forms, unlike human souls, are not what scholars like Brown view as 'subsistent states', that must mean that material forms pre-exist latently in matter; in other words, that they exist in matter even when they are not actually configuring some parcel of matter. Following such a characterization of material forms, matter becomes a repository of *latent states* - that is, configurational states that are not currently configuring matter but that can come to

⁶⁰ In *ST* 1a Q65a4, Aquinas speaks of forms of corruptible substances as forms that at one time exist and at another time exist not, without being themselves either generated or corrupted: "*formae autem corruptibilium rerum habent ut aliquando sint, aliquando non sint, absque hoc quod ipsae generentur aut corrumpantur, sed compositis generatis aut corruptis*".

⁶¹ Cf. *ST* 1a Q45a4 and Q45a8.

configure it through the operation of an agent that manipulates matter in different ways.⁶²

I would like to offer an alternative reading of the eduction theory, one which is based primarily on the idea that the notion of ‘eduction’ is used in a more figurative sense when employed by Aquinas to explain the coming to be of substantial forms in matter. Unlike the standard view, the figurative use does not involve the idea that the potency of matter should be understood as a storehouse of latent forms from which these forms are extracted and brought into full actuality. Neither are we required to accept, once following the figurative use, that substantial forms are abstract entities that emerge from the modification of matter.

One undeniable evidence of the unsuitability of the standard view is that Aquinas also makes use of the notion of ‘eduction’ in a context where it would be completely preposterous to interpret it as a literal ‘drawing out’. In a place where he discusses if the power of creation is communicable to a creature, Aquinas writes the following: “There is nothing greater than the infinite. But an infinite power is needed *in order to educe something from nothing into being*”.⁶³ Later in the same text, Aquinas makes a similar use of ‘eduction’. He says: “In bringing things to their end, those things that are for the end already exist, and so it is possible for a creature to

⁶² The standard view can also be espoused without recourse to the configurational state theory, and that is what we find in Bazán’s paper “The Creation of the Soul According to Thomas Aquinas” (2011). At one point, Bazán says the following with regard to a natural agent’s role in the production of a nonhuman substance: “A natural agent exercises its generative power to modify matter (*transmutatio*) until it succeeds in extracting (*eductio*) from the potency of matter a substantial form that is specifically identical to the substantial form of the agent. *For the ‘eductio’ to be possible it is necessary that this form be in the potency of matter; if it is not, no natural agent could elicit it from matter and there would be no generation*” (cf. p. 553; the emphasis is mine). This passage indicates that Bazán understands the idea of a form being ‘in the potency of matter’ in terms of a form existing latently in matter. The verbs employed by Bazán to explain the action of eduction (‘extract’, ‘elicit’) are reminiscent of Aquinas’ description of Anaxagoras’ mistake, which, as mentioned before, consists in the belief that, in order to be made by another, something has to be drawn from another in which it exists latently, where the verb used by Aquinas to express this activity of drawing out a form from matter is *extrahere* (see footnote 58). This suggests that a literal act of extraction presupposes a theory of latency, which is in turn explicitly rejected by Aquinas. Hence, Aquinas’ use of the eduction terminology to explain the coming to be of a form in matter cannot be taken at face value, as an actual extraction of forms from matter. I insist: the potency of matter cannot be viewed as a repository in which forms are latent.

⁶³ Cf. *QDPD* 3.4 obj.15 (the emphasis above is mine): “*Infinito non est maius aliquid. Sed infinitae potentiae est educere aliquid de nihilo in esse*”.

cooperate with God in bringing something to its ultimate end. *But in the universal eduction of things into being nothing is presupposed*".⁶⁴

What is important to retain from these two passages is how Aquinas characterizes God's creative agency as an *eduction* of creatures into being from nothing. We can, therefore, compare the eduction of creatures from nothing with the eduction of forms from matter. It seems, however, absurd to suppose that Aquinas would want to say that in divine creation things are literally *extracted* from nothingness, as if the ultimate source of their being were nothingness rather than God himself. What Aquinas has in mind when he speaks of creation *ex nihilo* is not that creatures are literally brought out by God from nothing - if that were the case, nothingness would have to be something, which is absurd. The point is rather that creation is the only kind of production in which nothing is presupposed except for God's creative power itself.⁶⁵

Since the absurdity of supposing, in the case of creation, that things are truly extracted from nothing as from a source does not inhibit Aquinas from speaking of an 'eduction' of creatures *from nothing*, one must assume that the best way to interpret the eduction terminology is not as a literal 'drawing out' of things from something else. Hence the comparison should be stated as follows: while creation denotes a sort of production in which nothing besides the divine power is presupposed (and thus creatures are said to be educed into being *from nothing*), natural generation requires, in addition to the efficient causality of a generator, the presence of matter as the subject of a substantial change (and thus substantial forms are said to be educed into being *from matter*). On that account, just as in the context of creation, where 'eduction' is used not according to the literal sense of 'something being drawn out of something else', so also in the characterization of the cogeneration of substantial forms as an eduction from matter all that is meant by 'eduction' is that a form comes to be under the presupposition of matter as the proper subject of a substantial change.

⁶⁴ Cf. *QDPD* 3.4 ad1 (my emphasis): "*In reducendo ad finem, praeexistunt ea quae sunt ad finem: et ideo non impossibile est per actionem alicuius cooperari Deo ad hoc quod res aliquae in finem ultimum reducantur. Sed in universali eductione rerum in esse, nihil praesupponitur*".

⁶⁵ On the precise sense in which in creation something is said to come to be 'from nothing', see *QDPD* 3.1 ad7: "*Et ideo dicatur aliquid ex nihilo fieri, quia fit quidem, sed non praeexistit aliquid ex quo fiat*".

Thus understood, the theory of eduction need not involve the mistaken view that equates the potency of matter with a sort of storehouse of latent forms. In a nutshell, potency is not latency but indeterminacy.⁶⁶ The main difference between the standard interpretation of the theory of eduction and the one I suggest here is that by characterizing potency as latency, the standard view ends up taking the modification of matter to be the *cause* of the emergence of a substantial form from matter, which substantial form is said to be ‘elicited’ from matter. Contrariwise, on my view, the transmutation of matter is what *results* from the reception of a form in matter. In other words, manipulation is consequent upon information, not the other way around. After all, according to Aquinas, for matter to be ‘modified’ is simply for it to be reduced from a state of potentiality (i.e., indetermination with respect to a certain form) to a state of actuality (i.e., determination with respect to that same form) by the action of some agent, through the *induction* of a substantial form.⁶⁷

In conclusion, while the standard view - due to its overly literal interpretation of ‘eduction’ as a genuine ‘drawing out’ of forms from matter - regards the *eduction* of forms *from* matter and the *induction* of forms *into* matter as mutually exclusive

⁶⁶ Not indeed *total* indeterminacy, as in the logical notion of ‘prime matter’, since no actually existing matter is completely bereft of form, but indeterminacy with respect to a given substantial form. Hence a parcel of matter *y* is said to be ‘in potentiality’ to substantial form *x* when (i) *y* is not yet *x* in actuality and (ii) nothing in the present constitution of *y* is inimical to the reception of *x*.

⁶⁷ Cf. SCG II.86: “*Hoc enim est materiam transmutari, de potentia in actum reduci*”. See also SCG II.43, where Aquinas speaks of the first induction of forms into matter as having its origin in God and not in natural agents: “*Impossibile est igitur quod prima inductio formarum in materia sit ab aliquo create formam tantum: sed ab eo qui est creator totius compositi*”. While the first forms are said to be produced by God through the creation of the whole composite, subsequent forms are taken to be induced into pre-existing parcels of matter by the action of some agent. Also against the literal interpretation of the theory of eduction is ST 1a Q65a4 (towards the end of the *corpus*), where Aquinas admits in a somewhat Platonic-Augustinian fashion that material forms (i.e., nonsubsistent substantial forms) are derived from spiritual substances, not in the sense that they emanate from those substances, but in that they are the endpoint of the movement of those substances: “*Etiam formae corporales a substantiis spiritualibus deriventur, non tanquam influentibus formas, sed tanquam moventibus ad formas*”. Finally, the reader might want to consult ST 1a Q104a1, where Aquinas holds that a natural agent is never the cause of a thing’s being (*secundum esse*) but only of its becoming (*secundum fieri*). According to Aquinas’ exposition, a natural agent cannot be the cause of a thing’s being because it cannot be the cause of the thing’s form ‘as such’ (*inquantum est talis forma*). The natural agent, however, can be the cause of a thing’s becoming since it can be the cause of ‘this form according as it is in this matter’ (*huiusmodi forma secundum quod est in materia*). The natural agent is thus said to be the cause that ‘this matter receives this form’ (*haec materia acquirat hanc formam*). It is noteworthy that in the passage Aquinas describes the presence of form in matter as the result of a *reception* rather than of a *drawing out*.

notions, my alternative reading suggests a relation of complementariness between the two. Accordingly, forms are said to be *induced into* matter in the sense that they are transmitted by some natural agent to a given parcel of matter - which in turn is said to be first in a state of indetermination with respect to that particular form, and next to be modified (or reduced to a state of actuality) by form thanks to its having received that same form. On the other hand, forms are also said to be *educed from* matter since, in the natural generation of a composite substance, the substantial form of the generated substance can only pass from nonexistence to existence insofar as the potentiality of a given parcel of matter to that particular form is presupposed. In other words, while *induction* has to do with the consideration of natural generation from the point of view of form as the principle of determination of some matter, *eduction* is concerned with natural generation from the point of view of matter as the ultimate substratum of a substantial change.

The point of my discussion of Aquinas' theory of eduction has been to show that, in order to support their interpretation of the nature of substantial forms, scholars who propose the standard view assume a number of theses regarding the occurrence of form in matter for which they have less than compelling evidence. Hence, it is indeed possible to reject the view that substantial forms are configurational states that emerge from the manipulation of matter and still make sense of Aquinas' characterization of forms as being educed from the potency of matter.

5.3.2. *Form as a 'Giver of Being' and its Consequent Independence from Matter*

Those who endorse the view that Thomistic substantial forms are abstract particulars cling to the idea that, according to Aquinas, forms are not properly beings but mere *principles* of being.⁶⁸ Since they think that for Aquinas principles are essentially explanatory in their nature, they take the claim that forms are principles as an evidence of the abstractness of Thomistic forms. In this last subsection of the present chapter, I challenge the view that the notion of 'principle' as ascribed to form

⁶⁸ Another way of saying this is that the form is not that which is but that *by which* something is. See, for instance, *QDPD* 3.8; *SCG* II.43, 68, 86; *CM* VII.7 n.1423; *ST* 1a Q45a4, Q65a4, Q110a2.

is devoid of ontological standing by showing that forms as such possess an element of concreteness whose origin lies in the close relationship that holds between form and being. Once we show that substantial forms are to a certain extent concrete - in the sense that they are genuine causes that operate at an ontological level - we are allowed to dismiss as a false paradox Kenny's claim that Aquinas' characterization of the human soul as a subsistent substantial form turns it into something that is at once abstract and concrete.

When considering the conditions that need to be met for something to be a substantial form of some substance, Aquinas holds that, first of all, the form must be the principle of the substantial being of the thing of which it is the form - where such a principle is not the *productive* cause, but the *formal* cause whereby something is properly called a 'being'.⁶⁹ The question that has to be addressed now is whether Aquinas' approach to forms as such can provide support for the strong view according to which substantial forms as *formal* principles of being are more than just explanatory elements of things, in that they are to some extent 'thing-like' - even though, generally speaking, substantial forms are neither substances in their own right nor subsistent things.

According to Aquinas, a substantial form cannot be the productive cause of the being of the substance of which it is the form since, properly speaking, no creature whatsoever can produce being.⁷⁰ Only God can be the productive cause of being. By contrast, a creature can be either the productive cause of a substance's becoming (when in natural generation a composite substance is said to induce this particular

⁶⁹ Cf. *SCG* II.68: "*Quorum unum est, ut forma sit principium essendi substantialiter ei cuius est forma: principium autem dico, non factivum, sed formale, quo aliquid est et denominatur ens*". Since Aquinas turns down the idea that the form might be a principle in the sense of that which *produces* being, those scholars who defend the view that forms are abstract particulars draw from such a rejection the conclusion that the form can only be a principle in the epistemological sense of that which *accounts for* the fact that something is a being. The general idea behind their position is that among the different types of Aristotelian causes only efficient causes have ontological standing. For my previous analysis of Aquinas' exposition in *SCG* II.68 of the criteria for being a substantial form, see Part 1, chapter 4, subsection 4.1.3.

⁷⁰ Cf., for instance, *ST* 1a Q45a5 ad1: "*Nullum igitur ens creatum potest producere aliquod ens absolute, nisi in quantum esse causat in hoc*". In the quotation, Aquinas contrasts (i) producing being in an unqualified sense (which is said of God only, and therefore denied of creatures) and (ii) causing being *in this* (in which sense creatures do produce being, while forms are said to be the vehicles through which being is received in a subject, namely the material substratum).

form into that particular parcel of matter) or the formal cause of a substance's being (in which case the substantial form is said first to receive the being that is sent forth from God and next to transmit it to the generated composite substance of which it is the form).⁷¹

The antenna analogy helps us understand how being is conferred on creatures as the result of distinct causal powers, so that it is said to follow upon each cause in a different sense. First, God is said to create being in an unqualified sense since he is the ultimate source from which being is emitted. Second, a natural generator is said to be an efficient cause of becoming (or of 'being-in')⁷² since it causes a form to be in some matter - or, according to our analogy, it installs in the material substratum a metaphysical receptor-transmitter of the signal which is sent forth by God. Third, form is said to be the formal (and not efficient) principle of being because it is neither a creator (i.e. an emitter) nor a generator (i.e., an installer), but rather that which receives the signal emitted by God and transmits it to the generated thing. Now since form is *induced into* matter by a generator, it is said to be an *intrinsic* principle of the being of a substance: the form is a metaphysical part of that to which it transmits being.⁷³

What one gets from the analogy I am proposing here (with its characterization of forms as metaphysical antennas, and of formal causality as the ability to receive-transmit a signal) is a plausible alternative to the view that forms are abstract entities whose causal role is confined to an epistemological register. By saying that the form

⁷¹ I am following here my earlier characterization of forms as 'metaphysical antennas' as presented in Part 1, chapter 4, subsection 4.2.3. According to the proposed analogy, God is the ultimate source of this 'signal' which being is; forms are the receptors-transmitters of the signal; the generated substance is the final receptacle of the signal; and the natural generator (which for Aquinas is only the productive cause of a substance's *becoming* and not of its *being*) is, say, the cable guy - i.e., the installer of the antenna. Hence, when Aquinas holds that neither forms nor substances produce being in the absolute sense what he means is that neither is responsible for the *emission* of the signal, whereas both are responsible - each in its own manner - for the *reception* of the signal: forms insofar as they receive-transmit the signal, and substances (i.e., natural generators) insofar as they render the reception possible by installing the metaphysical antennas in the naturally generated substance.

⁷² See footnote 70 for the second (and qualified) sense in which being is produced.

⁷³ For my previous characterization of substantial forms as metaphysical parts of substances, see Part 1, chapter 3, subsections 3.6 and 3.7. There, metaphysical parts have been described as belonging to the individual as such (and not to the individual in its universal characterization, like the parts of the definition) and as not contributing to the individual substance's spatial extension.

makes an ontological contribution to the being of a substance we are rejecting the idea that the causal role of forms must be reduced to that of an explanation lest we mistake the role of forms with that of efficient causes.

I now turn to Aquinas' own text in order to see how his description of form as a 'giver of being' accords with the way the relationship between form and being is presented in my analogy rather than with the theory of forms as abstract particulars.⁷⁴

Aquinas' doctrine of formal causality at the level of substances composed of matter and form is best expressed by the formula 'form gives being to matter' (*forma dat esse materiae*).⁷⁵ The formula is used by Aquinas in *DEE* as part of an argument whose aim is to provide support for a doctrine of created subsistent forms. The passage in which the argument takes place is as follows:

Whenever things are related to each other in such a way that one is the cause of the other's being, the one that has the status of cause can have being without the other, but not vice versa. Now matter and form are so related that form gives being to matter. Thus

⁷⁴ Before turning to Aquinas' text, let me add a qualification regarding the antenna analogy. Like most analogies, ours too has its imperfections, and one of them is that it might lead the reader into thinking that in a substance the occurrence of form is chronologically prior to the being that the substance receives. However, as Fr. Dewan explains, "Form and *esse* are *given together*, by virtue of another thing, the efficient cause" (cf. "St. Thomas, Metaphysical Procedure, and the Formal Cause", in Dewan (2006), chapter 9, p. 169; the emphasis is the author's). Hence, in our analogy, the installation of the antenna in the material substratum would actually be *equivalent* to the reception of being in the informed parcel of matter - where nonetheless the reception of being can only take place by means of a form's ability to transmit it to a subject. Since form is not an efficient cause, the concomitance of form and being does not prevent us from viewing form as a *cause* (in an ontologically relevant sense of the term) of being. Later in the same passage, Fr. Dewan characterizes form's priority over *esse* in the following manner: "What one is saying in attributing a *priority* to form over existence [*esse*, which I have been translating as *being* throughout this dissertation] is that the influence of the efficient cause on the caused thing will be the *existence* of the caused thing only inasmuch as the efficient cause also provides *form* for the caused thing, whereby that thing *appropriates* the influence" (cf. pp. 169-170; the italics are in the original). Fr. Dewan's characterization of form as the intrinsic principle by means of which a substance appropriates the influence of its natural generator is not too far from our metaphoric description of form as a metaphysical antenna, so long as we assume that the generator's influence on the generated thing can be tracked back to the ultimate source of being, namely God. This assumption in turn finds support in Aquinas' claim that natural generators can only be the cause of the generated thing's becoming, and not of its being.

⁷⁵ Cf. *DEE*, ch.4. According to Fr. Dewan, the literary source of the formula '*forma dat esse materiae*' is to be found in Ibn Gabirol's *Fons Vitae*, IV, 10. As Fr. Dewan explains, in Gabirol's work the maxim is used by the student who seeks to argue against Gabirol that form can exist without matter. Gabirol himself rejects the student's claim by saying that it is impossible for form to be without matter since form is the unity of matter ('*forma non est nisi unitas*'). As Fr. Dewan notes, Aquinas in *DEE* ends up adopting Gabirol's student's argument against Gabirol's universal hylomorphism. See "St. Thomas, Form, and Incorruptibility" (in Dewan, 2006, ch.10), pp.181-182.

matter cannot exist without some form. By contrast, there can be a form without matter; for form as such is not dependent upon matter. If, however, one finds some forms that cannot exist except in matter, this happens to them because they are too distant from the first principle, which is the first and pure act.⁷⁶

The first thing to be noted is how Aquinas relies on the doctrine that form is a cause of the being of matter in order to argue for the ontological independence of form from matter: since form gives being to matter it is possible for it to exist without matter. The conclusion draws support from a premise that states that when *x* and *y* relate to each other in such a way that *x* is the cause of *y*'s being, then it is possible for *x* to exist without *y*, whereas *y* cannot exist without *x*.

Notice that the argument is about *ontological* independence: it seeks to show that not every created thing has matter in its metaphysical constitution, so that some subsistent things can indeed be forms alone. Now, it is clear that one cannot derive the ontological separability of form from its status as a cause of the being of matter unless the causality of form is understood in some ontologically relevant sense. In other words, form as such must possess ontological standing, and not be reduced to an explanatory principle, if one is to allow the move from a form's status as a giver of being to a form's natural ability to exist on its own.

The second aspect to be noted in the argument is the way Aquinas accounts for 'material forms' (i.e., nonsubsistent substantial forms). As Aquinas contends, in the order of forms some are far removed from the first principle of being, so that they cannot exist except when conjoined to a material substratum.⁷⁷ As Fr. Dewan remarks in his analysis of the same passage, "to be form is to have a resemblance to the first cause; to require matter in order to exist is to fall somewhat short in the very line of

⁷⁶ Cf. *DEE*, ch.4: "*Quaecumque enim ita se habent ad invicem quod unum est causa esse alterius, illud quod habet rationem causae potest habere esse sine altero, sed non convertitur. Talis autem invenitur habitudo materiae et formae, quia forma dat esse materiae. Et ideo impossibile est esse materiam sine aliqua forma. Tamen non est impossibile esse aliquam formam sine materia. Forma enim non habet in eo quod est forma dependentiam ad materiam, sed si inveniantur aliquae formae, quae non possunt esse nisi in materia, hoc accidit eis secundum quod sunt distantes a primo principio, quod est actus primus et purus*".

⁷⁷ For my previous exposition of Aquinas' use of the doctrine of the hierarchy among forms to account for the human soul's hybrid nature, see Part 1, chapter 4, 4.1.2. For the relationship between form and being in the context of Aquinas' argument for the soul's incorruptibility, see 4.2.2.

being a form".⁷⁸ Hence, it is precisely insofar as form is form that it has the ability to exist without its material counterpart, since to be a form is to be a giver of being - and that whose nature consists in giving being is indeed capable of existing without that to which being is effected. If material forms are givers of being that are nonetheless not capable of independent existence, this is due to their falling short of being maximally form: in the case of nonsubsistent substantial forms, association with matter constrains their nature to such an extent that they become second-rate forms, and are thus unable to accomplish that which is in the very nature of form to achieve.⁷⁹

Aquinas' doctrine of created subsistent forms in *DEE* relies on the argument that form can exist independently of matter because form is the cause of the being of matter: in Aquinas' own words, 'form gives being to matter'. As said above, the argument is about *ontological* independence: it considers form's capacity for independent *existence*.

Since Aquinas' strategy in the argument is to establish the possibility of existence of created subsistent forms based on form's status as a cause of the being of matter, it stands to reason that the type of causality proper to form must operate at an ontological - and not merely epistemological - level. Hence, by thinking of forms as abstract entities the causality of which functions at the level of explanations, one fails to notice that which for Aquinas is most characteristic of form: its ability to cause being, and its consequent capacity to exist separately. Again, if formal causality were merely explanatory (in the sense that form is that which accounts for the being of a

⁷⁸ Cf. "St. Thomas, Form, and Incorruptibility" (in Dewan, 2006, ch. 10), p.181.

⁷⁹ In "St. Thomas Aquinas Against Metaphysical Materialism" (1982), Fr. Dewan shows how Aquinas' theory of the relationship between form and being in *DEE* marks a shift from the doctrine espoused in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, where subsistent forms are said to exist on their own not precisely as forms but as substances (see, for instance, CS 1.8.5.2 ad5 and 2.19.1.1 ad4). As Fr. Dewan explains, the position defended in *DEE* prevails throughout the rest of Aquinas' career, and its most assertive formulation is to be found in his *Treatise on Separate Substances*. I quote here the complete passage from *TSS*, ch.7, where Aquinas argues for the ontological priority of form over matter, and also holds that material forms do not subsist not because they are forms but because they are 'such forms' (*tales formae*): "*Amplius, cum actus naturaliter sit prior potentia et forma quam materia, potentia quidem dependet in suo esse ab actu, et materia a forma; forma autem in suo esse non dependet a materia secundum propriam rationem vel actus (a potentia); non enim priora naturaliter a posterioribus dependent. Si igitur aliquae formae sint quae sine materia esse non possunt, hoc non convenit eis ex hoc quod sunt formae, sed ex hoc quod sunt tales formae, scilicet imperfectae, quae per se sustentari non possunt, sed indigent materiae fundamento*".

substance), then Aquinas would never have been able to infer form's ability to exist on its own from its status as a *cause* of being.

That is precisely the element of concreteness that we need in order to reject both the idea that Thomistic substantial forms are abstract (as defended by the Saint Louis school) and the related objection (proposed by Kenny) that the two elements of Aquinas' hybrid theory of the human soul cancel each other out, since, according to the objection, human souls would have to be at once concrete and abstract. On Aquinas' view, forms as such are 'thing-like' insofar as they possess by their very nature a tendency (or inclination) to independent being.⁸⁰ We may want to use our proposed analogy to explain form's 'being-orientedness' by saying that, since forms are able to transmit being to matter, they are also, for that very same reason, capable of retaining that being for themselves.⁸¹ While it is true that some forms, given their association with matter, are characterized by their dual role of receiving-and-transmitting being, Aquinas nonetheless thinks that what is in fact most distinctive of forms as such is the ability to receive being. Accordingly, when one considers forms as such there is nothing in their nature that is inimical to the retainment of being.

In this chapter, I began by discussing Kenny's claim that Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul is inconsistent insofar as it presents the human soul as being at once an abstract and a concrete. I then addressed the position of a group of scholars who think that, while Kenny is wrong in defending the inconsistency of Aquinas' anthropology, he is nevertheless right in his interpretation of substantial forms as abstract particulars. My next step consisted in showing that once you hold that

⁸⁰ To use Fr. Dewan's felicitous expression, form is 'being-oriented' (cf. Dewan, 1982, pp.428-429). We can also mention the phrase Gabirol puts in the mouth of his student: '*intellectus esse est intellectus formae*' (cf. *Fons Vitae*, IV.10), that is, the notion of being coincides with that of form, in the sense that whenever there is form there is being, and vice versa. The reader might also want to check *ST* 1a-2ae Q85a6, where Aquinas not only says that form has an inclination to independent existence but, more importantly, to perpetual being: "*Et secundum hoc, corruptiones et defectus rerum sunt naturales: non quidem secundum inclinationem formae, quae est principium essendi et perfectionis; sed secundum inclinationem materiae...Et quamvis omnis forma intendat perpetuum esse quantum potest, nulla tamen forma rei corruptibilis potest assequi perpetuitatem sui, praeter animam rationalem*". The passage from *ST* is clearly in sync with the doctrine inaugurated in *DEE*, since it claims that forms intend perpetual being just from being forms, and not because they are this or that type of form.

⁸¹ Hence, we can paraphrase Aquinas' *DEE* axiom in the following manner: Whenever *x* transmits being to *y*, *x* is also capable of retaining that being, while *y* cannot possess it independently of its association with *x*.

substantial forms are configurational states of matter, you cannot say that human souls, as substantial forms, are capable of independent existence. As I claimed throughout the chapter, the notion of 'subsistent states' contains a contradiction in terms. On account of that, my strategy consisted in saying that, if one is to defend the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul, one has to do away with the interpretation of forms as abstract entities, and propose a view according to which forms are to a certain extent concrete - which is not to say that forms are efficient causes. Now, if forms possess an element of concreteness then formal causality must be understood as having some ontological status, which I justified by relying on Aquinas' doctrine of form as 'giver of being' and its consequent inclination towards independent existence.

Chapter 6

Alternative Attempts to Save Aquinas' Account of Human Souls

In the previous chapter, I have discussed Kenny's objection to Aquinas' twofold account of human souls as well as the idea - proposed by a group of scholars who, unlike Kenny, defend the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' theory of soul - that substantial forms are configurational states of matter. According to the view I developed there, the challenge imposed by Kenny's objection (which I refer to as the 'positive lesson' of his argument against Aquinas) consists in pointing out that, if one seeks to argue for the consistency of Aquinas' hybrid theory of human souls, one is required to give a coherent interpretation of forms according to which they are not seen as abstract particulars, but rather as intrinsic principles whose formal causality operates at the ontological level.

By defending the view that substantial forms as such are endowed with an element of concreteness, it was my intent to do away with the idea that the subsistence of the human soul can only be understood as an exception to a metaphysical rule that says that substantial forms must always inhere in the portions of matter that they inform. On the view I propose, the possibility of there being subsistent substantial forms is a consequence of both the nature of form as such (since forms are the cause of the being of matter and therefore can exist without matter, while the opposite does not hold) and the idea that forms are ordered according to a natural hierarchy in which some kinds of form are closer to the first principle of being than others. For Aquinas, to be maximally form at the level of creatures is to be closest to the first principle, which is itself pure form and act.¹

In the present chapter, I wish to look into some alternative ways of accounting for the coherence of Aquinas' twofold theory of human souls. The different readings that I take into consideration here constitute some of the most prominent views that are found in the recent literature on Aquinas, and are each distinct from my own position either in that they are metaphysically noncommittal (like Gyula Klima's), or in

¹ On God as form (or as simple essence), see *DEE*, ch.1, and *ST* 1a Q3a2, where it is held that God is "*per essentiam suam forma*". On the hierarchy of forms as a movement toward the perfection of the first act, see *DEE*, ch.4.

that they give explanatory priority to other aspects of Aquinas' metaphysics (like Brian Leftow's), or yet in that they support only the *partial* coherence of Aquinas' position (like Richard Cross's and Donald Abel's).

I now proceed to examine four different approaches to Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul which are advanced by leading medieval philosophy scholars. My method will consist in providing a brief exposition of each proposed solution, accompanied by an account of why I think the interpretation under examination should not be embraced. As I challenge each of these views I will constantly refer back to the position I have defended in chapter 5.

6.1. Donald Abel's *Substantializing* Approach to Thomistic Souls: A Poorer Ontology

In a paper called "Intellectual Substance as Form of the Body in Aquinas", Donald Abel seeks to explain how Aquinas succeeds in combining two apparently incompatible claims about the nature of the human soul into a single, innovative theory.² However, according to Abel's interpretation of Aquinas' hybrid anthropology, even though Aquinas manages to build a 'logically consistent' theory of soul, his doctrine falls flat since it requires important adjustments to the Aristotelian concepts of form and substance as well as to his own metaphysical doctrine of *esse*.³

As a result, one can rightly regard Abel's interpretation as a defence of the *partial coherence* of Aquinas' view: on the one hand, unlike Kenny, Abel is not of the opinion that Aquinas' twofold approach to the human soul is *logically* inconsistent (in that the notion of a form existing without matter is not for Abel a case of logical impossibility as it is for Kenny); on the other hand, contrary to what I have defended in the previous chapter, Abel does think that Aquinas' hybrid view of the soul is *doctrinally* inconsistent. His view is that Aquinas lacks the theoretical apparatus that

² Cf. Abel (1996), p. 227 and p. 232. Even though Abel's position is not as sophisticated as the ones that are examined in the following sections of this chapter, what makes me take it into consideration here is the fact that it exemplifies a common mistake - i.e., that of equating the separated soul with a full-blown substance, and also because it sets the stage for my discussion in chapter 7, subsection 7.1, where I compare Aquinas' account of the soul-body relation with different versions of substance-dualism.

³ Cf. Abel (1996), p. 227.

would allow him to put forward a fully consistent theory of subsistent substantial forms.

One thing that distinguishes my interpretation from Abel's is that, while I present Aquinas' twofold view of the soul as the thesis that the human soul is at once a substantial form and a subsistent thing, Abel in turn thinks that Aquinas' hybrid view consists in the idea that human souls are both substantial forms of bodies and spiritual substances.⁴ However, given that the separated human soul is neither a spiritual substance of the same caliber as the angels nor a composite substance like the human being of which the soul is only a part, Abel believes that in order to defend his twofold view of the human soul Aquinas has to introduce the idea that the human soul is 'an unusual sort of substance'.⁵

Thus, according to Abel, even though the human soul is 'a substance in its own right'⁶, it is at the same time a substance of an unusual sort. Abel spells out this idea that the soul is an unusual sort of substance by claiming that the human soul is only capable of meeting one of the two criteria for being a substance. While full-blown substances have to be (i) subsistent and (ii) complete with respect to their species, the human soul is a subsistent thing that is nonetheless incomplete in its species insofar as it does not possess a species of its own, being rather a part of the human species. In other words, the human soul does not belong to any species by itself; it is only in association with its material counterpart that the soul is said to belong to a species, namely the human species.⁷

Abel thinks that Aquinas' wish to accommodate the notion of unusual substances leads him to amend Aristotle's theory of substance, and that by proposing a

⁴ Abel begins his paper with the following statement: "Aquinas' theory of the human soul is an ingenious attempt to show, within an Aristotelian framework, how the soul can be both a substance in its own right and the form of the body" (cf. Abel, 1996, p. 227).

⁵ Cf. Abel (1996), p. 230.

⁶ "Human beings are unique among material living things, however, because their substantial form (their soul) is a substance in its own right" (cf. Abel, 1996, p. 228).

⁷ See, for instance, *QDA* a.1, *responsio*: "*Relinquitur igitur quod anima est hoc aliquid ut per se potens subsistere, non quasi habens in se completam speciem, sed quasi perficiens speciem humanam ut est forma corporis; et sic simul est forma et hoc aliquid*". For my previous examination of Aquinas' criteria for substancehood, see chapter 3, subsection 3.1. For my analysis of the soul's partial completeness and the consequent characterization of it as a nonsubstantial subsistent entity, see chapter 3, subsection 3.5.

revision of the Aristotelian doctrine Aquinas renders his own theory of the human soul less credible. If the soul has to be a substance in order for Aquinas to be able to argue for the soul's intrinsic incorruptibility, and, moreover, if the only way that the soul can be a substance in its own right is by means of unwarranted manipulation of the Aristotelian concept of substance, then Aquinas' doctrine is not a good doctrine. That is the core of Abel's criticism.

Now, since Abel wants to propose the idea that Aquinas defends the view of unusual substances, he needs to claim that for Aquinas the notions of 'substance', 'this something', and 'subsistent thing' are all interchangeable - in the sense that they designate only nominal distinctions within one and the same thing. The intuition behind Abel's concept of 'unusual substance' is that a thing cannot subsist unless it is a this something, and that by being a this something the subsistent thing is ipso facto a substance. On Abel's view, what determines the doctrinal incoherence of Aquinas' anthropology is the fact that he deviates from the Aristotelian system by characterizing the human soul as a substance (even if only in an unusual sense), which ends up causing an abandonment on Aquinas' part of the strict hylomorphic approach to the metaphysics of human composites in favour of a dualistic view of the soul-body relation.

As I have previously explained in chapter 3, *pace* Abel, Aquinas does not have to modify Aristotle's concept of substance in order to argue for the human soul's capacity to outlive its material counterpart, the body. On the contrary, Aquinas remains faithful to the Aristotelian idea that a substance has to be complete both with respect to its existence and with regard to its specific determination.⁸ In order to defend the idea that the soul is a substantial form which is nonetheless capable of

⁸ In chapter 3, subsection 3.1, I examined Aquinas' *ST* 1a Q29a2 and claimed that in that text Aquinas not only tells us what it is for a thing to subsist but also sets the criteria for substancehood. According to what Aquinas writes there, the two individually necessary conditions for something to be a substance are: (i) a substance must be a subsistent thing; (ii) a substance must be a 'thing of nature' (*res naturae*), that is, it must belong by itself - and not only when conjoined to something else - to some natural kind. Since the human soul is merely a part of human nature, it will not be a substance. However, since it is capable of existing without the parcel of matter the being of which it is the cause, the soul will be said to subsist. Hence, the most appropriate way to describe the human soul is as a *subsistent part* of the human substance. For the way in which Aquinas separates the two senses of completeness - existential and definitional (or of species) - see subsection 3.5.

independent existence, Aquinas' strategy - contrary to what Abel suggests - is not to promote the awkward concept of 'unusual substance', but rather to claim that the notions of existential independence (i.e., the capacity to exist on its own) and definitional independence (i.e., the capacity to belong by itself to some natural kind) are not mutually implicated.

On Aquinas' view, a thing can subsist - and therefore be a sort of this something - without being a substance. As a result, one can say that Aquinas' ontology is actually richer than Abel supposes: instead of bluntly dividing sublunar reality into substances and non-substances, Aquinas proposes a sharper, tripartite division of things into [i] substances (an example of which would be Socrates), [ii] subsistent parts of substances (like Socrates' soul), and [iii] nonsubsistent parts of substances (like Socrates' left foot). Even though neither [ii] nor [iii] are substances in their own right, there is a clear metaphysical difference between them, namely the fact that, unlike [iii], [ii] is capable of existing detached from the substance of which it is a part. Based on such a difference, Aquinas is led to say that in some cases a thing is capable of being a 'this something' (*hoc aliquid*) - given that it is 'something subsistent' (*aliquid subsistens*) - without thereby being a substance.⁹

That Aquinas does *not* think of the human soul as a substance - of either a usual or an unusual sort - is clear from Aquinas' claim that no substance can be composed of other substances.¹⁰ Because Abel defends the idea that souls are substances in their own right, it is obvious - since that of which souls are forms are also substances - that

⁹ For Aquinas' idea that human souls, though subsistent, are not substances, see *ST* 1a Q29a1ad5, where Aquinas claims the following: "*Anima est pars humanae speciei: et ideo, licet sit separata, quia tamen retinet naturam unibilitatis, non potest dici substantia individua quae est hypostasis vel substantia prima*". In a nutshell, separateness (or subsistence) does not entail substancehood. In this sense, one can view Abel's ascription of the concept of 'unusual substance' to Thomistic souls as resulting from his inability to distinguish between the concepts of 'substance' and 'this something' (*hoc aliquid*). In his effort to find textual evidence for the idea that Aquinas thinks of human souls as unusual substances, Abel relies on passages - such as *CDA* II.1.215 - where Aquinas explains how the rational soul can in a sense be called a 'this something', and translates every occurrence of the Latin expression *hoc aliquid* as 'substance' (see Abel, 1996, p. 231, specially the passage followed by footnote 39). However, in my opinion, by doing so, Abel disregards an important *philosophical* distinction: while the concept of 'this something' includes both subsistent things that are incomplete with regard to their species (i.e., subsistent parts) as well as subsistent things that are specifically complete (i.e., substances), the concept of 'substance' includes only things - material and immaterial - that are complete both with respect to their existence and with regard to their specific determination.

¹⁰ Cf. *SCG* II.49, n.3; *SCG* II.56, n.14; *CM* VII.13, n.1588.

he is a proponent of the 'substance-within-a-substance' view.¹¹ As I have been suggesting, though, this is the wrong way to approach Aquinas' twofold account of human souls.

Aquinas cannot agree with the idea that the human soul, as form of the body, is at the same time a substance in its own right because, if that were the case, he would have to accept that, when put together, the metaphysical elements of a human being - body and soul - do not make up the kind of thing that displays the sort of unity that is proper to substances. In other words, if the soul is itself a substance, then the whole human being - i.e., the composite of a soul and a parcel of matter - cannot be a substance, since it will only possess the accidental unity that is displayed, for instance, by the union of a horse and its rider. The alleged substantiality of the soul hampers the very substantiality of the soul-body composite, while the substantiality of the soul-body composite rules out the substantiality of any of its metaphysical components, even in cases where the component is said to be capable of existing without the substance to which it belongs.

Since the unity displayed by a substance is of the highest order, we can conclude that if something is a substance it is neither a part of some other substance nor composed of parts that are themselves substances. Hence, when a substance is said to be a part of some larger reality, that entity which the substance is a part of is not itself a substance, but what Aquinas calls an 'aggregate' (*confusio*) - i.e., an entity that, unlike a substance, is not said to be unqualifiedly one, but one *secundum quid*.¹²

On the other hand, if something exists as that out of which a substance is composed, then it cannot itself be a substance, but only a part of a substance. Now if some part of a substance is capable of surviving the dissolution of the substance of which it is a part, even then it will not be called 'substance'; it will rather be called 'subsistent part', since even when separated from the whole to which it is normally attached it does not lose its status as part - that is, its tendency to exist in composition

¹¹ That Abel defends the 'substance-within-a-substance' view is clear from passages such as the following: "Aquinas holds that in the unique case of human beings, however, the form is itself a substance. This substance gives existence to the body, thereby causing the existence of the body-soul composite, which is also a substance" (cf. Abel, 1996, p. 229).

¹² Cf. SCG II.56, n.4.

with matter so as to constitute a substance. This is what Aquinas means when he turns to the soul's 'nature of unibility' (*natura unibilitatis*) in order to explain how the soul is not a substance despite its capacity for separate existence.¹³

Based on the above, we can say, contrary to what Abel suggests, that the notions of parthood and substancehood are mutually exclusive: if something is a substance it is not a part, and if it is a part it is not a substance.¹⁴

According to Abel's interpretation, the fact that Aquinas characterizes the human soul as a substance in its own right does not entail that for Aquinas the unity of the soul-body composite is only *secundum quid* and not *simpliciter*. Abel thinks that Aquinas can avoid this result by claiming that in the case of human beings one and the same *esse* is shared by two distinct substances, namely the soul and the human composite. Since there is only one *esse* which is communicated by the soul to the composite as a whole, one cannot derive from the fact that there are two substances - soul and composite - that the human being is a compound of two beings. The substantial unity of the human composite is safeguarded by the doctrine of the communication of *esse*.¹⁵

On Abel's interpretation, however, the same idea that allows Aquinas to avoid the undesirable conclusion that the human being has no substantial unity is also responsible for creating an anomaly in Aquinas' own doctrine of *esse*. Since Aquinas' theory of *esse* involves the idea that each substance has its own being, the notion that two substances are capable of sharing one and the same being seems to Abel like an

¹³ Cf. *ST* 1a Q29a1ad5.

¹⁴ In order to avoid misunderstandings, I should propose an extended version of the above principle: if something is a substance it cannot be a part of *some substance*; if something is a part it cannot be a substance *in actuality*. The extended version is intended to make room for the following cases (which are in turn accepted by Aquinas): (i) when a substance is a part of some non-substantial whole, that is, an aggregate, whose unity is only accidental; (ii) when a part of a substance is not actually a substance, but virtually a substance, because - though it does not retain in actuality its own substantial form when it becomes part of a substance - it can, as part, retain some of the powers that issue from its substantial form. That is how Aquinas accounts for the fact that the basic elements are parts of the ensouled human body (cf. *ST* 1a Q76a4ad4).

¹⁵ "If the soul is a substance, and if the body-soul composite is also a substance, it may seem that a human being is a compound of *two* beings, and that the substantial unity of the human being is lost. Aquinas avoids such a conclusion by maintaining that the soul communicates its subsistent 'to be' (*esse*, existence) to the body" (cf. Abel, 1996, p. 231, the italics are the author's).

ad hoc solution to a problem that Aquinas creates for himself when he allegedly alters the Aristotelian theory of substance and describes the human soul as an unusual sort of substance.¹⁶

Abel's conclusion is that, since Aquinas, in order to defend his twofold view of the human soul, has to change Aristotle's theory of substance, and, as a result of that change, creates a metaphysical exception to his own doctrine of being, Aquinas' hybrid account of the soul - though logically consistent - is philosophically implausible.

Nonetheless, because Abel is wrong in assuming that Aquinas holds the view that human souls are substances in their own right, he is also mistaken in claiming that the idea that soul and composite share the same being is a philosophical aberration in Aquinas' own theory of being. Since the soul, as form, is only a part of the human substance, there is nothing wrong in saying that one and the same act of being is first received by the soul and then transmitted (or communicated) to the composite.¹⁷

Moreover, because the human soul is a *subsistent* form, it is not only capable of transmitting the being it receives from God (the first emitter of being), it can also retain that same being after the dissolution of the composite. In short, every subsistent thing is a genuine receptor of being. Now, it is agreed that substances cannot share their being with other substances. However, a substance can have its act of being shared with another subsistent thing when that subsistent thing is not only a part of the substance in question but also a part by means of which the act of being is received in that substance.

I conclude this subsection by saying that Abel does not provide us with any strong reason for believing that Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul is only partially consistent. As we have seen, Aquinas remains faithful to Aristotle's theory of substance when he claims that the soul is only a subsistent part of the human being.

¹⁶ "While this metaphysical exception does preserve the unity of the human person, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Aquinas is simply creating an ad hoc hypothesis simply to defend his theory that the human soul is both a substance and the form of the body" (cf. Abel, 1996, p. 233).

¹⁷ In the sentence above, the adverbs 'first' and 'then' do not imply any temporal distinction between the acts of receiving and transmitting *esse*, but only a logical distinction between these different metaphysical activities.

For Aquinas, the human soul can be a this something but not a substance, since the soul possesses existential independence without having independence of species. Even if someone objects that the split between the capacity to exist on its own and the capacity to belong by itself to a species is not originally in Aristotle (the investigation of which is beyond the goal of this dissertation), that is not enough for one to assume that Aquinas' doctrine lacks in philosophical plausibility, since the criterion for consistency should not be fidelity to Aristotelian hylomorphism but rather internal cogency.

6.2. Gyula Klima's *Minimalistic Account of Aquinas' Hybrid Anthropology*

In a paper called "Aquinas on the Materiality of the Human Soul and the Immateriality of the Human Intellect", Gyula Klima addresses Aquinas' hybrid view of human souls from a semantic perspective. His goal is to advance an interpretation of Aquinas' theory of soul that has the merit of engaging an analytically trained audience as well as of revealing the philosophical cogency of Aquinas' anthropology.

By proposing a purely linguistic reading of the main concepts of Aquinas' anthropology, Klima wishes to establish what he calls a 'metaphysically noncommittal' defence of the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' doctrine of soul.¹⁸ Accordingly, Klima's interpretation sits on the opposite side of the spectrum when compared to the reading I have offered in the previous chapter: a rather *metaphysically laden* approach to forms as givers of substantial being as a way of dissolving the apparently paradoxical nature of Aquinas' twofold account of the human soul.

Klima's approach to Aquinas' account of the soul is, in the author's own words, 'minimalistic' insofar as it is designed so as to make as few assumptions that are unpalatable to a present-day reader as possible.¹⁹ In other words, Klima wants to demonstrate the consistency of Aquinas' notion of 'human soul' without necessarily having to buy into the hard core of Thomistic metaphysics. My reaction to his strategy,

¹⁸ Cf. Klima (2009), p. 169. Klima's paper is divided into two parts, the first of which is devoted to the analysis of the *consistency* of Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul (i.e., whether or not it is possible for the soul to be inherent and subsistent at once), while the second part deals with the question of the *necessity* of Aquinas' view (i.e., whether or not one should say that the soul is both subsistent and inherent). Here I focus only on the first part.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

however, is that by reducing the metaphysical weight of his exposition to a bare minimum Klima is at the same time diminishing the explanatory force of his own account.

Since Aquinas' theory consists in holding that the human soul is at once a substantial form and a subsistent thing, Klima begins his discussion by advancing a semantic characterization of the notion of substantial form. A form, thinks Klima, whether substantial or accidental, is a truth-maker of a simple predication. Hence, if the book on my nightstand is brown, the form will be that in the thing (i.e., in the subject of predication, namely the book) by means of which the sentence "This book is brown" is true. Generally speaking, then, a form is the F-ness by means of which x is an F (in other terms: the F-ness in x on account of which "x is F" is true). Accordingly, a form is whatever is signified by a common predicate in an individual thing.²⁰

Since Aquinas distinguishes between accidental forms and substantial forms, and given that the soul is a substantial form, Klima says that a substantial form (when presented in purely semantic terms) is that F-ness whose presence in x verifies the predication of F of a subject x, where the existence of F is identical with the existence of x. When, on the other hand, the identity between the existence of the form and that of the subject of predication does not hold, the form is only an accidental form.²¹

Given the distinction between substantial and accidental forms in terms of the notion of existence, Klima's next step is to advance a linguistic approach to what Aquinas means by the 'existence' (the *esse* - i.e., the 'act of being') of a thing. Take any ordinary verb - say, 'to sit'. When we predicate this verb of something - as in "John sits" - what renders the predication true of John is the fact that the act signified by the verb - namely, the act of sitting - truly belongs to John. Analogously, when one says that "John is" - or "exists" (*est*) - what makes this predication true of John is John's act of being (*esse*). Hence, from the semantic standpoint, the existence of a thing is simply that on account of which one can truly say that the thing 'is' (or 'exists'), just as when we say that the act of sitting is that which renders the predication "John sits" true.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

Now, since from a linguistic point of view nothing prevents the verb 'is' from being truly predicated of both a form and a substance, one can say that a form is a substantial form when that which renders the predication of 'is' true of both the form and the substance is one and the same act of being. To the extent that the act of being of a substantial form is identical with that of its subject, it follows that a predicate that signifies a substantial form cannot become false of its subject without the destruction of the substance of which it is the form, and with which it shares the same act of being.

Even though the verb 'is' can be predicated of a substance as well as of its form, it is not precisely in the same sense that the predicate 'is' is truly said of a substance and of a form. As we have seen many times now, according to Aquinas, the act of being (*esse*) does not belong to a substance in the same way that it belongs to the substantial form of that substance. For Aquinas, what exists in a primary and proper sense is the substance, whereas a substance's form exists to the extent that a properly existing substance is informed by that form.²²

In order to explain Aquinas' idea that while substances exist on their own forms exist as 'informers' of substances, Klima introduces the distinction between subsistent and inherent being. These are seen as two distinct modes of being that are possessed, respectively, by substances and by forms.²³ Since forms possess an inherent mode of being, they are said to exist as *quo est* - i.e., as that by which something is. Hence, for a form to exist is for its subject to be informed by it. By contrast, because substances have a subsistent mode of being, they are said to exist as *quod est* - i.e., as that which is. Unlike a form, a substance does not inform anything else; it simply is.

Since the human soul is not itself a substance but a substantial form, one would think that its mode of being is simply that of inherence and not of subsistence. Accordingly, just as for a whiteness to exist is for this surface to be white, so for a given

²² Regarding Aquinas' thesis that substances exist primarily and in the proper sense, while forms exist only as that by which a composite substance exists, the reader might want to check back chapter 4, specially subsection 4.3.1, in which I analyze Aquinas' position on the generation of substances and the coming into being of nonsubsistent substantial forms. As we have seen in chapter 5, however, the view that forms exist only to the extent that they inform matter is true only of 'material forms', given that such a condition is not determined by the nature of form as such, but rather by the fact that some forms fall short of being maximally form, which in turn is explained by their distance from the first principle of all being, which is itself a perfect form (see chapter 5, subsection 5.3.2).

²³ Cf. Klima (2009), p. 169.

human soul to exist is for this substance to be a human being. In this sense, however, the human soul's existence is not separable from the existence of the material substance which it informs. But then the soul becomes a material form - that is, a form which can only exist in the parcel of matter which is actualized by that form. Aquinas, nonetheless, wants the human soul to be naturally capable of independent existence; in other words, he wants it to be a *subsistent* substantial form. Now that means that for Aquinas the soul has to have both modes of being - namely, subsistence and inherence.

Klima thinks he can provide a *semantic* account of the consistency of Aquinas' view; an explanation that relies only minimally on Aquinas' metaphysical tenets. He begins his metaphysically noncommittal explanation of how human souls for Aquinas can exist both as *quod est* and as *quo est* by advancing a linguistic interpretation of Aquinas' notion of subsistent forms. Making use of his conception of forms as truth-makers, Klima characterizes a subsistent form as that which renders a predication true of a subject without being an inherent formal *part* of the subject, but being rather identical with the subject itself. According to Klima, that there are subsistent forms is a possibility that is left open by Aquinas' semantics. In his own words, subsistent forms are "forms signified by some of our predicates, which are nothing but the substances themselves of which these predicates are true".²⁴

Against the backdrop of such an approach to the nature of subsistent forms - one that states that forms are subsistent "since they are nothing but immaterial substances themselves"²⁵ - we may paraphrase Klima's version of Aquinas' problem in the following manner: If subsistent forms are not inherent formal parts of material

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170. The reader should note that in the quotation above Klima explains the subsistent mode of being of some forms by means of their alleged status as immaterial substances. By contrast, in chapter 5, I strived to explain how the subsistent nature of some forms issues from a form's status as a 'giver of being', so that the subsistence of form is something that belongs to forms as such and not to forms as substances. The disadvantage of my interpretation is that it not only has to advance a metaphysical explanation of the relation between the concepts of form and being (which I attempted to do through the antenna analogy) but also needs to provide a metaphysical account of why some forms are imperfect - that is, why some of them do not actually subsist, even though they all in principle have the capacity to subsist. The disadvantage of Klima's view, on the other hand, is that, based on it, it becomes hard to see how forms that are not themselves substances are nonetheless capable of subsistence.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

wholes, how could the human soul subsist when its nature consists precisely in inhering in a portion of matter so as to constitute a composite human substance? To put it in different words: if being a whole is a prerequisite for being subsistent, it seems clear, at first glance at least, that the soul, as a *part* of a material substance, cannot, on pain of incoherence, be viewed as a subsistent thing.

Klima observes that in order to solve the issue of the subsistence or inherence of forms one should not focus on a form's relation to matter so much as on the way in which things possess their respective acts of being.²⁶ Klima believes that the subsistence or inherence of a form must be approached exclusively through the concepts of *quod est* and *quo est*. In this sense, a form will be *inherent* if and only if it is that by which something else is actualized with respect to it, regardless of that form's ability to inhere in matter. By contrast, a form will be *subsistent* if and only if it is a primary (or basic) existent - that is, when its existence is not reliant on a capacity to actualize something else.²⁷

Klima's opinion is that, when looked at from such a standpoint, the subsistent/inherent distinction loses its false appearance of incompatibility. He describes the application of both modes of being to the human soul in the following terms:

It [the human soul] is certainly material in the sense that it is inherent in the matter of the human body, simply because it has its being as *quo est*, as that by which this matter is actualised in a human form. In fact, it has the very same act of being that the whole human being has in a different way, namely, as *quod est*, as that which primarily exists. But Aquinas' further claim is that it is not only the whole human, but also the soul that has, again, the same act of being (the life of this human) not only as *quo est*, but also as *quod est*, i.e., also in the sense as [*sic*] the whole human person has it.

²⁶ Klima reinforces his point that the concepts of subsistence and inherence are not linked to the notions of immateriality and materiality by saying that in Aquinas there is room for both inherent immaterial forms and subsistent material forms. As instances of the former he mentions the acts of thinking and willing of angels, while the latter is, according to him, exemplified by the human soul itself (cf. Klima, 2009, p.170). I think, however, that Klima is led astray by a misinterpretation of Aquinas' notion of 'material form', which in fact does not signify a form whose nature consists in actualizing a portion of matter (which is true of the human soul) but rather a form whose existence is completely subsumed under matter, as is the case with imperfect forms (which only nonrational souls, and not human souls, are instances of). Given the correct understanding of 'material forms', Klima's notion of 'subsistent material form' becomes a contradiction in terms, and *a fortiori* does not apply to human souls.

²⁷ Cf. Klima (2009), p. 171.

And there is certainly no inconsistency in *this* position. The soul is material, insofar as it is inherent in the matter of the human body, having the substantial act of being of this human as *quo est*, as that by which this body is actualised, organised into a living human being. But with this it is certainly compatible that the soul also has this act of being not only as *quo est*, but also as *quod est*.²⁸

Let me begin by saying that the general problem with semantic interpretations of philosophical theses is that that which its author regards as its main advantage - i.e., metaphysical economy - actually becomes, on closer examination, the very cause of its failure. In our present case, Klima's metaphysically noncommittal interpretation of Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul, instead of *explaining* how Aquinas thinks his twofold account is consistent, simply *restates* the original tension by replacing the key notions of 'substantial form' and 'subsistent thing' with the analogous notions of *quo est* and *quod est*. Klima's purported solution consists merely in stating that there is no incompatibility between the modes of being of subsistence and inherence. It does not, however, explain how is it that something whose nature is to be an 'informer' (or 'actualizer') can also be a primary existent. It seems inevitable to me that the only way to inject explanatory force into Klima's account is by infusing some metaphysical content into it.

Another problem with Klima's interpretation is that its semantic approach can also lead to some *metaphysical* misconceptions. In the passage just quoted, Klima states that the human soul may possess "the same act of being (the life of this human) not only as *quo est*, but also as *quod est*, i.e., also in the sense as [*sic*] the whole human person has it". If that is truly the case, however, one is led to conclude that the human soul - to the extent that, according to Klima, it is capable of possessing the life of this human *in the same sense that this human has it* - is neither a part of the human being nor, as one might also think, some spiritual substance of a lower order than the angels, but rather a human being herself, which for Aquinas would be absurd.²⁹

²⁸ *Ibidem*. The italics in the quotation are the author's.

²⁹ Recall Aquinas' famous statement in *In 1 Cor.* 15.2: "But the soul...is not a whole human being, and my soul is not I" (*anima autem non est totus homo, et anima mea non est ego*). In the next chapter (subsection 7.4), I challenge the view of some scholars who use Lynne Rudder Baker's thesis that constitution is not identity to show that for Aquinas, in the interval between death and resurrection, the human person *is* the human soul - where 'is' means 'is constituted of' and not 'is identical with'.

What is also unappealing about Klima's semantic interpretation is that on his account the task of explaining the consistency of the twofold view of the human soul becomes even harder than it actually is in Aquinas' original formulation (as found, for instance, in *QDA* 1). In order to accept the philosophical coherence of Aquinas' hybrid view of the soul all that is required is that we welcome as a genuine possibility the idea that some parts of substances have the ability to exist on their own without losing their status as parts. The very concept of 'subsistent part' is a consequence of the metaphysical notion that forms as such have an inclination to independent existence since their main role in Aquinas' ontology is to be givers of being - for there is nothing wrong in assuming that that which can be given can also be retained by the giver.³⁰

On Klima's version, however, there is no room for a concept of 'subsistent part', given that he limits the notion of subsistence to substances - material or spiritual. Hence, he says that a form subsists when it is *identical with* that of which it is the form. A subsistent form, therefore, is not a subsistent *part*, but a full-blown substance. Moreover, given Klima's explanation of Aquinas' account, it would be wrong to suppose that the soul is a substance *other than* the human person: the soul just *is* the human person, since it possesses the life of a human being *in the same way* that a human being has it. If we add to this his characterization of an inherent form, which is itself reminiscent of the Saint Louis doctrine of substantial form³¹, we are then led to conclude that Klima's account of Aquinas' view can only be philosophically consistent if we accept the idea that some organizational states of substances can themselves be substances.

The last metaphysical misconception of Klima's semantic account is that it treats the soul's two modes of being as properties that the soul may lose without damage to

³⁰ For my previous exposition of the notion of the human soul as a subsistent part, see chapter 3, subsection 3.5. For the kind of parthood that belongs to the soul, see subsection 3.6. The metaphysical basis for the notion of subsistent parts is developed in the last subsection of chapter 5.

³¹ For the resemblance of Klima's account of inherent forms to the Saint Louis view, see Klima (2009), p. 169: "For an inherent being, i.e., for an inherent form, to exist is for its subject to be informed by it: for a whiteness to exist is for its subject to be white; and for a human soul to exist as the substantial form of this human being is nothing but for this human being to be human, i.e., *for the matter of this human body to be organised into a living human body*" (my emphasis).

its essential constitution. Hence, Klima states that “the soul’s separation from the body in death only means that it loses one of these *modes* of being, ceasing to be as *quo est*, while it retains its act of being in the other mode, namely, as *quod est*”.³² According to Aquinas, however, since the soul is a subsistent *part*, it never loses its status as the substantial form of a body - not even during the interval between death and resurrection, when it is said to exist separately.

As Aquinas contends in *QDA*, “When the body is corrupted the soul does not lose the nature according to which it is appropriate to it to be a form, even though the soul [when separated from the body] does not actually perfect matter as a form”.³³ Consequently, on Aquinas’ view, even if the separated soul is not actually informing the body, it still retains its nature of form. Allow me then to repeat myself: the human soul is a subsistent part, not a full-fledged substance - which would only be the case if it were indeed able to relinquish its status as *quo est*.

6.3. Richard Cross’ Response to Kenny’s Objection and the Undesirable Possibility of Subsistent *Accidental* Forms

In “Aquinas and the Mind-Body Problem”, Richard Cross advances, as I have done in chapter 5, a defence of Aquinas’ theory of soul against Anthony Kenny’s objection to it.³⁴

As we have seen, according to Kenny, since substantial forms are nothing but abstract states of that of which they are the forms, to say that the rational souls of human beings - to the extent that they are the substantial forms of human bodies - are subsistent is a contradiction in terms, for that would entail the absurd result that human souls are at once abstract (as forms) and concrete (as subsistent agents). Abstract entities are causally inert. Hence, if the soul is an independent agent which is thereby capable of separate existence, it cannot - thinks Kenny - be the form of a body,

³² *Ibid.*, p. 171. The italics in the quotation are the author’s.

³³ Cf. *QDA* 1, ad10: “*Corrupto corpore non perit ab anima natura secundum quam competit ei ut sit forma licet non perficiat materiam actu ut sit forma*”.

³⁴ See Richard Cross, “Aquinas and the Mind-Body Problem” (in John Haldane, ed., 2002, chapter 3, 36-53).

but rather a substance in its own right. Kenny's conclusion is that the two elements of Aquinas' hybrid view of the human soul cancel each other out.³⁵

Cross' strategy against Kenny's reading of Aquinas consists in rejecting the idea that forms are purely abstract items.³⁶ I must say, however, that Cross' solution is not as metaphysically engaged as the one I have developed earlier in chapter 5, since it does not rely on the fundamental relationship between form as such and the act of being of which form is the cause in a material substance. As a consequence, on Cross' view the philosophical coherence of Aquinas' doctrine will be contingent upon a weaker sense of subsistence, which involves only a subject's aptitude for having properties of its own, while the stronger - and genuinely Thomistic - sense according to which subsistence entails a capacity for independent existence is simply pushed aside. In fact, it is Cross' opinion that if we take 'subsistence' in the strong sense of 'ontological separability', then Aquinas' twofold view of human souls becomes inescapably incoherent. In other words, for Cross, the sense of subsistence which is compatible with being a substantial form does not entail the incorruptibility of the soul.³⁷

The line of argument pursued by Cross in order to do away with Kenny's idea that forms are abstract items consists in emphasizing the notion of substantial forms as *property-bearers*. The gist of Cross' solution is to say, against Kenny, that human souls can consistently be characterized as *agents* - that is, as causally active entities - since every substantial form is by its very nature a bearer of properties. Still, Cross' first step

³⁵ For an in-depth treatment of Kenny's objection against Aquinas' view, see chapter 5 of this dissertation, subsection 5.1.

³⁶ Cf. Cross (in Haldane, ed., 2002), p. 44. "All existing material forms - all "actualities of a body" - for Aquinas are in some sense individuals, and therefore in some sense *concrete* items" (the italics in the quotation are the author's). In the quoted passage, Cross certainly does not mean by 'individual' merely an individuated item (as opposed to a universal), since individuality alone is not a sufficient condition for being a concrete thing - an evidence of which is the legitimate use philosophers sometimes make of the notion of 'abstract particular'. As we will see shortly, what Cross has in mind is the idea that every form is a genuine subject of attribution.

³⁷ This aspect of Aquinas' theory is explored by Cross in a paper entitled "Is Aquinas's Proof for the Indestructibility of the Soul Successful?" (Cf. Cross, 1997). Since Cross believes that being a form is only compatible with a weak sense of subsistence, I have characterized him in the introduction to this chapter as a proponent of the *partial* coherence of Aquinas' twofold view.

consists in characterizing - much like Kenny would do - substantial forms as *property instances*.³⁸

Take, for instance, Aquinas' claim in *DEE*, chapter 2, that the term 'humanity' signifies that by which a man is a man since 'humanity' signifies the nature of the human species by cutting off from its intensional content any reference to individuating matter.³⁹ In this sense, 'humanity' signifies only the formal element of the human essence; it signifies thus a man's substantial form. Therefore, Peter's humanity (i.e., Peter's *substantial form*) is 'humanity' instantiated in Peter. Cross refers to the substantial form as a *physical property* since for 'humanity' to be instantiated is for it to inhere in a parcel of matter - that which constitutes Peter's body.

Given his basic interpretation of substantial forms as property instances, Cross' construal of Aquinas' foundational question regarding the nature of the human soul - 'How could the soul, which is essentially the form of a body, be a this something (*hoc aliquid*)?' - is stated in the following terms: 'How could a physical property itself be the subject of non-physical properties?'.⁴⁰

Because Cross defines a physical *substance* as one which includes matter in its very makeup, and a physical *property* as one which inheres in matter, he is able to claim that, by definition, a property - whether physical or not - cannot be the subject of another physical property, since a physical property, being defined as one which inheres in matter, always presupposes a physical *substance* (i.e., something that is itself constituted of matter) as its underlying subject. Hence, *if* a physical property - like the human soul, on Cross' view - is the subject of some other property, *then* the kind of

³⁸ Cf. Cross (in Haldane, ed., 2002), p. 39: "A substantial form is something like an *instantiated property*" (his italics). See also p. 47, where Cross characterizes the human soul as a 'physical property', i.e., a property that inheres (or is instantiated) in matter.

³⁹ In this passage from *DEE*, chapter 2, Aquinas is explaining how 'man' and 'humanity' signify the essence of man differently, the former as a whole (by signifying both the formal and the material elements of the essence) and the latter as a part (by excluding the material element from its intension): "*Et hoc modo essentia speciei significatur nomine hominis, unde homo de Socrate praedicatur. Si autem significetur natura speciei cum praecisione materiae designatae, quae est principium individuationis, sic se habebit per modum partis. Et hoc modo significatur nomine humanitatis; humanitas enim significat id unde homo est homo*".

⁴⁰ Cf. Cross (in Haldane, ed., 2002), p. 47. A non-physical property is one that does not inhere in matter. Instances of it are intellection and volition, which, in the Thomistic tradition, are instantiated in the human soul (cf. *SCG* II.58; *CDA* I.2, 19-20; *ST* 1a Q75a2).

property which is instantiated in it has to be a *non-physical* property, that is, one which does not inhere in matter, since physical properties themselves have no matter to be 'inherited in'.

The next step in Cross' argument consists in showing that substantial forms as such are in fact property-bearers, that is, they are the subjects of non-physical properties. Even though he admits that the argument will necessarily depend on what one allows to count as a property, Cross assumes that 'being the substantial form of a body' is a genuine property. Now, if that is the case, then any individualized substantial form - like the humanity of Peter - will not only be a property instance but also a property-bearer, since 'being the substantial form of a body' is truly signified of any substantial form.⁴¹

Any substantial form is thus, in a trivial sense, a property-bearer, since for any substantial form *x* there will be a property - namely, 'being the substantial form of an *x*-like body' - which is truly predicated of it. Hence, according to Cross, any material substantial form is a bearer of properties in this minimal sense. However, unlike other material substantial forms, the human soul in particular is said to be the bearer of two additional properties - namely, intellectual cognition and volition - in virtue of which it is said to be an *agent*.⁴²

Cross believes that the above argument is enough to prove, against Kenny, that the human soul's status as an independent agent - i.e., something that has an activity of its own - is not only *compatible* with the soul's status as form but also *derived* from it.⁴³ The human soul, therefore, is an agent: it is not something abstract, but a concrete item. And it is precisely *as substantial form* that the soul is capable of agency, since every substantial form is a property-bearer, and the human soul in particular instantiates, in addition to the trivial properties that are instantiated by every substantial form, also the kinds of property that allow it to be an agent. In order to show that Aquinas' view is incoherent, one would have to show that the human soul

⁴¹ Cf. Cross (in Haldane, ed., 2002), p. 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 42: "On this account, the fact that a human soul is capable of agency is in some sense explained by its being the form of a human body".

could not instantiate those properties that cause it to be an agent. What Cross thinks he achieves through his argument is the conviction that - *pace* Kenny - it is not simply as form that those properties will be denied of the human soul.

An obvious problem with Cross' argument against Kenny is that it just proves too much - not in the weak sense of proving more than it *needs* to prove, but in a rather stronger sense of proving more than it *should* actually prove. On Cross' reading, the human soul's capacity for agency is based on a substantial form's status as a property-bearer. Hence, there is nothing in the very nature of a substantial form that prevents it from being an agent *given that substantial forms are property-bearers*. Therefore, if we manage to ascribe to *accidental* forms as well the same trivial sense of being a bearer of properties, we would have to admit that - following Cross' approach to Kenny's objection - there is nothing in the nature of accidental forms that prevents *them* from being agents. In this sense, it would be at least possible to find among accidental forms an analogue of the human soul - that is, some accidental form which is at once a form and an agent.

Now it is clear that there would not be a problem in ascribing to accidental forms the property 'being the accidental form of such-and-such a body (or body part)'. We can say, for example, of the particular whiteness that is instantiated in my tee shirt that 'being the whiteness of my tee shirt' is truly predicated of it. Hence, if accidental forms can be property-bearers in the same sense that substantial forms are said to be property-bearers, then there is nothing in their nature that prevents them from being capable of agency as well. But again, if that is the case, it is possible to think of an analogue of the human soul among accidental forms.

It is evident that the solution to Kenny's objection that I defend in chapter 5 avoids the problem which Cross' interpretation is faced with. According to the position I have developed in the previous chapter, human souls have the ability to survive the demise of the bodies they inform because, as substantial forms, they give being to matter. Hence the inclination toward independent existence belongs to the soul as a substantial form in virtue of the distinctive relationship that holds between the substantial form and the act of being. Now, since a similar relationship between accidental forms and the acts of being of those substances of which they are the

accidental forms does not hold, for accidental forms are not givers of being in an absolute sense but only of 'being such' (*esse tale*)⁴⁴, it would not be possible - according to my proposed solution - to think of an analogue of the human soul among accidental forms. Therefore, the propensity for separate existence remains - on my interpretation - exclusive to substantial forms.

Another important aspect that distinguishes Cross' solution from my own has to do with how our contrasting interpretations of Aquinas' concept of subsistence determine our perspectives with respect to whether Aquinas' twofold view of the soul is coherent or incoherent. Cross' approach can be seen, to a certain extent, as a real defence of Aquinas' view of the soul: it is, after all, a justification of Aquinas' view against the kind of objection that claims that the very notion of 'subsistent form' is inconsistent, since it amounts to saying that those forms are at once abstract items and concrete entities. To this, Cross replies that substantial forms are capable of agency (i.e., they are 'doers') insofar as every substantial form is by nature a property-bearer (i.e., they are not '*abstract doers*').

On the other hand, Cross' approach is only partially a defence of the philosophical coherence of Aquinas' view, since - despite his opinion that forms are genuine agents - Cross does not believe that human souls, as forms, are capable of separate existence. Hence, his solution to Kenny's objection is in fact a defence of a hybrid view of the soul - based on which the soul is at once an instantiated property and a bearer of properties of its own - but not exactly of *Aquinas'* hybrid view. For Aquinas, the human soul is at once the form of a body and a subsistent thing, where 'subsistence' means an ability to exist on its own and not in another.⁴⁵ With respect to the coherence of *this* hybrid view of the soul, Cross says the following:

As I have spelt out Aquinas's account, it will entail the claim that the human soul is essentially the substantial form of a human body. But Aquinas also claims that a human soul could survive the demise of the human body. I do not see how something which is

⁴⁴ Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a4c: "*forma accidentalis non dat esse simpliciter, sed esse tale*". Because a substantial form gives '*esse simpliciter*' we say that in virtue of its relationship with the act of being it is 'being-oriented'.

⁴⁵ Cf. *ST* 1a Q29a2: "*secundum enim quod per se existit et non in alio, vocatur 'subsistentia': illa enim subsistere dicimus, quae non in alio, sed in se existunt*".

essentially the substantial form of a human body could survive the demise of the body.

*To be coherent, then, Aquinas's account will have to abandon one of these two claims.*⁴⁶

Even though Cross' account is strong enough to do away with Kenny's objection to Aquinas' view, it is not strong enough to guarantee the philosophical coherence of the genuinely Thomistic view according to which a soul which is essentially a form can persist without the body. By contrast, what I have tried to do with the concept of 'subsistent part' was to show that forms, on the one hand, as givers of substantial being, are able to retain the act of being which they transmit to matter and thus exist without matter. On the other hand, since forms are parts of substances and not themselves full-blown substances, when they survive the dissolution of the body which they once informed, they do not thereby lose their status as forms insofar as they retain their natural inclination toward union with matter - which Aquinas calls a form's 'nature of unibility'⁴⁷.

As a consequence, when Aquinas says that the soul is *essentially* the form of a body he does not mean that in each and every instant during which it exists a soul has to be in a state of actuality with regard to informing some parcel of matter. Just like being a builder does not entail the uninterrupted activity of building, so the continuous activity of informing matter is not what makes a soul an 'informer'. Rather, as long as the separate human soul is able to retain its *capacity* to inform a body - and provided that this capacity is brought to actuality once the appropriate conditions are restored - there will be nothing wrong in saying that something whose nature is to inform a body is also capable of independent existence.

6.4. Fortified Abstract Items: Leftow's *Platonic* Approach to Thomistic Souls

The last alternative account of Aquinas' twofold view of the soul which I would like to consider here is Brian Leftow's. In a paper called "Souls Dipped in Dust", Leftow wants to explain how Aquinas is able to hold that human beings are material things

⁴⁶ Cf. Cross (in Haldane, ed., 2002), p. 49. The italics are mine.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ST* 1a Q29a1ad5, where Aquinas explains that, because the soul - despite its subsistence - is only a part of the human substance, even in its separate state it cannot lose its '*natura unibilitatis*'.

that have souls - which are themselves immaterial things - without being a dualist, but rather a monist, that is, a proponent of the view that a human being is *one* actually existing substance.⁴⁸ According to Leftow, the key to an adequate understanding of Aquinas' position lies in what Leftow considers to be Aquinas' 'Platonizing' approach to the notion of substantial form.

Leftow begins his paper by characterizing Aquinas as an emergentist, and substantial forms in general as emergent states: they are substance-constituting items that emerge from matter's continual evolution, and by whose arrival matter is said to exist under a new state, thus constituting a new kind of individual.⁴⁹ However, while Leftow believes that substantial forms are usually states of matter, and that for a substantial form to be present in a substance is for each material part of that substance to exist in that particular state, he also thinks that Aquinas' account of substantial form is broad enough to make room for a kind of substantial form - the human soul - the existence of which is not reduced to being a state of the parcel of matter which it informs.⁵⁰

Leftow holds that there are three possible ways of approaching Aquinas' view that the human soul is at once a substantial form and a thing capable of separate existence. First, there is what he calls the 'Platonic or Augustinian' reading of Aquinas' hybrid view: according to this interpretation, one takes as a given that the human soul is an immaterial particular and then goes on to prove how it can also be the substantial form of some body. Second, there is the 'Aristotelian' reading, which considers as a primitive truth that the soul is a substantial form and then tries demonstrating how that same substantial form can also be a subsistent item. Third, there is the more impartial approach according to which some other characteristic of the soul is regarded as primitive, while one tries to show that this purportedly neutral nature is compatible with the soul's being at once a substantial form and an immaterial particular. It is Leftow's opinion that the most promising way of accounting

⁴⁸ See Brian Leftow, "Souls Dipped in Dust" (in Kevin Corcoran, ed., 2001, 120-139).

⁴⁹ Cf. Leftow (in Corcoran, ed., 2001), pp. 121-122.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-126. Despite what Leftow takes to be Aquinas' general emergentist view of substantial forms, he thinks that it is at the level of human souls that Aquinas' 'Platonizing' approach to forms comes into play.

for the coherence of Aquinas' twofold view is by adopting a Platonic reading of Thomistic human souls.⁵¹

What justifies the assimilation of Thomistic human souls to Platonic forms is that, according to Leftow, for both Plato and Aquinas subsistent forms are not to be understood as 'unowned states'.⁵² For Leftow, when a Thomistic human soul exists uninstantiated - that is, when it is not actually inhering in some portion of matter - that human soul does not thereby become a free-floating state, since human souls - and, among substantial forms, *only* human souls - are not *in themselves* states, even though a human soul's bearer - namely, a human body - is said to be in a certain state (i.e., the state of being human) by reason of its being informed by a soul.

Leftow thinks that when Aquinas denies of the human soul the type of inherence that is proper to material forms,⁵³ he is by that means rejecting the notion that human souls might be states of the body. This kind of interpretation leads Leftow to contend that human souls are metaphysical exceptions to the rule that substantial forms are generally states of matter. I have already discussed earlier in chapter 5 why I think that this is not the best way to approach Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul. Now, with respect to Leftow's claim that human souls are not *intrinsically* states, the idea seems to be that souls are states only *by association*, that is, by virtue of their natural conjunction with matter.

Despite his claim that neither Thomistic human souls nor Platonic forms are intrinsically states, Leftow holds nevertheless that both Thomistic souls and Platonic forms enjoy spatiotemporal existence only *per accidens* - in the sense that their presence in time and space is not due to the intrinsic constitution of a form or a soul, but only to the extent that they are attached to parcels of matter. Such a concession, according to some, would be enough to place human souls and Platonic forms within

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131. Leftow's *Platonizing* approach is introduced by him in the following terms: "For Aquinas, my soul's most basic relation to me is that it "informs" my body. Thomas's account of this (say I) makes my Thomist soul something like a Platonic Form of Leftowhood" (p. 131).

⁵² The expression is Leftow's, cf. p. 131. We will see in a moment how, apparently influenced by Stump, Leftow seems to change his mind in a later article.

⁵³ See *ST* 1a Q75a2 ad1, when Aquinas distinguishes between the two senses in which the phrase 'this something' can be understood.

the realm of abstract objects.⁵⁴ What is more, Leftow thinks that the soul does not act on that which it informs: a soul's role with respect to its bearer is simply *to be there*. On Leftow's interpretation, when we say that the soul 'enlivens' the body what we mean is that its presence in the body accounts for the fact that a live body is endowed with certain powers through which we are able to recognize - when those are brought to full actuality - that their bearer is a living thing.⁵⁵

According to Leftow, reading Aquinas' doctrine of soul with Platonic spectacles amounts to saying that soul and body stand in relations of formal causality and participation - the latter being the converse of the former. Hence, while the soul is said to be the *formal cause* of the body, the body is said to *participate* in the soul. Normally, says Leftow, these relations are viewed as linking abstract items to concrete items.⁵⁶ Now, despite what Leftow takes to be a general rule that says that concrete items participate in (thus being subject to the formal causality of) abstract items, he also believes that in the particular case of the human soul things are different, since,

⁵⁴ According to the so-called 'non-spatiotemporal' criterion for determining whether an item is concrete or abstract. Since the soul does not *by itself* belong to any region of space and time, it would be considered, according to such a criterion, an abstract item. Since, for Aquinas, the soul has a location (and is therefore moved) only accidentally, insofar as it is the actuality of a body, he would agree that the soul in and of itself is non-spatial (cf. *ST* 1a Q75a1ad1). Moreover, given that Aquinas accepts Aristotle's notion that time is the measure of movement, and having said that the soul is moved only accidentally, he would also agree that the soul is intrinsically non-temporal (cf. *ST* 1a Q85a4ad1; see also *QDPD* 3.10 ad 8 and ad 9, where Aquinas says that, when considered as a separate entity, the soul is not measured by time, but by eternity, in which there is no before and after). However, Aquinas would not agree that the reason for the non-spatiotemporality of the human soul is its alleged abstractness, but rather its intrinsic immateriality. As a consequence, for Aquinas, not everything that is non-spatiotemporal is abstract - in other words, being non-spatiotemporal is not sufficient for being abstract. Hence, Aquinas would certainly add as a necessary (and in this case probably sufficient) condition for abstractness what is called the 'causal inefficacy' criterion, according to which in order to be an abstract object an item has to be causally inert. For a recent survey of the topic of abstract objects, see Gideon Rosen's entry in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ('Abstract Objects', <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/abstract-objects/>).

⁵⁵ Cf. Leftow (in Corcoran, ed., 2001), p. 132. Therefore, even if Leftow explicitly says that human souls are not states of the body like other substantial forms (cf. p. 126), still they must be, according to his own characterization of Thomistic souls, something very close to that. Since for him they meet what we have called the criteria of 'non-spatiotemporality' and of 'causal inefficacy', they would seem to be some sort of abstract item.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133. That the soul relates to the body as the body's formal cause is not an infringement of the 'causal inefficacy' criterion for abstractness, since, on Leftow's view, all that means is that the soul's presence in the body accounts for the live body's essential properties. One may say that, for Leftow, the causality of forms remains at a purely explanatory level, and as such can be brought on by abstract entities.

on his view, that the soul is an immaterial particular is for Aquinas a primitive truth. On the other hand, that this same immaterial particular is also the form of a body is only a derivative truth which Aquinas arrives at on the grounds of the soul's capacity to function as the formal cause of the body.⁵⁷

Therefore, on Leftow's interpretation of Aquinas' view, to give a proper account of the coherence of the idea that the soul, as an immaterial particular, can also be the form of a body, one must answer the following question: how is it possible for a pair of particulars - namely, the human soul and the live human body - to stand in relations that commonly link *properties* and particulars?⁵⁸ To show that soul and body can be linked by the relations of formal causality and participation Leftow resorts to what he regards as a Platonic theory of attribution.

According to Leftow's (one may say) *unorthodox* approach to Plato's theory of forms, Platonic forms themselves are immaterial particulars. Hence, within Platonism, the relations of formal causality and participation do not link particulars to properties in the first place; they link pairs of particulars - namely, forms and their material instances. A Platonic form, on Leftow's view, is not a universal: a Platonic form with several material instances is multiply located at once only 'by participation' - to the extent that its material instances exist in a certain state⁵⁹ - and, therefore, only *per accidens*. By contrast, if one is a realist about universals, one will admit that a multiply instantiated universal is genuinely located in different places at the same time: the spatial manifestation of the universal is something that belongs to it by its very nature.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134. Leftow takes as evidence of the primitive status of the claim that the soul is an immaterial particular the fact that, in the *Summa Theologiae*, the idea that the soul is a subsistent item is developed in 1a Q75a2, whereas the thesis that the soul is the form of the body is explicitly presented only in 1a Q76a1. However, we must recall that before holding that the soul is a subsistent thing Aquinas establishes in 1a Q75a1 that the soul is the actuality of the body, thus already gesturing towards the final doctrine of the soul as a form of the body. Be that as it may, it is controversial whether or not we can really take the order in which the text is presented as replicating the order in which concepts are related. Moreover, in the specific case of the human soul's twofold nature it is questionable whether or not there really is an order of priority between the two modes of being - subsistence and inherence - that characterize the soul, since in several places Aquinas' mode of argumentation seems to move in both directions - i.e., from subsistence to inherence as well as from inherence to subsistence.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵⁹ In the Platonist interpretation, for matter to exist in a certain state is for it to participate in some form.

Nor is the Platonic form itself an attribute: on the Platonist view, to have a property consists in displaying some relation of dependence on a form - for a portion of matter to be a man is for it to display the relation of participation with respect to the form *Man*. Participation then is not a relation between an individual and its properties, but between an individual and forms, which in turn gives rise to an individual's properties.⁶⁰ Leftow's conclusion is that, if his interpretation is correct, there is nothing wrong in holding that an immaterial particular is also the formal cause of some material particular, since formal causality denotes in reality the same relation as participation, though considered from the opposite point of view, namely, that of form and not that of its instances.

This is how Leftow summarizes his position regarding Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul:

There *is* no form/thing problem, on the reading of Thomas that I propose. There is instead the need to recognize that Thomas's view of the soul has a Platonist component, and that for Platonists, Forms in general *are* particular things.⁶¹

There are a few things to be said about Leftow's approach to Aquinas' view - an *approach* which is not a *solution* since, according to Leftow himself, there is no real *problem* to begin with. The immediate reaction would be that Leftow makes us pay too high a price for this metaphysical merchandise which is Aquinas' hybrid view of human souls. For not only do we have to accept that there is what he calls a 'Platonist component' to Aquinas' theory; we also have to agree with Leftow's peculiar interpretation of Platonic forms, which, on his view, are not universals but immaterial particulars. The acceptance of a more traditional version of Plato's theory of forms would have absolutely no bearing on Aquinas' doctrine, since what we need to explain is how is it possible for an immaterial singular thing to be the form of a body. Instead of eliminating a problem, Leftow's approach seems rather to duplicate it.

Speaking of problems, Leftow's conclusion that there is no, as he puts it, 'form/thing' problem in Aquinas' doctrine of soul is hardly acceptable when Aquinas himself

⁶⁰ As a consequence, what really is a universal on Leftow's interpretation is not the Platonic form itself but the relation between a form and its particular instances.

⁶¹ Cf. Leftow (in Corcoran, ed., 2001), p. 135. The italics in the quotation are his.

admits that there is a philosophical tension involved in his twofold theory of human souls. Evidence that Aquinas is well aware of the fact that his doctrine of human souls is problematic - not in the sense that it contains insurmountable problems but simply because it involves difficulties that must be appropriately addressed - is that he opens his treatise on the soul by tackling the question 'Whether the human soul can be both a form and a this something'.⁶² If, on the Platonic reading, the idea of a form that is also a subsistent thing is made evident - thus obviating the discussion as to how something can be both at once - that to me constitutes enough reason for rejecting a Platonizing approach to Thomistic souls.

As Leftow admits it, the acceptance of the Platonic reading of Aquinas is contingent upon supposing that the claim that the soul is an immaterial particular is a primitive truth, and that what needs to be proved is the claim that the soul is the form of a body. I do not think we should embrace this sort of reading, but that does not mean that I think the opposite approach - what Leftow calls the 'Aristotelian' reading - is right either. To be sure, as I attempted to show in chapter 5, Aquinas' strategy consists in saying that it is *as form* that the human soul subsists, since every substantial form, as a giver of substantial being, is capable of surviving without that to which it gives being. It is thus the concreteness of form that explains the subsistence of the soul: it is because souls are forms that they are subsistent.

If that is really so, I should have no problem with admitting that Aquinas' approach to the twofold nature of the human soul is 'Aristotelian'. Now, this Aristotelianism of Aquinas' approach holds good only in the narrow sense that formhood explains subsistence, and not the other way around; but not in the sense (which is the one envisaged by Leftow) that the ascription of formhood to the human soul is taken as a given, whereas the attribution of subsistence to the human soul needs to be established by argument. As I have already mentioned in chapter 4, Aquinas' line of argumentation moves in both directions: there are places where he argues from formhood to subsistence, but there are also others where he argues from

⁶² Cf. QDA 1: "*Utrum anima humana possit esse forma et hoc aliquid*".

subsistence to formhood. In this sense, Aquinas is neither a Platonist nor an Aristotelian, but rather neutral.⁶³

The last aspect to be considered regarding Leftow's reading has to do with the ambiguity of his claim that Platonic forms are 'immaterial particulars'. I say this because it is not easy to determine exactly what the notion refers to, since, in principle, it could denote either a concrete immaterial thing or merely an abstract particular, and his argumentation is surely vague enough to make room for both sorts of interpretation.⁶⁴

At first glance, one could think that Leftow's goal is to show, through the use of a Platonic reading of Aquinas' doctrine, that the human soul is a concrete, nonphysical thing that can also be the form of a physical thing, namely the body. After all, on Aquinas' twofold view, the soul is both a form and a subsistent thing, and the main consequence of being subsistent - when coupled with the condition of being a form alone - is incorruptibility: the ability to persist on its own. It simply seems more intuitive to think that, if a thing is able to exist on its own, without a physical bearer, then it must be of some concrete nature, even if it is not intrinsically made up of any sort of material stuff.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the ability to exist separately - that is, without a physical bearer - is not exclusive to concrete items. They rather think that some abstract items are indeed capable of existing on their own.⁶⁵ As a consequence, since the soul, as the form of a body, is taken to be the organizational state of a body's material parts, and given that this same form is also said to be capable of independent existence, the human soul will be characterized, according to those

⁶³ For my previous consideration of the topic, see chapter 4, subsection 4.1.3. For a text where Aquinas seems to argue in both directions, see *SCG* II.68.

⁶⁴ In chapter 3, subsection 3.3, I have distinguished two senses of immateriality that are usually mentioned by Aquinas. The first sense refers to the absence of matter in a thing's intrinsic constitution; the second consists in the ability to exist wholly without matter - which means that something is both intrinsically and extrinsically immaterial. While it is clear that the first sense is compatible with abstract entities, in the second case things are not so obvious, since the second sense of immateriality seems to presuppose that the thing is causally efficacious. Hence the ambiguity of calling something an 'immaterial particular', given that we cannot determine, without additional information, which sense of immateriality the expression refers to.

⁶⁵ As we have seen in chapter 5, this is the position of Eleonore Stump.

thinkers, as a ‘subsistent state’. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the way Leftow describes Platonic forms is reminiscent of the theory of subsistent states, seeing as two of the characteristics that he assigns to forms are commonly viewed as criteria for abstractness, namely, non-spatiotemporality and causal inefficacy.⁶⁶

When we turn to a more recent paper of his, we find out that Leftow believes that his Platonic reading of Aquinas’ doctrine of soul is at the very least *compatible with* the idea that human souls are subsistent states.⁶⁷ In the paper, Leftow attempts to defend Stump’s notion of subsistent states against the sort of objection that holds that a state is the kind of thing that cannot exist without that of which it is the state.⁶⁸ Leftow thinks he can safeguard Stump’s idea that states can persist on their own between different physical bearers by employing a Platonic theory of attributes. On his reading of Stump’s view, a subsistent state is a Platonic attribute, which, according to him, can exist both as a state of something else and on its own.

A state is something that belongs to a subject; it exists *in* its bearer. Leftow calls them ‘immanent universals’: they are properties that are shared by many, and that exist in many. However, Leftow goes on to suppose that those universals also possess what he calls the ‘Platonic property’ of being capable of existing uninstantiated - that is, they are also able to exist without their usual bearers: they are free-floaters. Suppose that *a*, *b* and *c* are all the instances one can find of a certain Platonic state *y*. If *a*, *b* and *c* all cease to be, there will be no more instances of *y*. Now, if *y* is a Platonic state, at the time when all the instances of *y* have disappeared there will still be *y*-hood, that entity which was the state of every instance of *y*, and that now persists

⁶⁶ As regards the idea that forms are non-spatiotemporal, Leftow holds that Platonic forms are spatially located only *per accidens* - insofar as they are ‘participated in’ by physical bodies, which are by their very nature spatiotemporal. With respect to being causally inefficacious, even though Leftow says that forms are the formal causes of bodies, he nevertheless characterizes it as a, say, *passive* sort of causality - that is, something that belongs to forms merely in the sense that they are participated in by bodies. Hence, he claims that formal causality is not about the soul’s exerting some sort of influence on the body, but simply about the soul’s being present in the body. Therefore, given this particular reading of formal causality, I concluded that on Leftow’s view being a formal cause is compatible with being causally inefficacious.

⁶⁷ The paper I am thinking of is Leftow’s “Soul, Mind and Brain” (in Robert C. Koons and George Bealer, eds., 2010, chapter 20, 395-415).

⁶⁸ Earlier in chapter 5 I have labeled this the ‘*of-ness* argument’. The idea is usually ascribed to William Hasker. See his *The Emergent Self* (1999), p. 168.

independently of its former instances. What is more, if at some future time new instances of y appear, the abstract item which is denoted by y -hood will have existed between bearers.⁶⁹ Leftow concludes that, even if we cannot determine whether or not this is the correct theory of universals, as long as it is coherent Stump's notion of subsistent states is preserved.

The problem, according to Leftow, with the above description is that, if human souls as subsistent states are merely Platonic universals, one will be forced to conclude that there is only one soul for the whole humankind, just like there is only one y -hood that survives the demise of all its instances. To avoid that undesirable result, Leftow claims that the best way to get closer to Aquinas' doctrine is by mixing a belief in Platonic attributes with a belief in 'haecceities' - that is, individual essences. Thomistic souls - on Leftow's reading of Stump's interpretation of Aquinas - are nothing more than 'immanent Platonist haecceities'.⁷⁰

Again, it is hard to see where in Leftow's interpretation lies the theoretical improvement in relation to Stump's notion of subsistent states. Instead of explaining how the idea of states that can survive the corruption of their bearers is plausible, Leftow simply restates it in different, Platonic terms. In fact, Leftow assumes throughout his argument that the idea of a free-floating state is coherent. The notions of immanent universals and haecceities do not solve the philosophical difficulty; they simply relabel it. Hence, so long as one can do without the obscure notion of subsistent states and all the ontological paraphernalia that comes with it, it is definitely advisable to avoid introducing them into one's account, which is precisely what I have sought to do in my previous chapter.

⁶⁹ The paragraph above is a paraphrase of Leftow's argument. For the original story, see Leftow (in Koons and Bealer, eds., 2010), p. 401.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 402. If human souls are haecceities, then the soul constitutes the whole essence of the individual. But if the individual essence is to the individual substance what the universal essence is to the species, then it cannot be composed of form alone - it also has to include individual matter, since, for Aquinas, the nature of physical things includes both form and matter (cf. *ST* 1a Q75a4). With regard to this discussion, the reader might want to check back chapter 3, subsections 3.6 and 3.7, where I have characterized the soul as a metaphysical part of man, and a metaphysical part as a part of the individual essence.

Chapter 7

From Subsistent Parts to Part-Dualism: Aquinas and the Dualism/Materialism Debate

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I assess the distinctiveness of Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul by measuring it against three of the four major positions that are traditionally identified by philosophers working on the mind-body problem: substance-dualism, property-dualism and soft materialism. The fourth chief class, hard (or reductive) materialism - i.e., the view that you and I are material objects that are identical with the mereological sum of our respective physical properties - will not be taken into consideration, since it has absolutely nothing in common with Aquinas' own view. The main purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the consequences of categorizing the human soul as a 'subsistent part' to the formulation of a truly Thomistic account of the psychophysical union.

Since it is not uncommon to find both philosophers and historians of philosophy who characterize Aquinas as a substance-dualist¹, I begin by addressing the similarities and dissimilarities between Aquinas' account of the human soul and substance-dualism. Next, I move on to a refutation of the idea - first defended by Stump, now shared by other scholars - that the Thomistic doctrine of the human soul is compatible with nonreductive versions of materialism. My goal is to show that Aquinas' hybrid account of the soul is irreconcilable with soft materialism given that the Thomistic theory of the human soul's subsistence is rather at odds with at least one basic claim of materialism.

Following that, I show how the concept of subsistent part - which, according to the interpretation I have developed in the previous chapters of this dissertation, best describes Aquinas' view of the human soul - entails the notion of part-dualism. I argue that Aquinas' part-dualism cannot be reduced to either soft materialism or substance-dualism. At the same time, I want to say that part-dualism is also fundamentally different from property-dualism, since it is ontologically more robust than the latter. In light of the complexities of Aquinas' hybrid approach to the soul (and given the consequences of this approach to his ontology), I believe that the best way to

¹ For a list of authors who classify Aquinas as a dualist of substance, see chapter 1, footnote 5.

determine where Aquinas' view falls on the map of current debate is by introducing a new label (namely, part-dualism), of which his theory might easily be the only instance. However, by introducing the label 'part-dualism' to account for Aquinas' philosophical anthropology, my goal is not only to indicate the sui generis nature of the Thomistic view but also to go at least part of the way towards showing that it is plausible - that is, that it makes some intuitive sense.

In order to explain exactly how part-dualism differs from substance-dualism, it is essential that I discuss how Aquinas, as a proponent of part-dualism, views the status of the separated human soul. The reason for this is that some prominent scholars contend that the human person in the period between bodily death and resurrection, during which the soul is believed to exist on its own, though not *identical* with the human soul is nevertheless *composed* of the soul alone, with the consequence that the soul's existence would be sufficient for the person herself to exist. In order to defend their reading, those scholars see in Aquinas a precursor of the contemporary metaphysical thesis - advocated, among others, by Lynne Rudder Baker - expressed in the slogan 'constitution is not identity'. The problem, however, with this interpretation is that it goes against what I consider to be *the* distinguishing mark of Aquinas' part-dualism, namely, that the human soul, even in its separate state, never loses its status as a metaphysical part of the human person.

7.1. Subsistent Souls & Substance-Dualism

Whenever philosophers wish to refute substance-dualism, what they usually target is dualism on the Cartesian model. According to what is traditionally taken to be Descartes' version of it, substance-dualism is the view that human beings are aggregates of two radically different sorts of substance: the body - extended and non-thinking - and the soul - unextended and thinking. It is also assumed that on the Cartesian model human beings may be intimately related to their bodies, but they are not *essentially* constituted by their bodies. According to the standard characterization

of Cartesian dualism, each human being - or human person - is identical with his or her rational soul.² For instance, in his *Sixth Meditation*, we find Descartes saying that, Just because I know certainly that I exist, and that meanwhile I do not remark that any other thing necessarily pertains to my nature or essence, excepting that I am a thinking thing, I rightly conclude that my essence consists solely in the fact that I am a thinking thing (or a substance whose whole essence or nature is to think). And although...I possess a body with which I am very intimately conjoined, yet...it is certain that this I (that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am) is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it.³

Based on passages like the above, one is allowed to say that any proponent of CSD⁴ must at least subscribe to the following two pivotal claims:

(C1) *A human being is essentially a human soul.*

(C2) *The human soul can exist without the human body.*

One must also bear in mind that, according to CSD, (C2) follows directly from (C1). Given that the human soul is the only essential component of the human being, it is possible for a human being - which is to say, for a human *soul*, namely that which the pronoun 'I' ultimately refers to - to continue to exist without the body which it is usually (that is, during its earthly life) attached to.⁵

² Throughout this chapter, I use the expressions 'human being' and 'human person' interchangeably, since I take it as a given that if x is a human being then x must be ipso facto a human person, and vice versa.

³ Cf. Descartes, *Key Philosophical Writings*, translated by Elizabeth Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Wordsworth Editions, 1997, p. 181 (v. VII, p. 78 of the 'AT' edition). For a parallel text, see Part 4 of *Discourse on the Method*, in Descartes (1997), p. 92 ('AT' edition: v. VI, pp. 32-33).

⁴ Henceforth, I use 'CSD' as shorthand for 'Cartesian Substance-Dualism'.

⁵ Hence, following the principles of CSD, one may speak of a self (the so-called Cartesian ego) of which the body is not a part, and which is thus really distinct from the thing of which it is the self, i.e., the soul-body aggregate. As Anthony Kenny contends, unlike Descartes, Aquinas does not believe in the existence of an inner self which is distinct from the living human body, since he does not identify the disembodied soul with any self or ego (cf. Kenny (1988), pp. 26-30). In *ST* 1a Q75a4 ad1, for instance, Aquinas addresses the biblical distinction between the outer man (*homo exterior*) and the inner man (*homo interior*), and he emphasizes that, strictly speaking, we cannot call the soul a man, but that those who speak of the soul as the inner man do so on the basis of a habit of identifying a thing with that which is principal in it. (For the distinction in the Bible, see 2 Cor. iv, 16). Therefore, if in Descartes the soul genuinely is the inner man (while the outer man is an aggregate of soul and body), in Aquinas, by contrast, such an identification is only the result of a certain manner of speaking that does not correspond to the true nature of things.

One important aspect that separates Aquinas' account of the soul-body union from CSD is that Aquinas wants to secure (C2) without having to endorse (C1). On the one hand, I want to say that the fact that Aquinas subscribes to (C2) is enough to characterize him as a dualist, since the belief in subsistent souls is the hallmark of dualism: not necessarily of substance-dualism, but of a kind of dualism which is ontologically stronger than property-dualism, since by positing subsistent souls one is endorsing a dualism not only about kinds of property (i.e., mental and physical), but primarily about the bearers of those distinct types of property. Moreover, the belief in subsistent souls commits one to a version of dualism which is also ontologically richer than what is nowadays called 'emergent dualism' - the view that an immaterial bearer of mental properties emerges from matter in the sense that it is in some way or another produced by matter and not added to it from outside, in which case it is still considered to be ontologically dependent upon matter, a view that Aquinas explicitly denies of human souls.⁶ On the other hand, Aquinas' rejection of (C1) - which I take to be the central tenet of CSD - is sufficient to guarantee the conclusion that the sort of dualism espoused by Aquinas is fundamentally non-Cartesian, which means that for Aquinas human persons are not aggregates of soul and body the innermost nature of which consists simply in being an immaterial substance, namely a soul.

For obvious chronological reasons, Aquinas did not know Cartesian dualism. He was, however, acquainted with Plato's dualist model, which is sufficiently similar to CSD for one to say that by refuting Platonic dualism (which he explicitly does) Aquinas is thereby rejecting CSD.⁷ According to Aquinas' characterization of Platonic substance-dualism, a human person - just like on the Cartesian model - is identical

⁶ For an influential defence of emergent dualism in contemporary philosophy of mind, see William Hasker (1999), and also his "Persons as Emergent Substances" (in Kevin Corcoran, ed., 2001, 107-119).

⁷ I would like to remind the reader that I do not intend to take issue with scholars of Plato and Descartes, since I am not so much concerned with historical precision - i.e., with whether or not the views I ascribe to Plato and Descartes really are their most considered views - as with the sort of philosophical anthropology that derives from endorsing (C1) and (C2), and with how my reading of Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul is to be distinguished from it. In the particular case of Aquinas' refutation of the version of substance-dualism that was available to him at his time, all that the reader is kindly asked to do is to accept, at least for the sake of the argument, Aquinas' description of what he takes to be Plato's anthropology - a characterization which he inherits mostly from Aristotle's *DA*.

with her soul: for Plato - says Aquinas - a human being is nothing but 'a soul making use of a body'.⁸

Aquinas explains that what allows Plato to maintain that human beings are identical with their souls is his belief that the activity of sensation holds of the soul in its own right, without the body playing any instrumental part in it. Since, on that approach, both intellectual and sensory operations are said to belong to the soul alone, it is only natural for Plato to identify man with his soul, for, as Aquinas writes, 'any given thing is identified with what performs the operations of that thing'.⁹

One of Aquinas' most emphatic criticisms of Platonic dualism is found in *SCG* II.57, where he provides a brief account of the genesis of Plato's endorsement of (C1), and then advances his argument against it. For Aquinas, Plato's identification of man with his soul is rooted in his explanation of the soul-body union in terms of the mover-moved model, which, according to Aquinas' view, constitutes the sort of union that results from what he calls 'contact of power'.¹⁰ However, a union by contact of power cannot produce a thing unqualifiedly one, but something that is one only by accident. It is precisely to avoid this result that, on Aquinas' description of Plato's view, Plato is led to maintain that the human person is not a soul-body compound, but rather a simple substance - i.e., a soul that uses a body, just like a man uses his clothes.¹¹

⁸ Cf. *ST* 1a Q75a4c: "*Plato vero, ponens sentire esse proprium animae, ponere potuit quod homo esset anima utens corpore*".

⁹ *Ibid.*: "*illud autem est unaquaeque res, quod operatur operationes illius rei*". Hence, for Aquinas, substance-dualism is not internally inconsistent, i.e., it is not *logically* impossible. Rather, the problem with it is that it is based on the false assumption that the activity of sensation can be sufficiently accounted for by reference to the soul alone. For a passage from *First Alcibiades*, where Plato's subscription to (C1) is most clearly characterized, see chapter 2, 2.3, footnote 35.

¹⁰ Aquinas differentiates two kinds of contact - of quantity and of power. There is contact of power when entities *x* and *y* are linked in such a way that *x* either acts upon *y* or is acted upon by *y*, where the contact is not limited to the entities' extremities, nor is it necessary that what acts be extrinsic to what is acted upon (cf. *SCG* II.56, nn. 6-7). Union by contact of power is, according to Aquinas, Plato's alternative to the Aristotelian form-matter model, which is adopted by Aquinas and is, in his view, the only doctrine that is capable of accounting for the unqualified union that holds between a human being's essential parts (*ibid.*, n. 13).

¹¹ Cf. *SCG* II.57, n.4: "*Plato posuit quod homo non sit aliquid compositum ex anima et corpore: sed quod ipsa anima utens corpore sit homo; sicut Petrus non est aliquid compositum ex homine et indumento, sed homo utens indumento*". For a closer analysis of the notion of contact of power, as well as for my exposition of Aquinas' refutation of Plato's mover-moved model, see Part 1, chapter 2, subsections 2.2 and 2.3, respectively.

When a man is wearing his clothes he forms with them a sort of unity, though only an accidental one. Hence, he may take them off without losing his identity; Socrates naked is still Socrates. On the Platonic model, the analogy holds true of soul-body aggregates: disembodied Socrates is still Socrates, since Socrates is identical with his soul.

On Aquinas' interpretation, by seeking to avoid one unhappy result Plato's doctrine encounters yet another difficulty, which stems from having to endorse (C1) as a way of obviating the problem of the fragile sort of unity that comes with the adoption of the mover-moved model. Aquinas' argument runs as follows: A human being is by definition a rational animal. Now 'animal' - and, to the extent that every man is an animal, so also 'man' - picks out things that are both natural and sensible (*naturalia et sensibilia*). However, this can only be the case if the body is seen as an essential part of man, given that the soul - which, according to the Platonic doctrine, the human person is identical with - is in itself neither a sensible nor a material thing. Therefore, a man must not be identical with his soul.¹²

For Aquinas, the fact that something is a natural thing entails that matter is part of the thing's definition. Hence, if man is a natural thing - as Aquinas thinks he is - he cannot be equated with his soul, since souls are intrinsically immaterial.¹³ Moreover, Aquinas supposes that our animality (which is an essential part of our nature) entails not only that we are sensory agents - i.e., beings that can acquire knowledge of the world through sense faculties - but also that we are sensible entities - i.e., things that can be objects of sensory experience. In fact, for Aquinas, being actively capable of cognizing the world by the senses entails the passive capacity of being itself cognizable in that same fashion. But this can also only be true if we are not pure souls but rather ensouled bodies: that is, if our essence is composed of soul *and* body.

¹² Cf. SCG II.57, n.5: "*Animal enim et homo sunt quaedam sensibilia et naturalia. Hoc autem non esset si corpus et eius partes non essent de essentia hominis et animalis, sed tota essentia utriusque esset anima, secundum positionem praedictam: anima enim non est aliquid sensibile neque materiale. Impossibile est igitur hominem et animal esse animam utentem corpore, non autem aliquid ex corpore et anima compositum*".

¹³ On the notion that the definition of natural things includes matter, see, for instance, ST 1a Q75a4: "*definition autem in rebus naturalibus non significat formam tantum, sed formam et materiam*".

As I have mentioned above, Aquinas considers that by trying to escape the conclusion that man (as a soul-body aggregate) has no essential unity, Plato stumbles upon the problem that man (insofar as he is identical with his soul) is outside the realm of natural and sensible things. Though counterintuitive, the latter conclusion does not seem to be as metaphysically repulsive as the former. The Platonic idea that human beings as such are not natural and sensible things, but rather spiritual substances that are subject to the laws of nature and capable of being sensorily apprehended only to the extent that they are contingently linked to bodies does not appear to contain any internal contradictions. Thus stated, the dispute becomes one of *basic stance*: Aquinas' argument works for those who share his primary intuitions about human nature, while those who do *not* share his insights may easily reject his conclusion by dismissing his main premise (i.e., that men are natural and sensible things), the denial of which does not seem to involve any contradictions. Nonetheless, my goal was not to show the demonstrative force of Aquinas' argument, but to make clear that Aquinas does not agree with Platonic-Cartesian substance-dualism, so that, on the one hand, while he ought to be considered a dualist, on the other hand, the sort of dualism that he espouses must be characterized by a different set of claims than that which CSD consists of.¹⁴

If we want to make the comparison between Aquinas and substance-dualism more palpable to the present reader, it is worthwhile to examine - however briefly - a contemporary version of CSD. One of the most eminent proponents of CSD in our days is philosopher Richard Swinburne, in whose writings we encounter a modernized version of those ideas that Aquinas criticizes in Plato and that are also commonly

¹⁴ Aquinas' full argument against Plato's dualism contains a second stage in which he contends that the mover-moved model (according to which soul and body are diverse in being) does not succeed in accounting for the fact that certain operations that belong to men - as is the case with sensation, on Aquinas' view - are common to soul and body, to the extent that they cannot take place without some transmutation in parts of the body. Now, if soul and body are not essentially one in being, they cannot share one operation, unless we agree with Plato that one and the same operation belongs to mover (soul) as that *from which* the operation occurs and to moved (body) as that *in which* it occurs. However, such an account could only hold good if, in sensation, the soul were active, whereas in fact the active element in sensation is the external sensible object, while the sense faculties are said to be passive powers, so that they do not have the role of mover but rather of moved. Consequently, as I have suggested before, Platonic substance-dualism is, for Aquinas, flawed mainly because it involves a defective account of a human being's sensory life. (For Aquinas' exposition of the argument, see SCG II. 57, n.6.)

attributed to Descartes, with the advantage that in Swinburne they are formulated more explicitly - which can only clear the way for our analysis.

As I have stressed so far, substance-dualists hold the basic belief that human persons are identical with their immaterial souls. They must, however, also come to terms with the fact that human life on earth is to a large extent a material life: a life in which souls stand in various causal relations to bodies, even if (as they contend) bodies are not essential to our nature as humans. Hence, every substance-dualist tries in some way or another to acknowledge the person's relation to the body: Plato speaks of the latter as being used and ruled by the soul; Descartes in turn refers to the body as being intimately conjoined with the soul, where the conjunction is accounted for in terms of causal interaction between the two.

Following the same commonsensical path, Swinburne describes his approach to human nature as one according to which "each of us on Earth consists of two parts, a physical body and a non-physical soul".¹⁵ Because of his appeal to parthood terminology, some interpreters have misidentified Swinburne's dualism as being a sort of 'composite dualism', according to which the human person would not be identical with her soul but rather a compound of soul and body.¹⁶ However, since he believes that the two parts which a human person consists of are not on a par with each other, it would be wrong to suppose that the kind of dualism that Swinburne espouses is in any fundamental way different from CSD. On Swinburne's view, only the soul is an essential part of the human person; the body, on the other hand, is taken to be a mere contingent part of the human being. For that reason, according to Swinburne's dualistic theory, it is metaphysically possible for a person to lose her body without losing her identity as the numerically same person that at some point existed in an embodied fashion - a conclusion that would definitely not hold true if the person were a compound of soul and body.¹⁷ If the numerically same person is capable of

¹⁵ Cf. Swinburne (2009), p. 501.

¹⁶ See Dean Zimmerman's "Three Introductory Questions" (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, 1-32), p. 20.

¹⁷ In section 7.4 I criticize the position of some scholars who think that Aquinas is equipped with a metaphysical apparatus that allows him to hold, without inconsistency, that (1) the human person is essentially a soul-body composite, and (2) the same human person continues to exist uninterrupted after the demise of her body.

surviving the loss of her body, then the person must be identical with her soul-part, which is precisely what (C1) states, the endorsement of which is, according to the story I have been telling so far, a sufficient condition for championing CSD.

In line with the basic claims of CSD, Swinburne describes the human person as a *pure mental substance* - where 'substance' stands for a thing that can exist independently of all other things of its kind other than its essential parts, and 'pure mental substance' denotes a substance for which no physical parts are essential.¹⁸ If, on the one hand, Swinburne follows the dictates of common sense and grants that our earthly lives are largely material by characterizing the body as a part - though only a contingent one - of human beings, on the other hand, by claiming that human beings are pure mental substances he commits to the view (which is distinctive of Platonic-Cartesian substance-dualism) that a properly human life simply is a mental life. Or, to put the same idea in different terms, in order for a human being to exist all that is necessary is that some mental property be truly said of him.¹⁹ However, since he does not want his theory to be reduced to a dualism of properties (which would be the case if the human person were a mere agglomerate of mental properties), Swinburne contends that each human soul possesses its own 'thisness' - i.e., some sort of ontological standing which he describes as "a uniqueness which makes it the soul it is quite apart from the particular mental properties it has".²⁰

We already know from his rejection of Platonic dualism that Aquinas would not comply with the sort of anthropology that holds that the instantiation of some mental property is sufficient for the occurrence of human life. For Aquinas, human beings are rational animals, and the attribution of animality to a subject entails the presence in

¹⁸ Having a body as a part is therefore compatible with being a pure mental substance, but is not something that a mental substance needs in order to exist. For Swinburne's description of human persons as pure mental substances, see his paper "From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism" (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, 142-165), p. 161; for his definition of pure mental substances, see Swinburne (2009), p. 503. I have said above that it is wrong to characterize Swinburne as a composite dualist because, if composite-dualism is the view that human beings are (that is, are identical with) soul-body compounds, then it is not enough to say (like Swinburne does) that human persons have bodies; what must be held by a composite dualist is that having a body is necessary for my persistence as the numerically same human person.

¹⁹ Cf. Swinburne (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, 142-165), p. 163: "For me to exist, I need only to have some pure mental property (for example, having privileged access to my beliefs)".

²⁰ Cf. Swinburne (2009), p. 512.

that subject of what Aquinas would regard as *physical* properties, like the capacity to engage in sensation as well as the capacity for being sensorily apprehended by others.

Another problem that Swinburne has to face as a proponent of CSD is that, according to his view, human beings as we know them - that is, as things that both act and are acted upon in this world through their bodies - are not themselves substances, but mere aggregates of two opposite kinds of substance. In Aquinas' jargon, they lack essential unity. However, instead of challenging this claim Swinburne embraces it into his doctrine, which becomes clear in the following passage: "We could therefore tell the whole story of the world by telling the story of souls and bodies, and not mention human beings at all".²¹

Since one of the main goals of Aquinas' metaphysics is to provide a consistent account of what he considers to be the essential unity of man as a soul-body composite, it is fair to say that the above quotation would constitute for Aquinas a self-inflicted *reductio ad absurdum* of Swinburne's dualism. On Swinburne's doctrine, the term 'human being' does not denote a primary substance. It is rather a convenient way of speaking of the coincident activities of souls and bodies, which are the real players in every event that takes place in this world. But, for Aquinas, any metaphysical system that leads to the conclusion that man as a composite being is not at the same time essentially one (that is, a genuine substance) is inherently flawed.

When Aquinas calls our attention to the fact that on CSD human beings as aggregates of soul and body cannot be regarded as substances on the grounds that there is no essential unity between their parts, he is really being sensitive to the difficulties that involve characterizing the body as a contingent (i.e., non-essential) part of man. The intuition behind Aquinas' rejection of substance-dualism is that according to its principles there seems to be nothing to prevent other things in addition to the body from establishing with a human being a relation of contingent parthood, as we will see in an example below. We could thus paraphrase Aquinas' reaction against CSD by saying that for him the characterization of the body as a contingent part of the human being leads to what we may call 'the problem of the

²¹ Cf. Swinburne (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, 142-165), pp. 162-163.

inflated man', according to which many things besides the body may be said to constitute a contingent part of man. Again, once we allow the body to be a contingent part of man, there is no effective way of preventing other things from becoming contingent parts of the human being.

On Swinburne's view, to say that the body is a contingent part of a human being amounts to saying that (1) there is some physical substance through which that human being in his earthly life - given the laws of nature that are currently operative in the world - experiences the world, and, moreover, that (2) the numerically same human being is capable of losing his body without himself ceasing to exist. Now, take the case of someone who, by reason of some physical deficiency - say, poor vision - has to rely on some sort of implement - in this case, a pair of contact lenses - in order to go about his daily life. Given Swinburne's definition of substance, there is no reason to deny of artifacts in general the status of physical substance. Hence, a pair of contact lenses is a physical substance, since it is the sort of thing that does not depend on other things of its kind (other pairs of contact lenses) to exist. What is more, given the person's poor vision, the pair of contact lenses constitutes an artificial substance which is physically indispensable for that person to experience the world in the way someone endowed with a non-deficient capacity for seeing does. Nonetheless, despite the indispensability of the pair of contact lenses vis-à-vis the person with deficient vision, it is also the case that this person does not cease to exist whenever she takes off her lenses before going to sleep.

What the example above seeks to show is that, if one assumes Swinburne's characterization of contingent parts, one has to admit that other things besides the body may also play the role of a contingent part of a human being. Therefore, a human being on earth will not be a mere aggregate of soul and body, but a rather larger aggregate of soul, body, and whatever else is physically (though not metaphysically) necessary for him to experience the world around him. The idea that Swinburne's doctrine leads to an inflated conception of human beings is, in my view, a *reductio ad absurdum* of Swinburne's dualism in the style of Aquinas' critique of Platonic substance-dualism.

Thus far I have only taken into account classic and contemporary versions of what falls under the label of ‘soul-based’ substance-dualism. Having focused exclusively on this sort of substance-dualism, I have said above that the belief in souls is the distinctive mark of dualism, though not necessarily of substance-dualism, given that Aquinas, who surely believes in the existence of souls, is not a substance-dualist. In order to make things more precise as we advance, I must say that the conviction that souls exist is a sufficient, though not a necessary condition for someone to be considered a dualist.²² Now, if someone is not only a dualist, but a soul-based substance-dualist, then in addition to saying that souls exist, he will also contend that human persons are in fact identical with their souls, even though, by reason of the laws of nature that are currently operative in the world, human beings live their lives on earth as embodied souls.

Another brand of substance-dualism which is influential among contemporary philosophers who are not satisfied with either materialism or traditional substance-dualism (CSD) is what I label ‘subject-based’ substance-dualism. A first-line proponent of this variety of substance-dualism is philosopher E. J. Lowe.²³ Since Lowe’s dualism does not depend on the existence of souls, it may seem strange that we take his views into account here, given the primordial role of the notion of soul in Aquinas. However, not only does Lowe describe the simplicity of the human person (in opposition to the complexity of the body) in ways that may apply to Aquinas’ treatment of the human soul, but also, by considering the main tenets of this type of dualism, we may reach a deeper understanding of the opposition between Aquinas’ dualism and substance-dualism in general.

First of all, subject-based dualism distinguishes itself from soul-based dualism to the extent that, unlike the latter, it does not involve the concept of soul. Even so,

²² This claim will be accounted for in the next section, where I measure it against the opposing view according to which Aquinas, as someone who posits the existence of souls, may be seen as a non-reductive materialist.

²³ Throughout this brief exposition I rely mainly on his “Substance Dualism: A Non-Cartesian Approach” (in Koons & Bealer, eds., 2010, 439-461). For a book-length treatment of the sort of dualism that he proposes, see his *Subjects of Experience* (1996). A good complementary view of what subject-based substance-dualism looks like is found in Martine Nida-Rümelin’s “An Argument from Transtemporal Identity for Subject-Body Dualism” (in Koons & Bealer, eds., 2010, 191-211).

those who defend this type of dualism insist that it is irreducible to materialism since it includes as a basic claim the idea that human beings are individuals who think and have experiences and are nonetheless neither identical with nor constituted by a body. Hence the label 'subject-based' dualism: it is not a dualism of souls and bodies, but of subjects of experience and their bodies. Unlike Swinburne, subject-body dualists claim that although human persons have bodies, the latter are not properly speaking parts - not even contingent parts - of the former. On their view, bodies are self-sufficient, organized material wholes with which human persons are causally connected.

Moreover, unlike Aquinas, subject-body dualists do not endorse the notion of immaterial parts of human persons: while Aquinas believes that the human soul, as the life-giving principle of the human body, is a metaphysical part of the human being, subject-body dualists contend that their immaterial subject of experience is not a part of the person simply because it is identical with the whole person. Additionally, unlike both Aquinas' and Swinburne's dualistic models, subject-based dualism is not restricted to the human domain, since its basic motivation comes from the fact that some entities are endowed with consciousness - where the term is understood in a very broad sense according to which the mere capacity to enjoy warmth or feel pain is said to be indicative of conscious life.²⁴

Since souls are not items in the ontology of the subject-body dualist, one may wonder about the grounds for saying that this type of dualism constitutes a genuine brand of substance-dualism. Even though the claim that 'persons are identical with their souls' is a distinctive feature of substance-dualism (it is, as I have said above, the fundamental claim of CSD), there is another claim the endorsement of which is not only a sufficient condition for its endorser to be considered a substance-dualist, but also a necessary condition, with the consequence that it is not only distinctive of one class of substance-dualism (say, CSD), but of substance-dualism in general. The claim that must be held by any substance-dualist worthy of the name is the following:

(C3) I am not identical with my body.

²⁴ For this last point, see Nida-Rümelin (in Koons & Bealer, eds., 2010), p. 192.

If, on the one hand, the claim that the person is identical to her soul (C1) entails that the person cannot be identical to her body (C3), on the other hand, it is possible to hold that the person is something other than a body and still deny - by refusing to acknowledge the existence of souls - that the person is to be identified with a soul.²⁵

It seems, therefore, that subject-based dualism is sufficiently equipped to be considered a genuine variety of substance-dualism. After all, Lowe's theory upholds an ontological distinction between persons and their organized bodies by claiming that persons are incorporeal subjects of experience. On top of that, to the extent that he maintains that a substance is no more than a bearer of properties, Lowe is able to contend that persons as pure subjects of experience are substances in their own right. Lastly, with regard to the notion of experience - which is central to his project, since the person, on his view, is constituted by the experiences it has - Lowe argues that it ought to be taken in a wide sense, under which one includes not only instances of sensory cognition, but also introspection - what he calls 'inner awareness' - as well as intellectual states.

When we compare Aquinas' account of the human person with contemporary approaches to substance-dualism, the first thing to stand out is how strict Aquinas' definition of substance is, and, hence, how contemporary authors, when examining Aquinas' doctrine via *their own* concepts, may take him to be a substance-dualist just like themselves. For one thing, Aquinas agrees with Swinburne that human souls are capable of existing on their own - which, for the latter, is enough to call the soul a substance.

As regards subject-based dualism, not only would Aquinas agree that souls are bearers of properties (as we have seen earlier in chapter 6, there is a minimal sense in which even accidental forms can bear properties), he would also be led to say that separated souls - like persons on Lowe's characterization - are genuine subjects of experience, given Lowe's broad understanding of what counts as an instance of experience. For Aquinas, after the demise of the body, the soul is certainly aware of its

²⁵ For characterizations of (C3) as the foundational claim of substance-dualism as a genus, see Stephen Yablo's "The Real Distinction Between Mind and Body" (1990), p. 150, and E. J. Lowe (in Koons & Bealer, eds., 2010), p. 441.

own disembodied existence - it is not, for lack of a better expression, an immaterial zombie. What is more, Aquinas believes that separated human souls are capable of performing acts of intellectual cognition, even if, in order to do so, they require divine illumination, which, after the body's death, replaces the phantasms as the external stimulus through which intellection occurs.²⁶

Since Aquinas works with a stricter definition of substance - which includes not only a thing's capacity to exist on its own (i.e., its subsistence), but also a thing's completeness with respect to its species (parts of substances are not substances) - he is in a position to say that some concrete individuals, though endowed with the capacity to subsist, are not substances in their own right. Therefore, Aquinas can claim that, despite its capacity to persist without the body, the human soul is not itself a person, given that persons are defined by him as rational *substances*. Indeed, for Aquinas, human souls and human persons have different persistence-conditions.²⁷ Consequently, in order to provide an accurate account of the sort of dualism that results from Aquinas' anthropology one has to be mindful of what is for Aquinas a basic ontological item - namely, subsistent parts of substances.

The fact that Aquinas possesses a stricter definition of substance is not, however, the main reason why he is able to reconcile his claim that the human soul subsists with his rejection of substance-dualism. The examination of subject-based dualism gave us the opportunity to take account of the most basic claim of substance-dualism in general, namely (C3) 'I am not identical with my body.' Therefore, it must be because he rejects (C3) that Aquinas' dualism cannot be identified with any brand of substance-dualism whatsoever. As we have learned from Swinburne and Lowe, it is

²⁶ For Aquinas, because the separated soul has a different mode of being than the embodied soul it must also possess a different mode of understanding. Since the soul is by nature united to the body, its natural mode of knowing is by turning towards phantasms, which are said to exist inside bodily organs (but outside the intellect). Now, given that the separated soul cannot rely on phantasms in order to intellectually cognize things, Aquinas believes that the separated soul's appropriate (though nonnatural) mode of knowing is to turn towards intelligible things straightaway, by participation in the divine light. Aquinas does not take seriously the idea that the separated soul might be cognitively inert, given his acceptance of the principle that 'nothing exists without its proper operation' (cf. *ST* 1a Q75a6 obj.3 and ad 3). For his theory of the separated soul's mode of cognition, see *ST* 1a Q89a1.

²⁷ The point concerning the persistence-conditions of persons and souls will be pursued in 7.3, where I introduce the notion of part-dualism.

common practice among those who endorse (C3) to introduce a fundamental ontological distinction between some immaterial centre of consciousness (a soul or a subject of experience) and the body. In addition to identifying the person with that centre of consciousness, supporters of (C3) will also hold that the body to which a person is causally connected is not some fuzzy lump of matter, but rather an autonomous, organized body - that is, a physical substance capable of functioning on its own. Hence, those who argue for the simplicity of the human person are not merely denying that persons are collections of material bits; they are rejecting the stronger view that persons are identical with their living bodies.

Aquinas, by contrast, rejects the substance-dualist's distinction between persons and living bodies, which is to say that, on his view, the person is not a simple entity, but rather a complex one - a compound of soul and body.²⁸ Moreover, since Aquinas thinks of the soul as the body's life-giving principle, he would also reject the corollary of the substance-dualist's distinction - namely, that bodies are organisms independently of their souls, or, according to those who deny the existence of souls, that 'being an organism' is a property that belongs to bodies as such. Translated into medieval idiom, the idea that one could make an ontological distinction between souls and their organized bodies would consist in saying that bodies as such are endowed with a 'form of corporeity' (*forma corporeitas*), which, prior to the arrival of the soul, would be responsible for providing unensouled bodies with their basic features, like three-dimensionality and the capacity to be moved from one place to another.

As a champion of the unicity of substantial form, Aquinas claims that there is only one form - in the case of human beings, the soul - by means of which something is said to be a space-occupying thing, a living thing, a sensitive thing, and a thinking thing.²⁹ Those are all actualities of one and the same substantial form; or, to put it in different terms, each of them is a different manifestation of the same act of being

²⁸ See, for instance, *ST* 1a Q29a2 ad3, where Aquinas holds that the term 'person' adds the aspect of individuality to the notion of the essence. Hence, since the human essence is composed of both soul and body, it must be said that a human person is a compound of this soul and this body.

²⁹ Cf. *ST* 1a Q76a4.

which the soul endows matter with. Therefore, when employing the Aristotelian definition of the soul as the actuality of an organic body, Aquinas emphasizes how the soul must be included in that of which it is said to be the actuality - namely, the body. While the ensouled body is said to be actually living because of the soul's presence in it, at the same time the body of which the soul is the actualizing principle is also properly said to be only potentially living, though not as regards what stands to the body as its first actuality - namely, the possession of life itself - but with respect to its second actuality - that is, the carrying out of its vital operations.³⁰

All this to say that, for Aquinas, the living body simply is the ensouled body. Hence, when it is held, contrary to (C3), that 'I am identical with my body', if in this statement the term 'body' is not being used equivocally - as when we call a human corpse a human body - then it must be taken to mean that 'I am identical with my *living* body', which, in turn, given Aquinas' characterization of the soul as the body's life-giving principle, can only mean that 'I am identical with my *ensouled* body'. Since Aquinas contends that the human person is a soul-body compound, and given his conviction that there are no organized bodies apart from their souls, it follows that, unlike the substance-dualist, Aquinas rejects (C3). Now, as we will see in the next section, the fact that Aquinas distances himself from substance-dualism by accepting the claim that 'I (the human person) am identical with my organized body' does not mean that his anthropology could be reconciled with what philosophers nowadays call 'soft-materialism'.

7.2. Against Stump's Compatibility Theory

I now jump to the opposite side of the spectrum, and, before moving on to my own positive account of the type of dualism proposed by Aquinas, I argue against the idea

³⁰ *Ibidem*, ad 1: "Unde manifestum est quod in eo cuius anima dicitur actus, etiam anima includitur; eo modo loquendi quo dicitur quod calor est actus calidi, et lumen est actus lucidi; non quod seorsum sit lucidum sine luce, sed quia est lucidum per lucem. Et similiter dicitur quod anima est actus corporis etc., quia per animam et est corpus, et est organicum, et est potentia vitam habens. Sed actus primus dicitur in potentia respectu actus secundi, qui est operatio". For a parallel text, see CDA II.1, nn. 222-229.

that Aquinas' philosophy of human nature could be reduced, without internal damage, to nonreductive materialism.

It has become common among those interested in Aquinas' philosophy of mind to commend it for what they regard as an affinity with some materialistic views of human nature.³¹ Accordingly, in an effort to prove the relevancy to contemporary debate of Aquinas' perspective on the topic, some prominent scholars - led by Eleonore Stump - try to show that Aquinas' theory of the human soul and its subsistence is not that far from moderate versions of physicalism, which - if I may add - for them is like saying that it is not too far from truth itself. This attempt to harmonize Aquinas' views on the human soul with mild forms of materialism I call the 'compatibility theory'.

Though unquestionably popular, the compatibility theory is by no means a consensus. So, for instance, Norman Kretzmann held that Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul as a subsistent entity "is clearly incompatible with materialism of any sort".³² Following Kretzmann's cue, in this section I intend to refute the compatibility theory by showing how it results in a downplayed notion of subsistence which Aquinas never thought of defending - certainly not so far as the human soul is concerned. Because Eleonore Stump is thought to have inaugurated this 'materialist-friendly' reading of Aquinas' anthropology in her 1995 paper "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism Without Reduction", I will focus exclusively on her arguments for the compatibility theory.

First, a word on materialism. All types of materialism - hard and soft - contend that if something is a concrete individual it has to be made up of microphysical items. The hard-core materialist believes that a physical substance (which, on his view, is the

³¹ Dean Zimmerman, for whom Aquinas' anthropology is "at best a borderline case of substance dualism", writes that "the proponents of Thomistic dualism often recommend the view [namely, that the soul is a substantial form] by pointing out how very close it is to straightforward versions of materialism about human nature". See Zimmerman's "Three Introductory Questions" (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, 1-32), p. 22.

³² Cf. Kretzmann's "Philosophy of Mind" (in Kretzmann & Stump, eds., 1993, 128-159), p. 133.

only sort of substance to inhabit the world³³) is entirely made up of those microphysical items. In other words, for the reductive materialist a concrete particular is identical to the sum of its physical parts. The reductive materialist also holds that the only sort of property that can be instantiated by concrete individuals are physical properties.

This is where the nonreductive materialist begins to part company with the hard-core materialist, since for the former, in addition to physical properties, some types of physical substance also instantiate mental properties. However, given that the soft materialist is a monist with respect to substances, he will claim that, though distinct from physical properties, mental properties are dependent upon physical properties (the underlying idea being that if mental properties were completely independent from physical properties they would require another type of substance - that is, a nonphysical one - as its subject). Because the main difficulty that confronts nonreductive materialism in general consists in spelling out how a physical substance is able to instantiate mental properties, in its most moderate form soft materialism may include the claim that, apart from its microphysical components, concrete individuals are also made up of a nonphysical element which is responsible for the arrangement of the concrete individual's physical parts. For the soft materialist, that nonphysical element of material substances is intended to play an explanatory role: it accounts for the fact that some substances are capable of instantiating properties like 'having pain' or 'desiring x' - which are commonly recognized as mental properties. Now, just like mental properties (according to soft materialism) are dependent upon physical properties, so is the nonphysical element of substances dependent upon a substance's physical parts.

While the hard-core materialist disclaims any sort of nonphysical element of material substances (thus stating that a physical substance is identical with the sum of the microphysical items of which it is composed), the soft materialist in his most

³³ A caveat: some materialists, like Peter van Inwagen, distinguish between global and local materialism. Only the global materialist would claim that there are no other substances besides physical substances. By contrast, a local materialist would, for example, believe in the existence of God (who is neither abstract nor material) and contend that all objects of some particular kind - like human beings - are entirely physical. For van Inwagen's view of human nature, see his "A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person" (in van Inwagen & Zimmerman, eds., 2007, chapter 8, 199-215).

moderate mood will endorse the notion of an immaterial element of substances which accounts for that substance's ability to instantiate mental properties. Hence, according to nonreductive materialism, a physical substance amounts to more than the mere sum of its microphysical bits. Even so, since soft materialism (however moderate) is no less a materialist account of human nature, it must be said to include the following basic claim: (C4) *The nonphysical element of substances is ontologically dependent upon that substance's physical parts.*

The challenge facing those scholars who endorse the compatibility theory consists in explaining how one could harmonize the fact that (C4) is an essential component of soft materialism with Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul - a main part of which is that the human soul is a *subsistent* entity.

Let me now consider Stump's argument for her 'materialist-friendly' reading of Aquinas' philosophy of human nature.³⁴ According to Stump, what is most characteristic of standard substance-dualism is the idea that intellectual functions are not exercised in the body but in the thinking thing which is ontologically distinct from the body and which the person is ultimately identified with.³⁵ Materialism, by contrast, because it disavows other kinds of substance besides physical ones, claims that, even if there are mental properties, these are always instantiated in a material subject. Given those two opposing views, Stump believes that as regards the actualization of intellectual functions, Aquinas is closer to a materialist viewpoint since he contends against the substance-dualist that human persons are soul-body composites, and that it is not the soul itself but the whole human being (i.e., the ensouled body) who is the bearer of mental states - the soul being only that by means of which the composite engages in intellectual acts.³⁶

³⁴ All my quotes from Stump will be taken from "Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism Without Reduction" (*Faith and Philosophy*, 12, 4, 1995: 505-531). A revised version of the paper is found in Stump (2003), chapter 6.

³⁵ Cf. Stump (1995), p. 505.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 520. For Aquinas, see *ST* 1a Q75a2 ad2, where he draws the analogy between the soul and the eyes, saying that intellectual cognition belongs to the soul in the way that seeing belongs to the eyes: soul and eyes are said to be the parts through which different operations - intellection, in the case of the soul, seeing, in the case of the eyes - are ascribed to the human being as a composite whole.

Stump explains her compatibility thesis in the following manner: “The intellective soul is... in its natural state... a configuration of matter. If we can understand the intellective part of the human soul as roughly equivalent to the mind, then for Aquinas the mind is immaterial but implemented (in its natural condition) in matter”.³⁷ The idea that the human mind in its natural state is ‘implemented in matter’ is central to Stump’s case since she relies on Patricia Churchland’s view according to which one of the basic features of materialism is that “mental states are implemented in neural stuff”.³⁸ Therefore, assuming that Churchland is right in taking the idea that mental states are implemented in the brain as a sufficient condition for materialism, in that case, supposing Stump is also right both in her portrayal of Aquinas as contending that the intellective soul is implemented in matter and in her hypothesis that this characterization of Aquinas’ view is equivalent to Churchland’s description of materialism, then one could say that Aquinas’ theory of soul is compatible with soft materialism.³⁹

According to the moderate materialist, mental states - which are not to be identified with brain states - are entirely configurational to the extent that they account for the arrangement of the neural stuff upon which they are ontologically dependent. Hence, what is most characteristic of nonreductive materialism is not the idea that mental states are identical to physical states (unlike the hard-core materialist, the soft materialist denies this point), but the less rigorous idea that mental states are composed of matter.⁴⁰ Given her view - which I have addressed in detail in chapter 5 - that Thomistic substantial forms are configurational states of matter, Stump believes

³⁷ Cf. Stump (1995), p. 519.

³⁸ Cf. Patricia Churchland’s *Neurophilosophy: Toward a Unified Science of the Mind/Brain* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), p. 352. As quoted in Stump (1995), p. 520.

³⁹ For lack of expertise in the field, I do not question Churchland’s description of materialism, only Stump’s attempt to reconcile it with Aquinas’ view of the human soul.

⁴⁰ That being so, dualism would distance itself from soft materialism by rejecting that the mind is composed of matter. For a description of dualism as the view that the mind is not composed of any matter, see Daniel Dennett’s *Consciousness Explained*, pp. 33-37. For a characterization of nonreductive materialism as including the claim that mental states are purely configurational, see Richard Boyd’s “Materialism Without Reduction: What Physicalism Does Not Entail” (in Ned Block, ed., vol.1, 1980), p. 97. For a recent survey of soft materialism, see Lynne Baker’s essay “Non-Reductive Materialism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind* (McLaughlin, Beckermann & Walter, eds., 2009, 109-127).

that Aquinas would agree with the moderate materialist's characterization of the metaphysics of human composition. Stump sums up her case for compatibility in the following fashion: "Although Aquinas mistakenly supposes that the intellect is tied to no particular bodily organ, he nonetheless holds that the intellectual soul is the form constituting the human body as a whole. On his view, therefore, mental states will be implemented in matter. His account of the soul is consequently compatible with supposing that mental states are implemented in neural stuff".⁴¹

The main problem with Stump's approach is that, in order to safeguard the compatibility theory, she needs first to disregard as a theoretical mistake what is for her the undesirable part of Aquinas' hybrid account - that the human soul is a subsistent entity - and then advance a questionable interpretation of the apparently 'materialist-friendly' part of Aquinas' twofold view - that the soul is the form of the body. The point I have strived to make earlier in chapter 5 is that one cannot advance a plausible account of the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' twofold view of the human soul without showing how the two aspects of his doctrine work in tandem, and not in isolation from each other. That means that one cannot fully appreciate what Aquinas' theory of the soul as a form is without taking into consideration his doctrine of subsistence. In other words: a theory of forms that does not comprise the idea of subsistence as the ultimate achievement of forms as such is anything but a Thomistic theory of forms.

Now, if I am right when I say that a truly Thomistic theory of forms must allow conceptual room for a doctrine of subsistence as an effect of forms as such, then one should abandon the idea that forms for Aquinas are configurational states of matter. Once we realize that Thomistic substantial forms are endowed with this element of concreteness that derives from their status as 'givers of being', we understand that, even if some kinds of form cannot exist but in matter, still material existence is not an essential attribute of forms as such. For Aquinas, the notion of forms existing without matter is more than a logical possibility; it is a metaphysical necessity: it is something that is entailed by the idea that forms are causes of the being of matter. Since Aquinas'

⁴¹ Cf. Stump (1995), pp. 520-521.

twofold approach to the human soul is a consequence of his general theory of forms, it is wrong to conclude from his statement that souls are forms of bodies that souls are implemented in matter. The configurational state of matter is an effect of the form, not the form itself.

Another important aspect that makes the compatibility theory unviable is that, despite Stump's insistence on a characterization of nonreductive materialism that centres around the claim that mental states are implemented in matter, a more basic feature of soft materialism consists in the idea that the immaterial element which is responsible for the way in which the microphysical items of a substance are arranged - and which also accounts for the fact that that same substance is a bearer of mental properties - is ontologically dependent upon the microphysical items for whose configuration it is responsible. On the one hand, the moderate materialist acknowledges the existence of a nonphysical element of material wholes (that is why he is taken to be a *nonreductive* materialist); on the other hand, he does not admit that the nonphysical element of material wholes might exist independently of the physical parts of the whole (that is why he is a *materialist* all the same). For that reason, I have stated in the beginning of this section that (C4) is the hallmark of soft materialism, in the sense that it distinguishes it from substance-dualism as well as from hard-core materialism.

Since Aquinas endorses the idea that human souls are capable of continuous existence even after the dissolution of the body, it is clear that he would reject (C4) and, therefore, disavow nonreductive materialism. As Norman Kretzmann has put it, Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul's subsistence is incompatible with even the weakest forms of materialism. Aquinas' characterization of the human soul as a thing that can exist on its own is at odds with what I consider to be the fundamental claim of nonreductive materialism when taken in its mildest form - namely, that the immaterial principle of a material whole cannot outlive the microphysical bits of which that whole is composed.

For all that, one finds scholars who, instead of putting Aquinas' theory of the soul's subsistence to one side on the grounds that it consists in a disproven metaphysical antique (which I claim is what Stump does), propose as a last resort in

favour of the compatibility view a *deflated* reading of Aquinas' doctrine of subsistence. The idea is that, if subsistence means something which is not as ontologically rich as a capacity for independent existence, then it is still possible to reconcile a theory of subsistence with the distinctive claim of nonreductive materialism, which states that the nonphysical cannot outlive the physical.

For Robert Pasnau, a less rigorous approach to subsistence is one which is based not on ontological separability but simply on operational independence. Thus, he contends that "Its [the human soul's] subsistence alone is not inconsistent with materialism, because anything with its own operation is weakly subsistent".⁴² According to Pasnau, the introduction of a toned down notion of subsistence is justified by the several passages where Aquinas compares the human soul's subsistence with the purported subsistence of some integral parts of the human being, like the hand.⁴³ On this interpretation, operational independence is what *defines* subsistence: to say that a part of a substance subsists means that it is endowed with an operation of its own. Since hands have their proper operation - they grip things and wave goodbye - they are properly said to subsist. One should notice how such an account of subsistence is compatible with the ontologically strong version of subsistence without, however, entailing it. At the same time, because subsistence as operational independence does not entail (without the introduction of additional theory) subsistence as ontological separability, one may say that, when taken in its moderate version, subsistence is also compatible with nonreductive materialism.

However, contrary to what Pasnau contends, Aquinas nowhere holds that "the human soul is subsistent, and even a substance, in precisely the sense in which a hand is", and that, therefore, "there is nothing especial about the human soul in this

⁴² Cf. Pasnau (2002b), p. 71.

⁴³ Aquinas draws the analogy between the soul and the hand whenever he wants to stress that the soul, though subsistent, is not a substance (cf. *ST* 1a Q75a2ad1 and a4ad2). The comparison between the soul and the hand is also found in Descartes, who claims that both hand and soul are complete substances when considered on their own but incomplete substances when taken in relation to the human being as a whole (cf. Descartes' Fourth Set of Replies, AT VII, p. 222). Since this is not a work on Descartes, I do not examine how this comparison affects his allegiance to CSD.

regard".⁴⁴ First of all, I think Pasnau misses the point of Aquinas' analogy. By drawing a parallel between soul and hand Aquinas does not wish to equate the soul's subsistence with the hand's, but to avoid the misconception according to which the soul, because it subsists, is ipso facto a substance.

As we have seen many times by now, Aquinas thinks of the human soul not as a spiritual substance, but as a subsistent *part* of a composite substance. Hence, because the notion of immaterial parts is not, as a general rule, easily assimilated, Aquinas - for, say, pedagogical reasons - has to bring into the discussion the notion of integral parts of physical wholes, since this is the type of part that is immediately evident to us. But most importantly, Aquinas considers the hand a matter-of-fact example of something that belongs to a whole without fully inhering in that whole. For Aquinas, since integral parts, unlike accidents, are not properties, they are said to belong to a subject without inhering in that subject. Similarly, Aquinas wants to say that the human soul, unlike material forms, is said to subsist to the extent that it informs its subject without being completely subsumed under it.⁴⁵

The second aspect I want to mention is that, unlike what is held by Pasnau, for Aquinas, operational independence is not what defines subsistence; it is rather a *criterion* for subsistence. A thing's mode of operation is a consequence of its mode of being, and not the other way around. Therefore, it is because a thing subsists that it displays operational independence. Yet, since modes of operation are more evident to us than modes of being, we normally infer that a thing has a subsistent mode of being from the fact that it has operational independence. While operational independence is a criterion for a subsistent mode of being, what genuinely defines subsistence in its

⁴⁴ Cf. Pasnau (2002b), p. 66 and p.68, respectively. As regards the compatibility between his moderate approach to subsistence and a theory of the ontological separability of the nonphysical, Pasnau writes the following: "When we think of what could be in the broadest sense, letting our thoughts encompass possibilities quite remote from our present circumstances, it turns out that the rational soul could exist without the body. But we might say the same thing about a hand, or an eye, or any other bodily organ" (*ibid.*, p. 68).

⁴⁵ Therefore, contrary to what Pasnau suggests, the only weak sense of subsistence that can be ascribed to the soul as well as to integral parts is the following: something is weakly subsistent if it does not exhibit the kind of inherence that characterizes accidents and material forms (cf. *ST* 1a Q75a2ad1). However, since this weak sense of subsistence is the result of a figurative way of speaking, one cannot really build a theory out of it.

ontologically relevant sense is separability - i.e., a capacity to exist on its own.⁴⁶ Even so, operational independence is not an *infallible* criterion for separability, since there are things that are endowed with their proper operation which nonetheless do not subsist - like human hands.⁴⁷ For Aquinas, it is only when coupled with immateriality - that is, with the property 'being a form alone' - that operational independence will infallibly lead to separability.⁴⁸

In conclusion, since Aquinas' doctrine of the human soul's subsistence is out of keeping with the basic claim of nonreductive materialism - which holds that the immaterial element of a composite whole cannot survive the disintegration of the physical items which make up that whole - it follows that any effort to reconcile Aquinas' theory of the human soul with materialist accounts in philosophy of mind is bound to fail.

7.3. Introducing Part-Dualism

Having denied in the two previous sections that Aquinas' theory might be reduced either to substance-dualism or to moderate materialism, in this section I argue for the view that the best way to understand Aquinas' account of the human being's metaphysical composition is by means of the concept of *part-dualism*.

First of all, I would like to explain why the label 'part-dualism' is not a misnomer. By employing the label 'part-dualism' I do not wish to convey the idea that for Aquinas a human being is the result of bringing two independent parts together, where those parts could exist, as parts, independently of one another. To give you an image, the logic of a human being's metaphysical composition is not like that of a suit, the parts of which are designed to be worn together but may be worn separately

⁴⁶ Cf. *ST* 1a Q29a2.

⁴⁷ Hands do not subsist since they cannot, as parts, exist without the body as a whole. Something that functioned as a hand on its own would not be a hand, but a living substance (an animal, since it would have at least the sense faculty of touch) with a hand-like shape.

⁴⁸ That does not mean that only immaterial entities subsist - after all, there are material substances like you and I, and subsistence is an essential feature of substances. What the above statement means is that, assuming that something is not a substance, it will not be subsistent unless it displays both immateriality and operational independence.

without damage: neither the jacket nor the trousers cease to be what they are when they are not worn as an ensemble.

In order to be a part-dualist one does not have to go as far as saying that two ontologically independent parts are brought together in one full-blown substance. In the case of human composition, we actually find a disparity between its parts. In a Thomistic context, we say that a human being has two essential parts, soul and body. However, for one of those parts, the body, there is no independent existence apart from the other part, the soul. In other words, a human body can only be a human body (in a univocal sense) when the soul is actually informing that body. As I have stressed earlier in section 7.1, an actually existing human body is always an ensouled body. Even so, what the part-dualist will ask us to retain from the example of the suit is the idea that it is logically possible for a thing to exist separately from the whole of which it is a constituent without losing its status as a part.

The point I want to make by introducing part-dualism is that Aquinas' account of human composition lies midway between substance-dualism and nonreductive materialism; at the same time it is ontologically stronger than property-dualism in the sense that Thomistic souls have qualities that cannot be met by properties.

Dualism in philosophy of mind is usually divided into two chief kinds: substance- and property-dualism. While the former differentiates between mental and physical substances, the latter argues for a differentiation between mental and physical properties. Since substances are believed to be bearers of properties, and mental substance bearers of mental properties, it is said that substance-dualism entails property-dualism, but not vice versa. Although the property-dualist maintains the distinctness between two basic kinds of properties, he contends that there is only one kind of property-bearer, namely, the physical substance. Hence, it is agreed that the ontological landscape of property-dualism is less vast than that of substance-dualism.

It is also important to remark that, despite the fact that nonreductive materialists normally avow the existence of mental properties, property-dualism should not be equated with moderate materialism. While the materialist believes that all mental properties supervene upon - and hence are ontologically determined by - physical properties, property-dualism is associated with a rejection of what is called 'global

supervenience' - that is, the idea that every aspect of the world we live in is determined by the way in which elementary physical properties are instantiated throughout the universe. Therefore, unlike moderate materialism, property-dualism believes that there are at least some kinds of mental properties that fail to supervene upon physical properties. For property-dualism, a complete description of the physical structure of the world in terms of fundamental physical properties is compatible with a different arrangement of the mental: two worlds with exactly the same arrangement of physical properties could still have two different distributions of mental properties among the individuals in those two worlds.⁴⁹

It is, thus, admitted that property-dualism is an intermediate view between substance-dualism and nonreductive materialism. On the one hand, it disagrees with substance-dualism insofar as it does not endorse the multiplication of kinds of property-bearers: we do not need other type of substance besides the physical substance in order to provide an accurate description of the world. On the other hand, property-dualism takes issue with the moderate materialist's commitment to global supervenience: according to the former, not every type of mental property is completely determined by physical properties.

Some philosophers have found similarities between Aquinas' account of human composition and property-dualism. So, for instance, Richard Swinburne holds that because Thomistic souls are forms that are not intrinsically composed by any sort of stuff, not even immaterial stuff, they must be properties. Swinburne goes on to say that since Aquinas believes that a man's soul can persist without the body, he must be a proponent of some awkward kind of property-dualism, according to which mental properties are ontologically independent not only from physical properties but also from their physical bearers. In other words, Swinburne's Aquinas would be a champion of what can be called 'subsistent properties'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ For a recent characterization of the concept of supervenience and its role in materialist descriptions of the world, see Ansgar Beckermann's essay "What is Property Physicalism?" in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Mind* (McLaughlin, Beckermann & Walter, eds., 2009, 152-172).

⁵⁰ See Swinburne (1997), 'new appendix c', pp. 330-331.

But properties are abstract things. Therefore, given that souls (which are a kind of substantial form) are individual entities and not universals, they would be, on Swinburne's view, abstract particulars. What is more, according to Swinburne's description, Thomistic human souls would be what we may call 'abstract subsistents'. Earlier in chapter 5, I have taken to task the idea that Thomistic substantial forms are abstract particulars. I have claimed there that the best way to make sense of Aquinas' theory of subsistent forms is by viewing forms - every substantial form, not only subsistent ones - as endowed with an intrinsic element of concreteness, which is accounted for by means of the fundamental relationship that holds between substantial forms and the act of being of which those forms are the transmitters. I have also claimed that the notion of 'abstract subsistents' (or, to use the same expression as in chapter 5, 'subsistent states') is self-contradictory, and that anyone committed to defending the philosophical consistency of Aquinas' theory of subsistent substantial forms should abandon it.

For the same reasons, I think it would be senseless to try to defend the consistency of Aquinas' view by presenting it as an ontologically fortified version of property-dualism, allowing for such things as 'subsistent properties'. Moreover, since instantiated properties are usually seen as abstract particulars, whereas souls are for Aquinas causally active items, it would be simply wrong to characterize Aquinas' account as a case of standard property-dualism. That is why I think the concept of part-dualism is required: because we need a midway view between substance-dualism and nonreductive materialism which is, at the same time, ontologically richer than property-dualism.⁵¹

While substance-dualism advocates a basic ontological distinction between person and body, insofar as it contends that the human person is preserved in its entirety even after the dissolution of the body, part-dualism, on the other hand, maintains the distinctness of person and soul. It is important to note, however, that the part-dualist's distinction between person and soul is not fully equivalent to the substance-dualist's distinction between person and body.

⁵¹ Also because we have seen that a 'fortified', non-conventional version of property-dualism is just as absurd as the view criticized in chapter 5 according to which human souls are 'subsistent states'.

One way of putting it is by saying that for the substance-dualist the distinction between person and body entails *bilateral separability*: since persons are identical with their souls, they can exist without their bodies; since bodies have their own principle of organization independently of souls, they can exist without the persons to which they are normally attached. By contrast, according to part-dualism the distinction between person and soul entails only *unilateral separability*: while it is true that a soul can be present when the person of which it is a part is absent, it is not the case that a person may exist when her soul is not equally present.

Despite the asymmetry between substance-dualism's person-body distinction and part-dualism's person-soul distinction, what is important to retain is that, while substance-dualism is characterized by the fundamental claim that 'I am not identical to my body', part-dualism must be described as containing the fundamental claim that 'I am not identical to my soul' - where in both cases the 'I' stands for 'human person'.

Aquinas is unequivocal about his endorsement of the claim that 'I am not identical to my soul' in at least two places. The first passage is taken from *In 1 Cor.* 15.2, where Aquinas writes the following: "Now the soul, because it is part of the human body, is not the whole human being, and my soul is not I. So, even if the soul were to reach salvation in another life, it would not be I or any other human being".⁵² Notice how Aquinas characterizes the soul as a part of the human *body*, which concurs with the way I have presented his theory as endorsing, against the substance-dualist, the claim that 'I am identical with my body', without, at the same time, falling prey to the ontological sparsity of materialism. The second passage in which Aquinas expresses his approval of the distinction between person and soul comes from *CS*, book 4, 43.1.1.1 ad 2, where he says the following: "Abraham's soul is not, properly speaking, Abraham himself, but a part of him... Hence, the life of Abraham's soul would not suffice for Abraham to be living".⁵³

⁵² "*Anima autem cum sit pars corporis hominis, non est totus homo, et anima mea non est ego; unde licet anima consequatur salutem in alia vita, non tamen ego vel quilibet homo*".

⁵³ "*Anima Abrahae non est, proprie loquendo, ipse Abraham, sed est pars ejus... unde vita animae Abrahae non sufficeret ad hoc quod Abraham sit vivens*".

For the part-dualist, the distinction between person and soul is not merely conceptual but ontological, since he believes that not every occurrence of a human soul is ipso facto the occurrence of a human person. In other words, one basic motivation for part-dualism is the distinction between the *persistence-conditions* of souls and persons. If the conditions that need to be met for a soul to persist are not the same as the conditions that need to be met for a person to persist, then it is possible that an occurrence of the former does not entail the existence of the latter. As we have already seen, for Aquinas persons as ensouled bodies are composites of form and matter. Therefore, a human person will only be kept in existence on the condition that the two essential elements of which it is composed - i.e., soul and matter - are preserved. If that is correct, then bodily death - that is, the separation of the soul from the parcel of matter which, when conjoined to the soul, constitutes the person's body - entails the disappearance of the person.⁵⁴

Now, unlike human persons, which are form-matter composites, human souls, because of their metaphysical simplicity, do not require as an essential persistence-condition the constant companionship of matter in order to be kept in existence. As I have said many times now, human souls are for Aquinas God's metaphysical antennas: their role in the natural world consists in transmitting the act of being that flows from God to matter, the result of which is the production of a composite substance. Since Aquinas contends that human souls are the sort of transmitters that are also capable of retaining that which they communicate to matter when joined to it, he will hold that human souls are *subsistent forms* - that is, forms that can continue to exist even when they are not actually informing any portion of matter. Therefore, on Aquinas' view, souls and persons have different persistence-conditions. For that reason, it must be held that, for Aquinas, it is not the case that whenever there is a soul there is ipso facto a person. Accordingly, his philosophical anthropology must involve a dualism of persons and their souls. This is what I call *part-dualism*, since the soul - though subsistent - is not a substance but a *part* of the human person.

⁵⁴ Still, for Aquinas, bodily death does not mean the permanent (or irreversible) disappearance of the person, since resurrection is supposed to restore the numerically same human person by endowing the immortal soul with an 'upgraded', glorious body. For Aquinas' difficult account of how, through resurrection, the numerically same person is brought back to life, see SCG IV. 80-81.

The distinction between the persistence-conditions of souls and persons is not without repercussions for Aquinas' ontology. First of all, given the way Aquinas distinguishes a soul's persistence-conditions from those of a human person, it must be held that while souls enjoy a *continuous* mode of existence, persons enjoy a *gappy* mode of existence. Each and every human soul exists continuously through time, though in different conditions: at a pre-death stage, the soul exists as part of a corruptible body; later, during the period between bodily death and resurrection, it exists on its own as a subsistent part; finally, at the post-resurrection stage, it exists as part of a glorious, incorruptible body to which it will be joined throughout eternity. The human person, by contrast, exists discontinuously in time, since it ceases to exist at death and is later brought back to life at resurrection.⁵⁵

One must note that Aquinas takes no issue with the notion of gappy existence *per se*, but rather with the idea that some composite substance might be completely destroyed at time t_1 and then restored with numerical identity at time t_2 .⁵⁶ In *ST* Aquinas sheds some light on the topic by considering the example of a bonfire: the numerically same form of fire is kept in existence as long as there is continuity in the exchange of matter - that is, as long as I am careful enough to keep adding new pieces of wood to the fire before the original wood is completely consumed. If, however, I let the pieces of wood that originally composed my bonfire be completely extinguished, then by adding new wood to the ashes, a numerically distinct fire will be produced.⁵⁷

Aquinas' point is that natural things such as bonfires, the substantial form of which are nonsubsistent, cannot enjoy gappy existence to the extent that, when their matter is corrupted, their substantial form is also corrupted. This is true of all substances with nonsubsistent substantial forms: since every part of the whole is destroyed when the whole is corrupted, they can only be restored with identity of

⁵⁵ I do not address in this dissertation issues regarding the numerical identity between the original, pre-death person and the resurrected human person. For recent, philosophically engaging considerations of the matter, see Christopher Hughes (1997), Jason T. Eberl (2000) and Christina Van Dyke (2007).

⁵⁶ That is what Christina Van Dyke calls the 'principle of non-repeatability': the idea that no natural thing can be completely destroyed and then repeated with numerical identity (cf. 2007, p. 374). For Aquinas' endorsement of the principle, see *SCG* IV.80 n. 2.

⁵⁷ Cf. *ST* 1a Q119a1 ad5.

species, not with numerical identity. However, there is nothing to prevent the phenomenon of gappy existence to occur when the substance in question is endowed with a subsistent substantial form, since, in that case, the substance's corruption does not entail the destruction of each and every part of the whole. Therefore, because for human beings bodily death does not entail the whole's complete annihilation (given that the soul persists), it will be held that human persons as composites of soul and matter can enjoy a gappy mode of existence.⁵⁸

We have seen so far that the distinction between the persistence-conditions of souls and persons calls for a differentiation in the modes of being - continuous and gappy - of souls and persons. To this I must add that the basic item of Aquinas' ontology that will guarantee the distinction between continuous and gappy modes of existence is the separability of parts from wholes. This is, in my view, the fundamental metaphysical insight that serves as the basis for Aquinas' hybrid anthropology. By pointing out that Thomistic human souls are subsistent parts what I mean is that the sort of ontology behind Aquinas' account of human nature is one according to which certain types of whole are so composed that one of their essential parts is capable of surviving the decomposition of the whole in such a way that it continues to exist as a part independently of the whole which it once belonged to. This ontological assumption is what most fundamentally characterizes what I call Aquinas' *part-dualism*. I have begun this section by suggesting how part-dualism should not be understood, and I have introduced the example of the suit to show two things: first, that the label 'part-dualism' should not be taken to imply that for Aquinas human beings are the result of joining two independently existent parts together; second, and most importantly, that we are indeed familiar with the idea of parts that can be separated from their wholes without thereby ceasing to be viewed as parts, which shows that Aquinas' assumption is at least plausible.

The goal of this chapter was not only to show that Aquinas' account of human composition cannot be reduced to either substance-dualism or moderate materialism,

⁵⁸ Aquinas' defence of how the principle of non-repeatability does not apply to human beings is found in *SCG* IV. 81. Note that Aquinas can still preserve the idea that the principle applies to every natural being, since, as we know, Aquinas believes human beings to be on the boundary line between the natural and the spiritual (cf. *QDA* 1).

but above all that Aquinas' characterization of human souls as subsistent parts of human substances requires the concept of 'part-dualism'. Unlike substance-dualism, part-dualism is not a dualism of two radically different sorts of substance - persons and bodies - but rather a dualism of *subsistents*. For Aquinas, it is the ensouled body - i.e., the human person - that truly is a substance, and as such it subsists, since substancehood is a sufficient condition for subsistence. However, what is distinctive about Aquinas' position is the assertion that human substances, and only human substances, are constituted by one immaterial part - the soul - which is itself capable of subsisting. Since that which is capable of subsistence - besides the human person as a composite whole - is a part of the human substance, I label this kind of dualism of subsistents 'part-dualism'.

7.4. Part-Dualism, Types of Constitution & Personal Persistence

In my discussion of Aquinas' part-dualism, I have distinguished between the modes of existence of persons and souls, and I have stated that the persistence-conditions of human persons are distinct from those of human souls. Some prominent scholars, however, challenge the idea that for Aquinas human persons do not enjoy a continuous mode of existence to the extent that they believe that the persistence of the human soul is sufficient for the persistence of the human person. I would thus like to conclude this chapter with a refutation of the view that human persons exist in each and every moment in which human souls exist.⁵⁹ If, for Aquinas, the persistence of the soul were tantamount to the persistence of the person, it would be inaccurate to use the label 'part-dualism' to characterize Aquinas' dualism of subsistents, since in that

⁵⁹ The idea that the human person exists whenever the soul exists is defended by Eleonore Stump and her followers. Jason T. Eberl, for instance, holds that "Despite the human soul's not being a substance in itself, it serves as the necessary and *sufficient* condition for the existence of a human substance" (2000, p. 223, my emphasis). Stump, in a very recent paper, writes that "On Aquinas's view, a human being can survive even the loss of his entire body, when the substantial form remains", because, on her view, "the existence of the separated soul is sufficient for the existence of the human being whose soul it is" (cf. "Resurrection and the Separated Soul", in Davies and Stump, eds., 2012, pp. 461 and 463, respectively). Stump also addresses the relationship between soul and person in her paper "Resurrection, Reassembly, and Reconstitution: Aquinas on the Soul" (in Niederbacher and Runggaldier, eds., 2006, 153-174).

case the separate existence of the subsistent part would still turn out to be an occurrence of the whole itself, though under a different description.

The idea that whenever the part exists the whole also exists, and, therefore, that the separated soul simply is the whole person (only under a different description), is explicitly held by Jason Eberl, who writes that “There is no metaphysical distinction between the pre-mortem soul/body composite named ‘Socrates’, the disembodied soul of that composite, and the post-resurrection composite named ‘Socrates’. The difference is *merely logical*”.⁶⁰ To say that the difference between the soul and the person of which it is the soul is purely logical is, obviously, to deny the claim (which I think expresses Aquinas’ true position) that there is an ontological distinction between soul and person. In other words, by saying that the distinction operates only at the logical level one is rejecting what I have identified as a key element of Aquinas’ part-dualism, namely, that not every occurrence of a human soul (a part) is ipso facto an occurrence of a human person (a whole).

First of all, why is it important for these contemporary expositors to claim that for Aquinas the existence of the soul is sufficient for the existence of the person, when, as I have shown before, Aquinas clearly says that the life of Abraham’s soul does not suffice for Abraham himself to be living?⁶¹ According to Stump, “the views implied by the position that a human being fails to exist in the period between bodily death and bodily resurrection are *theological gibberish*”.⁶² Stump believes that the thesis that human persons, unlike their souls, enjoy a gappy mode of existence involves some bizarre - and, in her view, even heretical - theological consequences, which means that it cannot genuinely reflect Aquinas’ thought. For example, according to Stump, the idea that the separated soul’s existence does not entail the human person’s existence contradicts Aquinas’ doctrine of the punishments or rewards received by the soul after bodily death.⁶³

⁶⁰ Cf. Eberl (2000), p. 224, my emphasis.

⁶¹ For the exact quotation, see footnote 53 above.

⁶² Cf. Stump (in Davies and Stump, eds., 2012), p. 463. The italics in the quotation are mine.

⁶³ Cf. Stump (in Niederbacher and Runggaldier, eds., 2006), pp. 159-160. For Aquinas’ doctrine of the reception of punishments and rewards after death, see SCG IV. 91.

Aquinas' position on that matter is that, before the final judgement of all humankind, each separated soul is judged individually by Christ immediately after bodily death. At that individual judgement, each soul receives its rewards or punishments, says Aquinas, "according to what it has done in the body".⁶⁴ Therefore, once Peter dies his soul is judged according to the life Peter himself lived. In Stump's view, this creates a problem: if Peter's soul is not Peter, then it seems unfair to assign to the separated soul either the rewards or the punishments merited by Peter the human person, who is not his soul.⁶⁵

The idea that there might be some unfairness to the view that separated human souls receive punishments or rewards according to the life of the human person rests on a misreading of Aquinas' belief that 'my soul is not I'. That Stump misreads Aquinas' theory becomes evident in passages where she writes things like "if the separated soul of Socrates is not Socrates, then *who is it?*"; or "if a separated soul is not the *same human being* as the person whose soul it is, then the pain or bliss of the separated soul immediately after death is not the pain or bliss of the human being whose soul it is".⁶⁶ We must remember, however, that in the passage from *In 1 Cor.* Aquinas states that since the soul is not the person, even if it were to achieve salvation in another life, it would not be that person whose soul it is *nor any other human person*.⁶⁷ Hence, unlike what Stump seems to suggest in the above-mentioned passages, what Aquinas is saying when he states that 'my soul is not I' is not that after bodily death my separated soul becomes a different human being - in which case it would certainly be unfair to ascribe to the soul the punishments or rewards merited by the pre-mortem person - but only that the separated soul is a continuously existing part of *that same human person*, whose existence I claim is discontinuous. Now, since Peter's separated soul is a subsistent part of Peter only, there is an intuitive sense in which ascribing to the soul punishments or rewards that Peter the person is deserving of is not wrong.

⁶⁴ Cf. SCG IV. 91, n.2.

⁶⁵ Cf. Stump (2006), pp. 159-160, and Stump (2012), pp. 462-463.

⁶⁶ Cf. Stump (2006), p. 159 and p. 161, respectively. The italics in both quotations are mine.

⁶⁷ For the exact quotation, see footnote 52 above.

Whatever the case may be, I still want to focus on the *philosophical* arguments proposed by Stump and her followers in favour of the idea that, since the continuous existence of the soul is (in their view) sufficient for the persistence of the person, the human person's mode of existence must be as continuous as that of the subsistent soul. As someone who thinks that on Aquinas' view there is an ontological distinction between person and soul, with the consequence that only souls have a continuous existence, whereas persons enjoy a gappy mode of being, it is my position that the argument advanced by Stump and her followers relies on a misinterpretation of Aquinas' theory, more precisely on a confusion about two different kinds of constitution - material and metaphysical.

The first step of the argument for the thesis that the existence of the soul is sufficient for the existence of the person consists in viewing Aquinas as a precursor of modern mereological accounts that deny the reduction of wholes to their parts by proposing a distinction between the notions of constitution and identity. According to Lynne Rudder Baker - a prominent advocate of what is nowadays called the 'Constitution View' - even though a whole is entirely constituted by its material parts, it is still not identical with the sum of those same parts. For Baker, in a word, constitution is not identity: so, for instance, while it is true that a bronze statue is entirely constituted by the lump of bronze of which it is made, it is not the case that the statue is identical with the lump, since the latter has properties that are not shared by the former, like that of existing in a world completely devoid of art.⁶⁸

Aquinas - just like any otherhylomorphist - does believe that substantial wholes amount to more than the sum of their material parts. Hence, the idea that Aquinas, among others, anticipates the modern notion that material constitution is not identity seems to do justice to Aquinas' own theory of parts and wholes. In order to show that for Aquinas constitution is not identity, Jason Eberl quotes a passage from *CM*, where Aquinas states the following:

⁶⁸ A good introduction to the contemporary distinction between constitution and identity is found in Baker (1999). For her application of this distinction to the relationship between human persons and their bodies, see Baker (2000).

Since one kind of composite is constituted of something in this way 'as a whole' - that is, the whole is one - and not in the way in which a heap of stones is one, but as a syllable, which is one without qualification, in all such cases the composite must not be identical with its components, as a syllable is not its letters; for the syllable *ba* is not the same as these two letters *b* and *a*, nor is flesh the same as fire and earth.⁶⁹

Again, I take no issue with the idea that for Aquinas *material* constitution is not identity. This is precisely what Aquinas defends in the passage above and everywhere else in his *corpus* when he considers the composition of material substances. As we all know, for Aquinas the form is that element over and above matter which accounts for the distinctive arrangement of the material parts of a substance. Hence the substance - that is, the composite of matter and form - cannot be identical with that of which it is materially constituted. The problem lies in the abusive use that those who support the idea that souls are sufficient for the existence of persons make of passages such as the above. Both Stump and Eberl want to use the passage above as evidence for the idea that Aquinas applies the notion of constitution without identity to the soul-body relationship. This, I think, is a completely unwarranted move.

The point defended by Stump and her supporters is that we can draw an analogy between what Aquinas has to say about material constitution and a human being's composition out of soul and body. According to Stump, "although the metaphysical constituents of a human being normally include matter and a substantial form, Aquinas thinks that a human being can exist without being in the normal condition in this way, because what constitutes a human being is not the same as that to which a human being is identical. On Aquinas's view, a human being can survive even the loss of his entire body, when the substantial form remains".⁷⁰ The conclusion is that there are no gaps in the existence of a human person, since a human person is said to survive bodily death as composed of her soul alone. Therefore, according to such a reading of Aquinas' view, one is allowed to say that in the period between

⁶⁹ Cf. *CM*, book VII, lesson 17, n. 1674. The passage is quoted by Eberl (2004), p. 338, as well as by Stump (2006), p. 168.

⁷⁰ Cf. Stump (in Davies and Stump, eds., 2012), p. 461.

bodily death and resurrection Peter *is* his soul to the extent that, in this particular case, the 'is' is not the 'is' of identity but the 'is' of constitution.⁷¹

My point is that nothing in Aquinas warrants the analogy between material and metaphysical constitution. According to Aquinas, a human being is identical to neither his soul nor the matter his soul informs, but he certainly is identical to the informed matter, that is, the ensouled body. While it is true that material constitution is not identity, given that a composite substance is never identical to the sum of its material constituents to the extent that the form is an essential element of substantial wholes, once we consider the soul to be one of the components of living substances, then it is correct to say that a human person simply is the ensouled body, in which case constitution is identity. Because the soul is a component of a different order than a substance's material constituents, we will say that for Aquinas metaphysical constitution is identity.⁷²

In order to corroborate the idea that for Aquinas metaphysical constitution is identity it suffices to show how the opposite view leads to an absurd result. Since Stump and her followers believe that between death and resurrection the person is constituted of her soul alone without being identical to that soul, they must tell us what is it that the person is identical to in its alleged disembodied condition. To that Stump replies the following: "Aquinas should be interpreted as holding that, in Socrates's disembodied condition, when he is not composed of the normal constituents for human beings, Socrates is nonetheless identical to the same thing he was identical to in his embodied condition: an individual substance in the category *rational animal*".⁷³

⁷¹ For this last point, see Eberl (2004), p. 340.

⁷² I have already mentioned the passage from *ST* 1a Q29a2 ad3 where Aquinas identifies the person with the soul-body composite by claiming that the notion of person adds to the essence the aspect of individuality: "For soul, flesh and bone belong to the nature of man, whereas this soul, this flesh and this bone belong to the nature of this man. Therefore hypostasis and person add the individual principles to the notion of essence". Since Aquinas is here arguing at the level of a thing's nature or essence, it is clear that whenever he says that the person is the ensouled body the copula should be understood as the 'is' of identity and not merely that of constitution.

⁷³ Cf. Stump (in Davies and Stump, eds., 2012), pp. 461-462.

However, if that were truly the case, we would have to attribute to Aquinas a view that he explicitly criticizes Plato for holding, namely, that ‘animal’ and ‘man’ are terms that can be ascribed to non-sensible and non-natural realities.⁷⁴ Even if the acceptance of Stump’s reading does not entail seeing Aquinas as a full-blown substance-dualist, since, on account of the constitution-identity distinction, disembodied Peter would be an *incomplete* person (or a person under abnormal conditions), still both doctrines - i.e., Stump’s and that of full-blown substance-dualists - lead to what in Aquinas’ eyes is an undesirable result: that being a particular under the category ‘rational animal’ is compatible with being a purely intelligible, spiritual being.

Unlike what is held by Stump and her followers, I maintain that Aquinas’ part-dualism involves a commitment to the view that there are gaps in the existence of a human person, despite the continuous mode of existence of human souls. This means that for Aquinas not every occurrence of a soul amounts to an occurrence of a person. Hence, instead of referring to disembodied souls as incomplete persons, part-dualism suggests the following characterization: whenever a soul exists in a disembodied state, it is neither the case that the person of which that soul is a part has been completely annihilated nor the case that the person is actually present though in an incomplete way. We should rather assume an intermediate position according to which persons are held *in abeyance*. When a human soul as a subsistent part enters a stage at which it exists on its own, the person as a composite whole is put in suspension. Still, the same person can be restored - that is, it can be brought back to a state of full actuality - so long as the continuously existing soul is rejoined to a parcel of matter, which the soul will inform in exactly the same way as it informed the matter of its pre-mortem body.

In this chapter, I have strived to show that Aquinas’ account of the soul-body relationship is not reducible to either substance-dualism or moderate materialism. My goal has been to show how, by characterizing human souls as subsistent parts of

⁷⁴ Cf. SCG II.57.

human persons, we are led to adopt in our account of Aquinas' philosophical anthropology the label 'part-dualism'. I have shown that part-dualism involves an ontological distinction between soul and person, and that this distinction entails only unilateral separability. Finally, I have claimed that unilateral separability must be understood as presupposing the ontological notion that some parts of wholes are able to exist without their wholes and still retain their status as parts. Since one of my goals was to show not only that Aquinas' account is sui generis, but also that it makes intuitive sense, I have introduced the example of the suit as evidence that Aquinas' insight about subsistent parts is in keeping with some of our basic intuitions. In order to protect the accuracy of part-dualism as a faithful description of Aquinas' view of human nature, I have ended the chapter with a refutation of the position popularized by Stump that the existence of human souls is sufficient for the existence of human persons.

Conclusion

I would like to begin these concluding remarks with a brief summary of what has been achieved throughout the dissertation. Next, I want to point out a small tension between chapters 4 and 5, and I intend to explain how the tension is resolved. After that, I would like to elaborate on what I referred to in chapter 6 as two disadvantages of my approach to Aquinas' hybrid account of human souls. Finally, I think it would be important to emphasize both the plausibility and the intrinsic value of part-dualism.

My main goal in the dissertation has been to argue for the philosophical consistency of the view defended by Aquinas that human souls, and only human souls, are at once substantial forms and subsistent things. I have claimed that the best way to make sense of the distinctive nature of human souls in Aquinas is through the concept of *subsistent parts*. I have explained the parthood of souls by means of the notion of 'metaphysical part', and I have characterized this sort of part as the formal element in the definition of the individual as such.

As I have said many times, the ontological counterpart of Aquinas' twofold anthropology is that some parts of wholes are capable of outliving the wholes to which they belong without ceasing to be parts. As a consequence, I have held that Aquinas classifies the furniture of the world into three main kinds: subsistent wholes (i.e. substances), nonsubsistent parts of substances, and subsistent parts of substances. With that in mind, I have introduced the label *part-dualism* to characterize the way Aquinas regards the relation between soul and body in human beings.

Unlike substance-dualism, part-dualism endorses the claim that 'I am identical with my body', since, as we have seen, for Aquinas there is no actually living body independently of the soul. In other words, an organism is identical with the ensouled portion of matter, given that there is no other actualizing principle besides the soul. Nevertheless, the acceptance of an identity between self and body does not entail in Aquinas' case any affiliation to materialism about human nature - not even in its most moderate version. The reason for rejecting the compatibility between Aquinas' anthropology and nonreductive materialism was that, even though materialists sometimes accept the notion of a nonphysical element that answers for a physical

substance's possession of mental properties, I have identified as a foundational claim of soft materialism the idea that the nonphysical element of physical substances is ontologically dependent upon that substance's physical parts. This claim is clearly at odds with Aquinas' belief that the soul subsists in the strong sense of being capable of existing without the body.

In my reading of Aquinas' hybrid account of human souls I have avoided two strategies that are found in recent scholarship. The first one consists in holding that because the soul is a subsistent form it must be regarded as an unusual sort of substance. I have claimed that this sort of approach does not recognize the complexity of Aquinas' ontology inasmuch as it fails to distinguish between 'substance', 'this something', and 'subsistent thing'. As an antidote to this mistake I have proposed a reading that focuses on the soul's status as a part.

The second strategy that I have avoided consists in treating the human soul's subsistence as a fortunate exception to the metaphysical rule that says that being a form is equivalent to being enmattered. If we follow this kind of approach we have to admit that the human soul's separate existence is due to some mysterious, special circumstances, and that the soul's subsistence does not contradict the fact that the soul is a form simply because its disembodied condition is unnatural and therefore temporary. I have responded to this view by insisting that the best way to understand Aquinas' account of the human soul is by regarding the human soul's subsistence as an effect of its nature as a form. In short, the soul subsists because it succeeds in being a form to the maximum degree.

The thesis that the human soul subsists as form - and not as an exception to what it is to be a form - has caused a small tension between chapters 4 and 5. Let me first explain the tension, and then propose a solution to it. I have begun chapter 5 with an exposition of Anthony Kenny's objection to Aquinas' theory of the human soul. The objection says that Aquinas' hybrid account is self-cancelling since nothing can be at once abstract and concrete. I have then said that the positive lesson to be drawn from Kenny's objection is that, if we want to defend the consistency of Aquinas' anthropology we have to abandon the idea that for Aquinas substantial forms are abstract states of matter.

With that in mind, I have examined Aquinas' argument for the thesis that the form, as a cause of the being of matter, is capable of existing without matter. The aim was to show that for Aquinas formal causality takes place at the ontological level, and that substantial forms possess an element of concreteness on the basis of which Kenny's charge of inconsistency was rejected. Since the most fundamental feature of forms is not exactly to be enmattered, but to be a formal cause of being, I have concluded in chapter 5 that human souls subsist because they are maximally form.

However, when discussing the antenna analogy in chapter 4, subsection 4.2.3, I have said that a form's role of receiving and transmitting the act of being can be performed in two ways, so that both are compatible with the concept of form. While some forms do not retain the act of being they receive from God, other forms - i.e., subsistent forms - are able to retain the being they receive, and in the latter case the form and the substance of which the form is a part both share the same act of being. Therefore, by definition, every form must transmit, given the appropriate circumstances, the act of being it receives from the primary source of being. At the same time, the concept of form is undetermined as regards the form's capacity to retain that impulse it receives from God. I have concluded that, even though there is no incompatibility between 'being a form' and 'being subsistent', still it is not precisely as form that something subsists, but only as this particular type of form - namely, as a form that retains the being it receives.

The tension between the two chapters can be resolved once we distinguish compatibility from entailment. In chapter 4, when I contend that it is not as form that the soul subsists, what is being denied is entailment. As I have mentioned, the concept of form is neutral about the retainment of the act of being, since it makes room for both subsistent and nonsubsistent forms. Hence, formhood is compatible with subsistence, but it does not entail subsistence. By contrast, when I claim in chapter 5 that it is as form that the soul subsists, what is being affirmed is compatibility, not entailment. Therefore, even though formhood does not entail subsistence, it includes the possibility of subsistence to the extent that the latter does not have to be regarded as an exception to that which the concept of form dictates. In sum, while

compatibility derives from a thing's nature as a form, entailment derives from the fact that something is the kind of form that retains its act of being.

The tension gets apparently deeper if we recall that in chapter 5 the relation between formhood and subsistence has been described - on the basis of the argument that every form is a cause of being - not merely in terms of compatibility but as an inclination on the part of form for separate existence. However, I do not think that this ontological tendency of form toward subsistence is inconsistent with its conceptual indeterminacy. To say that forms as such have an inclination for separate existence means that a form subsists whenever it gets to be maximally form, since by definition forms are givers of being, and that which gives being is capable of existing without that to which being is given. However, since forms are realized according to different grades of perfection, it is not the case that every form is maximally form. So form is conceptually neutral with respect to subsistence in the sense that the concept 'form' makes room for both subsistent and material forms.¹

In chapter 6, subsection 6.2, I have examined Gyula Klima's defence of what he calls a 'metaphysically noncommittal' approach to Aquinas' hybrid account of the human soul. My strategy in rejecting his view consisted in showing how Klima's reading produces some metaphysically undesirable consequences. One of these consequences was that Aquinas is inadvertently represented as a substance-dualist, since on Klima's view the subsistent soul is identified with the human person when he contends that the act of being that the soul has as a *quo est* it can also have as a *quod est* in precisely the same way in which the human person has it.

I have claimed that while Klima's reading explains the soul's subsistent mode of being by means of the alleged substantiality of the soul, my reading seeks to show how the soul's subsistence derives from its nature as a form, so that the notions of 'being a part' and 'being a subsistent thing' can actually be put together without contradiction.

¹ To give an example of a concept in which tendency and indeterminacy coexist, we say that dogs by their very nature have a tendency to be friendly to humans. But we also know that dogs can get aggressive with people, and whenever we encounter an aggressive dog we do not exclude it from the canine species due to its lack of friendliness. Hence we must admit that the concept 'dog' is undetermined with respect to friendliness and aggressiveness, despite a tendency toward friendliness.

On that occasion, I have mentioned in a footnote two disadvantages of my reading of Aquinas' account of the human soul, which I want to briefly consider here.²

The first disadvantage of explaining the human soul's subsistence as an effect of its status as a form is that we need to provide a metaphysical account of the relation between the concepts of form and being that is not required when we explain the soul's subsistence as an exception to the concept of form. As I have mentioned above in this conclusion, that metaphysical account is obtained by an analysis of the argument first presented by Aquinas in *DEE* according to which substantial forms are capable of separate existence to the extent that their nature is to give being to matter. Since the form's role as a cause of being is used as a premise in an argument by means of which Aquinas wants to prove that forms are ontologically separable, I have claimed that formal causality happens at the ontological level, and that this is sufficient to show that substantial forms cannot be reduced to abstract states of matter.

The second disadvantage of holding that it is as form that the soul subsists is that now we have to explain why material forms do not subsist despite their nature as forms. One could cynically present this in the following way. By trying to avoid the idea that the human soul's subsistence is an exception to a metaphysical rule that says that substantial forms must be enmattered, some adopt the thesis that the human soul's subsistence must be explained as an effect of its status as form. The problem is that by trying to avoid one small exception those who endorse this view are then faced with a bigger exception, which is that material forms do not subsist despite the thesis that forms as givers of being have an inclination for separate existence.

As I have already suggested, a tendency is not a determination, since the mere possession of a tendency is not a guarantee that one will accomplish that which one has a tendency to. That is why it is important to distinguish compatibility from entailment, and be mindful that an ontological tendency on the part of the individual instances of a certain kind is not inconsistent with an indetermination on the part of the concept itself. Be that as it may, I think that the best way to respond to the above objection is by showing that the two exceptions are very different in nature.

² Cf. chapter 6, p. 179, footnote 24.

In the first case, where substantial forms are regarded as configurational states of matter, and the human soul's subsistence is treated as an exception to a rule that says that to be a form is to be enmattered, the exception involves a contradiction. If it is of the nature of forms to exist as states of matter, then the assumption of a form that can exist on its own - i.e., without having to configure some matter - is contradictory, and the only way to avoid that contradiction is to endorse the absurd idea of free-floating states. This is the intuition behind Kenny's objection, and because he took it for granted that forms in Aquinas are abstract entities he concluded that Aquinas' hybrid anthropology is inconsistent. The challenge since Kenny has been to show that substantial forms do possess an intrinsic element of concreteness.

In the second case, the idea of an exception does not involve any contradiction. On the reading I have proposed, substantial forms as such - and not only the human soul - are said to have an element of concreteness that derives from Aquinas' belief that forms are causes of the being of matter. Hence, a form's most fundamental trait is not to be enmattered but to be a giver of being. On that account, we can say that the human soul's subsistence is a consequence of its being a form to the maximum degree. But then there is no contradiction in saying that, unlike the human soul, material forms do not subsist despite the fact that they are forms and that every form possesses an inclination for separate existence. All one needs to admit is that, even though it is in the nature of form to be able to attain separate existence, some forms never realize this capacity. While in the first case subsistence contradicts the proposed definition of form, in this second case nonsubsistence does not contradict our approach to formhood, since what must be granted is only that some forms fall short of being maximally form.

Allow me to return now to the concept of part-dualism. The label 'part-dualism' has been introduced to capture the ontological scenario where some parts of wholes are capable of surviving the dissolution of their wholes without themselves turning into wholes. Since souls are subsistent parts of substances, and because substances (i.e., composite wholes) are by definition subsistent, I have characterized part-dualism as a dualism of subsistents. While the person as an ensouled body is said to subsist, the soul as a metaphysical part of that person is also said to subsist. However, since the

subsistent soul is not a substance, I have claimed that part-dualism is compatible with a monism of substance.

Therefore, when thinking of the intrinsic value of part-dualism (that is, when trying to answer questions like ‘why is part-dualism important?’ or ‘what does it have to offer?’), the first thing that comes to mind is this immediate advantage it has over substance-dualism. Since substance-dualism identifies the person with the soul, it is unable to provide a convincing account of the unity of the human being as a composite whole. All it manages to do is to explain away composition as some sort of necessary evil.

As we know, for Aquinas, giving a proper account of human composition is a metaphysical priority. On part-dualism, subsistence does not interfere with the human being’s unqualified unity, since the soul never loses its status of a part. Even in its separate condition the soul is said to retain the drive to be rejoined to the body - its so-called ‘nature of unibility’. As I have mentioned in chapter 7, this distinctive mark of Aquinas’ anthropology is completely overlooked by Stump when she contends that the soul’s persistence is sufficient for the person’s persistence. If in the period between death and resurrection the soul becomes the person - even if only in terms of composition, and not of identity - then the soul ceases to be a part. In this case, resurrection loses its metaphysical importance, namely to bring the person back to life.

When discussing in chapter 7 Aquinas’ approach to the soul-body relation, my main objective has been to show that with the introduction of part-dualism one is better able to give a fitting account of Aquinas’ twofold anthropology. Nevertheless, since my goal throughout the dissertation has been to argue for the consistency of Aquinas’ view, it is also important to show that part-dualism is a plausible notion. On this score, there is not a lot one can do besides using analogies as a passport to our basic intuitions.

The example of the suit was used to show that we are familiar with the idea of parts that can exist independently of their wholes without losing the status of a part. The suit is a set of clothes composed of a pair of trousers and a jacket which is designed to be worn as an ensemble. In this way, we can say that there is a sense in which each part is dependent upon the other, since it is only when worn together that

both jacket and trousers achieve the goal for which they were made. However, because they can also be worn separately without harm, it is right to say that even when separated from each other they are still treated as parts of an ensemble. Therefore, the notion of a subsistent part - that is, of a part that can exist on its own without ceasing to be a part - makes intuitive sense.

The example of the suit was also useful for showing what part-dualism is not. When worn independently from one another the parts of a suit do not lose their identity, so the suit is an instance of what I referred to as 'bilateral separability'. There is bilateral separability when both parts of a whole are able to exist separately without ceasing to be what they are. Substance-dualism entails bilateral separability, since it identifies the person with the soul (so that the body is not necessary for the persistence of the soul), and it characterizes the body as a self-reliant organism (so that the soul is not necessary for the functioning of the body). By contrast, part-dualism entails only unilateral separability: while the soul can persist without the body, the body cannot persist without the soul, since there is no living body apart from a soul that informs that body. What justifies the name 'part-dualism' is the fact that for Aquinas the only other subsistent entity besides the composite whole is the soul, whose ontological status is that of a part.

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