

Draft: Please Cite Published Version in

Daniel D. De Haan, Brandon Dahm, “After Survivalism and Corruptionism: Separated Souls as Incomplete Persons” *Quaestiones Disputatae*, Volume 10, Number 2, Spring 2020, pp. 161-176

After Survivalism and Corruptionism: Separated Souls as Incomplete Persons

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Thomas Aquinas consistently defended the thesis that the separated rational soul that results from a human person’s death is not a person. Nevertheless, what has emerged in recent decades is a sophisticated disputed question between “survivalists” and “corruptionists” concerning the personhood of the separated soul that has left us with intractable disagreements wherein neither side seems able to convince the other. In our contribution to this disputed question, we present a digest of an unconsidered middle way: the separated soul is an incomplete person. We define survivalism, corruptionism, and incomplete persons as follows:

Survivalism *def* The human person survives death along with the separated rational soul because the separated rational soul *is* a person

Corruptionism *def* The human person corrupts at death; the separated rational soul survives death but it *is not* a person

Incomplete persons *def* The human person corrupts at death; the separated rational soul survives death as the *incomplete* person of the deceased complete human person

Just as Thomist survivalists and corruptionists claim to have exegetical, philosophical, and theological justifications for their view, we also maintain that our position on incomplete persons rests on the plausible consequences of an exegetically cogent reading of Aquinas’s anthropology. More importantly, our position secures the philosophical and theological strengths of both corruptionism and survivalism without their weaknesses.

Elsewhere, we have articulated in detail the exegetical and philosophical criteria that justifies our position that the separated soul is an incomplete person.¹ Here we first outline our position and introduce the principled criteria we employed to justify it. After situating our view, we argue that the separated soul satisfies two of our three criteria and that it is an incomplete rational supposit. Next, we argue that the separated soul satisfies our third criteria enough to consider it an incomplete person. Finally, we turn to Mark Spencer’s helpful and challenging objections in his response paper.²

I. Situating Our View

On the exegetical front, we hold that Aquinas clearly defended the corruptionists’ thesis that the separated soul is not a person, because the human person corrupts with the death of the human. The survivalists’ thesis that the separated soul is the same person or “I” of the human person not only finds little textual support in Aquinas’s works, Aquinas explicitly rejects the survivalists’ position.³ On the philosophical and theological front, we contend, with the survivalists, that the corruptionists’ position entails unacceptable consequences: e.g., that the separated soul is a non-person that performs quintessentially personal operations, like being eternally rewarded and punished based on the merits of a person, undergoing purgation, praying for persons, beholding the beatific vision of the three person God, and so forth.

We also hold on the ontological front, that neither survivalists nor corruptionists have presented a plausible or sufficiently nuanced ontology of what precisely a separated soul is. The survivalists leave us with views that gesture towards either implausible, if not incoherent, metaphysical positions that vaguely or suggestively claim separated souls are somehow still “persons,” but not “human persons” because they are not “humans,” or views that introduce

¹ See Daniel De Haan and Brandon Dahm, “Thomas Aquinas on Separated Souls as Incomplete Human Persons” *The Thomist* 83 (2019): 589–637.

² Mark Spencer, “Survivalist, Platonist, Thomistic Hylomorphism: A Reply to Daniel De Haan and Brandon Dahm” in this Issue of *Quaestiones Disputatae*.

³ *In Sent.* III.5.3.2; ST I.75.2ad1; *In I Cor* 15 lt. 2, n. 924.

foreign ontological theories into Thomist hylomorphism producing ersatz ontological accounts which neither Thomists nor ontological constitutionalists find plausible. Such survivalist views tend to ignore, leave unaddressed, or downplay how these positions clearly conflict with Thomist anthropology. The most consistent survivalists are those who, like Mark Spencer, self-consciously abandon some of these Thomist anthropological principles in order to secure more Platonic and dualistic views of the rational soul, wherein the human person is essentially a rational soul which is contingently hylomorphically united to the body. Corruptionists defend Thomist anthropological principles, but they fail to provide any metaphysical analysis of separated soul's ontological composition, of what kind of entity it is, and of its connection to Thomist concepts like *hoc aliquid*, *suppositum*, and principles like *actiones sunt suppositorium*.

These concerns do not raise decisive objections to either survivalism or corruptionism, but they do challenge them to advance their enquiries and to articulate more clearly the details, justifications, and implications of their views. We believe that by accepting this invitation to address these concerns survivalists and corruptionists will find themselves in one of three positions. They will either articulate views consistent with Thomist principles but which only differ terminologically, and so superficially, from our account of incomplete persons. Or, they will find themselves abandoning these Thomist principles in favor of more Platonic or dualistic accounts of human persons. Or, they will articulate some etiolated conception of the separated soul which is incompatible with other Thomist psychological and eschatological doctrines and is philosophically less plausible than our principled account of incomplete persons.

We noted already that exegetically speaking, corruptionists are correct insofar as Aquinas holds the thesis that the separated soul is *not* a person.⁴ What this thesis leaves

⁴ Cf. *In Sent.* III.5.3.2ad1: “anima separata, proprie loquendo, non est substantia alicujus naturae, sed est pars naturae.” *In Sent.* III.5.3.2ad3: “quod anima rationalis dicitur hoc aliquid per modum quo esse subsistens est hoc aliquid, etiam si habeat naturam partis; sed ad rationem personae exigitur ulterius quod sit totum et completum.” See *In Sent.* III.6.1.1.1 ad s.c.; *SCG* II.55; *De Pot.* 9.3ad13; *ST* III.16.12ad2.

unaddressed is the follow-up question not asked by Aquinas: whether Aquinas’s metaphysics of a person, like his metaphysics of the rational soul as a *hoc aliquid*, admits of a principled distinction between complete and incomplete instances of a kind? Does the separated soul satisfy the criteria for personhood in a qualified but still principled way? Cajetan did ask such questions and he maintained that while it is not a person *simpliciter*, the separated soul does qualify as being a *semi-person (semi-persona)*. This is because the only difference between the separated soul and a person is that a separated soul is an incomplete instance of its species, as it is only part of its species.⁵ We contend, on similar and additional grounds not considered by Cajetan, that any Thomist metaphysics of the human person is committed *in principle* to the doctrine that the separated rational soul of the human person after death is an *incomplete person*, and this is because Aquinas holds that the separated rational soul is an *incomplete hoc aliquid* that performs rational operations.

Our argument for this thesis proceeds in two stages by way of the following three criteria for personhood sourced from Aquinas’s works:

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| <i>Subsistence</i> | If a being is a person, then it is <i>per se</i> subsistent individual. |
| <i>Rationality of the Supposit</i> | If a being is a person, then it is a supposit that performs rational operations in virtue of the rationality of its nature. |
| <i>Completeness</i> | If a being is a person, then it is complete or a whole. |

The first stage includes an account of how the separated soul satisfies the first two criteria. The conclusion of the first stage is a more modest claim about the separated soul that, we argue, any consistent Thomist analysis of what kind of entity the separated soul is cannot avoid conceding: the separated soul is an incomplete rational supposit or a rational supposit

⁵ “quia anima separata differt a persona solum per hoc quod est incompletae speciei; quia non est species, sed pars speciei.” Cajetan, *In ST III.6.3* (Leon., 11: p. 98a, n. II). For a different position from our own that also draws on Cajetan, see, Melissa Eitenmiller, “On the Separated Soul according to St. Thomas Aquinas” *Nova et Vetera*, 17.1 (2019): 57–91.

secundum quid. On the basis of this first stage's conclusion, the second stage aims to advance and establish the more contentious conclusion that the separated soul is also an incomplete person. We reach this further conclusion by considering how the separated soul satisfies the completeness criterion.

II. Stage 1: The separated soul is an incomplete rational supposit.

The Subsistence Criterion for Personhood. Aquinas appropriated, and sometimes slightly modifies, the Boethian definition of a person as “an individual substance of a rational nature.”⁶ The subsistence criterion for personhood expands the sense of “individual substance” present in this definition of person. A person is an individual entity that is *per se* subsistent or *subsists* in itself; it neither subsists through another like accidental beings, nor is it an abstract category predicated of something. Aquinas frequently draws on notions like hypostasis, supposit, and *hoc aliquid* (Latin translation of Aristotle's *tode ti*) to help illuminate the basic notion of an individual substance. A “human person” signifies more than the notions of the “nature” or “essence” common to all humans, for it also includes those individualizing principles of human nature that comprise *this* individual person “Socrates” and *that* individual person “Plato.” Aquinas writes:

“For soul, flesh, and bone belong to the *ratio* of a human, but *this* soul, *this* flesh, and *this* bone belong to the *ratio* of *this* human. And therefore hypostasis and person add individual principles to the *ratio* of an essence; nor are they the same as the essence in things composed from matter and form.”⁷

Aquinas even introduces *hoc aliquid* in his definition of personhood, noting that ‘person’ signifies a primary substance or a *this something* (*hoc aliquid*) that subsists in a nature.⁸ The

⁶ *STI*.29.1obj. 1; 29.4; 34.3ad1; 40.3; *SCG* IV.38; *De Pot.* 9.1ad3; 9.2; *De unione verbi* 1 et 2.

⁷ *STI*.29.2ad3 (our translation).

⁸ *In Sent.* III.5.1.3: “Natura enim, secundum quod hic loquimur, est quidditas rei quam significat sua definitio. Persona autem est *hoc aliquid* quod subsistit in natura illa.”

metaphysics of personhood for Aquinas builds upon the foundation of the metaphysics of a *hoc aliquid* and *suppositum*. What “person” adds is the distinctive individuality and rationality manifested by persons. This individuality, Aquinas notes, is manifested in the distinctive forms of rational cognition and self-determination of persons, and these essentially immaterial personal operations are rooted in the immaterial intellectual powers grounded in the immaterial and *per se* subsistent rational soul.⁹ In short, corruptionists and survivalists have no Thomist reasons for resisting Aquinas’s view that a person is a *hoc aliquid* or *suppositum* of a rational nature.

This point of agreement is significant, because it is relevant to another unequivocally Thomist doctrine concerning why the separated soul is a *hoc aliquid*, which all corruptionists and survivalists following Aquinas also endorse. Aquinas’s most mature treatment of this important thirteenth century disputed question invites us to distinguish two senses of *hoc aliquid* based on two criteria for being a *hoc aliquid*.¹⁰ A *hoc aliquid* without qualification or *simpliciter* needs to be an entity that is (1) *per se subsistent* and (2) a complete instance of its species or nature. Aquinas argues that while an individual human being meets both of these criteria, the rational soul only satisfies the criterion for being *per se* subsistent. This is because a rational soul is not a complete species or nature in its own right; it is only the formal part of hylomorphic nature comprised of a rational soul as the substantial form of an organic body. As Carlos Bazán has noted, the rational soul is existentially independent but essentially dependent on the body.¹¹ It is on the basis of Aquinas’s criteria for a *hoc aliquid* and his distinction between unqualified and qualified ascriptions of this notion to humans and rational souls, respectively, that we stipulated our distinction between a “complete *hoc aliquid*” and an “incomplete *hoc aliquid*.” These are not two different categories, species, or kinds, for that

⁹ *ST*I.29.1 et 3.

¹⁰ *QDDA* 1; *ST* I.75.2.

¹¹ Carlos Bazán, “The Human Soul: Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas’ Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire Du Moyen Âge* 64 (1997): 95-126, 122–126.

would entail the absurdity that the “rational soul” is itself a species different from the species “human” which it formally constitutes as its substantial form. Rather, a complete *hoc aliquid* and an incomplete *hoc aliquid* are two different manifestations of one and the same species; the former *simpliciter* the latter *secundum quid*. The classification of an incomplete *hoc aliquid* is a qualified classification derived from or reducible to (*per reductionem*; cf. *QDDA* 1; *DV* 27.1ad8) the primary classification of a complete *hoc aliquid*.

It is noteworthy that, independent of the question of the personhood of the separated soul, Aquinas argues for the thesis that the rational soul can subsist without the body as a separated rational soul because it is a *per se* subsistent entity, that is, an incomplete *hoc aliquid*. But this thesis entails that Aquinas along with corruptionist and survivalist Thomists are committed to the thesis that the separated soul satisfies the subsistence criterion for personhood. In the next section we show that all Thomists committed to the principles of Aquinas anthropology, must hold that the separated soul also satisfies the rationality of the supposit criterion for personhood. Before moving on, it is worth pointing out that the sole reason Cajetan provides for his contention that the separated soul is a semi-person, is based on the subsistence criterion.¹² Our account of incomplete persons is buttressed by arguments based on the completeness criterion and the rationality of the supposit criterion as well.

The Rationality of the Supposit Criterion for Personhood. We noted before that like *hoc aliquid*, Aquinas sometimes employs the Latin term *suppositum* in his definition of a person. Aquinas even makes the bold claim that ‘person’ simply adds nothing but ‘rational nature’ to ‘hypostasis’ or ‘supposit’.¹³ A supposit with a rational nature or a rational supposit is a person; “person” and “supposit” are therefore coextensional notions in all *per se* subsistent entities with a rational or intellectual nature. There are three crucial points concerning

¹² Cf. Cajetan, *In ST III.6.3*.

¹³ *De Pot.* 9.1-2; *ST I.29.1*.

Aquinas's doctrine of the *supposit* which contributors to the disputed question on the personhood of the separate soul have often overlooked.

The first point is brought out by reflecting on Aquinas's *esse* inclusive sense of *suppositum* (*Quod.* 2.2.2). Recall that *suppositum* adds to the notions of substance, essence, and nature the individuating principles of an entity. Aquinas employs both *esse*-exclusive and *esse*-inclusive senses of *suppositum*. The former includes common essential principles of, say, human nature, but also the individualizing matter of Socrates, like *this* flesh and *these* bones, powers, habitus, operations. The *esse* inclusive sense of *suppositum* includes all of these individual principles and attributes along with the most fundamental individualizing principle, namely, the *actus essendi* of an entity (*QDDA* 1ad2). Henceforth, we shall be concerned with Aquinas's *esse* inclusive sense of *suppositum*, which captures in a holistic way the totality of the common and individual principles and attributes that compose an entity and are unified in any existing individual. In short, "supposit" signifies the ontological entirety of whatever belongs to any existing entity.

This brings us to a second point, that the entity which survives the death of the human is an ontologically composite entity. Aquinas's frequent metonymical use of the term "separated soul" easily conceals this point from view, as is clear from the numerous survivalists and corruptionists who overlook it. Strictly speaking, the separated rational soul is only the formal substantial principle of an incomplete *hoc aliquid* or entity that is also comprised of its *esse*, intellectual powers, habitus, and operations. Thus far we too have used the term "separated soul" without distinguishing between its metonymical and strict senses. Henceforth, we will metonymically employ the Latin term *anima separata* to signify this composite entity comprised of a separated rational soul, *esse*, intellectual powers, habitus, and operations, and will employ such English terms as *rational soul* and *separated soul* to signify the formal principle alone.

Given these ontological elucidations we can now more clearly ask the question: Is this composite entity, the *anima separata*, a supposit? Aquinas never says that the *anima separata* is a supposit, but this ascription seems unavoidable insofar as we need some ontological term of art to designate the ontological entirety of whatever belongs to the *anima separata* as an existing entity, and this is precisely what Aquinas's *esse* inclusive sense of *supposit* designates. While corruptionists have given us cogent arguments for rejecting the implausible and sometimes incoherent survivalist proposals of a Thomistic *anima separata* that is also somehow a person, corruptionists have largely failed to articulate and defend any detailed ontological analysis of what sort of entity the *anima separata* is. Our contention is that any corruptionist attempts to explicate a consistently Thomist ontological analysis of what kind of composite incomplete entity the *anima separata* is will find themselves articulating the same metaphysical account of the *anima separata* we have put forth, and will thereby also find themselves without any objection to our claim that the *anima separata* is an incomplete rational supposit.

A crucial third point for understanding Aquinas's doctrine of the *supposit* is his understanding of the principle that actions are of supposits (*actiones sunt suppositorium*). We understand this Thomist principle to be central to the identification of what any supposit is, namely, the entity that is performing operations. This principle should not be confused with Aquinas's account of the distinct *subjects of inherence* or ontological grounds of psychological powers. Aquinas frequently explains that even though embodied sentient powers and operations are grounded in the hylomorphic unity of the soul and the body as their subject of inherence, immaterial intellectual powers and operations have the rational soul alone as their subject of inherence.¹⁴ Aquinas's account of the principle that *actiones sunt suppositorium* and the metaphysics of the supposit are where we find the more fundamental ontological notion

¹⁴ *ST I.76.8ad4; QDSC 2ad5.*

that signifies what unites these rational and sentient operations grounded in distinct subjects of inherence into an individual entity that performs as a single agent both rational and sentient operations. As Aquinas states clearly in *Quodlibet* 2.2.2, the supposit is signified as a whole, while the nature or quiddity as a formal part (*ideo suppositum signatur per totum, natura autem, sive quidditas, ut pars formalis*). No created substantial form of itself comprises the entirety of an entity. So, just an angel is not simply a pure form, but a supposit whose pure form is composed with *esse* and grounds a complement of powers, so neither can that entity called the *anima separata* by metonymy be a pure form alone. Both before and after death, the rational soul is always the formal principle and subject of inherence of rational powers and operations, but the rational soul—before and after death—is never the supposit that is performing rational operations. Before death *in statu via* it is the human person that is the rational supposit performing rational operations in virtue of the powers grounded in the formal principle that is the rational soul. After death, it is the *anima separata* that is the entity performing rational operations in virtue of the same powers grounded in the same formal principle that is the separated rational soul. Consequently, independent of whether or not *in statu via* the rational soul itself is potentially or actually an incomplete *hoc aliquid*,¹⁵ the rational soul itself is always a formal principle, but it is never an acting supposit.

Let us return to the question: whether the *anima separata* is an incomplete rational supposit? We answer that it is, and our argument for this answer can now be summed up as follows. For Thomists, the *anima separata* is a composite entity comprised of *esse*, rational soul, rational powers of agent intellect, possible intellect, will, and the *habitus* of these powers, by virtue of which the *anima separata* exercises various intellectual and volitional operations. These powers have the rational soul as their subject of inherence, but neither these powers nor

¹⁵ We thank Eric Mabry for pointing out that in *Quodlibet* 9.2.1, Aquinas seems to claim the rational soul *in statu via* is only potentially an incomplete *hoc aliquid*.

the rational soul itself comprise the entire entity that is existing and performing rational operations, for this is the composite entity itself, that is, the *anima separata*. What Thomist category or classification captures the ontological contours of this diminished composite entity? We contend it is an “incomplete rational supposit,” because *actiones sunt suppositorium* and this is an individual composite subsisting entity that performs rational operations yet without a complete rational nature insofar as its formal principle—the rational soul—is a substantial form which has ceased to inform a material body. In short, our view maintains that before death, the human is the *supposit*, but the rational soul *in statu via* is not a *supposit* because it does not perform any *operations*. After the death of the human the *anima separata*—but not the rational soul alone—is a *supposit* because it performs rational operations.

Thus far we have shown that the *anima separata* satisfies the subsistence criterion and is an incomplete *hoc aliquid*; it satisfies the rationality of the supposit criterion insofar as it is an individual subsisting entity that performs rational operations. This marks the end of the first stage of our argument the conclusion of which is that the *anima separata*, by virtue of its meeting these two criteria, is an *incomplete rational supposit*. We think this conclusion is inescapable for any Thomist anthropology that takes seriously the ontology of the supposit Aquinas spells out in *Quodlibet 2.2.2*. We invite our fellow Thomists—survivalists and corruptionists alike—either to concede this thesis or to pose substantive objections to this line of argumentation and our conclusion.

III. Stage 2: The *anima separata* is an incomplete person.

The Completeness Criterion for Personhood. This brings us to the second stage which advances the more contentious thesis that the *anima separata* is an *incomplete person*, because it satisfies four out of the five modes of completeness that comprise the completeness criterion. Aquinas rejects the thesis that the *anima separata* is a person because personhood requires the acme of completeness, and since the *anima separata* fails to be an entity that is complete in its

species or nature, it cannot be a person. Aquinas's claim is plausible and it is reasonable for him to conclude the *anima separata* is not a person *simpliciter*; however, like Cajetan, we contend that Aquinas does not exclude the possibility for an incomplete or reduced instance of personhood. We argue that the completeness criterion for personhood comprises five modes of completeness, and that any entity, like the *anima separata*, which meets four out of the five modes of completeness, and completely satisfies the subsistence and rationality of the supposit criteria, thereby merits being characterized as an incomplete person. What follows is a digest of our argument for this conclusion.

The first mode of completeness we consider is operational completeness. Because the *anima separata* performs perfectly rational operations—Aquinas claims it performs intellectual operations that are superior to the operations humans perform *in statu viae* (ST I.89)—it manifests operational completeness. Aquinas's principle *actiones sunt suppositorium* also instructs us that, just as we identify a substance's nature and powers on the basis of its operations, so also we identify the kind of supposit at issue on the basis of its operations, powers, and nature. What distinguishes a rational *suppositum*—that is, a *suppositum* that is a person—from all other non-rational *supposita*, is that a rational supposit can perform rational or personal operations. There is a danger for Thomists to take our taxonomies out of texts without addressing how they could be established on independent philosophical grounds. This can result in exaggerating the contrast between Aquinas's ontological definition of personhood from modern “subjective” definitions. But we, like Aquinas, can only identify persons by identifying the rational supposits that perform personal operations, which we identify by identifying rational or intellectual operations. Any entity or supposit that performs personal operations is a person; both corruptionists and “weak survivalists”—who claim the *anima separata* is a personal non-person that stands in for a person—defend the impossible thesis that a non-person performs personal operations. Mark Spencer suggests corruptionists should reject

the exceptionless principle *actiones sunt suppositorum*, and endorse a Jesuit scholastic view that some actions belong to *subsistents*, like the rational soul. Not only would this suggestion undermine the unity of the acting human person Thomists defend, it would radically transform what a substantial form is. More problematic still, it violates the mereological fallacy by ascribing to a part what can only be truthfully ascribed to the whole (*ST II-II.58.2*). Formal principles are not acting agents (*id quod est*), but that in virtue of which (*quo est*) an agent acts as it does.

Hence, when it comes to the performance of intellectual operations, that is, personal operations, Aquinas unequivocally maintains that the *anima separata* performs intellectual operations. Hence, all Thomists should concede that the *anima separata* has operational completeness.

Second, there is subsisting or existential completeness. Given that the *anima separata* is an existing incomplete *hoc aliquid*, because it is, according to Aquinas, *per se* subsistent, the *anima separata* uncontroversially has existential completeness.

Third, there is formal completeness. What the *anima separata* lacks is the material principle required for an informed organic body endowed with a panoply of embodied vegetative and sentient powers. But the *anima separata* is formally complete insofar as it is formally constituted by the formal principle of rationality that is the subject of inherence for all rational powers.

Fourth, there is the completeness of a supposit, which requires an individual subsisting entity that performs operations. As we have seen, the *anima separata* meets all of these marks; hence, it exhibits the completeness of a supposit.

Fifth, is the specific or essential completeness of an entity's nature, which the *anima separata* clearly fails to meet insofar as it fails to be the substantial form of a material body.

Our detailed analysis of the five modes of completeness that comprise the completeness criterion go beyond Aquinas's perfunctory account of the completeness criterion for personhood. By precisely showing the mode of completeness absent in the *anima separata* we have provided a clearer explanation than Aquinas gives for rejecting the thesis that the *anima separata* is a person. However, our detailed analysis of the five modes of completeness also reveals that there is principled taxonomical space for deviations from the paradigm of a person *simpliciter* and sets in relief a perspicuous way to identify and characterize what precisely is meant by a person *secundum quid* or an incomplete person. We have argued that the *anima separata* is just such an instance of a person *secundum quid* because it satisfies both the subsistence criterion and the rationality of the supposit criterion and meets four out of the five modes of completeness that comprise the completeness criterion for personhood.

IV. Spencer's Objections

Mark Spencer has raised some important questions and objections to our position which can be found in his contribution to this issue. Here we respond briefly to those objections; we refer the reader to Spencer's article for the details of his objections and concerns.

A common objection to our position is that "incomplete person" is an *alienans* term. If we had not spelt out in detail the threefold criteria which explicates what we mean by an "incomplete person," then this objection would be fair. But we did, so the objection ignores rather than engages our arguments. Indeed, on the exegetical front, we think few contributors to this debate have said more than we have on the score of what precisely is Aquinas's anthropology, his ontology of the *anima separata*, and its connections to the notions of a *suppositum*, *hoc aliquid*, and the criteria for personhood. In our article we anticipated these worries about the coherence of "incomplete person" and responded to the objection that it is unnatural and the *ad hoc* "category expansion objection." Accordingly, we think the bald version of this objection raised by other Thomists just begs the question.

Spencer's articulation of the *alienans* term objection gives us the opportunity to respond to another variation of this objection. His paradigmatic example of an *alienans* term is "dead animal," which we concede, because what an animal is is an entity that is living. "Animal" even wears this meaning on its etymological sleeve; *animalis* from *anima*. An animal is an actually living entity which cannot be actually dead; "dead animal" signifies the corpse of an animal that has died. But the comparison with "incomplete person" fails without counter-argumentation. For it is not self-evident that "person" means to be complete *simpliciter* without any qualifications whatsoever, such that "incomplete person" would be an *alienans* term. The history of rival ontologies and definitions of personhood are sufficient to show that its meaning is disputed. What is being insisted upon in this debate is that "person" is among those fixed classifications which exclude qualified instances; however, no principled argument has been provided for the intuition that "person" requires maximal or absolute completeness without exception. Of course with primary or basic unanalyzable notions like *esse*, substantial form, and act it is intelligible why they exclude the possibility for *secundum quid* instances, but "person" is a putatively analyzable notion and it is always an open question of whether such notions admit of *secundum quid* instances. So, while we endorse Aquinas's perfunctory argument that the dignity of personhood requires the acme of perfection and completion, we hold Aquinas's argument does not illuminate any principled reason for excluding *secundum quid* instances of personhood. Furthermore, there are principled reasons for maintaining that the *anima separata* is an "incomplete person" or a person *secundum quid*. We have presented substantive criteria for personhood and shown why the diminished entity that survives the corruption of a complete entity insufficiently meets these criteria in such a way that it is incorrect to maintain either that it is a person *simpliciter* or that it is non-person *simpliciter*. Instead, we are justified to classify it as an incomplete person or as a persisting entity—an incomplete rational supposit—that maintains its personhood *secundum quid*.

Spencer's version of this objection is different insofar as it comes from his more broadly scholastic, and, we think, eclectic position, rather than from within the stricter Thomist tradition we share with Thomist corruptionists and survivalists. Answering Spencer's four objections would take us outside of the comfortable realm of philosophical constructive exegesis of specifically Thomist debates on the *anima separata* into that of contested rival philosophical traditions, even if they be Catholic traditions of enquiry. We cannot do that here, but his outsider's challenge is an important reminder to Thomists of how many contentious substantive metaphysical doctrines we take for granted in this debate. Fundamental to all of Spencer's objections is the thesis that essences are indivisible; granting this thesis excludes not only our conclusion but some of the most fundamental planks of Thomist anthropology we presumed for our argument. We, like Aquinas, Cajetan, and other Thomists reject this thesis as Spencer understands it. Moving forward would require a debate about *what* essences are, including whether they can exist in impoverished or incomplete ways and *how* we, *pace* Spencer, *gradually* and dialectically come to know their *whatness* in virtue of their *propria* and essential operations. Essences, for Thomists, are ontologically fundamental difference-making intelligibilities. An essence *both* ontologically determines what a thing is and can do, *and* potentially manifests its intelligible whatness to intelligent agents. True classifications capture these ontological contours and sometimes are revised in light of new insights. The error of categoricalism is to presume our categories dictate the way reality must be. Hylomorphic substances manifest being composite entities and we define their essences accordingly. Humans are peculiar hylomorphic substances, for our intellectual operations exhibit existential and formal principles that can be theoretically demonstrated to subsist without the material principle they existentialize and inform. If this is so, then the intelligibility or essence exhibited by a human hylomorphic substance is one of an entity that can exist incompletely or in part.

Establishing all of these contentions is, of course, more contentious business than most Thomists are willing to concede. But given that Thomists do presume we can establish all of these contentions, it follows that Thomists reject Spencer's claim that essences are indivisible and so the *anima separata* cannot subsist merely as a partial manifestation of the human essence. Aquinas holds, contrary to Spencer's view, that the rational soul is only ever the *forma partis* and never the *forma totius* itself, but always the formal part of hylomorphic essence. It is on this basis that Cajetan goes beyond Aquinas to claim that the *anima separata* is a *semi-person* and not only a *semi-nature* (*anima separata est semi-persona, et non solum semi-natura*).¹⁶ And we have sought to go further still by establishing on Thomist grounds the threefold criteria that elucidate and justify characterizing the *anima separata* as an incomplete person.

Spencer's objections raise important challenges to Thomist corruptionists and survivalists, for they press the question: Why is incomplete person demurred but incomplete *hoc aliquid* secured? Spencer rejects Aquinas's incomplete *hoc aliquid* as another *alienans* term. Thomist corruptionists and survivalists cannot follow Spencer on this score and still maintain the Thomist anthropology they defend against—what to Thomists seems to be—Spencer's unacceptable eclectic hylomorphic substance dualism. Can these Thomists give a principled response to Spencer that does not entail their commitment to our incomplete persons as well? The challenge for corruptionist and survivalist Thomists is to provide principled justifications for why they reject that the *anima separata* is an incomplete person—or incomplete rational supposit—but still endorse the two Thomist doctrines that imply it is, namely, that it is an incomplete *hoc aliquid* and *actiones sunt suppositorum*, and to provide a principled alternative ontological analysis of what kind of entity the *anima separata* is.

V. Concluding Remarks

¹⁶ Cajetan, *In ST III.6.3*. (Leon., 11: p. 98a, n. III).

While survivalists accuse us of being corruptionists, corruptionists claim we are survivalists. We reject both contentions and claim to have articulated a distinctive middle ground between these alternatives. Our answer has implications not only for the ontology of the human person who after death is reduced to an incomplete person, but also for the continuity of the diminished “I” or “incomplete I” that survives death as an incomplete person. The human person corrupts by dying. Yet the resulting incomplete person is not a “generated” entity, but the composite continuant of personhood *secundum quid* that remains subsisting after the corruption of the human person. Hence, corruptionists are mistaken to claim our view entails the *survival* of the human person *in toto*, just as survivalists are wrong to presume our view requires the generation of a new entity with no *ego* continuity between the “I” *in statu viae* and the “incomplete I” of the incomplete person. An incomplete person is the radically diminished ego of a psychological agent who has died and entirely lost, as Aquinas holds, the natural exercise of all its autobiographical memory; apart from grace, it is the fragment of a someone who’s diverse psychological operations have become severely truncated to exclusively noetic operations and who can only participate in a psychological life that is utterly alien to the form of life that someone had *in statu viae* (ST I.89). The rational soul in itself is never me, but it would be false to say there is no “I *secundum quid*” when it comes to the *anima separata*, because the *anima separata* is the surviving incomplete person that is incompletely me.

We believe our position breaks the deadlock and resolves this disputed question and we optimistically hope our fellow Thomists will agree. But if we have only convinced our fellow Thomists of the truth of the position that the separated soul is an incomplete rational supposit, we will count this as a major, albeit imperfect, victory. More soberly, we hope our view inspires

further nuanced objections and responses to this disputed question and thereby advances the Thomist tradition's enquiries in anthropology, metaphysics, and eschatology.¹⁷

¹⁷ We thank the editors of *Quaestiones Disputatae* for the opportunity to do just that by reenacting here the spirited, sincere, and enormously fruitful debates we had with our colleagues during the 2019 *American Catholic Philosophical Association* satellite session organized by Turner Nevitt.