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**Human Identity, Immanent Causal Relations, and the Principle of Non-Repeatability:  
Thomas Aquinas on the Bodily Resurrection**

**Abstract:** Can the persistence of a human being's soul at death and prior to the bodily resurrection be sufficient to guarantee that the resurrected human being is numerically identical to the human being who died? According to Thomas Aquinas, it can. Yet, given that Aquinas holds that the human being is identical to the composite of soul and body and ceases to exist at death, it's difficult to see how he can maintain this view. In this paper, I address Aquinas's response to this objection (*Summa contra gentiles* IV.80-81); after making a crucial clarification concerning the nature of the non-repeatability principle on which the objection relies, I argue that the contemporary notion of immanent causal relations provides us with a way of understanding Aquinas's defense that renders it both highly interesting and philosophically plausible.

According to Thomas Aquinas, a human being is identical not to her soul, but rather to the physical composite of soul and body.<sup>1</sup> In fact, Aquinas holds that a human being is *necessarily* a composite of matter and form—a claim that commits him to the position that no human being could exist without a body.<sup>2</sup> Since substance dualism is generally taken to entail that human persons could exist apart from bodies,<sup>3</sup> he thus appears to advocate a version of

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<sup>1</sup> See, *Summa Theologiae* Ia 75.4, and *Quaestiones de anima* 1. Aquinas also claims that the human being is identical to the human person (ST Ia 29.1 and 4), and he denies that I am identical to my soul (*Ad Corinthios* 15, *Commentary on Job*, Lectio 2).

<sup>2</sup> See, *De ente et essentia* (DEE) 2 and ST Ia.75.4, where Aquinas argues that matter needs to appear in the very essence of a human being. That is, anything that satisfies the definition of 'human being' must possess a body; there can be no disembodied human beings.

<sup>3</sup> See, Lynne Rudder Baker's characterization of substance dualism: 'According to mind/body dualism, if Jane is a human person living in Canada, she has a body, but Jane's existence does not depend on her having the body that she has or on her having any body at all: If mind/body dualism is correct, even though she is now embodied, Jane could exist as a purely immaterial

dualism interestingly different from a Cartesian-style substance dualism.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Aquinas argues explicitly *against* substance dualism and claims instead that only the hylomorphic composite of body and soul constitutes one, complete substance.<sup>5</sup> As he writes in the *Summa contra gentiles* (SCG), 'The soul and the body are not two actually existing substances, but from these two things one actually existing substance is made' (II.69).<sup>6</sup>

Aquinas's rejection of a traditional substance dualism prevents his account from falling prey to the traditional problems associated with that position. His proposed alternative faces its own troubles, however—troubles raised in large part by Aquinas's insistence that the human soul survives the death of the body and that it persists in separation from matter until the bodily resurrection. Aquinas advocates the Christian doctrine that there will be a resurrection of bodies at the end of earthly life. This doctrine has two main claims: 1) at the end times, God will resurrect all the human beings who have ever lived, and 2) resurrection will involve those human  


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 being' Lynne Rudder Baker 'Need a Christian be a Mind/Body Dualist?', *Faith and Philosophy*, **12** (1995), 489-504.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, there's some debate over whether Aquinas's position is fairly characterized as dualism at all. Stump (1995) suggests the label 'subsistence dualism', although she herself calls Aquinas a non-reductionist materialist, and argues that the dichotomy which contrasts materialism with dualism is harmful rather than philosophically useful.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas holds that for something properly to be called an individual substance, it needs to meet two conditions: 1) it must be capable of independent existence, and 2) it must be complete in species and genus. The body fails both of these conditions; the soul meets 1), and so in this limited sense it can be called a substance, but it fails 2), and so Aquinas claims that the soul isn't a complete substance. (See QDA1.co, and ST Ia 75.2.ad1.)

<sup>6</sup> '*Non enim corpus et anima sunt duae substantiae actu existentes, sed ex eis duobus fit una substantia actu existens*' (1461). All paragraph numbers correspond to the Marietti edition of the *Summa contra gentiles* (1961, Italy: Marietti Editori Ltd.). All translations are mine.

beings' possessing physical bodies of some sort. In this paper, I focus on the particular problem death (and the subsequent resurrection of the body) raises for Aquinas's account of human identity. In its simplest form, the question is this: Can the persistence of an individual human being's soul at death and prior to the bodily resurrection be sufficient to guarantee that human's numerical identity to the resurrected human being?<sup>7</sup> If a human being, say, David, is identical not to his soul but to the composite of soul *and body*, then at death David ceases to exist, even if his soul persists.<sup>8</sup> In this case, how can God later resurrect someone numerically identical to David?

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<sup>7</sup> This question itself presupposes that Aquinas has successful answers to two prior questions that lie beyond the scope of this paper: 1) Can the human soul continue to exist at death, and 2) What could ground the individuation of separated souls? For discussions of the first question, see Norman Kretzmann's *The Metaphysics of Creation: Aquinas's Natural Theology in Summa contra gentiles II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), and Robert Pasnau's *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae Ia 75-89* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For a detailed discussion of the second question, see Bernardo Bazán's "La corporalité selon Saint Thomas", *Revue Philosophique de Louvain*, **81** (1983), 369-409.

<sup>8</sup> The identity claim here about body and soul differs importantly from the identity claim 'David is identical to his body', where we would typically agree that David can, nevertheless, persist through changes in body parts (such as a foot amputation or a heart transplant). The latter case is significantly complicated by the difficulty specifying the diachronic identity conditions for material objects (illustrated by examples such as the ship of Theseus), whereas the former case involves a composite not of physical but of *metaphysical* parts whose continued persistence is necessary for the persistence of the object in question. To see this, compare the claim 'David is a composite of his body parts' with the claim 'David is a composite of form and matter'. We can imagine David's persisting through the loss and/or replacement of individual body parts, whereas

Aquinas recognizes the need to address the difficulty the bodily resurrection poses for human identity, and in this, he is not alone. Much recent work in philosophical theology has been aimed at constructing an account of personal identity that can accommodate the doctrine of the bodily resurrection without appeal to a Cartesian brand of substance dualism.<sup>9</sup> More broadly, contemporary thought experiments involving brain state transfer devices and defective transporters raise essentially the same question of 'gappy' existence and personal identity. Can the *very same* human being who ceased to exist at time *t* be brought back at time *t'*?

Many philosophers believe that the correct answer to this question is 'no'; I begin this paper by addressing one particularly pointed argument Aquinas considers in SCG IV.80 against the possibility that the resurrected human being can be numerically identical with the original human being. In short, the objection rests on the principle that no natural thing can be corrupted and then restored with numerical identity—what I'll call the principle of non-repeatability. In his article 'Aquinas on Continuity and Identity', Christopher Hughes argues that Aquinas should simply reject this principle and that he concedes too much in adopting it in his reply.<sup>10</sup> I believe, however, that Hughes misinterprets the importance of the principle's mention of '*natural things*'. In fact, when it's understood correctly, it seems that the principle *does* hold in the case of living organisms.

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it's impossible on a hylomorphic account to imagine David's persisting through a loss either in form or in matter. (For an argument that questions this understanding of hylomorphic identity, however, see Eleonore Stump's discussion of souls, bodies, and the constitution relation in chapter one of *Aquinas* [London: Routledge, 2003], 35-60.)

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Lynne Rudder Baker 'need a christian be a mind/body dualist?' in Peter van Inwagen (ed.) *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), and Dean Zimmerman's 'The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: the 'Falling Elevator' Model', *Faith and Philosophy*, **16** (1999), 194-212.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Hughes 'Aquinas on Continuity and Identity', *Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, **6** (1997), 93-108.

Moreover, in responding to the objection, Aquinas appears to overstate both the problem and his solution in a way that makes his position appear 1) philosophically unattractive and 2) puzzling, since the account of human nature Aquinas has already provided prior to IV.80 leaves a more plausible response to the objection ready to hand. In the second half of this paper, I provide an outline for such a plausible response. In short, I suggest that, although the disembodied human soul is not identical to the human being, Aquinas is able to claim that the soul's persistence guarantees the persistence of relevant immanent causal connections between the human being pre-death and post-resurrection—connections which can, in fact, ground the identity of the human being at death and through the bodily resurrection.

### The Resurrection of the Body

The problem of 'gappy' existence is raised for Aquinas by the Christian doctrine of the bodily resurrection, which Aquinas understands to involve the reunion of the rational soul with matter after a period of separation at death. Aquinas believes that he has philosophical as well as theological reasons to advocate this doctrine; as we'll see, his general theory of human nature leads him to posit a bodily resurrection as opposed to the continued existence of disembodied souls in the afterlife.

Indeed, Aquinas presents several arguments in SCG IV.79 in defense of the claim that 'the resurrection of bodies will come through Christ',<sup>11</sup> all of which rely on the further belief that it goes against the human soul's very nature to exist apart from matter.<sup>12</sup> In his first

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<sup>11</sup> For a closely parallel passage, see the *Scriptum*, IV.43.1.1. Lectiones II-VII of Aquinas's commentary on I Corinthians provide Aquinas's most detailed examination of the doctrine of Christ's resurrection and its consequences for human beings, but they contain little of philosophical interest.

<sup>12</sup> Marilyn McCord Adams discusses these arguments in her survey of Aquinas's position on the bodily resurrection. Marilyn McCord Adams 'The Resurrection of the Body According to Three Medieval Aristotelians: Thomas Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and William Ockham', *Philosophical Topics* 20 (1992) 2-8.

philosophical argument in chapter 79 in support of the bodily resurrection, for example, Aquinas appeals to the need the soul has for union with the body:

It was shown [in SCG II.79], that the souls of human beings are immortal. Therefore, they remain after the bodies [are corrupted], being independent of bodies (*a corporibus absolutae*). Also, it's clear from things said in book II [chapters 83, 68] that the soul is naturally united to a body, for [a soul] is, according to its essence, the form of a body. For this reason, it is against the nature of the soul to exist without the body. Nothing that is contrary to nature can exist perpetually, however. Therefore, the soul will not exist perpetually without the body. So, since the soul remains perpetually, it must be joined again to the body, which is what it means to be resurrected. Thus, the immortality of souls seems to require a future resurrection of bodies.<sup>13</sup>

Aquinas's argument here in favor of a bodily resurrection relies on two claims familiar from his general account of human nature, namely that 1) the soul is, by nature, immortal, and that 2) the rational soul's nature as the substantial form of the human being mandates union with a body.<sup>14</sup> The explanation for 2) is that—since the very 'essence' of the rational soul involves

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<sup>13</sup> *'Ostensum est enim in Secundo animas hominum immortales esse. Remanent igitur post corpora a corporibus absolutae. Manifestum est etiam ex his quae in Secundo dicta sunt, quod anima corpori naturaliter unitur: est enim secundum suam essentiam corporis forma. Est igitur contra naturam animae absque corpore esse. Nihil autem quod est contra naturam, potest esse perpetuum. Non igitur perpetuo erit anima absque corpore. Cum igitur perpetuo maneat, oportet eam corpori iterato coniungi: quod est resurgere. Immortalitas igitur animarum exigere videtur resurrectionem corporum futuram'* (4135).

<sup>14</sup> The argument also relies on the rather dubious claim, which Aquinas attributes to Aristotle in his commentary on *De caelo et mundo* (2, 269 b7-10), that nothing contrary to nature can exist

structuring, organizing, and vivifying a human body—a soul separated from a body can't do what it's meant by nature to do. Although the soul's nature doesn't require being joined to the body *at all times*, it is unnatural (in the strict sense of 'natural') for it to be separated from matter, and Aquinas's point here is that this state of affairs can't continue without end. Since the human soul is immortal, however, it *would* remain in that unnatural state perpetually unless it were reunited with matter, and so it's clear (if we accept the premises of the argument) that the soul must be joined to a body again at some point.

The main interest of this particular argument lies in its application of general principles of Aquinas's theory of human nature to the special case of the bodily resurrection. We might well expect Aquinas to shy away from discussing his claim (stated explicitly in *Summa Theologiae* Ia.75.4) that a human soul is not identical with the human being, and that the soul is 'incomplete' in separation from the body. After all, it's this very emphasis on the composite nature of the human being that appears to cause serious problems for his account of post-mortem human identity. Instead, Aquinas uses exactly that point to *support* the doctrine of the bodily resurrection.

In the following argument of SCG IV.79, Aquinas stresses this point even more strongly, underscoring the soul's status as *part* of the composite human being rather than the whole human being: 'The soul separated from the body is in a way imperfect, like every part existing apart from its whole: for the soul is naturally *part* of human nature.'<sup>15</sup> What's more, Aquinas goes on to argue that a perpetual separation of soul from body would mean that complete happiness could never be achieved: complete happiness involves the satisfaction of all natural desires, and the separated soul *naturally* inclines toward re-union with its body (in the same way that a dropped rock falls downward because of its natural inclination to be 'down'). Human nature requires that a human being possess both body *and* soul; as Aquinas states in his commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, 'The soul of Abraham is not Abraham himself, properly speaking, but is

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perpetually. Fortunately, the soundness of Aquinas's argument isn't relevant to our purposes—what's of interest is what this passage says about the nature of the human soul.

<sup>15</sup> '*Anima autem a corpore separata est aliquo modo imperfecta, sicut omnis pars extra suum totum existens: anima enim naturaliter est pars humanae naturae*' (4136).

*part of him*' (43.1.1a.ad2).<sup>16</sup> Later, he adds, 'Other things being equal, the status of the soul in the body is more perfect than the status of the soul outside the body, since it is *part* of the whole composite' (ibid, ad4).<sup>17</sup> If the rational soul existed perpetually apart from the body, one *part* of the human being—David's soul—would persist, while the *whole* human being—David himself—would be lost.

It seems clear, then, that Aquinas believes not only that a bodily resurrection is compatible with his account of human nature but that it is in fact demanded by it for the immortality of an individual human being. At the same time, Aquinas recognizes that, on his account, the bodily resurrection raises vexing questions about human identity—questions he attempts to answer in SCG IV.81. In what follows, I focus on one particularly pressing objection to the claim that *the very same* human being is present after the resurrection as existed before death and examine Aquinas's response in light of a criticism raised to the objection by Christopher Hughes.

#### The Principle of Non-Repeatability and Hughes's Criticism

In SCG IV.80, Aquinas lays out three objections to the view that the resurrected human being will be numerically identical with the original human being. The most philosophically daunting proceeds as follows:

In no natural thing is that which is corrupted found to be brought back to existence the same in number, just as it seems that nothing [which had a particular disposition] can be returned from some privation to having the disposition. And, therefore, since those things that are corrupted cannot be repeated with numerical identity, nature intends that something the same in species as that which is corrupted is preserved through generation. For this reason, since human beings are corrupted through death, and the body of a

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<sup>16</sup> '*Anima Abrahæ non est, proprie loquendo, ipse Abraham, sed est pars ejus; et sic de aliis.*'

<sup>17</sup> '*Ceteris paribus perfectior est status animæ in corpore quam extra corpus, quia est pars totius compositi...*' He makes this point in response to the objection that human souls should remain disembodied because in that state they resemble God and the angels more closely.



human being is itself broken down (*resolvatur*) all the way to the first elements, it doesn't seem that a human being can be restored to life the same in number.<sup>18</sup>

This argument crucially depends on what I'll call the principle of non-repeatability: *viz.* the principle that no thing A that is destroyed (i.e. corrupted) at time t can be numerically identical with a thing B that exists at a later time t'. This claim is supposed to be analogous to Aristotle's point in *Physics* V.5 that a disposition (such as health) that is acquired after a privation (in this case, sickness) is numerically distinct from the original disposition.<sup>19</sup> In other words, the health David possesses before he gets a cold is numerically distinct from the health David possesses after he recovers. Once David's original health has been corrupted by disease, it can't be restored as *the very same* disposition—David has a different instance of 'health' before and after his sickness.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *'In nullo enim naturalium rerum invenitur id quod corruptum est idem numero redire in esse: sicut nec ab aliqua privatione ad habitum videtur posse rediri. Et ideo, quia quae corrumpuntur eadem numero iterari non possunt, natura intendit ut id quod corrumpitur idem specie per generationem conservetur. Cum igitur homines per mortem corrumpantur, ipsumque corpus hominis usque ad prima elementa resolvatur: non videtur quod idem numero homo possit reparari ad vitam'* (4139).

<sup>19</sup> The objector gets Aristotle's point slightly wrong. What Aristotle actually says in the *Physics* is more complicated; he claims that *if* it were true that the two instances of health were not numerically identical, *then* one would need to be committed to the principle of non-repeatability. And then he claims that 'these difficulties lies outside our present inquiry'.

<sup>20</sup> For more support of this sort of claim in Aristotle, see *Gen et Cor* ii.9, which Aquinas takes to say that the only kind of identity you get after a corruptible substance is destroyed is identity of species, not numerical identity. (Aquinas cites this passage in his Commentary on Job 19 L.II and his Commentary on I Corinthians 15 L.IX.)

According to this objection, what's true in the case of dispositions is also true in the case of natural things. For example, if, after an oak tree A is cut down and used for firewood, an oak tree B grows in exactly the same place, it seems clear that A and B are *numerically* distinct, even if they happen to be *qualitatively* identical. In fact, on this line of argument, the non-repeatable nature of natural things is the very reason why species reproduce: the process of generation of individuals within a species is what ensures that the species will continue despite the corruption of its individual members. Individual oak trees are non-repeatable, and so they produce acorns in order for there to be other oak trees after the original ones die. More to the point, according to this general principle of non-repeatability, once a human being dies and is corrupted, it is impossible for a human being to exist at a later time who is numerically identical with the original human being. (That the human being *is* corrupted seems evident, since on Aquinas's theory a human being is a composite of soul and body.) Once David dies, this objection claims, we've lost *David* forever, even if God produces something which looks and acts *exactly like* David.

The principle of non-repeatability (PNR) seems obviously true in the cases I've discussed: in the normal course of nature, you don't get the same members of a natural species repeated after they die—you get *new* members of the *same* species. In his response to this objection, Aquinas himself accepts PNR without discussion. Yet, as Christopher Hughes has argued in a discussion of this passage, PNR seems obviously false in other cases; thus Hughes claims that Aquinas should have responded to this objection by rejecting the principle out of hand.<sup>21</sup>

Hughes makes this point by first summarizing objection one as follows: 'Once things have undergone corruption, they cannot come back into existence. At death a man undergoes corruption; so he cannot come back to life' (98); Hughes then derives a 'principle of continuity' based on this, namely: (C1) Necessarily, in the course of nature: if a and b are identical, and if a exists at time t, and b exists at time t', then a is not corrupted between t and t' (99). Hughes then claims, first, that Aquinas accepts (C1) and, second, that he's wrong in doing so.

In order to prove that Aquinas should have denied (C1), Hughes constructs a thought experiment involving two qualitatively identical bicycles, A and B. Suppose, he says, he brings

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<sup>21</sup> 'Aquinas on Continuity and Identity'

the bikes home from the shop and completely disassembles them. He then puts half of A's parts together with half of B's parts, and half of B's parts together with half of A's parts. Now there appear to be two new bicycles, call them C and D, which are identical neither to each other nor to A and B. At this point, however, he can disassemble *those* bicycles and put all the parts that were originally in A back together, and all the parts that were originally in B back together, 'so that' he says, 'everything looks just as it did when I brought the bicycles home from the shop' (107). At this point, it appears that A and B have come back into existence, and that C and D have ceased to exist. Of course, he could go through the process of dis- and re-assembly again, at which point C and D will come back from non-existence. 'So,' Hughes concludes, 'both (C1), and the stronger principle that results from deleting 'in the course of nature' from (C1), appear not to be true' (107).

In fact, it doesn't even seem necessary to go to such extravagant lengths in order to find examples that appear to refute both (C1) and PNR. Take the simple case of a broken lawnmower that is disassembled, repaired, and then reassembled. What we seem to have here is one, not two, numerically distinct lawnmowers, despite the fact that the lawnmower is 'corrupted' when its parts are strewn across my driveway. Given this rather common happening (in cases involving, e.g., lawnmowers, bikes, watches, and computers), Hughes seems right in arguing that it *does* seem possible for things to be first corrupted and then repeated with numerical identity.

Hughes is also right in thinking that Aquinas doesn't appear to recognize this difficulty with PNR, and not for lack of similar objects or similar examples in his own lifetime. (In the section of his *Sentences* commentary devoted to the bodily resurrection, for example, Aquinas's contemporary Bonaventure considers whether a wooden chest that is taken apart and then reassembled is numerically identical with the original wooden chest.<sup>22</sup>) In his reply to this objection, Aquinas accepts the principle of non-repeatability as given and works at providing an argument for why the case of resurrected human beings can be an exception to it. In so doing, Hughes argues, Aquinas gives himself needless trouble.

## Artifacts and Natural Things

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<sup>22</sup> SC 43.1, quaestio 4.co, opinion 2.

In making this argument, however, I believe that Hughes himself overlooks a crucial qualification that is built right into the original statement of PNR in SCG IV.81; as a result, neither Hughes's summary nor his proposed principle of continuity adequately captures the force of the original objection. In fact, I'll argue that Aquinas is right in accepting PNR, and that this objection proves harder to overcome than Hughes believes—although Aquinas's account does possess the resources with which to do so.

Recall that the objection as stated in IV.81 began with the claim that '*in no natural thing (naturalium rerum) is that which is corrupted found to be brought back to existence the same in number.*' Hughes glosses this in his principle of continuity as the claim that 'Necessarily, *in the course of nature*: if a and b are identical, and if a exists at time t, and b exists at time t', then a is not corrupted between t and t' (99, added emphasis). In Hughes's summary, then, the principle of non-repeatability becomes the general claim that, in the natural world, no thing that is corrupted can come back into existence.

I believe, however, that the original mention of natural things isn't just a casual reference to the normal state of affairs. Rather, the objection is very carefully intended to pick up on the distinction between natural things and artifacts. That is, the principle on which the objection rests (and to which Aquinas responds) is a principle pertaining specifically to the non-repeatability of *natural* things, not to all things found in the physical world. Thus, although Hughes is right that PNR fails for artifacts like bicycles and lawnmowers, that failure doesn't impact the original objection: the principle was never meant to apply to such cases anyway. And, as we'll see, it's not at all obvious that PNR fails in the case of natural things.

Although Aquinas doesn't explicitly mention artifacts in SCG IV.81, he distinguishes between natural substances and artifacts in numerous places, including three of his earlier discussions of the bodily resurrection (namely, *Scriptum* IV.44.1.1b.ad4, 1c.sc1, and *Quaestiones quodlibetales* 11.6.1.ad3).<sup>23</sup> In each of these passages, Aquinas draws a sharp distinction between natural things and artifacts, arguing that they have different identity conditions.

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<sup>23</sup> Aquinas's *Sentences* commentary is dated 1253-6, QQ to 1256-9, and SCG to 1259-65.

(Dates taken from Kretzmann, Norman and Eleonore Stump. 1998. 'Aquinas, Thomas.'

*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, general editor Edward Craig.)

In fact, in QQ 11.6.1, Aquinas brings in the distinction between natural things and artifacts precisely when addressing the identity of the resurrected human body. The discussion here arises in response to the objection that the resurrected body cannot be one in number with the original body. For, as 'the Philosopher says in his book *On the Soul*, the statue which is destroyed is not the same as the statue which is re-fashioned from the same gold. By the same argument, the body which is now corrupted will not be numerically identical with the body which is resurrected.<sup>24</sup> That is, if I take a gold statue of Hypatia, melt it down, and refashion it into another statue of Hypatia, it seems fairly clear that there are two, numerically distinct statues involved even if the two statues resemble each other exactly.<sup>25</sup> In the same way, the objection goes, if David's body is completely 'melted down' or corrupted after death, then the body that is refashioned at the end times must be numerically distinct from David's original body.

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<sup>24</sup> *'Philosophus dicit in lib. de anima, quod non est eadem statua numero quae destruitur, et de eodem aere reficitur. Pari ergo ratione corpus quod modo corrumpitur, non erit idem numero cum eo quod resurget'* (1956. Italy: Marietti Editori Ltd.).

<sup>25</sup> There's an interesting ambiguity to the example as it's set out in this passage: it's not clear whether Aquinas is thinking of a case in which a statue of Hypatia is melted down and then refashioned as a statue of Xanthippe, or whether he's thinking of Hypatia's statue being melted down and then refashioned as Hypatia again. I take it, though, that Aquinas's answer is going to be the same no matter which case he's thinking of. Even in the case where the statue is refashioned in exactly the same shape, I think Aquinas will claim that it has a different form in each instance, since statue forms are non-repeatable accidents. The case of the forms of the Hypatia statues will be parallel to the case of my suntan last year and my suntan this year—i.e., they're two numerically distinct instances of the same property, 'being shaped like Hypatia,' or 'being tan'.

Aquinas responds to this objection by claiming that statues are different from human bodies in one very important respect: statues are artifacts, and human bodies are natural substances:

All artifacts are placed in a genus or a species in two ways, since [an artifact is placed in a genus or species] either with respect to its matter *or* with respect to its form. Natural things, however, are placed in a genus or species only through their forms. Moreover, artificial forms, since they are accidental [forms], ought to be placed in a genus or species through matter; but natural forms should not, since they are substantial forms. For this reason, I say that if the statue is considered as placed in a genus or species through its matter, then the same statue is re-fashioned. But if it is considered as placed in a genus or species through its form, in this case I say that it is not the same statue, but a different one; for there is one form for this [statue], and another form for that one. In the body, however, this is not the case, since there will be the same form in the [resurrected] body (ad3).<sup>26</sup>

Because the forms of artifacts, such as statues (and bicycles), are *accidental* forms, then, they are most properly placed in a genus and species according to their *matter* (e.g. gold or steel), although they can also be placed in a genus and species according to the artifactual form 'statue' or 'bicycle'. Natural things, on the other hand, are placed in genera and species only according to their substantial forms (which artifacts don't possess *per se*).

As Aquinas points out, this distinction entails that the identity conditions for artifacts differ from the identity conditions for natural substances. In particular, it means that there are two possible answers to the question 'Is this the same statue?' but only one possible answer to the question 'Is this the same human being?' In the case of the statue, the answer depends on

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<sup>26</sup> '...[O]mnia artificialia ponuntur dupliciter in genere vel in specie; quia vel per materiam suam, vel per formam suam. Naturalia autem ponuntur in genere vel specie tantum per formam suam. Formae autem artificiales, quia sunt accidentia, ideo oportet quod collocentur in genere vel specie per materiam; naturales vero non, quia sunt substantiales.'

whether you're referring to the matter (the gold), in which case the answer is 'yes', or whether you're referring to the artifactual form ('statue'), in which case, the answer is 'no'.<sup>27</sup> The main reason for the ambiguity is that, in the case of artifacts, the only real substance in question is what's being referred to as the matter: gold, wood, steel, etc. But gold, wood, and steel are already composites of substantial form and matter. In the case of natural substances such as human beings, of course, this problem simply doesn't arise.

Thus, it seems that Aquinas would solve the question of the identity of the reconstituted statue or the reassembled bicycles by claiming that whether or not the thing counts as the same statue or the same bicycle depends on whether you're appealing to its matter or to its artifactual form. To return to Hughes's example involving bikes A and B, Aquinas would apparently say that the reassembled bicycles can count as A and B insofar as they possess the same matter that originally constituted A and B. In the same sense that the two statues fashioned from the same gold count as the same statue (because the same gold is involved in both cases), the bicycles count as the same bicycles (because the same steel, plastic, etc. is involved in both cases). When considered this way, however, Aquinas's account looks problematic. According to the position he's laid out, it looks as if the original bike is identical with the reassembled bike in exactly the same way that the original bike would be identical with a bicycle made up of parts which had been melted down from the original bike and refashioned so that what used to be the fender was now the handlebars, etc. Same 'stuff', different artificial forms. This position goes directly against our intuitions in these cases, however. I think we want to say that in the case Hughes imagines, the reassembled bicycle *is* identical to the original bicycle, whereas the totally re-

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<sup>27</sup> One might suppose that, were every atom in the re-fashioned statue B situated precisely where each atom was situated in the original statue A, B and A would count as the same statue. Aquinas would, however, likely point out that this is still an appeal to features of the *matter* of the statue. His position on artifactual identity relies on sameness of form: the artifactual form of B is numerically distinct from A (in the same way that each miniature replica of David's Michelangelo possesses a distinct artifactual form), and so B and A would count as different statues, despite similarities in matter.

worked bicycle *isn't*. But it looks as if the position Aquinas adopts with respect to artifacts commits him to the highly unintuitive claim that the reassembled bicycle is identical to the original bicycle in exactly the same, very weak sense that the completely re-fashioned bicycle is identical to the original bike—that is, the sense in which both bicycles are made from the same 'stuff'. Fortunately, the real issue at hand isn't whether Aquinas has picked out the right criteria of identity for artifacts, but whether the distinction he draws between artifacts and natural things defends the principle of non-repeatability against Hughes's objection. The bicycles count as numerically distinct bicycles insofar as the artifactual form 'bicycle' is concerned.

For our purposes, what proves most important about the distinction Aquinas draws here between artifacts and natural substances is that the original objection explicitly specified that 'for no *natural* thing is that which is corrupted and that which is returned to being the same in number.' It seems clear that—in light of Aquinas's claim that artifacts and natural things possess differing identity conditions—we should thus take PNR as meant to refer only to *natural substances*, such as oak trees or hamsters (call this, if you want, the principle of *natural* non-repeatability).

This clarification about the scope of PNR has significant consequences for its plausibility, however, for none of the examples raised so far that appear to refute the principle of non-repeatability involve natural substances. Indeed, when PNR is properly understood, it becomes significantly harder to imagine counter-examples to the principle. The principle seems especially plausible in the case of living organisms, a subset of natural things, and the subset to which human beings (the natural things in question) belong. It's certainly more difficult to conceive of how a hamster which has died and decomposed could be reconstructed as the *very same* hamster than it is to conceive of how a bicycle which was taken apart could be restored.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> There are, of course, cases involving living organisms which appear somewhat vague:

suppose that a hamster dies, but that a dedicated veterinarian manages to bring it back to life a moment later. In that case (and similar cases), I believe Aquinas would claim that it is the same hamster (or human being, koala bear, etc.). In cases that involve a greater time span between the end of biological life processes and reanimation, however, it is more difficult to speculate on Aquinas's behalf. In general, though, it seems to me that the question here involves



Aquinas, after all, is addressing the corruption of a human body at death, not a Frankenstein-style case in which different body parts are removed from and then reattached to living organisms: he acknowledges that the matter that constitutes a human being's body can undergo substantial fluctuation throughout the life of the human being.<sup>29</sup>

For Aquinas, the key feature which sets living organisms apart from artifacts is that living beings (and not artifacts) possess a unifying principle of life—an *esse*—which seems impossible to restore to an organism once it has lost it. It's precisely the difficulty of explaining how a natural thing that has ceased to live can be numerically identical to something that exists at a later time, however, on which the first objection in SCG IV.80 focuses—not difficulties involving non-living lawnmowers and statues.

Given, then, that PNR is meant to apply only to natural substances and not to artifacts, it seems that Aquinas is faced in SCG IV.80 with a perfectly legitimate objection (and, in fact, one which is strikingly similar to contemporary objections to the resurrection of the body): namely, how can a resurrected human being be *the very same* human being who ceased to exist at death? As the objection points out, 'human beings are corrupted through death, and the body of a human being is broken down all the way to the first elements.' If human beings aren't 'repeatable' in the way that artifacts are, it does seem impossible for the resurrected David to be numerically identical with the original David.

#### Aquinas's Response

Nevertheless, given both Aquinas's general theory of human nature and what he's said about the relation between body and soul only one chapter earlier in SCG, it seems clear that Aquinas has an answer to this objection ready to hand. In particular, we might expect Aquinas to

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*epistemological* difficulties specifying the precise moment at which the substantial form/soul separates from matter, rather than metaphysical difficulties with Aquinas's account of human nature.

<sup>29</sup> See, ST Ia.119 and a slightly later passage SCG IV.81. In both places, Aquinas claims that the matter that composes the human body can change over time without compromising the identity of the human being, so long as the substantial form remains the same.

respond to this objection by explaining that human beings prove an exception to the general rule because—unlike all other living organisms—they possess immortal souls that survive their death. In other words, we might expect Aquinas to counter the objection by pointing out that human beings *aren't* completely corrupted at death; PNR is true, but the bodily resurrection doesn't violate it because the human being never actually ceased to exist in the relevant sense.

It's initially surprising, then, that Aquinas's response doesn't focus at all on the unique status of the rational soul. Rather than concentrating on the sense in which the human being isn't corrupted at death, Aquinas focuses instead on God's ability to do things which nature can't:

The power of nature is inferior to (*deficiens*) the divine power, just as the power of an instrument [is inferior to] the power of the principal agent. So, although this can't be brought about by an act of nature—namely, that a corrupted body be restored to life—nevertheless, this can be brought about by divine power. The reason nature can't do this is that nature always acts through some form. What has a form, however, already exists. But when [the body] was corrupted, it lost the form that used to be [its] principle of action. For this reason, that which is corrupted can't be brought back the same in number by an act of nature. But the divine power, which brings a thing into existence, is able to produce an effect of nature, just as is made through nature, *apart from nature*, as was shown above (SCG III.99). Thus, since the divine power remains the same even when things are corrupted, it can restore the corrupted thing to integrity.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *'Secundum hoc igitur ad primum dicendum quod virtus naturae deficiens est a virtute divina, sicut virtus instrumenti a virtute principalis agentis. Quamvis igitur operatione naturae hoc fieri non possit, ut corpus corruptum reparetur ad vitam, tamen virtute divina id fieri potest. Nam quod natura hoc facere non possit, ideo est quia natura semper per formam aliquam operatur. Quod autem habet formam, iam est. Cum vero corruptum est, formam amisit, quae poterat esse actionis principium. Unde operatione naturae, quod corruptum est idem numero reparari non potest. Sed divina virtus, quae res produxit in esse, sic per naturam operatur quod absque ea*

The argument here, simply put, is that God can do things nature can't, including restoring life to something that had lost it. The reason for this, Aquinas states here, is that nature always has to act through forms: if a natural object has been corrupted, then there's no form left for nature to act through. Thus, something that has been corrupted can't be restored by *nature*. God doesn't share this limitation, however, and so he's able to restore the same thing to existence even after it's been corrupted.

At first glance, this argument seems too strong—and unnecessarily so. Aquinas's claim that 'the divine power, which brings a thing into existence, is able to produce an effect of nature...apart from nature', and, thus, that 'since the divine power remains the same even when things are corrupted, it can restore the corrupted thing to integrity', could easily be read as the claim that, since God's power remains constant, God can recreate *anything* which has been corrupted as the very same thing.

But this claim seems doubtful at best, and blatantly false at worst. As Peter van Inwagen argues in a famous thought experiment, if a group of monks claims in 1997 to possess a manuscript 'written in St. Augustine's own hand' which was burned by Arians in 457, and yet which was miraculously recreated by God in 458, we're likely to have the following reaction:

The deed [thus described] seems impossible, even as an accomplishment of omnipotence. God certainly might have created a perfect duplicate of the original manuscript, but it would not have been that one; its earliest moment of existence would have been after Augustine's death; it would never have known the impress of his hand; it would not have been a part of the furniture of the world when he was alive; and so on (45).<sup>31</sup>

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*effectum naturae producere potest, ut superius est ostensum. Unde, cum virtus divina maneat eadem etiam rebus corruptis, potest corrupta in integrum reparare'* (4150).

<sup>31</sup> Peter van Inwagen 'the possibility of resurrection', in P. Van Inwagen (ed.) *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

In other words, even God can't recreate a physical object once it's been completely destroyed, because the recreated object wouldn't possess the right sort of causal connection to the original. At best, God could produce a perfect *duplicate* of the original object. This seems as true in the case of hamsters, oak trees, and human beings as it does in the case of the manuscript. On these grounds, then, it seems doubtful that even God could resurrect a human being who is numerically identical to one who has died and whose body has decomposed, despite what Aquinas claims here.

What makes Aquinas's 'God can do things nature cannot' response to the non-repeatability objection especially odd, moreover, is that it fails to appeal to the continued existence of the human substantial form—namely, the rational soul. Aquinas holds that one of the primary characteristics that distinguishes the substantial form of a human being from the substantial form of every other physical substance is that human souls survive the death of the composite, while the forms of all other material substances perish. In fact, as we saw in section I, Aquinas appeals to the immortality of the human soul in defending the very possibility of the bodily resurrection. If the substantial form of a human being never goes out of existence, though, it would appear that both God and nature *do* still has something to act through; so it seems, on this argument, that the resurrection of the body should be possible through either an act of God or an act of nature. Thus, it might appear that Aquinas has not only overlooked the obvious point that human forms survive death, but that he's also overlooked an obvious consequence of this claim—*viz.* that the bodily resurrection is something nature *can* accomplish.

### The Resurrection of the *Body*

I believe, however, that Aquinas is intentional in his not bringing the separated soul into his response to this objection, for I believe that the primary concern in both the objection and the reply is the status of the corrupted human *body* and only consequentially the status of the composite human being. The original objection focuses on the fact that 'the body of a human being is itself broken down all the way to the first elements'; in his response, Aquinas picks up on this worry, claiming that 'although this can't be brought about by nature—*namely, that a corrupted body be restored to life*—nevertheless, this can be brought about by divine power.' Human bodies, after all, don't differ from the bodies of other living organisms in terms of their decomposition after death.

With this focus, Aquinas's claim that nature doesn't have a form to work with in the case of human death seems more plausible. When the body is corrupted, it *does* lose the form that used to be its principle of action: the human soul persists *apart* from the body and outside the realm of nature. That's just what it means for a human being to be dead—the rational soul separates from matter and continues persists in a disembodied state until the bodily resurrection. Although the rational soul survives the death of the composite human being, then, it's not available to nature *qua* form. Thus, nature can't act through the form of the human being in order to restore the human body to life.

This also makes Aquinas's claim that in this case God can do something nature can't do seem more relevant. Although the human soul is not available to the natural realm, God still has 'access' to the human soul and can restore the human body by rejoining the body to its principle of action. If we restrict the scope of Aquinas's claim about divine power to only the cases in which a form survives the death of the composite—i.e., to only the case of human beings—it seems that Aquinas does have some reason for claiming that, although human beings can't be brought back to life through the normal course of nature, God can act above and beyond nature to reunite the still-existing human soul with matter; this act will result in the restoration of both that human being, and that human being's body.

Furthermore, even if Aquinas's claim is taken as applying broadly to all natural substances (and not just to human beings—the only natural substances whose substantial form survives death of the composite), at least some people believe that God can recreate a physical organism which has been completely destroyed. Here again, the distinction between natural substances and artifacts becomes relevant, since artifacts (such as manuscripts) appear to require a certain sort of origin to count as the same artifact. Lynne Rudder Baker, for instance, argues that van Inwagen's analogy of the burnt manuscript fails in one crucial respect to parallel the case of living organisms, particularly human beings:

But the case of the resurrection is different: Although God could not simply will that a certain manuscript have the property of having been inscribed by Augustine without involving Augustine, He could simply will (it seems to me) there to be a body that has the complexity to subserve Smith's mental states, and that is suitably related to Smith's biological body, to constitute Smith...If creation of a resurrected body is within the

power of God at all, it seems to me equally in his power to produce the conditions necessary for the body to constitute Smith, where what makes Smith the person she is are her characteristic intentional states, including first-person reference to her body.<sup>32</sup>

That is, Baker argues, if God is able to create a resurrected body at all, it seems plausible to suppose that God could guarantee that such a body constitutes a particular person. If we suppose that God could recreate a physical body numerically identical to David's original body, then it seems that Aquinas would be right to claim that God is able to recreate any physical organism at all. On such a position, even the overstated version of Aquinas's response would effectively counter the original objection.<sup>33</sup>

#### Causal Connections and Gappy Existence

Aquinas's focus on the corrupted human body (rather than on the rational soul) thus renders his reply more philosophically plausible than it first appears. It doesn't, however, seem adequate to explain how the identity of the resurrected to the original David is compatible with the radical break in continuity that death appears to constitute. Although Aquinas's reply to the objection is incomplete in this way, I believe that Aquinas's general account of human nature does possess the resources with which to respond to this worry. In the remainder of this paper, I sketch what such a response might look like by 1) appealing to the importance of immanent causal connections in identity and then 2) arguing that the persistence of the rational soul is

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<sup>32</sup> 'Need a Christian be a Mind/Body Dualist?', pg. 499.

<sup>33</sup> Baker's position relies on an interesting version of non-reductionist materialism according to which the human body constitutes the human being without being identical to that human being. See, Lynne R. Baker 'Why Constitution is Not Identity', *The Journal of Philosophy*, **94** (1997), 599-621.

sufficient to guarantee that the resurrected human being bears the appropriate causal relation to the original human being.<sup>34</sup>

As we've seen, Aquinas's claim that a human being is identical to the composite of matter and substantial form entails that a human being ceases to exist at death and prior to the bodily resurrection. Both defenders and critics of Aquinas have long identified this difficulty—what I'll call the problem of 'gappy' existence—as one of the most serious difficulties facing his account of human identity.<sup>35</sup> Sandra Edwards argues that Aquinas is, in fact, unable to answer this worry adequately: 'If a man is an organic unity of the sort Aquinas has in mind, then the body after death is not the man, nor is the disembodied soul the man... If the soul is not the man, then at death there is a break in the continuity of the individual [human being] which even bodily resurrection cannot remedy.'<sup>36</sup>

This is not a problem unique to Aquinas's account of human identity, however: gappy existence poses a problem for any non-substance-dualist account of personal identity (including materialist accounts) that attempts to accommodate the bodily resurrection without claiming that the body somehow survives our death (due to, e.g., last-minute fission or God's miraculous intervention). In general, any theory which holds that a person is not identical to her soul (and which also holds that there will be a bodily resurrection) will need to address the problem that—for all appearances—that person ceases to exist for a time at death.

Some people try to solve this problem by claiming that death constitutes the end of our existence as temporal creatures, and, thus, that there is no temporal gap in existence between death and the bodily resurrection. Brown, for instance, tries to solve the problem of 'gappy'

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<sup>34</sup> I cannot, of course, hope fully to spell out such an account here; the position I lay out here is meant to indicate in outline what such an account would look like.

<sup>35</sup> As Montague Brown asks, 'Granted that there is to be a resurrection of the body with the rational soul providing the transition from this life to the other, would not the break in continuity between the soul's information of the body in this life and its information of the resurrected body rule out the possibility of the person being one and the same in each case?' (193). Montague Brown 'Aquinas on the Resurrection of the Body', *The Thomist*, **56** (1992), 165-207.

<sup>36</sup> Sandra Edwards 'Saint Thomas Aquinas on "The Same Man"', *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*, **10** (1979), 94-95.

existence as follows: 'Discontinuity depends on a break in time, and...time is not at issue here' (193-4). This doesn't seem like a promising solution to me, at least with respect to Aquinas's account of human nature, for at least two reasons: 1) as we'll see, the real problem with the bodily resurrection doesn't seem to be a gap in *time* but rather a gap in *causal connections*, and 2) Aquinas is far more concerned with explaining human identity than he would need to be if he adopted Brown's line on the separated soul. Brown's defense of this position also rests on the supposition that separated souls exist in *aeviternity*, like the angels; there appears to be no textual support for this claim in Aquinas, however, and it would pose a variety of other problems for Aquinas's account of the bodily resurrection (since material beings necessarily exist in time).

For this reason, the growing consensus that temporal gaps in a person's existence *don't* necessarily pose a serious impediment to continued identity represents a particularly interesting development in contemporary philosophy. Spatio-temporal continuity is increasingly seen as neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for something's persisting as the same object.<sup>37</sup> Thus, many contemporary philosophers (whose intuitions are primed with heavy doses of Star Trek malfunctioning-transporter examples and defective brain-state transfer devices) don't see spatio-temporal gaps in existence as, *in and of themselves*, constituting an insurmountable difficulty for accounts of personal identity. Instead, such philosophers claim that the real challenge is providing an account of personal identity which guarantees the correct sort of *causal connections* between the person at time *t* and the person at time *t'*. Although Captain Kirk may not actually exist between time *t* and time *t'* (when the transporter he was using malfunctioned and failed to transport him instantaneously), there's a growing intuition that the Captain Kirk who's finally transported to the *Enterprise* at time *t'* is numerically identical to the Captain Kirk who entered the transporter at time *t*, so long as the right causal connections obtain.

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<sup>37</sup> See, Sydney Shoemaker 'identity, properties, and causality,' in S. Shoemaker (ed.) *Identity, Cause and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 234-260. Dean Zimmerman 'immanent causation' in J. E. Tomberlin (ed.) *Philosophical Perspectives XI: Mind, Causation, and World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1997), 433-71. Hud Hudson *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), especially chapters 4 and 7.



What this means for philosophical defenses of the bodily resurrection, of course, is that the problem of explaining how the resurrected David is identical to the original David isn't a problem posed first and foremost by a temporal gap in his existence, for a temporal gap will pose an infeasible difficulty only if it is accompanied by a gap in the relevant sorts of *causal connections*. If the problem facing a philosophical defense of the bodily resurrection involves preserving appropriate *causal* connections between the earthly and resurrected human being, however, then the real challenge for Aquinas is to provide an account of human identity that can explain how these sorts of causal connections are preserved between the resurrected and the original human being. And this is just what I think his account *does* provide, with its emphasis on the rational soul—that which makes a human being that which it is, and which continues at death—as grounding human identity.

To see this, it's helpful to look more closely at the role of immanent causation in diachronic identity. First, although it's difficult to pin down exactly what causal relations are 'appropriate', it seems true that in order for a material object to count as the same thing over time, its later states must be causally dependent on its earlier states in some way. As Dean Zimmerman says, '[I]n order that a given material object—or any other individual thing, for that matter—persist throughout a given period of time, there must be appropriate causal relations between the object as it is at earlier times and the object as it is at later times... Later states of a persisting body must be causally dependent, at least in part, upon its earlier states' (195).<sup>38</sup>

To preserve identity, moreover, the appropriate sort of causal dependence must obtain. In particular, although God's action of re-creating a human being at the bodily resurrection can be seen as ensuring some sort of causal dependence of the post-resurrection body on the earlier body (assuming that God fashions the resurrected David from a sort of 'blueprint' of the original David), it doesn't seem to be enough to guarantee diachronic identity: 'The way my body was at death [cannot] serve as a mere *blueprint* for God's creation of a new one at the general resurrection. That is causal contribution of a sort; but here the causal chain passes through God's mind; it doesn't remain at all times 'immanent' with respect to processes going on inside a living human body' (195).

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<sup>38</sup> Dean Zimmerman 'The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: the "Falling Elevator"

Model', *Faith and Philosophy*, **16** (1999), 194-212.

In particular, God's using a mere mental blueprint of David-at-death in re-creating David at the bodily resurrection doesn't appear to preserve the immanent causal connections which need to obtain between David's different temporal stages. God's act of re-creating David in this way would appear instead to constitute the beginning of a new life, in the same way that (as we saw in section IV) his creating in 458 a perfect duplicate of the manuscript burned in 457 constitutes the beginning a new manuscript and not the continuation of the old one. A life is the sort of thing whose 'causal paths' end at death; God *can't* re-create a being numerically identical to the original David if David's life has ended. It seems, then, that the resurrected human being can be identical to the original human being only if, in some way or other, the life of a human being *doesn't* end at death—that is, if the appropriate causal paths remain intact.<sup>39</sup>

It is no small matter, then, that Aquinas's general account of human nature leaves him in the position to make exactly this claim. According to Aquinas, a human being's life, understood as her *esse* ('being', or 'actualized existence'), doesn't end at death.<sup>40</sup> Rather, it continues in virtue of the soul's persistence. In his words:

It is clear that the *ℳ* and form is one, for matter has being in actuality only through form...But the rational soul clearly exceeds matter in action, for it has a certain action

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<sup>39</sup> This is, of course, what drives materialists such as Hudson, van Inwagen, and Zimmerman to claim that a person's life does not end at death, contrary to popular opinion. Rather, God preserves David's life in some way or another by preserving whatever material component of the person is necessary for David's continued identity.

<sup>40</sup> The Latin word '*esse*' is notoriously difficult to render in English in a way that preserves its original meaning. The infinitive form of the verb 'to be', '*esse*' is used by many medieval scholars (including Aquinas) to indicate the 'act of existing' an actual being possesses, where this differs from that thing's essence. Someone could meaningfully describe the essence of a human being (or a hamster), even if no such animal existed at that moment in time. A thing's *actuated* essence—its existence—is its '*esse*'.

apart from bodily organs, namely intellection. For this reason, [the soul] doesn't have *esse* only when it's joined to matter. Therefore, its *esse*, which was [the *esse*] of the composite, remains in the soul after the dissolution of the body; and when the body is restored in the resurrection, it is brought back in the same *esse*—the *esse* which remains in the soul (SCG IV.81).<sup>41</sup>

Although David doesn't exist *as such* when his soul is separated from matter, then, the resurrected David doesn't have two beginnings of existence, properly speaking, because his life—his *esse*—continues *via* his soul at his death.

One might worry here that claiming that David doesn't exist, properly speaking, while his existence continues is—at best—a contradiction in terms. Yet this is precisely Aquinas's view, and its plausibility rests entirely on the sense in which the rational soul differs from both all physical objects and the substantial forms of all other physical substances. Although it is true on Aquinas's account that, were you to remove David's foot from the rest of his body, David's foot would possess a new '*esse*' (since it's no longer 'David's foot' but now 'detached foot'), the same is not true in the case of the separated soul. Because the soul can (and does) persist in separation from matter—unlike all other substantial forms—Aquinas claims that it preserves David's original *esse*. As he claims in the above passage, because the soul can persist apart from matter, its *esse*, 'which was [the *esse*] of the composite, remains in the soul after the dissolution of the body; and when the body is restored in the resurrection, it is brought back in the same *esse*—the *esse* which remains in the soul'. In short, the soul's continuing to exist proves sufficient for David's *esse* to continue to exist.

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<sup>41</sup> '*Manifestum est enim quod materiae et formae unum est esse: non enim materia habet esse in actu nisi per formam...Anima vero rationalis, manifestum est quod excedit materiam in operari: habet enim aliquam operationem absque participatione organi corporalis, scilicet intelligere. Unde et esse suum non est solum in concretione ad materiam. Esse igitur eius, quod erat compositi, manet in ipsa corpore dissoluto: et reparato corpore in resurrectione, in idem esse reducitur quod remansit in anima'* (4156).

Once we grant Aquinas the existence of this separated soul, I believe that we can make sense of his claims about the rational soul's grounding the identity of the human being (without being identical to the human being) in terms of its guaranteeing the proper sorts of immanent causal relations.<sup>42</sup> It seems to me that, on Aquinas's account of human nature, the persistence of the rational soul—the substantial form of the human body—at death can be seen as meeting Zimmerman's reasonable requirement of 'preserving the self-sustaining structure peculiar to the living thing in question' even in separation from matter. During earthly life, the persistence of the human soul guarantees the preservation of such a structure peculiar to the living human being, and there's no reason why, if the soul persists at death, it should be thought of as losing its ability to preserve that structure after the human being's death simply because that ability is not being actualized.<sup>43</sup>

On Aquinas's theory, then, the very nature of the human soul guarantees that the causal connections between the earlier stages of David's earthly existence to the later stages of his resurrected existence are of the 'right sort'. For the appropriate immanent causal relations to obtain, David's resurrected body need to be the way it is primarily because of the way his body

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<sup>42</sup> I can't hope to defend here Aquinas's claim that the human soul can exist in separation from matter. I think, however, that Eleonore Stump (1995) is right in claiming that 1) Aquinas is a sort of non-reductionist materialist, and that 2) non-reductive materialism might create the logical space necessary for a subsistent soul. (See also Richard Boyd's 'materialism without reductionism: what physicalism does not entail' in N. Block (ed.) *Readings in Philosophy of Psychology* vol. I, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.))

<sup>43</sup> This, I take it, is the main force of the arguments Aquinas makes in SCG IV.81 on behalf of the continuity of the essential principles of the human being. For a defense of this claim in more contemporary terms, see Eleonore Stump's discussion of Aquinas's account of identity post-death and the continuity of a configured configurer in *Aquinas*, chapters one and four; see also Robert Pasnau's discussions of this topic in *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: a Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae Ia 75-89* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

was at death, and this is precisely what holds true on Aquinas's account. David's body was the way it was at death primarily because of David's structuring, vivifying, life-preserving soul, and David's resurrected body is the way it is primarily because of that same soul, whose existence continues uninterrupted throughout earthly life, death, and the bodily resurrection. In this way, David's resurrected existence as David—instead of being explained directly in terms of God's creative actions—can be explained in terms of immanent causal connections obtaining between his earlier and later temporal stages. Thus, it seems that the continued existence of the rational soul is sufficient to preserve the necessary causal connections between the resurrected and the original David, despite the temporal gap in David's physical existence after death and prior to the resurrection of the body.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, Aquinas's account builds the preservation of our identity into the very center of his theory of human nature. God's only role in the bodily resurrection in this theory is to reunite our forms with matter. Since human beings are by nature composites of form and matter (the substantial form of David makes him what he is: a living, breathing human being, while his form's unique relation to his body distinguishes him from all other human beings), God's role in the bodily resurrection can be seen as the act of putting right what was put wrong by death: that is, re-joining what's meant by nature to be together—form and matter. In this way, Aquinas's account has an edge on contemporary accounts that require God's dramatic intervention at the moment of death, 'snatching' our bodies or central nervous systems at the moment of death and replacing them with simulacra, or 'fissing' all of our cells at the moment of death.<sup>45</sup>

To sum up, on Aquinas's account of human nature, David's identity over time is generally ensured by the persistence of his substantial form in union with some matter or other. At death, however, David's soul persists in separation until it's joined again with matter at the bodily resurrection. Although David doesn't exist, properly speaking, during this period of

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<sup>44</sup> Again, it's crucial for Aquinas's explanation of post-resurrection identity that David's *esse* continues after his death, preserved by his soul. This is what allows Aquinas to claim that David's resurrected self constitutes a different stage of the same life, rather than constituting the beginning of a new person who's qualitatively identical to David.

<sup>45</sup> See van Inwagen and Zimmerman's articles on the bodily resurrection, cited above.

separation, the persistence of his soul is sufficient to guarantee the persistence of the appropriate sorts of immanent causal relations between David's temporal stages, and so the resurrected David is causally related to the original David in a way sufficient for him to count as the same human being. Furthermore, the re-joining of David's soul with matter results in the re-creation of David's own body, since David's body just is the physical organism resulting from the union of his substantial form with matter.

In conclusion, although not without its problems, Aquinas's account of human nature yields an account of the bodily resurrection that proves not only highly interesting but also at least as (if not more) plausible than many modern accounts. I believe that philosophers and theologians alike should agree that his theory deserves attention not just for its historical importance but for its continued relevance to contemporary discussions.<sup>46</sup>

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