

Resurrection, Reassembly, and Reconstitution: Aquinas on the Soul

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Introduction

In his entry on the immortality of the soul in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Richard Swinburne calls our attention to a problem often raised in connection with the Christian doctrine of resurrection. He says:

[...] if I come to live again, the question arises as to what makes some subsequent human me, for [at death] my body will be largely if not entirely destroyed. If the answer is given that (most of) the atoms of my original body will be reassembled into bodily form, there are two problems. First, many of the atoms may no longer exist; they may have been transmuted into energy. And second, what proportion of the atoms do we need? Sixty per cent, seventy per cent, or what? If it is mere atoms which make some body mine and so some living human me, then no body will be fully mine unless it has all my atoms. Yet some of my atoms, even if not destroyed, will have come to form other human bodies.¹

Peter van Inwagen raises roughly the same problem in a slightly different way. In his entry on resurrection in the *Routledge Encyclopedia*, he says:

It can be plausibly argued that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead presupposes some form of dualism. For if human persons are not immaterial souls, if they are living animals, then it would seem that death must be the end of them. A living animal is a material object. A material object is composed, at any given moment, of certain atoms. But if one is composed of certain atoms today, it is clear from what we know about the metabolisms of living things that one was not composed of those same atoms a year ago: one must then have been composed of a set of atoms that hardly overlaps the set of atoms that composes one today – and so for any living organism. This fact, the fact that the atoms of which a living organism is composed are in continuous flux, is a stumbling block for the materialist who believes in resurrection.

Suppose, then, that God proposes to raise Socrates from the dead. How shall he accomplish this? How shall even omnipotence bring back a particular person who lived long ago and has returned to the dust? – whose former atoms have been, for millennia, spread pretty evenly throughout the biosphere? This question does not confront the dualist, who will say either that there is no need to bring Socrates back (because, so to speak, Socrates has never left), or else

1 Swinburne (1998), 45.

that Socrates can be brought back simply by providing his soul (which still exists) with a newly created human body. But what will the materialist say? From the point of view of the materialist, it looks as if asking God to bring Socrates back is like asking him to bring back the snows of yesteryear or the light of other days. For what can even omnipotence do but reassemble? What else is there to do? And reassembly is not enough [...].²

Van Inwagen goes on to pose a challenge for any theory which supposes both that there is a resurrection for human beings and that human beings are material composites. He says:

[...] if Socrates was a material thing, a living organism, then, if a man who lives at some time after Socrates' death and physical dissolution is to be *Socrates*, there will have to be some sort of material and causal continuity between the matter that composed Socrates at the moment of his death and the matter that at any time composes that man. [...] But 'physical dissolution' and 'material and causal continuity' are hard to reconcile. To show how the continuity requirement can be satisfied, despite appearances – or else to show that the continuity requirement is illusory – is a problem that must be solved if a philosophically satisfactory 'materialist' theory of resurrection is to be devised.³

This problem is thought by many to afflict Aquinas's theory of resurrection too, because Aquinas does not identify a human being with his soul. What we now commonly call 'Cartesian dualism' was an account of human beings Aquinas knew and associated with Plato, and he repudiated it energetically.⁴ So, for example, Aquinas says:

Plato claimed that a human being is not a composite of soul and body but that a

2 Van Inwagen (1998), 295f.

3 Van Inwagen (1998), 296.

4 Elsewhere I have argued that Aquinas's own position escapes many of the problems thought to afflict Cartesian dualism; see the chapter on the soul in Stump (2003), 191-216. In his gracious and helpful review of the book, Robert Pasnau (2005), 203-206, raises objections to my defense of Aquinas's non-Cartesian dualism. Speaking of my attempt to dissociate Aquinas's position from that commonly attributed to Descartes, Pasnau says, "Aquinas's brand of interactive dualism is said to depend on the claim that 'there is no efficient causal interaction between the soul and the matter it informs' [...], but in subsequent chapters it turns out to be important that the soul's agent intellect exercises efficient causality on the body's phantasms [...] and that the will is the efficient cause of motion in the body [...]." But, in my view, Pasnau is here confused about the different kinds of causal interaction at issue. It is true that the agent intellect exercises efficient causality on the phantasms – but these are not material things informed by the soul. It is also true that the will exercises efficient causality on the parts of the body – but the parts of the body are not the matter which is informed by the soul. What the soul informs is *prime* matter, and this is matter which is in potentiality only and so metaphysically incapable of being acted on with efficient causality by anything.

human being is the soul itself using a body [...]. But this position is shown to be impossible. For an animal and a human being are natural, sense-perceptible things. But this would not be the case if a body and its parts did not belong to the essence of a human being and of an animal. Instead, on Plato's view, the whole essence of both a human being and an animal would be the soul, although the soul isn't anything sense-perceptible or material. And for this reason it is impossible that [something that is] a human being and an animal be a soul using a body.⁵

On Aquinas's own view, the soul is the form of the body, and a human being is a composite of matter and form. How, then, does Aquinas's theory of resurrection deal with the problems posed for non-Cartesian (or, as Aquinas would think of it, non-Platonic) theories by van Inwagen and Swinburne? On Aquinas's theory of resurrection and his account of human beings as material composites, what makes the resurrected body of Socrates the same body Socrates had during his earthly life? What makes the resurrected Socrates Socrates?

As far as that goes, on Aquinas's account how are we to understand what happens to a human being between earthly death and resurrection in an after-life? Aquinas believes that the soul is capable of existence without the body; between earthly death and resurrection, he thinks that the soul persists separated from the body. But the separated soul is not a material composite. So what are we to say about a human being in the period in which all that remains of him is the separated soul? Does he continue to exist during that period? If he does, then in what sense is it true to say that he is a material composite? On the other hand, if he is a material composite, then how could it be true that he exists when the matter composing him is gone?

In this paper, I want to try to shed some light on these questions and on Aquinas's theory of the resurrection by looking with some care at Aquinas's basic metaphysics of matter and form as well as at his theological treatments of the persistence of the soul and the nature of the resurrection. I will first consider one interpretation of Aquinas's position on these issues which is held by some contemporary expositors of his views but which is incorrect in my view. Then I will try to sketch an interpretation of Aquinas's position which is preferable; and I will show the way in which, on that interpretation, Aquinas's position accounts for the identity of a resurrected human being.

5 *Summa contra gentiles* II.57.

An unworkable interpretation of Aquinas

Without any doubt, Aquinas accepted the Christian doctrine that, after the death and before the resurrection of the body, the soul persists in a separated state. Since it is also beyond doubt that for Aquinas a human being is a material composite, some scholars take it as evident that for Aquinas the separated soul is not the same as the human being whose soul it was during that person's life on earth. On their interpretation of Aquinas, Aquinas thinks that the soul of Socrates, separated from the body of Socrates, is not a human being and that, for this reason, the soul of Socrates is not Socrates. In the view of these interpreters, Aquinas's position is that when Socrates's soul is separated from Socrates's body, Socrates ceases to exist. So, for example, van Inwagen says:

Aquinas [...] sees the human person as essentially a composite of a human soul and a human body. According to the 'composite' theory, a person cannot exist without a body: to exist is for one's soul (always numerically the same) to animate some human body or other. (In the interval between one's death and one's receiving a new body at the time of the general resurrection, one's soul exists and thinks and has experiences, but *one* does not, strictly speaking, exist.)⁶

Van Inwagen, of course, is a metaphysician and not a scholar of medieval philosophy. But the interpretation of Aquinas's views van Inwagen expresses can be found even among those whose area of expertise includes the thought of Aquinas. So, for example, Robert Pasnau also argues that for Aquinas a separated soul is not a human being and therefore that a human being ceases to exist at death, on Aquinas's position. As one example supporting this interpretation, Pasnau cites a passage from Aquinas's *Sentence* commentary in which Aquinas is discussing the separated soul of Abraham. In that place, as Pasnau rightly points out, "Aquinas remarks [...] that 'Abraham's soul is not, strictly speaking, Abraham himself'".⁷ Pasnau claims that Aquinas "insists on this point precisely so as to argue that bodily resurrection is necessary for human immortality. Hence [Aquinas] immediately concludes: 'So Abraham's soul's having life would not suffice for Abraham's being alive.'" In Pasnau's view, this passage shows

6 Van Inwagen (1998), 295.

7 The passage is cited by Pasnau as *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* IV 43.1.1.1 ad 2. For Pasnau's extended argument in defense of his own interpretation of Aquinas's account of the soul, see his excellent book *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature. A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae Ia 75-89* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

that Aquinas cannot have supposed that “the persistence of the soul ‘is sufficient for the existence’ of the human being”. Rather, in Pasnau’s view, the passage makes plain that Aquinas “would deny that a human soul could constitute a human being.”

For Pasnau as for van Inwagen, then, Aquinas must hold that a human being ceases to exist at bodily death and comes back into existence only with the resurrection of the body. On this interpretation of Aquinas’s position, the challenge for Aquinas is to find some solution to the problems afflicting those who accept human immortality but reject Cartesian (or Platonic) dualism.

But I do not think that the interpretation of Aquinas represented by the views of Pasnau and van Inwagen can possibly be right. To see why not, we need to consider Aquinas’s views of the separated soul and his theological claims about it.

To begin with, the separated soul has a mind. It has both sensory and intellectual knowledge; it can know singulars as well as universals. Furthermore, insofar as the separated soul of Socrates, for example, is the rational soul which configured Socrates during his earthly life, the mind of the separated soul of Socrates is the mind of Socrates. The intellectual faculties of the separated soul of Socrates are the intellectual faculties Socrates had during his lifetime. So, for example, the memories that Socrates laid down during his earthly life are the memories of the separated soul of Socrates. And insofar as the will is a rational faculty, the will of the separated soul of Socrates is the same will as the will which Socrates had during his lifetime. Finally, the separated soul also has experiences and passions. If it is in hell, for example, the separated soul experiences pain and has the passion of sorrow; and the mind in the separated soul affected by these passions is the mind of Socrates. But how can these things be true if Socrates has ceased to exist?

On the other hand, if van Inwagen and Pasnau are right in their interpretation that, for Aquinas, Socrates ceases to exist when he dies and that the separated soul of Socrates is not Socrates, we will have an array of very troubling questions.

Suppose we ask about the separated soul that typical medieval question, *quid est?* If the separated soul which thinks, knows, wills, desires, and grieves is not a human being, then what is it? It is clearly a *hoc aliquid*, a something. That is, it has no place on any of the nine categories of being

other than substance, since those are all categories of accidents; but no accident can think, will, and suffer. Since, on the view of Pasnau and van Inwagen, the separated soul is not a human being, however, it also apparently does not fall under the category of *rational animal*. So what is it then? It is true that Aquinas's ontology allows for parts of substances to continue to exist in detachment from the substances of which they are parts; a severed hand of a human being can persist after its detachment from the human body, for example. But Aquinas denies that a detached part of a material composite is a substance, and his reason for this position is precisely that such a part has its characteristic function only when it is not detached but is included in the whole it helps to constitute. So if the soul maintains its characteristic intellectual functions after it is detached from its whole, namely, the human being it informed, then it cannot be relegated to the class of parts of substances, such as severed hands. Where in Aquinas's ontology does it then belong?

But there is an even worse question in this neighborhood. Since, on this interpretation of Aquinas, the separated soul of Socrates is not Socrates and yet thinks, wills, and feels, we can ask not only *what* the separated soul is but also *who* it is. How could there be something which has a mind and a will but is not *somebody*? Clearly, anything which thinks, wills, and feels has to be a person in some sense of the term. In fact, since the separated soul has rational capacities and is capable of independent existence, it seems to fit the definition of a person Aquinas inherits from Boethius: a person is an individual substance of a rational nature. Or if that is too much to say, then at least this is true: for Aquinas, the separated soul is an independently existing thing with rational capacities. So if the separated soul of Socrates is not Socrates, then who is it?

And what happens to the thinking, experiencing separated soul when Socrates is resurrected? Does the separated soul go out of existence when Socrates comes back into existence, since the separated soul is not the same as Socrates? As far as that goes, anything which thinks and wills is a living thing. So does the separated soul *die* when Socrates is resurrected? Does the separated soul *know* that it will die when Socrates returns to existence? Does the separated soul desire that the resurrection of Socrates be postponed as long as possible so that it might *not* die? On the other hand, if the separated soul does not die or go out of existence when Socrates is resurrected, then does the separated soul somehow persist in the

resurrected Socrates? But how could that be? If the soul is an existent thing which is different from Socrates and yet persists in the resurrected Socrates, then in what sense could the resurrected Socrates be one thing? On the contrary, if the separated soul is not Socrates and yet persists in the resurrected Socrates, then the resurrected Socrates seems to be Socrates and the separated soul.

And there is worse to come. On Aquinas's theological views, before the general judgment of all humanity, each separated soul is judged, individually, at the moment of the bodily death of the human being whose soul it is. But at that individual judgment, the separated soul is judged on the basis of the actions and dispositions of the human being it informed. The separated soul of Socrates is judged by Christ on the basis of the life of Socrates; and, on the basis of this judgment, the soul either enjoys the blessings of heaven or the pains of the fires of hell. Aquinas says:

When the soul is separated from the body, it receives its reward or punishment immediately for those things which it did in the body [...]. In the providence of God, rewards and punishments are due to rational creatures. Since when they are separated from the body, they are immediately capable both of glory and of punishment, they immediately receive one or the other; and neither the reward of the good nor the punishment of the bad is put off until the souls take up their bodies again.⁸

But if the soul of Socrates is not Socrates, then what justice is there in assigning to the separated soul either the reward or the punishment merited by Socrates, who is not the soul? Furthermore, on Aquinas's views, the soul does not exist in advance of the human being whose soul it is. So if the separated soul of Socrates is not Socrates, then whatever and whoever the separated soul is, it comes into existence for the first time with the death of Socrates. But what sense does it make to suppose that God assigns a reward or a punishment for a created thing which has done nothing worthy of reward or punishment in virtue of having done nothing at all, since it comes into existence only at the time of the divine judgment? (There is no point in looking to the doctrine of predestination for help here, since the doctrine of predestination is separate from the doctrine of judgment. Divine predestination of a person is independent of any merits on the part of the person predestined, but judgment is precisely a response to the merits or demerits of the person judged.)

Worse yet, the separated soul of a saint, say, Dominic, goes to heaven,

8 *Summa contra gentiles* IV.91.

on Aquinas's view, and enjoys the beatific vision, loving God and being loved by God. Aquinas says that

[...] when the body is destroyed, the soul is brought to an eternal and heavenly home, which is nothing other than the enjoyment of the deity, as the angels enjoy it in heaven [...]. And so, immediately, when the holy soul is separated from the body, it sees God by sight. And this is the final beatitude.⁹

But if the separated soul of Dominic is not Dominic, then that something-which-is-not-Dominic, with a mind and a will, loves God in heaven and is loved by him – but only for the period between the death and the resurrection of Dominic. At the point of the resurrection of Dominic, the place in the loving union with God held by the separated soul of Dominic is taken by Dominic himself. So something that God loves in union with him, the separated soul of Dominic, God ceases to hold in loving union with himself in heaven when Dominic is resurrected. For no fault on the part of the separated soul of Dominic, the bliss the separated soul had in loving union with God terminates, never to be resumed. Does the separated soul know and fear this loss of union with God? Or is the separated soul in the beatific vision of heaven in a state of ignorance about its future loss of beatitude? And what about God, on this interpretation of Aquinas? On this interpretation, we have to say that God loses forever one of his beloveds, the separated soul of Dominic, who had been united to God for a period of time in the union and beatific vision of heaven.

Not only are these views theological gibberish, but they are contradicted by Aquinas's explicit claims about the nature of the separated soul's bliss. He says, for example, that

[...] souls immediately after their separation from the body become unchangeable as regards the will [...]. [...] beatitude, which consists in the vision of God, is everlasting [...]. But it is not possible for a soul to be blessed if its will did not have rectitude [...]. And so it must be that the rectitude of the will in the blessed soul is everlasting [...].¹⁰

In addition, if a separated soul is not the same human being as the person whose soul it is, then the pain or bliss of the separated soul immediately after death is not the pain or bliss of the human being whose soul it is. But Aquinas uses the bliss of the redeemed separated soul immediately after death as a way of showing that death is not to be feared. He says:

But if someone wants to object that the Apostle did not say that immediately

9 *Summa contra gentiles* IV.91.

10 *Summa contra gentiles* IV.92.

when the body is destroyed, we will have an eternal home in heaven in actuality, but rather only in hope – [...] this is clearly contrary to the Apostle’s intention [...]. The point is made even more clearly [in the Pauline lines] that follow: “[...] we are confident and are willing, with a good will, to be absent from the body, and to be present to the Lord” [...]. But we should be willing in vain “to be absent from the body,” – that is, separated [from the body] – unless we were to be present immediately to the Lord [...]. Immediately, therefore, when the holy soul is separated from the body, it sees God by sight [...]. Therefore, the Apostle was hoping that immediately after that destruction of his body he would come to heaven.¹¹

In this passage, it is clear that, on Aquinas’s views, when the separated soul of Paul is in heaven, Paul himself is in heaven, contrary to the interpretation which takes Aquinas to hold that a human being exists only in an embodied condition.

Nor is this the end of the problems generated by this interpretation of Aquinas. For example, it is also Christian doctrine, explicitly accepted, explained, and developed by Aquinas that, at Christ’s death, before the last judgment and the resurrection of the body, Christ harrowed hell. On this doctrine, the souls of those believing Jews who lived before the time of Christ and were waiting for the Messiah were sent to Limbo; and, in the harrowing of hell, Christ brought them out of Limbo into heaven. But on the interpretation of Aquinas according to which the separated soul of Abraham is not Abraham, Aquinas has to hold that Abraham himself was not in Limbo when the separated soul of Abraham was in Limbo. Instead, on this interpretation of Aquinas, Aquinas has to say that Abraham went out of existence with his death; and he will return to existence only when he is resurrected, at which time he will be in heaven with all the redeemed. And so, since the separated soul of Abraham was removed from Limbo before the general resurrection of the body, there is in fact no time ever at which Abraham was in Limbo. And since there were only separated souls in Limbo at the time of Christ’s harrowing of hell, then, on this interpretation, Aquinas will also have to say that Christ never took any human beings from Limbo.

These claims are not only obviously heretical, so that it is historically implausible to attribute them to Aquinas, but they are also contradicted by explicit claims of Aquinas’s. For example, Aquinas says:

[...] the holy Fathers were held in hell because access to the life of glory was not available to them on account of the sin of our first parent. [...] when Christ

11 *Summa contra gentiles* IV.91.

descended into hell, he freed the holy Fathers from hell. [...]. [So] it is written that “despoiling the principalities and powers,” namely, of hell, by taking out Isaac and Jacob and the other just souls, “he brought them over,” that is, “he brought them far from the kingdom of darkness into heaven,” as the gloss explains.¹²

In this passage, Aquinas makes plain his view that, at the time of Christ’s descent into Hell, when Limbo contained only separated souls, the inhabitants of Limbo were the patriarchs themselves. On Aquinas’s view, not *just* the separated souls of Isaac and Jacob, but Isaac and Jacob themselves, were taken from Limbo when the souls were delivered in Christ’s harrowing of hell.

These texts and many others make plain the unacceptability of the interpretation which assigns to Aquinas the view that a human being ceases to exist at death and that a separated soul is not the same human being as the person whose soul it is. That interpretation has to attribute to Aquinas views which make his theological position bizarre or heretical and which are explicitly denied by him in one place or another. It is abundantly clear therefore that for Aquinas the existence of the separated soul is sufficient for the existence of the human being whose soul it is.

But, then, we need to ask, how can Aquinas also hold that a human being is a material composite? It seems as if, for Aquinas, either a human being is identical to his soul, in which case a human being is not a material composite, or else a human being is a material composite, in which case he is not identical to his soul. How is it possible for a human being to be a material composite and yet to continue to exist in the absence of his body?

The soul as substantial form

In order to deal with these questions, it will be helpful to remind ourselves of some parts of Aquinas’s general account of form, since Aquinas takes the soul to be the form of the body.¹³

Although Aquinas thinks that not all forms are forms of material objects, nevertheless on his view all material things are composites of matter and form. In the case of human beings, the substantial form of the whole is

12 *Summa theologiae* III.52.5.

13 For further discussion of the metaphysical issues raised here and in subsequent sections in connection with Aquinas’s theory of forms, see the chapter on Aquinas’s theory of things in Stump (2003), 35-60.

the soul. Now a substantial form of a material object such as a human being is that in virtue of which the material object is a member of the species to which it belongs. Furthermore, the substantial form is the configuration or organization of the matter of that object in such a way that it gives that object its species-specific causal powers. In general, form for Aquinas is not static but dynamic. According to Aquinas, at death, the soul leaves the body and is replaced with a different, non-animating substantial form. The matter of the dead body is then configured in a substantially different way.¹⁴ That is why after death the body can be called ‘a human body’ only equivocally. For the same reason, Aquinas thinks that when we use the names of the parts for the dead body, we use those words equivocally. Once a human being dies and the soul is gone, Aquinas says, we use words such as ‘flesh’ or ‘eye’ equivocally if we apply them to parts of the corpse.¹⁵

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Aquinas thinks that any given substance has only one substantial form.¹⁶ That is, a material substance such as a cat does not have one substantial form in virtue of which it is a cat, another in virtue of which it is an animal, a third in virtue of which it is a living thing, a fourth in virtue of which it is a material thing, and so on. On Aquinas’s view, there is just one substantial form for any substance which makes it what it is; the one substantial form of a cat makes the cat a material object, a living thing, an animal, and a cat. When Aquinas says that the soul is the form of the body, he means that the soul is the single, substantial form which configures the matter of a human being into a rational animate corporeal substance.

For Aquinas, the individuation of a substance is also a function of its substantial form. Any given substance is *this* thing just in virtue of the fact that the form which configures it is *this* form. For example, a material substance such as Socrates is this human being in virtue of having *this* substantial form. What is necessary and sufficient for something to be identical to Socrates is that its substantial form be identical to the substantial

14 *Sententia libri De anima* II.11.226.

15 *Quaestio disputata de anima* un.9.

16 Cf., for example, *Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis* un.3. For a good account of this medieval controversy over substantial forms, see, for example, Pegis (1934). See also the discussion in the chapter on Aquinas’s theory of things in Stump (2003), 35-60.

form of Socrates.¹⁷

But how are the substantial forms of material objects such as human beings individuated? The answer is expressed in Aquinas's line that matter individuates.¹⁸ The line is well-known, but its meaning is less evident.

For Aquinas, the substantial form of any material substance configures prime matter, that is, matter which is devoid of every form, without any configuration. On the other hand, when Aquinas attempts to explain the concept of matter relevant to individuation, he tends to speak of it as matter under *indeterminate* dimensions,¹⁹ that is, matter which is extended in three dimensions but where the degree of extension in any dimension is not specified. Now any actually existing matter has *determinate* dimensions. But the particular degree of extension in a dimension is one thing; the materiality, as it were, of matter is another thing. The determinate dimensions of a material thing have to do with exactly what space that thing occupies. On the other hand, matter under indeterminate dimensions, that is, the *materiality* of the matter, is responsible for the space-occupying feature itself. Matter is the sort of thing which is *here* now, in a way that numbers, for example, are not. But this feature of matter, its space-occupying character, can be considered without specifying the precise spatial locations which any particular material thing occupies. Matter is *this* matter in virtue of occupying *this* space, even if the dimensions of that space are indeterminate. And so because matter has an irreducible space-occupying character, we can distinguish one substantial form from another by its association with matter. This substantial form is the configuration of this matter, and that one is the configuration of that matter.²⁰

For Aquinas, then, all the matter of a material substance is configured directly by a particular substantial form. That is, the substantial form of a

17 *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate* 2.4.2; cf. also *Summa theologiae* I.119.1 and *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia* 9.1.

18 Perhaps the most detailed exposition of this view of his is in his *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate* 2.4.2.

19 *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate* 2.4.2. Aquinas does not always describe his position on this score in the same way, and the variation in terminology suggests to some scholars either a development in his thought or a series of changes of mind. The issue is complicated, and so I am leaving it to one side here. For the discussion of the scholarly controversy, see Wippel (2000), 357-373.

20 Cf., e.g., *Summa theologiae* III.3.7 ad 1 where Aquinas says that a substantial form is multiplied in accordance with the division of matter.

substance such as a cat does not weave together the integral parts of the cat – the legs and trunk and so on – or any other matter-form composites in the cat. Rather, every material part of the cat is a cat-ish part, which is what it is in virtue of being informed by the substantial form *cat*. But what makes a substantial form *cat* this particular substantial form *cat* is that there is some particular materiality, *now* and *here*, which is informed by that form. In the case of human beings, Aquinas's idea is the same. What individuates Socrates is *this* substantial form of a human being; and a substantial form of a material substance such as Socrates is *this* substantial form in virtue of the fact that it configures *this* matter.

On this way of understanding the form that is the human soul, it is also easier to see why Aquinas thinks that the soul makes matter be not just human but also this human being. The soul is imposed on prime matter, whose basic materiality or extensibility then differentiates this form with its spatio-temporal location from any other. In fact, Aquinas thinks that, for human beings, each soul is, as it were, handcrafted by God to inform *this* matter.²¹

For Aquinas, then, the soul is, we might say, an individual configured configurer of matter.

Aquinas's way of individuating the substantial forms of material substances has seemed to some people to pose a problem for his claim that the separated soul can exist independently of the body after death. It is true that the separated soul of Socrates will differ from the separated soul of Plato in virtue of having configured the body of Socrates rather than the body of Plato. But some philosophers suppose that, even so, Aquinas is stuck with an incoherent position. So, for example, Swinburne says:

If Aquinas' view is to be spelled out coherently, it must be done [...] [in terms of intrinsic properties of the soul]. What did happen to a soul in the past, namely that it was united to a certain body, and will happen to it in future cannot make it the soul it is now. That must be something internal to it now. Religious believers who believe that humans can exist without their bodies, even if only temporarily, must hold that. So too must any believer who holds that there is life after death, even if souls do not exist separately from bodies.²²

I am not sure why Swinburne supposes that a historical characteristic of a thing is insufficient for its individuation. If engineers succeed in constructing an exact duplicate, molecule for molecule identical, of Michel-

21 But see also the other issues having to do with the individuation of the soul discussed in Stump (2003), 35-60.

22 Swinburne (1998), 45.

angelo's David, it will certainly be possible to distinguish the duplicate from the original. The original was made by Michelangelo, and the duplicate was not. Here a historical characteristic, not an intrinsic one, is sufficient to distinguish the two intrinsically identical things.

But we need not sort this disagreement out, because, of course, for Aquinas there *will* be intrinsic differences between the separated soul of Socrates and the separated soul of Plato. There is continuity of cognitive and conative faculties, with their dispositions and occurrent conditions, between an embodied person such as Socrates and his separated soul. For example, the separated soul of Socrates has the memories of Socrates rather than those of Plato. As far as that goes, all the intellectual faculties, including the rational will, of Socrates are preserved in his separated soul. But what is contained in these faculties of the separated soul of Socrates, the habits of the will as well as the knowledge, will be different from those in the faculties of the separated soul of Plato. And so there are these intrinsic differences between the separated souls of Socrates and Plato: the things known, willed, and remembered by the separated soul are different from those known, willed, and remembered by the separated soul of Plato.

Consequently, on Aquinas's view, both intrinsic and historical characteristics differentiate one separated soul from another. On Aquinas's position,

[...] everything has its being and its individuation from the same source. [...] Therefore, as the being of the soul is from God as from an active principle, [...] so also the individuation of the soul, even if it has a certain relationship to the body, doesn't perish when the body perishes.²³

This position is not shown incoherent by Swinburne's objection.

Constitution and identity

In addition to this much of Aquinas's basic metaphysics of the nature of substantial forms, it is also important to see that on Aquinas's views constitution is not identity.²⁴ Or, to put the same point another way, for Aquinas

23 *Quaestio disputata de anima* un.1 ad 2.

24 See, for example, *Sententia super Metaphysicam* VII.17.1672-1674. There Aquinas says that in cases in which the composite is one thing, the composite is not identical with its components; rather the composite is something over and above its components. For interesting contemporary arguments against the reduction of wholes to their parts, see Johnston (1992), and Baker (1997). For an excellent

nas a whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In many places in his texts, he makes plain that, in virtue of having its elements configured by the form of the whole, the whole has emergent properties not had by any of its parts, so that a sum of the parts and the properties of the parts will not be equivalent to the whole. So, for example, Aquinas says:

[...] a composite is not those things out of which it is composed, [...] [as, for example,] flesh is not identical to fire and earth [the elements of which it is composed].²⁵

In fact, Aquinas's views of change commit him to the claim that constitution is not identity. On the Aristotelian understanding of change Aquinas inherits and accepts, a thing which gains or loses an accidental form undergoes change while remaining one and the same thing. Quantities, including quantity of matter, are also accidents. So, on Aquinas's position, a human being who loses a quantity of matter, such as a hand or a leg, for instance, remains one and the same thing while undergoing change. If, however, constitution were identity for Aquinas, then a human being whose material constituents changed would cease to be the thing he was and become some other thing instead. In that case, contrary to Aquinas's position, the gain or loss of an accident such as quantity of matter would not be a change in a human being; it would be the destruction of one thing and the generation of another.

Furthermore, because constitution is not identity for Aquinas, it is also possible for him to suppose that a particular substance survives even the loss of some of its metaphysical constituents, provided that the remaining constituents can exist on their own and are sufficient for the existence of the substance.

Consequently, for Aquinas, a human being is not identical to either the integral or the metaphysical parts which constitute him. Normally, the integral parts of a human being include two hands, but a human being can exist without being in the normal condition. A human being can survive the loss of a hand or other of his larger integral parts, as well as the elemental bits of which such larger integral parts are composed. That is why the loss of a hand or the amputation of a limb is not the destruction of a human being. Aquinas would therefore repudiate the sort of mereological essentialism which identifies a person as the whole sum of his material

discussion of the constitution relation, see Baker (1999). Cf. also Baker (2000).
25 *Sententia super Metaphysicam* VII.17.1673-1674.

parts. Analogously, although the metaphysical constituents of a human being normally include matter and a substantial form, Aquinas thinks that a human being can exist without being in the normal condition in this way, because what constitutes a human being is not the same as that to which a human being is identical. On Aquinas's view, a human being can survive even the loss of his entire body, when the substantial form remains. And yet Aquinas repudiates just as energetically the Platonic or Cartesian position which identifies a person with what Aquinas takes to be only one of that person's metaphysical parts, namely, the soul.

Therefore, since what makes Socrates this individual substance is the individual substantial form which configures him, and since the substantial form can exist independently of the body, then for Aquinas the existence of the substantial form separated from the body is sufficient for the existence of the human being whose substantial form it is. Socrates can continue to exist when all that remains of him is his separated soul. But it does not follow that Socrates is identical to his soul, because constitution is not identity.

The separated soul

Given these views, Aquinas should be interpreted as holding that, in Socrates's disembodied condition, when he is not composed of the normal constituents for human beings, Socrates is nonetheless identical to the same thing he was identical to in his embodied condition: an individual substance in the category *rational animal*.

It is easy to become confused about Aquinas's position here because Aquinas is adamant in his rejection of Platonic dualism, (or Cartesian dualism, as we would say). Consequently, Aquinas is at pains to make clear that in his view a human being is not identical to his soul. So, for example, in his commentary on I Corinthians²⁶, Aquinas says:

Since a soul is part of a body of a human being, it is not the whole human being, and my soul is not me.²⁷

As I explained at the outset, passages such as this have suggested to some scholars that for Aquinas a human person ceases to exist with the

26 I am grateful to Brian Leftow for calling this passage to my attention.

27 *Commentarium super epistolam I ad Corinthios* chapter 15, 1.2.

death of the body. As these interpreters read Aquinas, if my soul is not *me*, but my soul is all that continues to exist after the death of my body, then it seems that *I* do not survive bodily death. Whatever else can be said about what persists after bodily death, it is not me. A second, closely related²⁸ objection to my interpretation of Aquinas arises from Aquinas's insistence that the soul alone is not a human being.²⁹ In the view of some interpreters, if (as I claim) Aquinas thinks that the existence of a soul is sufficient for the existence of a human being, then since for Aquinas the soul sometimes exists in a disembodied condition, it seems that on my interpretation the soul in that condition must *be* a human being, contrary to Aquinas's own oft-repeated claim. But, as I also explained earlier, the passages in which Aquinas denies that a soul is a person or a human being need to be read in the context of Aquinas's other views; and when they are, we plainly have to hold that Aquinas thought a human being survives bodily death as a separated soul. If we read those passages on the supposition that for Aquinas a human being ceases to exist with the death of the body, the result is a theological confusion studded with large, explicit, obvious contradictions.

On the other hand, the texts in which Aquinas claims that a human being is not a separated soul or that a separated soul is not a human being are compatible with the position that a human being survives death as a separated soul if we give proper weight to the distinction between constitution and identity in his thought. A human person is not identical to his soul; rather, a human person is identical to an individual substance in the species *rational animal*. A particular of that sort is normally, naturally, composed of form and matter configured into a human body. Because constitution is not identity for Aquinas, however, a particular can exist with less than the normal, natural complement of constituents. It can, for example, exist when it is constituted only by one of its main metaphysical parts, namely, the soul. And so although a person is not identical to his soul, the existence of the soul is sufficient for the existence of a person. Similarly, it

28 For Aquinas, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature; a human being is an individual substance of a rational *animal* nature. Since these are not the same, someone might suppose that my interpretation needs a separate argument to handle texts that appear to deny that a disembodied soul is not a human being. I am happy to consider this a separate objection, though I think it is worth pointing out that while there is a difference between a person and a human being for Aquinas, there is no difference between a human person and a human being.

29 See, for example, *Summa contra gentiles* II.57, where Aquinas argues at length against Plato's attempt to show that a human being is identical to a soul.

is true that on Aquinas's account a soul is not *identical* to a human being, but a human being can exist when he is composed of nothing more than one of his metaphysical constituents, namely, his form or soul. For Aquinas, in the case of human beings, the persistence of one metaphysical part of the whole thing is sufficient for the existence of that thing. Because constitution is not identity, however, it does not follow from this claim that the part is identical to the whole, or that a soul by itself is identical to a human being.

It may help in this connection to consider a roughly analogous position regarding bodily parts and wholes. Some contemporary philosophers suppose that a human being is identical to a living biological organism; but they also hold that, although this organism is ordinarily composed of a complete human body, it is capable of persisting even when the body has been reduced to nothing more than a living brain or part of a brain.³⁰ On this view, a human being is capable of existing when she is composed only of a brain part, but she is not identical to the brain part that composes her in that unusual condition. In the same way, for Aquinas, a human being is capable of existing when she is composed of nothing more than a metaphysical part, without its being the case that she is identical to that metaphysical part.

On this basis, we are in a position to interpret properly passages which have seemed to some to be an explicit denial on Aquinas's part that a human being can continue to exist just as a separated soul, passages such as *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* IV.43.1.1.1 ad 2, where Aquinas says that

[...] strictly speaking, the soul of Abraham is not identical to Abraham (*ipse Abraham*) but is a part of him [...]. And so the life of the soul of Abraham would not be sufficient for it to be the case that Abraham is living. Rather what is needed for this is the life of the whole composite, namely, the soul and the body.

The context of this passage includes Aquinas's attempt to refute the Platonic view that a human being is identical to his soul, and it needs to be read in that context. Once we are clear about Aquinas's distinction between constitution and identity, we can see that a rejection of the Platonic position that a human being is identical to a soul is not equivalent to the acceptance of the position that a human being cannot exist without a body.

Furthermore, this very passage is followed immediately by another in

30 See, for example, Olson (1997).

which Aquinas explains that the venial sins of a human being are purged through his suffering in purgatory. Now the sufferings in purgatory, as Aquinas makes plain, are the sufferings of the separated soul alone. Consequently, if Aquinas thinks that a person purges his venial sins in purgatory, then it must be that he also takes the separated soul in purgatory to be the person whose venial sins are being purged. And so in the passage immediately following the one about Abraham, Aquinas is clearly maintaining that a human being can persist as a separated soul.

Therefore, we should understand the passage about Abraham as part of Aquinas's attempt to repudiate the Platonic position that identifies a human being with a soul alone. The claim about the life of Abraham then becomes a denial that the life of the soul is sufficient for the life of the whole composite. And this is, of course, just right. The whole composite died when Abraham underwent bodily death, and that whole composite will not live again until the resurrection of the body. But the life of the soul is sufficient for the continued existence of Abraham, even if it is not sufficient for the life of the material whole of which Abraham is composed in his natural condition.

So we can understand Aquinas as holding that a human being is composed of matter and form but is not identical to the components which constitute him. For Aquinas, any given substance is *this* thing just in virtue of the fact that the form which configures it is *this* form. What is necessary and sufficient for something to be identical to Socrates is that its substantial form be identical to the substantial form of Socrates. Consequently, since the human soul is capable of independent existence, a human being can continue to exist just as a separated soul.

It follows, then, that for Aquinas, there are no temporal gaps in the existence of a human being. Socrates does not cease to exist when he dies. And so there is continuity of mental states between a human being from the period of his earthly existence to the time of his resurrection.

Resurrection, reassembly, and reconstitution

For all these reasons, the problems regarding reassembly of atoms which trouble some versions of resurrection are not difficulties for Aquinas.

To begin with, on Aquinas's views, the separated soul accounts for the

sameness of the resurrected body. Some philosophers and theologians may suppose, as Swinburne suggests, that resurrection is a matter of the reassembly of the atoms of a person's earthly body, but this is not Aquinas's view at all. For Aquinas, preservation of identity is not something which has to be guaranteed by recomposing the human being of the same bits of matter-form composites, such as atoms, as before. Rather, on Aquinas's account, the soul is what makes unformed prime matter into this human being by configuring prime matter in such a way that the matter is this living animal capable of intellectual cognition. In the resurrection of the body, by informing unformed matter, the soul makes unformed matter this human being again. And so puzzles about what happens when the same atoms have been part of more than one human being are avoided.

Furthermore, the material and causal continuity between the matter that composed Socrates at the moment of his death and the matter that at any subsequent time composes him is provided by the substantial form itself. For Aquinas, the individuation and identity of anything at all is provided by its substantial form. And so the matter configuring Socrates's resurrected body is the same as the matter configuring Socrates's earthly body in virtue of the fact that it is configured by the same particular substantial form which is the soul of Socrates.

For these reasons, on Aquinas's views, God's resurrecting Socrates is not like bringing back the snows of yesteryear, as van Inwagen puts it, because, unlike the snows of yesteryear, Socrates never ceased to exist. The re-embodiment of Socrates is not a reassembly of those atoms still available as constituents for Socrates's new body. On Aquinas's account, resurrection is not so much reassembly of integral parts as it is reconstitution of metaphysical parts. The constituents of Socrates in his resurrected state are the same as those of Socrates during his earthly life: this substantial form, the soul, and the prime matter which is configured by the soul into a body. Unlike the snows of yesteryear or the atoms of Socrates's earthly life, prime matter has no form of its own. It exists only in potentiality; and in order to be the same matter as it was before, it needs only to be configured by the same form as it was before.

The Thomistic synthesis of Aristotelianhylomorphism and Christian theology therefore yields a doctrine of the resurrection much less open to objection than some of its critics suppose.

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