

I See Dead People

Disembodied Souls and Aquinas's Two-Person Problem

Christina Van Dyke

Aquinas's account of the human soul is the key to his theory of human nature. The soul's nature as the substantial form of the human body appears at times to be in tension with its nature as immaterial intellect, however, and nowhere is this tension more evident than in Aquinas's discussion of the 'separated' soul. In this paper I use the Biblical story of the rich man and Lazarus (which Aquinas took to involve actual separated souls) to highlight what I will call the Two-Person Problem facing his account of human identity through death and the bodily resurrection.¹

Here, in short, is the problem: Aquinas explicitly claims that the rational soul is neither the human being nor the human person.² When the rich man's soul says "I am in agony," then, what is the referent of "I?" It appears to be the soul. If the rich man's separated soul is not identical to the rich man, however, how could the human being that Aquinas claims is resurrected at the final judgment be numerically identical to the original rich man (commonly referred to as 'Dives' in medieval discussions)?³ It appears

¹ The problem initially appears similar to the "Too Many Thinkers" problem that Patrick Toner addresses in "St Thomas Aquinas on the Problem of Too Many Thinkers," in *The Modern Schoolman* 89 (2012), 209–22. They are actually distinct issues, however. Toner addresses the general problem that on Aquinas's account of human nature, both the human being and the human soul seem able to think. (This is one of the central motivations for animalism as a metaphysical view on personal identity, and Toner advocates a modified animalist response on Aquinas's behalf.) In this paper, my goal is to address a more specific problem—one raised for post-mortem identity by Aquinas's account of the separated soul.

² See, for example, *Summa theologiae* Ia.75.4.co, and ST Ia.29.1.ad5; I discuss both passages in some detail in Section 4.

³ See SCG IV.81 for Aquinas's most extensive series of arguments in favor of the resurrected human person's being numerically identical to the original, earthly person.

that there is a human person, ‘Dives,’ who is replaced at Dives’s death by the person ‘Dives’s soul,’ who is in turn replaced at the bodily resurrection by ‘Dives,’ whom Aquinas claims is numerically identical to the original person. But this seems hopeless as a genuinely identity-preserving account of human nature. Contemporary readers, whose intuitions about personal identity have been honed on Parfit and Unger, might well respond, “And so . . . ?” For Aquinas, however, as well as virtually all medieval and early modern thinkers and the majority of theists, this is an issue of the utmost importance. The theological claim is that *you* will continue to exist after your death, and that it is you who will experience the consequences of decisions you made in this life. For someone else to be praised or blamed for the rest of eternity for someone you did seems unjust, to put it mildly.

The Two-Person Problem is, thus, a pressing issue for Aquinas, and it has received a great deal of attention in Thomistic studies. After laying out the problem in more detail, I will consider two particularly promising solutions (offered, respectively, by Robert Pasnau and Eleonore Stump), both of which argue that there is a relevant sense in which the human person does *not* cease to exist at death. Unfortunately, neither of these proposals adequately solves the Two-Person Problem. In fact, I believe that Aquinas’s account of human nature does not, as it stands, possess the resources with which to overcome this difficulty; I conclude that reconstructing a(n otherwise) Thomistic account that involves immediate bodily resurrection, although a radical approach, is the one best suited to preserving the most essential features of Aquinas’s theory.⁴

1. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

At first glance, it might not be clear why the story of the rich man and Lazarus, found only in the gospel of Luke (16:19–31), should shed any light on Aquinas’s account of the separated soul. Placed at the end of a series of four parables (including the Prodigal Son and the Shrewd Manager), the story today is often understood as itself a parable. General opinion in the

⁴ In this paper I shall be focusing primarily on Aquinas’s later discussions of the separated soul in an effort to avoid familiar concerns about the development of his views. (For a clear discussion of this concern, see Anton Pegis’s “The Separated Soul and Its Nature in St Thomas,” in A Maurer (ed.), *St Thomas Aquinas 1274–1974: Commemorative Studies* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974). Because Aquinas’s later claims about the cognitive capacities of the separated soul are more modest than his earlier claims, it will be enough to show that the difficulty I am concerned with arises even from those later, weaker claims.

thirteenth century, however, held that this story described actual events involving separated souls; as such, it was taken to shed light on disembodied existence after death and prior to the final judgment.⁵ Aquinas himself mentions the story of the rich man and Lazarus in every single one of his discussions of the separated soul (barring the discussion in *Summa contra gentiles* [SCG] II—an omission which is hardly surprising, since Aquinas there carefully refrains from appealing to special revelation).

To summarize the relevant details of the story Jesus tells, Lazarus is a beggar who is laid at the gates of an unnamed rich man (often called “Dives”—the Latin for “rich man”—in later commentaries); when both men die, Lazarus is brought to stand by Abraham himself, while the rich man suffers the torments of hell. The rich man sees Lazarus standing by the Patriarch and calls out: “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.” Abraham refuses the request, telling him to “Remember that in your lifetime you received your good things.” “Then send Lazarus to my father’s house,” the rich man begs, “For I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.” Abraham again refuses the rich man’s request, telling him that if his brothers have not believed Moses and the prophets, they will not believe even someone risen from the dead.

This passage raises a host of issues, not least among which is how to separate what is meant to be metaphorical in this story from what is meant to be taken literally. Aquinas himself walks a cautious line in this respect. In *Disputed Questions on the Soul* (QDA), for instance, a question is raised about how a soul separated from matter could suffer thirst, or see and hear the souls of Abraham and Lazarus. In response, Aquinas claims that

There is no reason why in an account of things that happened something cannot be said metaphorically. For although what is said in the Gospel about Lazarus and the rich man is something which took place, still it is by way of metaphor that Lazarus is said to have seen and heard; just as it is also said metaphorically that he had a tongue. (QDA 19.ad11)⁶

⁵ A participant in Aquinas’s eighteenth disputed question on the soul, for instance, states matter-of-factly that: “As Gregory says [in his commentary on Luke], what is related in Luke 16 about Lazarus and the rich man is not a parable but something which happened; this is clear because the person involved is given his proper name” (sc10). In the next question, Aquinas himself agrees, stating that “what is said in the Gospel about Lazarus and the rich man is something which took place.”

⁶ All translations are my own. The relevant Latin texts can all be found at <<http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>>.

Here Aquinas both affirms the literal reading of the basic events reported and gives a metaphorical gloss on some of the descriptions. The passage reports actual events: the souls of the rich man, Abraham, and Lazarus can communicate and can even suffer in separation from matter. The story describes these events in metaphorical (physical) terms, however, simply for ease of understanding.

2. HUMAN ACTIVITIES AND THE RATIONAL SOUL

Indeed, it is not the physical metaphors but the robust agency of the separated soul that seems inconsistent with claims Aquinas makes elsewhere about the fundamental unity of body and soul—a unity that lies at the very heart of Aquinas’s account of human nature. In this section I look at Aquinas’s general claims about the possibility of disembodied cognition and argue that the real problem facing Aquinas’s account of the separated soul is not the *mode* of its cognition (that is, how it thinks apart from the body), but the mere *fact* of its cognition.

Aquinas repeatedly argues for an intimate connection between body and soul, explicitly reacting against the early-thirteenth-century trend of emphasizing the nobility of the soul by stressing its independence from the body.⁷ One of the main implications of Aquinas’s hylomorphic commitments (as well as his adherence to the unicity of substantial form) is his belief that *all* the operations or activities of the human soul naturally involve the body. Nutrition, growth, sensing, locomotion . . . all of these operations of the rational soul rely on union with matter. In fact, Aquinas even uses the body’s role in human sense perception to support his claim that the human being is not merely a soul: “Since sensing is an action of a human being (albeit not the proper action), it is clear that a human being is not only a soul, but is something composed of soul and body” (ST Ia.75.4).

Even the rational capacities of human beings typically require the body for their actualization. Although the human intellect’s operation transcends matter in abstract thought, for instance, it still needs access to powers (such as imagination and sense) which themselves require physical organs. The activity of intellection itself does not require matter (since otherwise God and the angels would not be able to think), but the human intellect does require union with matter in order to have something to think *about*. As Aquinas puts it, “It is necessary that [the soul] receives intelligible species

⁷ See Richard C. Dales’ *The Problem of the Rational Soul in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) for an excellent, extensive discussion of these issues.

from external things through the mediation of the sensory powers, which cannot carry out their proper operations apart from bodily organs” (QDA 8). Other intellects receive intelligible species (abstract, universal concepts) directly from higher intellects, but human intellects are the very weakest sort of intellect, and so they need to be united with matter in order to acquire objects of cognition.⁸

What is more, Aquinas argues that the human intellect must revert to phantasms (essentially, mental ‘pictures’ of the things we are thinking about) every time it makes use of those intelligible species: “the soul, while joined to a body, cannot understand something without turning itself to phantasms” (ST Ia.89.1.co). The body is naturally involved in human cognition, then—a fact he uses to support the integral body/soul unity of the human being: “Since the human soul’s act of understanding needs powers—namely, imagination and sense—which function through bodily organs, this itself shows that the soul is naturally united to the body in order to complete the human species” (SCG II.68). In short, on Aquinas’s account, human beings aren’t souls forced to inhabit the physical world, but rather integrated composites in which the body plays an essential role.

3. THE COGNITION OF THE SEPARATED SOUL

The body is integrally involved with the cognitive process, then, but Aquinas takes pains to argue that this involvement does not entail that the soul *depends* on matter for its characteristic activity of intellection. Intellection itself is an activity that transcends matter, and for this reason Aquinas believes the soul both can and will continue to exist in separation from matter.⁹ Moreover, he claims that the soul can—and does—cognize in separation from matter.

Taken as describing actual events, the story of the rich man and Lazarus clearly seems to demonstrate this fact. Suffering the torments of hell, the soul of the rich man displays rational activity first in seeking a way to ease its

⁸ See, for example, QDA 7.co: “In its own nature, a soul does not possess the perfection of intelligible objects but is in potentiality to intelligible objects, just as prime matter is with respect to sensible forms. For this reason, for its proper operation, a soul needs to be actualized by intelligible forms, acquiring them from external things through sensory powers. And since the operation of the senses takes place through bodily organs, it is appropriate (because of this condition of its nature) that the soul be united to a body and that it be *part* of the species ‘human being,’ not being complete in species in itself.”

⁹ See, for example, ST Ia.75.2.

agony (“Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue”) and then immediately determining another way in which Lazarus might prove useful (“Send Lazarus to my brothers to warn them about this place of torment”). Without reference to sensory powers and also the intellectual powers (such as imagination and sensory memory) that depend on them, however, how can the rich man’s soul perform such intellectual feats? As Aquinas himself points out, “It is hard to see the way in which [the separated soul] understands . . . since it is quite clear that it can understand now only if it turns to phantasms, and these will not remain in any way after death” (QDV 19.1.co). Unlike intelligible species, the building blocks of abstract thought, phantasms (the images from which the active intellect abstracts intelligible species) cannot exist apart from physical organs.¹⁰

Aquinas’s solution is to claim that while the fundamental nature of the human soul remains the same in separation from matter, the nature of its cognition changes significantly, becoming like that of other immaterial intellects (like angels). In his words, “Once separated from its body, the soul will have a different mode of cognition, like that of other substances that are separate from bodies” (ST Ia.75.6.ad3, added emphasis). Other intellectual creatures never require phantasms for their cognitive processes, because they do not need to begin with sense perception, generate phantasms from sense information, and then abstract intelligible species from phantasms. Instead, they rely entirely on intelligible species that they receive from higher immaterial substances. Aquinas claims that in separation from matter, our souls, like the angels, “will be able more fully to perceive an influx [of intelligible species] from higher substances.” In particular, “through an influx of this kind the soul will be able to understand without phantasms, something it cannot do at present” (QDA 15). Such understanding will strain our cognitive abilities, and will be inferior in certain ways to what we are capable of when embodied.¹¹ Nevertheless, our separated souls will receive the intelligible species they require from a higher power, and so they can in this way continue to cognize even apart from the body.¹²

¹⁰ See ST Ia.85.1 for a discussion of this process, especially ad3, where Aquinas states: “Phantasms are the images of individual things, and exist in corporeal organs.”

¹¹ “But an influx of this kind will not cause knowledge which is as perfect and as determinate with respect to singulars as the knowledge which we acquire in this life through our senses.”

¹² There is some confusion in Aquinas’s own corpus as to the exact source of the illumination of separated souls—some passages (most crucially ST Ia.89) suggest that God himself directly illumines them, whereas other passages (for example, QDA 15–20 and SCG II.81) clearly leave the task of illumination to the angels. For our immediate purposes, this ambiguity proves unimportant; I do think, though, that the prospect of

This explanation might appear a bit *ad hoc* initially: a sort of explanatory stop-gap. Ultimately, however, this is exactly what we should expect him to say. Human souls—the substantial forms of human beings—are created in union with their bodies, and they exist in a highly unnatural state in separation from matter, but their disembodied mode of cognition is just an extension of the natural order of things. On a Thomistic view of the universe, God constantly illumines all of creation. When joined to bodies, human souls are illuminated through the natural move from sense perception to phantasms to intelligible species. When separated from matter, human souls are able to receive illumination from a source that, although new to them, has always been available. In earthly life, our intellects do not need this sort of influx of intelligible species, and are (almost) never in a position to receive it properly, but they can still naturally participate in this influx when removed from their nature source of objects of cognition.

4. HUMAN BEINGS, PERSONS, AND ME

Aquinas does have an explanation for the cognition of separated souls, then. Unfortunately, the real difficulty facing Aquinas's account of the separated soul does not stem from his claims about the *mode* of the separated soul's cognition. It arises from the separated soul's mere status as a thinking thing. For Aquinas explicitly denies that the rational soul is identical to the human being, to the human person, and to me (at the same time that he argues *for* the identity of the human being with the human person and with me).¹³ This appears to entail that when the separated soul is thinking, the agent doing that thinking is something distinct from any of those things.

Even in his early *Sentences Commentary*, Aquinas states plainly that “The soul of Abraham is not Abraham himself, properly speaking, but is *part* of him; and so for all the others. So Abraham's soul's having life would not suffice for Abraham's being alive” (SC IV.43.1.1.1.ad2). This idea—that a human being is identical to the composite of soul and body, and not simply to her soul—appears repeatedly throughout Aquinas's corpus, and is something he sees as central to his account of human nature.¹⁴ When he

angelic illumination of separated souls fits more smoothly with Aquinas's general account of the cognition of separated substances, according to which there is a natural hierarchy of illumination, with lower intellects generally being assisted by slightly higher ones.

¹³ See my “The End of (Human) Life as We Know It: Thomas Aquinas on Bodies, Persons, and Death,” *The Modern Schoolman* 89 (2012), 243–57 (special issue: “Theological Themes in Medieval Philosophy”) for a fuller discussion of these claims and their implications for Aquinas's account of human nature.

¹⁴ See, for example, SCG II.61, ST Ia.75, QDA 1.

discusses the unique status of the human soul as the form of a material body that can persist in absence of the body it informs, Aquinas consistently claims that the rational soul is something subsistent but not something that is complete in species. It is *part* of the human species, but the human being is something composed of soul *and* body. (As we saw above, “It is clear that a human being is not only a soul, but is something composed of soul and body” (ST Ia.75.4); also, “It is appropriate . . . that the soul be united to a body and that it be *part* of the species ‘human being,’ not being complete in species in itself.” (QDA 7.co).)

Aquinas also flatly denies that the rational soul is the human person. In fact, relying on the standard medieval definition of ‘person’ as “an individual substance with a rational nature,”¹⁵ he denies that the soul is a person at all. As he puts it, appealing again to the idea that only the soul/body composite meets the criteria for being a member of the human species:

. . . the soul is *part* of the human species; for this reason, since it is still by nature unitable [to a body] even when it is separated, it cannot be the sort of individual substance which is called a “hypostasis” or “first substance” any more than a hand or any other part of a human being can. And so neither the name nor the definition of “person” belongs to the rational soul. (ST Ia.29.1ad5)

Even in separation from the body, then, Aquinas believes that the rational soul does not meet the criteria for personhood (understood in the medieval sense). It is a central component of a natural kind (‘human being’), not a natural kind itself. He makes much the same point in *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, claiming that “the separated soul is part of [something with] a rational nature, namely, human [nature], but it is not the whole rational human nature, and therefore it is not a person” (9.2.ad14). For our purposes, what is important about these claims is that Aquinas denies that the soul is a person, considered on its own, on the grounds that the soul is only one part (albeit the most important part) of the human person.

Aquinas thus denies that the soul is either the human being or the human person; he also explicitly rules out the possibility that I am my soul. “Since the soul is part of the human body, it is not the whole human being,” he claims, “and I am not my soul; for this reason, although the soul might achieve salvation in another life, it nevertheless does not follow that I or any other human being has salvation in another life” (ad I Corinthians 15).¹⁶ In other words, not only am I not my soul, but my soul’s glorification

¹⁵ See, for example, ST Ia.29.1 and QDP 9.2.

¹⁶ Consider also the *Sentences Commentary* passage quoted above, which makes the same point about the life of Abraham’s soul not entailing that Abraham himself lives.

would not be enough to count as my own glorification.¹⁷ In his gloss on Job's famous claim that "In my flesh shall I see God," Aquinas draws the same distinction between 'me' and 'my soul,' writing: "Job says, 'whom I myself shall see' as if to say 'not only my soul, but *I myself, who subsist from soul and body*, will see God" (ad Job, Lectio 2). Even if my separated soul were to see God, Aquinas holds that such an event would not constitute *my* seeing God. In the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Lazarus's soul is enjoying a blessed state with Abraham's soul, awaiting the final judgment. But this is not enough, then, according to the passages we have seen, for Lazarus to be seeing God, or enjoying glorification. In the same vein, the suffering and the pleading of the rich man's soul is not equivalent to the suffering or the pleading of the rich man himself.

5. THE RICH MAN('S SOUL) AND THE PROBLEM OF SELF-REFERENCE

Aquinas is clear that the rational soul is the substantial form of the human body. As such, my soul makes me both actually exist and exist as a member of the human species; my soul organizes and animates my body in a way that makes me uniquely me. And yet, Aquinas seems quite clear that—although my soul is now part of me and will be part me again after the bodily resurrection—my separated soul itself is not me.¹⁸ What, then, is it? The obvious option appears to be that my separated soul (which thinks, believes, anticipates, and so on) is a person. Thus, the Two Person Problem emerges: during earthly life I exist as a human person; after death and

¹⁷ See Aquinas's *Treatise on Happiness* (ST IaIIae.1–5) for a fuller discussion of what is required for our happiness. As I have argued in "Aquinas's Shiny Happy People: Perfect Happiness and the Limits of Human Nature," *Oxford Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (vol. 6, forthcoming), there is some tension between what Aquinas claims in this passage and the role the body plays in his account of perfect happiness, which consists in cognizing God's essence.

¹⁸ There are scholars who argue that Aquinas does believe that my separated soul is me—a position sometimes called 'survivalism.' See, for example, Jason Eberl, "Do Human Persons Persist between Death and Resurrection," in K. Timpe (ed.), *Metaphysics and God: Essays in Honor of Eleonore Stump* (London: Routledge, 2009) and Jim Madden, "Thomistic Hylomorphism and Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Religion," *Philosophy Compass* 8 (2013), 664–76. Eleonore Stump is often portrayed as advocating a version of this view as well, but I will consider her view separately, since what she actually claims is that my soul is not identical to me, but rather that it *constitutes* me in the period between death and the bodily resurrection. I will not address the full-on survivalist views in this paper, because it seems so clear (on the grounds of matters which I have already discussed) that their position cannot be Aquinas's own.

prior to the bodily resurrection my soul exists as a person who is non-identical to me.

The Two-Person Problem, of course, assumes that there is a clear sense in which the separated soul *is* a person. And we have already seen Aquinas deny that it is. The problem does not get off the ground, then, one might think: the separated soul cannot be a person, and so there are not two persons in the picture, and, hence, no Two-Person Problem.¹⁹ This seems to me, however, too easy a resolution. The problem posed by the separated soul's actions is that it functions as a person in the modern sense of the term—as does the human being. The real force of Aquinas's denial of the claim that the rational soul is a person is to point out that the soul's persistence is not sufficient to count as the persistence of the human being of which that soul is the substantial form. That is, what claim he is interested in establishing is that human soul and the human person (which is identical to the human being and to me) are two separate things . . . things both of which appear to meet contemporary criteria of personhood. This is all it takes to get the Two-Person Problem off the ground: the human being is clearly a person (in both the modern *and* the medieval sense), and the rational soul appears to be a person (in the modern sense, if not the medieval). But Aquinas denies that they are identical.

It should be clear why the human being counts as a person, but why think that the separated soul counts as a person in the modern sense? There are at least two main reasons, both of which can be seen clearly in the context of the story of the rich man and Lazarus. First, as we have seen from the description of the story, the rich man's soul appears to have intentional states, discursive thought, desires, and so on; as such, it meets virtually every contemporary standard for personhood.²⁰ Second, the rich man's soul uses first-person reference in a way that cannot apply to the rich man himself.

Indeed, if we look closely at the story, there appear to be two different sorts of self-referential claim made by the rich man's soul. The first is demonstrated by the rich man's statement, "I have five brothers." In this utterance, the referent of 'I' seems to be the previously existing human being, 'Dives,' who has five brothers. But Dives is not identical to his soul.

¹⁹ Patrick Toner is definitely tempted toward this view; see his "St Thomas Aquinas and the Too Many Thinkers Problem" cited above.

²⁰ Even accounts of personal identity which rely on bodily rather than psychological criteria generally take such capacities to indicate the presence of a person; see, for example, chapter 6 of Eric Olson's *The Human Animal: Personal Identity without Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), Judith Jarvis Thomson's "People and Their Bodies" in J. Dancy (ed.), *Reading Parfit* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), and Hud Hudson's *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Thus, it seems that the separated soul really means something like “The human being of which this was the substantial form had five brothers.” In the same way, if Lazarus’s separated soul were to say, “I am going to enjoy the new creation,” we could take that as properly referring to the resurrected human being.

Even if we can account for the rich man’s soul’s claim, “I have five brothers,” by holding that it refers to the rich man, however, there is still a second sort of self-referential claim Dives’s soul makes, as when it cries out, “Send Lazarus to cool my tongue, for I am in agony in these flames!” Clearly, in this case, the referent of ‘I’ is the separated soul itself, *not* the composite human being. At the time of the story, there is no union of matter and form suffering the agony of hell—there is only the rich man’s disembodied soul. The rich man’s soul appears to have a variety of experiences, desires, and thoughts, then, which the rich man does not share. In short, there appears to be one person, Dives, who is replaced at his death by another person (Dives’s soul), who is in turn replaced at the bodily resurrection by the human person Dives*—whom Aquinas claims is numerically identical to the original Dives.²¹

Aquinas himself seems uncharacteristically tentative about how best to handle the question of referring to the disembodied soul. In a brief passage on petitionary prayer in *ST IIaIIae*, for instance, Aquinas considers the issue of praying to the saints. Since this request occurs after their deaths and before the final judgment, Aquinas takes it that our requests are directed at the separated souls of the saints; does this, then, count as praying *to the saint*? As the fifth objection to this article puts it, “The soul of Peter is not Peter. Therefore, if the souls of the saints pray for us while they are separated from bodies, we should not ask (*interpellare*) saint Peter to pray for us, but his soul” (83.11.obj5). In response, Aquinas claims neither that we should pray to Peter’s soul nor that we refer to Peter when we pray. Instead, he writes simply: “Since the saints earned the right to pray for us while they were living, we invoke them using the names by which they were called here, and also by which they are better known to us. And, also, in order to indicate belief in the resurrection.”

That is, Aquinas seems to say, we can fairly refer to Peter’s soul as “Peter” during the period in which Peter, properly speaking, does not exist, both because it was Peter who earned the right to pray for us (rather than his soul, which used to be part of Peter), and because that soul will be part of Peter again after the resurrection. This is, of course, not at all the same as claiming that Peter’s soul is Peter. Aquinas does not even appeal to the

²¹ Again, see SCG IV.81 for a series of arguments in favor of the resurrected human person’s being numerically identical to the original, earthly person.

continuity of Peter's intellect and will—the two central components of human psychology on his account—to argue that enough of Peter remains for us to call him by that name. It is entirely Peter's past and future relation to the soul that persists that allows us to continue to pray to Peter.

So where does this leave us? Elsewhere, I have argued that the persistence of the rational soul in the interim state could be sufficient to account for the identity of the original human being with the resurrected human being because it maintains the right sort of immanent causal connections.²² That is, although the soul itself is not the human being (or the human person or me), the central role the soul plays in human identity means that its persistence guarantees the persistence of 'what counts' for identity-preserving purposes.

Aquinas's commitment to the sort of agency attributed to Dives's soul in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, however, appears to block this possibility. For what is important in the causal story is that the right sort of immanent causal relations be preserved between the original Dives and the resurrected Dives: that is, that the resurrected Dives be the way he is because the original Dives was the way *he* was. If the soul that is meant to preserve such connections acts as an agent in its own right in the period during which it is not Dives, however, it becomes difficult (if not impossible) to see how it can simultaneously preserve the right sort of causal connections. One might well think, for instance, that part of what it would take for the resurrected Dives to be identical to the original Dives would be for the resurrected Dives to have certain mental/intentional/volitional states because of states the original Dives possessed. In this case, the existence of an interim period during which the sustainer of those states (which is not identical to Dives) exhibited its own mental/intentional/volitional states would seem to irreparably interrupt the appropriate causal connections.

6. PARTIAL IDENTITY AND CONSTITUTION

The problematic status of the disembodied soul for Aquinas's account of identity has hardly gone unnoticed (although I think the seriousness of the problem has often been underestimated). The challenge for defenders of

²² See my "Human Identity, Immanent Causal Relations, and the Principle of Non-Repeatability: Thomas Aquinas on the Bodily Resurrection," *Religious Studies* 43 (2007), 373–94. In it, I draw on the model of the role immanent causal connections play in Dean Zimmerman's "The Compatibility of Materialism and Survival: the 'Falling Elevator' Model," *Faith and Philosophy* 16 (1999), 194–212, who is responding to seminal concerns raised by Peter van Inwagen in his *The Possibility of Resurrection and Other Essays in Christian Apologetics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

Thomistic anthropology who have agreed with me to this point is to explain how—although the rich man’s soul is not, properly or strictly speaking, identical to the rich man—his separated soul can nevertheless function in a way that preserves Dives’s identity. I have just explained why I no longer believe that a solution I proposed earlier can work; in the remainder of this paper I examine two other attempts to defend Aquinas’s account: Robert Pasnau’s partial identity account and Eleonore Stump’s constitution account. I argue that, despite their attractions, neither attempt is ultimately successful.

First, in *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, Robert Pasnau seeks to solve the Two-Person Problem by taking a Parfitian line, claiming that the soul-person is not an entirely separate person at all, but, rather a person who is *mostly* or *partially* me, and that the soul-person’s persistence is sufficient for my partially continuing to exist in a way that preserves personal identity. As he writes:

When [Aquinas] says “my soul is not I,” we should take this to mean that a person’s soul is not *entirely* that person. If then asked who or what a separated soul becomes, Aquinas should say that it does not become anyone, or anything at all: it stays what it was, a part of a person. So when I die, I cease to exist, as a whole, but part of me continues to exist, and hence I partly continue to exist. (388)²³

In other words, since my soul is part of me, its continued existence entails that I continue to exist—just partly, rather than fully.

On this Parfitian reading, survival is not simply an all-or-nothing proposition. According to Pasnau:

[My] separated soul is not anyone other than I, and in a sense it is I, but it is not fully I, not I in the strictest sense. The soul’s survival is a necessary condition for personal identity, not a sufficient condition . . . The core of who I am is my soul, but that is not all of who I am. (389)

Dives’s soul is not exactly Dives, then, but it is not really anyone else either. It is a sort of partial-Dives, or ‘Dives-lite.’

I agree with Pasnau that, for Aquinas, my soul is the core of who I am without being the whole of who I am. At the same time, it seems to me that trying to cash out Aquinas’s claims about the separated soul in terms of partial identity is a non-starter on both philosophical and textual grounds. Philosophically, Aquinas’s essentialism seems incompatible with an account of partial identity. Parfit’s original introduction of the notion of partial identity, after all, followed on his belief that personal identity is “not

²³ Robert Pasnau. *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa Theologiae Ia 75–89* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

what matters”—that is, that focusing on our own, individual, continued existence is in an important sense misguided.²⁴ Given Aquinas’s interest in the strict numerical identity of the resurrected human being with the earthly human being (especially for the purpose of just reward and punishment), it seems highly unlikely that Aquinas would agree that personal identity is not what matters.

Furthermore, in two of the passages we have already seen, Aquinas seems to hold that my soul does not count as me in separation from matter precisely *because* it is part of me. In the I Corinthians commentary, for instance, he states explicitly that my soul’s salvation does not entail my salvation because my soul is part of me and not the whole of me; in his *Sentences* commentary, he claims that Abraham’s soul’s having life does not suffice for Abraham’s being alive, again because it is only part of him. Whatever partial sense in which I might continue to exist on Pasnau’s line, then, will not count as *my* existence in any way relevant to Aquinas’s theory of identity.

Rather than being “partly me” after death, my soul seems at most something with the interesting historical property “having been part of me.” If the soul’s survival is, for Aquinas, a necessary and not a sufficient condition for personal identity (and I agree with Pasnau that it is), then its survival alone does not yield direct continuity in personal identity.²⁵ If, for example, lightning strikes a tree and half of it breaks off and falls to the ground, where it quietly decays, it does not seem to me that the right thing to say about the remaining half of the tree is that, because part of it continues to exist, *it* partly continues to exist. Rather, I think the tree wholly continues to exist in a diminished state. Analogously, in the case of separated souls, I think the right thing to say is that I wholly cease to exist at death, although something interestingly related to me persists.²⁶

²⁴ See chapter 12 of *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 245–80, for Parfit’s discussion of “Why our identity is not what matters”; he discusses the possibility of partial survival on pp. 298–302.

²⁵ In SCG II.81, Aquinas appears to endorse an account of diachronic identity which incorporates a temporal gap in human existence between death and the bodily resurrection—a gap which the separated soul “fills” in such a way as to guarantee that the resurrected person is numerically identical to the original person (without the soul’s being identical to the person). What I am arguing in this paper is that the agency of the separated soul threatens the philosophical effectiveness of this position.

²⁶ In fact, the extent to which understanding Aquinas’s account in terms of partial identity appears at all attractive stems from the fact that it is the *soul* that continues to exist in this case. That is, the plausibility of this view comes not from the theory of partial identity itself, but from the fact that my soul’s continued existence seem “close enough” to stand in for me until the bodily resurrection. To use another notion from the contemporary debate about personal identity, the intuition that Pasnau here tries to

Eleonore Stump presents a second way of solving the Two-Person Problem. In *Aquinas*, Stump agrees that the soul is one part of a human person, and not the human person itself.²⁷ She, however, denies Pasnau's claim that the soul's existence is a merely *necessary* condition for the persistence of the human person, arguing instead that the soul's existence is a *sufficient* condition for a human person's persistence. Combining a non-orthodox constitution account with an ontology of metaphysical parts, Stump claims that the persistence of one metaphysical part (namely, the soul) can guarantee the persistence of the whole even in the absence of another part (namely, the body). In her own words:

A human person is not identical to his soul; rather, a human person is identical to a particular in the species *rational animal*. A particular of that sort is normally, naturally, constituted of an array of bodily parts and is composed of form and matter. 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 . . . [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 (53).

This interpretation offers Aquinas a way to solve the central problem facing his account of separated souls without committing him to the drawbacks entailed by interpreting Aquinas's account in terms of partial identity.

Stump's view, however, appears problematic on independent grounds. First, the constitution relation is meant to solve the problem of what appear to be two co-located physical objects: a lump of clay, for example, and a statue made entirely from that lump of clay. It is not at all clear that an immaterial soul can constitute a human being in the way that a lump of clay can constitute a statue or a piece of paper can constitute monetary currency. According to Aquinas, living human bodies are constituted by matter without being identical to that matter—a human body, for example, can survive changes in the bits of matter that constitute it at any one time.²⁸

capture with partial identity might better be cashed out in terms of the separated soul's being the human person's "closest continuer"—my soul is the next best candidate for being me, given the absence of the original person. Unfortunately, Aquinas's theory does not appear to fare any better on this understanding.

²⁷ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

²⁸ See, for example, ST Ia.119.1.ad2: "if by 'flesh' we mean the matter of which something is composed, that does not remain, but little by little it is taken away and restored," and SCG IV.81: "In the body of a human being, while that human being lives, there are not always the same parts with respect to matter, but only according to species, for with respect to matter parts come and go" (ed. Marietti, par. 4157).

(It might even be plausible to claim that Aquinas holds that the human being is constituted by the body without being identical to that body.²⁹) It thus seems right to say, as Stump does, that a human being is constituted of a certain array of bodily parts. Nevertheless, this is quite different from saying that a human being is constituted by form and matter, or that a human being could be constituted by her substantial form in separation from matter.

To see this more clearly, it helps to consider that the constitution relation is typically explained in terms of differing modal properties possessed by the constitutor and the constituttee, where these differing modal properties entail different persistence conditions for the constitutor and the constituttee. Someone who claims that a flag is constituted by (but not identical to) a piece of cloth, for example, holds that flags and pieces of cloth possess different modal properties and correspondingly different persistence conditions. That is, she believes that a flag can survive changes that the piece of cloth cannot—for example, the replacement of a large section with a fresh piece of material. In the same way, that same piece of cloth could exist in a world in which the nation whose flag it is in ours does not exist; in that case, the cloth exists, but it does not constitute a flag.

On Stump's proposed understanding of the relation between the rational soul and the human person, however, soul and person do not appear to possess modal properties that allow for differing persistence conditions. If the soul constitutes the human person without being identical to it, and if "the existence of the soul is sufficient for the existence of a person" (where that is taken to refer to the human person), there appears to be no possible world in which a rational soul exists in the absence of a human being, or in which a human being exists in the absence of a soul.

Contrast with Aquinas's example in *Summa theologiae* Ia.119.1.ad2 of the case of human flesh; there, Aquinas points out that the human body persists throughout fluctuation in bits of matter. The bits of matter that constitute a human body at any given time and the body which is constituted by them possesses very different persistence conditions. That exact arrangement of matter could exist without constituting a human body—if, for example, those bits of matter constituted a corpse—and that same human body could exist without being constituted by those particular bits of matter. For Aquinas, a human body is straightforwardly constituted by matter without being identical to that matter. It is much harder to see

²⁹ I have argued elsewhere, however, that the unicity of substantial form does not leave Aquinas with the conceptual space to draw this sort of distinction between human being and human body. (See "Not Properly a Person: the Rational Soul and 'Thomistic Substance Dualism,'" *Faith and Philosophy* 26:2 (2009), 186–204.)

how a human being can be constituted by an immaterial soul without being identical to that soul, however, given that on Stump's view the persistence conditions for human souls and human persons cannot come apart.

Stump's argument for the coherence of Aquinas's claims concerning human identity and the separated soul does not rest entirely on the constitution relation, however. Her primary concern is to argue that a human being can survive the loss of one of her metaphysical parts—namely, the body—without ceasing to exist and without being identical to the remaining physical part, and it is possible to make this case without appealing to constitution. Stump appeals, for instance, to Eric Olson's *The Human Animal*, writing:

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. 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. (53)

The parallel claim for Aquinas's account, of course, would be that the human being is capable of existing when she is composed only of a soul, although she is not identical to that soul.

Olson himself, however, does not claim that the detached living brain composes the human being without being identical to it. Instead, when he considers such a possibility in the case of the unfortunate Tim, he writes: "Tim's detached head is a debilitated but living animal, I say, even though it cannot remain alive for more than a few minutes without a heart–lung machine" (133). That is, in this unusual state, Tim's detached head does not *compose* but is *identical* to the living animal, Tim. Olson is willing to make this claim because on his account, what is crucial for Tim's continued identity is the organism's capacity for continued functioning. As he puts it: "Part of what makes something a living organism . . . is its capacity to coordinate and regulate its metabolic and other vital functions. A living organism may be prevented from carrying out those functions . . . Nevertheless, [in this case] the control and coordination mechanisms are intact" (133–4). *Tim himself*—the living organism—continues to exist (however briefly), on Olson's account, even in the absence of the organs that could actualize that capacity.

On Aquinas's view, the separated soul is responsible for exactly the sort of coordinating and regulating capacities that Olson attributes here to Tim's detached head. This is also, however, where Aquinas's account runs into difficulty. Olson's account does not give us any reason to believe that a human being can exist when composed of nothing more than one of her metaphysical parts, without its being the case that she is identical to

that part. Rather, it seems to support the intuition that if I continue to exist when whittled down to only one of my metaphysical parts, I am at that point actually identical to that part. But this is exactly the position—namely, that I am identical to my separated soul—that we have seen Aquinas so carefully deny.

Thus, although Stump holds that, for Aquinas, “the existence of a human soul is sufficient for the existence of a human being” (52), it seems to me that Pasnau is right in claiming that the existence of the human soul is a necessary but *not* a sufficient condition for the existence of the human person. In his *Quodlibetal Questions*, for instance, Aquinas states that “what is essential to any given individual is what belongs to its definition (*ratio*), just as matter and form are essential principles of any material thing” (QQ 11.6.1). ‘Human being’ is defined as ‘rational animal,’ however, and Aquinas believes that the essential principles of a human being include both form *and* matter.³⁰ If matter is an essential component of a human being, though, it would seem that matter as well as form is a necessary (although not sufficient) condition for the existence of a human being. A soul existing in separation from matter lacks one of the essential principles of a human being; in the absence of matter, a human being does not exist, even if the soul persists.

7. IMMEDIATE RESURRECTION

At this point, what options remain for salvaging a Thomistic account of human nature, particularly one that can accommodate the resurrection of the body? One possibility would be to reconstruct his view such that, in separation from matter, the separated soul does not cognize at all. In this case, the rich man’s soul would think no thoughts after death and prior to the resurrection. In the face of the lack of access to its proper objects of thought, the separated soul would simply remain in a sort of “holding pattern” similar to a deep sleep or a coma-like state, serving as a ‘placeholder’ for the resurrected human being to come, while remaining entirely inactive. On this view, the soul *could* cognize if it were joined to matter, and it *will* cognize again when it receives a new body at the general resurrection, but it in no way functions as a person apart from a body.

Unfortunately, this option does not deliver the hoped-for results. Not only does it come with a theological cost (insofar as it makes purgatory and prayer to the saints problematic), but it also does not fit well with other

³⁰ See, for example, *De ente et essentia* 2.

aspects of Aquinas's larger metaphysical system. I have shown previously, for instance, that Aquinas's explanation of the separated soul's mode of cognition is just a natural extension of his general theory of the cognition of immaterial substances. For the separated soul to remain completely inactive would require the influx of intelligible species it would otherwise naturally receive from higher intellectual substances being intentionally blocked somehow—a prospect that seems highly counter-intuitive, to say the least. In addition, Aquinas's main argument for the soul's immortality is that the soul has an operation it continues to carry out in separation from the body.³¹ Using a 'frozen' separated soul as a stand-in for the pre-mortem person until the bodily resurrection does not offer enough advantages to overcome the costs it comes with.

Perhaps the best option remaining (and one already advocated in some form by Thomists such as Montague Brown and James Ross) is to modify and reconstruct Aquinas's account of human nature . . . without the separated soul.³² On this revised account, at the very moment a human being ceases to exist at death and her soul separates from her body, God reunites it with matter at the final judgment. A Thomistic account of an "immediate resurrection" would solve the Two-Person Problem decisively, since the soul would never exist apart from matter (and, therefore, would never cognize or have other intentional states in separation from matter). The soul would persist through death and resurrection, but it would never exist *as separated*.

I admit that such an option is not particularly appealing. Among other disadvantages, it requires us to jettison a rather large chunk of things to which Aquinas himself was clearly committed. Aquinas believes that human souls exist in separation from matter at death—in fact, his central argument for the immortality of the soul depends on the soul's ability to exist apart from matter.³³ Nevertheless, I think the only other plausible alternative is to argue that the separated soul is, in fact, identical to the human person (despite Aquinas's claims to the contrary). This strikes me as an even less attractive option than arguing against the existence of the separated soul: it leaves his account of the relation between body and soul

³¹ See, for example, ST Ia.75.6.

³² See Brown's "Aquinas on the Resurrection of the Body," *Thomist* 56 (1992), 165–207, and Ross's 2001 Presidential Address to the American Catholic Philosophical Association: "Together with the Body I Love," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 75 (2001), 1–18.

³³ Note that the prospect of immediate resurrection does not interfere with this ability: the soul would still be able to survive in separation from matter. God would just ensure that it never actually was in this state.

looking much more like Platonic and Cartesian substance dualism than he intends, and it weakens the hylomorphic unity of form and matter central to Aquinas's metaphysics of human beings. In the absence of a solution to the Two-Person Problem, I believe removing the separated soul from Aquinas's account constitutes the best move in preserving a generally defensible, largely Thomistic account of human nature.³⁴

Calvin College

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³⁴ Many thanks to Hud Hudson, Scott MacDonald, Bob Pasnau, and Eleonore Stump for useful conversations on this topic, to the philosophy department at Calvin College for their comments on a much earlier draft of this paper, and to audiences at St Louis University's April 2003 conference "Aquinas's Ethics: Metaphysical Foundations, Moral Theory, and Theological Context."

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