

IS THOMAS A PHYSICALIST OR DUALIST?

by

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Introduction

As Christian theologians, biblical scholars, and philosophers continue to debate anthropological views, the question of how to understand Thomistic hylomorphism within the contemporary analytic categories inevitably arises: Is it a form of mind-body dualism or a form of physicalism? That is, does Thomas consider the physical body and the immaterial mind or soul as something like parts joined together to form a whole or does Thomas see the human person as identical with or exclusively composed of physical material that instantiates immaterial properties or aspects?¹ Or perhaps Thomas cannot be allied with either. Confusion abounds, especially when attempting to translate between contemporary analytic metaphysics and medieval hylomorphic ontology.

I shall argue that the Thomistic anthropology can be construed as a form of mind-body dualism based upon Thomas's description of the nature of the form—that is, the soul—of the human person. First, I shall survey contemporary confusion over where to place Thomas, especially by analytic scholars to better appreciate the need for this project. Second, I shall offer crucial definitions from an analytic perspective to establish a rough rubric to locate Thomas's view properly. Finally, I shall summarize Thomas's anthropological view and compare it with those definitions, arguing that he fits with dualism, even if imperfectly. My conclusion is sure to

¹ For the purposes of this paper, I shall use *mind* and *soul* interchangeably, though I recognize not all will be comfortable with that. Further, I make no commitment to a particular theory of properties, be they Platonic universals or Aristotelean tropes, except that they are not reducible to any physical base.

displease many, and I am open to revising my interpretation should someone clearly demonstrate that I have gerrymandered the conceptual landscape to dualism's advantage.

Analytic Confusion

For those who do not venture often into analytic scholarship, it is safe to say that there is no consensus on how to classify the Thomistic anthropology. Some wish to claim Thomas for physicalism, or something near enough.² For example, Trenton Merricks argues that, according to one way of reading Aquinas, “A human person in this life is identical with a living body. And that is physicalism.”³ While Eleonore Stump is more nuanced, recognizing that Aquinas shares a great many similarities with dualism, nonetheless she slightly favors the idea that Thomas ought to be regarded as a materialist, albeit of a non-reductive sort.⁴ However, Denys Turner is unapologetic in labeling Aquinas as a materialist, devoting an entire chapter of his book to argue that Thomas thought of a human as identical with a human animal or organism.⁵

² With apologies for appropriating Jaegwon Kim's book title. James Madden, “Thomistic Hylomorphism and Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Religion,” *PhC* 8 (2013): esp. 670 can also be added here if we take “emergent property dualism” to be a form of physicalism, though some may disagree with that assessment.

³ Trenton Merricks, “The Word Made Flesh: Dualism, Physicalism, and the Incarnation,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 295.

⁴ Eleonore Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism,” *F&P* 12 (1995): 520–22.

⁵ Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), esp. 56–99.

On the other hand, others label Thomas a dualist, or perhaps mostly a dualist.⁶ Alvin Plantinga, an ardent defender of Cartesian substance dualism, argues that whether Thomas can be counted among the dualists depends upon whether the human person can continue to exist sans body: “If the answer is no, then Aquinas’s view is not felicitously counted as a version of dualism; at least it is not among the versions of dualism for which I mean to argue. If, on the other hand, the answer is yes, we can welcome Aquinas (perhaps a bit cautiously) into the dualist camp.”⁷ On the other hand, Hud Hudson, an ardent defender of physicalism, qualifies his recognition that the majority voice of Christian tradition has been dualist by saying, “Or if not dualists, whatever it is that Aquinas is.”⁸ Others are more enthusiastic in counting Thomas among the dualist ranks, such as J. P. Moreland and Scott Rae who name their position after him, much to the chagrin of Christina van Dyke.⁹

⁶ Edward Feser, *Aquinas: A Beginner’s Guide*, Oneworld Beginner’s Guides (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), 163–64. With great reluctance, it is admitted that Aquinas could qualify as a dualist by both Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas*, Arguments of the Philosophers (New York: Routledge, 2003), 212 and Jeffrey E. Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World: Change, Hylomorphism, and Material Objects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 271–75. More on that anon.

⁷ Alvin Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 101.

⁸ Hud Hudson, *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 168, n. 2.

⁹ J. P. Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000) passim; Christina Van Dyke, “Not Properly a Person: The Rational Soul and ‘Thomistic Substance Dualism,’” *F&P* 26 (2009): 186–204.

Still others have no idea how where Thomas fits.¹⁰ Dean Zimmerman, a dualist with physicalist sympathies, hesitantly calls Thomism “a borderline case” of dualism, one fraught with ambiguity.¹¹ Kevin Corcoran, a physicalist with dualist sympathies, confesses that he simply does not understand Thomas, and that is not entirely Corcoran’s fault, since “the range of logically incompatible views of human nature that travel under the banner of Thomism is dizzying.”¹²

Or perhaps Thomas fits in neither camp and is a unique category unto himself.¹³ Or perhaps the contemporary conceptual framework is ill-suited for classifying Thomas’s ontology,¹⁴ a conclusion reached by both Eleonore Stump with her leaning toward Thomas being a materialist and Edward Feser with his leaning toward Thomas being a dualist.¹⁵

¹⁰ Peter van Inwagen, “A Materialist Ontology of the Human Person,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 204–05; Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 57, 64.

¹¹ Dean W. Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 20–22.

¹² Kevin J. Corcoran, “The Constitution View of Person,” in *In Search of the Soul: Perspectives on the Mind-Body Problem*, ed. Joel B. Green, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010), 155.

¹³ Peter S. Eardley and Carl N. Still, *Aquinas: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 34–50; Christopher John Shields and Robert Pasnau, *The Philosophy of Aquinas*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 190–216; and (despite the concessions mentioned above) Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 260, 270–72.

¹⁴ Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 272–73; Turner, *Thomas Aquinas*, 51.

¹⁵ Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism,” 520–22; Feser, *Aquinas*, esp. 131–32.

No doubt this rampant confusion is partially due to the anachronistic superimposition of our categories onto a medieval thinker. So even if we conclude that Thomas was in fact a materialist, he may not be of a like kind to today's materialist since he has a vastly different view of the material from our post-Enlightenment, mechanical conception. Still, even with accounting for the disparity of our respective worldviews, Thomas is not altogether easy to understand on his own terms. To map Thomas onto the contemporary taxonomy requires that we understand the conceptual landscape, to which we now turn.

Locating the Disagreement: Crucial Definitions

Although it is impossible to represent all of the analytic tradition such that every member would be satisfied, still there are generalities that most could nod in agreement.

Despite enjoying ubiquity among analytic discourse, "substance" remains notoriously difficult to define. Many define it ostensibly with organisms being the prime exemplar.¹⁶ Presently, I shall understand a substance to have (at least) two typical characteristics. First, it is the bearer or subject of properties, especially an essence or a nature (i.e. the sort of property or set of properties that qualify the bearer to be a member of a kind). For example, a carrot exemplifies the property of being orange, while orange-ness itself does not bear any properties

¹⁶ Howard Robinson, "Substance," in *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2014. (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2014). Cited 27 September 2018. Online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/substance/>; Robert C. Koons and Timothy H. Pickavance, *Metaphysics: The Fundamentals*, Fundamentals of Philosophy 4 (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 104–06; E. J. Lowe, *A Survey of Metaphysics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15–16. Most seem to follow the classic example in Aristotle, *Categories* 1b25–2a4.

(except, perhaps, genus-species properties like “being a color”). Second, it is its own object rather than a part of another object. So, while my dog is a substance, his leg is not.

As an anthropological thesis, physicalism, also known as materialism, sees the human person as a strictly physical substance as far as her composition goes.¹⁷ That is, she is made of exclusively physical stuff, whatever that stuff may be. Note carefully that this thesis pertains only to humans and should not to be confused for *global physicalism*, the belief that all of reality is exclusively physical.¹⁸ Christian physicalists deny the larger claim since it is so characteristic

¹⁷ I shall continue to use *physicalism* and *materialism* interchangeably because they are virtually indistinguishable despite some disagreement over the nature of the most fundamental constituent that composes the human person and whether one term is to be preferred over the other. Interesting as those in-house debates may be, they have no bearing at all in this present investigation since all who adopt these labels agree that the human person is a strictly physical or strictly material substance, whatever “physical” or “material” might mean. Nancey Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, CIT (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1–2 sees the distinction as between designating the global and anthropological theses. Others see the distinction based upon how we conceive of the physical or the material—whether as the basic particles of physics or spatially extended, sense-perceptible matter—so one’s anthropological term is affected by one’s philosophy of physics (e.g., Alyssa Ney, “Defining Physicalism,” *PhC* 3 (2008): 1033–34; Jessica Wilson, “On Characterizing the Physical,” *Philosophical Studies* 131 (2006): 61–99; cf. Jaegwon Kim, *Philosophy of Mind*, 3rd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2011), 11–14). Relatedly, the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics makes “physical” and “matter” sound positively immaterial, problematizing precision (Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Creation and Humanity*, vol. 3 of *A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 330, 343–44). It will be taken for granted for this presentation that we generally know what “physical” or “material” means.

¹⁸ Oliver D. Crisp, *God Incarnate: Explorations in Christology* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 137–39; Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 30; Kevin J. Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature: A Christian Materialist Alternative to the Soul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 13 n. 2.

of naturalistic atheism,¹⁹ and thus clearly incompatible with our shared religion.²⁰ Additionally, this localized thesis can countenance the existence of non-material things (e.g., properties, numbers, or propositions) and even immaterial persons (e.g., the Persons of the Trinity and angelic beings).²¹ It is thus a mistake to consider anthropological physicalism as entailing atheism.

Being strictly physical in composition, however, does not preclude some sort of immaterial reality for humans. No Christian scholar, as far as I know, subscribes to *reductive* or *eliminative physicalism*, the view that all mental phenomena are nothing but physical phenomena or are otherwise illusory and ought to be discarded.²² Rather, many physicalists today, Christian

¹⁹ As characterized by both advocates and critics alike (e.g., Kevin J. Corcoran, “Human Persons are Material Only,” in *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J. P. Moreland, Chad V. Meister, and Khaldoun A. Sweis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 273–74; David Papineau, “Naturalism,” in *SEP*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 ed. (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016). Cited 11 June 2017. Online: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/naturalism/>).

²⁰ van Inwagen, “A Materialist Ontology,” 206; Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, 1–2; Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature*, 13; Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “‘Multidimensional Monism’: A Constructive Theological Proposal for the Nature of Human Nature,” in *Neuroscience and the Soul: The Human Person in Philosophy, Science, and Theology*, ed. Thomas M. Crisp, Steven L. Porter, and Gregg A. Ten Elshof (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 216–17; Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 161–62.

²¹ Corcoran, “The Constitution View,” 154–55; van Inwagen, “A Materialist Ontology,” 199–202. William F. Vallicella, “Could a Classical Theist Be a Physicalist?,” *F&P* 15 (1998): 160–80 argues that this compatibility is only skin deep.

²² As also observed by Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Guides for the Perplexed (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 70–71. However, some do make statements awfully close (e.g., Joel B. Green, “What Does It Mean to Be Human? Another Chapter in the Ongoing Interaction of Science and Scripture,” in *From Cells to Souls, and Beyond: Changing Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Malcolm A. Jeeves (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 179–80). Reductivism and eliminativism seem functionally equivalent, both amounting to an antirealism or nihilism regarding the mental as an entity or phenomenon in its

or otherwise, affirm *mental realism*, the belief that mental properties and subjectivity are real and distinct from physical properties and phenomena. In so doing, physicalists also subscribe to *property dualism*: The human person possesses both physical and non-physical properties, mental properties being among the latter.²³ So, although a human may have some immaterial reality in so far as some of her properties are immaterial, she is not herself immaterial—not any more than gray having the property of being a color likewise grants my gray car the property of being a color.²⁴ Physicalists insist that there is no *substantive*, immaterial constituent of the human person, whether it be a soul or mind or spirit.²⁵

own right, though some disagree with that assessment (e.g., Peter van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2015), 230). Though Oliver Crisp affirms the (possible?) existence of Christians holding this view in *God Incarnate*, 147–48, he provides no examples. Though waning in popularity, reductive/eliminative materialism is far from dead (see, e.g., Paul M. Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness: A Contemporary Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001); Patricia Smith Churchland, *Touching a Nerve: The Self as Brain* (New York: Norton, 2013); Daniel C. Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991)).

²³ Merricks, “The Word Made Flesh,” 294–95; Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, chp. 3; John C. Polkinghorne, “Towards an Integrated Anthropology,” in *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 80–81; Warren S. Brown, “Cognitive Contributions to Soul,” in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancey Murphy, and H. Newton Malony, Theology and the Sciences (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 101–03; Kärkkäinen, “Multidimensional Monism,” 212–16. This is not a uniquely Christian physicalist trend (e.g., Jaegwon Kim, *Physicalism, or Something Near Enough* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008)). Other non-physical properties include moral properties.

²⁴ Some even think that physical properties are not themselves physical, even if they confer physicality (see van Inwagen, “A Materialist Ontology,” 201, 210–15).

²⁵ Alfred Schmidt, “Materialismus,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller and Gerhard Krause (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), 22:263–64; Hud Hudson, “I Am Not an Animal!,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 220; Lynne Rudder Baker, *Persons and Bodies: A Constitution View*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 213–16; Murphy, *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?*, ix; van Inwagen, “A Materialist

Some physicalists move beyond this minimal portrait and make a finer distinction regarding how the human person relates to her exclusively physical body. Some say the human person just is identical with her animal body, known as *animalism*. Others, however, say the human person is constituted by but not identical with her body in a like manner as a desk is constituted by but not identical with wood, known as *constitutionalism*. Crassly put, animalism is a hardware view of humanity, while constitutionalism is a software view of humanity. Animalism sees humans as the platform that runs the operating system that is mentality. Conversely constitutionalism sees humans as the operating system that is mentality, but operating systems cannot exist, let alone function, without a platform.

Dualism, also known as *mind-body* or *substance dualism*, is the primary alternative to physicalism.²⁶ Like physicalism, dualism resists easy characterization so as to accommodate all who profess the label. However, the different varieties are all minimally united by the common conviction that the human person is composed of two different *kinds* of components—material and immaterial, the latter being theoretically separable from matter and enabling the human person her mentality including rationality, emotion, and volition.²⁷ Thus, dualism goes further

Ontology,” 206; Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible*, Studies in Theological Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 33; Corcoran, “Human Persons are Material Only,” 270. Physicalists can continue to use the term “soul” for something else, such as an enduring narrational identity (K. Nicholas Forti, “Persons and Narratives: A Physicalist Account of the Soul,” in *The Resounding Soul: Reflections on the Metaphysics and Vivacity of the Human Person*, ed. Eric Austin Lee and Samuel Kimbriel, Veritas (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2015), 114–34).

²⁶ Although it is not the only thesis to claim that the substantial soul exists, the third alternative is the previously mentioned idealism—which is even more of a minority voice than dualism and is at times difficult to distinguish from dualism anyway, as is also observed in Hudson, “I Am Not an Animal!,” 220.

²⁷ Crisp, *God Incarnate*, 137; Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 19; idem, “Christians Should Affirm Mind-Body Dualism,” in *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of*

than mere property dualism by positing that the respective kinds of properties are possessed by the right kinds of things—physical properties are had by physical things (i.e. bodies); while immaterial, mental properties are had by immaterial, mental kinds of things (i.e. minds or souls). Try as we might, we could never induce a rock to be afraid nor should we ever expect a mind to be of a certain color or length.

Further, most dualists ground the identity of the human person in her soul: same soul, same person.²⁸ Many, in fact, take the stronger view that the human person just is identical with her soul or mind,²⁹ which is the dualist manifestation of what I shall call the *Cartesian intuition*—the tendency to equate the person with her mentality or her soul.³⁰ However, this is not

Religion, ed. Michael L. Peterson and Raymond J. VanArragon (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 316–17; Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 17–22; Richard Swinburne, *The Evolution of the Soul*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), passim; Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” 100; Stewart Goetz, “Substance Dualism,” in *Ashgate Research Companion to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Joshua R. Farris and Charles Taliaferro (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 125–27; Cortez, *Theological Anthropology*, 72–73; Joshua R. Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology: A Cartesian Exploration*, Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (New York: Routledge, 2017), 56.

²⁸ E.g., Swinburne, *Evolution of the Soul*, 146, 154; Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 19; Plantinga, “Materialism and Christian Belief,” 119.

²⁹ E.g., Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 180, 205–206; Richard Swinburne, “From Mental/Physical Identity to Substance Dualism,” in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean W. Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 161; Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, 2–3, 17.

³⁰ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* 2.54; cf. David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 368–69; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 495; R. Lucas Stamps, “A Chalcedonian Argument Against Cartesian Dualism,” *SBJT* 19 (2015): 57; Kelly M. Kapic, “Anthropology,” in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 122–24. A related, but not quite equivalent, concept is the “turn to the subject.” See Cornelis van der Kooi and Gijsbert van den Brink, *Christian Dogmatics: An Introduction*, trans. Reinder

a necessary feature of the minimalist thesis as illustrated by some who are clearly dualists but reject such an equation.³¹

Having provided this rough sketch of these analytic concepts, let us now hear from Thomas and his followers and see where we may locate him.

Locating Thomism

Thomas espouses a hylomorphic ontology, construing physical objects as a combination of form and matter. Therefore, if a human person is physical, she is then a compound of form (i.e. soul) and matter, the form being the principle that organizes and animates the matter.³² But unlike some physicalists who may think of the form as something like a property or structure, Thomas's description of the form complies with the minimal dualist thesis.

First, Thomas considers the soul to be more than just a *substantial form* (the principle that turns a parcel of matter into a substance—in this case, giving life to the body).³³ The soul is also a *subsistent form*, capable of existing on its own apart from its associated matter unlike other

Bruinsma and James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 252. Constitutional physicalists also accept the Cartesian intuition, though obviously not the Cartesian anthropology.

³¹ E.g., Anselm, “On the Virgin Conception and Original Sin,” in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, ed. Brian Davies and G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 357–89; Calvin, *Institutes* I.15.2; Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 20; Christopher Hughes Conn, “Human Nature and the Possibility of Life after Death: Why Christian Orthodoxy Requires Compositional Substance Dualism,” *Philosophy and Theology* 20 (2008): 132–33; Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, esp. 40–41. Some evidence suggests that early Christian theologians made such a distinction in light of the doctrine of the Incarnation, to be explored further in chp 5.

³² Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.1; cf. Shields and Pasnau, *The Philosophy of Aquinas*, 194–97.

³³ Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.1; 1.76.1. Contrast with his designating the soul as a substance in *SCG* 2.46ff.

forms.³⁴ Neither the fact that the disembodied existence is a result of divine intervention nor that the soul was never meant to exist sans material negate the fact that the soul *can* survive apart from its associated material.³⁵ Aquinas follows Aristotle for the vast majority of objects by claiming that forms do not exist apart from their matter.³⁶ However, against Aristotle, Aquinas grants that some forms exist purely without matter, such as God and angels.³⁷ Further complicating this general ontological rule of thumb is the human form. While all human forms essentially depend upon material substrata for their initial existence, human forms are not

³⁴ Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.2 esp. s.c. and ad 2; 1.90.4 ad 2 and ad 3; cf. Michael Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 16; Brian Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust,” in *Soul, Body, and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 130–32. Another possible case of forms existing independently from their material is the Thomistic understanding of the Eucharist, whereby the accidents of the bread and wine remain even when the bread and wine themselves have been removed (*SGC* 4, c. 65; *ST* III.75.5 ad 1; *ST* III.77.1 ad 1; cf. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 84–85). A related problem is that the standard issue hylomorphic conception of nature creates problems for individuation with the Incarnation, leading to natures being modified (“tailor-made,” according to *Ibid.*, 9) for the Incarnation.

³⁵ Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.6 ad 2; 1.76.1 ad 6; cf. Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 251–52. Baker considers this feature alone to be sufficient to place Thomas in the dualist camp (see her *Persons and Bodies*, 5). Substance dualists need not hold that the soul is naturally immortal. A related and equally confounding puzzle is the possibility of matter surviving separation from its form, especially regarding the ontological status of Christ’s body during the three days of burial (see, e.g., Andrew J. Jaeger and Jeremy Sienkiewicz, “Matter Without Form: The Ontological Status of Christ’s Dead Body,” *JAT* 6 (2018): 131–45; Thomas M. Ward, *John Duns Scotus on Parts, Wholes, and Hylomorphism*, Investigating Medieval Philosophy 7 (Boston: Brill, 2014), chp. 2).

³⁶ Aquinas, *SCG* 4.79.

³⁷ Aquinas, *ST* 1A.3.2; 1A.54.3 ad 2; cf. Stump, *Aquinas*, 197–200.

essentially dependent upon them for their continued existence.³⁸ In fact, Christ’s own human soul is separated from his body, and it is Christ’s human soul that descends into hell.³⁹

Second, although Thomas insists that the human person is identical with the united body-soul composite rather than just with the soul,⁴⁰ nonetheless he grants that the soul is capable of doing a number of activities normally ascribed to persons, such as cognition.⁴¹ In her normal state of embodiment, the human person’s cognitive functions are due to her physicality.⁴² However, in the disembodied state, the soul can continue some of those functions, albeit to a greatly diminished degree and only by divine intervention.⁴³ Dean Zimmerman poignantly observes, “[...] according to Aquinas, although the soul that persists after death is not identical to

³⁸ Aquinas, *ST* 2.66.1 ad 3; cf. Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 21. In fact, it is even debatable whether Aquinas thought that human forms needed a material substratum to begin its existence (compare, e.g., *ST* 1A.90.2, 1A.118.2 with 1A.90.4, 1A.76.3 ad 3, 1A.118.2–3; cf. Stump, *Aquinas*, 206–07). The Eucharistic elements are another exception to the ontological rule of thumb (*ST* 3.77.1, ad 3 and aa. 1–2). The accidental properties of the communion elements are preserved and transferred over from the essence of the communion elements to another substratum, namely Christ.

³⁹ *ST* 3.50.4. Although Thomas thinks the human body and human soul are separated, he still maintains that the Word remains united to both during the burial (*ST* III, q.50, aa.2–3; cf. Matthew Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death* (Baylor University Press, 2012), 22, 142–43 n. 46).

⁴⁰ Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.4; 1.75.7 ad 3; cf. Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust,” 120.

⁴¹ Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.2 co; 1.75.4 co; cf. Denys Turner, “The Human Person,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Summa Theologiae*, ed. Philip McCosker and Denys Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 172–73.

⁴² Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.2 ad 3; 1.75.7 ad 3; 1.77.8 co.

⁴³ Aquinas, *ST* 1.75.6 ad 3; 1.77.8 ad 5; 1.89.1; 89.8; cf. Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death*, 101–02; Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism,” 519.

the person whose soul it was, the soul does retain the ability to think. *Who* this thinker is remains something of a mystery.”⁴⁴

Thomas and his followers need not embrace the Cartesian intuition of equating the soul with the human person. Perhaps the human person is constituted by the soul in a like manner as marble constitutes a statue.⁴⁵ But it seems to be a difference of semantics for Thomists to call the disembodied soul “an incomplete substance” or “not the whole human being” while insisting it can both exist apart from matter and continue to be the bearer of at least some properties, especially mental properties normally attributed to human persons.⁴⁶ The substantial form that is the soul must be more than a property, since properties are not the sorts of thing that thinks and acts.⁴⁷ Surely if anything qualifies as a substance, then the Thomistic concept of the soul would, despite the adamant denial by Thomas and his followers.⁴⁸ The soul seems to qualify as a

⁴⁴ Zimmerman, “Three Introductory Questions,” 21, emphasis original.

⁴⁵ For an insightful way of constructing an anthropology that does not see the human person as identical with the soul with the added benefit of being consistent with Chalcedonian Christology, see Stamps, “A Chalcedonian Argument Against Cartesian Dualism”.

⁴⁶ *ST* IA.29.1 ad5, 1A.75.4 ad 2, IA.77.89 ad 5; cf. Stump, *Aquinas*, 209–10, 212; Patrick Lee and Robert P. George, *Body-Self Dualism in Contemporary Ethics and Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), esp. 68. Something similar concerning Christ and his own death is argued in Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 295.

⁴⁷ As observed also by Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 251–52.

⁴⁸ As also observed by Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature*, 39–40; Brower, *Aquinas’s Ontology of the Material World*, 252; Goetz and Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*, 58–60. Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust,” 130–36 interprets Thomas as claiming that the soul is a particular thing. If my analysis is right, then Moreland and Rae are justified in using the label “Thomistic dualism” (*Body and Soul*, esp. 10–11, 14, 201; cf. Swinburne, *Evolution of the Soul*, 331); *contra* Van Dyke, “Not Properly a Person: The Rational Soul and ‘Thomistic Substance Dualism’”. This much is strongly implied by Stump, *Aquinas*, 52–54 with her analogy of humans normally being two-handed. Surely a one-handed human is still a human!

substance even on Thomas’s own definition of substance—an individual (hypostasis) that subsists (exists in and through itself and not in another) standing under its non-essential features (i.e. it is the subject of its accidents), and is the basis for the unity of its constituents if it has any.⁴⁹ So although some Thomists insist that Thomas advocates a form of non-reductive materialism,⁵⁰ William Vallicella said it best: “To call this ‘physicalism’ would be a misuse of terms. For it would be indistinguishable from a form of substance dualism.”⁵¹ This is made all the more evident with Eleonore Stump’s proposal that perhaps a new taxonomy should be drawn where *subsistence dualism* is a genus under which Cartesianism and Thomistic hylomorphism belong.⁵² Physicalism need not apply.

However, one could be bold enough to object against Thomas’s view for inconsistency and push back to Aristotle, seeing the form as only a complex organizational property.⁵³ Such a

⁴⁹ Thomas, *ST* 1.29.2; 3.2.1; 3.16.12 ad 3; cf. Gorman, *Aquinas on the Metaphysics of the Hypostatic Union*, 16–17.

⁵⁰ Stump, “Non-Cartesian Substance Dualism and Materialism without Reductionism,” 507–08; idem, *Aquinas*, 212–16.

⁵¹ Vallicella, “Could a Classical Theist Be a Physicalist?,” 162. A similar sentiment is found in Goetz and Taliaferro, *A Brief History of the Soul*, 55–57; Farris, *The Soul of Theological Anthropology*, 159–63. *Nota bene*, both Stump and Brower take it that Aquinas’s materialism/animalism does not align with the contemporary understanding described in the previous chapter since the animal body that the human person is identical with is not strictly (prime) matter, but also of a substantial, subsistent form. See also Leftow, “Souls Dipped in Dust,” esp. 130, 137–38.

⁵² Stump, *Aquinas*, 212.

⁵³ See, e.g., Corcoran, *Rethinking Human Nature*, 67. Even with Aristotle, however, there is some debate concerning whether the soul is merely a configurational state or property or something greater, a sort of incomplete substance capable of being separated from its matter (e.g. *De Anima* 412a–413a; cf. Christopher Shields, general introduction to *De Anima*, by Aristotle, trans. Christopher Shields, Clarendon Aristotle Series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), xxvii).

maneuver is in keeping with the constitutionalist version of physicalism. Yet, such a maneuver wins conceptual consistency at the cost of Thomas' Catholic commitment to the intermediate state and Christ's descent into Hell. Properties are not the sorts of things that experience the Beatific Vision or preach to Hell's imprisoned.⁵⁴ It just seems to be a categorical mistake for something like redness or hardness or even humanity to be cognitive subjects or things that survive separation from their possessors.⁵⁵ Rather, it is persons, endowed with properties, that are cognitive agents. And if the disembodied human soul is said by Thomas to do these things, it is difficult to avoid the inference that souls are in fact persons, or at least human persons are primarily composed of souls.

Conclusion

Having surveyed and appreciated the prevailing confusion about Thomas's anthropology, defined the key analytic concepts, and compared Thomas's explicit declarations, Aquinas ought to be aligned with contemporary dualists rather than physicalists. Adding a respected thinker, even one so influential as Thomas, onto one's team does not justify that team's position. It could very well be that Thomas is one of the more impressive thinkers for a position that is ultimately false. However, this technical exercise is needed in order to reinforce the majority voice of Christian tradition as being solidly dualist while clarifying ambiguous or imprecise language.

On the other hand, in claiming Thomas as one of their own, dualists ought to pay closer attention to his reasons for saying disembodiment is unnatural, like the whole-body counterpart

⁵⁴ And if they were properties themselves, they would not hear Christ's preaching anyway.

⁵⁵ A like point is made by Vallicella, "Could a Classical Theist Be a Physicalist?," 170.

to amputation. While no contemporary dualist I know of would bifurcate the human person to the degree that some physicalists allege, nonetheless they have neglected treatments of embodiment in order to advance arguments for the existence of the soul. Dualists must devote attention to the theology and metaphysics of embodiment lest Christians continue to be tempted toward physicalism with its prioritization of physicality. So, along with Thomas, and to modify the words of our Lord, *What God hath joined together, let no dualist put asunder*—even if unwittingly.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ My thanks to the following for comments are earlier drafts: Marc Cortez, Daniel Treier, Ty Kieser, Wheaton College's spring 2014 Theological Anthropology seminar.