

MICHAŁ ZEMBRZUSKI

## **HOMO NON EST INTELLECTUS. AQUINAS ON THE RELATION BETWEEN SOUL AND INTELLECT**

**Abstract.** This paper discusses Thomas Aquinas' stance on the relation between intellect and human soul, where the former is a power and the latter its principle. Due to the fact that Aquinas understands soul as the form of a body, rather than its mover, the problem of how to separate and characterize intellective powers arises. For it is accidental intellectuality that enables cognitive and volitional acts, which are independent of body in their essence. To explain his own position, Aquinas employs the so-called "impediment argument" for the spirituality of the human intellect. He also employs the whole/part distinction when discussing the relation between intellect and soul as whole/part categories. As a result, his account can avoid Averroistic flaws without having to identify intellect with the soul or the whole human being (as argued by Albert the Great). M. Gogacz's thesis that the intellectual accident of the soul is identical with the possible intellect seems to solve the problem of the accidental and potential character of this particular human power.

**Keywords:** Thomas Aquinas, intellect, soul-body problem, impediment argument, hylomorphism, whole-part relation

1. Introduction. 2. Soul as *hoc aliquid* vs. intellect. 3. Soul as a form united with body vs. intellect. 4. Whole-part relation vs. intellect (Where is intellect? In the left finger?). 5. In what sense is the intellect a form of the human being? 6. Summary – Admit the necessity of intellectual potentiality in the human soul.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle expressed the view that *homo inquantum homo solus est intellectus*, which for many medieval thinkers served as a paradigm to define human being<sup>1</sup>. This formula does not concern a species-qualitative definition explaining human as

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1 See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* IX, 8 (1168b32–1169a2); X, 7 (1178a 2–8), X, 9 (1179a22–32).

a rational being (*animal rationale*); rather, it emphasizes a primary and paramount feature that humans possess and that makes them intellectual beings. The thinker who was especially fond of the above statement was Albert the Great. For him, it is an intellect that created humans, and it is an intellect that made humans similar to God<sup>2</sup>. Interestingly, Aquinas hardly ever commented the views of his masters on this issue<sup>3</sup>. There are no remarks in his commentary to the *Ethics*, and more generally in his own research on understanding a human being and his soul<sup>4</sup>. Regarding Aristotle, Thomas only argued that the intellect is the principle that makes human everything that is assigned to it. The intellect makes human will a free will, and human love a true love. Aquinas would rather say: *homo est praecipue id quod est secundum intellectum et rationem*<sup>5</sup>, stressing that the intellect

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2 See H. Anzulewicz, *Albert Wielki o naturalnym pragnieniu wiedzy*, Przegląd Tomistyczny 15(2009), 33–34. The author lists the most important places where one can find this statement. Cf. H. Anzulewicz, *Anthropology: The concept of Man in Albert the Great*, in: *A Companion to Albert the Great. Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences*, ed. I.M. Resnick, Leiden–Boston 2013, 325–346.

3 Cf. K. Krauze, *Transforming Aristotelian Philosophy: Alexander of Aphrodisias in Aquinas Early Anthropology and Eschatology*, Przegląd Tomistyczny 20(2015), 175–217.

4 Aquinas mentions this phrase i.a. in (abbreviations of the titles of Aquinas's works are taken from: [www.corpusthomaticum.org/](http://www.corpusthomaticum.org/)): *Super Sent.*, III, d. 22, q. 1, a. 1, arg. 7; *Quaestiones disputate de anima*, a. 12, arg. 13; *De unitate intellectus*, cap. 4, co. ("Si vero oculus non sit principale hominis, sed aliquid sit eo principalius quod utitur oculo, quod diversificaretur in diversis, essent quidem multi videntes sed uno oculo. Manifestum est autem quod intellectus est id quod est principale in homine, et quod utitur omnibus potentiis animae et membris corporis tamquam organis; et propter hoc Aristoteles subtiliter dixit quod homo est intellectus «vel maxime». Si igitur sit unus intellectus omnium, ex necessitate sequitur quod sit unus intelligens, et per consequens unus volens, et unus utens pro suae voluntatis arbitrio omnibus illis secundum quae homines diversificantur ad invicem"). Only the last fragment contains this phrase, developed by Aquinas with his understanding of the soul, intellect and powers. Nevertheless one needs to remember its context, which is a polemic against Averroism. According to Aquinas, the saying "this man cognizes" (*hic homo intelligit*) could not be formulated on the basis of Averroism.

5 *Sententia Ethic.*, IX, l. 9, n. 6.

is a formal principle and a source of complexity for a human being, rather than something identical with a whole human being as such<sup>6</sup>.

Aquinas was far from considering the human being as identical with a soul, and he never explicitly said that the human being is an intellect. One may wonder, then, how to characterize the relation between soul and intellect, particularly when the soul is understood as the form of a body and the intellect is a power that operates independently of corporeal organs. The problematic issues here do not merely concern the simple explanation that the intellect is the power of a human being, but also: (1) whether understanding intellect as a power, which is an immaterial part of a human being, contradicts the thesis of the unity of being, given that we refer to human being in terms of subsistence; (2) whether the intellect is just a part of the human being or it concerns the whole human being; and (3) whether it is consistent to claim that the human intellect is the human form. What follows in my article confirms a traditional *adagium* by Thomas: “it is an error to say that mind or intellect acquires cognition, but it is a human himself who acquires cognition through them”<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. SOUL AS *HOC ALIQUID* VS. INTELLECT

The definition of soul as the substantial form of the human being is one of the best-known anthropological theses of Aquinas. Such a definition allowed this medieval author to characterize the essential identity of the human being. Unlike Plato, Aquinas did not need to rely on the idea that the soul is a factor that activates motion (*motor*), which implies the highly problematic thesis that unification, i.e. the unity of body and soul, can be accomplished only by activity. Furthermore, the assumption that there are indirect elements (*media*)

6 See also *Sententia Ethic.*, IX, l. 9, n. 7.

7 *De veritate*, q. 2, a. 6, ad 3. “Non enim proprie loquendo sensus aut intellectus cognoscent sed homo per utrumque”.

between the rational soul and the first matter, connected with a form in a human being, implies a multiplicity of forms or an infinite number of “connectors”<sup>8</sup>. For Aquinas the latter thesis was also a consequence of the “Platonic views”<sup>9</sup>.

The above statement that soul is a form quickly becomes inadequate when we take into account the immateriality/incorporeality of the soul, as well as its immortality/incorruptibility. One could easily notice that the very phrase “soul is a form” barely explains what the intellect in it (i.e. , the soul) actually is. We need to explain how the soul can exist as both an individual being and subsistence. This can help us to show its precise relation with the intellect.

When Thomas refers to the soul in terms of *hoc aliquid*, he also speaks of *subsistentia*<sup>10</sup>. He differentiates between two meanings of *hoc aliquid*: (1) that which is not in anything else but in a subject, that is, it exists independently. In this first sense, that expression refers to any separate subsisting beings (*pro quocumque subsistente*); (2) that which is complete, and exists independently as for its genus and species. In this second sense, the expression refers straightforwardly to that which possesses all the parts of which a whole is made of. On the first understanding of “this concrete being” all accidents are excluded, as well as all forms that are not substantial. On the second understanding, however, what is excluded is a rational soul , because *hoc aliquid* is supposed to entail a definition of the human being as a “thinking animal possessing both soul and body”. We may assume that a rational soul is only part of a species definition of the human being. Thus, a soul can-not be considered in terms of the second understanding of “this particular being”. The existing *compositum* should rather be referred to as subsistence. What is clear is that soul

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8 See M. Krasnodębski, *Dusza i ciało. Zagadnienie zjednoczenia duszy i ciała w wybranych tekstach Tomasza z Akwinu oraz w filozofii tomistycznej*, Wyd. Navo, Warszawa 2004, 33–34.

9 S. th. I, q. 76, a. 7, co.

10 S. th. I, q. 72, a. 2, co.

as a part is “this concrete (subsisting) being”, and as such it is able to exist independently (this follows from its activity *per se*). In this case, however, we refer to the soul in the first meaning of *hoc aliquid*. The soul cannot participate in the fullness of the human species – to accomplish its nature. When united with a body, the soul makes the human being fulfilled in its genus; but when they exist separately, it is unable to do so<sup>11</sup>.

With regard to our earlier statement, one may doubt whether the soul is able to accomplish its nature without a material body. It is typical for the soul to act through the intellect, with no corporal organ involved (an eye, however, does have one and phantasms are located in the mind). It is also typical for the soul to act through forms with no corporal dimensions. In his analysis of the thesis that the intellect acts without corporal involvement in the *Quaestiones de anima*, Aquinas proceeds as follows: he claims that the soul exists independently (*per se*), for in its essence (*per se*) there are activities that require no body for their operation. “And because a thing acts so far as it is actual, the intellective soul must have a complete act of existence in itself, depending in no way on the body”<sup>12</sup>.

The unity of the intellect follows immediately from the above, and one might easily accuse Thomas of being a Platonist – if the intellect acts and exists independently in man (*est aliquid subsistens*), then it must exist as one separate being. Aquinas’s aim was to prove that the soul exists independently of the body. He did so by stressing the intellectual activity in the human being. Even the first understanding

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11 See N. Kretzmann, *Philosophy of Mind*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. N. Kretzmann, E. Stump, Cambridge University Press 1993, 133–136. Cf. E. Stump, *Aquinas*, Routledge, London 2003, 200–212.

12 *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* a. 1, co. “Et quia unumquodque agit secundum quod est actu, oportet quod anima intellectiva habeat esse per se absolutum non dependens a corpore”. Unless otherwise noted, I will use the following English translation of Thomas Aquinas’ works : *St. Thomas Aquinas’ Works in English*, Dominican House of Studies, Washington DC, accessed March 20, 2017, <<http://dhspriory.org/thomas/>>.

of *hoc aliquid* was adequate to this end; the second understanding was supposed to say that it is logically non-contradictory and possible for a soul to exist without a body. Finally, refusing Plato's view that the soul has the fullness of the species in itself, Thomas develops an account according to which the essence of the soul is constituted both by its being a form and its acting intellectually. Such an activity enables the immaterial soul to acquire knowledge through material things<sup>13</sup>.

In our analysis on the soul it is now reasonable to turn our attention to the intellect, as this is the way Thomas himself proceeded. When he argued for the subsistence and immateriality of the soul, Aquinas intended to show the existence of the intellect, which, together with its immaterial activity, is the obvious implication of Thomas' argument for the spiritual dimension of the union of soul and body. Interestingly, this argument was inevitably grounded in the thesis of the two intellects operating within the human being.

The aforementioned argument for the spirituality of the soul is repeatedly discussed in Aquinas' works, and is sometimes called "the impediment argument", "the argument for plasticity of intellect", and "the argument from common dimension"<sup>14</sup>. These different expressions are due to the fact that Thomas himself did not attach any *labels* to his argument. There is no doubt that the argument derives from Aristotle's treatise *On the soul*. Aquinas, however, does not develop it. The argument can be found in four different places,<sup>15</sup> and its most important contentions are summarized as follows:

1. man can cognize the nature of all bodies with his own intellect;

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13 See S.L. Brock, *The Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas. A Sketch*, Cascade Books, Eugene 2015, 51–58.

14 Cf. D.P. Lang, *Aquinas's Impediment Argument for the Spirituality of the Human Intellect*, *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 11(2003), 107–124.

15 *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, a. 2, co; a. 14, co; *S. th.* I, q. 75, a. 2, co; *Sententia De anima* III, l. 7, n. 10.

2. that which is able to cognize everything cannot in itself have the nature of a cognized object – for the nature of the body would prevent the process of cognition;
3. it is impossible for the intellectual principle to be a body – for it would be impossible for the principle of intellectual action to act through a bodily part;
4. the intellectual principle which is called the intellect or the mind acts *per se*;
5. there is no bodily involvement in its action.

It follows from this argument that, according to Aquinas the soul is something subsisting with regard to actions that are not the acts of a body. However, this statement is disturbingly mistaken. In the *Summa*, nevertheless, Thomas develops this issue further. In response to some objections,<sup>16</sup> he emphasizes that no parts (as long as a part is understood as relative to a whole) could exist and act separately – neither soul nor body (as well as an eye or a hand)<sup>17</sup>. This is because the soul is something subsisting (*quod est*) and inherited in matter (*quod aliquid aliud est*)<sup>18</sup>. Aquinas tries to explain the status of the soul at great length, although he leaves some questions open to allow a more general analysis on the whole human being, including the body for which the soul serves a form. Thus, through the intellect we observe the unique feature of the human soul as a rational being<sup>19</sup>.

### 3. SOUL AS A FORM UNITED WITH BODY VS. INTELLECT

In light of the above, one might object to the very mode of the soul and body unity in the human being. Assuming their unity entails

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<sup>16</sup> *S. th.* I, q. 75, a. 2, ad 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> See G. Klima, *Aquinas on the Materiality of the Human Soul and the Immateriality of the Human Intellect*, *Philosophical Investigations* 32(2009)2, 169.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J.D. Madden, *Mind, Matter and Nature. A Thomistic Proposal for the Philosophy of Mind*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2013, 274–286.

assuming that they are one thing. This follows from the thesis stated above that a human being is a complete substance and exists independently, whereas his parts, even considered in isolation, would never be complete substances.

In *Summa theologiae*, question 76 (a. 1), we find an instance of the problems Aquinas had to cope with to employ the categories of form and matter in his explanation of the union of soul and body<sup>20</sup>. These issues are of paramount importance, because they raise the question whether the intellect can also unite with body in the human being. We have noticed that the intellect operates outside the body, and so it exists outside the body as well. Additionally, the soul, as a subsisting thing, cannot serve as a form for the body, because the soul is that “through which t a thing is what it really is (*forma est quo aliquid est*)”. In turn, this implies that the soul has to possess its own external principle of existence. The arguments against the view that the soul (and the intellect) is a form of the body appeal to the incompatibility of intellectual cognition and materiality. If that were the case – i.e., that the union between form and matter should be understood in terms of the union between intellect and body –, intellectual activity would be impossible. We should remember, moreover, that the soul continues to exist after the body is decomposed<sup>21</sup>.

If one does not accept that the intellectual soul is a form of the body, one would have to accept an absurd thesis instead. This implication is a key argument for Thomas. A further question to address is what makes intellectual cognition our own. As Pasnau puts it: “what join us to our intellect?”<sup>22</sup>. In *Summa theologiae*, Thomas mentions a kind of “personal

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20 It is possible when the relations between the intellect and the body are understood according to hylomorphism. Even if in the *Summa* Aquinas is rather careful (“and there is only one way already introduced by Aristotle”), we should concede that this solution is his own.

21 *S. th.* I, q. 76, a.1, arg 1–6.

22 R. Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002, 75.

experience” to stress the importance of this issue: “Should anyone wish to maintain that the intellectual soul is not the form of the body, he would have to find some way of making the act of understanding an act of this particular person”<sup>23</sup>. Similar ideas we may find in his *Commentary on the Soul*: “For it is clear that the actually intelligent being is this particular man. Whoever denies this implies that he himself understands nothing; and therefore that one need pay no attention to what he says. But if he does understand anything he must do so in virtue of some principle in him of this particular activity of understanding”<sup>24</sup>.

The question “what makes my intellectual activity only mine?” would be easily answered from the Platonic standpoint, according to which a human being is a soul that uses the body. This view posits a particular man as a particular intellect having intellectual cognitive abilities, and receiving sensual experience through certain features of his own soul. Moreover, the intellect can cognize itself more easily than its own body<sup>25</sup>. Despite the fact that this proposal is prone to be easily accepted, it contradicts the fact that the whole man cognizes while his parts are united in one cognizing wholeness: “Now the first of these alternatives is untenable, as shown above, on the grounds that one and the same man perceives himself both to understand and to have sensations. Yet sensation involves the body, so that the body must by said to be part of man. It remains, therefore, that the intellect whereby Socrates understands is part of Socrates, in such wise that the intellect is in some way united to the body of Socrates”<sup>26</sup>.

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23 *S. th. I, q. 76, a. 1, co.* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Man*, vol. 11, transl. T. Suttor, Cambridge University Press 2006, s. 43.

24 *Sentencia De anima*, lib. 3 l. 7 n. 20. “Manifestum est enim, quod hic homo intelligit. Si enim hoc negetur, tunc dicens hanc opinionem non intelligit aliquid, et ideo non est audiendus: si autem intelligit oportet quod aliquo formaliter intelligat”.

25 *S. th. I, q. 75, a. 4, co.* “Plato vero, ponens sentire esse proprium animae, ponere potuit quod homo esset anima utens corpore”.

26 *S. th. I, q. 76, 1, co.* “(...) propter hoc quod ipse idem homo est qui percipit se et intelligere et sentire, sentire autem non est sine corpore, unde oportet corpus aliquam esse hominis partem”. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Man*, op. cit. 43.

Aquinas firmly opposes Platonic views, and even when he follows Aristotle he partly rejects some of the Philosopher's solutions as well.

Apart from the aforementioned possibilities, including the only one Aquinas chose almost immediately as a starting point for his own answer to the question of the union of soul and body on the basis of the form and matter principle, he considers other possibilities for such a union in terms of a causative activity. It is obvious that Aquinas makes an assiduous effort to explain the formula: *hic homo intelligit*. He takes into consideration two proposals in particular: one by Averroes and, once again, one by Plato, phrased however in different terms.

The views of Averroes, which are considered in many places, including the *Summa theologiae*, and which Aquinas commented and rejected as the main thesis of the doctrine of monopsychism, show that the union of the soul – the intellect and body union – is possible through a proper intellectual cognitive form. Its essence is based on two types of entities: (1) a specific phantasm for any particular man, and (2) the possible intellect, which is united with a particular man. The union (*continuatio vel unio*) of a phantasm and the possible intellect during the process of intellectual cognition makes it possible to characterize, for instance, Socrates' intellectual activity as his own.

Thomas rejects the above explanation of the "this human cognizes" statement. He suggests that it is not a wall that cognizes – similarly when it comes to a man whose cognition is enabled by the possible intellect (*intellectus possibilis*). According to Averroes, man does not cognize intellectually; rather, it is a common possible intellect that cognizes a particular man, or better his phantasms. This, we might notice, explains how the possible intellect acts and how intellectual power is united with a human being.

A second solution based on causality explains the intellect-body relation in terms of the principle of motion and motion itself. The unity of soul and body, hence intellectual activity, applies to man in virtue of a principle of activity inherent in him, and also to that

which is moved by such principle. Aquinas criticizes this position when he says that: (1) Socrates cognizes not because he is moved by the intellect (this would presume the external existence of the intellect forcing him to cognize), but in virtue of the intellect he possess and through which he operates and cognizes; (2) intellectual cognition does not function according to a ‘moving–moved’ schema, from something that initiates motion to an object of cognition in which motion stays; (3) Socrates and his intellectual activity are not a tool moved by some outer source of motion (if that were the case, the intellectual activity would be accomplished by the body); and (4) we cannot ascribe to a certain thing an activity that belongs to some other thing, even if we agree that it is the intellect that serves a source for other parts. “Indeed, if Socrates is a whole composed by uniting the understanding with the rest of the things that go to make up Socrates , and yet the understanding is united to the rest only as their motor, it would follow that Socrates is not properly speaking one thing, that Socrates as Socrates does not have an existence of his own. A being exists as being one”<sup>27</sup>.

This sentence, by rejecting the soul–body union in terms of the “moving–moved” paradigm , becomes key to understanding the intellect–soul relation. Human as existing essence and human as cognizing essence are one and the same thing consisting of parts.

Aquinas contrasts “one absolutely” with “one with respect to”. Gathering and connecting some elements does not make them one. A house is an example of what Thomas has in mind here. Its unity is by composition or by the gathering of some elements, and it is not that kind of unity that would denote the “unity absolutely”. Moreover, uniting on the basis of cause and result can’t guarantee a unity in its full sense. The implication is that Averroes’ and Plato’s views can’t explain the unity of the human being: “The intellectual substance, then, can be united to a body by contact of power. Now, things united

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27 S. th. I, q. 76, 1, co. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*. Man, op. cit., 47.

by contact of this kind are not unqualifiedly one. For they are one with respect to acting and being acted upon, but this is not to be unqualifiedly one. Thus, indeed, one is predicated in the same mode as being. But to be acting does not mean to be, without qualification, so that neither is to be one in action to be one without qualification”<sup>28</sup>.

Concerning the question of unity, Aquinas claims he has in mind the most proper kind of “direct unity” typical of the soul and body union. The soul, and consequently the intellect, is not united with body indivisibly and continually (*continuum* – i.e., something that can be classified in terms of quantity, or bodily measure), but in the sense of being one thing. This particular unity balanced between two extremities, allows one to say that soul and body remain themselves even when they are united. Moreover, in no way the soul considered as a form of intellectual activity becomes a material body or something extended. We may conclude from the unity of soul and body and their form–matter relation that, when the act of being is considered soul and body are the same; nevertheless, when it comes to further activity they can’t remain identical. The intellectual form in the human being, even through its union with a body, does not become a material one. Its character remains the same, apart from operating through the senses.

On account of the fact that we have attributed to the soul, which is a key element of being, the ability to render the unity of all organic elements as well as to be the first act of being, we need to accept the following implication: if something is one thing absolutely, then all its actions are to be assigned to the whole being. This is also due to the fact that all actions following from the powers of the soul are performed in two different ways: by the body itself (vegetative and sensual powers) or with no corporal elements dependent on the body<sup>29</sup>. Rejecting the above results in absurdity, as Aquinas promptly

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28 *Contra gentiles* II, c. 56.

29 *Contra gentiles* II, c. 69.

shows in his polemic against Averroism (the polemic might include Platonism as well). “But if you should say that Socrates is not some one thing absolutely, but one by the coming together of mover and moved, many incoherencies follow. First, indeed, that since anything is one in the manner in which it exists, it would follow that Socrates is not a being and does not belong in a species or genus; and further, that he would have no action, because only beings act”<sup>30</sup>.

A helmsman’s cognition would not be the cognition of a wholeness that he could have himself, as well as the ship and crew. Moreover, Socrates’ cognition would not be his own act, but the act of the intellect operating in Socrates’ body. Aquinas adds a remark that seems to confirm the analysis that the intellect would not be identical with Socrates, even though intellectual activity is supposed to apply to Socrates as a whole, because the soul is the form of the whole Socrates. Thomas says: “The action of a part is the action of the whole only when the whole is one being. Anyone who says otherwise speaks improperly”<sup>31</sup>.

These words are properly understood when we understand intellect not only as a power, but also when the notion of an “intellect”, denoting the most crucial power of the human being, is taken to characterize the essence of the human soul<sup>32</sup>.

The *Summa theologiae* contains Aquinas’ own answer to the question of the soul-body relation. What he clearly emphasizes is that the human form is the principle of his (human) intellectual acts. This means that the intellect is related to the establishing of the human

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30 *De unitate intellectus* c. 3, n. 68. “Sed si tu dicas, quod Socrates non est unum quid simpliciter, sed unum quid aggregatione motoris et moti, sequuntur multa inconvenientia. Primo quidem, quia cum unumquodque sit similiter unum et ens, sequitur quod Socrates non sit aliquod ens, et quod non sit in specie nec in genere; et ulterius, quod non habeat aliquam actionem, quia actio non est nisi entis”. R. McInerney, *Aquinas against the Averroists. On there Being Only One the intellect*, Purdue University Press, West Lafayette 1993, 87.

31 *Ibidem*.

32 *De veritate* q. 10, a. 1, co.

essence, and that a human is then referred to as caused by a form. Nevertheless, the intellect is not identical with the soul. Thomas gives three arguments for “including” the intellect in the category of ‘form’ – ultimately, they are the quintessence of hylomorphism<sup>33</sup>:

1. man is able to cognize intellectually for there is a principium of that inherent in him (*principium intellectivum*), which is the substantial form;
2. we can describe form in terms of a species perspective – the nature of something is related to its activity; when it comes to man, his most distinctive feature is his intellectual cognition (*proprium operatio hominis*);
3. among forms united with matter, the human form is the most perfect with regard to immaterial activity (*nullo modo communicat materia corporalis*). The human form is neither immersed in nor comprehended by a body (*comprehensa sive immersa*).

An additional argument for such a unity emphasizes the absence of a composition of form and matter in a soul. If that were so, the whole would not serve as a form for any “lower” matter<sup>34</sup>. In the *Summa*, Aquinas pointed out with regard to the impediment argument that it would be impossible for both form and matter to exist in a soul: “For were it composed of matter and form, the forms of things would be received into it in all their concrete individuality, so that it would know only the singular, as the senses do, which receive forms of things in a physical organ”<sup>35</sup>.

We may add that soul understood as a form is an act of the body as well. It is the soul that makes the essential principium and actualizes

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33 Cf. R. Pasnau, *Philosophy of Mind and Human Nature*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, eds. B. Davies, E. Stump, Oxford University Press, New York 2012, 350–357.

34 *S. th.* I, q. 76, a. 1, co.

35 *S. th.* I, q. 75, a 5, co. “Si enim anima intellectiva esset composita ex materia et forma, formae rerum reciperentur in ea ut individuales, et sic non cognosceret nisi singulare, sicut accidit in potentiis sensitivis, quae recipiunt formas rerum in organo corporali”. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Man*, op. cit., 23.

the potentiality of being, which is body. When the human intellect is considered, it is worth noticing that the intellect not always acts through its object, so it does not always cognize. Aquinas often says about the possible intellect that: “a man is found sometimes to be actually understanding and sometimes only potentially”<sup>36</sup>.

On further reading, this remark sounds slightly different when we emphasize the activity of the human intellect in moving from one act of cognition to another: “Every intellect, furthermore, that understands one thing after the other is at one time potentially understanding and at another time actually understanding”<sup>37</sup>.

#### 4. WHOLE-PART RELATION VS. INTELLECT (WHERE IS INTELLECT? IN THE LEFT FINGER?)

Aquinas often refers to whole–part categories and considers them as metaphysical concepts in general. When applied to psychological issues, they are helpful to solve the problem whether the soul is whole in each part of body. The very understanding of the soul as a form of the body, which is actually its act, means that the soul is by itself (*per se*) the first act of the body and that it is inherent in specific parts for their being assigned to the whole<sup>38</sup>. That a form organises particular

36 *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* a. 2, co. “Similiter cum homo inveniatur quandoque intelligens actu, quandoque intelligens in potentia tantum”.

37 *Contra gentiles* I, c. 55. “Omnis intellectus intelligens unum post aliud est quandoque potentia intelligens et quandoque actu: dum enim intelligit primum in actu, intelligit secundum in potentia”. Ibidem, II, 78. “Sed anima intellectiva est quaedam natura in qua invenitur potentia et actus: cum quandoque sit actu intelligens et quandoque in potentia. Est igitur in natura animae intellectivae aliquid quasi materia, quod est in potentia ad omnia intelligibilia, quod dicitur intellectus possibilis: et aliquid quasi causa efficiens, quod facit omnia in actu, et dicitur intellectus agens”. See P.S. Mazur, *Tomasza koncepcja umysłowej władzy poznawczej*, in: *Wierność rzeczywistości. Księga pamiątkowa z okazji jubileuszu 50-lecia pracy naukowej na KUL O. prof. Mieczysława A. Krąpca*, Wyd. Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2001, 350–351.

38 *De spiritualibus creaturis* a. 4, co. “Anima enim totius quidem corporis actus est primo et per se, partium vero in ordine ad totum”.

yet different parts of the body is possible, as their activities differ as well. Interestingly, Aquinas clearly states that the soul brings together different parts into a whole, in which they gain a greater perfection. The obvious implication here is that, the more complex the body, the greater the soul (form)<sup>39</sup>.

Obviously, the problem of the whole-part relationship is one of the most crucial for metaphysics, for it predicates being with respect to its whole content – i.e., the whole structure of being<sup>40</sup>.

We may find a compelling analysis on the whole-part relation mainly in Aquinas' *Quaestiones de spiritualibus creaturis*.<sup>41</sup> However, a similar approach can also be found in his other works<sup>42</sup>. The question is whether the soul exists wholly in each part of the body. This, could actually be posed as the question whether the intellect is in any particular part of the body (e.g., in a finger). To answer this question, Thomas starts by pointing out three kinds of wholeness: 1) of quantity, 2) of essence, 3) of power.

According to how wholeness is understood, we can speak about different possibilities of the soul's presence in body. The first understanding can't be ascribed to any soul in its full meaning, certainly not to a rational soul. Something can be divided into a certain amount of parts, and we can also say that one form is everywhere (e.g., whiteness on a white wall). This is because matter, even fragmented, is as similar in its wholeness as in its parts (whiteness is present

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39 Ibidem. "Anima vero, cum sit forma altioris et maioris virtutis, potest esse principium diversarum operationum, ad quarum executionem requiruntur dissimiles partes corporis. Et ideo omnis anima requirit diversitatem organorum in partibus corporis cuius est actus; et tanto maiorem diversitatem, quanto anima fuerit perfectior. Sic igitur formae infimae uniformiter perficiunt suam materiam; sed anima difformiter, ut ex dissimilibus partibus constituatur integritas corporis, cuius primo et per se anima est actus".

40 See A. Maryniarczyk, *Całość-część*, in: *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, t. 2, Wyd. Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2001, 20–24.

41 *De spiritualibus creaturis* a. 4, co.

42 See *S. th.* I, q. 76, a. 8, co; *Contra Gentiles* II, c. 72; *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, a. 10.

accidentally). The second understanding of wholeness takes into consideration all its essential elements, which represent its perfection. In *De spiritualibus creaturis*, Aquinas gives three examples of such a wholeness: in physical beings, composition of form and matter assures perfection (obviously, this is because of form); in the logical order, perfect wholeness exists when genus and species (and their differences) are described according to a definition. When it comes to accidental forms (as opposed to substantial ones), wholeness has degrees (“more–less”). The last understanding of wholeness consists of the power in its fullest to accomplish its tasks in particular parts. The power can operate differently, depending on the parts.

If the last two distinctions were referred to soul and body, and to powers of the soul over the body, one should accept their mutual dependence (the first, quantitative distinction is of no use here because soul is neither quantitative wholeness nor does it occupy any place). Such dependence is the result of the fact that the body as wholeness is made perfect indirectly, but particular parts are being perfected as long as they act accordingly to this wholeness. This means that: 1. The soul is wholly in each part of body according to the second understanding of the whole–part relation, which says that the soul is a form and acts to unite each part into a wholeness; 2. The soul is not wholly in each part of body according to the third understanding of the whole–part distinction, that is, not all of the powers are in particular parts of the body.

Such a solution, according to Aquinas, allows to claim that in the soul there exists a domain of powers that does not belong to any particular part of body. It also shows that particular powers are united with particular organs, and finally, it allows to establish a hierarchy between the parts of the body. The more important a power, the more important a part of the body, or it better serves others power<sup>43</sup>.

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43 S. th. I, q. 76, a. 8, ad 5.

We conclude from this that the parts of the body are unequal in their excellence, with different ranges of activities.

In addition to the remarks on whether the soul is wholly in a whole body, we can find much more in Aquinas' text. In particular, it formulates his answer to the question why *homo non est intellectus*. If the intellect were an act of the body ( of its single parts in particular), and if it were identical with a form, it would unite with the body through relations, such as form–matter relations.

On the other hand, if form is a source for the activity of being and it is present in its parts as a power, one would not say that the soul is wholly in the whole according to the third understanding of the way in which a whole is present in the parts. The soul is wholly present in a whole for the perfection of the essential part; as for its role as a principle of activity, however, it is not wholly included in a whole human being.

Here we may add another categorization, also to be found in *De spiritualibus creaturis* and in other works<sup>44</sup>. This concerns three kinds of wholeness: 1. potential; 2. integral; and 3. universal. Universal wholeness exists in each part as subject, according to its essence and perfect powers. This kind of wholeness can be attributed to its parts. Integral wholeness is present in each part neither essentially nor in terms of powers. Going back to Thomas's example above, the house is not wholly in a wall, nor are its powers present in it. This kind of wholeness can't be attributed to the parts. The last type of wholeness, i.e. accidental wholeness, is in each part *secundum se*, according to powers; however, it is not perfect. It is present only in the highest powers, so it is not properly attributed to the parts, as we do instead in the case of the first universal wholeness. Thomas says: "One is a universal whole, which is present to every part in its whole essence and power; it is properly predicated of its parts, as when one says: Man is an animal. But another whole is an integral whole, which is

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<sup>44</sup> See *Super Sent.* III, d. 3, q. 4, a. 2, ad 1.

not present to any part of itself, either in its whole essence or its whole power; and consequently there is no way in which it is predicated of a part as if one were to say: A wall is a house. The third whole is a potential whole, which is intermediate between these two: for it is present to a part of itself in its whole essence, but not in its whole power. And hence it stands in an intermediate position as a predicate: for it is sometimes predicated of its parts, but not properly, and in this sense it is sometimes said that the soul is its own powers, or *vice versa*<sup>45</sup>.

These remarks should be read in light of the simplicity of the soul, its division into powers, and its relations (soul–powers). We find the most relevant analysis on this in the *Commentary on Sentences*, where Aquinas claims on metaphysical grounds that, in so far as a proper result depends on its cause, the very activity of essences, whose primary principle of activity is of a substantial kind, is a substance. This scenario takes places in the case of God – He does not operate through a principle different from his essence. Apart from God, any activity is an activity of such a substance and can be attributed to it, but it can't be identified with it, as we cannot speak of anything but a substance in the case of a substance. In his early work,<sup>46</sup> Thomas presupposes that if the soul is a substance then all its activity has to be through powers, similarly to perfect power, which operate through dispositions and virtues. Powers of the soul follow from it, they are

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45 *De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 11, ad 2. "Unum universale, quod adest cuilibet parti secundum totam suam essentiam et virtutem; unde proprie praedicatur de suis partibus, ut cum dicitur: homo est animal. Aliud vero est totum integrale, quod non adest alicui suae parti neque secundum totam essentiam neque secundum totam suam virtutem; et ideo nullo modo praedicatur de parte, ut dicatur: paries est domus. Tertium est totum potentiale, quod est medium inter haec duo: adest enim suae parti secundum totam suam essentiam, sed non secundum totam suam virtutem. Unde medio modo se habet in praedicando: praedicatur enim quandoque de partibus, sed non proprie. Et hoc modo quandoque dicitur, quod anima est suae potentiae, vel e converso".

46 We characterize his "early" works (*Sententiae de anima*, *De veritate*, *De spiritualibus creaturis*) by comparison with the *Summa theologiae* and the *Quaestiones de anima*.

both perfections of the material body and powers that “exists in soul itself, whose activity is incorporeal, and that is why I assume they are accidental. Not common accidentals flowing from species but from particular principles. They are like regular accidentals of genus, begin from its principles, however they come from the very integrity of soul itself, as far as it is accidental one possessing some kind of perfection of powers, implied from different powers”<sup>47</sup>.

### 5. IN WHAT SENSE IS THE INTELLECT A FORM OF THE HUMAN BEING?

In many of his works, Aquinas speaks about the intellect as the form of the human being. If it really were an act of the body, this would contradict the earlier analysis; moreover, the sentence *homo est intellectus* would appear absolutely justified. The human being would then be an intellect determining not only the human essence, but also the unity of the human being. Such statements need to be further elaborated, especially in the context of the relation between the soul and its powers. As obvious as it seems, the statement that the essence of the soul does not consist in its powers (or power) would then be questioned on this particular point. As E.-H. Wéber notices,<sup>48</sup> while dealing with Siger’s interpretations of the intellect during the second Paris regency (critically commented in *De unitate intellectus*), when such a change of mind is supposed to have happened, Aquinas never

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47 *Super Sent.* I, d. 3, q. 4, a. 2, co. “(...) et quaedam ut existentes in ipsa anima, quarum operatio non indiget corpore, ut intellectus, voluntas et hujusmodi ; et ideo dico, quod sunt accidentia: non quod sint communia accidentia, quae non fluunt ex principiis speciei, sed consequuntur principia individui; sed sicut propria accidentia, quae consequuntur speciem, originata ex principiis ipsius: simul tamen sunt de integritate ipsius animae, in quantum est totum potentiale, habens quamdam perfectionem potentiae, quae conficitur ex diversis viribus”.

48 E.-H. Wéber, *Le controverse de 1270 à l’Université de Paris et son retentissement sur la pensée de s. Thomas d’Aquin*, Paris 1970, 47–220.

mentioned the issue of the soul and of the identity of its powers<sup>49</sup>. Suffice it to say that he did not change his mind on the soul–powers relation, which is the soul–intellect relation<sup>50</sup>. The quotes below do not take a result as identical with its cause, as it would probably seem.

This *aporia* can be easily solved, but before we do so we find it necessary to quote some of the most relevant passages from Aquinas's works suggesting the identity of intellect and human form:

“The cogitative power, since it operates by means of an organ, is not that whereby we understand, for understanding is not the operation of an organ. Now, that whereby we understand is that by which man is man, since understanding is man's proper operation, flowing from his specific nature”<sup>51</sup>.

“(…) it remains for us to show that in the Philosopher's judgment we must say that the intellect, as to its substance, is united to the body as its form”<sup>52</sup>.

“But none is higher than the intellect. Therefore, the intellect is man's soul, and, consequently, his form”<sup>53</sup>.

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49 Changes were to take place after Aquinas wrote the following passages (1270), in which the difference between a soul and its powers is clearly stated and explained: *Super Sent.* I, d. 3, q. 4, a. 2, co; *De veritate* q. 10, a. 1, co; *Quodlibet* 10, q. 3, a. 1, co; *Quaestiones disputatae de anima* q. 12; *De spiritualibus creaturis* a. 11, co; *S. th.* I, q. 77, co. After his polemic with Siger of Brabant, Aquinas refrained from any further comments in this matter (i.e., the difference between a soul and its powers).

50 See J.F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas. From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2000, 275–294.

51 *Contra gentiles* II, c. 73. “Virtus cogitativa, cum operetur per organum, non est id quo intelligimus: cum intelligere non sit operatio alicuius organi. Id autem quo intelligimus, est illud quo homo est homo: cum intelligere sit propria operatio hominis consequens eius speciem”.

52 *Contra gentiles* II, c. 70. “(…) ostendendum restat quod necesse est dicere, secundum opinionem Aristotelis, intellectum secundum suam substantiam alicui corpori uniri ut formam”.

53 *Contra gentiles* II, c. 59. “Nulla autem est altior quam intellectus. Est igitur intellectus anima hominis. Et per consequens forma ipsius”.

“It was Aristotle’s judgment, therefore, that that whereby we understand is the form of the physical body”<sup>54</sup>.

“Therefore the intellect whereby a man understands is the form of this man, and the same is true of another man”<sup>55</sup>.

“Therefore the agent intellect and the possible intellect must inhere in the one essence of the soul”<sup>56</sup>.

“For the soul, considered in itself, is in potentiality to knowing intelligible things, since it is like »a tablet on which nothing is written«, and yet it may be written upon through the possible intellect, whereby it may become all things, as is said in *De Anima* III, 18”<sup>57</sup>.

What strikes in the above is Aquinas’ attitude to connect the intellect with the human being according to the Aristotelian thought and categories. At the same time, this attitude is directed to those interpreters of his psychology who separate intellects from the soul and locate them in substances, which are not multiplied and which unite with bodies only for the process of acquiring knowledge. Such an anti-Averroistic background shows unequivocally their polemical character, rather than their intention to directly identify intellects with that form which is a human soul.

Such an answer would hardly be accepted as adequate. To eventually find the answer to the above texts we need to analyze some passages in *De veritate*, particularly q. 10 (*De mente*). Aquinas clearly suggests (considering whether Augustine’s mental categories – memory, intelligence, and will –, while being the image of God, allow

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54 *De unitate intellectus*, c. 1, n. 11. “Fuit ergo sententia Aristotelis quod id quo intelligimus sit forma corporis physici”.

55 *Compendium theologiae* I, c. 85. “Intellectus igitur quo homo intelligit, est forma huius hominis, et eadem ratione illius.”

56 *Compendium theologiae* I, c. 87. “Oportet igitur quod intellectus agens et possibilis in una essentia animae conveniant”.

57 *S. th.* III, q. 9, a. 1, co. “Anima enim, secundum se considerata, est in potentia ad intelligibilia cognoscenda, est enim sicut tabula in qua nihil est scriptum; et tamen possibile est in ea scribi, propter intellectum possibilem, in quo est omnia fieri, ut dicitur in III *De anima*”.

to adopt Aristotelian categories) that the intellect is the power of the human soul. Granted that it is the highest power, the name “intellect” could be applied to the soul and be identical with it. “So, the word »mind« is applied to the soul in the same way as understanding is. (...) Since, however, the essences of things are not known to us, and their powers reveal themselves to us through their acts, we often use the names of the faculties and powers to denote the essences”<sup>58</sup>.

The above passages are clearly different from the passages quoted earlier, in which we find that intellect and soul are the same. Aquinas would assert the identity of the intellect and the intellectual soul, however, only in the domain of predication or understanding, not in the ontic domain. We can then say that the “soul is an intellect” in the sense that the soul possesses the highest features. Conversely, when we say that the “soul is not an intellect” we characterize the non-identity of soul and intellect.

We hasten to add that the above seven statements are introduced purposely. Aquinas probably wanted to stress that essentially and formally we find in the human being a principle of intellectual activities. And if we embrace the thesis that the soul is the principle of intellectual activities and of factor (essence and acts), then we need to apply these results to the intellect accordingly. Aquinas stressed these ideas for no other reason than to refute the views of Siger and his “grumbling-on-the-side proponents”<sup>59</sup>. For they, employing *vis cogitativa*, a function determining the human species, and separating the possible intellect from individual men provoked Aquinas to restate his views on the relation between soul and body by emphasizing their separate character and pointing out their causative relation.

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58 *De veritate*, q. 10, a. 1, co.

59 See *De unitate intellectus* c. 5.

## 6. SUMMARY – ADMIT THE NECESSITY OF INTELLECTUAL POTENTIALITY IN THE HUMAN SOUL

Aquinas's conception of the relations between soul, body and intellect is of philosophical character. It is alternative to Platonic, Augustinian and Cartesian explanatory models (each of which has, obviously, its own specific merits). Aquinas developed Aristotle's achievements and modified them further. Some changes were essential and fundamental. Thomas took into account the peripatetic tradition to understand Aristotle better. Modifications were of paramount importance also with regard to the Augustinian position, which influenced medieval theological thought significantly.

To the analysis above, we now add some remarks by M. Gogacz on intellectual potentiality<sup>60</sup>. They properly explain how to understand Thomas' requirement that we need to pose a domain responsible for intellectual activity and operations (including volitional activities). Such a domain would also provide a solid reason, apart from matter susceptible of quantitative measurements, to establish the individuality of the human being. Aquinas' statements are not straightforward. However, if one begins with the same assumptions, one could certainly reach the conclusions Gogacz came to. When one understands the intellect as a potential domain one is led to the claim that a "human being is not an intellect", on the basis of Aquinas' overall view of reality. That is the view from the perspective of the being (*esse*) as the very first act of the whole being.

When one speaks about two intellects, it is necessary to turn one's attention to the act – potentiality relation. Act is limited by potentiality, and it signifies the one. Potentiality with regard to an act makes the accidental possible, it makes an act imperfect. It exists along with an act "penetrating it and making its ontic foundation

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60 See M. Zembrzuski, *Prawda o intelekcie. Mieczysława Gogacza rozumienie intelektu możliwościowego i czynnego*, *Rocznik Tomistyczny* 5 (2016), 79–85.

thinner”<sup>61</sup>. Intellect as a potentiality of the soul diminishes the one, or makes it imperfect. But is it not only body that diminishes the soul. We should also remember that the intellect is a potentiality of the soul. It is, obviously, a necessary accident (*proprietas*) “manifesting reasonability of soul, but it is also something that modifies soul significantly. It is a tool of cognition and the condition or rather a principle of its individuality”<sup>62</sup>.

If the intellect were not a soul it would be “outside” of a soul, because it differs from the soul’s nature as an act (the question here is: does it differ in terms of substance and accident?). We should say that the intellect is a potentiality, in which case it would be dependent on a soul for its existence. Hence, it would not possess its own existence apart from composition, but only an existence as a “dependence on”. These remarks may be taken as dangerously emphasizing the cognitive character of the existence of the intellect, and result in hypostasis. Even if the intellect (active and possible) is different from the soul, its “being outside” signifies potentiality, being as a structural factor of the soul. The soul, however is an act and signifies itself through potentiality. The most reasonable thing to say would be that the soul is a form consisting of an act of bodily and intellectual potentiality, which are intellectual powers.

Additionally, with the problem of intellectual potentiality arises the problem of the individuality of the human being. The crucial element for individualization is derived from the nature of the intellect itself as a potentiality of the soul, and there is much more in it than just matter. As Gogacz puts it: “Potentiality, which perfects existence, is essential. It signifies the accidental character of being and its separateness. Potentiality, which makes matter imperfect, makes being an individual within its species”<sup>63</sup>.

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61 M. Gogacz, *Istnieć i poznawać*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 1976, 207.

62 *Ibidem*, 210.

63 *Ibidem*, 208.

The above solution is a proposal to address the question posed by Gogacz, among others: how is it possible to accept both the accidental and the potential character of the intellect? Any proposals separating the intellect from the soul make it impossible for both the active and possible intellect to be the powers of a soul. If, however, they were powers, one would not say that a human is an intellect, a mind, a consciousness or reason. For there is not only different semantic content in these words; they also denote different concepts of the human being as such.

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MICHAŁ ZEMBRZUSKI

m.zembrzuski@uksw.edu.pl

Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Institute of Philosophy

Wóycickiego 1/3, 01–938 Warsaw, Poland

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