Thomas Aquinas

The Treatise on Human Nature

Summa Theologiae 1a 75–89

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stood certainly does exist outside the soul, but without having the same
mode of existence outside the soul as when it is understood. For what is
understood is the common nature, putting to one side the individuating
principles; but this is not the mode of existence that it has outside the
soul. According to Plato's view, however, the thing understood exists
outside the soul according to the same mode in which it is understood.
For he held that the natures of things are separated from matter. 20

Ad 5. The knowledge in the student is different from that in the
teacher. As for how it is caused, this will be made clear in what follows
[1a 117.1].

Ad 6. Augustine means that it is not only the case that there are many
souls—as if they were not made one in their one specific nature.

Article 3. Does a body whose form is the
intellective principle have any other soul? 21

It seems that beyond the intellective soul there are other, essentially dif­
ferent souls in a human being—namely, the sensory and nutritive souls:

1. That which is corruptible and that which is incorruptible do not
belong to a single substance. But the intellective soul is incorruptible,
whereas the other souls (the sensory and nutritive) are corruptible, as is
clear from earlier claims [75.6]. Therefore in a human being the intel­
excive, sensory, and nutritive souls cannot have a single essence.

2. One might reply that the sensory soul in a human being is incorrupt­
able.

On the contrary, the corruptible and the incorruptible differ in
genus, as is said in Metaphysics X [1058b26–59a10]. But the sensory
soul in a horse, a lion, and other brute animals is corruptible. Therefore
if it is incorruptible in a human being, then the sensory soul in humans
and in brutes will not belong to the same genus. But something is said
to be an animal as a result of its having a sensory soul. Therefore animal
will not be a single genus common to humans and other animals,
which is unacceptable.

3. The Philosopher says in The Generation of Animals [736a35–b15]
that an embryo is an animal before it is a human being. But this could
not be the case if the sensory and intellective souls had the same

20 SCG II.58; QDP 3.9 ad 9; QDSC 3; QDA 11; QQ 11.5; CT 90–92; InIC 15.6–7; InITh 5.2.
essence, since it is an animal through the sensory soul and a human being through the intellective soul. Therefore in human beings the sensory and intellective souls do not have a single essence.

4. The Philosopher says in *Metaphysics* VIII [1043a2–21] that the genus is drawn from the matter, the *differentia* from the form. But *rational*, which is the constitutive *differentia* of *human being*, is drawn from the intellective soul. Something is said to be an animal, in contrast, because of its having a body that is animated by a sensory soul. Therefore the intellective soul is related to a body animated by a sensory soul just as form is related to matter. Therefore, in a human being, the intellective soul is not the same in essence as the sensory soul, but rather presupposes it, as a material subject.

*On the contrary* is what is said in *On Church Dogma* [15]: “We do not say that there are two souls in a single human being (as James and other Syrians write), one an animal soul, which animates the body and mixes with its blood, the other a spiritual soul, which is devoted to reason. We instead say that in a human being one and the same soul gives the body life, by its affiliation, and manages itself, by its reason.”

**Reply.** Plato claimed that within a single body there are different souls, distinct even with respect to their organs. To these souls he attributed the different functions of life: the nutritive soul, he said, was in the liver, the concupiscible in the heart, the cognitive in the brain. Aristotle discredits this view in his *De anima* [413b13–24], as regards those parts of the soul that use corporeal organs for their functions. For he shows that in the case of animals that live when cut apart, we find in each part the different operations of soul, such as sensation and appetite. But this would not be the case if the different principles of the soul’s operations were spread over different parts of the body—as if those operations were essentially distinct. As regards the intellective soul, however, Aristotle seems to leave room for doubt over whether it is separate from the soul’s other parts only conceptually (*ratione*), or also spatially (*loco*).

Plato’s view certainly could be upheld if one were to suppose that the soul is united to the body not as its form, but as its mover—as Plato did

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22 76.1sc.

23 See Averroës, *De anima* I.90 (p. 121), and Plato, *Timaeus* 69c–72d, although the details there are quite different. See also Avicenna, *Liber de anima* V.7 (p. 157).

24 *De an.* II 2, 413b24–29.
suppose. For nothing unacceptable seems to follow if different movers move the same movable object, especially if they do so with respect to different parts. But if we suppose that soul is united to body as its form, then it seems entirely impossible for several, essentially different souls to be within one body. This can be shown through three arguments.

First, an animal with several souls would not be one thing unconditionally. For nothing is unconditionally one except through the one form through which that thing has existence, because a thing's being existent and its being one thing come from the same source. For that reason, things that are characterized by different forms are not one thing unconditionally (e.g., a white human being). Therefore if a human being were to be living through one form (the vegetative soul), an animal through another (the sensory soul), and human through a third (the rational soul), then it would follow that a human being would not be one thing unconditionally. Aristotle argues like this against Plato in Metaphysics VIII [1045a14–20]. If the Idea of animal were different from the Idea of biped, then a biped animal would not be one thing unconditionally. For this reason, arguing in De anima I [411b6–14] against those who held that there are different souls in the body, Aristotle asks “what contains” them—i.e., what makes from them one thing. And it cannot be said that they are united by the body's unity. For it is the soul that contains the body, and that makes it be one thing, rather than vice versa.

Second, this is shown to be impossible through modes of predication. For things that are drawn from different forms are predicated of one another either (i) per accidens, if the forms are not ordered to one another (e.g., when we say that white is sweet); or (ii) if the forms are ordered to one another, the predication will be per se—in the second mode of speaking per se, since the subject is contained in the definition of the predicate. (A surface, for instance, is a prerequisite for color; therefore if we say that the body's surface is colored, this will be the second mode of per se predication.) Therefore if something were said to be an animal because of one form, and said to be a human being because of another, then it would follow that either (i) one of the forms could be predicated of the other only per accidens, if the two forms did not have any order to one another; or (ii) there would there be predication in the second mode of speaking per se, if one of the souls were a prerequisite for the other. But each of these is clearly false. For (i) animal is predicated of human being per se, not per accidens, and (ii) it is not the case that human being is contained in the definition of animal,

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but vice versa. Therefore it must be the same form through which something is an animal, and through which something is a human being. Otherwise, the human being would not truly be that which the animal is, in such a way that *animal* would be predicated per se of *human being*.

Third, this is shown to be impossible through the fact that one operation of the soul, when intense, impedes another. This could in no way occur if the source of the actions did not come from a single essence. Accordingly, then, it must be said that the soul in a human being—sensory, intellecutive, and nutritive—is numerically the same. Now, as for how that is the case, this can be easily grasped if one pays attention to the differences among species and forms. For the species and forms of things are found to differ relative to one another in terms of being more and less complete. For example, things with souls are more complete than things without, in the order of things, whereas animals are more complete than plants, and human beings more complete than brute animals. There are also different levels among the individuals of these kinds. For this reason Aristotle, in *Metaphysics* VIII [1043b36–44a2], likens the species of things to numbers, which differ in species as a unit is added or subtracted. Also, in *De anima* II [414b19–32] he compares the different souls to species of shapes, one of which contains another. Pentagon, for example, contains tetragon, and exceeds it. In this way, therefore, the intellecutive soul virtually contains what is possessed by the sensory soul of brute animals and the nutritive soul of plants. So a surface with a pentagonal shape is not tetragonal through one shape and pentagonal through another: for the tetragonal shape would be superfluous, being contained within the pentagonal. In the same way, Socrates is not a human being through one soul and an animal through another; rather, through one and the same soul he is both.

**Ad 1.** The sensory soul is not incorruptible because it is sensory. Rather, it is made incorruptible by being intellecutive. So when a soul is merely sensory it is corruptible, but when it has the intellecutive with the sensory, then it is incorruptible. For although the sensory does not confer incorruptibility, nevertheless it cannot take incorruptibility away from the intellecutive.

**Ad 2.** It is not the forms but the composite that is classified by genus or species. But a human being is corruptible, just as other animals are.

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26 Avicenna, *Liber de anima* V.7 (pp. 158–59).

27 75.4 ad 2, 75.7 ad 3.
Hence the difference in corruptible versus incorruptible, which concerns the form, does not make a human being differ in genus from other animals.

Ad 3. An embryo first has a soul that is merely sensory. When that is displaced, a more complete soul arrives, one that is at the same time sensory and intellective. This will be explained more fully below [1a 118.2 ad 2].

Ad 4. It is not required that one treat diversity among natural things in terms of the diverse accounts or logical conceptions (rationes vel intentiones logicas) that result from how one understands them. For reason can grasp one and the same thing in different ways. So, as was said [c 117], the intellective soul virtually contains whatever the sensory soul has, and more still. It follows, then, that reason can consider separately that which involves the power of the sensory soul—taken as something incomplete and material. And because reason finds this to be common to humans and other animals, it forms on this basis an account of the genus. Meanwhile, reason takes that in which the intellective soul exceeds the sensory as something formal and perfecting, and on that basis it forms the differentia of human being.

Article 4. Is there any other substantial form in the human body?28

It seems that in a human being there is another form beyond the intellective soul:

1. The Philosopher says in De anima II [412a27–28] that “the soul is the actuality of a physical body potentially having life.” Therefore the soul is related to the body as form to matter. But a body has a substantial form through which it is a body. Therefore the body has some substantial form that precedes the soul.

2. A human being, like any animal, is self-moving. But, as is proved in Physics VIII [257b6–13], everything self-moving is divided into two parts, one producing the motion, the other moved. Now the part that produces the motion is the soul. Therefore the other part must be such that it can be moved. But prime matter cannot be moved, as is said in Physics V [225a20–31], because it is a being only in potentiality, whereas everything that is moved is a body. Therefore a human being,

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28CT 90; QQ 1.4.1, 12.7.1; QDA 9; QDSC 3; SCG II.58, IV.81; InDA II.1.242–88; IV Sent. 44.1.1.1 ad 4 (= ST 3a supp. 79.1 ad 4).
and every animal, must have another substantial form, one that gives rise to the body.

3. The ranking of forms is determined by their relationship to prime matter, since prior and posterior are specified by comparison to some starting point. Therefore if in a human being there were no substantial form beyond the rational soul, and instead it inhere in prime matter without any intermediary, then as a result it would rank among the most imperfect of forms, those that inhere in matter without any intermediary.

4. The human body is a mixed body. But mixture does not occur with respect to the matter alone, because that would be merely corruption. Therefore the forms of the elements must remain in the mixed body, and these are substantial forms. Therefore the human body has other substantial forms beyond the intellective soul.

On the contrary, for one thing there is one substantial being. But a substantial form gives substantial being. Therefore for one thing there is only one substantial form. But the soul is the substantial form of a human being. Therefore it is impossible for a human being to have a substantial form other than the intellective soul.

Reply. If it were supposed that the intellective soul is not united to the body as its form, but only as its mover, as the Platonists supposed, then it would be necessary to say that there is another substantial form in a human being, giving rise to the existence of the body that is moved by the soul. But if the intellective soul is united to the body as its substantial form, as we have already said above [76.1], then it is impossible for any other substantial form beyond it to be found in a human being.

To see this, consider that a substantial form differs from an accidental form as follows: an accidental form does not give being unconditionally, but being such. (So heat does not make its subject be unconditionally, but be hot.) And so when an accidental form is added, we do not say that something is made or is generated unconditionally, but that it is made such or that it stands in some way. Likewise, when an accidental form departs, we do not say that something is corrupted unconditionally, but in a certain respect (secundum quid).

A substantial form, on the other hand, gives being unconditionally. So something is said to be generated unconditionally through its addi-

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2976.5.
3076.1c107, 76.3c54.
tion and, through its removal, to be corrupted unconditionally. That is why the ancient naturalists, who supposed that prime matter is something that actually exists (fire, air, or some such thing), said that nothing is generated or corrupted unconditionally, but that all “coming to be consists in being altered,” as is said in Physics I [187a30]. Therefore if it were the case that prior to the intellective soul there were also some other substantial form in the matter, through which the soul’s subject were actually existent, then as a result the soul would not make a thing be unconditionally. Consequently it would not be a substantial form, and through the addition of soul there would not be generation unconditionally, nor through its removal corruption unconditionally, but only in a certain respect. These consequences are clearly false.

One must say, then, that a human being has no substantial form other than the intellective soul alone, and that just as it virtually contains the sensory and nutritive souls,31 so it virtually contains all its lower forms, and that it alone brings about whatever it is that less perfect forms bring about in other things. And the same must be said for the sensory soul in brutes, and the nutritive soul in plants, and generally for all more perfect forms with respect to the less perfect.

Ad 1. Aristotle does not say that the soul is the actuality of body alone, but “the actuality of a physical body with organs” [412b5–6], “potentially having life”—and it is such a potentiality that he says “does not rule out soul” [412b25]. On this basis it is clear that the soul too is included in that of which it is said to be the actuality. This is said in the same way in which heat is said to be the actuality of what is hot, and light the actuality of what is luminous. It is not that something luminous exists apart from light, but that it is luminous through light. And the soul is likewise said to be “the actuality of a body,” etc., because through the soul it is a body, it has organs, and it is potentially having life. But first actuality is spoken of as potential with respect to second actuality, which is the operation.9 For such a potentiality “does not rule out soul”—i.e., it does not exclude soul.

Ad 2. The soul moves the body not through its existence, in virtue of which it is united to the body as its form, but through its potential for producing movement, the actualization of which presupposes a body already actualized by soul. In this way, then, the soul is the part producing motion as regards its motive power, whereas the ensouled body is the part that is moved.

3176.3c117.
Ad 3. There are different levels of perfection to be considered in matter, such as existing, living, sensing, and thinking. But a second thing added onto its predecessor is always more perfect. Therefore a form that provides only the first level of perfection to matter is the most imperfect, whereas a form that provides the first, second, and third degrees (and so on) is the most perfect, and nevertheless [inheres] in matter without any intermediary.

Ad 4. Avicenna claimed that the substantial forms of the elements remain whole in something mixed, and that mixture occurs inasmuch as the contrary qualities of the elements are brought down to a mean state. But this is impossible. For the different forms of the elements cannot exist except in different parts of the matter, and this difference among parts must be understood as involving dimensions, without which there can be no divisible matter. But matter subjected to dimension is found only in a body. Different bodies, however, cannot be in the same place. So it follows that the elements in something mixed would have distinct locations. As a result, this will not be a true mixture, one that occurs throughout the whole, but an apparent mixture, one that occurs through minute [parts] being positioned next to one other.

But Averroës, in De caelo III [67], claimed that the forms of the elements, because of their imperfection, fall in between accidental and substantial forms: hence they are susceptible to more and less, and hence they are attenuated in the mixture and brought down to a mean state, and out of them flows forth a single form. But this is even more impossible. For the substantial being of any thing lies in something indivisible; every addition and subtraction changes its species (like the case of numbers, as is said in Metaphysics VIII [1043b36–1044a2]). That is why it is impossible for any substantial form to take on more and less. Also, it is no less impossible for something to fall in between substance and accident. And so we must say, in accord with the Philosopher in De generatione I [327b29–31], that in something mixed the forms of the elements remain virtually, not actually. For the distinctive qualities of the elements remain, although attenuated, and in these qualities is the power of the elemental forms. This sort of quality of the mixture is its distinctive disposition for the substantial form of a mixed body—e.g., the form of stone, or any soul.

32As characterized by Averroës, De generatione I.90.
33Aristotle, Categories 5, 3b32–4a9.