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**TITLE: ON AQUINAS' PHILOSOPHY OF MIND**

**SUBTITLE: AQUINAS' CONCEPTION OF THE BODY-SOUL RELATIONSHIP  
AND ITS RELATION TO SOME CONTEMPORARY THEORIES IN PHILOSOPHY  
OF MIND**

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## **Abstract**

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In his question 75 and 76 of the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas argues that the human soul is related to the body as its form such that even after death, the soul has a natural inclination and affinity to the body. This position of Aquinas brings some questions to the fore when discussing him in contemporary philosophy of mind. This paper therefore seeks to respond to one of these arising questions by investigating whether or not Aquinas' philosophy of mind can be seen as a physicalist view or a substance dualist view. My assertion will be that Aquinas' position on the body-mind problem cannot be seen as a physicalist or a substance dualist view. This is because none of the two aforementioned dominant theories in contemporary philosophy of mind adequately captures and presents Aquinas' position.



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## 1. Introduction

The intellectual climate during the medieval era was a rigorous one with the theologians of that period providing philosophical arguments for many of their philosophical positions. Questions regarding the existence of God, the nature of the human soul, man, immortality and afterlife, morality and the ultimate ends of human life, including metaphysical questions such as the nature of universals were discussed from a philosophical perspective. A towering figure in this era was Thomas Aquinas. Copleston (1955)<sup>1</sup> asserts that Aquinas was one of the leading theologians and philosophers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries together with Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. Also, Brock (2015: ix) remarks that “Thomas Aquinas was one of the greatest artists ever. His whole aim, we might say, was to be intelligible, and few have been more so.”<sup>2</sup> The best known works of Aquinas are the two systematic treatises, the *Summa contra Gentiles* “A Summary against the Gentiles” and the *Summa Theologiae* “A Summary of Theology”.

Thomas Aquinas was born in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1225-1274), he was “primarily and officially a theologian.” (McInerny & O’Callaghan, 2018)<sup>3</sup>. He however produced works which are considered philosophical in character. Aquinas’ *Summa Theologiae* is often cited by philosophers whenever they want to refer to something that Aquinas said mainly because it is an influential work. Although Aquinas lived a short life, he produced a copious body of work which continues to be of relevance today. According to Fergus Kerr (2009: 20) “Thomas Aquinas wrote or dictated over eight million words: two million of commentary on the Bible; a million on Aristotle; with the rest divided between records of the disputations at which he presided, many short works, and three large compendia of Christian doctrine.”<sup>4</sup> Kerr notes that, Aquinas’ theory of the soul as presented in the *Summa Theologiae* influenced whatever Aquinas had to say later on “about happiness, moral psychology, emotions, virtue, sin, law, grace, and so on” (Kerr, 2009: 58). It is

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<sup>1</sup> See Copleston (1955). ‘Aquinas’. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>2</sup> Brock, S. L. (2015). *The Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas: A Sketch*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> See McInerny, Ralph and O’Callaghan, John, "Saint Thomas Aquinas", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aquinas/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Kerr, F. (2009). *Thomas Aquinas: A very short introduction*. OUP Oxford.

therefore important that critical attention is paid to Aquinas' theory of the soul and its relationship with the body, hence, this will be my focus in this paper. I shall consider Thomas Aquinas' views on the relationship between the soul and the body as presented in the Part 1 questions 75 and 76 of his *Summa Theologiae*.

Arguably, one of the major preoccupations of philosophers during the medieval period was the task of finding answers to pressing questions such as the nature of the human soul, whether man is a composite of body and soul, why man is more rational than other animals and whether the soul of man if any, will live after man's body is destroyed. It is in this stimulating intellectual environment that Thomas Aquinas set out to provide his views on the relationship that existed between the body and the soul.

It must be noted that Thomas Aquinas' conception of the soul was highly influenced by the views of Aristotle. According to Kerr (2009: 27) "much of Thomas's personal study went into 'exposition', as he usually called it, of works by Aristotle. Having embarked on what would become the *Summa Theologiae*, he clearly found Aristotle's *De Anima* very helpful in his own theological account of the soul." As a philosopher, Aquinas can be said to be an adherent of Aristotle as it is rightly put by McNerny and O'Callaghan, "when Thomas referred to Aristotle as the Philosopher, he was not merely adopting a *façon de parler* of the time. He adopted Aristotle's analysis of physical objects, his view of place, time and motion, his proof of the prime mover, his cosmology." However, Aquinas acknowledged that the Aristotelian concepts were not the whole truth. As such, he reconciled the ideas of Aristotle with that of Christian revelations and came out with some ideas and contexts of his own based on the Aristotelian account.<sup>5</sup>

Aquinas posits that the soul is united to the body in such a way that even after death the soul has a natural propensity and a natural affinity to embodiment (*Summa Theologiae*, Ia q. 76 a. 1 ad 6). This Thomistic view of the human soul contrasts with that of Plato's, for according to Plato the body is the prison house of the soul and that at death the soul is set free from the shackles of the body and returns to the world of Forms . Thus, while Plato considers the body to restrict the soul in its full reasoning ability, Aquinas considers the body as integral to the full functioning of the

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<sup>5</sup>See <http://www.quebecoislibre.org/06/060122-5.htm>. Younkings E.W, asserts that it was Aquinas' greater adherence to Christian tenets that contributed immensely to whenever Aquinas departs from Aristotle.

soul and consequently the human person. It must be noted however that this apparent contrast between Aquinas and Plato is originally a contrast between Aristotle and Plato which was later built upon by Aquinas. Aristotle objects to Plato's description of the relationship between the soul and the body in the *Timaeus*. In the first book of the *De Anima*, Aristotle describes Plato's account of the body-soul relation as absurd (*ἀτοπov*) (407b13). Aristotle maintains that a full functioning individual is rather a composite of body (matter) and soul (form) as was later accepted by Aquinas. However, to sustain the Christian doctrine of life after, unlike Aristotle, Aquinas also asserts that the intellectual soul of an individual can survive even after death and is indestructible.

Aquinas' conception of the relationship between the soul and the body is considered by some of his modern commentators as providing a middle ground between extreme monism<sup>6</sup> and extreme dualism<sup>7</sup>. Copleston (1955: 160) attempts to explain Aquinas' middle position:

The human being is not composed of two substances, soul and body: it is one substance, in which two component factors can be distinguished. When we feel, it is the whole man who feels, neither the soul alone nor the body alone. Similarly, when we understand something we could not do so without the soul, but it is the man who understands. Aquinas does not mean that soul and body are not distinguishable realities; he calls them 'incomplete substances'; but together they form one substance, the human being, to which all human activities are properly ascribed.

In an attempt to conduct a critical inquiry into Thomas Aquinas' conception of the relationship between the body and the soul and its relation to some current discussion, I shall divide this paper into three sections. Section one will consider various accounts of the relationship between the body and the soul in medieval philosophy by Saint Augustine and John Scottus Eriugena and Peter Abelard. In the second section I will present Thomas Aquinas' view of the nature of the soul and its relationship with the body as presented in questions 75 and 76 of the *Summa Theologiae*. I will consider Aquinas' own counterarguments and how he responds to them. I will evaluate Aquinas' responses to his counterarguments to ascertain if his responses are valid. In

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<sup>6</sup> Monism is the view that the human being can be described in purely physical or material terms (i.e. materialism) or that the human being is describable in only immaterial terms (i.e. idealism). Dualism on the other hand considers the soul and the body as two distinct substances existing separately of each other.

<sup>7</sup> See F.C Copleston's 'Aquinas' (1955) p.158.

addition, I will consider secondary literature which discusses Thomas Aquinas' conception of the soul and its relationship with the body. I shall consider philosophers who argue for and against the validity of Thomas Aquinas' arguments, with the aim of identifying the differences in their understanding and interpretation of Aquinas, while also evaluating the arguments raised for and against Aquinas' view of the relationship between the body and the soul.

In the final section I will try to situate Thomas Aquinas' view of the relationship between the body and the soul within some contemporary discussions in philosophy of mind, specifically within the physicalism and dualism debate. The question I will hope to answer in this section is whether Aquinas' view falls under physicalism or substance dualism, or whether his view should be considered as a theory in its own right, without the attempt to fit it within the box of theories in contemporary philosophy of mind.

## **2. Some Accounts of the Soul-Body Relation Prior to Aquinas**

The relationship between the soul and body was investigated by some medieval philosophers before Aquinas. In what follows I give brief overviews of the accounts of Augustine, John Scottus Eriugena, and Peter Abelard. My intention in providing these accounts is firstly, to show that discussions around the concept of the human soul was a major topic of concern for medieval philosophers and secondly to provide these other theories on the soul and body as a background to Aquinas' account.

### **2.1. Augustine (354-430)**

In the *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, Ch. 4, Augustine tries to answer the question: What is man? He accepts that man has a body and a soul but seems to be uncertain whether man is essentially a soul only, a body only, or the composition of body and soul. Augustine writes<sup>8</sup>:

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<sup>8</sup> See Augustine's *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*, D.A. Gallagher & I.J. Gallagher, Trans., Ch. 4, P. 7.

What do we call man, then? Is he soul and body like a centaur or two horses harnessed together? Or shall we call him the body only in the service of a governing soul, as is the case when we give the word lamp, not to the vessel and flame together, but to the vessel alone on account of the flame within it? Or shall we say that man is nothing but the soul, inasmuch as it rules the body, just as we say that the horseman is not the horse and man together, but the man alone from the fact that he guides the horse?<sup>9</sup>

Although Augustine is not certain about what man essentially is i.e. either soul, body or both soul and body, he is of the view that if man is the body then the relationship between the soul and the body is that the soul rules the body. How the soul rules the body may not be clear from the extract quote above but in *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, Ch. 5, he states: “For by its presence, the soul provides the body with all the things we have enumerated, and with that which exceeds them all besides, life” (Augustine’s *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, Trans. D.A. Gallagher & I.J. Gallagher, Ch.5, p.8)<sup>10</sup> . Here Augustine makes it clear that the soul is that which gives the body life. It is that which animates the body, and without the soul the body cannot be alive.

Again Augustine provides further insight into the activity of the soul and the body when he makes this point in Ch. 5<sup>11</sup>:

If the body be man, it cannot be denied that the supreme good of man is the soul. But, surely, when it is a question of morals- when we ask what kind of life we must lead in order to attain happiness- the commandments are not for the body, and we are not concerned about bodily discipline.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>“Quid ergo hominem dicimus? Animam et corpus tamquam bigas vel centaurum? An corpus tantum, quod sit in usu animae se regentis, tamquam lucernam non ignem simul et testam sed testam solam tamen propter ignem appellamus? An nihil aliud hominem quam animam dicimus, sed propter corpus quod regit, veluti equitem non simul equum et hominem sed hominem solum, ex eo tamen quod regendo equo sit accommodatus, vocamus?”(Augustinus, 1845, Liber Primus, Caput IV, Ed. Migne, J.P.).

<sup>10</sup> “Nam et ista quae commemorata sunt, praesentia sui exhibet corpori et quod antecellit omnibus vitam”(Augustinus, 1845, Liber Primus, Caput V, Ed. Migne, J.P.).

<sup>11</sup> See Augustine’s *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*, D.A. Gallagher & I.J. Gallagher, Trans., Ch.5, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup>“At si corpus est homo, quin hominis optimum anima ipsa sit, recusare non possum. Sed certe cum de moribus agitur, cum quaerimus quinam vitae modus tenendus sit ut beatitudinem

Augustine makes the point in the above extract that man is identified with the body, however the soul is the part of a man which ‘inquires’ and ‘learns’ and it is the soul of a man which is capable of attaining moral virtue, not the body. The soul is that which is capable of directing man (identified with the body) to obtain happiness through moral virtue. The body therefore seems to be under the direction of the soul like a car which is driven by a human being to the right destination. Augustine continues to speak about the relationship between the body and the soul<sup>13</sup>:

But if it follows, as it does, that the body when ruled by virtuous soul is ruled both better and more worthily, and is at its best because of the perfection of the soul ruling it rightly, then that which perfects to the soul will be man’s supreme good, even though we call the body man.<sup>14</sup>

Above, Augustine makes the point that when the body is ruled by a virtuous soul it is ruled “both in a better way and more honorably” (*multo et melius et honestius*). If the body is ruled better by a virtuous soul then for Augustine the question of whether man is either body or soul or both is not of paramount importance, that which is the chief good of man is to know what will makes the soul perfect in order to rule or govern the body honorably. Augustine considers God to be the answer to the soul’s virtue, it is by following after God that the soul will be virtuous to rule the body rightly. The chief good of man therefore is found in the pursuit of the soul after God who is the Supreme good.

For Copleston<sup>15</sup> (1955: 156-157), Augustine’s view of the relationship between the body and the soul is quasi-Platonic when Augustine describes man as ‘a rational soul using a mortal and earthly

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possimus adipisci, non corpori praecepta dantur, non corporis investiganda est disciplina. Postremo bonos mores ea nostra pars actura est, quae inquit et discit et haec animae sunt propria; non igitur de corpore, cum de virtute obtinenda satagimus, quaestio est.” (Augustinus, 1845, Liber Primus, Caput V, Ed. Migne, J.P.).

<sup>13</sup> See Augustine’s *De Moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et De Moribus Manichaeorum*, D.A. Gallagher & I.J. Gallagher, Trans., Ch.5, p.9.

<sup>14</sup> See “Quod si est consequens sicuti est, ut ipsum corpus cum ab anima regitur, quae virtutis compos est, multo et melius regatur et honestius eoque optime sese habeat quo est optima illa, quae sibi iusta lege dominatur, id erit hominis optimum quod animam optimam facit, etiamsi hominem corpus vocemus.” (Augustinus, 1845, Liber Primus, Caput V, Ed. Migne, J.P.).

<sup>15</sup> See Copleston (1955). ‘Aquinas’. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.

body'<sup>16</sup> or as 'a certain substance participating in reason and fitted for ruling a body'<sup>17</sup>. According to Tornau (2020),<sup>18</sup> during his Manichean phase, Augustine considered the soul to be a material unit which was a portion of God but which "had fallen into this corporeal world where it remained a foreigner, even to its own body." Tornau continues by saying that it was after coming into contact with Platonic theory in Milan that Augustine received the philosophical acumen to conceive of the soul as an immaterial entity. Tornau writes that Augustine's earlier definition of the soul as "a rational substance fitted for rule over a body" mirrors Plato's definition of a human being as "a rational soul with a body". Again, Tornau notices that in *De quantitate animae* (70-76) Augustine considers the "greatness" of the soul to refer to its reflective, life-giving, perceptive and rational capacity which enables it to access God and the realms of the immaterial. A similar position to this is found in Brittain (2003)<sup>19</sup>.

## 2.2. John Scottus Eriugena (c.800-c.877)

Eriugena articulates his views on the relationship between the body and the soul in the following passage in the *Periphyseon*<sup>20</sup>:

Rather I declare that man consists of one and the same rational soul conjoined to the body in a mysterious manner, and that it is by a certain wonderful and intelligible division that man himself is divided into two parts, in one of which he is created in the image and likeness of the Creator, and participates in no animality ... while in the other he communicates with the animal nature and was produced out of the earth, that is to say, out

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<sup>16</sup> Copleston cites *De moribus eccl.*; 1, 27, 52. p.156.

<sup>17</sup> Copleston cites *De quantitate animae*, 13, 21 p.157.

<sup>18</sup> Tornau, Christian, "Saint Augustine", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/augustine/>.

<sup>19</sup> See Brittain (2003), "Colloquium 7: Attention Deficit in Plotinus and Augustine: Psychological Problems in Christian and Platonist Theories of the Grades of Virtue", *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy*, 18: 223–275. doi:10.1163/22134417-90000043.

<sup>20</sup> See Eriugena.(1987). *Periphyseon (The Division of Nature)*, trans. Inglis Patrick Sheldon-Williams and John J. O'Meara, Montreal–Paris: Bellarmin.

of the common nature of all things, and is included in the universal genus of animals.  
(*Periphyseon*, IV.754b).<sup>21</sup>

In the above passage we see that Eriugena considers the soul as rational. This view of the soul as rational is similar to the view of Augustine considered earlier. The soul for Eriugena is the part of the human being which is responsible for contemplation. Again when we consider the passage above we see that for Eriugena the soul is conjoined to the body in a mysterious way. Eriugena perceives the relationship between the body and the soul as a mysterious one because these two parts which make up a human being are completely different entities; while the soul is created in the image and likeness of the Creator, the body is corporeal, belongs to the animal nature and is made of earth. Eriugena describes the coming together of these two entities as a certain wonderful and intelligible division. I consider Eriugena's puzzlement at the union between two entities of different composition as important. In fact, the mind-body problem<sup>22</sup> which we seem to have inherited from Rene Descartes<sup>23</sup> also seems to appear in Eriugena's theory. The 'mystery' which Eriugena sees here is how two entities of different compositions (the soul is immaterial since it is in the image and likeness of God and the body is physical and earthly) are conjoined together in a human being. This indeed is a philosophical puzzle. Eriugena does not tell us much about the particular relationship that exists between the body and the soul in the explicit manner that Augustine does.

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<sup>21</sup> "Vnam uero eandem que rationabilem animam humano corpori ineffabili modo adiunctam hominem esse assero; ipsum que hominem mirabili quadam et intelligibili diuisione, ea parte qua ad imaginem et similitudinem creatoris factus est, nullius animalitatis participem esse et ab ea omnino absolutum, ea uero qua animalitati communicat, in uniuersali animalium genere de terra (hoc est de communi omnium natura) productum."(*Periphyseon*, IV. 754b, Ed. Jeaneau, E.A.).

<sup>22</sup> The mind-body problem is the problem of explaining how two different substances; physical and mental are able to interact in a human being. This problem gained popularity in the *Meditations* of Rene Descartes when he asserted that he existed as a thinking thing i.e. a mind and interacts with a physical body.

<sup>23</sup> See Cottingham, J. (1996). *Rene Descartes: Meditations on first philosophy: With selections from the objections and replies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

### 2.3. Peter Abelard (1079-1142)

Peter Abelard presents his views on the relationship between the body and the soul within his general metaphysical theory. According to Peter King (2004:76)<sup>24</sup> “Abelard holds that in the mundane world, i. e. everything apart from God and angels (including fallen angels), everything is form, matter, or a composite of form and matter. Strictly speaking, the ‘matter’ of something is that (a) out of which it is made, and (b) in which it remains as a part.” Abelard considers human beings to be the only category of entities in the world which are not composed of matter and form (King, 2004:78). Abelard defines the form of a material substance as the composition of its parts; for example, he considers the form of a statue to be its shape which it has as a result of the arrangement of its matter (King, 2004:78). The form according to Abelard is supervenient<sup>25</sup> on matter. Abelard considers human souls to be different from all other souls (souls of animals which are material). To him, the human soul is different from all others because the human soul does not supervene on the body, as the soul was not created in the way the body was, as such the body does not provide the material parts for the soul, and hence the soul is not the form of the body. Abelard makes the following remarks in the *Hexaameron*<sup>26</sup>:

The Lord God fashioned man from clay, i. e. from moist earth, as though it were tightly packed together rather than loose; and He thus infused the soul into a body that was already created. This passage suggests that the human soul is dissimilar from all other living beings in the very manner of its creation. For in the creation of all other living beings, God was said to have produced “the heavens and the earth” along with body and soul together— which suggests that their souls are made of those very elements.<sup>27</sup>(*Hex.* 102.21–103.3)

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<sup>24</sup> See Peter King (2004) *The Cambridge Companion to Peter Abelard*. CUP, 65–125.

<sup>25</sup> The view that higher level entities depend on lower level entities, i.e. there cannot be a change in the higher level without a change in the lower level. For instance, the supervenient theory of mind states that mental properties supervene on physical properties.

<sup>26</sup> See Abelard’s *Hexaameron*, (2004). Trans. Romig, M.F. with the assistance of Luscombe, D. in *Corpus christianorum continuatio mediaevalis* Vol.15. Brepols: Turnhout.

<sup>27</sup> “Formavit igitur dominus deus hominem de limo terrae, id est de terra humida et quasi compacta, non dissoluta, et sic corpori iam creato infudit animam. Ex quo patenter innuit animam humanam ex ipso modo creationis dissimilem a caeteris animabus esse. In creatione quippe caeterorum animantium dictum est terram uel aquam ea cum corpore simul et anima

For Abelard, the soul of humans is unique because unlike all other created things on the earth, the human soul was not produced in the way that the other creations of God were made. The soul was breathed into a human body which was already created. By virtue of this, the souls of humans are not composed of the parts of the body (matter) and hence the soul is not the form of the body as compared to the way the shape of a statue is its form. King (2004: 78) makes the point that, Abelard “gives a surprisingly modern twist to this Aristotelian claim” when he defines the “form of a physical object as a particular configuration of its matter”. The human soul does not fall within this bracket. King (2004) also states that although Abelard was not familiar with Aristotle’s *De Anima* 3.5, he had a similar view with Aristotle that the human soul is incorporeal because the soul does not need a body in order to think. The soul is capable of existence apart from the body and therefore it is “numerically different from the body and from the composite” (King, 2004: 15).

It is noteworthy that Augustine, Eriugena and Abelard affirm that the soul is a component of a human being and that it is rational and immaterial. However, all three medieval philosophers offer different views of the relationship between the soul and the body. Whereas Augustine considers the soul to ‘rule’ the body and to make the body “both better and honorable” (*multo et melius et honestius*), Eriugena considers the soul and the body to be conjoined together in a mysterious manner. Peter Abelard on the other hand affirms that, all material objects in the earth are composed of matter and form, except human beings. He is of the view that the soul is not the form of the body since it is not composed of the material parts of the body as is the case in all other material entities.

In the next section I will present the views of Aquinas on the relationship between the body and the soul and compare his position to those of Augustine, Eriugena and Abelard.

### **3. Thomas Aquinas’ Conception of the Soul and its Relationship with the Body**

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produxisse. Ex quo innuitur illorum animas ex ipsis etiam elementis esse.”( *Hex.*102.21–103.3, Ed. Romig, M.F.)

It is important to note from the start that I cannot possibly cover the full breadth of Aquinas' metaphysical thought on the relationship between the soul and the body in this rather short piece of work. What I seek to do here is to unveil some aspects of Aquinas' conception of the soul and its relationship with the body as presented in the Questions 75 and 76 of his *Summa Theologiae*. Aquinas proceeds to present his arguments on the nature of the soul and its relationship with the body by raising possible counter arguments which he shows through further argumentation are invalid. In what follows I outline Aquinas' arguments.

In answering the question whether the soul is corporeal, -i.e. having a body and is material, Aquinas asserts that the soul is incorporeal. In the words of Aquinas:

**Counter argument:** "It would seem that the soul is a body. For the soul is the moving principle of the body. Nor does it move unless moved. First, because seemingly nothing can move unless it is itself moved, since nothing gives what it has not; for instance, what is not hot does not give heat. Secondly, because if there be anything that moves and is not moved, it must be the cause of eternal, unchanging movement, as we find proved *Phys.* viii, 6; and this does not appear to be the case in the movement of an animal, which is caused by the soul. Therefore the soul is a mover moved. But every mover moved is a body. Therefore the soul is a body." (*Summa Theologiae*, Question 75, Article 1, Objection 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>28</sup>

**Response:** "As everything which is in motion must be moved by something else, a process which cannot be prolonged indefinitely, we must allow that not every mover is moved. For, since to be moved is to pass from potentiality to actuality, the mover gives what it has to the thing moved, inasmuch as it causes it to be in act. But, as is shown in *Phys.* viii, 6, there is a mover which is altogether immovable, and not moved either essentially, or accidentally; and such a mover can cause an invariable movement. There is, however, another kind of mover, which, though not moved essentially, is moved accidentally; and

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<sup>28</sup> "Ad primum sic proceditur. Videtur quod anima sit corpus. Anima enim est motor corporis. Non autem est movens non motum. Tum quia videtur quod nihil possit movere nisi moveatur, quia nihil dat alteri quod non habet, sicut quod non est calidum non calefacit. Tum quia, si aliquid est movens non motum, causat motum sempiternum et eodem modo se habentem, ut probatur in VIII *Physic.*, quod non apparet in motu animalis, qui est ab anima. Ergo anima est movens motum. Sed omne movens motum est corpus. Ergo anima est corpus".(Aquinas, 1889, I<sup>a</sup> q. 75 a. 1 arg. 1, Ed. Corso, L. et al).

for this reason it does not cause an invariable movement; such a mover, is the soul. There is, again, another mover, which is moved essentially---namely, the body. And because the philosophers of old believed that nothing existed but bodies, they maintained that every mover is moved; and that the soul is moved directly, and is a body.” (*Summa Theologiae*, Question.75, Article 1, Reply to Objection 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>29</sup>

In defending his position that the soul is incorporeal Aquinas makes use of the argument of motion. To refute the counter argument that every mover moved is a body, Aquinas introduces three different types of movers and the kind of causes they bring about. The first is a mover who is altogether immovable and who is not moved either essentially or accidentally but who can cause ‘invariable movement’ (*motum uniformem*). The second type of mover is moved ‘accidentally’ (*per accidens*) and as a result of that cannot cause ‘invariable movement’. The third mover is moved ‘essentially’ (*per se*)<sup>30</sup>. Aquinas refers to the second mover which is moved accidentally as the soul, while the mover which is moved essentially he refers to as the body. Thus by identifying three different types of movers, Aquinas is able to refute the counter argument that every mover moved is a body. A first important point about the soul and the body which we can extract from Aquinas’ arguments is that both body and soul are movers. While the soul moves the body, the body in turn can move other bodily or material objects.

Thomas Aquinas provides another counter argument of his position regarding whether the soul is a body when he remarks:

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<sup>29</sup> “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod, cum omne quod movetur ab alio moveatur, quod non potest in infinitum procedere, necesse est dicere quod non omne movens movetur. Cum enim moveri sit exire de potentia in actum, movens dat id quod habet mobili, in quantum facit ipsum esse in actu. Sed sicut ostenditur in VIII Physic., est quoddam movens penitus immobile, quod nec per se nec per accidens movetur, et tale movens potest movere motum semper uniformem. Est autem aliud movens, quod non movetur per se, sed movetur per accidens, et propter hoc non movet motum semper uniformem. Et tale movens est anima. Est autem aliud movens, quod per se movetur, scilicet corpus. Et quia antiqui naturales nihil esse credebant nisi corpora, posuerunt quod omne movens movetur, et quod anima per se movetur, et est corpus.” (Aquinas, 1889, I<sup>a</sup> q. 75 a. 1 ad 1, Ed. Corso, L. et al).

<sup>30</sup> See Aquinas, 1889, Ia q. 75 a. 1 ad 1. Ed. Corso, L. et al)

“Further, between the mover and the moved there must be contact. But contact is only between bodies. Since, therefore, the soul moves the body, it seems that the soul must be a body.”<sup>31</sup> In response to this Aquinas makes the point that “there are two kinds of contact; of "quantity," and of "power." By the former a body can be touched only by a body; by the latter a body can be touched by an incorporeal thing, which moves that body.” (*Summa Theologiae*, ques.75, Article 1, Reply to Objection 3, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>32</sup>

Again, Aquinas defends his position that the soul is incorporeal by refuting the argument that the soul must be a body since only bodily entities can have contact with each other. In refuting this argument, Aquinas differentiates between two types of contact, namely; contact of quantity and of power. While the kind of contact that exists between two bodily objects is a contact of quantity, it is possible for an incorporeal entity to have contact with a body through a contact of power. Hence the soul does not have to be corporeal in order to have contact with the body. The soul therefore is immaterial or incorporeal. From this second argument offered by Aquinas we learn that the soul is something immaterial which moves the body through a contact of power. Fisher (2017: 36) comments that “Aquinas believes that the human soul is the only form that is the actuality of matter, but is not wholly embedded in matter. To the extent that the soul extends beyond and supersedes the potency of matter, it is incorporeal”<sup>33</sup>. Thus for Aquinas, the soul is distinct from the body, while the soul is non-physical, non-extended (cannot be measured) and indivisible, the body on the other hand is physical, extended and divisible. The soul is the activating principle of life and it is that which energizes or animates the body.

After providing philosophical arguments to defend his view that the soul is incorporeal. Aquinas attempts to answer the question of whether the soul is something which subsists or supports itself

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<sup>31</sup> “Praeterea, moventis ad motum oportet esse aliquem contactum. Contactus autem non est nisi corporum. Cum igitur anima moveat corpus, videtur quod anima sit corpus.” (Aquinas, 1889, Ia q. 75 a. 1 arg. 3).

<sup>32</sup> “Ad tertium dicendum quod est duplex contactus, quantitatis et virtutis. Primo modo, corpus non tangitur nisi a corpore. Secundo modo, corpus potest tangi a re incorporeal quae movet corpus. .”(Aquinas, 1889, Ia q. 75 a. 1 ad 3, . Ed. Corso, L. et al).

<sup>33</sup> See Fisher, Kendall Ann, "Thomas Aquinas on the Metaphysical Nature of the Soul and its Union with the Body"

(2017). Dissertations - ALL. 707. Retrieved from <https://surface.syr.edu/etd/707>.

independently of the body. In other words, the question posed here is whether the soul exists by itself. Aquinas makes the argument that the soul is something which subsists and makes the following argument in support of this position:

**Counter argument:** “Further, if the soul were subsistent, it would have some operation apart from the body. But it has no operation apart from the body, not even that of understanding: for the act of understanding does not take place without a phantasm, which cannot exist apart from the body. Therefore the human soul is not something subsistent.” (*Summa Theologiae*, Question. 75, Article 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>34</sup>

**Aquinas’ Response:** “The body is necessary for the action of the intellect, not as its origin of action, but on the part of the object; for the phantasm is to the intellect what color is to the sight. Neither does such a dependence on the body prove the intellect to be non-subsistent; otherwise it would follow that an animal is non-subsistent, since it requires external objects of the senses in order to perform its act of perception.” (*Summa Theologiae*, Question. 75, Article 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>35</sup>

In responding to the counter argument that the soul is not something subsistent because it depends on the body for its operation, Aquinas refutes this argument by making the case that although it is true that the intellect requires images provided by the body in order to understand and make generalizations, it does not follow that the soul is not independent. He provides an analogy of the relationship between color and sight to depict the kind of relationship which exists between the *phantasma*<sup>36</sup> and the intellect. In the case of color and sight what happens is that the sight

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<sup>34</sup> “Praeterea, si anima esset aliquid subsistens, esset aliqua eius operatio sine corpore. Sed nulla est eius operatio sine corpore, nec etiam intelligere, quia non contingit intelligere sine phantasmate, phantasma autem non est sine corpore. Ergo anima humana non est aliquid subsistens.” (Aquinas, 1889, I<sup>a</sup> q. 75 a. 2 arg. 3, Ed. Corso, L. et al)

<sup>35</sup> “Ad tertium dicendum quod corpus requiritur ad actionem intellectus, non sicut organum quo talis actio exerceatur, sed ratione obiecti, phantasma enim comparatur ad intellectum sicut color ad visum. Sic autem indigere corpore non removet intellectum esse subsistentem, alioquin animal non esset aliquid subsistens, cum indigeat exterioribus sensibilibus ad sentiendum.” (Aquinas, 1889, I<sup>a</sup> q. 75 a. 2 ad 3, Ed. Corso, L. et al)

<sup>36</sup> *Phantasma* is a complex word and for that it is extremely difficult if possible to get a single English word as its translation. “Mental image” is one possible translation though it does not cover it completely.

perceives color but it does not mean that without the existence of color the experience of sight cannot exist on its own. In the same way although the body supplies the intellect with *phantasma* in order to help in understanding, it does not follow that without a body to supply *phantasma* the intellect will not exist by itself. Moreover, since the soul is that which animates the body it must as a matter of necessity exist or subsist on its own if it is to cause the body to act or function in certain ways, as nothing can give what it does not have. Commenting on this, Copleston (1955:166) writes, “Aquinas’ position is this. The human soul is able to exercise some activities which transcend the power of matter, and this shows that the soul itself is not material. And that which is not material does not depend intrinsically on the body for its existence.”<sup>37</sup>

It is important to note that while the soul subsists differently from the body there is a relationship or union that exists between the soul and the body. The body supplies sensations and images to the soul, the soul interprets these images and from there develops concepts and generalizations. The question to ask then is, what is the nature of the specific union that exists between the soul and the body? Aquinas answers this question in question 76 of the *Summa Theologiae* using the following argument:

**Counter argument:** “Further, whatever exists in a thing by reason of its nature exists in it always. But to be united to matter belongs to the form by reason of its nature; because form is the act of matter, not by an accidental quality, but by its own essence; otherwise matter and form would not make a thing substantially one, but only accidentally one. Therefore a form cannot be without its own proper matter. But the intellectual principle, since it is incorruptible, as was shown above (Question 75, Article 6), remains separate from the body, after the dissolution of the body. Therefore the intellectual principle is not united to the body as its form.” (*Summa Theologiae*, Question. 76, Article 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Copleston (1955). ‘Aquinas’. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.

<sup>38</sup> “Praeterea, id quod inest alicui rei secundum se, semper inest ei. Sed formae secundum se inest uniri materiae, non enim per accidens aliquod, sed per essentiam suam est actus materiae; alioquin ex materia et forma non fieret unum substantialiter, sed accidentaliter. Forma ergo non potest esse sine propria materia. Sed intellectivum principium, cum sit incorruptibile, ut supra ostensum est, remanet corpori non unitum, corpore corrupto. Ergo intellectivum principium non unitur corpori ut forma.” (Aquinas, 1889, I<sup>a</sup> q. 76 a. 1 arg. 6, Ed. Corso, L. et al).

**Aquinas' response:** "To be united to the body belongs to the soul by reason of itself, as it belongs to a light body by reason of itself to be raised up. And as a light body remains light, when removed from its proper place, retaining meanwhile an aptitude and an inclination for its proper place; so the human soul retains its proper existence when separated from the body, having an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body." (*Summa Theologiae*, Question. 76, Article 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>39</sup>

According to Aquinas, the soul is united to the body as its form. Aquinas agrees very much with Aristotle concerning the relationship between the body and soul, one may even say that Aquinas re-echoes Aristotle's views concerning the specific union between the body and the soul. Aquinas defends his view that the soul is united to the body as its form by refuting the argument that, if the soul is the form of the body then as the body ceases to exist after death, the soul must also cease to exist after death, since 'the form cannot be without its proper matter.'

As I argued earlier, Aquinas makes the case that the soul is independent and subsists without the body (Question 75, Article 2) and therefore the soul has the ability to continue to exist after the body dies. However, in spite of the soul's ability to exist after death, the soul has 'an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body' (*aptitudinem et inclinationem naturalem ad corporis unionem*)<sup>12</sup>, in the same way a displaced light object retains 'an aptitude and an inclination for its proper place' (*aptitudine et inclinatione ad proprium locum*)<sup>12</sup>. It is this inclination that the soul has to be reunited to the body after death that the Christian concept of a resurrection can make sense. This is because Christians believe that at resurrection the soul is given a new heavenly body.

As McInerny and O'Callaghan (2018) remark, it is the nature of a soul to be the "formal element of a complete substance"<sup>40</sup>. Accordingly, they note that the soul without the body does not have

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<sup>39</sup> "Ad sextum dicendum quod secundum se convenit animae corpori uniri, sicut secundum se convenit corpori levi esse sursum. Et sicut corpus leve manet quidem leve cum a loco proprio fuerit separatum, cum aptitudine tamen et inclinatione ad proprium locum; ita anima humana manet in suo esse cum fuerit a corpore separata, habens aptitudinem et inclinationem naturalem ad corporis unionem."(Aquinas, 1889, Ia q. 76 a. 1 ad 6, Ed. Corso, L. et al).

<sup>40</sup> McInerny, Ralph and O'Callaghan, John, "Saint Thomas Aquinas", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/aquinas/>>.

the status of a complete substance. Hence they make the point that “it is because it is naturally incomplete as subsisting apart from the body that Thomas sees this state as unnatural for it, and an intimation of, but not an argument for, the resurrection of the body.”<sup>41</sup>

Also, commenting on the union between the body and the soul Kerr (2009: 61) opines that “for Thomas, as we should expect by now, it was for the human soul’s good that it was united to a body and that it understands by turning to sensible images.”<sup>42</sup> Here, Kerr makes the case that it is actually beneficial for the soul that it is united to the body, since the body supplies the soul with sensible images in order to aid the soul in its act of understanding. It is important to note that Aquinas paints the human body in a good light as against some philosophers who argue that the body has a negative influence on the soul.<sup>43</sup>

In summary, I have presented some of Aquinas’ arguments concerning the nature of the soul and its relationship with the body. Aquinas notes that the soul is not a body since it is incorporeal, he also argues that the soul subsists or supports itself and moves the body, and he suggests that the relationship that exists between the soul and the body is a union in which the soul is the form of the body.

Aquinas’ views differ from those of Augustine, Eriugena and Abelard in some aspects. In the case of Augustine, the body is one to be ruled by the soul, Aquinas on the other hand considers the soul to be incomplete without the body. Although Aquinas considers the soul to animate the body, he does not consider the body as something to be ‘ruled’. For Aquinas the soul acts in union with the body such that the body provides sensory images to help in the soul’s act of understanding. In the case of Eriugena, he considers the soul and the body to be united in a mysterious manner. In my view Aquinas tries to demystify this ‘mystery’ (*arcanum*) by clearly articulating the kind of union that exists between the body and the soul. First, Aquinas argues that the soul relates to the body as its form and secondly that the soul and the body are incomplete without each other, in such a way that although the soul has independent existence beyond the body, as the intellect it

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> See Kerr, F. (2009). *Thomas Aquinas: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>43</sup> In the *Phaedo* Plato considers the body to be a hindrance to the full reflective power of the soul, the body is some kind of prison of the soul. See, Plato (1951). *Phaedo*. (Trans. F.J. Church). New York: The Liberal Arts Press

relies on the body in its act of understanding. With regards to Abelard, it becomes clear that while Abelard maintains that the soul is not the form of the body because the soul is not made up of parts of the body, Aquinas thinks otherwise. For Aquinas the soul relates to the body as its form, on the grounds that, it is the form which animates the body. I think that the difference between Aquinas and Abelard lies in their different understanding of 'form'. For Abelard, a form consists of the parts of its matter as the shape of a statue is simply made up of the parts of the statue. But in the case of the body and soul, the soul is immaterial, while the body is material and hence the soul cannot be the form of the body since it cannot consist of the material parts of the body. Contrariwise, Aquinas understands form to be the active principle in a thing, that which causes the thing to be, that which makes the thing alive and that entity which activates the body is the soul, hence the soul relates to the body as its form.

In the next section, I shall explore to what degree it can be claimed that Aquinas' view of the body and soul falls within a particular theory in contemporary philosophy of mind.

#### **4. Aquinas' relationship between the body and soul and contemporary philosophy of mind.**

How can we interpret Aquinas' conception of the relationship between the body and the soul in relation to contemporary philosophy of mind? It is important to mention at the outset that, contemporary discussions of the soul have witnessed a shift in terminology. The 'soul' (*anima*) is often referred to as 'the mind', this is partly because contemporary philosophers feel that using the term 'soul' has religious connotations. The use of the term 'mind' is not distinct from Aquinas' use of the 'soul', if by mind both contemporary philosophers are referring to the faculty of a human being responsible for all rational or mental activity. For this reason, I shall use both 'soul' and 'mind' interchangeably to designate Aquinas' 'soul' (*anima*) in this thesis. It is worth noting at this onset that there are so many different theories in the contemporary discussions of philosophy of mind that this short paper could possibly capture. As such, my focus will be placed on the two dominant positions which are: physicalism and substance dualism. I shall explain the theories of physicalism and substance dualism to ascertain whether Aquinas' view of the relationship between the body and the soul could be classified as a physicalist view, substance dualist view, or a position which is in-between physicalism and substance dualism. Although

interactionism, occasionalism, and parallelism are classified under substance dualism, while reductive physically and non-reductive physicalism falls under physicalism, I will not divulge into the types of these two dominant positions. This is because the purpose of this study is to look at physicalism and substance dualism in the broad sense and as such divulging into the types will be of little or no additional benefit to this paper.

#### 4.1. Physicalism

Physicalism as it relates to mental phenomena refers to the view that mental activities such as perception, thinking, pain and memory are physical activities of the brain. A strand of physicalism; type identity which falls under reductive physicalism states that, mental states are reducible to brain states. For the type identity theorists, mental state ‘A’ is identical to brain state ‘B’. John Smart (1959) and Ullin Place (1970) propounded this version of physicalism. They asserted that sensations are identical to physical processes in the brain and thus mental state T is nothing other than brain state N. Pain is just the firing of c-fibres within a particular portion of the brain. In his seminal paper titled: *Is Consciousness a Brain process?* U.T Place (1970) makes the claim that:

We realise that there is nothing that the introspecting subject says about his conscious experiences which is inconsistent with anything the physiologist might want to say about the brain processes which cause him to describe the environment and his consciousness of that environment in the way he does. When the subject describes his experience by saying that a light which is in fact stationary, appears to move, all the physiologist or physiological psychologist has to do in order to explain the subject’s introspective observations, is to show that the brain process which is causing the subject to describe his experience in this way, is the sort of process which normally occurs when he is observing an actual moving object and which therefore normally causes him to report the movement of an object in his environment.<sup>44</sup> (p. 50).

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<sup>44</sup> See Place, U. T. (1970). *Is consciousness a brain process?*. In *The mind-brain identity theory* (pp. 42-51). London:Palgrave

What this means is that, since mental events are identical to neuronal events, mental events can adequately be substituted for neuronal events. The physicalist in effect argues that a human being is reducible to the body. The relationship therefore between the body and the soul is one in which the body takes precedence over the soul. One can infer from the physicalist position that there is no immaterial substance in man which transcends the body and which survives the death of the body. The rational capacity associated with the notion of the soul or mind is reducible to the activity of the brain. For the physicalist therefore, the death of a person refers to the death of the cells in the body of a person, nothing survives after the death of the cells of the human body. To the physicalist, the notions of immortality and afterlife do not make sense.

#### 4.2. Substance Dualism

Substance dualism as a position in philosophy of mind where the soul and the body are two distinct substances. These two substances although distinct can interact. The modern proponent of the view of substance dualism is Rene Descartes. In his quest for certain knowledge, Descartes arrived at the conclusion that the only thing that he could not doubt was his own existence. After doubting his senses and body he concluded that he existed as a *thinking thing*; a thing that affirms, doubts, denies and understands, i.e. he existed as a mind<sup>45</sup>. It is through Descartes' finding in his Meditation II that; '*Cogito ergo sum*' which translates as 'I think therefore I am' that the phrase is attributed to him. Later in his Meditation VI (On the Existence of Material Objects from Body), he affirmed the existence of the body and asserted that the mind interacted with the body. According to Descartes the mind and the body are two distinct substances. While the body is extended, divisible and spatial, the mind is non-extended, indivisible and non-spatial<sup>39</sup>.

According to Madden (2013);

A more robust version of dualism is *substance dualism*: human minds and bodies are distinct substances, the former being nonphysical and the latter being physical. According to the substance dualist, the mind is not just a collection of nonphysical properties, but an individual, nonphysical substance. The body is a physical substance just like any other

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<sup>45</sup> In the Meditations I and II, Descartes seeks to search for an indubitable truth to use as a foundation where he builds his knowledge in the subsequent Meditation upon ie. Meditation III-VI. See Meditations on First Philosophy.(1996). Trans., Cottingham, J. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

tangible object, whereas the mind is a mental substance independent of any physical object for its existence and activity.<sup>46</sup> (p. 20)

As noted by Madden, the substance dualist considers the body as a substance on its own, existing within the ontological realm of the physical, while the mind also exists as a separate substance belonging to the ontological realm of the non-physical. It is erroneous therefore to think that substance dualism is the view that a human being is made up of body and soul. For substance dualism, the body is a substance and the soul is also a substance on its own, they are not co-dependent and both exist in different locations.

#### **4.3. Is Aquinas' position physicalism or substance dualism?**

As indicated in the section 3 of this paper, according to Aquinas, the soul is united to the body as its form. A human being according to Aquinas is composed of a soul and a body. Aquinas' position cannot be described as physicalism, this is because physicalism refutes the view that any entity will outlive the body. Aquinas on his part believes that the soul subsists after the death of the body. Moreover, Aquinas attributes the powers of understanding to the soul and not to the body. The body provides the needed sensations which the soul interprets. This view by Aquinas will be rejected by any physicalist. Physicalism as a theory holds that the powers of understanding, feeling and consciousness in general are attributable to the brain, which is a part of the body. For the physicalist there is no immaterial entity responsible for the rational life of humans. Hence physicalism reduces the mental life of humans to brain activity. This is clearly an anti-Thomistic position. Aquinas does not reduce the soul to the body, neither does he reduce the body to the soul, both entities are co-dependent and make up a human being. Aquinas shows that he is not a physicalist when he makes the following remarks:

The body is necessary for the action of the intellect, not as its origin of action, but on the part of the object; for the phantasm is to the intellect what color is to the sight. Neither does such a dependence on the body prove the intellect to be nonsubsistent; otherwise it would follow that an animal is nonsubsistent, since it requires external objects of the

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<sup>46</sup> See Madden, J. D. (2013). *Mind, Matter, and Nature*. Catholic University of America Press.

senses in order to perform its act of perception. (Summa Theologiae, Question. 75, Article 2, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>47</sup>

Aquinas in this extract makes a distinction between the activity of the body and the activity of the soul. While the body is necessary for the action of the intellect, the body is not the origin of the action of the intellect. The intellect which is a property of the soul subsists on its own but it requires the body for its full activity, (i.e. understanding) but it is not reducible to or caused by the body. This clearly shows that Aquinas is not a physicalist. He believes that every component of the human being—body and soul—have different roles they each play and one is not reducible to the other.

Furthermore, Aquinas shows clearly that he is not a physicalist when he asserts that understanding is not the capacity of any physical organ. The soul is immaterial and therefore does not fall within the ontological category of the physical. Kretzmann (1992) in articulating the point that Aquinas is not a physicalist appeals to Aquinas view of God, he remarks by saying “obviously, Aquinas is not a materialist. God - subsistent being itself, the absolutely fundamental element of Aquinas's metaphysics - is, of course, in no way material.”<sup>48</sup> (p.1)

Now, provided that Aquinas does not subscribe to physicalism, is it to be accepted that his position is in tandem with substance dualism? It is not immediately clear whether Aquinas' position conforms to the theory of substance dualism. This is not obvious because Aquinas believes in the existence of an immaterial soul and a material or physical body, just these two beliefs may be construed by some as placing Aquinas firmly within the camp of the substance dualist. Again, by asserting that the soul subsists independently of the body and exists even after the death, it becomes difficult not to interpret Aquinas' position as substance dualism. But we should not be too quick to categorize Aquinas' position as substance dualism.

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<sup>47</sup> “Ad tertium dicendum quod corpus requiritur ad actionem intellectus, non sicut organum quo talis actio exerceatur, sed ratione obiecti, phantasma enim comparatur ad intellectum sicut color ad visum. Sic autem indigere corpore non remouet intellectum esse subsistentem, alioquin animal non esset aliquid subsistens, cum indigeat exterioribus sensibilibus ad sentiendum.”(Aquino, 1889, Ia q. 75 a. 2 ad 3, . Ed. Corso, L. et al).

<sup>48</sup> See Kretzmann, N. (1992). Aquinas's Philosophy of Mind. *Philosophical Topics*, 20(2), 77-101.

I would claim that Aquinas is not a substance dualist. First of all, Aquinas does not consider the soul and the body to be two substances as it is the case for substance dualism. Aquinas on his part affirms the existence of only one substance; the human being, who is composed of soul and body. The fact that Aquinas makes reference to two components of a human being does not mean that he subscribes to substance dualism. For him to be a substance dualist he must posit a separate ontological status for the soul and another for the body, this he does not do. In his attempt to show that Aquinas is not a substance dualist, Copleston (1955) commenting on Aquinas' position writes that:

The human being is not composed of two substances, soul and body: it is one substance, in which two component factors can be distinguished. When we feel, it is the whole man who feels, neither the soul alone nor the body alone. Similarly, when we understand something we could not do so without the soul, but it is the man who understands. Aquinas does not mean that soul and body are not distinguishable realities; he calls them 'incomplete substances'; but together they form one substance, the human being, to which all human activities are properly ascribed.<sup>49</sup> (p. 160)

An important point which Copleston makes in his commentary here is that, for Aquinas, the soul and the body are distinguishable but are individually incomplete. They are co-dependent, one cannot fully operate without the input of the other, and together they are complete. As Aquinas notes, the soul relates to the body as its form, this shows that the soul and the body do not belong to two different ontological realms. It is probable to reason that for Aquinas, while the soul and the body are functionally distinct they are not ontologically distinct. In order for a view to be described as substance dualism, it is not enough that the entities involved are functionally distinct, what is more important is that they must be ontologically distinct. This is not Aquinas' position, hence he is not a substance dualist.

In spite of the soul and the body not being ontologically distinct, Aquinas appears to contradict himself when he asserts that the soul continues to exist after the death of the body, making the soul immortal while the body is not. Should we take the immortality of the soul to show that the

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<sup>49</sup> See Copleston (1955). 'Aquinas'. Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd.

soul is ontologically distinct from the body, hence making Aquinas a substance dualist? I do not think so because to this objection Aquinas responds;

To be united to the body belongs to the soul by reason of itself, as it belongs to a light body by reason of itself to be raised up. And as a light body remains light, when removed from its proper place, retaining meanwhile an aptitude and an inclination for its proper place; so the human soul retains its proper existence when separated from the body, having an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body.” (*Summa Theologiae*, Question. 76, Article 1, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province)<sup>50</sup>

It can be gleaned from the above extract that the soul is left incomplete when it is separated from the body through death. In other words, the soul yearns to be reunited to the body in order to be ‘whole’ again. In commenting about Aquinas’ view of the relationship between the soul and the body, García-Valdecasas (2005) claims that “detached from the actualized body, the soul is a bizarre entity.<sup>51</sup>” (p. 295). Again García-Valdecasas (2005) notes that “...it would be unfair to regard him as a dualist without taking into account that in several other places he rejects any treatment of souls and bodies as distinct entities.” (p. 297-298)

From the above discussions, I have argued that Aquinas’ view of the relationship between the body and the soul neither falls within the camp of physicalism nor substance dualism. The question that arises now is; what theory in contemporary philosophy of mind is Aquinas’ view more likely to resemble then? I am of the view that Aquinas’ conception of the relationship between the body and the soul is a middle position between physicalism and substance dualism. It may resemble middle positions in contemporary philosophy of mind such as property dualism<sup>52</sup> or non-reductive physicalism<sup>53</sup>, but until it is proven so, I believe that it will be more appropriate

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<sup>50</sup> “Ad sextum dicendum quod secundum se convenit animae corpori uniri, sicut secundum se convenit corpori levi esse sursum. Et sicut corpus leve manet quidem leve cum a loco proprio fuerit separatum, cum aptitudine tamen et inclinatione ad proprium locum; ita anima humana manet in suo esse cum fuerit a corpore separata, habens aptitudinem et inclinationem naturalem ad corporis unionem. .”(Aquino, 1889, Ia q. 76 a. 1 ad 6, Ed. Corso, L. et al).

<sup>51</sup> See García-Valdecasas, M. (2005). Psychology and mind in Aquinas. *History of Psychiatry*, 16(3), 291-310.

<sup>52</sup> Property dualism is the view that there exists one substance which has two properties namely; mental and physical.

<sup>53</sup> This is the view that mental properties supervene on physical properties such that there cannot be a change in the mental properties without a further change in physical properties.

to view Aquinas' position on its own right and should be referred to as Aquinas' philosophy of mind or better still a Thomistic philosophy of mind and may not need to fit within the categories created by contemporary philosophers.

As Madden (2013) notes, the attempt by contemporary Thomists to fit Aquinas' position into contemporary theories in philosophy of mind "has done much to motivate the charges of ambiguity and ad hoc gerrymandering that are often leveled against contemporary Thomists." (p. x). I agree with Madden on this and suggests that since there is no conclusive answer to the question of the relationship that exists between the body and the soul, it is important that we consider the views of other philosophers such as Aquinas, who have grappled with this question in the past as separate rather than putting them under the umbrella of a contemporary theory in the philosophy of mind. It is easy to think in physicalistic terms nowadays due to the ascendancy of scientific research, but let's be reminded that there are so many other puzzles, such as the puzzle of human consciousness which science has not been able to unravel yet. It is possible that greater attention to Aquinas' philosophy of mind may help to shed light on these human complexities by providing a different perspective to the debate.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this work I presented Thomas Aquinas' conception of the relationship between the body and the soul in questions 75 and 76 of his *Summa Theologiae*. I have demonstrated how Aquinas' view differs from those of Augustine, Abelard and Eriugena. For Aquinas, the soul is united to the body as its form. The soul and the body together form a human being. These two components of a human being are co-dependent and remain incomplete without each other. Aquinas does not consider the body as an entity to be ruled by the soul as is presented by Augustine. For Aquinas, the body provides the needed sensations to aid in the soul's act of understanding. I have also tried to show in this paper that, Aquinas' view of the relationship between the body and the soul cannot be characterized as either physicalism or substance dualism. His view cannot be characterized as physicalism because, Aquinas does not suggest that the rational life of a human being can be

reduced to the body. Aquinas suggests that understanding is not the faculty of any physical organ but rather is a function of the soul, which is incorporeal. Hence, Aquinas is not a physicalist. Also, Aquinas' view cannot be characterized as substance dualism because, he does not consider the body and the soul as two different substances existing in two separate ontological realms as the substance dualist does. For Aquinas, the soul and the body are components of one substance; a human being. Although the soul outlives the body (which makes it look like the soul belongs to a different ontological realm), it remains incomplete without the body and yearns for embodiment.

I agree with Copleston (1955) that Aquinas' position is a middle ground between physicalism and substance dualism. I also think that we should not try and fit Aquinas' view within any of the two discussed contemporary theories in the philosophy of mind, but that, we should consider Aquinas' view as unique in its own right, and to be properly acknowledged as Aquinas' philosophy of mind or Thomistic philosophy of mind. I believe that an attempt to fit his view within the box of some contemporary theories in philosophy of mind (such as property dualism, non-reductive physicalism or physicalism) will miss out on very salient features of Aquinas' view and the unique perspective it brings to discussions in the field. Considered as a middle position between physicalism and substance dualism, I believe Aquinas' philosophy of mind will be able to overcome the criticisms levelled against physicalism and substance dualism in contemporary philosophy of mind. Future research in the field should consider taking this up as it promises to be a rewarding task in contemporary philosophy of mind

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