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NOT JUST A TERMINOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE:
CARTESIAN SUBSTANCE DUALISM
VS THOMISTIC HYLOMORPHISM*

INTRODUCTION

Richard Swinburne's new book *Are We Bodies or Souls?* features the most recent formulation and defense of a theory of the human person that Swinburne has been articulating and defending for several decades now: Cartesian substance dualism.¹ And it is one of the very best defenses of Cartesian substance dualism currently on offer. I highly recommend this book to anyone looking to learn more about how such a view might be defended today.

On Swinburne's theory of the human person, human persons are compound substances. Each of us is a substance composed of two other substances: a physical substance (a human body) and a mental substance (an immaterial soul). One of the main conclusions for which Swinburne argues in the book, however, is that each of us is essentially composed of just a soul. Though I am right now composed of two

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¹ Richard SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?* (Oxford: OUP, 2019). See also his *Mind, Brain, and Free Will* (Oxford: OUP, 2013), *The Evolution of the Soul*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997); and "Personal Identity: The Dualist Theory," in *Personal Identity*, ed. Sydney Shoemaker and Richard Swinburne (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1984), 3–66. For this essay I will be focusing on the presentation and defense of his view that he gives in his most recent book, though I will also make occasional references to similar points made in previous work.

substances, I could, in principle, continue to exist without my body, composed of nothing more than the mental substance that is my soul.

As Swinburne himself points out, his theory of the human person shares many similarities with the hylomorphic theory of the human person espoused by Thomas Aquinas.² Both theories hold that human persons are composed of both body and soul and both theories hold that the human soul is capable of surviving the death of the body. How different, then, are these two dualist theories of the human person really? And are their differences significant enough to provide any compelling reasons to prefer one over the other? In his discussion of Aquinas's theory of the human person at the end of Chapter Four, Swinburne suggests that the differences between the two theories are "almost entirely terminological," pertaining chiefly to how each understands the term 'substance'.³ In this essay, I aim to show that the differences between Swinburne's Cartesian substance dualism and Thomistic hylomorphism are much more significant than that. I will argue, moreover, that the distinctive claims of Thomistic hylomorphism allow it to successfully avoid some key concerns for Swinburne's brand of Cartesian substance dualism.

SWINBURNE'S CARTESIAN SUBSTANCE DUALISM

On Swinburne's theory of the human person, human persons are compound substances. A substance, according to Swinburne, is simply "a component of the world; a particular object or collection of objects."⁴ On Swinburne's account, substances can be composed of other substances.⁵ And so there are both simple substances and compound substances. We are substances of the compound variety. Each of us is composed of both a physical substance (a human body or human organism, itself a compound substance composed of various smaller physical substances) and a mental substance (an immaterial soul, itself a simple substance). To say that the

² See especially SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?* 80–85. For some other helpful resources comparing and contrasting Cartesian substance dualism and Thomistic hylomorphism, see Eleonore STUMP, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003), chap. 6; Brian LEFTOW, "Soul, Mind and Brain," in *The Waning of Materialism*, ed. Robert C. Koons and George Bealer (Oxford: OUP, 2010), 395–416; James D. MADDEN, *Mind, Matter, and Nature: A Thomistic Proposal for the Philosophy of Mind* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2013); and Jason T. EBERL, *The Nature of Human Persons: Metaphysics and Bioethics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2020), chap. 3.

³ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?*, 80.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 13. For a more detailed account of what Swinburne takes to be the characteristic features of substances, see SWINBURNE, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 4–5.

⁵ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?*, 13.

body is a physical substance is to say that all of its essential properties are physical properties, properties to which their possessor has no “privileged access.”⁶ To say that the soul is a mental substance is to say that it has at least one essential mental property, a property to which its possessor does have privileged access. The one essential mental property possessed by the soul is its capacity for consciousness.⁷ We, human persons, normally possess both physical and mental properties. By virtue of being composed of a human body, we possess all of those physical properties that our bodies possess. And by virtue of being composed of an immaterial soul, we possess all of those mental properties that our souls possess. An important component of Swinburne’s account, and one to which he dedicates a large portion of the book defending, is the claim that our immaterial souls are the only substance of which we are essentially composed. And so each of us could, in principle, continue to exist without our bodies. It follows that each of us is only contingently a human organism, by virtue of possessing that organism as a non-essential part, but essentially an immaterial soul, by virtue of possessing that soul as an essential part. Since a human being is essentially composed of both a human body and an immaterial soul, it also follows that we are only contingently human beings.⁸ But a human *person* is essentially composed of only an immaterial soul, and so we are essentially human persons. As Swinburne himself explains,

while every actual human being is a pure mental substance in the sense that that being could exist without a body, if he or she were deprived of their body, they would then cease to be a human being. This is because any human being belongs to a biological species, and so must have a body. But a human being who was deprived of their body but continued to be conscious would remain a pure mental substance, and—if they retained their moral beliefs and the capacity for reasoning—they would remain a person. Each actual human being is essentially a pure mental substance, consisting of two substances—a soul (the essential part) and a body (the inessential part).⁹

According to Swinburne’s theory of the human person, I am neither my body nor my soul. I am something composed of both body and soul. While it is true that

⁶ Ibid., 29–32. For a subject to have privileged access to one of its own properties (or to the event of its possessing that property) is for the subject to have an additional way of coming to know that it possesses that property (or participates in the event of its possessing that property) which is not available to any other subject, namely by experiencing it.

⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁸ Ibid., 79–80, 83–84.

⁹ Ibid., 79–80. ‘Human being’ and ‘Human organism’, then, are, for us, “phase sortals,” whereas ‘human person’ is our “substance sortal.”

I could survive the loss of my body and so come to be composed of nothing more than my soul, I am not now, nor have I ever been, nor could I ever become identical to my soul.¹⁰ Right now I possess both physical and mental properties. By virtue of being composed of a human body, I possess all of those physical properties that my body possesses. And by virtue of being composed of an immaterial soul, I possess all of those mental properties that my soul possesses. Things done by my body are things that I do. When my body sits on the couch, I sit on the couch. Things done by my soul are also things that I do. When my soul thinks about going to the store, I think about going to the store.

While all of this might seem innocent enough, Swinburne's account appears to have the result that there are too many things doing all of the things that I do.¹¹ For whenever I think about going to the store, both me, the human person, and my soul, my essential part, think about going to the store. And so it seems that there are at least two things thinking about going to the store whenever I do so. This raises a host of familiar problems. First, there is the sheer fact that it seems like too many things doing my thinking. Then there is the issue of personhood. If what makes something a person is the possession of the essential capacity for consciousness, then both me and my soul possess that essential capacity. And so we both count as persons. Third, there is the epistemic worry. When I think "I am identical to a soul," two things think that thought: both me and my soul. But one of us is wrong about that (the person), and one of us is quite right (the soul). And I ought to wonder how I could ever know which one of those thinkers I am. Since both the person and the soul always have the very same thoughts, any reason I could have for thinking that I am the person and not my soul is also a reason my soul has for thinking the same thing. (Notice that this problem need not assume, as the standard too many thinkers problem does,¹² that the human organism can think. The person and her soul are enough).

Swinburne's solution to this problem is to identify my thinking about going to the store with my soul's thinking about going to the store. According to Swinburne, it only seems like there are too many thinkers here because we are supposing that

¹⁰ This is actually made most explicit in his earlier book (see, for example, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 236). In *Are We Bodies or Souls*, Swinburne never explicitly addresses the issue of whether, upon the loss of her body, the person comes to be identical to her soul or merely solely composed of it, though throughout he consistently refers to the soul as only part of the human person. And so I don't think that his views on this have changed.

¹¹ See Eric T. OLSON, "A Compound of Two Substances," in *Soul, Body and Survival: Essays on the Metaphysics of Human Persons*, ed. Kevin Corcoran (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 73–88; Eric T. OLSON, *What Are We? A Study in Personal Ontology* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 169.

¹² See Eric T. OLSON, "An Argument for Animalism," in *Personal Identity*, ed. Raymond Martin and John Barresi (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 318–34.

my thinking about going to the store is something over and above my soul's thinking about going to the store. On the contrary, according to Swinburne, my soul's thinking about going to the store *just is* my thinking about going to the store. They are the very same mental event, the very same thought. As Swinburne explains,

the properties of a substance may belong to that substance because they belong to a part of that substance—a table may be flat because its top is flat, a person may be tattooed because their skin is tattooed. And since a person being tattooed makes the same difference to the world as that person's skin being tattooed, these events are the same event. Since a person's body has physical properties (e.g., it weighs 70 kg) and parts (e.g., a heart) independently of its connection to a soul, a person has physical properties because their body has physical properties. Since it is logically possible that at any time any person could cease to have a body, and yet their mental properties could continue to belong to them, it follows that a person has mental properties because their soul has mental properties. (That is not to deny that it may be naturally necessary—that is, a consequence of some law of nature—for a person's soul to be connected to their brain, if they are to have some or any mental properties.) So a person having a physical property is the same event as that person's body having that physical property, and a person having a mental property is the same event as that person's soul having that mental property.¹³

As plausible as this proposal might seem, I am not convinced that it actually solves the problem. Even if Swinburne is right to insist that there is really just one thought here, there would still be two things thinking it. And so it seems that all of the concerns outlined above introduced by having two things think my thoughts will still arise.

On Swinburne's account, then, it seems that there are two things thinking my thoughts: me and my soul. True, my thinking is not distinct from my soul's thinking. But there are still two things thinking my thoughts. And, importantly, each of these two thinkers can be said to think my thoughts in a slightly different way. It seems that my soul thinks my thoughts in the strict, primary sense, and I, the human person, think my thoughts only in a secondary, derivative sense. I think my thoughts only because my soul thinks those thoughts and because I am related to my soul in such a way that its actions are also attributed to me. But, intuitively, it seems wrong to say that I do not think my thoughts in the strict, primary sense, that I in some way inherit my thoughts from some other thing. Surely, if anything thinks my thoughts in the strict and primary sense it is me!¹⁴ And so even if Swinburne can somehow

¹³ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?* 80. See also SWINBURNE, *Mind, Brain, and Free Will*, 235–36.

¹⁴ I think that this point is put rather nicely by Roderick Chisholm: “There is no reason whatever for supposing that I hope for rain only in virtue of the fact that some other thing hopes for rain—some

address the concerns above related to there being too many thinkers of my thoughts, his account would still conflict with what Andrew Bailey calls the “Priority Principle,” according to which “we human persons have mental properties (like hoping for rain) in the primary and nonderivative sense. We think our thoughts in the primary and nonderivative sense.”¹⁵

I see only two ways in which Swinburne might resolve this worry. The first is to identify the person with what he takes to be the primary subject of the person’s thoughts: her soul. (The second is the Thomistic proposal, which I will consider later.) On the first proposal, the person would not be something over and above her soul, something which possesses a soul as its essential part. Rather, the person would just be her soul and so would think her thoughts and possess all of her mental properties in the strict, primary sense. In that case, human persons would no longer be compound substances. We would be simple mental substances contingently related to our bodies in something like the way a driver is related to her car or a sailor is to her ship (if that driver or that sailor were to be, as a matter of accident, bound to that car or ship for the entirety of her career). It seems to me that at least some of the properties and actions that are possessed by, or take place in, my body might still be attributed to me in that case, since I am the primary agent behind that body: my willing that it be so is the ultimate explanation of its behavior. Think, for example, of an onlooker rightly complaining to the pilot of a ship that she has crashed into the dock. But, as I said, this solution would require that Swinburne give up the claim that we are compound substances and so come to identify each of us with our souls.¹⁶

Swinburne’s proposed solution to his problem of too many thinkers also introduces another potential concern for his account. If every (purely) physical property

stand-in that, strictly and philosophically, is not identical with me but happens to be doing duty for me at this particular moment.... If there are thus two things that now hope for rain, the one doing it on its own and the other such that its hoping is done for it by the thing that now happens to constitute it, then I am the former thing and not the latter thing” (Roderick CHISHOLM, *Person and Object: A Metaphysical Study* [London: Open Court, 1976], 104).

¹⁵ Andrew M. BAILEY, “The Priority Principle,” *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 1, no. 1 (2015): 165. Bailey himself identifies Swinburne’s view as one that violates this principle.

¹⁶ And, moreover, it seems to me that there are some very good reasons not to go this route. As Alexander Pruss points out, if I am an immaterial soul, then “my wife has never kissed me—she has only kissed Bob, my body. You cannot touch me you can only touch Bob. Rape seems more like a property crime. Making philosophical sense of the meaning of sexuality is a lost cause: two persons’ having sexual intercourse is nothing but intercourse between the animals associated with each of the persons. Stealing one of my kidneys is a mere property crime—it is not stealing a part of me. These consequences are ethically unacceptable” (Alexander R. PRUSS, “I Was Once a Fetus: That Is Why Abortion Is Wrong,” in *Persons, Moral Worth, and Embryos: A Critical Analysis of Pro-Choice Arguments*, ed. Stephen Napier [New York: Springer, 2011], 24).

is possessed primarily by the person's body and every (purely) mental property is possessed primarily by the person's soul, and every one of my actions is an action performed primarily by either by body or my soul (or partly by my body and partly by my soul), then it looks like the human person does not really do anything that is not already done by her parts. It seems that there is nothing true about the human person that is not already true of her body or her soul. To put it in Swinburne's terms, the human person herself does not seem to make any difference to the world. Everything about the human person can be entirely accounted for by her soul and her body. It is unclear, then, why we should think that there is anything like a composite person there at all. That there exists some composite whole over and above its parts is usually justified by pointing to some emergent property or some non-redundant causal power present in the whole which is not merely a function of the properties and causal powers of its parts.¹⁷ But in the case of Swinburne's human persons, it looks like there are neither emergent properties nor non-redundant causal powers, which seems to take away any good reason we could have for thinking that there are human persons over and above the two substances that compose them. But if we have no good reason to think that there are persons in addition to souls and bodies, then it seems that we have no good reason to think that we exist. And that seems like a pretty serious concern for Swinburne's view.

That Swinburne's composite persons are in a precarious ontological position can also be demonstrated by looking at how he understands the relationship between the body and the soul. On Swinburne's account, the body and the soul are independent substances, capable of existing and acting apart from one another. Neither the body nor the soul depends for its existence or its identity on the other. The body can and does exist both prior to the introduction of the soul and after its departure.¹⁸ And the soul can and does exist after its separation from the body. There is a sense in which the soul owes its initial existence to certain events that occur in the body. The soul is said to emerge at a particular point in the human organism's development.¹⁹ But there is no continuing existential dependence of the soul on that particular body or on any body at all. What, then, is the relationship between these two independent but contingently related substances?

¹⁷ See, for example, Peter van INWAGEN, *Material Beings* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990) and Trenton MERRICKS, *Objects and Persons* (Oxford: OUP, 2003).

¹⁸ On Swinburne's account, the human soul does not emerge from the developing human organism until approximately seven months after conception, and the human soul departs from that organism at the permanent cessation of all higher brain activity (so-called "higher brain death," which in many cases can precede the death of the organism) (see SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?*, 144–45, 152–56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 145.

It seems that the relationship between the body and the soul is entirely a matter of the particular causal relations that they bear to one another. The body is the physical substance upon which the soul exercises certain of its own causal powers and the soul is the mental substance upon which the body exercises certain of its own causal powers. But if that is all that there is to the relationship between the soul and the body, we ought to wonder whether that is enough to say that the two compose something altogether new when they are joined to one another, something over and above each of the parts. The relationship between the body and the soul seems to me to be little more than the relationship between a person and her clothes or a driver and her car (if the person were to be, as a matter of accident, bound to some particular outfit or some particular car for a long stretch of time). But it seems implausible to suggest that when a person gets dressed in the morning that some new substance comes into existence composed of both the person and her clothes. Likewise, when a person gets into her car, there arises no new substance of which both are now parts. As I pointed out above, there are no emergent properties or non-redundant causal powers that arise when the body and soul come together to compose a human person. And so what is it about the relationship between the body and the soul that causes them to give rise to something over and above themselves, something composed of both?

The underlying worry here is that once the body and the soul are recognized as independent substances, it is hard to see how they could come to compose anything larger than themselves. Or if they do compose something larger than themselves, it seems that the only sort of thing that they could jointly compose would be a mere collection of things, a mere aggregate, some wholly derivative composite entity the properties and actions of which can be accounted for solely in terms of the properties and actions of its parts.²⁰ Swinburne does say that substances can include “collections of objects,”²¹ but surely not all collections of objects count as substances. And so which collections do count as compound substances and which do not? And what is it about the way in which the body and the soul are related to one another that qualifies the resulting human person as one of the collections that do so count? Importantly, even if we could give an account of the sort of collection that a human person is which might justify the existence of such a composite, it still seems highly implausible to regard each of us as mere collections. I seem to be something more

²⁰ Christopher M. Brown makes a similar point in his critique of Swinburne’s view in “Some Advantages for a Thomistic Solution to the Problem of Personal Identity beyond Death,” in *Paradise Understood: New Philosophical Essays about Heaven*, ed. T. Ryan Byerly and Eric J. Silverman (Oxford: OUP, 2017): 232–33.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

unified than that. It seems to me like I ought to be something fundamental, something non-derivative with my own emergent properties and non-redundant causal powers. And it is not clear to me that Swinburne's account can preserve that.

AQUINAS'S HYLOMORPHIC DUALISM

On Aquinas's theory of the human person, we are rational, sentient, living, corporeal substances: rational animals.²² According to Aquinas's hylomorphic ontology of the natural world, all material substances are essentially composed of both matter and form. And, following Aristotle, Aquinas refers to the forms of living material substances as 'souls'. As rational, sentient, living, corporeal substances, then, each of us is composed of both matter (a body) and form (a rational soul). As Swinburne points out in his discussion of Aquinas's theory of the human person at the end of Chapter Four, Aquinas holds that the rational soul of a human person is unique among forms and among souls in that it is capable of surviving the death of the body of which it is the form and soul.²³ But as Swinburne also points out, according to Aquinas, the separated soul does not survive in that case as a complete substance.²⁴ According to Aquinas, neither the soul nor the body are themselves substances.²⁵

²² The central text for Aquinas's theory of the human person is his "Treatise on Human Nature" from his *Summa theologiae* (See Thomas AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 75–76). For some helpful overviews of the main elements of this theory, see, for example, Robert PASNAU, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002); STUMP, *Aquinas*, chap. 6; LEFTOW, "Soul, Mind and Brain"; and Jason T. EBERL, *The Nature of Human Persons*, chap. 2. Hereafter, all references to the works of Aquinas are to the Latin versions of the texts available at <http://www.corpusthomicum.org/iopera.html>. All English translations are mine, though I have also made use of the standard English translations of these texts in preparing my own.

²³ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?*, 81–82. See AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 75 a. 2 co. for Aquinas's defense of this claim.

²⁴ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?*, 82. See AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 75 a. 4 ad 2.

²⁵ As he explains in his *Summa contra gentiles*, "body and soul are not two actually existing substances. Rather, the two of them together compose one actually existing substance" (see AQUINAS, *SCG*, lib. 2 cap. 69 n. 2). Aquinas says that the rational soul meets some of the conditions for substancehood (it is a subsistent thing, for example, capable of surviving on its own after having been separated from the body) and so counts as a substance in that sense. But it fails to meet the conditions for complete substancehood, and so, unlike the human person of which it is a part, it fails to count as a complete substance or supposit (see, for example, AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 75 a. 2 ad 1 and AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 75 a. 4 ad 2). For a helpful overview of the various senses in which the soul can and cannot be considered an individual substance or supposit according to Aquinas, see Daniel DE HAAN and Brandon DAHM, "Thomas Aquinas on Separated Souls as Incomplete Human Persons," *The Thomist* 83, no. 4 (2019): 589–637.

The soul and the body are incomplete and complementary parts or principles of the single substance that is the human person. As Aquinas explains in his *On the Principles of Nature*, the matter or body is that which can be made into a certain sort of thing, the form or soul is that by which the matter is made into a certain sort of thing, and it is only the substance that they compose, the human person, which is a certain sort of thing.²⁶

Swinburne interprets Aquinas as holding that while the rational soul is capable of surviving the death of the body, the human person is not, since the human person is essentially composed of both body and soul.²⁷ Only when the rational soul is later reunited with its body does the human person begin to exist once more. Now, this certainly is one reading of Aquinas, and there is much that can be said in favor of it,²⁸ but it is not the only possible reading of Aquinas's texts on this issue. There are contemporary interpreters of Aquinas who argue that on Aquinas's view, while the human person is essentially composed of both body and soul, this is to be understood normatively: not that human persons are necessarily composed of both body and soul but that they are normally and in their complete, natural state composed of both.²⁹ This opens up the possibility that, on Aquinas's view, human persons might be said to survive the loss of their bodies in an incomplete, unnatural state as composed solely of their rational soul. On this reading of Aquinas, which has come to be known as the "survivalist" position (in contrast to the "corruptionist" reading that Swinburne advocates), Swinburne and Aquinas seem to disagree on even less than we might have thought. Both would hold that a person is composed of both body

²⁶ See, for example, AQUINAS, *DPN*, cap. 1.

²⁷ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?* 82.

²⁸ Other proponents of this interpretation include Robert PASNAU (*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 387–89), Patrick TONER ("Personhood and Death in St. Thomas Aquinas," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 26, no. 2 [2009]: 121–38; "St. Thomas Aquinas on Death and the Separated Soul," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 91, no. 4 [2010]: 587–99; and "On Hylemorphism and Personal Identity," *European Journal of Philosophy* 19, no. 3 [2011]: 454–73); and Turner C. NEVITT ("Aquinas on the Death of Christ: A New Argument for Corruptionism," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 90, no. 1 [2016], 77–99; and "Survivalism vs. Corruptionism: Whose Nature? Which Personality?" *Quaestiones Disputatae* 10, no. 2 [2020]: 127–44).

²⁹ Proponents of this interpretation include Eleonore STUMP (see her *Aquinas*, 51–54, as well as her "Resurrection, Reassembly, and Reconstitution: Aquinas on the Soul," in *The Human Soul: Do We Need Dualism?* ed. Bruno Niederberger and Edmund Runggaldier [Frankfurt: Ontos, 2006], 151–71; and her "Resurrection and the Separated Soul," in *The Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, ed. Brian Davies and Eleonore Stump [Oxford: OUP, 2012], 458–66); Jason EBERL (see his *The Nature of Human Persons*, chap. 7); Christopher M. BROWN (*Aquinas and the Ship of Theseus* [New York: Continuum, 2005], 78–79; "Souls, Ships and Substance: A Response to Toner," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 81, no. 4 [2007], 655–68; and "Some Advantages for a Thomistic Solution"); and Jeffrey E. BROWER (*Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World* [Oxford: OUP, 2014], chap. 13).

and soul but that the person could survive the loss of her body as composed solely of her soul. But this apparent rapprochement between Swinburne and Aquinas masks a deeper source of disagreement. And I think that this deeper source of disagreement is relevant to the problems for Swinburne's account that I introduced above. According to Aquinas, neither the soul nor the body are themselves substances. The soul and the body are incomplete and complementary parts or principles of the single substance that is the human person. Swinburne suggests that Aquinas's rejection of the substancehood of the soul is merely a terminological difference between their two accounts.³⁰ But I think that it is much more than that. For, according to Aquinas, it is only substances which can be said to act in the strict, primary sense. Substances are the pushers and pullers of the world, the primary causal agents and the ultimate subjects of predication. External instruments or artifacts can be said to act but only in the sense that some substance or other acts through or by means of them. Parts of substances can also be said to act but once again only in the sense that the substance of which they are parts acts in, through, or by means of them.³¹ And this idea has some clear intuitive pull. When I kick the door with my foot it is not really my foot that kicks the door. I kick the door in, through, or by means of my foot. Feet don't kick doors. People do. Aquinas extends this same theory of agency to those actions performed in, through, or by means of my soul. When I think about going to the store, for example, I think about going to the store in the strict, primary sense, and my soul thinks about going to the store in the secondary, derivative sense that I think in, through, or means of my soul. In a commonly cited passage, Aquinas explains that

neither the eye nor the hand can be said to subsist through itself; nor can either for that reason be said to operate through itself. Hence, the operation of the parts is attributed to the whole through each part. For we say that a human being sees with the eye, and feels with the hand, and not in the same sense as when we say that what is hot gives heat by its heat. For heat, strictly speaking, does not give heat. We may therefore say that the soul understands, as the eye sees, but it is more correct to say that a human being understands through the soul.³²

³⁰ SWINBURNE, *Are We Bodies or Souls?*, 80.

³¹ "The action of anything composed of matter and form belongs not to the form alone, nor to the matter alone, but to the composite. For to act belongs to that which exists, and existence belongs to the composite through its form, so that the composite also acts through its form" (AQUINAS, *SCG*, lib. 2 cap. 50 n. 4) (see also AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 77 a. 1 ad 3, and AQUINAS, *STh*, III q. 2 a. 3 co. for similar passages).

³² AQUINAS, *STh*, I q. 75 a. 2 ad 2 (see also AQUINAS, *DA*, lib. 1 l. 10 n. 152, and AQUINAS, *QDSC*, q. 1 a. 2 ad 2 for similar passages). For a much deeper analysis of why it is the human person and not her soul that thinks in the primary sense, see Kendall A. FISHER, "St. Thomas Aquinas and the Too Many Thinkers Problem," *Quaestiones Disputatae* 10, no. 2 (2020): 106–24.

One might wonder at this point whether Swinburne can also utilize similar locutions to explain the relationship between a person and her soul. No doubt he can speak of the person's actions this way, as performed in, through, or by means of her parts (including those actions performed in, through, or by means of her soul), but notice that, on Swinburne's account, the order of explanation is reversed. For Swinburne, I think because my soul thinks, whereas on Aquinas's account there is a sense in which my soul thinks because I think. And so Aquinas's denial of the substancehood of the soul is not a mere terminological difference. It changes the way that we understand how properties and actions are attributed to the human person. According to Aquinas, because only substances are agents in the strict, primary sense, and because the rational soul, as part of a larger substance, fails to qualify as a substance in the proper sense, all of the actions performed in, through, or by means of the soul are attributed primarily and in the first place to the human person whose soul it is.

If the survivalist interpretation of Aquinas is correct, this applies even in the case of the separated soul.³³ According to the survivalist interpretation, human persons can survive the loss of their bodies, though doing so would put them in an incomplete, unnatural state. Like Swinburne, proponents of this interpretation would deny that a human person ever was, is, or will be identical to her soul. Upon the loss of her body, the person would come to be composed of, but not identical to, her soul. And so after the death of the body, both the soul and the human person would survive (the soul as the sole constituent of the surviving human person). In such case, Aquinas might say that even in a disembodied state, it is the human person, not her soul, which acts. Any actions which are possible in such a state would be actions that the human person performs in, through, or by means of just her soul.

Aquinas's rejection of the substancehood of the soul also allows him to resolve the last major concern that I raised for Swinburne's account. Earlier I argued that because, on Swinburne's account, the body and the soul are independent substances, it is difficult to see how their interactions with one another could be enough to say that there is some further substance composed of both. Once again, on Aquinas's account, neither the soul nor the body are substances. They are parts or principles of a substance. And so the human person on this account is not a collection or aggregate of two independent substances contingently related to one another through some particular causal relations. The human person is a single substance essentially composed of two incomplete parts or principles. And it is not the particular causal relations that they bear to one another that unite body and soul. Body and soul do not act on one another as two bodies do. As we've seen, there is a sense in which body

³³ As Brown rightfully points out in "Some Advantages for a Thomistic Solution" at p. 252.

and soul do not act at all. The person acts in, through, or by means of her soul or her body or particular parts of her body. Body and soul are instead united to one another by their internal complementarity as matter and form. As the form of the body, the rational soul is the actuality of the potency found in the matter to be made into a certain sort of thing.³⁴ On this account, a living human body is a body already enformed and so a person's body depends for its existence and its identity on the particular soul by which it is enformed.³⁵ A human person's body in that sense is not an independent substance. It cannot exist or act without the particular soul that enforms it. All of this is just to emphasize the robust unity that is present between the soul and the body on Aquinas's account. The body and the soul are not two independent substances capable of existing and acting apart from one another. And the human person is not a compound, collection, or aggregate of two substances which arises from their mutual interaction. Rather, body and soul are two incomplete yet complementary parts or principles of a single substance, a human person, which arises from their union as from the union of matter and form and acts in, through, or by means of the parts of which it is composed. In this way, I think that Aquinas's account better preserves the unity, fundamentality, and irreducible agency of the human person.

CONCLUSION

There are, then, a significant amount of similarities between Swinburne's Cartesian substance dualism and Thomistic hylomorphism. Both theories hold that human persons are composed of both body and soul and both theories hold that the human soul is capable of surviving the death of the body. On the survivalist interpretation of Aquinas, both theories even hold that the human person survives the death of the body as composed solely of her soul. But as I have tried to show here, there are also deeper underlying disagreements between Swinburne and Aquinas concerning the nature of substances, the mechanics of human agency, and the relationship between

³⁴ See, again, AQUINAS, *DPN*, cap. 1.

³⁵ As Aquinas explains in his *Disputed Questions on the Soul*, for example: "The soul is that which gives life to the body. Moreover, to live is to be for living things. Consequently, the soul is that which gives the human body its actual existence. Now a form is the kind of thing that does this. Therefore, the human soul is the form of the body. But if the soul were in the body as a sailor is in a ship, it would give neither the body nor its parts their specific nature. The contrary of this is made apparent by the fact that when the soul leaves the body, the body's individual parts retain their original names only in an equivocal sense. For the eye of a dead human being, like the eye of a portrait or that of a statue, is called an eye equivocally. And similarly for the other parts of the body" (AQUINAS, *QDA*, a. 1 co.) (see also AQUINAS, *DA*, lib. 2 l. 2 n. 239, and AQUINAS, *QDSC*, q. 1 a. 2 co. for similar passages).

body and soul. And these differences make a difference. As I have also tried to show here, the distinctive claims of Thomistic hylomorphism allow it to successfully avoid some key concerns for Swinburne's Cartesian brand of substance dualism. I submit, then, that the differences between Swinburne and Aquinas are not just terminological. They are substantial.

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The Latin text available on: www.corpusthomisticum.org/iopera.html

<i>DPN</i>	<i>De principiis naturae</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>In libros de anima expositio</i>
<i>QDA</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de anima</i>
<i>QDSC</i>	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de spiritualibus creaturis</i>
<i>SCG</i>	<i>Summa contra Gentiles</i>
<i>STh</i>	<i>Summa theologiae</i>

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NOT JUST A TERMINOLOGICAL DIFFERENCE:
 CARTESIAN SUBSTANCE DUALISM VS THOMISTIC HYLOMORPHISM

S u m m a r y

In *Are We Bodies or Souls?* Richard Swinburne presents an updated formulation and defense of his dualist theory of the human person. On this theory, human persons are compound substances, composed of both bodies and souls. The soul is the only essential component of the human person, however, and so each of us could, in principle, continue to exist without our bodies, composed of nothing more than our souls. As Swinburne himself points out, his theory of the human person shares many similarities with the hylomorphic theory of the human person espoused by Thomas Aquinas. Swinburne suggests at one point that the differences between the two theories are "almost entirely terminological," pertaining chiefly to how each understands the term 'substance'. In this essay, I aim to show that the differences between Swinburne's Cartesian substance dualism and Thomistic hylomorphism are much more significant than that. I argue, moreover, that the distinctive claims of Thomistic hylomorphism allow it to successfully avoid some key concerns for Swinburne's view.

Keywords: substance dualism; hylomorphism; Swinburne; Aquinas.