

Thomistic Hylomorphism and Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Religion

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Abstract

Contemporary philosophers of mind tend to accept either some version of dualism or physicalism when considering the mind–body problem. Likewise, recent philosophers of religion typically assume that we must work within these two categories when considering problems related to the possibility of bodily resurrection. Recently, some philosophers have reintroduced the Thomistic version of hylomorphism. In this article, we will consider the distinctive doctrines of Thomistic hylomorphism and how they can be used to address concerns about both the mind–body problem and the possibility of resurrection. We will see that hylomorphism allows for a novel version of emergent property dualism that is both metaphysically plausible and allows us to recognize the irreducibility of mental states and the possibility of resurrection without ignoring the fact of human embodiment. We will also discuss the currently lively debate among Thomistic hylomorphists who advocate opposed corruptionist and survivalist versions of the afterlife.

1. Introduction

Hylomorphism originated with Aristotle and later became dominant in Western medieval philosophy and theology. Though it was rejected by prominent early modern philosophers, hylomorphism remained constant in the later scholastic tradition (continuing today), and it is enjoying a resurgence of consideration among a vocal minority of analytic philosophers (Oderberg 2007; Koslicki 2010; Jaworski 2011; Fine 1994; Madden 2013; Loux 1978, 2006; Rea 2011; Clarke 2001; Toner 2011; Feser 2005; Johnston 2006). We will discuss how the Thomistic version of hylomorphism can address problems in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of religion; specifically, the apparent irreducibility of mental states and the possibility of bodily resurrection. After introducing these problems, along with common non-hylomorphic proposals for solving them, in Section 1, we will consider the two cornerstone doctrines of Thomistic hylomorphism in Section 2. In Section 3, we will discuss how Thomistic hylomorphism can be used to account for mental states, and in Section 4, we do the same regarding to the possibility of resurrection.

2. *The Intersection of the Problems of the Philosophy of Mind and the Philosophy of Religion*

2.1. THE IRREDUCIBILITY OF MENTAL STATES

The central problem of contemporary philosophy of mind is the apparent resistance of mental states to physical reduction. Consider Cormac's thinking that "This tortoise is cold-blooded." There are three definitively mental aspects of Cormac's thought: (a) There is a *qualitative aspect*, inasmuch as it involves a feeling or experience of images, shapes, etc.; (b) Cormac's thought has an *intentional aspect*, because it is about or refers to non-mental objects; and (c) Cormac's thought has an *intelligible aspect* inasmuch as it involves universal

concepts that allow him to draw logically valid inferences beyond what he is presented directly by the qualitative and intentional aspects, for example, given a conceptual understanding of *tortoise*, Cormac could infer from his current thought that “Some reptiles are cold-blooded.”

The most common approach to mental states among contemporary philosophers of mind is to adopt one of the many variations of *physicalism*. Of course physicalism comes in many varieties, but any physicalist will say at least this much (and in some cases something much stronger): When Cormac has a token of a certain thought, it is a token of a neurophysiological state, that is, Cormac’s thought is, in some sense, a brain state. The problem for the physicalist is that it seems that neurophysiological states do not have the relevant qualitative, intentional, and intelligible aspects to be identified (either as types or tokens) with mental states. Of course, there are very sophisticated attempts by physicalists to avert these worries, but many recent philosophers of mind have despaired that any of these physicalist projects can ever be entirely successful (Kim 2011 and Searle 1992).

One way to accommodate the apparent irreducibility of mental states to physical states is to adopt a version of *dualism*. Substance dualists claim that mental states are had by non-physical substances (souls or minds) closely associated with bodies, whereas property dualists claim that bearers of mental states can be thoroughgoing physical substances possessing non-physical properties. Dualism raises worries about how non-physical substances or properties could interact with physical substances, and it is not easily squared with the undeniable fact that our mental states are dependent on our neurophysiology, which is a problem in particular for the substance dualist. That is not to say that these problems cannot be addressed, but they do pose significant difficulties to be overcome by the dualist (Lowe 2008 and Taliaferro 1994). Some recent dualists have dealt with these concerns by adopting versions of *emergentism*: they argue that mental properties/substances, though they are not physically reducible, are the products of neurophysiological systems (O’Connor 2000; Searle 1992; Hasker 1999, 2005, 2010; Zimmerman 2011; Unger 2006; Bedau and Humphreys 2008). Just as liquidity or solidity can emerge from and exert *top-down* causation on properly arranged, non-liquid/non-solid particles, likewise mental states/substances can emerge from and interact with properly structured physical elements. The problem for emergence doctrines is that, whereas we can readily understand why and even model how liquidity and solidity emerge from non-liquid or non-solid foundations, no such explanation or model for mental states as yet seems even conceivable, that is, there is nothing about neurons or the parts of neurons that suggests how and why these are the sorts of things from which mental states emerge. Emergent substance/property dualism can then take on the appearance of an appeal to a brute fact, and not a terribly plausible philosophical explanation (Strawson 2008). Some philosophers have attempted to avoid this problem by positing an intrinsic disposition for consciousness (or even proto-consciousness) as a fundamental feature of physical particles, but that too has the air of an ad hoc solution when couched in a broader physicalist metaphysic (Strawson 2008; Chalmers 1997; Nagel 1989, 2012; and Moreland 2009).

2.2. RESURRECTION AND THE INTERIM STATE

The primary point of overlap between the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of religion arises when we consider that the major strands of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam conceive of the afterlife in terms of the resurrection of the body. The promise of resurrection is not satisfied if it is a close facsimile of me, though strictly not me, who is reanimated at the end of time, and it is *prima facie* reasonable to suppose that I will go out of existence on the

occasion of my death. Resurrection then seems to imply that intermittent or *gappy* existence is possible (something can go out of existence for a span of time following which that very same thing can be brought back into existence), and this is a notion that many metaphysicians over the years have found to be strange.

Some philosophers have sought to diffuse these worries by arguing that so-called gappy existence is not really metaphysically otiose (Merricks 1999, 270; and Merricks 2001), but we should expect that the theist who defends the resurrection of the body can provide us with some plausible account of the relation between the pre- and post-resurrection body sufficient to show either that its existence is not, despite appearances to the contrary, at all gappy or that there is some principle of continuity that makes the gap a bit easier to swallow. At this point, ones broader views in the philosophy of mind are likely to make a difference. Substance dualists, emergent or otherwise, might have a much easier time making sense of the resurrection, because they can argue that the human soul, as a substantial individual, can exist in an interim state post-mortem but pre-resurrection (Hasker 1999). There then would be something, the soul, that enjoys gapless existence throughout the entire death-interim state-resurrection process. The dualist solution, however, does not contribute to our understanding of how it is possible for the deceased to get the same body back following the resurrection. Traditionally, appeals have been made to the possibility of God reassembling sufficiently many particles taken from the pre-mortem body to form the post-resurrection body, but this view raises its own thorny problems: Just how many particles must be reassembled? What about cases of bodies that were composed by the same particles? (Merricks 2001) More recently, some dualists (and some theists sympathetic to physicalism about human persons) have been so moved by worries about intermittent existence as to deny that the pre-mortem and post-resurrection bodies are in fact identical, which, however, seems to be contrary to the mainstream of theological reflection on these matter (Cooper 1989; and Reichenbach 1978).

Physicalists, however, are not entirely without resources for dealing with these problems. Since physicalists claim that human beings are entirely physical substances and physical substances only have physical components, then they are likely either to argue that gappy existence is not so bad (Merricks 1999 and 2001) or come up with some conception of the resurrection that does not involve intermittent existence. Along the lines of the latter, some philosophers have proposed that God might switch the deceased body for a qualitatively indiscernible doppelgänger to be left rotting in the grave while preserving the original until the general resurrection (van Inwagen 1978; Hershenov 2003) or that a body organized so as to constitute a subject with sufficient psychological continuity with the formally deceased is all that is needed to bring back the same person (Baker 2001). Others have argued that it is metaphysically possible that the resurrection occurs immediately upon the death of the individual or simply within God's power to make the pre- and post-resurrection bodies identical by a special miraculous act (Corcoran 2001, 2005).

3. What is Hylomorphism?

3.1. MATERIAL SUBSTANCES ARE COMPOUNDS OF PRIME MATTER AND FORM¹

Material substances are subject to changes in attributes. If such events are to be changes and not wholesale replacements, then something must persist throughout the change. Hylomorphists call that which persists through a change *matter*. Of course there must also be something new that comes to be as a result of the change, what hylomorphists call *form*. The matter of a change must be a principle of potential, that is, if the matter that became

F were not potentially F , the change would be impossible. Likewise, the form must be a principle of actuality, that is, it must be such that it can account for something actually coming to be in a certain way. Matter and form are then functional concepts; the matter of a change is *whatever* principle accounts for the potential for that change, whereas form is *whatever* principle accounts for the actuality of the change (Brower 2012).

Determining the matter and form involved in changes of accidental properties, or *accidental changes*, is not terribly difficult: Fluffy persists through and has the potential to undergo the change of becoming calico, so in this case Fluffy is the matter. The form in this case is a trope of calico (Leftow 2003). *Substantial change*, or change in kind, is more difficult. The persistence conditions of material substances are determined by their kinds, so substantial changes involve the generation (coming to be) or corruption (ceasing to be) of a material substance. For example, with the union of sperm and ovum, we have the generation of a new member of the substantial kind cat, and if Fluffy were to have an unfortunate encounter with a truck causing her to forfeit her *catness*, she would be altogether corrupted by the process. Neither the sperm nor the ovum can be the matter of Fluffy's generation, because *they* have no potential to be a cat; indeed they are corrupted by the process. Likewise, Fluffy is not the matter of her corruption, because *she* has no potential to become the several pounds of former cat parts that result – she is destroyed by the corruption. There is a broad sense in which the sperm and ovum and Fluffy have the potential to become a cat and become a cat corpse, respectively, as they are composed of the stuff that can undergo such a change. That, however, is the potency of their components, not the potency of the sperm and ovum and Fluffy (Lee 2011, 22–29; George and Lee 2008, 133–140; Olsen 2007, 86; Moreland and Rae 2000, 203–204). What is needed then is a principle of potential for substantial change whose persistence conditions are not determined by any substantial kind. In other words, if we are to maintain the reality of substantial change, we must posit a principle of potential that is itself not actually a member of any substantial kind, *prime matter* (Aquinas 1998; Oderberg 2007, 71–76). A *substantial form* is then whatever accounts for the actuality of something as a member of a substantial kind. A material substance, as something subject to generation and corruption, is ultimately a compound of prime matter and substantial form.

Aristotle calls the substantial form of a living thing its *soul* (Aristotle *On the Soul* in Aristotle 1984 Vol. I; Aquinas 1954; and Reichmann 2000). Care is needed with this talk of souls, because for the most part hylomorphists have something fairly pedestrian in mind. A soul is only as ontologically robust as needed for it to play its role as the kind-making principle for a living thing; a soul could merely be something as metaphysically innocuous as a structure or organization of matter, if that is all that is necessary to account for the essential attributes of a certain kind of organism. Prime matter and substantial form (or the soul in the case of living substances) are *co-dependent*; prime matter is not *actually* anything without being in composition with a substantial form, and in all but one exceptional case (which we will discuss below), substantial forms are inseparable from prime matter. Fluffy is a prime matter-cat soul compound, not just a cat soul or simply matter.²

3.2. MATERIAL SUBSTANCES ARE ONTOLOGICALLY PRIOR TO THEIR PARTS³

Suppose we accept the standard, atomistic–mechanistic account of material objects popular among contemporary philosophers (especially physicalists).⁴ On this view, a complex material object just is a collection of the ultimate physical particles, for example, quarks, into which it can be divided. Under this supposition, we are thereby tempted to think that Fluffy is just the collection of parts into which she can ultimately be divided. Call that collection of parts that compose the entirety of Fluffy, C^1 . Call the collection of parts that compose all of

Fluffy except her tail C^2 . If something *just is* a collection of parts or set of elements, then its identity is determined by the membership of that collection or set, for example, the collection of the Eiffel Tower, Mount Rushmore, and the car that won the 2012 Indy 500 is not identical to the collection of the Eiffel Tower and the car that won the 2012 Indy 500. Notice that C^1 and C^2 are distinct collections of ultimate particles, and they are both seemingly sufficient to compose cats. Thus, if complex material substances just are their parts, we would have to say that two numerically distinct cats occupy overlapping regions within the space outlining Fluffy. There is also a collection of parts, C^3 , that contains all the parts the compose Fluffy except her left ear, and these parts are likewise sufficient to compose a third cat. It should be apparent that we will have another distinct overlapping cat for every division of Fluffy into collections of parts sufficient to compose a cat, that is, there are billions of cats occupying overlapping regions within the space outlining Fluffy.⁵ Of course, one might want to resist this odd conclusion by arguing that there is some special relation, for example, physical contact, causal interaction, shared history, among Fluffy's ultimate parts such that none of her various sub-collections compose distinct cats, but all such accounts are highly controversial and difficult to square with the mechanistic account of Fluffy as just a collection of ultimate physical parts (Van Inwagen 1990 and Unger 2006).

Whatever the fate of other attempts to avoid this gratuitous proliferation of cats may be, hylomorphists avoid this problem by arguing that the parts of a material substance are not *substantially present* within the composition. That is, Fluffy's paw, tail, heart, carbon atoms, quarks, etc. are not present in her composition as *individual substances* (Aquinas 1954 Pt. 1, Q. 76, A. 4 and Aquinas 1998). These parts of Fluffy are retrievably, potentially, virtually, or nominally present in Fluffy's composition. Strictly speaking, there are no carbon atoms in Fluffy *actually as material substances*, but she subsumes the powers of such substances, and we could generate actual individuals of this kind by dividing Fluffy, for example, cutting small enough parts from Fluffy might produce individually existing carbon atoms. Since the ultimate parts of a complex substance are not present as distinct individuals within the compound, they do not compose distinct sub-collections while in such composition. That is, the ultimate particles composing Fluffy do not exist through themselves (when composing Fluffy), but only as powers or capacities assumed by Fluffy, and they therefore do not simultaneously compose cats distinct from Fluffy. Before being scandalized by this proposal, note that the hylomorphist does not deny that Fluffy is composed of things like carbon atoms. Rather, the hylomorphist only contends that Fluffy's parts, when they compose her, exist in a lesser, non-substantial way, whereas Fluffy exists substantially. The manner in which subatomic particles exist when composing macrophysical objects makes no difference for our empirical concerns, and therefore the ontological priority of material substances with respect to their parts is a metaphysical, not a scientific, consideration. The fact that giving substances priority over their parts circumvents the problem of too many cats, among others, does much then to recommend the hylomorphic view (Toner 2007, 2008; Brown 2005, 2007; Clarke 2001; Nichols 1996; Connell 1988; and Stork 2008).

At this point, we should be careful to avoid saddling the hylomorphist with the claim that a living material substance is a body-soul compound (e.g., Hudson 2007; Olsen 2007). On the one hand, if what is meant by *body* is a quantity of *non-substantially present* material constituents existing through a certain substantial form, then this formula indeed captures what the hylomorphist is up to. On the other hand, if by *body* we mean an actual organism or even an aggregate of actually existing substances, then we are dealing with a significant distortion of the hylomorphic view. An organism does not enter into a composition with a soul, but rather an organism is a product of the compound of material parts (including all the various levels of composition, e.g., organs, molecules, ultimate particles, and ultimately

prime matter) with a soul; and these material parts do not exist substantially within the resulting compound. Fluffy's organism is not an otherwise independent entity that compounds with Fluffy's soul, but the product of such a composition (Kenny 1993, 28). In short, hylomorphic compounds are not couplings of previously existing substantial individuals, a soul and an organism, but substantial individuals with a soul and various material constituents as non-substantial components.

Certainly, there is a sense in which the organism or *organic body* is, as Aquinas approvingly quotes Aristotle, "that which has life potentially" along with the other characteristic capacities of a living substance of a certain kind (Aquinas 1954, Pt. 1, Q. 76, A. 4).⁶ That is, the matter composing Fluffy must be the sort of material that can compose a cat; we cannot make cats from iron or whipped cream. That fact, however, does not entail that the substantial form compounds with a distinct substantial entity (an organism or organic body), because, as Aquinas points out, it is only "by the soul" that the matter "is a body, and is organic, and has life potentially" (Aquinas 1954, Pt. 1, Q. 76, A. 4). In other words, it is only by the substantial form (soul) that the material constituents of a cat have the potency for composing a cat whilst they are components of such a composition, and this is a consequence of the general hylomorphic doctrine that the parts of a complex substance have their actuality only through the substantial form of the substance. Remember, the material parts of a complex substance survive the process of composition only virtually and not as actual substances. No doubt, Fluffy can only be composed of cat-type stuff, but Fluffy's components, when composing her, exist as cat-type stuff only through Fluffy's soul.

4. Thomistic Hylomorphism and Mental States

4.1. THE QUALITATIVE AND INTENTIONAL ASPECTS OF MENTAL STATES

Hylomorphists influenced by Saint Thomas Aquinas in particular defend a similitude doctrine regarding the qualitative and intentional aspects of psychological states (Haldane 1994, 1999a, 1999b; Sellars 1991a; Brower and Brower-Toland 2008). For example, by having a red sensation, Fluffy the cat becomes similar to the red trope in the object of his awareness, and having a perception of or about a certain object involves Fluffy's becoming somehow like that object. Once again, a form is the product of a change, so the new way of being for a psychological subject that comes to have a mental state is a formal similitude (or on some renderings a *formal identity*) between the sense faculty (presumably a component of the central nervous system) of the organism and the object of its perception. When Fluffy has a red sensation, her sense faculty becomes red isomorphically with the a of red in the object of her sensation, that is, something in Fluffy is actualized as red by sharing a red form with the object. Likewise, when Fluffy perceives a particular ball, her sense faculty shares a form with the object (Aquinas 1947, Pt. I, Q. 78, A. 3). It would be absurd to say that Fluffy becomes visibly red when she has a red sensation (surely there need be nothing within Fluffy we could see as red like an apple when she sees the apple) or that her perception of a ball causes a little tangible ball to exist somewhere in her head. Thus, Fluffy's sense faculty must become red or a ball in some immaterial or non-physical manner (Aquinas 1952, Pt. I, Q 21, A. 3). Notice that the *immaterial* or *spiritual* nature of a sensed object in the sense faculty is not in any way separable from that faculty (Kenny 1993, 34; Pasnau 1997). Hylomorphists have thus argued that all objects of sense then have a possibility for a dual existence, that is, a natural way of being as substantial individuals and a psychological manner of being as the object of mental states (Brower and Brower-Toland 2008; and Peifer 1952).

Hylomorphists are then fairly characterized as property dualists, but the fact that they identify material substances with prime matter–substantial form compounds likewise shows that their position is in no way akin to substance dualism (Eberl 2010), and indeed they might even be characterized as naturalists about the qualitative and intentional aspects of mental states (Haldane 1999b). Many Thomistic hylomorphists will be quick to point out that they do not claim that psychological subjects have a direct access to their sensations or perceptions, as is typical of dualists. That is, Thomists tend to argue that the direct object of awareness is not, for example, an idea or sensation of the ball, but the ball itself, which is capable of both a physical and mental existence. Such Thomists (though not all) then agree with contemporary philosophers who take mental states as theoretical entities, which though not directly observed; we posit to makes sense of apparently intelligible behavior in the present of certain objects (Sellars 1991a, 1991b; Pouivet 2006). Further, notice that for the hylomorphist, the ability to have these qualitative and intentional mental states is something an organism has in virtue of its neurophysiological machinery; in fact, it is the associated neurological structures themselves that come to have the isomorphic relation with the object of perception. Sensation and intentionality are entirely natural processes that occur once an organism achieves a level of neurophysiological sophistication. Thus, Thomistic hylomorphism is best taken as a variety of emergent property dualism.

We noted earlier, however, worries about other recent emergentist accounts of mental states, because such views have the appearance of being ad hoc or appealing to supposed brute facts. That is, emergentists typically claim that essentially non-conscious entities, ultimately fundamental physical particles, become conscious or at least cause consciousness under certain specific circumstances. Outside of the fact that this supposition would solve a fundamental problem in the philosophy of mind, there is no reason to believe that conscious states are among the potentialities of fundamental physical particles (or physical structures composed by such particles). Notice, however, that there is nothing mysterious or ad hoc in this sense about the hylomorphist's version of emergentism in the context of her broader views regarding the metaphysics of material objects. Certainly, the hylomorphist grants that even conscious organisms are composed of fundamental physical particles, but once again those particles do not exist substantially as components of organisms, but as powers or capacities of that organism. Moreover, like all materials substances, conscious organisms are ultimately composed of prime matter that has the potency for all manners of being to which material substances are susceptible. Thus, the account of material substance that the hylomorphist defends does allow that the matter ultimately composing Fluffy has a natural potency for being red or being a ball, so there is nothing metaphysically suspect about saying that Fluffy, as a material substance, comes to be in a red or ball-like way. It certainly does seem odd to say that the neurons, molecules, atoms, quarks, etc. that compose Fluffy become red or ball-like when she sees the ball, but notice: (a) the constituents of Fluffy do not exist as actual individual substances when composing Fluffy, so it is not as though the hylomorphist claims that fundamental particles, molecules, neurons, etc. *as individual substances* become conscious, but rather that a substance that has subsumed their powers becomes conscious; and (b) all of these material constituents are particular actualizations within Fluffy of a broader potency to be in any physical manner whatsoever. Thus, if one had independent reasons for holding a generally hylomorphic account of material objects, an appeal to emergence as an account of the qualitative and intentional aspects of mental states would enjoy a much greater plausibility. The soul of a conscious organism is then whatever is necessary to actualize an organism with a nervous system that can be the emergent basis for qualitative and intentional states in addition to its other organic capacities.

4.2. THE INTELLIGIBLE ASPECT OF MENTAL STATES

In the case of the qualitative and intentional aspects of thought, the form comes to exist in the psychological faculty as individuated, for example, it is the psychological existence of *this* trope of red or *this* ball. The intelligible aspect of consciousness, however, requires the existence of something universal – it requires that the psychological faculty must be actualized not as this or that tortoise but *tortoiseness* in general distinct from any of its particular instances. No material object has being multiply instantiable as one of its potencies, and no particular physical thing can have a universal effect (Ross 2008, 127). That is, the intelligible aspect of thought is not only immaterial in the sense that involves non-physical properties of physical organs, but further requires that organisms subject to such states have an essential activity that is not strictly carried out by any physical organ.⁷ The soul is the seat of the essential activities of an organism, so if those activities are such that they cannot be accounted for by the activities of any material thing, then the soul itself must not depend on or emerge from any physical thing.⁸ Though the human soul is not a substance (it is not a member of a substantial kind, but a component of a member of a substantial kind), it is *subsistent* in the sense that it can exist on its own.⁹ This is not to say that the intelligible aspect of mental states, or even the generation of organisms with this capacity, is not emergent in some broader sense, that is, the activity of certain physical structures in the central nervous system is still sufficient to *predict* that (without fully *explaining* why) an organism will have such mental states (Leftow 2001, 2010). Moreover, the hylomorphist is immune to the mind–body interaction problems that hamper substance dualism, because the soul and the material constituents of the human organism are not *both* subsistent individuals. The hylomorphist does not believe that there is an organism or body that interacts with the soul. Rather, the soul is the principle of actuality of the organism, and in virtue of this principle the organism is capable of intelligible mental states (Section 2.2).

Some philosophers worry that Thomistic hylomorphism commits the *content fallacy*, by playing on the ambiguity between the intelligible aspect of thought having something non-physical (a universal) as its *content* and its involving a non-physical *entity* (Pasnau 1998, 2002; and Novak 1987). All that is needed, says the objector, is that the thought have universal content, not that it involve a universal entity, and universal content does not imply that the faculty that abstracts such content is in any important sense non-physical or immaterial. In other words, all that is necessary for universal content is that the thought be *about* or *refer* to something immaterial, not that the thought actually *be* immaterial.

We will discuss briefly two avenues of reply open to the Thomist. (a) Certainly, the critic is correct to point out that thinking about something does not require that the subject be like its object in all ways. The Thomist, however, should first point out that, on his or her understanding of the intentional aspect of thought, awareness does require a similarity, even a formal identity, between the intentional state and the relevant aspect of its object. In the case of the intelligible aspect of thought, the relevant aspect of the object is its universal nature; the intelligibility of thought, as the vehicle of valid inferences, requires a similarity of the thought and its objects precisely as universal. In other words, the intelligible aspect of thought does require that the thought involve a universal entity, because intelligible thoughts presuppose a formal identity with the universal nature of their objects. Thus, the Thomist's general understanding of intentionality and the particularities involved in explaining the intelligible aspects of thought are sufficient to show that the Thomist does not commit a content fallacy.

(b) The Thomistic hylomorphist is operating under the assumption of realism, that is, there is an objective ground for the universal content of thoughts. That objective ground, for example, the universal entity *tortoiseness*, must either exist as a universal extra mentally

or in the intellect. If we find the extra mental existence of universals otiose, as do Thomistic hylomorphists, then the sole option is to say that the objective ground of universal content exists *as universal* only in the intellect, which seems to be enough to support the Thomistic thesis that the intelligible aspect of thought involves a separable non-physical process. The Thomist is not claiming, however, that universal content is merely subjective because universals exist only in the intellect. Rather, the claim is that the nature of *tortoiseness* is capable of a two distinct modes of existence: as a universal in the intellect and as a particular when acting as the form of an individual tortoise (Aquinas 1968; Owens 1957).¹⁰

Another worry is that this view trades on an ambiguity in the notion of form. On the one hand, typical examples of forms are abstract entities, for example, shapes, organizations, configurations, etc., but on the other hand, in the case of the human soul, we are asked to entertain the possibility of a form that exists concretely even when there is nothing that it shapes, organizes, or configures (Hasker 1999; Corcoran 2005; and Barnes 2003). Form, however, just is whatever accounts for the actuality of a certain type of change. Thus, the form of a statue is whatever makes the difference between being a lump of clay and being a statue. In this case, the form is a shape, because such an abstract entity accounts for the essential attributes of the statue (if indeed statues have essential attributes). If, however, there are changes that can only be accounted for by a concrete, subsistent entity, then the form in those cases will be a concrete, subsistent entity. The Thomist argues that that just such a concrete, subsistent form is necessary to account for the actuality of a human being. There is no equivocation or ambiguity going on here, but merely an application of a functional concept (Madden 2103).

5. *The Immortality of the Human Organism and the Resurrection*

Traditionally, Thomists have argued that the human soul is not only capable of existing without the human body, but it is likewise naturally immortal; since the soul is the principle of unity of the living organism, it must be intrinsically unified (metaphysically indivisible), and therefore not subject to corruption in any sense (Aquinas 1947, Pt. I, Q. 75, A. 6; Kenny 1993, 129–144). Be that as it may, Thomistic hylomorphists are quick to point out that we, human persons, are essentially animals. Even though our distinct ability to display the intelligible aspect of thought transcends any physical process, the exercise of this capacity presupposes the sensations and images provided by the physically-based sensory faculties as grist for intelligible abstraction. Thus, even distinctively human cognition is something done by an animal, and the afterlife of the human person, with all of her essential functions, presupposes a bodily resurrection (Aquinas 1947, Pt. I, Q. 75, A. 4; George and Lee 2008). It would seem then that the human person is corrupted with the demise of the human organism. The separability of the human soul, however, does much to make sense of the resurrection: the continuity of the antemortem and the post-mortem body could be secured, because they would both be partially composed by the same human soul (Geach 1969, 17–30; Adams 1992; and George and Lee 2008). Moreover, since prime matter has no actual identity of its own, so long as it is my soul that informs a quantity of matter, the result will be my body.

Some hylomorphists have begun to question this *corruptionalist* view of the afterlife. Their motivations include certain readings of Aquinas' texts along with particular concerns about the immediacy of post-mortem rewards and punishments as prescribed by Christian theology (Stump 2003, 51–54 and 2006, and Eberl 2009); worries that the corruptionist commits us to intermittent or gappy existence, because the person (though not the soul) does go out of existence (Hershenov 2003); and the fact that the soul, as the principle of identity for a

human person, would seem to carry with it the identity of the human person both pre- and postmortem (Oderberg 2007, 255–259). Some of these *survivalists* argue that, while the premortem human being is an organism composed of prime matter and a soul, the post-mortem (and preresurrection) human person is an organism constituted by the soul alone (Stump 2006; Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov 2006; Brown 2005, 2007), whereas others argue that human persons are only contingently living animals (Hershenov and Koch-Hershenov 2006, Hershenov 2008). The idea of a compound substance constituted by just one of its former components is counterintuitive, and the notion that we are contingently animals is something many philosophers question (Toner 2007, 2009, 2011; Olsen 2007, 23–47). There are also objections to the survivalist reading Aquinas' texts and speculations addressing the theological worries over corruptionism (Toner 2010a, 2010b).¹¹

Short Biography

James D. Madden's research focuses primarily on the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of religion, and metaphysics. His book, *Mind, Matter, and Nature: A Thomistic Proposal for the Philosophy of Mind* (Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming – 2013) is a critical survey of contemporary philosophy of mind in which he argues that the mind–body problem is a product of a defective approach to the metaphysics of material objects that can best be remedied by a Thomistic version of hylomorphism. He is an Associate Professor of philosophy at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kansas, where he was named Educator of the Year in 2006. Previously he taught at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. He holds a BA from St. Norbert College, an MA from Kent State University, and a PhD from Purdue University.

Notes

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¹ What follows is basically a summary of Aristotle's *Physics*, Bk. I in Aristotle 1984 Vol. I and the *Principles of Nature* in Aquinas 1998.

² For other approaches to the matter–form distinction see Haldane 2010 and Klima 2009.

³ What follows is adapted from *On Generation and Corruption* in Aristotle Vol. I and *On the Mixture of Elements* in Aquinas 1998.

⁴ For a detailed descriptions and criticisms of atomism and mechanism from philosophers who are not particularly sympathetic to hylomorphism, see Unger 2006 and Nagel 2012. Nagel does, however, mention a broad Aristotelianism as one among viable options (though not his preferred approach) one might pursue as a post-mechanistic philosophy of nature (Nagel 2012, 66–68).

⁵ This example is adopted from Geach 1980 in order to introduce what contemporary metaphysicians call the problem of material constitution, about which there is a vast recent literature. My intention is not to introduce a definitive treatment of this problem, but only to motivate the hylomorphic approach. For a good introduction to this area of contemporary metaphysics, see Rea 1996 and Lowe 2002.

⁶ Thanks to an anonymous reviewer from *Philosophy Compass* for pressing this subtle concern.

⁷ Of course nominalists are inclined to deny that intelligibility requires universals concepts, but see Madden 2013 for an argument to the effect that the intelligible aspect of mental states transcends physical processes even without the presupposition of realism.

⁸ The classic scholastic dictum for this point is “Activity follows on being”, see Aquinas 1947, Pt. I, Q. 75, A. 2.

⁹ For St. Thomas' original development of this line of reasoning see Aquinas 1956 Book 2, Ch. 50; Aquinas 1947, Pt. I, Q. 75., A. 2 and Aquinas 1956, Lec. 7. For recent Thomistic arguments see Haldane 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2010; Stump 2003, 200–207; Felt 2005, 61–77; George and Lee 2008, 52–68; Braine 1992, 447–479; Foster 1991; Pannier and Sullivan 2006; Ross 2008; Madden 2013.

¹⁰ See also Haldane 2007 and Klima for a different suggestion as to how a hylomorphist might address this objection.

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