The soul exceeds the proportion of matter.

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THE SOUL EXCEEDS THE PROPORTION OF MATTER

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ABSTRACT

This thesis, using as its focal text St. Thomas Aquinas' treatment in Book II of the Summa Contra Gentiles, is an approach to the problem of the union of the intellectual substance with the body.

The problem, in short, is that the proportion required between matter and form would apparently entail a determination, by the matter of the body, of the soul's receptivity of intelligible forms, to the detriment of the quasi-infinite potency of the intellect. On the other hand, anyone denying that the intellectual soul is the form of the body must explain how the action of understanding is attributed essentially to man.

An initial examination of the teachings of Aristotle serves to acquaint us with the nature of the soul and the consequent difficulties involved. These difficulties are brought into still sharper focus in the philosophy of Averroes who, teaching that the intellect is separate but in continuatio with the body by the intelligible species present in both the intellect and the corporeal phantasms, fails to explain how the action of understanding is predicated essentially of man.

Plato, who held that the soul is united to the body
only as mover to the moved fails in the same respect, and, like Averroes, seems to fall into the error of saying that man is several beings.

St. Thomas offers a resolution of the problem in teaching that the subsistent soul, having vegetative, sensitive and intellective powers, communicates its esse to the body which it needs, constitutes a substantial union with the body through one act of being, and yet surpasses the matter of the body in its intellective powers whose exercise needs no corporeal organs.
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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

This thesis is primarily an exposition of the Thomistic doctrine concerning the soul's union with the body, giving insights into the nature of man.

That every sensible being is composed of prime matter and form, the two combining in a relationship of potency and act to produce a third, the composite, we know from cosmological considerations presented in Aristotle's hylomorphic theory. It is neither the form nor the matter but the reality of the composite which exists and acts. Hence, it might appear that form would be determined according to the nature of the matter of which it is the act and perfection. It would seem then, that the two must be perfectly proportioned to one another, the form not exceeding the matter in which it has its being.

Remaining on the cosmological level, and applying these principles, one would conclude that the intellectual soul, the principle of understanding, could scarcely be the form of the body. For, having its being, power, and operation imbedded in matter, the soul's receptivity of intelligible forms in the
action of understanding would be determined by the matter of the body, to the detriment of the quasi-infinite potency of the intellect. On the other hand, anyone denying that the intellectual soul is the form of the body, must explain how the action of understanding is attributed essentially to man.

This thorn, in the side of philosophers from the time of Plato, was extracted by St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century. That the problem has persisted, as is evidenced by the philosophies of such as Descartes, is due, perhaps, to a lack of true appreciation of the Thomistic doctrine. Such an appreciation cannot be had without considering the various treatments given the problem by philosophers prior to St. Thomas. His resolution of the difficulty, though found in the Summa Theologicae, De Spiritualibus Creaturis, and the Opusculum de Anima, is best presented in the awe-inspiring complexity of the Summa Contra Gentiles which we shall use as our focal text.

Our historical considerations of the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and Averroes will not follow chronological order. We will begin with that of Aristotle, for his teachings serve to acquaint us with the nature of the soul and the consequent difficulties involved. These difficulties are then brought into sharper focus in the philosophy of Averroes, whose literal, and possibly erroneous, interpretation of Aristotle’s dictum that the intellect is "separable, both impassible and unmixed", in the light of the quasi-infinite
potency of the possible intellect, led him to deny that the intellectual soul is the form of the body. Hence, he seeks to explain that the action of understanding is attributed to man because the separate intellect is in continuatio with the man by the intelligible species being present in both the intellect and the corporeal phantasm.

Continuing, we shall briefly consider the doctrine of Plato on this matter. For St. Thomas' teachings are closer to those of Plato than to those of Averroes. The Angelic Doctor draws little, if anything, from the latter. Rather, he seems to find it to be a corruption of the teachings of Aristotle and contents himself in the Contra Gentiles, which he wrote primarily to refute the Arabian philosophers, with pointing out the absurdities which follow on it. Although Plato erred as greatly in attempting to show that man is said to understand because the immortal (intellectual) soul is united to him as mover to the moved, St. Thomas finds in this "contact of power" a certain validity. For he notes that "the intellectual substance can be united to a body by contact of power", and in a following chapter refutes arguments posited to show that a thing one in ratio would not be so constituted.

In the philosophies of Averroes and Plato, we find involved teachings, directly or indirectly, of the plurality


2 Ibid., ch. 69.
of forms characteristic of most essentialist philosophies. While one might be accused of prematurely crediting this erroneous position to these philosophers, as well as to Aristotle, certainly we can find in the philosophies of Averroes and Plato a similarity of attitude that the intellectual soul transcends but does not transfuse the body.

On the other hand, St. Thomas, resolving the problem by the application of metaphysical and not merely cosmological principles, teaches that the subsistent soul, having vegetative, sensitive, and intellective powers, communicates, in the order of formal causality, its esse to the body which it needs, constitutes a substantial union with the body through that one act of being, and yet surpasses the matter of the body in its intellective powers whose exercise need no corporeal organs. In the Thomistic system, the intellectual soul as the form of the body transcends— but also transfuses the body. As we shall see, the entire resolution of this problem rests on the relation of matter surpassing intellection and matter-immersed sensation, a relationship wherein sensation is necessary for the acquisition of knowledge but does not, nevertheless, deprive the intellect of its autonomy in the actual act of understanding.

In the Thomistic doctrine, man takes on a nobility granted to him by no other philosophy, namely the dignity of an intellectual being, a little less than the angel and so much more than the animal. In the Contra Gentiles, St. Thomas surprisingly begins his treatment of the problem.
with the chapter entitled: "That the Perfection of the Universe Requires the Existence of Some Intellectual Creatures." One would almost think that he is speaking strictly of angels. However, in the next twenty-one chapters, which include historical considerations, he presents his resolution of the problem and his basic doctrine on the nature of man.

3 Ibid., ch. 46.
CHAPTER II

ARISTOTLE: THE SOUL AS THE FORM OF THE BODY

Applying the cosmological principles which he has expounded in the *Physics*, Aristotle proves in the following manner that the soul is united to the body. After showing that the soul is one principle common to the several types of living things, he considers the relation of the vegetative, sensitive, intellectual, and locomotive powers to each other and to the soul. He proceeds to do this by asking two questions: (A) Is each of these powers a soul; (B) If each power is only a part, is it separable, only as being thought of as separate, or has it also a distinct place, as a separate being, in a part of the body. Giving consideration to the second question first, he notes that, with regard to some powers, we quite easily see that they do have being in certain parts of the body; others are not in any special part; and other powers cause us some doubt. This he illustrates by reference to plant life, noting that some plants can be cut, but continue to live when grafted or replanted; in which case the life principle appears to be one soul in act,

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but several in potency.²

Aristotle continues his illustration with reference to animals which can be cut in half, such as snakes and frogs, but continue to react in withdrawing from the tactile stimulus of the pin; consequently, the part would seem to retain the principle of sensation and local movement, and also imagination which Aristotle defines as "a movement never originated apart from sensation."³ Further, the divided part must also have appetite as is evident from its comfort-seeking effort to avoid pain. Thus, the divided part contains the vegetative, sensitive, appetitive, and locomotive principles which are, then, not in any special part of the body. On the other hand, the external sense powers, with the exception of the most fundamental and necessary one of touch, are located in the special parts of the body, the sense organs.

Finally, "but as regards intellect and speculative power, nothing has so far been demonstrated; but it would seem to be another kind of soul, and alone capable of being

² St. Thomas, in his commentary, draws attention to the fact that the same thing is observable in the forms of inanimate physical bodies which can be divided into parts but retain the same nature, for example, rocks. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, In Aristotelis Librum De Anima Commentarium, translated by Kenneth Foster and Silvester Humphries: Aristotle's De Anima, in the version of William of Moerbeke; with the commentary of St. Thomas Aquinas, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1951), p.191 (In II De Anima, lec.4, No.264).

separated, as the eternal from the perishable." Completing his answer to the second question, he states, "By definition, however, they are obviously distinct. For if feeling is other than opining, the sense faculty will differ from the capacity to form opinions. Likewise with each of the other powers mentioned." Hence, these faculties and powers, excluding the intellect and the speculative power of which no conclusion is here reached, are separable in thought, and some, such as the sense organs and their powers, are separable in place.

Now he answers the first question posed, as to whether each power is a soul or a part of the soul, noting that some animated beings have only one power, judging from the vital operations; others more than one; and yet others have all four. Where only one of these principles is found, as is the case with the lower forms of plant life, it is itself the soul; however, where more than one are found, as in the higher forms of life, the soul is named after the higher part or power. Aristotle proceeds to set forth, in four parts,

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4 Ibid., p.187. (De Anima II, 413 b 26).
5 Ibid., pp.187-188. (De Anima II, 413 b 29).
the argument whereby he concludes that the soul is "an actuality and formal principle of a thing in potency to exist accordingly" or, in other words, is that by which we live, sense, move, and understand.

The major proposition is to the effect that if we concede that there are two principles of our being and activity, one will be prior to the other. This he explains observing that we can speak of the principle of life and sensation from two points of view, formally or materially. For example, when we speak of the act of knowing as proceeding either from the knowledge itself or from the soul, or when we speak of becoming healthy either with regard to the health itself or with regard to the body as becoming healthy, one of these principles is formal and the other is material.

As St. Thomas comments:

For knowledge and health are forms or actualities of certain subjects: knowledge is a form of the soul that knows; health of the body capable of health. Thus, he (Aristotle) says 'capable of knowing' and 'capable of health' in order to indicate the particular subject's aptitude to its particular form. For the actuality of any active principle, such as the form transmitted to matter by an agent, always appears to exist in what receives it and is adapted to it, i.e. in the subject, whose nature is to receive from one particular active principle, and which is adapted to attain the final term of the receiving process, namely the form in question. 8

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8 St. Thomas Aquinas, *op. cit.*, p.193 (*In II De Anima*, lec. 4, No. 272). The reader's attention is drawn to the statement herein of the proportion required between matter and form.
Similarly, we speak of there being two principles of life, the soul and the body. We are said to live by the body only insofar as the body has a soul, the actuality of the body. Hence, the body is the material principle of life and the soul is the formal principle of life. The soul then is prior to the body.

The analogy is made that as knowledge is as a form and specific essence to the 'soul knowing' as health is as a form and specific essence to the body being healthy, so the soul is to the body as a specific form. Being a specific form, the soul is not a material for, or a mere subject of, anything.

To clinch the argument, lest anyone say that the body, which is a principle of life, is the form no less than the soul, Aristotle notes that substance is predicated in three ways: as the form, as the matter, and as what results as one from the composite of form and matter. With reference to the latter, the body is clearly not the soul's actuality, the soul being prior to the body as we have said above. Hence, it is the soul and not the body which is the specifying principle, since it is clear that the body is not the form of the soul.

From the foregoing Aristotle deduces that the soul is not a body, but is a part of the body, and therefore
"is in a body", and in a body of a definite kind; since the act is always the act of that which is in potency to it. He concludes: "that the soul, then, is an actuality and formal principle of a thing in potency to exist accordingly is evident from these considerations."

However, it must be remembered that at the beginning of his discourse Aristotle had said, "but as regards intellect and speculative power, nothing has so far been demonstrated; but it would seem to be another kind of soul, and alone capable of being separated, as the eternal from the perishable." The reason for this controversial remark lies in the nature of the possible intellect, the existence of which he posited because "whenever a thing is found to be sometimes in potency and sometimes in act, there must be some principle by which it is in potency." As man is sometimes actually sensing and sometimes only potentially, it is necessary to maintain that in man there is a sentient principle which is in potency to sensible things. Similarly, it is necessary to maintain that, since man is only sometimes actually understanding, in him there is an intellective principle.

9 Aristotle, op. cit., p.188. (De Anima II, 414 a 21).

10 St. Thomas demonstrates that the body of man was given an apt disposition for the soul. Vide: St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologicae. (Ottawa: Institutum Studiorum Mediaevalium Ottaviensia, 1941-5), part I, q.91, a.3.

power which is in potency to intelligible things; this Aristotle calls the possible intellect.  

If, then, there is but one formal principle in man, would not the potentiality of the possible intellect be determined by the matter of the body, since it is neither the form nor the matter but the composite which exists and acts? And yet, if, to avoid this pregnable position, Aristotle meant his "intellect...would seem to be another kind of soul ..." to be taken literally, would not this be tantamount to saying that there is not one but more than one substantial form in a man? What, then, precisely is his doctrine? Let us now consider Averroes' answer to this question.

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CHAPTER III

AVERROES AND PLATO:

THE SOUL TRANSCENDENT BUT NOT TRANSFUSING.

Literally interpreting Aristotle’s dictum that the intellect is "separable, both impassable and unmixed", Averroes proposes his answer to that question by asserting that it is contrary to the nature of the intellectual soul to be the form of the body.

Averroes was a follower of the position that the possible intellect, to be in potency to all intelligible forms, must be devoid of every sensible nature, from which he infers that the soul cannot be present in any body.

For Averroes, existence in a body means being totally embraced by the matter of the body; in other words, he was of the opinion that there must be a perfect proportion between matter and form by reason of cosmological considerations. For, he defines matter as a substance which is in potency and form as a substance which perfects the

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matter in potency to it. The two are complementary to each other so that from their coming together a unity results. However, it is a composite (unity) which "is being in act only through the form". This form cannot be the perfection it is except that it exist in the body as inseparable from it.

Hence, he concluded that the intellect as the form of the body would, in sharing in the determinate nature of the body, have a determinate nature; consequently, it would not be capable of knowing all things. This is so since it would seem that it would receive nothing without its matter; as prime matter receives only individual forms, which are individuated through being in matter, the possible intellect would receive forms as individuated and would not then be cognizant of universals. Similarly, as prime matter is not cognizant of the forms it receives, the possible intellect, having the

3 Ibid., p.130, 11.37-39. (Commentary on De Anima, II,2).
4 Ibid., p.404, 11.503-504. (Commentary on De Anima, II,5).
5 Ibid., p.139, 11.44-46. (Commentary on De Anima, II,7).
6 Ibid., p.167, 11.16-17. (Commentary on De Anima, II,26).
7 Ibid., p.161, 11.44-46. (Commentary on De Anima, II,22).
8 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (Ottawa, 1941-5), part I, q.75, a. 2 c. "Si igitur principium intellectuale haberet in se naturam alicuius corporis non posset omnia corpora cognoscere."
same receptivity, would not be cognizant of the forms received. Again, as Aristotle proves, an infinite power cannot exist in a finite body. However, the possible intellect is endowed with a certain infinite power, since by it we know universals which are potentially infinite in number.

For these reasons, Averroes denied that the possible intellect can be united to the body as its form. However, this left him in the dilemma that follows from this position: that understanding is not attributed to this particular man but rather to an intellect separate from him. In order to avoid this incongruity, he taught that the possible intellect "entirely separated from the body in its actual being, is connected with 'this man' through phantasm." This is so in that the intelligible species, which is the perfection of the possible intellect, is founded in the phantasm from which it is abstracted. Hence, it has a two-fold kind of actual being: one in the possible intellect, and the other in the phantasm from which it is abstracted. The phantasms are in 'this man' because the imagination is

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a power within a body; that is, it has a corporeal organ. Thus there arises one thing from the possible intellect and the form understood in act. The possible intellect is then united to the form, which form is also in union with the phantasm which is in man. In this way, Averroes explains that it is the particular man who understands.

The possible intellect not being the form of man, Averroes sought to show that man differs specifically from the brutes by the intellect which Aristotle calls "passive", and which is the same as the cogitative power that is proper to man. To this he credits the functions of distinguishing and comparing individual intentions and preparing, together with the imagination and memory, the phantasms to receive the action of the agent intellect, whereby the phantasms are made intelligible in act. Accordingly, to this power he gives the name of 'intellec' or reason.

Thus, in the Averroeisit system, man, composed of matter and a form which is immersed in matter, is united by continutatio to the intellectual soul (separate intellect) by the intelligible species present in both the intellect knowing and in the corporeal phantasm present in man. (We will

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consider later, in our treatment of St. Thomas, the question of the validity of this position.) The intellectual soul, then, in the doctrine of Averroes, transcends, being separate, but does not transfuse the body since it is not the form of the body.

Plato's philosophy is very similar. For reasons similar to those which later led Averroes to refuse to accept the intellectual soul as the form of the body, Plato held that the soul is a self-subsistent and incorruptible form, and consequently denied that the intellectual substance could inform the body. For him, the body would seem to be also an actually existing subject, but different in genus since it is corruptible.

Like Averroes, Plato had to explain how the action of understanding is said to belong to the particular man. Of the three ways an action may be attributed, Plato asserted that man is said to understand in virtue of his whole self. For he said that the soul, constituting the full perfection

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14 Cf. Plato, Phaedo, nos. 87-88, where Plato speaks of the soul as being self-restoring, self-reproducing, and immortal, perpetually renewing itself from within. Vide: Phaedrus, nos. 245-246. (All Plato references are to: The Dialogues of Plato, translated by Benjamin Jowett, (New York: Random House, 1937), and to the marginal numbers in this translation).

15 Supra, p.15.

16 Aristotle, Physics, ed.cit., V, 224 a 31.
of the species, is united to the body, not as its form, but only as mover to the movable, the body being the vehicle and image of the soul. Thus he explains that the action of understanding is attributed to the particular man inasmuch as the man is the soul - "for surely there is nothing which may be called more properly ourselves than the soul".

To account for the fact that the body lives and has the character of its own species, which it could not have by reason of the immortal soul, as the mover causes the motion and not the being of the moved, Plato stated that the form of the body is a soul which is imprisoned in the body. Judging from the way in which he described this soul, he seems to be referring to what we would call the sensitive soul.

18 Plato, *Timaeus*, no. 69.
19 Plato, *Laws* XII, no. 959.
22 Plato, *Phaedo*, no. 82.
In summary, these principles of understanding, the Separate Intellect of Averroes and the immortal soul of Plato, are transcendent of the matter of the body. This must be so by reason of the apparent determination of form by matter. For both philosophers, the intellectual principle exists in almost total separation from the matter of the body. Only the quasi-unions of the continuatio and the efficient causality of the mover-moved relationship can be admitted into their essentialism. Such a union does not permit it to be said that the intellectual principle transfuses the body, for such transfusing can be said only of that principle which enjoys that intimacy of being the form of the body. For the intellectual principle, as the form of the body, would be determined by the matter of the body. Consequently, they posited a material or matter-immersed principle as the form of the body to account for the fact that the body lives and has the character of its own species. Hence, it is the 'passive intellect' in the Averroist system and the "soul of another nature which was mortal" in the Platonic system which transfuses the body as its form. The importance of this observation, namely of the soul or intellectual principle transcending but not transfusing, will become more evident in the light of the Thomistic solution of the problem. For, therein we will find that, despite the problem of determination, the intellectual soul not only transcends but transfuses the matter of the body being the form of the body.
CHAPTER IV

ST. THOMAS: THE SOUL TRANSCENDENT AND TRANSPUSING

A. That the Soul Can Be United to, and Naturally Requires the Body

As we have seen, a literal interpretation of Aristotle's dictum that the intellect is "separable, both impassible and unmixed" must result in the doctrine that the intellectual soul, inasmuch as it transcends the body, cannot transfuse the body as its form.

However, St. Thomas objects to such an interpretation of Aristotle and concludes that the Philosopher's doctrine is "where several (i.e. of the vegetative etc. principles) are found together each is a part of the soul and the soul itself is named after the principal part whether sensitive or intellectual as the case may be." He finds it hard to believe that Aristotle held that the intellect is a substance separated from the body because anyone who states that the intellect is a separate substance "implies that he himself understands nothing; and therefore then one need pay no attention to what he says. For it is clear that the

actually intelligent being is this particular man." 2

A further argument may be adduced to show that Aristotle thought that there was one formal principle, one soul in an animal, the principle of all its activities. For, he himself says "one of the kinds of things that are is substance. Of this, there is one element, matter, which of itself, is no particular thing; another the form or species according to which it is called this particular thing; and a third, that which is both. 3 From the De Anima, it is evident that he regards the soul as the form of the body. 4 Now, since he says that form is that "by which it is called a particular thing", it is difficult to envision him as holding that one thing could be several (particular things). Such would be the case if he held that the intellect was another kind of soul since, in essential attribution, man is said to sense (by reason of the sensitive soul) as well as to understand (by reason of the intellective soul). In other words, if both actions are attributed to man as operations flowing from his essence, then one must credit to that man the principles of those actions; hence one would credit to that man the sensitive and intellective souls as separate formal principles or forms by which he would then become two

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2 Ibid., p. 408. (In III de Anima, lec. 7, no. 690.).


4 Ibid., p. 163. (De Anima II, 412 a 20).
"particular things". The remaining alternative would be that man is an accidental union (which Aristotle definitely does not hold). The basis for such a conclusion lies in the fact that whatever accrues to a thing after its first substantial form will accrue to it accidentally. Hence, if man's form is said to be the intellective soul, the nutritive and sensitive souls will accrue to him accidentally.

Hence St. Thomas finds it hard to believe that, when Aristotle says that the intellect "would seem to be another kind of soul, and alone capable of being separated," in which text he (Aristotle) reaches no conclusion leaving it for later consideration, he meant that the intellect is another kind of soul. For, such an interpretation is bound to lead to the teaching of that illogical doctrine of the "plurality of forms" found in the philosophies of both Plato and Averroes. St. Thomas finds it equally difficult to believe that Aristotle held that the intellective soul is a substance separated from the body. Rather, Aristotle was probably referring to the intellect's independence of the body since it needs no corporeal organ for its action of understanding.

St. Thomas points out the error of such an interpretation of Aristotle's controversial statement by a critical

5 Ibid., p. 187. (De Anima II, 413 b 24).
6 Cf. Ibid., p. 450 sq. (De Anima III, 429 a 10 sq.).
7 St. Thomas Aquinas, op. cit., p. 452. (In III de Anima, lect. 12, no. 786).
analysis of the philosophical psychologies of Plato and Averroes who, as we have seen, deemed such an interpretation necessary. Averroes taught that the possible intellect is united to 'this man' because of the two-fold existence of the intelligible species, namely as united to the intellect in act and united to the phantasm from which it is abstracted. Further, he has asserted that man derives his specific nature, not from the possible, but from the passive intellect. However, this doctrine is unreasonable. A thing is capable of knowing, not because of the presence of the intelligible species, but because of its cognitive power. For Averroes, man is capable of knowing because the intelligible species is present to man, but the power of understanding, i.e. the possible intellect, exists in complete separation from him.

What actually follows, St. Thomas notes, is that the particular man is understood. For, the actually understood species is the form of the intellect, just as the actually visible species is the form of the power of sight. "As the species of color are in the sight, so are the species of phantasms in the possible intellect." In other words:

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the intelligible species abstracted from the phantasm is in the possible intellect in the same way as the species 'color' is in the sense of sight. Now the intelligible species is in the phantasm in the same way as a species which makes seeing possible (species visibiles) is in the physical object which is a wall. Now owing to the fact that the species which makes seeing possible, the form 'sight' is based on the color of the wall, the act of seeing is not connected with the wall as with a seeing object, but as with a seen object, for by means of it the wall does not see but is seen.10

Continuing the comparison we must conclude that the unavoidable consequence of this is that man is understood, not that he understands.

In further criticism, every knower is united to its object by its cognitive power, as the agent is united to the patient by the agent's operative power. It is by his intellect as by his cognitive power that man is intelligent and hence united to the intelligible. This is in sharp contrast to Averroes' conclusion that man is united to the intellect by the intelligible form.

Averroes' position might be sound if the intellect in potentiality and the intelligible in potentiality were one. But this is not the case, for, while it is true that "the intellect in act and the intelligible in act are one"11 "just as the sense in act and the sensible in act"12 are one,

12 Cf. Ibid., p. 358. (De Anima II, 425 b 27).
The intellect in potentiality and the intelligible in potentiality are not one. The species of the thing as present in the phantasm is only potentially intelligible; as present in the intellect, it is actually intelligible, having been made so by being abstracted from the phantasm by the light of the agent intellect. Therefore, the intelligible species could not be the means whereby a separate possible intellect could be brought into contact with man, because, in the separate possible intellect, the species of the thing would be actually intelligible but not in contact with us; in the phantasm, the species would be only potentially intelligible, and therefore not in contact with the intellect.

His position is further criticised in that he was actually saying that the union of the possible intellect with man, following upon the operation of man, gives man his species, namely of being intellectual; for, it takes place by means of the imagination, which Aristotle defines as "a movement resulting from the exercise of a sense power" since it is "a movement never originated apart from sensation." However, that which follows the operation of a thing does not

14 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 394. (De Anima III, 428 b 15).
give a thing its species, for the specific thing must exist prior to the operation. Hence, Averroes mistakenly denies that man has intellect (formally speaking), and is forced to distinguish him from brutes by something else, which would seem to be that man is capable of being in continuation with the separate intellect, whereas the brute animal is not. 17

Perhaps to meet such an objection, Averroes sought to show that man differs in species from the brutes by the intellect which Aristotle calls 'passive'. This position is answered in several ways by St. Thomas; it will suffice for our purpose to note only one. The operations of a living thing are compared to the soul as second acts to the first act, which precedes the second in time in the same thing, just as knowledge precedes reflection. Now man has an operation, namely of understanding, higher than that of the animals. Therefore we must attribute to man a principle that gives him his proper specific nature, and which is related to the act of understanding as first to second act. Further, since the soul is independent of the body, needing no corporeal organ, this principle cannot be immersed in matter. The 'passive' intellect, which is dependent on the sense organs, could not be such a principle.

18 Ibid., bk.II, ch. 60.
Let us recall that Plato taught that the soul, constituting the full perfection of the species, is united to the body not as form but only as the mover to the moved. The body lives and has the character of its own species by reason of a mortal soul of another nature. We have noted the similarity of this to Averroes' union of the separate intellect to man who derives his species from a mortal, matter-immersed form, the 'passive' intellect. Since sensation is predicated essentially as well as understanding, to both philosophers may be credited the doctrine of a plurality of forms, a doctrine which St. Thomas attacks strongly in the Summa Contra Gentiles, specifically citing Plato. They would seem to be reduced to the absurdity of saying either that man is three beings by reason of the nutritive, sensitive and intellective souls, or man is by reason of one of the three, and the remaining two will accrue to him accidentally, thereby constituting man as an accidental being. For every substantial form makes a being complete in the genus of substance, the form being the actuality of the matter and that by which a thing is what it is.

We have referred to the fact that an action may be said to belong to a thing in three ways. The first is attribution through an accidental quality, which is impossible as far as the action of understanding is concerned, since this

19 Ibid., bk. II, ch. 58.
20 Supra, p. 17.
would mean that man is an accidental union. Further, we have seen that Plato's choice of the second alternative, namely that understanding be said to belong to man in virtue of his whole self as though he were but a soul, is really the same as the first alternative. Hence St. Thomas held to the third way, namely that man understands in virtue of the intellectual principle which is a part of him so that it is united to him, and, since the action of understanding is predicated of man essentially, the principle of this action must be united to him as his substantial form.

If the possible intellect were a separate substance and united in any other way, it would be impossible for a man to understand by means of it, because if a substance performs an operation, that operation cannot belong to any other substance than the one performing it. For, although one of two substances can be the cause of the other's operation, as the principal agent is the cause of the activity of the instrument, nevertheless the action of the principal agent is not numerically the same as that of the instrument. For the action of the agent consists in moving the instrument, whereas that of the instrument consists in being moved by the agent and in moving something else. Consequently, if the possible intellect were a substance existing apart from this or that particular man (as Averroes held) it is impossible for the possible intellect's act of intellection to be the act of any particular man.

Hence he concludes that "there remains no other explanation than that given by Aristotle - namely, that this

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particular man understands because the intellectual principle is his form", the possible intellect being "a certain faculty or power of the soul."

How this could be was the problem which confronted the Angelic Doctor in the thirteenth century. On the one hand, we have the nobility of the soul in its substantiality and immortality; on the other hand, we have the unity of man to be insured. To posit the soul as the form of the body would seem to endanger either one or the other. If the soul is a complete substance, a composite, it could not enter into a further composition in an essential way; thus the human compound would be rendered an accidental unity. On the other hand, if we make the soul simple, in order to safeguard the unity of man, it would be immersed in matter as a material form. To unite these two extremes is the task he undertakes in the Contra Gentiles.

St. Thomas begins by establishing that, since intellectual substances are analogous to their Creator's nature, operation and mode of operation in their intellect and will, the existence of these intellectual substances is fitting for the perfection of the universe. After then establishing that the intellectual substance has will and freedom of choice in acting, he proceeds to show that the intellectual

23 Ibid.

substance is not a body, nor a material form, and is immaterial. This he does arguing from the immaterial power of understanding possessed by such a substance.

The argument is well paraphrased by Dr. Pegis, who says:

the forms of things are not really intelligible unless separated from their matter by the power of the intellect in the act of knowing and at the moment when they are received in the intellect. The intellect must therefore be free from matter in the sense that neither is a part of it matter nor is it impressed in matter as are the material forms. In other words, we can admit neither the composition of matter and form in the soul nor the existence of the soul in the body as a material form.

However, if there is no composition of matter and form, what composition can be admitted in the intellectual substance? In a philosophy such as Aristotle's, wherein form is the highest act, an insurmountable difficulty is confronted here.

In the Thomistic doctrine, wherein recognition is given to the act of existing (esse), metaphysics supplies the answer. For in God alone is esse (quod est) and essence (quod est) the same. In all other substances, inasmuch as their existence is had not of themselves but from another,

25 Ibid., chs. 47, 48.

26 Anton C. Pegis, St. Thomas and the Soul (Toronto: Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1934), pp. 133-134.

'being' and 'what is' differ. Hence, in the created intellectual substance there is a composition of *forma* and *esse* or *quod est* and *quod est*.  

Since that which belongs to a thing through itself is always necessarily in it and inseparable from it, intellectual substances can never be deprived of being, for they are themselves forms and 'being' is consequent upon form through itself.  

The importance of this point will be seen shortly.

Now, in order for it to be the substantial form of the body, the intellectual soul must meet two requirements. First, it must be the formal principle of the substantial being of the thing whose form it is. Secondly, the form and the matter must be joined together in the unity of one act of being. As to the first condition, it is to be noted that the soul is said to be the formal, and not the productive, principle whereby a thing exists and is called a being. This is a distinction which could not be made in the essentialist philosophy of Plato who, like Aristotle and many others, failed to attach any significance to the act of *esse*; consequently, Plato, for one, identified the orders of efficient  

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28 Ibid., ch. 52; St. Thomas Aquinas, Le "De Ente et Essentia" (Paris: Librairie Philosophique, J. Vrin, 1948), ch. 4  
30 Ibid., ch. 68.
and formal causality. If the soul were united to the body as its efficient cause, a thing one in being would not result; hence, the second condition would not be fulfilled. Now "it is obvious that the soul is the reality which gives life to the body. Moreover, vital activity (vivere) is the act of existing (esse) of living things. Consequently the soul is that which gives the body its act of existing."

It must be remembered, however, that the single act of being does not belong in the same way to the matter as to the intellectual substance. "For that act of being appertains to the corporeal matter as its recipient and its subject raised to a higher level; it belongs to the intellectual substance as to its principle, and in keeping with its very own nature." Thus is answered the objection that the soul, being of the genus of the incorporeal, could not communicate its being to corporeal matter. For, together in the one act of existing, they are of one and the same genus as principles of it; if they existed apart, the intellectual substance and the body

32 Aristotle, De Anima, ed. cit., p. 211. (De Anima II, 415 b 13). "In all things that live, to live is to be."
33 St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusculum de Anima, ed. cit., ch. 1, p. 9.
34 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, ed. cit., bk. II, ch. 68.
would be species of diverse genera.

Disregarding for the moment the problem of receptivity, it is evident, from the foregoing, that, communicating its own being to the body, the intellectual substance can be united to the body as its substantial form, constituting a substantial unity, the two existing by the soul's one act of being.

Thus, can we contemplate that "actively engaged in it, the soul is giving itself the body which it needs; it progressively builds it up through physiological operations which pave the way for intellectual operations." For it is of the soul's very nature to be united to the body "not as a thing having a complete species of its own, but as completing the human species by being the form of the body"; a substantial perfection evidenced by the fact that "when the soul leaves the body, the body's individual parts retain their original names only in an equivocal sense."

Further the soul is united to the body for an accidental perfection, for "inasmuch as the soul is naturally capable of acquiring immaterial knowledge from material things,

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36 Gilson, op. cit., p. 186.
37 St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusculum de Anima, ed. cit. ch. 1, p. 10.
38 Ibid., p. 9.

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evidently its species can be complete only when it is united to a body; "for a thing's species is complete only if it has the things necessary for the proper operation of its species."39 "The soul united to the body can understand only by turning to the phantasms, as experience shows."40 These phantasms, from which the intelligible species is abstracted by the agent intellect, actualising the possible intellect,41 though intermittently,42 are dependent upon the sense organs of the body. Hence it is for its own good that the soul, understanding "by turning to corporeal phantasms, which are in corporeal organs,"43 is united to the body which it needs.

Since Plato maintained that the participation of forms by material things is for the sake of material things, he could of course see no reason why the subsistent form, the human soul, should be united to the body; in keeping with his belief, if the soul were united to the body, it would be


43 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, ed. cit., part I, q. 89, a. 1 c.
imprisoned and entombed by the human body. To the contrary, as Aristotle had seen, matter exists for the sake of form, the human body for the sake of the soul. Thus the human body is considered as having been given an apt disposition for the soul. Since "the proximate end of the human body is the rational soul and its operations", we can contemplate the unity of the composite from the point of view of final causality by attending to the end of the intellectual being, man, namely Truth.

One might question, in view of the soul's immortality and need for the phantasms, whether the soul separated from the body can understand anything. This St. Thomas answers noting that the soul "when united to the body, consistently with that mode of existence, has a mode of understanding by turning to corporeal phantasms which are in corporeal organs; but when it is separated from the body, it has a mode of understanding by turning to simply intelligible objects, as is proper to other separate substances", retaining its proper being when separated from the body.

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44 Ibid., q. 91, a. 3, n.b., the replies to objections. Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusculum de Anima, ad. cit., ch. 8, pp. 100 - 102.

45 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, ad. cit., part I, q. 91, a. 3 c.

46 Ibid., q. 89, a. 1 c.

47 Ibid., q. 76, a. 1 ad 6.
Now one might argue that God should have ordered the soul's nature so that it would have been natural for it to understand in the nobler way, namely by turning to simply intelligible objects for which it would not have needed the body. However, "if the inferior substances [human souls] received species in the same degree of universality as the superior substances [angels], since they are not so strong in understanding, the knowledge which they would derive through them would be imperfect, and of general and confused nature . . . . Therefore to make it possible for human souls to possess perfect and proper knowledge, they were so made that their nature required them to be joined to bodies, and thus to receive the proper and adequate knowledge of sensible things from the sensible things themselves." 48

In short "the human soul is united to the body both for a good which is a substantial perfection; and for a good which is an accidental perfection, namely, the perfecting of the soul in intellectual knowledge which it acquires from the senses; for this mode of understanding is natural to man." 49 Having its own esse, the soul can exist apart from the body and understand by turning to simply intelligible


objects, but has an aptitude and a natural inclination to be united to the body which it needs and gives itself, communicating its own being (esse) to the body; together they constitute a unity of being.

B. The Soul Exceeds the Proportion of Matter

From what has thus far been said, it is apparent that the soul exceeds the human body in its being and operation, and that, contrary to Averroes' supposition, a perfect proportion is not required between matter and form. As understanding is a vital activity belonging essentially to man, its principle must be the soul, the principle of life. As operation follows on being, the human soul's mode of existing can be known from its operation. The activity of understanding is not effected by means of the body. This operation has no bodily organ, but is an operation transcending the material order. "Hence the actual being of that principle (i.e. of understanding, namely the soul), must be an actual being which is raised above corporeal matter and not dependent on it," 50 since, "inasmuch as the human soul has an operation transcending the material order, its act of existing transcends the body and does not depend on the body." 51 Hence, "though the form and matter are united in

50 St. Thomas Aquinas, De Spiritualibus Creaturis, ed. cit., ch. 2 c., p. 34.
51 St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusculum de Anima, ed. cit., ch. 1, p. 11.
the one act of being, the matter need not always be commensurate with the form. Indeed the higher the form the more it surpasses matter in its being.\(^5\)

This is made evident by examining the order of forms through the observation of their operations, since each thing acts according as it has being.

Now the lowest of these, namely those of inanimate bodies, are wholly immersed in matter, as is evidenced by the fact that they have no operations of their own. Sometimes, we are perhaps tempted to attribute operations to them, but these are actually "limited to the class of those proper to the qualities such as heat, cold, moisture and dryness, rarity and density, gravity and levity, etc."\(^5\)

With a view to the continuity of nature, St. Thomas stated that higher than these forms are the forms of mixed bodies which lie somewhat midway between the forms of the simple elements which we have first mentioned and the higher forms, namely those of animate beings.\(^5\) In this he cites as


\(^54\) Ibid.
an example the lodestone whose operation of attraction he
credits to a power received from, and consequent upon, the
species of the heavenly bodies. This was not a philosophical
error on his part, but a result of the fact that his scienti­
ic knowledge of the nature of magnetic forces was deficient.
What he took to be something different is, in fact, but
another disposition of matter.

However, a continuity is seen in the microscopic
organisms of plant life. For the forms of such plants, and
for that matter all plants, are the intrinsic principles by
which the plant lives and has self-movement as evidenced by
the operations of nutrition, growth, and generation. Hence
these forms have a greater nobility than the forms of inani­
mate beings which have no operations of their own.

In this lower order of vitality there seems to be
greater and lesser perfection of life: the almost inanimate
microscopic organisms, the diminutive duckweed, the poppy
whose shoots bend and bow to the different points of the
compass and follow the path of the sun on its zenith, the
ever-spreading prickly pear of India, the purslane and chick­
weed whose seeds continue to ripen even when the plant is
uprooted, plants which revive year after year. Some bear
marked resemblance to animal life: the pea whose tendril
moves apparently in circular avoidance of the touch of the
twig, the Desmodus of the Ganges Basin whose leaves are in
constant motion, the Venus flytrap of the Caroline swamps,
and the insect-eating sundew. The operations, flowing from these forms, are through, and for, the matter of the composite; as such, they fail to surpass the proportion of matter.

Bearing in mind St. Thomas' dictum that "it is always found that the lowest in the higher genus touches the highest of the lower species", we note that the transition from plant life to animal life is as gradual as that from inanimate beings to living plants. Among the lowest of the animals we find the plant-like sponges, zoophytes, corals, the sluggish sea squirt, the single-celled amoeba, and the edentates of more active vitality. But they are the forms of the brute animals which "resemble the higher substances not only in moving, but even, somehow, in knowing, so that they are capable of operations to which the aforesaid qualities (dispositions of matter) are of no assistance even organically, although these operations are performed only by means of a bodily organ."

Modern physiology and experimental psychology have contributed to explaining the "somehow" of St. Thomas' statement and have also banished the misconception, scientific not philosophic, that the qualities which are dispositions of matter are not of assistance in the acquisition of sense knowledge. Further, they have borne witness to Aristotle's and St. Thomas' dictum that the soul has not just any kind of a body but one aptly disposed for the soul. Correctly interpreted, they have

55 St. Thomas Aquinas, _op.cit._, bk.II, ch. 68.
56 _Ibid._

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made clearer both the immateriality and materiality of sense knowledge. The immateriality of sense knowledge, and hence of the sensitive soul, lies in the fact that such a knowledge consists in the reception of the sensible species of the known without its matter. On the other hand, such knowledge is material as it is not had except through corporeal organs.

All impulses arising from stimulation are transmitted to the specific areas of the brain. This organ seems to be the corporeal organ of the sensus communis, integrating the separate sensations into a meaningful whole. It has been found that the human cortex is much more perfectly developed than that of brutes. There is a reason for this: the human sensus communis must be properly disposed to formulate a phantasm which can serve as the sensuous basis of intellectual knowledge. For it is the human soul which, in addition to vegetative and sensitive powers in common with the lower forms of life, "has an activity that goes entirely beyond matter and does not take place through a corporeal organ; namely understanding. And because the actual being of a thing is proportioned to its activity, as has been said, since each thing acts according as it is being (ens), it must be the case that


the actual being of the human soul surpasses the corporeal matter and is not totally embraced by it."  

By its external powers, the human soul, through the corporeal receptor organs impinged on by an object, can disengage the form from the matter of that object. Its internal sense power, the *sensus communis*, discriminates between these particular resultants at the same time as it unites them into perpetual wholes called perceptions.  

The *sensus communis* receives its object in a nobler way than the external sense power "because it lies at the very root of sensitivity, where this power has its point of greatest union"; hence, we say that it has a greater immateriality for it collects data not from the external sensibles, but from the external senses themselves.  

But the human soul possesses another more immaterial power which does not require the presence of an object actually touching on a receptor as the external senses and *sensus communis* do, but which can, though dependent on previous sensation, recall things that are no longer present to the

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59 St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, ed. cit., ch. 2, p. 36.  


61 Ibid., p. 373. (In III de Anima, lec. 3, no. 612).  

62 Ibid., pp. 369-374 (In III de Anima, lec. 6, no. 659).  

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outer senses, namely the imagining power, which is found in man and in some irrational animals, and only indeterminately in the lower rational animals. It is a more perfect cognitive instrument than the sensus communis as it does not require the presence of an object for its function, and is in this respect like the power of reason; hence St. Thomas describes it as a permanent principle of knowledge.

Still more noble is the soul's power of memory by which it can recall past apprehensions; because of this greater nobility, it is found only in the more perfect animals. For in animals the principle of memory is merely the experience of biological values, that is, of the usefulness or harmfulness of certain things, while in man it is won only with difficulty and, like the imaginal power, benefits from its association with the intellect.

The human soul, like the animal soul, has the benefit of the concupiscible and irascible appetites, but which differ in man by reason of the appetite's being moved by the particular

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63 Ibid., p. 383. (In III de Anima, lec. 4, no. 633).
64 Ibid., p. 390. (In III de Anima, lec. 5, no. 644); p. 480. (In III de Anima, lec. 16, no. 839).
65 Ibid., p. 497. (In III de Anima, lec. 18, no. 873).
67 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, ed. cit., part I, q. 78, a. 74, passim.
68 St. Thomas Aquinas, In I de Memoria et Reminiscentia, ed. cit., lec. 8, nos. 399-400.
reason (cogitative power) which in turn is guided by the universal reason. Further, these appetites are subservient to the will.

Over and above these powers of perceiving, imagining and remembering, the soul also possesses the power by which it can discern the useful and the obnoxious character of certain objects. In its purely sensitive state, as in the irrational animals, this is known as the estimative power; in man, because of its link with the intellect, it takes on something of a rational nature and so St. Thomas calls it cogitative power or particular reason. Whereas "in brute animals... the estimative power, or instinct, is a sort of natural prudence... in man the estimative sense is called the cogitative power. It apprehends the individual objects as the real and concrete subjects of the universal essence conceived by the intellect. For that reason, and because it can conjure these individual intentions, it is called particular reason." When the object is present, the intellect will abstract directly from the phantasm of the common sense. If it is absent, the imagination will furnish the phantasm. The

69 St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, ed. cit., part I, q. 81, a. 3.


cogitative power is constantly used in dealing with knowledge of individuals and is a sort of prolongation of the intellect, so that in man there is frequent interaction between these faculties."72

From these phantasms, formed through those corporeal powers of the soul, it can now, by its highest power which has no corporeal organ, abstract the intelligible species or essence of that object which has first stimulated the external sense power. Because of its ability to grasp the essence of the thing through a universal, immaterial concept in the act of knowing, through a power not rooted in any corporeal organ, the soul itself must be immaterial and transcending the capacity of all corporeal matter. The soul is consequently "said to be on the horizon and confines of things corporeal and incorporeal, in that it is an incorporeal substance and yet the form of the body"73 having "operations and powers in common with the body; such, for example, are the powers of the nutritive and sentient part."74

Like all immaterial substances, as St. Thomas says, the soul is endowed with will.75

There is in all things an appetite for the good which

72 Ibid., p. 114.
73 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, ed.cit., bk. II, ch. 68.
74 St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusculum de Anima, ed.cit., ch. 2 p. 25.
75 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, ed.cit., bk. II, ch. 47.

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is sought by the action of the agent. Now the actions of natural things, devoid of knowledge and in which this desire is called a 'natural appetite', follow not on their own forms but from forms outside themselves. As we have mentioned above, the movements of plants, though the principle of their movement is intrinsic, follow on those things of nature which nourish them (sun, earth, water) and by which they are generated (bees, insects and wind). Brute animals, though they move themselves in the sense that one part of them moves another, are actually moved by the forms of things sensed and imagined upon which appetition follows, through their senses and from the judgement of their natural estimative faculty.

However, the forms understood, through which the intellectual substance acts, proceed from the intellect itself; hence the operation is in the power of the intellectual substance which is itself productive of the form on which the action follows. In that the intellectual substance has mastery of its own action, it follows that it is endowed with will. Since, through its intellectual cognition, it judges of things to be done, and since it has mastery of its own action as we have just shown, the intellectual substance has freedom of choice in action.76

Freedom of choice and will constitute one power, which is immaterial, because the will is not subject to any

76 Ibid., ch. 48

77 St.Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, ed. cit., part I, q. 82, a. 3, a. 4.
particular good but has a capacity for the universal and perfect good. Hence both intellect and will enjoy the immateriality of the universal object which debars the medium of a corporeal organ.

However, the intellect holds supremacy and nobility over the will absolutely speaking, since the intellect's object is the more simple and more abstract idea of the appetible good which is the will's object. Since the proper nature of a power is proportionate to its object, and the object of the intellect is nobler and higher in itself by reason of its simplicity and greater degree of abstraction, the intellectual power must be higher and more noble than that of the will.

On the other hand, relatively speaking, the will is sometimes higher than the intellect for the following reason. The end of the intellectual operation is the possible intellect's union with the actually intelligible species at which time knowledge is had. Hence St. Thomas says that the action of the intellect consists in that the idea of the thing understood is in the one who understands. To employ an often-used expression, the thing understood has intentional being in the knower. The act of the will consists in that the will is inclined to the thing itself, not as having intentional being, but as existing in itself. Hence when the soul wills, or is inclined to, a good more noble than the soul, in which is the idea understood, "by comparison with such a thing, the will is

Ibid., a. 2 ad 2.
higher than the intellect." 79 But when the good is less noble than the soul, the intellect holds supremacy.

In keeping with this doctrine, in this life, the love of God, Who is more noble than the soul, is better than the knowledge of God, but knowledge of corporeal things is greater than the love of them. However, in the case of the Beatific Vision, where we have God's own knowledge of Himself, the intellect is more noble. Therefore, man's ultimate end lies, not in the love of God, but in the knowledge of God.

From these powers of intellect and will, it is seen that the human soul, though a form united to the body, is not embraced completely by the body as though immersed in it as other material forms are, but transcends the capacity of the whole of corporeal matter, the potentiality for intelligibles exists in the soul and this (potentiality) belongs to the possible intellect. Certainly the soul, so far as it is united to the body, has operations and powers in common with the body; such, for example, are the powers of the sentient part. 81 Thus does the soul transfuse the body. It still remains that the


80 This is one of the few places in which St. Thomas refers to the human soul as a 'material' form. It is 'material' in so far as it is a form of matter and therefore in matter, but not as being submerged in matter.

possible intellect is separate, not in the sense of existing apart from man, but as being free from matter in its operation, being not a power rooted in a bodily organ. Since this infinite power is not placed in a magnitude but is rooted in the intellectual substance, we have no cause for concern at Averroes' objection that an infinite power cannot be placed in a finite body. Man is said to understand formally by means of the intellect inasmuch as it is rooted in the essence of his soul. That "the possible intellect is a certain power or faculty of the human soul" and not a separate substance, is evident from the fact that understanding is not had without the corporeal phantasms, which situation we have discussed above.

Since a perfect proportion is not required and the soul is not immersed in matter, and since the intellect is not the act of any part of the body, it follows that its receptiveness is not that of prime matter, for intellectual receptiveness and operation are altogether without a corporeal organ.

On first realizing this capacity to possess all other being, one is apt to succumb to a kind of spiritual snobbery in which the body is seen as a hindrance, a prison of the soul, or at best "a mere tool to be tossed aside when its edge is blunted." To do so is to lose sight of the very nature of

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82 Supra, p.15.
the soul and consequently the nature of man. For the soul needs the sense-receptors, the twelve billion neurones, the wonderful complexity of the nerve tracts, and the brain of the body for the production of the phantasms from which it may abstract the intelligible species. Hence, the body is not merely a tool nor a clumsy impediment to the soul's powers; it has a certain nobility in that, aptly disposed, it co-operates in the acquisition of truth with the soul by which it is transfused and thus given nobility.

In speaking of the human soul's need of the body, Etienne Gilson says "the cause of such a need is a certain incompleteness in actuality." He goes on to explain that the soul does not need to be confirmed in its own nature:

As has been said several times, there is no form of the form nor any act of the form qua form, but it still needs to become more fully that which it is.... Always in existential potency to the absolute fullness of its own being, such a form is bound to exert manifold operations in order to fill the privation of actuality which it suffers: not a privation of essence but that of substance which still fails completely 'to be' its own essence, and which in order more fully to be must achieve its own being by exciting a series of operations, each of which shall ultimately bring it a step nearer to its own completion.

In every created being there is an "incompleteness in actuality" for in God alone is His essence His "to be."

All creatures exercise their act of existing only by reason of the Pure Act and hence in a limited way "being always in

86 Ibid., p. 181.
existential potency. In them there must always be a composition of act and the principle of limitation, potency, 'esse' and 'quod est', since esse cannot be the source of its own limitation as, if it were, an effect would pre-exist the cause. Nor are these, 'esse' and 'quod est', to be taken as two existing things, for 'esse' is not a thing, not an essence, nor has an essence any reality without 'esse'. Rather, they are two metaphysical constituents, two real principles, which combined produce a third, namely the composite which we call 'ens'.

Now a spiritual substance is the composite of 'esse' (quo est) and 'forma' (quod est). In them the form or intellectual substance is the very essence. However, that composite being, man, is still further removed from the First Principle and in him there is an even greater limitation or incompleteness in actuality. For in man there is a two-fold composition, 'esse' (act) and 'essentia' (quod est - potency), the latter being a unity produced by the composition of the two metaphysical constituents 'forma' (act) and 'materia' (potency).

Already enjoying its own act of existence as an actually existing substance, the human form, the soul, can have no further act, as such would result in an accidental being; as an already existing form, it can have no other form, as such would entail a regression to infinity. Hence it does not and cannot "need to be confirmed in its own nature." But it is

an intellectual substance which is on the confines of spiritual and corporeal creatures, the powers of which meet in the soul. 88

The soul is a substance which is not the total essence of man. In order to exercise its intellectual powers, the soul must first exercise its vegetative powers to preserve the body which it needs. It must exercise its sensitive powers that the body may perform those acts of sensation which result in the production of the phantasm. Only then can the soul exercise its intellectual powers, rendering actually intelligible the form or species so that the form or species may be one with the possible intellect. Finally in order that the thing be known, the essence had in this simple apprehension must then be restored by the soul's judgement to its own act of existing, for it is the composite union of esse and essence which constitutes the actually existing thing. Thus the soul, in exercising this series of powers and operations, may attain to a knowledge of the created things of the universe, and may proceed by reason to a certain analogical and mediate knowledge of the Cause of these effects. 89

It is only after its separation from the body that the soul may ultimately rejoice in the repose of that immediate intellectual vision, through the aid of the Divine illumination. 90

88 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, ed. cit., part I, q. 77, a. 2 c.
89 Ibid., q. 12, a. 12 c.
90 Ibid., a. 5.
of that Cause, the Source of all truth, which vision constitutes his felicity; only then can the soul embrace in the ecstasy of the fullest love of which the will is capable, the Source of all good so presented to it by the intellect. Nor is the soul's enjoyment of this happiness to be marred by a futile inclination to be united to the body, for this futility is dissolved in the resurrection of the glorified body, and its reunion with the soul. As it is the whole man who exercises the earthly mode of existence, so it is the whole man who exercises the heavenly mode of existence.

In the unity of the one act of being, proper to the soul and communicated to the body by the soul, surpassing the corporeal world by his intellectual power which can have no corporeal organ, man subsists and tends by his manifold powers and operations toward that repose in the understanding of Divine Truth which is his final end and, achieved, the full perfection of his being. Man is not a rational animal. He is an intellectual being whose existence is the working out of an intellectual soul, which, in itself transcending matter, achieves rationality in the ordered union with matter, to work through rationality to the intellectuality of the final vision of Truth Itself.

APPENDIX

Besides the works already mentioned, there are several relatively recent arguments pertinent to the topic of this thesis, and dealing with some of the more urgent difficulties involved in its implications and ramifications. In particular, there have come to the writer's attention four articles appearing in the *New Scholasticism*, which is published quarterly by the American Catholic Philosophical Association.

In one of these, *The Raison D'Etre of the Human Composite, According to St. Thomas Aquinas*, John D. McKian discusses the reason for man's existence in terms of the intrinsic ratio of the hierarchy of being, which God has instituted for His own purposes. His approach is much the same as that of St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, in that he begins at the Summit of the hierarchy - God, Pure Esse, the Transcendent Source of this hierarchy of being.

After establishing that God is pure existence, and hence pure goodness, and noting that "since every agent operates in order to produce what is like to itself, then the

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perfection of any effect will consist precisely in some likeness to the agent upon which it depends for the existence it receives," he notes that the Thomist may find in the order of God's creation, a sense in which this order may be said to require the presence of man, an effect which attains its perfection by "returning to its cause" in its operations of understanding and willing. Man's presence may be said to be required in that "a break or a gap between the spiritual and corporeal orders of creation would be repugnant to such an orderly graduation" - the graduation of being arranged by the Master Architect in a hierarchy according to their degrees of participation in His own perfection. "In having to look to sensible things for all his knowledge, man necessarily affords those things the opportunity of making their due contribution to the formal extrinsic glory of God. In this way, the concert of creatures giving praise to their maker is completed."

The article is closed in giving consideration to an appreciation of the nature of man's intellectual passivity which explains the fact that the human spirit must exist united with a body, which we have just seen explained in terms

3 Ibid., p. 45.
4 Ibid., p. 60.
5 Ibid., p. 63.
6 Ibid., p. 64.
of the finality of creation in general.

Passivity, he notes, can have no place in the Absolute Simplicity of Divinity. Being nearer to Divinity, the angelic separate substances are always in actual possession of the intelligible species connatural to them. "In contrast, the human intellect is the lowest member of the intellectual hierarchy", 7 furthest removed from the Pure Act of the First Intellect, and consequently in a greater state of potentiality or passivity. Unlike the angelic separate substance, the human intellect is, at conception, devoid of intelligible forms, 8 and must look to sensible things for these intelligible forms which it receives from sensible things but not in a totally passive way. For, by its exercise of the matter immersed external and internal sense powers, the soul provides itself with a phantasm from which it may abstract the intelligible species by the illuminating light of the agent intellect. Since the human intellect is in such a state of passivity, and must look to the lower order of sensible things, it is only fitting that the human principle of intellection should exist as the form of the body.

Further considerations on the union of soul and body, may be found in Rev. John F. McCormick's The Burden of the

7 Ibid., p. 67.
8 Supra, p. 13.
Body wherein he discusses the Thomistic answer to the question of whether charity can be had in its perfection in this life. The problem arises because St. Thomas assigns as one reason why the soul cannot rise to the vision of the Divine Light in its essence, that the body is a burden to the soul. Fr. McCormick pursues the matter to point out that St. Thomas is referring to the body as a burden not by reason of the necessary care of the body, nor by reason of the soul's preoccupation with temporal things for the sake of the body, nor does it seem to have reference to sin, but rather by reason of the body's corruptibility which keeps the soul from rising to the vision of the Divine Light in its essence, of which impediment man cannot rid himself in this present life. Fr. McCormick goes on to point out, with reference to several passages, that St. Thomas is insistent that the union of the human soul with the body is not disadvantageous to the soul. Rather, the union is natural to the soul both because of the argument from the completion of the species and the argument of the soul's need in knowing, to turn to phantasms which cannot be had except by means of the body.


10 St. Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae, IV, "De Veritate" (London, 1900), q. 2, a. 10.

11 Supra, p. 33.

12 Supra, pp. 33 - 34.
At the close of the article, Fr. McCormick speaks of the intellectual light as being immaterial (so too is the intelligible object) - the need for freedom from matter on the side of the knower and the known. He goes on to note that "nearness to matter is a diminishing of light in the intellect and in the intelligible form", and that consequently "the intellectual light poured into a soul united with a body is dimmed by the material body to which the soul is conjoined." He continues, "therefore to the feeble light of his intellect there corresponds for man the shaded intelligibility of the forms of material things, his proportioned objects of thought." Therefore, it is natural for man's soul to have an aspectum ad inferiorem, and so the body, rather than being an impediment is an indispensable aid to mental growth.

It is to be noted that both these articles closed with references to the agent intellect. In connection with the agent intellect, Fr. McCormick brings up a perplexing problem in another article, Quaestiones Disputandae. That problem is discussed in Anton C. Pegis' In Umbra Intelligentiae.

13 Supra, p. 30; McCormick, op. cit., p. 400.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
17 Anton C. Pegis, "In Umbra Intelligentiae", The New Scholasticism, XIV (1940), 146 - 180.
wherein he states it as being the difficulty in seeing:

(a) how the soul can have a way of operating, and therefore of being, when separated from the body, and (b) how, even in the body, the agent intellect can have a function which is not entirely limited to illuminating the phantasms in the imagination. 18

In other words, after death's separation of soul and body, does the agent intellect cease to have any utility in the separated soul, "i.e., at precisely the time when the reason for its existence and the condition of its activity no longer exist." 19 As Fr. McCormick pointed out, St. Thomas' texts seem to indicate that the agent intellect has but the one function of illuminating the phantasm, and would then seem to have no utility in the separated soul. Dr. Pegis notes that "the Aristotelianism which St. Thomas made the historical cornerstone of his own thought" 20 has led us into this trap. While falling back on Plato would help in finding a solution, that avenue is closed to us, since Plato's efficient causality of the mover-moved relationship is untenable. 21

Dr. Pegis goes on to show that the soul must be form as well as substance. Furthermore, the union of soul and body must be a natural one, a naturalness which is discovered in the nature and articulation of human knowledge itself. Therein

18 Ibid., p. 147.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., p. 150.
21 Cf. supra, p. 27.
we discover the "humbleness" of the origin of human knowledge and the imperfection of the agent from which it proceeds.

Dr. Pegis continues in stating that perhaps the answer to the problem at hand will be resolved in a consideration of the significance and the consequences, as well as the metaphysical origins, of St. Thomas' test: "Ratiocinatur homo discurrendo et inquiringo lumine rationali per continuum et tempus obumbrato, ex hoc quod cognitionem a sensu et imagine accipit..."22

He goes on to note that man is situated in nobility, in the hierarchy of being, above the brute animal but also below the angel. As such, man has a lesser degree of intellectuality than the angel, varying by reason of the lesser universality of the principle of knowledge and hence his intellect requires a knowledge of "the natures of singulars through singular species". Giving closer consideration to the differences, he notes:

(a) the soul is made for union with the body, the angel not; (b) the soul is rational, the angel is intellect; (c) the angel has an intellect that is receptive only of what is above it, receiving illumination from above, whether from God or from another angel, while the human soul has an intellect that is receptive of both what is above it and below it, for the human soul is illumined and also receives knowledge from phantasms; (d) the angel has an immutable vertibility, because it clings immutably to the good or the evil to which it has once

22 Pegis, op. cit., p. 157; St. Thomas Aquinas, "In II Sententiarum Petri Lombardi", Opera Omnia (New York, 1948), d.III, q.1, a.2, - in the latter work we find intellectuali instead of rationali.
turned through its own election, while man has a mutable vertibility, because he can go from good to evil, and the reverse; (e) the angel expresses himself through certain intellectual signs without the vehicle of physical sound, while man speaks through the expression of sound. 23

Dr. Pegis places great stress on the fact of the soul's imperfection as an intellectual substance, the reason for finding within the soul's essence infra-intellectual powers. On a subsequent page, "intellectual light belongs to the soul by the very fact that it participates in an intellectual nature."24 To see these differences "is to see, in a way, the relation of the light of the agent intellect towards intelligere and abstrahere."25 Note the assignation of two functions to the agent intellect - the abstraction of the intelligible species and the illumination of the intelligible species abstracted.

The light of man's agent intellect is not sufficient for a distinct knowledge of things.26 The intellectual light which exists in man for knowing (intelligere), and in which the soul shares, is a diminished light; it suffers from a debilitas, a weakness whereby it does not actually contain the determinations of the things known by man who, being intellectually without actual specification, must turn to the realm of


24 Pegis, op.cit., p. 164.

25 Ibid.

material substances - hence the need for abstraction (abstrahere).

The writer confesses that Dr. Pegis' conclusion is rather vague. However, it would seem that he does conclude that the agent intellect has a function of illumination over and above the function of abstraction. In closing, Dr. Pegis states that "the intellectual light exists by nature as the means of knowing whether in God or in the angel or in man." This statement would seem to leave very little doubt that Dr. Pegis does reach this conclusion, for he would scarcely assign to God's or the angel's intellect the function of abstraction.

It is the writer's opinion that the agent intellect in the separated soul can have the utility of illumination though not of abstraction. In support of this conclusion, the following passage is offered:

...operatio intellectus agentis et possibilis respicit phantasmata secundum quod est anima corpore unita; sed cum erit anima a corpore separata, per intellectum possibilim recipiet species effluentes a substantiae superioribus, et per intellectum agentem habebit virtutem ad intelligendum. 28


28 St. Thomas Aquinas, Quaestiones Disputatae, II, "De Anima" (London, 1897), 15, ad 9.
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6. "In Aristotelis Librum de Anima Commentarium. See Foster, Kenelm.


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