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## What is a Power of the Soul? Aquinas' Answer

Does the soul have powers? If so, what general account can philosophy give of powers of the soul? One can broach some of Thomas's more obscure teachings concerning the soul and its powers, such as that the soul alone is the subject of some powers and that powers flow from the soul, by asking these broad questions. Many commentators have preferred, however, to focus on specific powers of the soul, which has resulted in detailed studies of, for example, the intellect and the will. Here, however, I want to take up powers of the soul in general and, through a causal analysis of their being, articulate what they are.<sup>1</sup>

I intend, then, to present Thomas's answers to the two questions at the beginning of this article. In order to determine whether the soul has powers, I examine two arguments Thomas gives for their existence. Then, after exploring the soul's causal relations to a power, I present a general description of a power of the soul applicable to sight, hearing, imagination, intellect, will, and the rest. This approach not only allows me to sketch out the sort of reality that a power of the soul is, but also

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Pasnau has recently addressed these issues in his book on Thomas's study of human nature in the *Prima pars*, in which he spends a whole chapter considering the soul and its powers. See his *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature: A Philosophical Study of Summa theologiae* 1 q. 75-89 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 143-70. I will, therefore, be comparing my interpretation of Thomas with his, and because I disagree with how he approaches certain issues in Thomas's thought, I will be criticizing some aspects of his interpretation.

The classic commentators, Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, also discuss these issues. See Cajetan's commentary on the the *Prima pars*, q. 77 aa. 1 5-6 (Leonine ed., vol. v, 236-39, 244-47). For John of St. Thomas, see *Cursus philosophicus thomisticus*, ed. Beatus Rieser, 3 vols. (Turin: Marietti: 1937), vol. III, 61-74. Others who have touched on these issues in Thomas's writings include George KLUBERTANZ, *The Philosophy of Human Nature* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1953), 86-102; Pawel SIWEK, *Psychologia Metaphysica* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1956); and John WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Created Being* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 266-94. A broad study of the medieval treatment of these issues can be found in Pius Künzle, *Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen: Problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von Augustin bis und mit Thomas von Aquin* (Fribourg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg i. Schweiz, 1956), and a review of the views of late medieval thinkers prior to Thomas can be found in Odon LOTTIN, *Psychologie et morale aux XII e et XIII e siècles*, Volume 1, and Id., *Problemes de Psychologie* (Gembloux: J. Ducolot, 1957), 427-502. How modern and contemporary philosophers have handled these questions is addressed in Julien PEGHAIRE, "Peut-on encore parler des facultés de l'âme?": *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa* 11 (1941), 111-43.

brings to the fore a number of puzzling ideas in Thomas's teaching concerning the human soul and its powers.

I will be focusing primarily on the human soul and its powers, and I do so for a few reasons. First, we are much more familiar with our own activities than with those of other beings. Second, human beings possess all the different kinds of powers that can be found in other en-souled beings, namely, vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual powers. Third, the human being presents the most intriguing philosophical puzzles concerning powers of the soul, especially those that arise from a consideration of distinctively human powers, namely, intellect and will. Finally, Thomas himself is clearly most interested in the soul of the human being than in that of any other ensouled being. Indeed, he identifies the human soul as the highest form in nature and thus the human being as the end of all natural coming-to-be.<sup>2</sup> As a theologian, moreover, Thomas undoubtedly saw the study of human nature as a way to grasp better the Incarnation and perhaps even as a way to understand personhood and the Trinity.

Methodologically speaking, I will be addressing these issues from the perspective of philosophical psychology, considered as springing from natural philosophy, rather than that of a metaphysician or theologian. In other words, I want to show as far as possible how Thomas's teaching on the soul and its powers finds its roots in his analysis of human vital activity and the natural world rather than from overarching principles concerning being in general, God, and the world as created. This approach demands at least two things from an interpreter of Thomas: first, that he be attentive to the kind of argument that Thomas puts forward and show how it fits into the way in which a natural philosopher would approach questions about powers of the soul; second, that he reconstruct to some degree Thomas's positions, since the texts he will be working with are generally not works of natural philosophy. My purpose, therefore, is to present Thomas's teaching about powers of the soul in line with the concerns and methods proper to philosophical psychology.

Reconstructing Thomas's thought about powers of the soul along these lines involves, of course, the risk of distorting his positions. But it is worth doing in order to see how his teachings about the powers of the soul could be presented as the result of the investigations of a natural philosopher. The approach here, therefore, is distinct from—and in part a response to—that of Robert Pasnau in his recent exposition of Thomas's so-called "Treatise on Human Nature", namely, *Prima pars*, qq. 75-89.<sup>3</sup> For although Pasnau undertakes a philosophical study of a medieval theological work, he fails to attend to distinctions relevant to carrying out such a task, one of which would be the distinction between metaphysics and natural philosophy. In Pasnau's account, philosophy is (now) characterized by its tendency "toward the abstract and conceptual";<sup>4</sup> by its attempt

<sup>2</sup> See *Summa contra gentiles* [henceforth, SCG], III.22 (Leonine ed., vol. XIV, 53b8-29).

<sup>3</sup> See note 1 above.

<sup>4</sup> *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, p. 14. This apparently sets philosophy apart from "scien-

to understand "why and how what is said to be true can be true,"<sup>5</sup> and by its not presupposing religious doctrine. If one simply cuts out the religious doctrines presupposed in the *Summa theologiae*, then a work of philosophy remains. Such is the *modus operandi* for Pasnau's study of the "Treatise on Human Nature". The order in which Thomas treats subjects and the light under which he considers them, for example, are apparently negligible when dealing with particular arguments, even though Pasnau acknowledges that the "Treatise on Human Nature" fits into a larger context.<sup>6</sup> The failure to take into account these and other criteria that Thomas himself understood as important for understanding the kind of argumentation taking place causes Pasnau to misunderstand some of Thomas's positions. What follows, therefore, is an attempt to respect these criteria when considering Thomas's teaching concerning powers of the soul, and in this way it can be taken as a response to Pasnau's treatment of these same issues.<sup>7</sup>

In order to approach Thomas's teachings from the perspective of philosophical psychology, it may be helpful to sketching out the context in which questions concerning powers of the soul would arise.

### I. Motions, rests, and powers

Things in nature change. This fact seems indisputable; it is grasped immediately through observation and experience.<sup>8</sup> But things also achieve stability in certain respects. There is, then, both motion and rest among natural things.<sup>9</sup> Evidence of rest is as extensive as that of motion: a rock stops falling and remains on the ground; a cheetah stops its chase when it catches its prey; I conclude taking counsel with myself and rest assured with my decision. What was in motion before is now at rest with regard to the very aspect that was changing.

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ce", which deals with the concrete and empirical.

<sup>5</sup> *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 16. Pasnau sees this as the "project of philosophy".

<sup>6</sup> Pasnau's attempt to explain the larger context of the "Treatise on Human Nature" is given in *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 16-22.

<sup>7</sup> Along these lines, then, I will be echoing and perhaps adding to the comments made by Denis Bradley at the end of his article criticizing Pasnau (see "'To Be or Not to Be?': Pasnau on Aquinas's Immortal Human Soul": *The Thomist* 68 [2004], 1-39 [especially 33-39]). What I am attempting to do is something like what Bradley calls "an extracted Thomistic philosophy [that] is, in fact, a contemporary historian's reconstruction" (36). (Cf. J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. xvii-xviii). Since Pasnau calls his book a philosophical study of the "Treatise on Human Nature" in the *Prima pars*, I am taking him to be attempting a similar task.

<sup>8</sup> This is not to say, of course, that no philosopher has ever denied this. But Thomas considers the denial of this fact an "extraneous" philosophical position, insofar as it would eliminate natural science as a valid philosophical endeavor. This denial of motion, says Thomas, is similar to the denial of freedom; for as the former eliminates natural science, so the latter eliminates moral science. On this, see *Questiones disputatae de malo* [henceforth, *De malo*], q. 6 (Leonine ed., vol. XXIII, 147-48:238-268).

<sup>9</sup> As James Weisheipl points out, some rests—namely, those that are "natural" (which are of prime interest here)—"should be understood not as the mere absence of activity but as the positive possession of fulfillment" (J. A. WEISHEIPL, *Nature and Motion in the Middle Ages* [Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985], 22).

An important feature of many motions and rests is their regularity. Indeed, our recognition of some events as unpredictable indicates that instances of the opposite kind of events—regular and predictable ones—also obtain in the world. Motions and rests are regular and predictable because things move and rest in accord with the kinds of things they are. It is not surprising to see a rock fall, a cheetah run, or a human being deliberate. In short, action follows being; what a thing does follows upon the sort of thing that it is.<sup>10</sup>

Regular and predictable motions do not obtain simply because something external acts upon what is in motion; rather, such motions are determined in some way from within. In other words, a source internal to what is in motion is responsible for the motion's regularity and predictability. This is what it means when Aristotle says that such a thing has a "nature" (φύσις), "a principle of motion and standing"<sup>11</sup>.

It has an internal source that governs the ways in which it both moves and remains stable<sup>12</sup>. A rock, for example, has a nature such that it is affected in a certain way (i.e., it regularly falls toward the earth), whereas a cheetah has a nature such that it acts in a certain way (i.e., it chases antelope). This difference in how regularity manifests itself, either as an undergoing or an action, suggests two aspects of nature, one that governs how a thing is moved in regular ways and another how it brings about motion in regular ways<sup>13</sup>. In both cases we speak of such motions as natural, i.e., governed by a principle internal to what is in motion<sup>14</sup>. The nature of a thing, then, explains why it behaves in regular and predictable ways. In the absence of such an explanation, one would have to say that regularity and predictability are the results of chance, which eliminates the basis for any rational account of motion and rest.

Another obvious fact is that not all motions and rests take place at the same time. This is why Thomas, before giving an account of motion and rest in *De principiis naturae*, bids the reader thus: "Notice that something is able to be although it is not, while some other thing is"<sup>15</sup>. Thomas then introduces the notions of potency and act: "What can be is said to be in

<sup>10</sup> "[...] cum nihil operetur nisi inquantum est actu, modus operandi uniuscuiusque rei sequitur modum essendi ipsius" (*Summa theologiae* [henceforth, ST] I q.89 a.1 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 370]).

<sup>11</sup> "[...] ἀρχὴν ἔχει κινήσεως καὶ τάσεως" (*Physics* II.1: 192b14).

<sup>12</sup> For a thorough study of the concept of nature, see J. A. WEISHEIPL, *Nature and Motion in the Middle Ages*, 1-23.

<sup>13</sup> Hence Thomas makes a distinction between the "active principle of motion" and the "passive principle of motion" (*In octo libros Physicorum Aristotelis expositio* [henceforth, In Phys.], Lib. II, lect. 1, n. 144 [Marietti ed., 74]). See also J. A. WEISHEIPL, *Nature and Motion in the Middle Ages*, pp. XI and 22.

<sup>14</sup> In living things one recognizes not only a natural way of acting, but also a natural way of being affected. The bird that fails to flap its wings falls like a stone, because it too is heavy like a stone. Thomas, of course, sees this: "Unde quod animal movetur deorsum, non est ex natura animalis inquantum est animal, sed ex natura dominantis elementi" (*In Phys.*, Lib. II, lect. 1, n. 145 [Marietti ed., 75]).

<sup>15</sup> "Nota quod quoddam potest esse licet non sit, quoddam vero est" (*De principiis naturae*, §1 [Leonine ed., vol. XLIII, 39:1-2]).

potency, whereas what already is is said to be in act"<sup>16</sup>. Consider again one of the examples already given: A cheetah chasing an antelope is actually running; when it catches its prey and stops, it is potentially running. By carrying out activities in relation to various objects, natural things—most evidently, living things—manifest determinate powers or capacities (*potentiae*) to be in motion or at rest in different ways.

Can we so easily conclude that such powers exist? Not all philosophers have thought so. David Hume, for example, was opposed to positing powers in things. "It must certainly be allowed", he maintains,

"that nature has kept us at a great distance from all her secrets, and has afforded us only the knowledge of a few superficial qualities of objects; while she conceals from us those powers and principles on which the influence of these objects entirely depends"<sup>17</sup>.

Given that nature conceals the powers of things from human beings, Hume considers talk of them meaningless. One may describe and even classify motions and rests that one experiences or observes, but one should not infer the existence of powers therefrom. Behind Hume's objection, of course, lies his skepticism about our ability to know cause-effect relations and necessary connections between things. Yet even setting aside these epistemological issues, Hume clearly raises an important difficulty. Is it necessary to hold that things have powers? Is it possible that there be just the thing and its motion or rest? Must one postulate some intermediary between a thing and what it does, "a middle between a substance and operation"?<sup>18</sup>

## II. That the soul has powers

The questions at the close of the last section are more general versions of the question with which this article begins: Does the soul have powers? In order to answer this, let us consider, along with Thomas, human activity.

A human being moves and changes in innumerable ways, from breathing to walking to seeing to thinking. In performing these activities, a human being moves himself and is thus considered a living being<sup>19</sup>. In

<sup>16</sup> "Illud quod potest esse dicitur esse potentia, illud quod iam est dicitur esse actu" (*De principiis naturae*, §1 [Leonine ed., vol. XLIII, 39:2-4]).

<sup>17</sup> D. HUME, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Section IV, Part II, § 29. This passage can be found in *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge, Third edition, rev. P. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 32-33. To be sure, Hume has a different notion of "nature" than does Thomas; yet I think Hume's point about "powers and principles" can be understood as opposed to the general idea that such things can be known and spoken about.

<sup>18</sup> This is how Thomas briefly characterizes a power in *Questio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis* [henceforth, *QD de spir. creat.*] q. un. a. 11 s.c. 4 (Leonine ed., vol. xxiv. 2, 117:173-74): "[. . .] potentia est medium inter substantiam et operationem".

<sup>19</sup> "Propria autem ratio vite est ex hoc quod aliquid est natum mouere se ipsum, large accipiendo, prout etiam intellectualis operatio motus quidam dicitur; ea enim sine vita esse dicimus que ab exteriori tantum principio moueri possunt" (*Sententia libri De anima* [henceforth, *Sent. lib. De an.*] II.1 [Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1, 70:177-81]).

other words, the human being has a principle of life that is traditionally called a "soul" —not only for human beings, but also for all self-moving beings. This name "soul" may connote much that is not intended here. In asserting that a human being has a soul, nothing more is meant at this point than that there is a principle present in the human being that differentiates it from a corpse as well as from a stone. Corpses and stones —i.e., dead and nonliving bodies— cannot perform vital activities wherein they move themselves; a human being can.

Some bodies are alive, some are dead, and some are nonliving. Since a soul determines a body to be of a certain sort —namely, living— it must be a formal principle rather than a material one; for form determines a thing to be of such-and-such a sort, whereas matter is what is made to be of such-and-such a sort. As a formal principle, then, the soul is a kind of act<sup>20</sup>. But one can speak of two kinds of act: first act, which Aristotle compares with possessing scientific understanding of something; and second act, which Aristotle compares with actually contemplating something<sup>21</sup>. According to Aristotle and Thomas, the soul is a first act. For just as understanding something scientifically allows one to contemplate what is understood whenever one wants, even though one is not always contemplating it; so the soul allows for the performance of vital activities by the composite, even though not every such activity is always taking place. Soul as first act and matter as potency, therefore, together constitute a living natural substance.

At first glance, then, it looks as if the soul is not a complete substance; rather, it is the formal principle of a living substance<sup>22</sup>. In order to give a complete account of the soul, therefore, it is important to determine the sort of subject in which it must exist, i.e., the kind of body of which it is the formal principle<sup>23</sup>. Obviously the soul is the principle of a body ca-

<sup>20</sup> See *De anima*, II.1: 412a9-11; *Sent. lib. De an.*, II.1 (Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1, 69:113-17).

<sup>21</sup> See *De anima*, II.1: 412a10-11; *Sent. lib. De an.*, II.1 (Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1, 69:118-29).

<sup>22</sup> The human soul presents some difficulties on this score, since there are good reasons for thinking that it can survive after separation from the body and so in some way appears to be a substance in its own right. Thomas addresses these issues concerning the human soul in *ST* I qq.75-76. To present a full account of these matters is beyond the scope of this paper, but the following points should be kept in mind. The human soul is subsistent (I q.75 a.2 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 196-97]), and yet the soul cannot be identified with the human being, because the human soul does not include flesh and bones, which partly constitute what it is to be human (I q. 75 a.4 [Leonine ed., vol. V, 200-1]). Moreover, because the human soul as an intellectual principle allows the human being to perform his proper operation (i.e., *intellegere*), it should be identified as the form of the human being united to the human body—although the human soul is not to be thought of as simply a material form, as is the soul of a plant or that of a brute animal, but as the most noble of forms that includes within it the powers of a vegetative and a sensitive soul (I q.76 a.1 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 208-10]). As we will see below, however, this form nonetheless can have proper accidents that inhere in it alone —e.g., intellect and will— and in this way it is like a substance in the Aristotelian sense. For a discussion of Thomas's ideas concerning the unique status of the human soul, as well as a criticism of Pasnau's reading of Thomas's teaching, see BRADLEY, "To Be or Not to Be": Pasnau on Aquinas's Immortal Human Soul".

<sup>23</sup> In this way the soul is similar to an accident, for when defining both a proper subject must be included in the definition. On this, see *Sent. lib. De an.*, II.1 (Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1, 68:59-83).

pable of having life. Such a body is natural, not man-made; for it is the result not of human skill, but of natural generative activities. Furthermore, such a body is actual in some sense—it is alive—but is also ordered to further activities—it can perform a variety of vital activities. In other words, such a body has parts that can serve as tools; it is organic. For if self-movement is to take place, the body must be equipped with different organs so arranged as to act on and be affected by other organs in a cooperative fashion in order to attain various ends. Such integration and interdependence of parts is a key aspect of physical life, and it is brought about and maintained by the principle of life in a body that is organic. Given this account of the proper subject of the soul, Aristotle concludes and Thomas agrees that “the soul is the first act of a natural organic body.”<sup>24</sup>

A human being, then, is a living body, an ensouled body, flesh and bones composed with a soul. Can an analysis of the human being and human vital activity stop here? Is the soul adequate to explain all the vital activities we perform? Thomas thinks not. The analysis must go further, for the soul so defined—to wit, the essence of the soul<sup>25</sup>—is not sufficient to explain either the diversity or the transience of vital activities.<sup>26</sup> On these two bases, therefore, Thomas argues for the existence of powers of the soul.

#### *Argument based on the diversity of vital activities.*

Thomas maintains that the soul has powers based on the diversity of vital activities. He argues as follows:

“[...] the essence of the soul itself is not the immediate principle of its operations; rather, it operates by means of accidental principles [...] This appears from the very diversity of actions of the soul, which are diverse in kind and cannot be traced back to a single, immediate principle, since some of

<sup>24</sup>This is a more concise rendering of Aristotle's common account of the soul at *De anima*, II.1: 412a27-b1: διὸ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐντελέχεια ἡ πρώτη σώματος τοιοῦτον δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἡ ὀργανικόν. Thomas echoes this definition at *Sent. lib. De an.*, II.1 (Leonine ed. vol. xlv.1, 72:362): “Anima est actus primus corporis phisici organici”. In arriving at this account, I have basically followed the steps taken by Aristotle himself in *De anima*, II.1: 412a1-b9. Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's approach to the soul in this chapter, i.e., *Sent. lib. De an.* II.1 (Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1, 68-73:40-392), is very illuminating.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas uses this phrase, *essentia animae*, at various points in the *Prima pars*, and Pasnau is puzzled by it. At first sight, as Pasnau says, it “simply reflects [Thomas's] need to draw some distinction between the soul's accidents [its powers] and the subject and source of those accidents [the soul itself]” (*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 152). There is more to it than this. The human soul subsists—i.e., has *esse* in its own right—and communicates *esse* to the body, and in this way it is like a substance in the Aristotelian sense. Hence from a metaphysical perspective the human soul can be seen as a composition of *esse* and *essentia*. The phrase *essentia animae*, therefore, serves not only to separate what is accidental from what is essential, but also indicates the metaphysical composition of the human soul. This, moreover, leads to a more profound understanding of man, whose powers and operations must always be seen as not at the heart of his existence, but as accidental.

<sup>26</sup>I focus on the variety and transience of vital activities because these arguments spring more from the perspective of the natural philosopher, who begins from what is manifest in our external and internal sense experience. For a discussion of other arguments that Thomas gives for the existence of powers of the soul, see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 275-94.

them are actions and some affections, and they have other differences of this sort, which must be attributed to diverse principles. And so since the essence of the soul is a single principle, it cannot be the immediate principle of all its activities; rather, it must have several diverse powers that correspond to the diversity of its activities".<sup>27</sup>

The diversity of vital activities is apparent from our own experience. Thomas argues that such diversity, such as that between walking (a way of acting) and hearing (a way of being affected), cannot stem directly from the same principle, since diverse activities must spring from diverse powers. (Thomas refers to "actions" and "affections" because these realities obviously belong to diverse genera of being.) For Thomas, then, the existence of diverse powers explains the diversity of the vital activities that we experience<sup>28</sup>. In other words, Thomas infers the cause —i.e., the immediate sources of vital activities— from its effects —i.e., the diverse vital activities that human beings experience in themselves and observe in other beings. Hence this argument proceeds *a posteriori* and so serves as a fitting starting-point for the natural philosopher.

<sup>27</sup> "[...] ipsa essentia anime non est principium immediatum suarum operationum, sed operatur mediantibus principiis accidentalibus [...] Deinde hoc apparet ex ipsa diversitate actionum anime, que sunt genere diverse et non possunt reduci in unum principium immediatum, cum quedam earum sint actiones et quedam passioness, et aliis huiusmodi differentiis different, que oportet attribui diversis principiis. Et ita, cum essentia anime sit unum principium, non potest esse immediatum principium omnium suarum operationum, set oportet quod habeat plures et diversas potentias correspondentes diversitati suarum actionum." (*Questiones disputatæ de anima* [henceforth, *QD de an.*] q. 12 [Leonine ed., vol. xxxiv.1 110:205-207, 210-215]).

A similar argument that there are powers of the soul based on the diversity of vital activities can be found in *Quodlibet* x [henceforth, *Quod. x*], q. 3 a. 1 (Leonine ed., vol. xxv.1, 130-31:41-50): "[...] impossibile est ut idem secundum idem sit naturaliter principium plurium et diversorum, immo quasi oppositorum; anima autem secundum diversas potentias inuenitur esse principium actuum diversorum secundum speciem et quasi oppositorum; unde impossibile est quod ipsa essentia anime, que est una, sit immediate horum principium; et ideo oportet ponere in anima, preter eius substantiam, potentias naturales, que sunt horum actuum immediata principia». For another argument along these lines, see *QD de spir. creat.* q. un. a. 11 (Leonine ed., vol. xxxiv.2, 118:216-20).

<sup>28</sup> Some of Thomas's contemporaries rejected the position that powers of the soul are distinct from the soul itself, including Bonaventure and Henry of Ghent. See P. KÜNZLE, *Das Verhältnis der Seele zu ihren Potenzen: Problemgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von Augustin bis und mit Thomas von Aquin, passim*.

Édouard-Henri Wéber, in *La controverse de 1270 à l'Université de Paris et son retissement sur la pensée philosophique de s. Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1970) (especially 87-220), maintains that Thomas changed his mind about the real distinction between the soul and the intellectual power owing to the arguments of Siger of Brabant. (Wéber argues along similar lines in "Les discussions de 1270 à l'Université de Paris et leur influence sur la pensée philosophique de S. Thomas d'Aquin", in: *Die Auseinandersetzungen an der Pariser Universität im XIII. Jahrhundert*, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia*, Volume 10 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976], pp. 285-316.) This reading of Thomas is criticized by Charles Lefèvre in "Siger de Brabant a-t-il influencé Saint Thomas?": *Mélanges de science religieuse* 31 (1974) 203-15, and it appears to be effectively refuted by Bernardo Bazán in "Le dialogue philosophique entre Siger de Brabant et Thomas d'Aquin: À propos d'un ouvrage récent de É.-H. Wéber": *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 72 (1974) 53-155. For another critique of Wéber's interpretation of Thomas on this issue, see J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 288-94.



It should be noted that this argument presupposes a correspondence between the kind of activity taking place and that from which the activity springs. This is clear from the sentence following the passage just quoted: "For a power is said to be in relation to its act".<sup>29</sup> Thomas makes a similar point in a related discussion in the *Prima pars*, in which he argues that the activity of an angel is not its substance. One of his arguments applies just as well to our question concerning the existence of powers of the human soul:

"Since a power is said to be in relation to its act," Thomas says, "there must be a diversity of powers according to a diversity of acts. On account of this, it is said that a distinct (*proprius*) act corresponds to a distinct power".<sup>30</sup>

A distinct power, in other words, is defined according to a distinct act of which it is a principle, active or passive. According to Thomas, moreover, a distinct act is determined by its formal object, i.e., an object that differs from other objects precisely as an object.<sup>31</sup> In other words, in distinguishing powers of the soul, it does not matter that what the vital activity corresponds to is diverse in reality, e.g., a man and a horse. What matters is that what the activity corresponds to differs in how it stands over against the living being and relates to it, e.g., a man as something colored rather than as something heard. Hence, to the extent that one identifies diverse vital activities by identifying diverse formal objects to which a living being relates, to that same extent one demarcates powers of the soul.

*Argument based on the transience of vital activities.*

Thomas also argues for the existence of powers of the soul on the basis of the transience of vital activities. This is clear in his response to the query, "Whether the very essence of the soul is the soul's power", found in *Prima pars* q. 77 a. 1. When considering this article, one should keep in mind that for Thomas the soul ultimately accounts for the difference between a living being (i.e., a being able to move itself) and a nonliving being, for the soul is the first act that allows a living being to move itself.

<sup>29</sup> "Potentia enim ad actum dicitur" (*QD de an.* q. 12 [Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.1, 110:220]). This correlation does not imply that a power is itself a relation, although it is certainly relational, since it is order to act. (This may be why Thomas uses the verb *dicitur* here rather than *est*.) As will be clear below, Thomas maintains that powers are qualities, not relations.

<sup>30</sup> "Cum enim potentia dicatur ad actum, oportet quod secundum diversitatem actuum sit diversitas potentialium: propter quod dicitur quod proprius actus respondet propriae potentiae" (*ST*, I q. 54 a. 3 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 47]). More would have to be said here, of course, concerning what constitutes a distinct kind of act. A distinct kind of act requires a distinct formal object. What constitutes a distinct formal object, thought, is the work of another day.

<sup>31</sup> "Sed sciendum est quod ex obiectis diuersis non diuersificantur actus et potentie anime nisi quando fuerit differentia obiectorum in quantum sunt obiecta, id est secundum rationem formalem obiecti, sicut uisibili ab audibili. Si autem seruetur eadem ratio obiecti, quecumque alia diuersitas non inducit diuersitatem actuum secundum speciem et potentie: eiusdem enim potentie est uidere hominem coloratum et lapidem coloratum, quia hec diuersitas per accidens se habet obiecto in quantum est obiectum" (*Sent. lib. De an.*, II.6 [Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1, 93-94:162-72]).

The question as to whether the very essence of the soul is the soul's power, therefore, affords Thomas an opportunity to determine more precisely how the soul provides the wherewithal for vital activities.

Do vital activities take place simply because of what the soul is in itself, namely, the first act of a natural organic body? A negative answer to this question implies that the soul has other features not denominated by its very essence that give rise to vital activities—in other words, that something that falls outside the account of the soul's essence must be introduced to explain vital activities. Thomas argues for such a position as follows:

"[. . .] it is impossible to say that the essence of the soul is the soul's power [. . .] This also appears impossible in the soul. For with respect to its own essence, the soul is act. If, therefore, the very essence of the soul were the immediate principle of activity, then anything possessed of a soul would at every moment have its vital activities in act, just as anything possessed of a soul is at every moment alive in act. For insofar as it is form, the soul is not an act ordered to further act, but is the ultimate terminus of generation. Hence that it is in potency to another act does not belong to it according to its essence, insofar as it is form, but according to its power. And so the soul itself, insofar as it underlies its power, is said to be first act ordered to second act. It is found, however, that what has a soul is not at every moment in act with respect to vital operations. Hence even in the definition of the soul it is said that it is the act of a body having life in potency, which potency, however, does not cast aside the soul. It remains, then, that the essence of the soul is not its power. For nothing is in potency with respect to act insofar as it is an act".<sup>32</sup>

The essence of the soul cannot be the direct principle of vital activities because "it is found" that such activities come and go. No human being, for example, is performing all vital activities at each and every moment. Rather, human beings see at one time and do not see at another; they think at one time and do not think at another. If one were to hold that the essence of the soul is the direct principle of vital activities, however, one would have to hold that a human being is in act at every moment with respect to all vital activities, because the soul, as the form of the living composite, is in its essence an act. In other words, the soul is the determining and perfecting principle composed with matter as a result of an act of generation, which principle is present at every moment of a human being's life. Hence

<sup>32</sup>"[. . .] impossibile est dicere quod essentia animae sit eius potentia. [. . .] Hoc etiam impossibile apparet in anima. Nam anima secundum suam essentiam est actus. Si ergo ipsa essentia animae esset immediatum operationis principium, semper habens animam actu haberet opera vitae; sicut semper habens animam actu est vivum. —Non enim, inquantum est forma, est actus ordinatus ad ulteriorem actum, sed est ultimus terminus generationis. Unde quod sit in potentia adhuc ad alium actum, hoc non competit ei secundum suam essentiam, inquantum est forma; sed secundum suam potentiam. Et sic ipsa anima, secundum quod subest suae potentiae, dicitur actus primus, ordinatus ad actum secundum. —Invenitur autem habens animam non semper esse in actu operum vitae. Unde etiam in definitione animae dicitur quod est actus corporis potentia vitam habentis, quae tamen potentia non abiicit animam. —Relinquitur ergo quod essentia animae non est eius potentia. Nihil enim est in potentia secundum actum, inquantum est actus" (*ST* I q.77 a.1 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 236-37]).

if it is also in its essence the power from which vital activities immediately spring, then each and every vital activity would also be in its determined and perfected state at every moment. But precisely because a human being is not performing all vital activities simultaneously, there must be intermediaries situated between the soul (first act) and vital activities (second acts) as immediate principles of the latter.

It should be noted that Thomas is not claiming that all vital activities come and go, since there may be some that are always going on (e.g., the beating of the heart). It is enough that there be some activities that are recognized as both vital (i.e., as springing from a being precisely as self-moving in some respect) and transient. If no activities were recognized as both vital and transient, then the realm of natural life would encompass only those activities that are always going on (i.e., certain vegetative activities). Thomas would certainly reject such a view, since it amounts to eliminating sensation and locomotion as natural vital activities. This may explain why Thomas says, "It is found, however, that what has a soul is not at every moment in act with respect to vital *operations*" (my emphasis on the plural). In other words, even if a living being must always be performing some vital operation, it is not always performing all the vital operations possible to it, and this shows that the soul is not the power from which vital operations immediately spring.

Unlike the previous argument based on the diversity of vital activities, in which Thomas move *a posteriori*, here Thomas proceeds *a priori*.<sup>33</sup> For in this argument he moves from what is prior in being, the essence of the soul, and concludes on the basis of the definition of the soul as an act that it cannot be the direct principle of vital activities. Not only by considering vital activities, therefore, but also by considering what the soul is in itself, is one able to show that there are powers of the soul.

### *Comments on methodology*

At this point I want to clarify some of my comments near the beginning of this paper concerning the approach I am taking toward these questions. I do so because one could easily take exception to the above presentation of the argument from *Prima pars* q. 77 a. 1, in which Thomas shows that the essence of the soul is not the soul's power. Someone who has read the whole article may note that I have conveniently skipped over an argument in the body that precedes the one just given. Shouldn't the second argument —i.e., the one just given— be read in light of the first? Pasnau, for example, seems to think so, for he reads the second argument in light of q. 79 a. 1 an argument practically identi-

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<sup>33</sup>This claim has to be qualified to some degree, since, as Cajetan points out, one of the premises of the argument is from *experientia* (see *Commentaria in Summa theologiae*, I q.77 a.1, n. 11 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 238]), namely, "Invenitur autem habens animam non semper esse in actu operum vitae".

cal to the first one in the body of q. 77 a. 1.<sup>34</sup> In so doing, however, he is compelled to import premises (e.g., that to live is to be for living things) unnecessary for understanding the second argument and, in my view, misrepresent its role in the article.<sup>35</sup>

As my presentation of the argument indicates, I think it stands on its own as an analysis of human vital activity and thus as an argument that proceeds according to the mode of philosophical psychology. In making this claim, though, I can still maintain that it assists the theological argument that precedes it.<sup>36</sup> In fact, it makes sense that in the *Summa theologiae* the authoritative and governing theological argument would precede the psychological one. In bringing up this objection, though, I don't pretend to give a full explication of how to differentiate what belongs to psychology and what belongs to theology in a work like the *Summa theologiae*; rather, I bring it up in order to clarify the perspective from which I am approaching these issues as well as to indicate some of the distinctions one should make when reconstructing Thomas's philosophical thought.

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<sup>34</sup> Pasnau focuses on q. 79 a. 1, because it deals explicitly with the distinction between the human soul and the intellect, which appears harder to maintain since intellectual activity seems to belong to the very essence of a human being. By q. 79 a. 1, however, Thomas thinks that he has said enough to distinguish the intellect from the essence of the soul, for he begins his response thus: "[...] necesse est dicere, secundum praemissa, quod intellectus sit aliqua potentia animae, et non ipsa animae essentia" (*ST* I q. 79 a. 1 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 258]). Interestingly, Pasnau acknowledges that Thomas thinks this, although Pasnau himself says the following: "The question of 79 a. 1 is whether the intellect is a power of the soul or the soul's essence. Nothing that Aquinas has claimed up to this point in the Treatise explicitly settles this question. For although q. 77 a. 1c does distinguish the soul's essence from its powers, it doesn't decide any questions about what those capacities are" (*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 151). Hence Pasnau proceeds to analyze the more specific argument of q. 79 a. 1, instead of the general one in q. 77 a. 1, or even the one in q. 54 a. 3, which deals with the same issue in the context of angelic beings. But because the argument in q. 79 a. 1 simply repeats the first argument in q. 77 a. 1, and applies it to the intellect, I am justified in saying that Pasnau reads the second argument in q. 77 a. 1, in light of the first.

Interestingly, Pasnau's way of proceeding has the odd effect of reading the second argument of q. 77 a. 1, in light of q. 79 a. 1. If one is going to read it in light of some other argument, it would make more sense to do so in light of q. 54 a. 3, and this for a few reasons: first, it actually precedes q. 77 a. 1; second, this would cohere better with the theological order of the *Prima Pars*; and third, it would answer the difficulty that Pasnau has —i.e., that in q. 77 a. 1, Thomas does not say which powers are to be distinguished from the essence of the soul— because in q. 54 a. 3, Thomas argues that the intellectual power is to be distinguished from the essence of an angel. In a way, however, Pasnau has eliminated this as a possible reading by focusing solely on the "Treatise on Man" (i.e., *ST* I qq. 75–89) and not taking into account its place in the *Summa theologiae* as a whole, which indicates a lack of attentiveness to the theological order of the *Prima pars*.

<sup>35</sup> Thus Pasnau must add the following remarks after his quotation of this argument: "There is no explicit mention of *esse* here, but for Aquinas's contemporaries—and now for us— no explicit mention is needed. Aquinas says that "the soul [...] is an actuality": we know that what soul brings about is *esse*. The soul makes a thing be "always actually living": we know that for things with souls, living just is their *esse*" (*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 155).

<sup>36</sup> One might maintain that the first argument in I q. 77 a. 1, does not depend on a revealed article of faith and so does not belong to theology, properly speaking, since theology begins with revealed premises; rather, it belongs to metaphysics. I want to leave aside this question here. The only point I want to make is that the first argument, unlike the second, relies on conclusions reached earlier in the *Prima pars* concerning God and creatures and does not represent the order of philosophical psychology, a point worth attending to when trying to reconstruct Thomas's philosophical thought.

The first argument in the body of q. 77 a. 1 runs as follows:

"[. . .] since potency (*potentia*) and act divide being and any genus of being, it is necessary that potency and act bear on the same genus. And for this reason, if an act is in the genus of substance, the potency that is said with respect to that act cannot be in the genus of substance. Now the soul's operation is not in the genus of substance, but [operation is in the genus of substance] in God alone, whose operation is His substance. Hence God's power (*potentia*), which is a principle of operation, is God's very essence. This cannot be true in either the soul or in any creature, as was also said above about an angel".<sup>17</sup>

A few principles seem to be at work bringing about the conclusion reached in this argument, namely, the transcategorical distinction between act and potency, the notion of God as pure act, and the status of the human soul as creature. According to this argument, then, the human soul is to be distinguished from its power because, as a creature, its operation—and thus its power—is not the same as its essence; for only in the Creator are essence and power the same. Such an argument proceeds not according to the mode of psychology, but according to the theological principles laid out earlier in the *Prima pars*.

How, then, does the second argument in the body of this article assist the first? It does not do so by demonstrating any of its premises; rather, it shows that the same conclusion is reached from an analysis of human activity, which explains why Thomas transitions to it thus: "Secondly, this also appears impossible in the soul".<sup>18</sup> The conclusion of the second argument is the same as that of the first: the essence of the soul is not identical with its power. It arrives at this conclusion, however, on the basis of principles belonging to psychology (e.g., the soul as act and the transience of vital activities), not on the basis of theological principles concerning God and creatures.

This clarifies to some degree the approach I am taking—an approach that, as the transition to the second argument suggests, Thomas is aware of and sometimes employs in a theological work like the *Summa theologiae* to assist the theological argument already made. But why is it important to emphasize this point? Perhaps it is best to answer this question by distinguishing more explicitly my reading of this article from Pasnau's.

First of all, as I mentioned above, Pasnau feels compelled to read more into the second argument than is actually there. In order to relate this

<sup>17</sup>"[. . .] cum potentia et actus dividant ens et quodlibet genus entis, oportet quod ad idem genus referatur potentia et actus. Et ideo, si actus non est in genere substantiae, potentia quae dicitur ad illum actum, non potest esse in genere substantiae. Operatio autem animae non est in genere substantiae; sed in solo Deo, cuius operatio est eius substantia. Unde Dei potentia, quae est operationis principium, est ipsa Dei essentia. Quod non potest esse verum neque in anima, neque in aliqua creatura; ut supra etiam de angelo dictum est" (*ST*, I q. 77 a. 1 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 236]). For a similar argument, see *Quod*. X, q. 3 a. 1 (Leonine ed., vol. xxv.1 131:50-60).

<sup>18</sup>"Secundo, hoc etiam impossibile apparet in anima" (*ST* I q. 77 a. 1 [Leonine ed., vol. v 236]). The transition made in the body of *QD de spir. creat.* q. un. a. 11, which comes after Thomas gives the same first argument as that in *Prima pars* q. 77 a. 1, is similar: "Secundo impossibile apparet hoc speciali ratione in anima propter tria[. . .]" (Leonine ed., vol. xxiv.2, 118: 214-16)). Then Thomas proceeds to give three arguments that proceed from principles of philosophical psychology.

argument to the first one, he introduces the idea that *esse est vivere* for living beings. I do not deny, of course, that such a connection may be made and that making it may bear much fruit. In forcing this connection, however, Pasnau fails to recognize the cogency of the second argument as it stands, namely, as an argument proceeding from principles of philosophical psychology, which Thomas suggests in when transitioning to it.

In addition, by not distinguishing between the kinds of argument Thomas makes along the lines I do here, Pasnau fails to see how Thomas's views about the soul arise not only from metaphysical and theological principles, but also —and perhaps more importantly when presenting Thomas's philosophical views— from an analysis of human vital activities that proceeds according to the mode of philosophical psychology. To see this, however, requires that the reader of Thomas attend to the subtleties of the text, especially when he is dealing with the complex and puzzling array of phenomena that the human being presents. It is important to do this, moreover, to face the objections of later thinkers that Pasnau cites and finds attractive. Pasnau seems to agree with Ockham, for example, that one can rely neither on experience nor on an evident argument to distinguish the soul from its powers. Rather, one must base the distinction on the "deep metaphysical assumptions that Aquinas relies on". Furthermore, Pasnau says, "two of the most attractive features of his theory of human nature —(1) the unification of soul and body and (2) the account of how and why the soul subsists on its own— require Aquinas to draw a distinction between the soul and its rational powers".<sup>39</sup>

Pasnau implies, then, that Thomas holds that the soul is distinct from its powers because he wants to hold certain positions further down the road. But if Thomas argues that the soul is distinct from its powers on psychological grounds, such an interpretation can be avoided. Given, moreover, that Pasnau intends his book to be a philosophical study of human nature in the *Prima pars*, one expects him to be attentive to the different kinds of argumentation that Thomas employs and to consider the relation between them. The fact that Pasnau is apt to collapse psychological and theological argumentation —and apparently dismiss the former— makes Thomas's philosophical outlook tend "toward the abstract and conceptual"<sup>40</sup> more than it actually does. For even when Thomas deals with difficult speculative issues concerning the human soul and its powers, he remains empirically connected with the natural world.

### III. Ways in which the soul causes a power

Above I recapitulated two of Thomas's arguments that show that the human soul has powers. Thomas argues that the *essentia animae* is insufficient to account for the diversity and transience of human vital activities, and so there must be powers of the soul. Yet the human soul always main-

<sup>39</sup> *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 158.

<sup>40</sup> See note 4 above.

tains a priority with respect to its powers, insofar as every vital activity presupposes a human being already alive. Hence one must distinguish a power of the soul from the essence of the soul while retaining the soul's priority to its powers.<sup>41</sup> Thomas does so when he calls a power of the soul an "accident"<sup>42</sup>—even more, an "active accidental form"<sup>43</sup>—that determines and perfects a living being by enabling it to carry out specific operations.

That a power of the soul is an accident does not mean that it somehow just "happens" to the soul and is separable from it. Rather, the first thing it means is that a power exists in another, not in itself.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, because a power makes a living being to be of such-and-such a sort—i.e., the sort that is able to carry out such-and-such activities—it is said to be a quality. Thomas places a power of the soul in the second species of quality, "powers and incapacities".<sup>45</sup> By way of negation, this tells us that a power of the soul is not a habit or disposition (first species), not an affection or affective quality (third species), and not a shape (the fourth species of quality).<sup>46</sup> From this categorization of a power of the soul, then, it is

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<sup>41</sup> According to Thomas, the distinction between the soul and its power is a real distinction, not merely a distinction in reason, i.e., a conceptual distinction. This is clear from *In 1 Sent.*, d. 7 q. 1 a. 1 ad 1um (Mandonnet ed., vol. 1, 177): "Egreditur etiam ab essentia alius actus, qui est etiam actus habentis essentiam sicut agentis, et essentiae, sicut principii agendi: et iste est actus secundus, et dicitur operatio: et inter essentiam et talem operationem cadit virtus media differens ab utroque, in creaturis etiam realiter, in Deo ratione tantum". This passage must have been missed by Pasnau, since he maintains that Thomas never says that the powers of the soul are really distinct from the essence of the soul. See *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 151 and 425-26, note 5.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas presents an argument for this in *Scriptum super primum librum Sententiarum* [henceforth, *In 1 Sent.*], d. 3 q. 4 a. 2 (Mandonnet ed., vol. 1, 116): "[...] effectus proprius et immediatus oportet quod proportionetur suae causae; unde oportet quod in omnibus illis, in quibus principium operationis proximum est de genere substantiae, quod operatio sua sit substantia; et hoc solum in Deo est: et ideo ipse solus est qui non agit per potentiam mediam differentem a sua substantia. In omnibus autem aliis operatio est accidens: et ideo oportet quod proximum principium operationis sit accidens". Since living beings with bodies are obviously included in *omnibus aliis*, a power of the soul is thus an accident. Thomas's most complete analyses of powers of the soul as accidents are in *QD de spir. creat.*, q. un. a. 11 (Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.2, 119-20:239-90); *ST* 1 q.77a.1 ad 5um (Leonine ed., vol. v, 237).

<sup>43</sup> "[...] sic se habet forma accidentaliter activa ad formam substantialem agentis [ut calor ad formam ignis], sicut se habet potentia animae ad animam" (*ST* 1 q.77 a.1 ad 3um [Leonine ed., vol. v, 237]).

<sup>44</sup> "[...] si accidens accipitur secundum quod dividitur contra substantiam, sic nihil potest esse medium inter substantiam et accidens: quia dividuntur secundum affirmationem et negationem, scilicet secundum esse in subiecto et non esse in subiecto. Et hoc modo, cum potentia animae non sit eius essentia, oportet quod sit accidens" (*ST* 177 q.1 a.5 [Leonine ed., vol. v 237]. Cf. *QD de spir. creat.* q. un. a. 11 ad 5um [Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.2, 121:350-56] quoted in note 66 below. See also Thomas's comments on the beginning of *Metaphysics*, IV.2, where Aristotle discusses the different ways a thing is said to be: "Tertium autem dicitur quod nihil habet de non ente admixtum, habet tamen esse debile, quia non per se, sed in alio, sicut sunt qualitates, quantitates et substantiae proprietates" (In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio [hence forth, *In Meta.*], Lib. IV, lect. 1, n. 542 [Marietti ed., 152]). As accidents, therefore, powers of the soul have a imperfect sort of existence, at least insofar as they must exist in substance.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., *ST* 1 q.77 a.1 ad 5um (Leonine ed., vol. v, 237), where Thomas says that a power "est in secunda specie qualitatis". See also *QD de spir. creat.* q. un. a. 11 (Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.2, 119:257-58).

<sup>46</sup> For Aristotle's full discussion of quality as a category, see *Categories*, 8, 8b25-11a38. Thomas discusses the four species of quality in *ST* I-II q.49 a.2 (Leonine ed., vol. VI, 310-12). For a basic explanation of them, see Joseph OWENS, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1985), 170-78.

clear that it is neither acquired (as is a habit or disposition) nor sensible (as is an affective quality or a shape). Hence a power is neither the essence of the soul nor a part of the essence; neither is it unnecessary or separable. According to Thomas, then, it is more like a property natural following upon the essence of the soul.<sup>47</sup>

In order to arrive at a more complete account, however, it is helpful to consider the soul's causal relations to each of its powers.<sup>48</sup> What follows, therefore, is an examination of how a soul causes its powers according to three modes of causality, namely, causality as a subject,<sup>49</sup> causality as an active source, and final causality.<sup>50</sup> From this examination a general account of powers of the soul can be formulated.

### *The soul as subject of its powers*

Because powers are accidents, they must inhere in a subject, for it belongs to any accident to have existence in something else. Is it possible, however, to say that the soul alone is the subject of a power? At first glance it does not seem so, since an accident belongs to a substance, and the soul is not a substance, but the formal principle of a substance.

In order to approach this question, let us consider Thomas's reasoning concerning the subject of an operative power in general. In *Prima pars* q. 77 a. 5, when considering whether all the powers of the soul are in the soul as a subject, Thomas says:

"The subject of an operative power is that which is able to carry out the activity, because every accident denominates a proper subject. But that which is able to carry out an activity is the same as that which carries out the activity. Consequently, that to which the power belongs as to a subject must be that to which the activity belongs".<sup>51</sup>

If one wants to know what the subject of a power for a certain activity is, one needs to consider that which carries out the activity. Since a living being carries out vital activity, it appears that the living being as a whole

<sup>47</sup> "Sic igitur potentie anime sunt medium inter essentiam anime et accedens quasi proprietates naturales uel essentielles, id est essentiam anime naturaliter consequentes" (*QD de spir. creat.* q. un. a. 11 [Leonine ed., vol. xxxiv.2 286-90]).

<sup>48</sup> W. Wallace shows how one can understand causes or "explanatory factors" as "defining factors" in *The Modeling of Nature* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), pp. 287-88. The soul's causal relations to a power are responsible for the being of that power, and so they provide a basis for determining what, generally speaking, a power of the soul is.

<sup>49</sup> That Thomas considers being a subject a genuine kind of causality is implied in *In Meta.*, Lib. iv, lect. 1, no. 539 (Marietti ed., 152): "Sed tamen omne ens dicitur per respectum ad unum primum. Sed hoc primum non est finis vel efficiens [. . .], sed subiectum".

<sup>50</sup> Thomas's doctrine on the causal relations between a substance and accidents is discussed in J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 266-75, which was adapted from his "Thomas Aquinas on Substance as a Cause of Proper Accidents", in: *Philosophie im Mittelalter: Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen*, edd. J. Beckman, L. Honnefelder, G. Schrimpf, and G. Wieland (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1987), 201-12.

<sup>51</sup> "[. . .] illud est subiectum operativae potentiae, quod est potens operari: omne enim accidens denominat proprium subiectum. Idem autem est quod potest operari, et quod operatur. Unde oportet quod eius sit potentia sicut subiecti, cuius est operatio" (*ST*1 q.77 a.5 [Leonine ed., vol. v 244-45]).



is the subject of an operative power. It appears, then, that the composite is the subject of power.

Is it possible, though, that for some powers the soul alone is the subject? As suggested above, this is a pressing question in the context of the human soul. In fact, some human activities appear not to involve the body in an essential way, insofar as they transcend matter and its limitations. Indeed, in q. 75 a. 2, prior to the article concerning the soul as a subject of powers, Thomas argues for this point. Taking Aristotle as a guide,<sup>52</sup> he says:

"It is evident that man through his intellect can cognize the natures of all bodies. That which can cognize certain things, however, must have nothing of those things in its own nature. For that which is present in a thing naturally impedes the cognition of other things. For example, we observe that a sick person's tongue, which is infected with a cholerick and bitter humor, cannot perceive something sweet; rather, all things seem bitter to him. If, therefore, the intellectual principle were to have in itself the nature of some body, then it could not cognize all bodies".<sup>53</sup>

Since the intellectual principle is able to consider all bodies in its cognitive activity—indeed, human beings even consider what a body is in general—it must not include anything corporeal in itself. Otherwise it could not cognize certain bodies, which seems not to be the case.

It seems, then, that some human powers are not in the composite as in a subject, but in the soul alone. Hence Thomas says:

"Certain operations of the soul are performed without a bodily organ, such as thinking and willing. As a consequence, the powers that are the principles of these operations are in the soul as in a subject. Other operations of the soul, however, are performed by means of bodily organs, as seeing occurs by means of the eye and hearing by means of the ear. The same can also be said of all other operations of the nutritive and sensitive parts. For this reason, the powers that are the principles of such operations are in the composite as in a subject, and are not in the soul alone".<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> See *De anima* III.4, 429a13-27.

<sup>53</sup> "Manifestum est enim quod homo per intellectum cognoscere potest naturas omnium corporum. Quod autem potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura: quia illud quod inesset ei naturaliter, impediret cognitionem aliorum; sicut videmus quod lingua infirmis quae infecta est cholerico et amaro humore, non potest percipere aliquid dulce, sed omnia videntur ei amara. Si igitur principium intellectuale haberet in se naturam alicuius corporis, non posset omnia corpora cognoscere" (*ST*, I q. 75 a.2 [Leonine ed., vol. v 196]). Thomas exemplifies his point here with an outdated notion of sickness as an imbalance among the four kinds of humors present in a living body (i.e., blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile). The *humor cholericus et amarus* to which Thomas refers is yellow bile.

A similar argument, perhaps with stronger metaphysical grounds (as well as an example involving sight rather than taste), is made by Thomas at *Sent. lib. De an.*, III.1 (Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1 203:131-36, 139-43): "[...] omne enim quod est in potentia ad aliquid et receptium eius caret eo ad quod est in potentia et cuius est receptius, sicut pupilla quae est in potentia ad colores et receptiva eorum est absque omni colore; [...] cum igitur intellectus noster sit natus intelligere omnes res sensibiles et corporeas, oportet quod careat omni natura corporali, sicut sensus visus caret colore propter hoc quod est cognoscitivus coloris".

<sup>54</sup> "[...] quaedam operationes sunt animae, quae exercentur sine organo corporali, ut intelligere et velle. Unde potentiae quae sunt harum operationum principia, sunt in anima sicut in subiecto.

Depending on the power of the soul in question, therefore, the soul is the subject in one of two ways: either as the only subject, when the power does not carry out its activity by means of a bodily organ,<sup>55</sup> or as subject together with the body, when the power carries out its activity by means of a bodily organ.

*The soul as active principle of its powers*

A power inheres in the soul alone or in the composite as an accident — more precisely, as an active accidental form. One example that Thomas provides for such a relation is that between fire and heat. Saying that fire is the subject of heat, however, does not seem sufficient, since fire appears to play an active role in the production of heat. Likewise, in addition to being their subject or cosubject, the soul seems to play a more active role in bringing about its powers. How are we to conceive of this causal relation between the soul and a power?

At first glance Thomas's framing of this question seems obscure, for he employs what appears to be imprecise, almost metaphorical language to address this issue. Consider, for example, the phrasing of the question in *Prima pars* q. 77 a. 6: "Whether the powers of the soul flow from the essence of the soul".<sup>56</sup> What sense are we to make of "flow" in this context? Indeed, Thomas's use of such a word suggests the difficulty of this issue. A careful consideration of Thomas's response and replies to the objections in this article, however, coupled with an examination of relevant passages from other works,<sup>57</sup> should help us both to delineate this causal relation more exactly and to see its importance in understanding the human soul. In particular, a proper understanding of this causal relation provides grounds for a better understanding of immanent activities

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—Quaedam vero operationes sunt animae, quae exercentur per organa corporalia; sicut visio per oculum, et auditus per aurem. Et simile est de omnibus aliis operationibus nutritivae et sensitivae partis. Et ideo potentiae quae sunt talium operationum principia, sunt in coniuncto sicut in subiecto, et non in anima sola" (*ST* I q. 77 a.5 [Leonine ed., vol. v 245]).

<sup>55</sup>In these cases Aquinas distinguishes between a power's having an organ by means of which it exercises its activity and a power's simply needing the body in order to perform its activity. In the case of the intellect, for example, Thomas says that the body is needed in order for intellectual activity to take place, since it provides objects to be cognized, and yet the body is not the organ of the intellect: "[...] corpus requiritur ad actionem intellectus, non sicut organum quo talis actio exercentur, sed ratione obiecti: phantasma enim comparatur ad intellectum sicut color ad visum" (*ST* I q.75 2.2 ad 3um [Leonine ed. vol. v 197]).

<sup>56</sup>"Utrum potentiae animae fluant ab eius essentia". (*ST*, I q.77 a.6 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 245-46]) (emphasis added).

<sup>57</sup>J. Wipfel analyzes a number of texts in which Thomas tries to spell out causal relations between a substance and its proper accidents besides the material one. He points to *In 1 Sent.* d. 17 q. 1 a. 2 ad 2um (Mandonnet ed. vol. I 398-99); *Super Boethium De Trinitate*, q. 5 a. 4 ad 4um (Leonine ed., vol. I 155-56:263-304); *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia*, q. 7 a. 4 (Marietti ed., vol. II 195-96); and *ST* I qq.3-4 (Leonine ed., vol. IV 42). See J. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 205-208: "Thomas Aquinas on Substance as the Cause of Proper Accidents". See *ST* I q. 77 a. 6. Therefore is one of only a few texts in which the more specific, nonmaterial causal relationship between the human soul and its powers are spelled out. Moreover, the text in particular brings together in a succinct way most of the significant conclusions found in the other texts. Hence special attention is given to *ST* I q.77 a. 6 here.

and, consequently, for understanding the fulfillment and happiness proper to the human being, although spelling out these connections fully is the work of another article.<sup>58</sup>

Thomas begins his response in q. 77 a. 6, by noting similarities and differences between substantial and accidental forms. As has been noted, Thomas holds that the soul is the substantial form of a living being, whereas a power is an accidental form. Consequently, anything Thomas says about substantial and accidental forms applies to souls and their powers, respectively.

Thomas first enumerates two ways in which substantial and accidental forms are alike. "Each of them is an act", he says, "and according to each something is in act in some way".<sup>59</sup> In other words, both substantial and accidental forms are sources of determination and perfection, and hence they determine and perfect that which they inform. Thomas then contrasts substantial and accidental forms. A substantial form, he says, makes a thing to be simply, and hence the subject of a substantial form —i.e., that which it determines and perfects— is a being that exists only in potency and has no actuality of itself, namely, prime matter. An accidental form, on the other hand, does not make a thing to be simply, but to be such-and-such, or to be so much, or to stand toward something in some way. The subject of an accidental form, therefore, is a being that exists in act.<sup>60</sup>

From this it is clear that the actuality of a substantial form is prior by nature to its subject. As the ultimate source of determination and perfection in a composite, a substantial form is prior to that which stands wholly open to determination and perfection. The opposite is true in the case of an accidental form, because its existence presupposes a subject in act, i.e., a subject already determined and perfected and standing as an independent being. Because the subject of a substantial form depends on the substantial form itself in order to be in act, a substantial form can be considered the cause of its subject's being in act. Moreover, because an accidental form depends on the existence of its subject in order to be in act—for the sub-

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<sup>58</sup> Along these lines, I think Pasnau is right to point out a connection between the study of human nature in the *Prima pars* and the study of human action in the *Prima secundae*, although he goes too far when he says that "Aquinas views the study of human nature as primarily a study in moral psychology" (*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, p. 151). This does not square with the fact that the study of man in the *Prima pars* takes place within a discussion of God's creation—something that Pasnau recognizes but does not make much of. In fact, Thomas transitions to this study as follows: "Post considerationem creaturae spiritualis et corporalis, considerandum est de homine, qui ex spirituali et corporali substantia componitur". (*ST* I q. 75. prol. [Leonine ed., vol. v 194]). For Thomas, then, the study of human nature in the *Prima pars* is primarily aimed at understanding God's creative activity.

<sup>59</sup> "Conveniunt quidem in hoc, quod utraque est actus, et secundum utramque est aliquid quodammodo in actu." (*ST* I q. 77 a. 6 [Leonine ed., vol. v 246]).

<sup>60</sup> "Differunt autem in duobus. Primo quidem, quia forma substantialis facit esse simpliciter, et eius subiectum est ens in potentia tantum. Forma autem accidentalis non facit esse simpliciter: sed esse tale, aut tantum, aut aliquo modo se habens; subiectum enim eius est ens in actu" (*ST* I q. 77 a. 6 [Leonine ed., vol. v 246]).

ject is prior to the accidental form with respect to actuality—the subject can be considered the cause of an accidental form's being in act.<sup>61</sup>

In making these claims about substantial forms, subjects, and accidental forms, Thomas spells out the causal relations between them with regard to being in act. An accident depends on its subject in order to be in act. In turn, the subject depends on the actuality of its substantial form in order to be in act. In order to be in act, therefore, an accidental form depends on a subject that is itself in act owing to a substantial form. Hence in addition to being a cause as the subject in which accidental forms inhere, the subject also plays an active causal role with respect to accidental forms. Thomas thus says:

“The subject, insofar as it is potential, is receptive of the accidental form; insofar as it is in act, however, it is productive of the accidental form.”<sup>62</sup>

Is this true for all accidents? Is the subject productive of every accidental form of a human being?<sup>63</sup> Clearly it seems not. During the summer, for instance, the increased tanness of one's skin is produced by the heat and light of the sun, not by something within oneself. According to Thomas, therefore, a subject is productive only of “proper and *per se* accidents”. This subject is, of course, that in which other kinds of accidents inhere, but an external agent produces them.<sup>64</sup>

This distinction between an accident that is proper and *per se* and one that is not turns on whether or not the accident has a necessary relation to the nature of its subject.<sup>65</sup> In order to show that such a relation between a subject and one of its accidents exists, one first has to discover that the accident regularly accompanies the subject (otherwise the necessary relation would never arise as a question), and then one has to demonstrate how having such an accident follows from the nature of the subject as expressed in its definition. For the purposes of this investigation, though, it is enough to acknowledge that not every accident is proper and *per se* and that, consequently, the subject does not play an active causal role in relation to every accident.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> “Unde patet quod actualitas per prius invenitur in forma substantiali quam in eius subiecto: et quia primum est causa in quolibet genere, forma substantialis causat esse in actu in suo subiecto. Sed e converso, actualitas per prius invenitur in subiecto formae accidentalis, quam in forma accidentalis: unde actualitas formae accidentalis causatur ab actualitate subiecti”. (ST I q.77 a.6 [Leonine ed., vol. v 246]).

<sup>62</sup> “Ita quod subiectum, in quantum est in potentia, est susceptivum formae accidentalis: in quantum autem est in actu, est eius productivum” (ST I q.77 a.6 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 246]).

<sup>63</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the various ways in which an accident is caused, see Barry BROWN, *Accidental Being: A Study in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 70-141.

<sup>64</sup> Thus the text in note 62 continues: “Et hoc dico de proprio et per se accidente: nam respectu accidentis extranei, subiectum est susceptivum tantum; productivum vero talis accidentis est agens extrinsecum” (ST I q.77 a.6 [Leonine ed., vol. v 246]).

<sup>65</sup> For more on this, see B. BROWN, *Accidental Being*, 85-87.

<sup>66</sup> A distinction that runs through all categorial accidents is between proper and common accidents. Thomas reaffirms the status of powers of the soul in such terms when he says the following: “[...] potentie anime possunt dici proprietates essentielles, non quia sint partes essentie, set quia

One may recall that some powers have the composite of body and soul as their subject while others have the soul alone as their subject. Does the soul play an active role in the production of both sorts of power, or only in the production of the latter? According to Thomas, it is productive of both sorts, because the composite itself is actual by virtue of the soul inasmuch as the latter is the substantial form of the former. Consequently, Thomas reaches the following conclusion:

"It is clear, then, that all the powers of the soul, whether their subject is the soul alone or the composite, flow from the essence of the soul as from a principle. For it has already been maintained that an accident is caused by its subject insofar as the subject is in act, and that it is received into the subject insofar as the subject is in potency".<sup>67</sup>

All powers of the soul, therefore, flow —or, as Thomas sometimes says, proceed or emanate<sup>68</sup>— from the essence of the soul as the principle of life.<sup>69</sup>

This position demands clarification. What does Thomas mean by saying that powers flow or emanate from the essence of the soul? What is the nature of this flowing or emanation? Thomas provides a few conclusions. At one point, for example, he illustrates the more general case of the emanation of proper accidents from a substance as follows:

"The emanation of proper accidents from a subject is not by way of some transmutation, but by way of some natural resulting, just as from one thing something else naturally results, as color results from light".<sup>70</sup>

Emanation is not a change in the usual sense of the word, i.e., a "transmutation". That is to say, it is not a process whereby something goes from being one sort of thing to being another. Accordingly, the soul does

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causantur ab essentia: et sic non distinguuntur ab accidente quod est commune nouem generibus; sed distinguuntur ab accidente quod est accidentale predicatum, quod non causatur a natura speciei». (*QD de spir. creat.* q. un., a. 11 ad 5um [Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.2 121:350-56]). With regard to this text, see J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas on Substance as the Cause of Proper Accidents": 210, note 29. Wippel goes further in the analysis of accidents by showing that Aquinas maintains that some accidents flow from "the principles of an individual" (e.g., gender and temperament) (202-203). Concerning this, see *In 1 SENT.* d. 17 q. 1 a. 2 ad 2um (Mandonnet ed., vol. I 398) and BROWN, *Accidental Being*, p. 115. Since my concern here is only with proper accidents that flow from the specific nature of a living being —as powers of the soul do— it is not necessary to deal with accidents that flow from the principles of an individual.

<sup>67</sup> "Unde manifestum est quod omnes potentiae animae, sive subiectum earum sit anima sola, sive compositum, fluunt ab essentia animae sicut a principio: quia iam dictum est quod accidens causatur a subiecto secundum quod est actu, et recipitur in eo in quantum est in potentia" (*ST* I q. 77 a. 6 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 246]).

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g., *ST* I q. 77 ad 2um and ad 3um (Leonine ed., vol. v 246), respectively.

<sup>69</sup> In *QD de spir. creat.* a. 11 (Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.1 20:286-90), Thomas uses the following language: "Sic igitur potentie anime sunt medium inter essentiam anime et accidens quasi proprietates naturales uel essentielles, id est essentiam anime naturaliter consequentes". A power, therefore, flows, proceeds, emanates, or (as this passage says) naturally follows from the essence of the soul.

<sup>70</sup> "[...] emanatio propriorum accidentium a subiecto non est per aliquam transmutationem; sed per aliquam naturalem resultationem, sicut ex uno naturaliter aliud resultat, ut ex luce color" (*ST* I q. 77 a. 6 ad 3um [Leonine ed., vol. v 246]).

not pass from being "just a soul" to being "a soul with powers"; rather, says Thomas, the emanation of powers "is simultaneous with the soul".<sup>71</sup> In fact, this is suggested by the word *emanatio*, which is formed from *ex* ("out of" or "from") and *manere* ("remain" or "endure"). *Emanatio*, then, suggests something permanent and enduring that nonetheless derives from something prior to it, not in time but by nature.

Considering the example Thomas provides in this passage, one may initially construe emanation as follows: just as colors naturally follow when light comes into contact with an opaque body, so powers naturally follow from the soul given the conditions in which it exists. This example also indicates that Thomas is thinking of the soul as acting not in the mode of a moving cause —i.e., one that brings about a transmutation in something else— but in the mode of a formal cause; for he considers light to be a sort of active formal cause of color, insofar as each color is a likeness or participation of light and is in some way brought to completion formally by light.<sup>72</sup> The relation between light and color as Thomas understands it is complicated and perhaps outdated, to be sure, but a few more words here may help to clarify Thomas's use of this example.

When commenting on Aristotle's claim that light is needed in order for color to be visible, Thomas says the following:

"The power of color in acting is imperfect with respect to the power of light (*luminis*), for color is nothing other than some light (*lux*) that has been obscured in some way from the admixture of an opaque body; hence color does not have the power to make the medium to be in that disposition whereby it is receptive of color, although pure light is able to do so. From this it is clear that since light is in some way the substance of color, everything visible is led back to the same nature".<sup>73</sup>

With regard to power in acting, light may be compared to color as the perfect to the imperfect. For pure light has the power to make the

<sup>71</sup> "[...] potentia animae ab essentia fluit, non per transmutationem, sed per naturalem resultationem, et est simul cum anima" (*ST* I q.77 a.7 ad 1um [Leonine ed., vol. v 247]).

<sup>72</sup> On light as a sort of formal cause of color: "Quaecumque autem conveniunt in uno subiecto, alterum eorum est sicut forma alterius, sicut cum color et lux sint in diaphano sicut in subiecto, oportet quod alterum, scilicet lux, sit quasi forma alterius, scilicet coloris" (*SCG* III 43 [Leonine ed., vol. XIV 110b12-17]). See also *Scriptum super tertium librum Sententiarum* [henceforth, *In III Sent.*] d. 24 a. 1 q. 1a (Moos ed., vol. III, 762); *De ver.* q. 2 a. 4 ad 4um (Leonine ed. vol. XXII.1, 58:228-44); q. 23 a. 7 (Leonine ed., vol. XXIII.3 670:131-36); *De malo*, q. 2 a. 2 ad 5um (Leonine ed., vol. XXIII 34:191-94). On each color somehow being brought to completion formally by the character (*ratio*) of light: "[...] illud quod est ratio alterius sicut formaliter complens obiectum, non pertinet ad aliud habitum vel potentiam, sicut lux et color. [...] Sed illud quod est ratio alterius sicut causa, non oportet quod ad eundem habitum pertineat, nec etiam ad eandem potentiam; sicut calor qui est ratio odoris, cognoscitur tactu, odor autem olfactu" (*In III Sent.* d. 34 q. 2 a. 3, q. 1a [Moos ed., vol. III 1154]). And on each color somehow being a likeness or participation of light: "Similitudo autem alicuius rei recepta in vidente non facit eum videre rem illam, nisi perfecte eam repraesentet; sicut similitudo coloris in oculo existens, non facit videre lucem perfectam, quia in colore non est nisi quaedam obumbrata participatio lucis" (*In III Sent.* d. 14 a. 1 q. 3a [Moos ed., vol. III 438-39]).

<sup>73</sup> "Dicendum est igitur quod uirtus coloris in agendo est imperfecta respectu uirtutis luminis: nam color nichil aliud est quam lux quaedam modo obscurata ex ammixtione corporis opaci, unde non habet uirtutem ut faciat medium in illa dispositione qua fit susceptivum coloris;

medium receptive of color, whereas color, which is a sort of obscured light, has no such power of itself. In addition, light is in a way the substance of color, by which Thomas seems to mean at least two things, namely, that light is the basis and foundation of color<sup>74</sup> and that light makes color<sup>74</sup> to be visible in act.<sup>75</sup>

How do these points concerning the relation between light and color clarify what it means to say that the soul is an active principle of its powers? One thing it indicates is that Thomas is not thinking of the soul as a moving cause in the production of its powers. Rather, he seems to be thinking that just as light is the basis of all color and in some way gives them their nature as specific colors, so the soul is the root of its powers and in some way formally makes them be what they are as specific powers. Put otherwise, just as a color is in some way a likeness or participation of light, so a power may be seen as a particular manifestation of the first actuality that the soul is. Consequently, the actuality of the soul is at work through a power, but no one power is the soul itself or manifests the soul in its fullness. Hence, just as one traces the visible back to the nature of light, so every vital activity can be traced back to the first actuality that is the soul.<sup>76</sup> To say that the soul is an active principle of its powers as a sort of formal cause rather than a moving one, therefore, is to say that a power should not be conceived of as a product over against the soul, but as a permanent facet of the first actuality that the soul is, just as each color may be considered a facet of light that reveals only part of the nature of light—which is indicated by the fact that each color is just a part of the full spectrum.<sup>77</sup> As indicated above, the very word “emana-

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quod tamen potest facere lux pura. Ex quo etiam patet quod, cum lux sit quodam modo substantia coloris, ad eandem naturam reducitur omne visibile” (*Sent. lib. De an.*, II.14 [Leonine ed., vol. XLV.1 130:373-84]).

<sup>74</sup>This is clear from *In III Sent.* d. 23 q. 2 a. 1 ad 1um (Moos ed., vol. III 719-20), where Thomas compares the relation of faith and the whole spiritual life to that of light and color: “[...] fides dicitur substantia, non quia sit in genere substantiae, sed quia quamdam proprietatem habet substantiae: sicut enim substantia est fundamentum et basis omnium aliorum entium, ita fides est fundamentum totius spiritualis aedificii. Et per hunc modum dicitur etiam quod lux est hypostasis coloris, quia in natura lucis omnes colores fundantur”.

<sup>75</sup>Thomas says that light makes color visible in act on numerous occasions. See, e.g., *In I Sent.* d. 17 q. 1 a. 5 (Mandonnet ed., vol. I 405); *In III Sent.* d. 24 a. 1 q1a. 1a (Moos ed., vol. III 762); *De ver.* q. 23 a. 7 (Leonine ed., vol. XXIII.3 670-71:189-92); *De malo* q. 16 a. 12 ad 2um (Leonine ed., vol. XXIII 333:170-73).

<sup>76</sup>Thomas often expresses this by saying that “anima est principium operandi, set primum, non proximum” (*QD de an.*, q. 12 ad 10 [Leonine ed., vol. XLIV 111:295-96]). On one occasion he even says that a power is “a sort of instrument” (*quasi instrumentum*) of the soul (see *QD de an.*, q. 12 [Leonine ed., vol. XLIV 109:152-82]), and he compares powers of the soul to qualities of an element, which he considers instruments of the element’s form.

<sup>77</sup>Perhaps another apt example of being an active principle in the mode of a formal cause would be the way in which a circle gives rise to a triangle in geometry: first, because mathematical demonstration proceeds by way of formal causality; second, because in some way the triangle exists potentially in the circle (see *Super Boet. De Trin.* q. 6 a. 1 q1a. 1a [Leonine ed., vol. I 160:182-90]); and third, because the equilateral triangle can be derived from the circle (which is clear from the first theorem in Book I of Euclid’s *Elements*; see also Thomas’s comments in *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, I.2 [Leonine ed., vol. I\*.2, 11-12:75-112]).

tion" suggests this, since it depicts the power as derivative from, though in some way remaining within, the soul.

The example of color resulting from light clarifies what it means to call the soul the active principle of its powers, therefore, by showing that the mode of causality at work is not that of a moving cause, but that of a formal cause. By contrast with the soul's causality as a formal principle of the living substance, which explains that substance's unity as a being, the powers of the soul explain how a living thing is itself able to move others as well as to be moved. In other words, these powers are precisely what allow the living substance to act and to be acted upon. Hence one could say, to use Kantian language, that the emanation of powers is the grounds for the possibility of interaction between a living substance as living and other substances in the order of efficient causality. Because of this, emanation appears to be a mode of intrinsic rather than extrinsic causality—more specifically, a mode of formal rather than moving causality.<sup>78</sup>

In addition, the example of color resulting from light suggests that just as certain conditions must be met in order for color to be actualized—e.g., light must come into contact with an opaque body—so there are certain conditions for the emanation of powers from the soul to take place. Besides considering the mode of causality at work when the soul is considered the active principle of its powers, therefore, another way of clarifying the emanation of powers is to spell out the conditions under which it occurs.

In reply to an objection that contends that several diverse things (in this case, powers) cannot proceed from something simple (the soul), Thomas proposes two conditions for emanation.<sup>79</sup> He says:

"[. . .] from a single, simple thing many things can proceed by reason of a certain order, and again owing to a diversity of recipients. In this way, therefore, several diverse powers can proceed from the single essence of a soul, both owing to the order of the powers and also according to the diversity of bodily organs".<sup>80</sup>

Thomas clarifies these two conditions for emanation when he replies to a similar objection in *Quaestiones disputatae de anima*, q. 12. There he says:

<sup>78</sup> Cf. J. WIPPEL, who suggests that "the subject or soul exercises a kind of instrumental efficient causality regarding such proper accidents" (*The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 275). Wippen appears to be focusing on how the soul serves as a mediator of God's creative activity in giving rise to its powers. Siwek, however, does not think the soul can serve as an efficient cause of its powers: "[Potentiae animae] non oriuntur ex anima per viam efficientiae. Ratio patet. Aut enim oriuntur ita ex ea immediate—i.e. nulla alia mediante potentia,—aut mediate, i.e. mediante alia iterum potentia. Si primum, ergo falsum esset, quod in thesi modo stabilivimus, scil. Animam non agere per suam essentiam! Si secundum, adstrueretur *processus in infinitum*, ut patet" (*Psychologia Metaphysica*, 86).

<sup>79</sup> The objection reads as follows: "Ab uno enim simplici non procedunt diversa. Essentia autem animae est una et simplex. Cum ergo potentiae animae sint multae et diversae, non possunt procedere ab eius essentia" (*ST* I q.77 a.6 obi 1a [Leonine ed., vol. v, 246]).

<sup>80</sup> "[. . .] ab uno simplici possunt naturaliter multa procedere ordine quodam. Et iterum propter diversitatem recipientium. Sic igitur ab una essentia animae procedunt multae et diversae potentiae, tum propter ordinem potentialium: tum etiam secundum diversitatem organorum corporaliū" (*ST* I q.77 a.6 ad 1um [Leonine ed., vol. v 246]).



"[. . .] although the soul is one in essence, there is nonetheless in it potency and act. It both has a diverse bearing toward things and is also related to the body in diverse ways. Owing to this, diverse powers can proceed from the single essence of the soul".<sup>81</sup>

For Thomas, then, two conditions may be considered as grounds for the emanation of powers from the soul, namely, the various ways the soul relates to things and the various ways it relates to the body.

The second of these conditions —i.e., that powers emanate from the soul "according to the diversity of bodily organs" or because the soul "is related to the body in diverse ways"— is the easier to grasp. The various bodily organs in which the soul is received constitute a diversity of recipients that allows many things to proceed from the soul, which is a single, simple principle of life. In other words, several diverse powers result from the soul because<sup>82</sup> that which receives the soul has several diverse parts or organs.<sup>83</sup> These organs, of course, must be intact and suited to their various operations. This is especially clear from cases in which a power is disabled by a physical defect in an organ that, as a consequence, cannot be appropriately informed by the soul. The activity of seeing, for instance, cannot take place in an eye that lacks a retina, since a retina is an indispensable component of the organ of sight.<sup>84</sup> The diversity of intact and appropriate organs, therefore, is one condition for the emanation of powers of the soul.<sup>85</sup>

This condition, however, does not account for the emanation of all the powers of the human soul. Hence for distinctively human powers, i.e.,

<sup>81</sup> "[. . .] licet anima sit una in essentia, tamen est in ea potentia et actus; et habet diuersam habitudinem ad res; et diuersimode etiam comparatur ad corpus. Et propter hoc ab una essentia anime possunt procedere diuersae potentie" (*QD de an.* q. 12 ad 17um [Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.1 112:338-42]).

<sup>82</sup> The "because" here is not meant to suggest that what follows is a sufficient condition. For then one may think that according to Thomas, if *per impossibile* the soul of a plant were placed in the body of an animal, sensitive powers would nonetheless emanate owing to a diversity of organs. Such a view fits better with one who posits the transmigration of souls, not one who holds a truly hylomorphic view of living beings, as Thomas does, according to which there is a proportionality between the form and the matter. Something of an exception to this is the human being, whose soul is not wholly immersed in matter and is thus disproportionate to it in some way. But this has to be proved precisely because strict proportionality between the form and the matter is the "default position" in hylomorphic beings.

<sup>83</sup> Regarding this condition of emanation, Thomas undoubtedly has in the back of his mind a principle he often uses: "Quidquid recipitur, ad modum recipientis recipitur". For a discussion of this principle in Thomas's thought, see J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas and the Axiom 'What is Received is Received According to the Mode of the Receiver': A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture, ed. R. Link-Salinger (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 279-289.

<sup>84</sup> What is said here applies not only to situations in which a power is totally non-functional, as in cases of blindness, but also to more common cases in which there are differences in the degree of the functionality of a power, as when one person has 20/20 vision and another 20/40. The eye of a person with 20/20 vision is a better recipient of the vitality that the soul offers than is the eye of a person with 20/40 vision. Moreover, the fact that many of these defects can be corrected by physical repairs or devices suggests that it is indeed imperfections in the "recipient" of the soul that are at the root of such problems.

<sup>85</sup> "[. . .] potentiarum anime plures non sunt in anima sicut in subiecto set in composito: et huic multiplicati potentiarum competit multiformitas partium corporis." (*QD de spir. creat.*, a. 11 ad 20um [Leonine ed. vol. XXIV.2 123:466-69]).

powers that have the soul alone as their subject, Thomas must look to the other condition for emanation, namely, the soul's "diverse bearing toward things". In such cases, of course, one cannot appeal to a diversity of recipient organs, since such powers are not composed with the body.<sup>86</sup> Rather, such powers must emanate from the soul owing to some potentiality it has to relate to reality in different ways. That the substance of the soul is in some way a composite of act and potency —i.e., of *esse* and *essentia*— provides a basis for the soul's being ordered toward things in different ways.<sup>87</sup> This implies that the very substance of the human soul is incomplete and can come to completion by relating to reality in certain ways, namely, by knowledge and love. In this respect the human being seems different from other natural living beings. For even when a human being is "biologically" mature —i.e., when the human soul has fully worked itself out in matter by bringing about a mature human body capable of all normal "biological" activities— the human soul still has potential, insofar as it remains perfectible by the objects of intellectual cognition and voluntary love. The emanation of intellect and will, therefore, is accounted for by reference to those potential objects to which the rational soul is able to relate and which can further actualize the soul.

For Thomas, then, the human soul is unique among souls, for it has a fundamental openness to being perfected. Although the human soul is a principle of determination and perfection, it nonetheless retains a potentiality that underlies the intellectual knowledge and the freedom that are distinctive of human life. Considered philosophically, this distinctive way of living is grounded in the human soul's ability to relate to reality in different ways and the emanation of powers that this entails. In the case of the human soul, then, the emanation of powers may be construed as a kind of "hollowing out" of the soul that allows —indeed, demands— that it be filled by knowledge and love —or, perhaps better put, by "forms and friends".<sup>88</sup> With this in mind, it is easier to see what it means to say that understanding and willing are immanent activities, for these activities in some way actualize the human soul itself and bring it to a different level of determination and perfection.

Although this condition for emanation —i.e., the soul's diverse bearing toward things— is especially clear in the case of a power whose subject is

<sup>86</sup> "[...] in anima nostra sunt quaedam vires, quarum operationes per organa corporalia exercentur: et huiusmodi vires sunt actus quarundam partium corporis, sicut est visus in oculo, et auditus in aure. Quaedam vero vires animae nostrae sunt, quarum operationes per organa corporea non exercentur, ut intellectus et voluntas: et huiusmodi non sunt actus aliquarum partium corporis" (ST I q.54 a.5 [Leonine ed., vol. v 52]).

<sup>87</sup> On this point, see, e. g., *QD de spir. creat.*, a. 11 ad 20um (Leonine ed., vol. XXIV.2 123:470-74): "[...] potentie uero que sunt in sola substantia anime sicut in subiecto sunt intellectus agens et possibilis et uoluntas: et ad hanc multiplicitatem potentiarum sufficit quod in substantia anime est aliqua compositio actus et potentie."

<sup>88</sup> Something like this may be what Aristotle has in mind when he says the following about the intellect in *De anima* III 4: 429a27-29: καὶ εὖ δὴ λέγοντες τήνψυχὴν εἶναι τόπν, πλὴν ὅτι οὔτε δλη Ολλ' ἡ νοητικὴ, οὔτελεία δυνάμει τὰ εἶδη.

the soul alone, it also applies in the case of a power whose subject is the composite of body and soul. For these powers as well are means by which the soul, conjoined with the body, relates to things. The emanation of a power whose subject is the composite, therefore, would not take place unless the soul with the body had the potentiality to relate to the object with which such a power deals. The power of sight, for example, emanates from the soul not only because there is an appropriate organ in the body informed by the soul (the eye), but also because the soul conjoined with the body is ordered to color as to an object. Because the soul relates to such an object by means of the body, the activities of these sorts of powers require bodily organs. With regard to powers whose subject is the soul alone, however, the only condition that provides a basis for their emanation is the soul's potentiality to relate to reality in ways that transcend the limitations of corporeality.<sup>89</sup> Unlike vegetative and sensitive powers, therefore, the powers of intellect and will allow the human being to relate to reality in a spiritual way, i.e., in a way that opens him up to the whole of reality, both material and immaterial.<sup>90</sup>

Such is Thomas's understanding of the conditions for the emanation of powers from the soul. Spelling out the conditions for emanation, however, does not fully explain why emanation takes place, but only delineates the context necessary for it to take place. The closest one can come to explaining why the emanation of powers of the soul takes place is to say that the soul is simply the kind of form that gives rise to the various powers that a living being has when it exists under the aforesaid conditions. Under such conditions powers result naturally.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> This fact becomes even clearer in the emanation of powers of a created spirit, i.e., an angel, since in such a case the only way to account for intellect and will is by referring to the potential of relating to objects. (That Thomas thinks that angels have intellect and will, see *ST* I q. 54 a. 5 (Leonine ed., vol. v 52).) In *ST* I q. 54 a. 3 (Leonine ed., vol. v 47), Thomas argues that there must be powers distinct from the essence of an angel since an angel, like any creature, performs diverse activities. If Thomas were to run this argument to its conclusion, the diversity of these angelic activities would in turn be accounted for by the diversity of the objects of these activities, as he says so often elsewhere. Hence the angel's order to objects ultimately underlies the emanation of its intellect and will.

<sup>90</sup> "By its nature, spirit (or intellection) is not so much distinguished by its immateriality as by something more primary: its ability to be in relation to the totality of being" (J. PIEPER, "The Philosophical Act" in: *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. G. Marlsbary [South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 1998], 85). Cf. Thomas's thoughts in *De verit.*, q. 23, a. 1 (Leonine ed., vol. XXII 652:111-13): "[...] cognitio et voluntas radicanur in substantia spiritali super diversas habitudines eius ad res". According to Thomas, all cognition, including sense perception, requires some sort of immateriality, but in this article Thomas argues that intellectual cognition involves the highest sort of immateriality, which is what I mean by "spiritual" here. See also *De verit.*, q. 15, a. 2 (Leonine ed., vol. XXI.2 486:223-258); q. 22 a. 10 (Leonine ed., vol. XXII 3 635-36:49-106); *ST* I q. 78. a1 (Leonine ed. vol. v, 250-51). J. Aertsen offers some illuminating thoughts on the human being's relations to reality on this level, especially insofar as they concern Thomas's innovative doctrine on the transcendentals. See his *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 256-62.

<sup>91</sup> See *ST* I q. 77 a.6 ad 3um (Leonine ed., vol. v, 246) and I q.77 a.7 ad 1um (Leonine ed., vol. v, 246), quoted above in notes 70 and 71, respectively. This seems to be one of the points of the analogy Thomas makes between color's naturally resulting from light and powers naturally resulting from the soul. When light comes into contact with a surface, visible color automatically arises; likewise, when the soul exists under the proper conditions, powers automatically emanate.

*The soul as final cause of its powers*

Besides maintaining that the human soul is the subject and active principle of its powers, Thomas also maintains that it is the end or final cause of its powers.<sup>92</sup> To say this means that the powers of the human soul somehow function for the sake of the soul itself. Thomas presents this position in *Prima pars* q. 77 a. 6 when he makes a further distinction between a substantial form and an accidental form. He says:

“A substantial form and an accidental form differ in another way. Since what is less primary is for the sake of what is more primary, matter exists for the sake of a substantial form, but conversely, an accidental form exists for the sake of its subject’s fulfillment”.<sup>93</sup>

As an accidental form, a power exists for the sake of that in which it inheres, insofar as it somehow fulfills, completes, or perfects it.

A simple example should help illustrate Thomas’s point. The composite of body and soul is the subject for the power of hearing. One can get along in life without hearing, of course, but the activities of hearing benefit the composite in a variety of ways. Hearing a train whistle may save the life of one waiting at the railroad crossing. The music that one hears may lift one’s spirits and help one perform a monotonous, but necessary task. Hearing another speak may enable one to forge a friendship. The list of benefits goes on and on. The point is that the composite, which is the subject of the power of hearing, is brought to completion and perfection in certain ways with the help of this power. In such a case as this —i.e., in which the composite is the subject of the power— the soul itself is the end of the power indirectly, for the activity of the power is directly ordered to the perfection of the composite as a whole. In human beings, lower powers, such as the senses and the imagination, are also necessary for the activities of powers that have the soul itself as a subject. In these cases, the lower powers are helping to achieve an end to which, as powers embodied in organs, they are not ordered by their very nature, namely, the determination and perfection of the soul itself by means of knowledge and love.

This brings us to the somewhat exceptional cases of intellect and will, whose subject is the soul alone. Clearly the activities of these powers can benefit the composite, e.g., when we deliberate about what to eat and then decide to eat something healthy. But how do these powers benefit their

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<sup>92</sup> Here I am considering the *finis cui* of the power —the end as that which the power benefits— rather than its *finis quod* —the end as that which the power achieves— since the latter is clearly the fulfillment of the power in its own activity. In other words, the power is obviously ordered to its own activity and perfection; the question here, however, concerns that to which the power is further ordered as the beneficiary of its activity.

<sup>93</sup> “Secundo autem differunt substantialis forma et accidentalis, quia, cum minus principale sit propter principalis, materia est propter formam substantialem; sed e converso, forma accidentalis est propter completionem subiecti” (*ST* I q. 77a. 6 [Leonine ed., vol. v, 246]). Although this text implies as much, Thomas nevertheless does not call the subject a final cause here. But he does say this explicitly at (*ST* I q. 77a.6 ad 2um [Leonine ed., vol. v, 246]: “[...] subiectum est causa proprii accidentis et finalis, et quodammodo activa” See also *ST* I q. 77. a. 7 (Leonine ed., vol. v, 247), where Thomas says that the essence of the soul is related to its powers as a *principium finale*.

proper subject, namely, the soul alone? As we saw above in the discussion of the emanation of powers, the intellect and will open up the soul for further actualization. In other words, the human soul is enlarged or amplified in its being by means of knowledge and love. This further actualization of the soul's being is the good toward which the activities of intellect and will are directly and naturally ordered. In other words, the intellect and will have the human soul itself as its end in that their activities are ordered toward its further actuality by means of possessing the forms of other things and being united with other persons. The augmentation of the being of the human soul, then, is the end of intellect and will.

*A general account of powers of the soul through their causal relations to the soul.*

The preceding consideration of the causal relations of the soul to its powers is helpful for setting out a general account (*ratio*, λόγος) of powers of the soul. Such powers may be sketched out as follows: They are proper qualities of the second species inherent either in the soul alone or in the composite that flow from the essence of the soul owing to the soul's potential to relate to reality in some way (and, in the case of powers whose subject is the composite, owing to the diversity of organs in the body in which the soul is present) and that enable a human being to perform activities for the sake of the subject of the power, inasmuch as such activities contribute to that subject's preservation and fulfillment. Every specific power of the human soul—sight, hearing, intellect, will, and so on—can be so described. In other words, this formulation answers the question "What is a power of the soul?" by delineating a common account applicable to all the powers of the soul. It would be going too far to call this account a definition of a power of the soul; it should be seen, rather, as a description that is useful for focusing the mind on the kind of reality under consideration when one investigates a power of the soul. As such, it is more the source for further inquiry than the definitive end of an investigation.

### III. Closing remarks

As I just suggested, this general account of powers of the soul leaves ample room for further inquiry, especially concerning specific powers. One may wonder, for instance, how to go about defining a specific power, an issue first addressed in the *Republic* by Plato and expanded on by Aristotle and Thomas. Or one may wonder about how specific powers of the soul are able to work together, so that, e.g., the human intellect and will can function simultaneously as a single principle of human action.<sup>94</sup> One may also wonder, as I did briefly above, what Thomas's account of

<sup>94</sup>"[. . .] sicut in aliis rebus est aliquod principium priorum actuum, ita etiam in hominibus. Hoc autem actuum siue motuum principium in hominibus proprie est intellectus et uoluntas" (*De malo* q. 6 [Leonine ed., vol. xxiii, 148:270-74]).

the emanation of intellect and will from the human soul reveals about his understanding of the human nature. The pursuit of these questions is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this article.

What has become clear to me —and, I hope, to the reader as well— is that some of the more obscure issues that Thomas addresses in the *Prima pars* and in other works concerning the soul and its powers demand more attention because they provide the framework for a genuine Thomistic philosophical understanding of human nature. It is unsurprising, then, that an interpreter of Thomas such as Pasnau would distort the Thomistic account of human nature either because he is not attentive to the kinds of arguments that Thomas presents or because he neglects to address certain issues, such as the emanation of powers from the soul, that are crucial for grasping this account. At the very least, then, I hope that this article gives a more accurate presentation of Thomas's insights into the human soul and its distinctive powers, which set the human being apart from the rest of creation.<sup>95</sup>



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