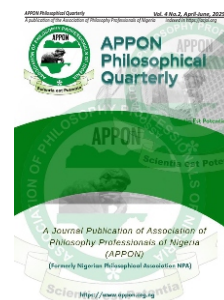


A COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION OF PLATO, ARISTOTLE AND AQUINAS ON THE UNITY OF BODY AND SOUL



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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to metaphysically synergize the concept of the soul as the principle of life within the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas. According to Plato, man is defined as a divine, immortal soul inhabiting a material and perishable body. In this structure, the soul fulfils a biological function, serves as the subject of knowledge, and acts as a moral agent. In the *Republic*, Plato develops a dualist conception of the soul, characterizing it as an immaterial, tripartite, and immortal substance that pre-exists the body and attains knowledge through the recollection of the Forms. The body, in this view, is conceived as a prison or tomb that distracts the soul from the pursuit of truth. Conversely, Aristotle presents a different perspective, asserting that man, like all being-substances, is composed of both body and soul. He argues that no separate existence of “man-soul” or “man-body” exists, as Plato taught; instead, man exists as a composition of body and soul. In this way, Aristotle refutes Platonic dualism, contending that the soul is not the sole essence of man. For Aristotle, the human being, through reason, a function of the soul, transcends the world. He posits that the soul, as the first act of a living natural body, encompasses not only vegetative and sensitive functions but also higher intellectual capacities such as thinking and volition. While Plato locates the essence of the soul outside the physical world, Aristotle situates it as the immanent cause of life. However, this raises the *aporia* of how an immaterial intellect can arise from material generation. Employing a comparative-metaphysical method through textual analysis of primary and secondary sources, this paper argues that Aquinas resolves the tension by synthesizing both positions: the soul is the substantial form of the body, yet it is also a subsistent, immaterial substance directly created by God. In this way, Aquinas preserves both Aristotelian embodiment and Platonic immortality, offering a unified account of human nature.

Keywords: Consciousness, Immortality, Human Dignity, Metaphysics, Soul.

Introduction

The relationship between body and soul is fundamental to understanding human identity, knowledge, and moral responsibility. This issue is framed by two classical extremes. Plato contends that the

human being is primarily an immortal soul temporarily joined to a perishable body as a result of a primordial fault. In his view, the body obstructs knowledge, which can only be reclaimed through recollection of the Forms. In contrast, Aristotle rejects this

dualism, defining the soul as the "first act of a natural organic body that potentially possesses life."¹ According to Aristotle, the human being is a unified substance rather than a soul utilising a body. This hylomorphic account affirms the importance of embodiment in human identity but introduces a significant *aporia*. As Christopher Shields notes, for Aristotle, the soul is not a thing but the organization of a living body.²

According to Aristotelian principles, spirit cannot emerge from matter without violating the assertion that "non-being is not being." Plato views the soul as an autonomous principle of motion.³ (*autokinesis*). For him, the soul is eternal and immaterial, existing independently of the body and connected to it only as a result of some spiritual fault. Conversely, Aristotle argues that the soul is the form of the body, and since humans arise through generation, the human soul must also result from material changes. This presents a challenge for Aristotle's theory; it is problematic to conceive of an immaterial soul as a natural consequence of material changes. As per the principle of non-contradiction, "non-being is not being," indicating that matter, in relation to spirit, is a form of "non-being."

Aquinas provides a notable resolution to the question of the soul's origin. His solution is grounded in an understanding of being as existence and the notion of contingent reality, which presupposes a necessary reality, absolute being, or God, who is pure existence. All other beings possess existence; thus, by virtue of possessing existence, they are real. In this conception, the human soul, being immaterial and capable of producing immaterial acts, is non-composite in its essence. As such, it cannot come into being as the result of increasing changes; there is nothing in it to

change because its very nature is non-composite. Since the soul generates spiritual operations of cognition and volition, it must exist as a being that is simultaneously the form-organizer of the body. The soul, existing independently as the subject of its existence, cannot arise from natural forces; it transcends nature.⁴ Consequently, it must be created by God, indicating that it is called into existence through a special act. This perspective separates the origin of the soul from purely natural factors, directing our attention to an absolute source of being, namely, the Absolute, to explain and justify the soul's existence, which is manifested in human experience. Only the Absolute can bring a non-composite, immaterial substance into independent (subjective) existence. This is congruent with the immaterial nature of intellectual cognition and volitional love, which are free from contradiction regarding their ontological structure.

Thomas Aquinas reconciles the *aporia* by synthesizing both Platonic and Aristotelian positions. He retains Aristotle's assertion that the soul is the form of the body while simultaneously asserting that the soul is a subsistent, immaterial substance created directly by God. This synthesis results in a unified account of human nature that preserves both embodiment and immortality.

Plato: The Soul as Prisoner of the Body

Plato presents the soul as descending into the body due to an unspecified fault or catastrophic event, as discussed in the *Phaedrus*, or as part of a mission to animate the body, as noted in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*. The soul fulfils three primary functions: (1) it animates the body biologically, (2) it serves as the subject of

¹ Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *The Pluralistic Interpretation of Reality*, trans. H. McDonald (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza Z Akwinu, 2011), 40.

² Christopher Shields, *Aristotle* (London: Routledge), 78.

³ Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *The Monistic and Dualistic Interpretation of Reality*, trans. H. McDonald (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza Z Akwinu, 2010), 102.

⁴ Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *The Realistic Interpretation of Reality*, trans. H. McDonald (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza Z Akwinu, 2015), 37.

knowledge (the soul is the one that knows), possessing knowledge independently of the body, and (3) it acts as a moral agent, thereby bearing responsibility for its actions, which results in punishment or reward in the afterlife.

In the *Republic*, Plato describes the soul's tripartite structure: the rational part (to *logistikon*), located in the head; the courageous or irascible part (to *thymoeides*), situated in the chest; and the appetitive or concupiscible part (to *epithymetikon*), found near the reproductive organs. Only the intellectual part, the *logistikon*, is immortal, capable of existing and functioning independently of the body. The other two parts derive their functions from their union with the body. The ability to perform the soul's functions perfectly is regarded as a virtue. Each part of the soul has a corresponding function and virtue: the *logistikon* embodies wisdom (*sophia*), the courageous part represents courage (*andreia*), and the appetitive part is associated with temperance (*sophrosyne*). Collectively, these four virtues: justice (*dikaiosyne*), wisdom, courage, and temperance, are referred to as the cardinal virtues.⁵ While the doctrine of the soul's pre-existence and immortality has religious origins, Plato transforms it into a philosophical argument by offering reasoned proofs. He presents at least four arguments for the soul's immortality, found in the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, and *Republic*.

In the *Phaedo*, Plato argues that the soul directly knows eternal and unchangeable ideas. Since, according to him, only like knows like, the soul must possess a nature akin to that of its objects. Thus, because the objects of the soul are eternal and indestructible, the soul itself must also be eternal and indestructible.⁶ Furthermore, Plato posits that the essence of the soul is life; since life is the opposite of death, the soul will never accept death and will forever

be a living being. He also adopts the argument of the Pythagorean physician Alcmaeon of Croton, stating that the soul is capable of self-motion (*autokinesis*), which makes it independent of external factors. As such, it holds the status of the absolute; being absolute, it is indestructible, thereby rendering the soul indestructible and immortal.⁷ In the *Republic*, Plato offers another proof of the soul's immortality. It states that everything perishes due to its particular evil, such as life perishing through death and health through sickness. The soul's peculiar evil is ignorance and the absence of virtue. However, it does not perish from ignorance. According to Maryniarczyk, since the soul is not destroyed by its own inherent flaws, it cannot be destroyed by any other factors, confirming its immortality.⁸

Plato in the *Phaedrus* envisions humans as souls that exist eternally but become joined with bodies due to their transgressions.⁹ These offenses must vary since souls can inhabit different bodies, those of men, women, or animals. In this theory, the only goal of the soul, once joined with the body, is to liberate itself from that body and return to its original spiritual state. The fall of the soul occurs because, based on these beliefs and human experience, the soul acts through desire, courage, and reason, symbolized by a many-headed hydra, a lion, and rational thought, respectively.

This triadic expression of the human soul is mirrored in the structure of the state, comprising three classes: craftsmen, soldiers, and rulers. Justice requires that each receive what is due. Only those who understand the true purpose of human life, namely, freedom from involuntary incarnation, should govern the state. This purpose can be attained through a rational and just life. Philosophers who comprehend the nature of the good should thus lead the state, creating laws that promote or enforce a

⁵ Plato, *The Republic* Trans. by B. Jowett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892).

⁶ Plato, *Phaedo*, trans. G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002).

⁷ Plato, *The Republic*.

⁸ Maryniarczyk, *Monistic and Dualistic Interpretation*, 102.

⁹ Plato, *Phaedrus*, in Plato: Complete Works, ed. J. M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 113.

just life, allowing a return to a state of pure spirit. A philosophical and law-abiding state necessitates continuous education and moral refinement. The educational process, or *paideia* (for Plato, *paideia* is the soul's turning away from the body and shadows, back to knowledge it already had), fosters culture by cultivating rationality in accordance with the ideal of "man," which embodies the sum of perfections humans should achieve while in a body.

The foundation of *paideia* is intellectual cognition. However, corporeality obscures and complicates the soul's access to pure truth, truth that the soul possessed before its incarnation. Once joined with the body, the soul must escape this obscured reality to rediscover the knowledge it has always held. The process of uncovering this truth involves a recollection known as *anamnesis*, which is the soul's return to its original understanding of reality. As a result of the fall, when the soul becomes encased in matter, it travels through the "river of oblivion" (*Lethe*). Hence, it is only through *anamnesis* that the soul can reconnect with the realm of truth (*alétheia*).¹⁰

Similarly, Plato proposes that humanity's knowledge of the world is fundamentally rooted in *anamnesis*. He argues that this notion further supports the immortality and eternity of the soul: "If the truth of all things always existed in the soul, then the soul is immortal. Therefore, the soul attempts to recollect what it does not know or rather, what it does not remember." *Anamnesis* operates across various levels of cognition: it manifests in *doxal* cognition (belief-based knowledge), in *dianoetic* cognition (discursive reasoning), and culminates in the highest form, *noesis* (intuitive knowledge). Plato's metaphysical approach positions the soul as an eternal and immutable entity that descends into and animates the corporeal realm. It is through the processes of learning, remembering, and recollection that the soul strives to regain its

lost knowledge and virtue. This journey toward truth emphasizes the soul's inherent dignity and ultimate purpose, as it seeks reawakening and liberation from the constraints of the material world.

Aristotle: The Soul as Form of the Body

For Aristotle, man, like all substances, is a being composed of both body and soul.¹¹ He argues against the notion of a "man-soul" or "man-body" as proposed by his predecessors, asserting instead that humans exist as a composite of body and soul. In doing so, Aristotle refutes Platonic dualism, which held that man is solely an immaterial soul, and also departs from the monism of the Ionian naturalists, who viewed man as an aggregate of uniform primordial elements. According to Aristotle, the rational capacity of the soul enables humans to rise beyond the material world. The soul, considered the first act of a natural body possessing life in potency, not only encompasses vegetative and sensitive functions but also includes higher functions such as thinking and volition (reason and will).

Aristotle defines the soul as the principle of life and all phenomena associated with it. He contends that the soul is the form of its corresponding body; it is neither a separate entity nor a corporeal substance, as Democritus and the atomists posited, nor a divine essence, as affirmed by the Pythagoreans and Plato. Instead, the soul is an essential component of any living being. There are three basic kinds of living beings: plants, animals, and humans, each corresponding to three types of soul, arranged in ascending order of perfection: (1) the vegetative soul (plant soul), (2) the sensitive soul (animal soul), and (3) the intellective soul (human soul). Each higher kind of soul includes all the functions of the lower kinds: the animal soul possesses not only its own operations but also the functions of the plant soul, while the human

¹⁰ Maryniarczyk, *Monistic and Dualistic Interpretation*, 102.

¹¹ Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *Discovery of the Internal Structure of Being*, trans. H. McDonald (Lublin: Polskie Towarzystwo Tomasza Z Akwinu, 2018), 194.

soul encompasses the functions of both lower forms along with its unique capabilities.

The proper functions of the vegetative soul include nutrition, growth, and reproduction. The sensitive (animal) soul performs functions related to external senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste), internal perception (common sense), imagination, appetite, and locomotion. The intellective (human) soul is characterized by the capacity for thought, which consists of the agent intellect and the possible intellect. Aristotle conceptualizes the soul as the principle of self-movement. He posits that the soul is what moves living beings, akin to how a body moves in space. This perspective leads to the understanding of the soul as a stable source of movement. Aristotle perceived that what is not itself moved cannot initiate movement in another. Thus, they categorize the soul among entities that are inherently in motion. This idea influenced Democritus, who described the soul as a form of fire or heated substance, suggesting that its 'forms' or atoms are infinite in number.

Aristotle describes the soul as "the first act of a physical organic body possessing life in potency," comprising faculties that directly yield vital actions.¹² In organising the body, the soul simultaneously coordinates the organs through which it acts. The manifestations of life, termed as the second act (*enérgeia*), represent the ability of a living being to utilize its faculties, even if not continuously, in accordance with the needs of the soul (the "first act"). The concepts of potency and act (corresponding to matter and form in material beings) underpin Aristotle's definition of the soul as the source of life. A crucial aspect of this theory is that Aristotle understands potency and act to be necessarily and transcendently ordered to one another. This transcendence refers to the relationship in which potency and act coexist within a substance. If act resides in the category of

substance, any corresponding potency is also classified within that category. Vital actions appear as accidents emanating from substance and are characterised by their non-necessity of action, relating to time and space, and involving both action and reception of action. These vital acts indicate that the soul possesses its own faculties of action, with the "subject" of this action being the corresponding organs of the living being. Thus, the understanding of the soul as "the first act of a physical body that has life in potency" is rationally substantiated.

The *Aporia* in Aristotle

In living beings, the soul serves as the source of activity, simultaneously establishing the identity and indivisibility of being. It represents the unity of the 'I' that engages in operations that cannot be reduced to one another, as the ontological structures of vegetative, sensitive, and spiritual life (intellectual and volitive operations, including acts of love) are distinct.¹³ The soul encompasses the whole being and functions as the single form that organizes the human body. The soul transcends the body, initiating spiritual operations in the form of intellectual cognition, consciousness, and self-consciousness. Through this cognition, we understand things in their necessary relationships and recognize that it is indeed we who perform the act of knowing. Our intellectual cognition is the clearest manifestation of our "I." Thus, the soul, as the source of human operations, including immaterial activities, reveals itself as immaterial. But what is the origin of the soul?

According to Plato, the soul is eternal and immaterial, connected to the body due to a spiritual fault, existing externally to it. In contrast, Aristotle posits that the soul is the form of the body; as a natural being who arises through generation, the human soul must be a consequence of material changes.¹⁴ This creates a fundamental

¹² Aristotle, *De Anima*, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

¹³ Aristotle, *De Anima* 413a20-25.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 736b27-29.

challenge in Aristotle's theory, as it seems implausible that an immaterial soul could emerge from material changes, and spirit cannot arise from matter. The principle of non-contradiction underlines this point, affirming that "non-being is not being," thereby classifying matter in relation to spirit as a form of "non-being." As Terence Irwin explains, this is a foundational axiom in Aristotle's natural philosophy.¹⁵

Aquinas' Synthesis: The Subsistent Form

Thomas Aquinas presents a satisfactory and rational solution to the question of the origin of the soul. His resolution stems from a general understanding of being as existent and a conception of contingent reality that presupposes a necessary reality—absolute being, referred to as God, who embodies reality as pure existence.¹⁶ As Robert Pasnau argues, Aquinas' key move is to make the soul both form and subsistent.¹⁷ All other beings partake in existence; thus, their status as real beings hinges on possessing existence. Eleonore Stump further clarifies that for Aquinas, the soul has its own act of existence apart from the body.¹⁸ Within this conception, the human soul, which is immaterial (as it generates immaterial acts), is inherently non-composite in essence. It cannot arise through a process of increasing changes since, being non-composite, it contains nothing that can change. As the source of spiritual operations: cognition and volition, the soul must exist as a being that simultaneously functions as the form-organizer of its body. The soul exists independently as the subject of its existence and cannot emerge through natural forces, as it transcends the natural order. Thus, it must be created by God, summoned into existence

by a special act.¹⁹ This understanding of creation is fundamentally negative, distinguishing the origin of the soul from natural factors. Consequently, we must look to an absolute source of being, the Absolute, to explain and justify the emergence of the soul, as experienced within human consciousness. Only the Absolute, in the form of God, can bring forth into independent (subjective) existence a substance that is non-composite in nature, an immaterial (spiritual) substance. This understanding eliminates contradictions in the context of intellectual cognition and volitional love, which occupy an immaterial ontological structure.²⁰

The human soul, created by God as an independent being, organizes matter at the moment the male and female gametes unite, thereby forming a human body. This fertilised cell contains a complete genetic code that, through an immense quantity of information, directs the actions of the human body and influences the overall shape of human vital activities from the inception of the first cell until the moment of biological death. As Aquinas states: "the soul imparts to bodily matter the existence in which it subsists, with which the intellectual soul becomes one, to such a degree that the existence belonging to the whole composite also belongs to the soul. This does not occur with other forms that are not subsistent. And for this reason, the human soul remains in existence when the body is destroyed, but other forms do not."²¹ Thus, by virtue of its creation, the soul exists in itself. It serves as the subject that organizes matter according to the genetic code and simultaneously imparts existence to the body it informs.

The soul imparts existence to the body and acts through it, for otherwise such

¹⁵ Terence Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 112.

¹⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 3, a. 4, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947).

¹⁷ Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35.

¹⁸ Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas* (London: Routledge, 2003), 201.

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book II. Trans. James F. Anderson. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

²⁰ Maryniarczyk, *Realistic Interpretation*, 37.

²¹ Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5.

impertation would be without purpose. All human actions, such as cognitive, appetitive, and motor, are mediated by the body, which is continuously organized by the soul.²² While human vital actions are always expressed through the body, this does not negate the immaterial ontological structure of certain faculties. This immateriality of the soul is manifest in spiritual activities of reason and will. These faculties proceed from the soul as active potencies. Their acts, such as concepts, judgments, reasoning, and love in its various forms, are distinctly immaterial.

Appetite, Reason, and the Need for Subsistence

A significant aspect of Aristotle's anthropology is his analysis of desire, or the drive toward a known good. In *De Anima*, Aristotle asks: "What is it in the soul that originates movement? Is it a separate part of the soul or the soul as a whole?"²³ He concludes that motion results from appetite, which may be both sensory and intellectual. "There is will in the calculative part, and desire and passion in the irrational part... If the soul is divided into three, appetite will be found in each."²⁴

Aristotle identifies three levels of the soul: vegetative, sensitive, and rational. Each level has its own "form," a determining factor of a specific mode of existence, revealing that a distinct inclination (appetite) arises from each form either through natural or cognitive appetite.²⁵ Natural inclinations, exemplified by nutrition and reproduction in vegetative life, embody natural appetite. In both humans and animals, movement facilitated by the body's organs arises from the perception of a practical good that motivates sensory or

rational evaluation.

In executing movement, two interconnected aspects emerge, engaging different faculties of the soul. Additionally, cognitive power, based on sensory and imaginative cognition, as well as rational understanding, is essential. To refine movement, an appropriate judgment regarding a practical good, something genuinely good in the context of the knower, is necessary. This cognitive assessment allows the good to become a tangible object of appetite and, thus, a genuine motive for action within the desiring subject. By recognizing the sensory perception of practical good through instinct, an infallible guide for an animal's actions alongside the intellectual understanding of the good, which motivates rational actions, we affirm the existence of distinct appetitive faculties: the faculty of sensory appetite and the faculty of intellectual appetite, with the latter manifesting in humans as the will.²⁶

For Aristotle, reason is the defining characteristic of humanity. As Siwek observes: "Man owes to reason the features that differentiate him from all other creatures... speech, a social system, an economic system, a political system, science, a sense of obligation, justice, law, the ability to make free choices, and the concepts of virtue and vice."²⁷ Aristotle also notes that "nature does nothing in vain."²⁸ If this is so, then all things are ordered for the sake of man, the rational animal.

This analysis, however, returns us to the aporia. The soul, as a substantial form, is individual because it is an act of the existence of a being, and a being is always individual. Just as act and potency together create a composite being, so too, a human being is a unity of body and soul. In Thomas Aquinas' exposition, the soul is not merely

²² Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 76, a. 5.

²³ Aristotle, *De Anima* 432a15–18.

²⁴ Aristotle, *De Anima* 433a9–13.

²⁵ Aristotle, *De Anima* 414a29–415a14.

²⁶ Aristotle, *De Anima* 432a22–433a1.

²⁷ Paweł Siwek, *Aristotle's On the Soul: Introduction and Commentary* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1965), 112.

²⁸ Aristotle, *De Anima* 415b15–21.

the form of the body and the principle of life; it is also the first and autonomous act of man's existence. A person does not only act through the soul; he or she exists because of the soul. The human soul is the ultimate act of the unity of man's being. Therefore, the very fact that I exist, that I receive sensory impressions, that I think intellectually, make judgments, and exercise free will, all these activities stem from the same principle, which is the soul. According to Krapiec, Plato views the soul as external, immaterial, and connected to the body due to some spiritual fault, treating the soul as something separate from the body.²⁹ In contrast, Aristotle posits that the soul is the form of the body; man is a natural being whose existence results from generation, implying that the human soul must also arise from material transformation.

Aquinas provides a unique solution to this philosophical question. His resolution is rooted in a general understanding of being as existent and a conception of contingent reality that implies a necessary reality, singular Absolute Being. Within this metaphysics, the human soul, being immaterial, is simple in its essence and cannot come into being through transformation or increase, as there is nothing within the soul that could change into something else. Existing inherently as the subject of its own existence, the soul cannot arise from natural forces, as it transcends nature. Therefore, if it exists in this manner, it must have been created by God, meaning it has been called into existence through a special divine act.

While the human soul exists in itself, it is also ordered to the body, together forming a complete human being. The soul acts through the body; thus, neither the soul nor the body alone can constitute a man. Humanity is a synthesis of matter and spirit, acting as one unified subject. As demonstrated by human actions, the soul requires the matter of the human body to exert its influence. Although the outcomes of cognition or acts of will are immaterial in

structure, the functioning of cognition or love in humans always occurs through material means. The soul, as a spiritual essence, exists as a being in itself, evidenced by the ontological effects of spiritual actions that are immaterial by their nature. However, the processes of the soul's actions take place in and through the body; there are no purely immaterial actions, since the human spirit, together with matter, forms a single source of action. This represents the unique mode of existence of the human spirit, which acts through the matter it organizes as its own body, allowing the soul to express itself externally and enrich itself internally through the exercise of free will, a capacity unique to spirit.

Aquinas articulated the view that the human soul can only emerge through an act of divine creation, as no inherent natural powers possess the necessary capacity to generate the human soul. This soul exists as an independent entity, serving as the subject that imparts existence to the human body. Consequently, the existence of the soul cannot be derived from any form of material substance; rather, it necessitates an intervention by the Absolute. Scriptural texts further support this perspective, as they affirm that God created humanity as male and female. For instance, the book of Genesis states, "So God created man in his own image; in the image of God, he created him; male and female he created them."³⁰ Additionally, it describes the creation of man in more detail: "Then Yahweh God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being".³¹ This explains the belief that the creation of the human soul is a divine act, distinct from the processes associated with the material world.

Conclusion

Man's fundamental property lies in the unique synthesis of matter and spirit, a concept that is also illuminated by biblical

²⁹ Maryniarczyk, *Realistic Interpretation*, 37.

³⁰ Genesis 1:27, Revised Standard Version.

³¹ Genesis 2:7, RSV.

revelation. The human soul, as evident through various human actions, requires the matter of the human body to manifest its capabilities. Although the products of cognition and acts of the will are immaterial in structure, their exercise in humans is always mediated through material means. The soul, as a spiritual entity, exists as a being in its own right and serves as a subject. This is evidenced by the ontological effects of spiritual action, which, while immaterial, occur through and within the physical body. There are no purely immaterial actions; rather, the human spirit and matter together constitute a singular source of action. This inseparable relationship indicates that the human spirit operates within a specific mode of existence, acting through the matter it organizes for itself as its own body. This body serves as a conduit through which the soul can act and externally express itself, while simultaneously enriching itself internally through the exercise of free decision, a capacity unique to the spirit. The philosophical explanation of human nature primarily unfolds within the theory of the essential aspect of humanity. Although Aristotle's insights into this essential aspect are commendable, his interpretations regarding the existential aspect of human nature are flawed. As Joseph Owens demonstrates, Aristotle never solved the problems of the intellect's separability.³² The emergence of humanity should not be regarded as a result of natural evolution; the human soul, which transcends matter in its actions, cannot simply be the product of evolutionary transformations. Aquinas posited that the human can arise only through an act of divine creation, as no natural powers possess the capability to create the human soul.³³ This soul exists independently as a subject, imparting existence to the human body. It cannot be derived from any material form, necessitating an intervention by the Absolute.

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³² Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute, 1978), 145.

³³ Edward Feser, *Aquinas* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009).

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