

# FORM, ESSENCE, SOUL: DISTINGUISHING PRINCIPLES OF THOMISTIC METAPHYSICS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

What is the difference between the substantial form, the essence, and the soul of a living material substance? Each of these three items would normally be considered in a course in Thomistic philosophy. In my experience, there reaches a point where students begin to wonder how these terms are related and even whether it is necessary to describe the metaphysical principles of things in so many different ways. I have found it useful, for my own understanding and my teaching, to exploit, even to foster, some potential confusions precisely in order to focus on them, and in the process illuminate certain distinctions and insights in Thomistic philosophy.

## II. CONFUSIONS

Presentations of Thomistic metaphysics can tend to present the substantial form, essence, and soul as if they are basically the same thing. Aquinas himself, after all, sometimes treats “form” as synonymous with “essence,”<sup>1</sup> and they seem to serve the same basic metaphysical task: both are causes not only of a thing’s being the kind of thing it is, but of its just being.<sup>2</sup> And, as causes, the causality exercised by both the essence and the form is *formal*, not material or efficient.<sup>3</sup> As for the soul, Aquinas of course adopts its Aristotelian

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<sup>1</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 1: “Dicitur etiam forma secundum quod per formam significatur certitudo uniuscuiusque rei, ut dicit Avicenna in II Metaphysicae suae.”

<sup>2</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 1: “Et hoc est quod Philosophus frequenter nominat quod quid erat esse, id est hoc per quod aliquid habet esse quid.” *De Principiis Naturae*, ch. 1: “omne a quo aliquid habet esse, quodcumque esse sit sive substantiale, sive accidentale, potest dici forma.”

<sup>3</sup> D.Q. McInerny treats essence and substantial form as the same in his *Metaphysics* (Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, 2004), 219-20, 237.

definition as the form of (a certain kind of) a body, i.e. as that kind of body's substantial form. He even says, on at least one occasion, that the soul can be called the essence (or the *quod quid erat esse*) of the body.<sup>4</sup> So, surely, one might be forgiven for beginning to treat "essence," "substantial form," and "soul" as different words for the same metaphysical principle. The words may not be synonymous, but perhaps they are co-extensional, picking out the same item but in virtue of different connotations: we talk about a *substantial form* when we want to emphasize the natural philosopher's contrast between form and matter; of *essence* when we want to emphasize the common whatness or quiddity of something, or else when we want to talk about the famed Thomistic real distinction between *esse* and *essentia* in created beings; and we speak of the *soul* when we are considering living things as living things—explaining either their various powers as living things or their very life itself.

On the other hand, it is not very difficult to show that these three cannot be identified, that as metaphysical principles they play different roles that should not be confused. For consider the following metaphysical equations, each describing in different ways the compositionality<sup>5</sup> of an individual living material substance, such as Socrates, and each well attested in the works of Aquinas:

- (1) Socrates is a composite of a *substantial form* and *prime matter*.
- (2) Socrates is a composite of an *essence* and some *designated matter*.

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<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, *In Metaph.* Bk. 7, lect. 10 (§1484): "Corpus enim organicum non potest definiri nisi per animam. Et secundum hoc *anima dicitur quod quid erat esse* tali corpori."

<sup>5</sup> Note that these "compositions" are not to be thought of as the mixing together of material elements, or the incidental joining of components that have independent existence in their own right. A consistent emphasis in Aquinas is that a material substance, like Socrates, is really one substance, and so when we speak of Socrates as a composite we are distinguishing in him metaphysical principles which are "parts" of Socrates in the sense that they are not identical with Socrates and they are not beings in their own right, but taken in combination they can be said to constitute the really one substantial whole.

(3) Socrates is a composite of a *soul* and a *body*.

Now, given the metaphysical equations listed here, it should be quite clear that in referring to Socrates' substantial form, soul, and essence we are not referring to exactly the same things. For each of these is said to constitute Socrates together with respective, complementary, metaphysical principles that are not identical with each other: *prime matter*, which is matter in pure potentiality, lacking any actuality, is not the same as *designated matter*, which is matter with some actuality, namely that actuality which determines it to particular dimensions; and neither prime matter nor designated matter is the same as the relevant *body* which is composed with the soul; for that body is not prime matter, and it has even more actuality than designated matter, enough actuality to make it "an organized body having life potentially in it." But then, if prime matter, designated matter, and an organized body capable of life are clearly distinct, then the three principles with which they respectively compose the same one substance cannot be identical.

### III. FURTHER CONFUSIONS

One proposal for making sense of a difference between essence and substantial form would describe the essence as universal or specific and the substantial form as individual or particular. But will this do? The essence or nature or quiddity, considered absolutely or according to its proper *ratio*, abstracts from existence in particular individuals (but this also is not the universal, as Aquinas famously makes clear in *De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 4). The essence or nature or quiddity can also be considered insofar as it has being in individuals, but in this case it is multiplied—the quiddity as it has *esse* in Socrates is only specifically the same, but remains numerically distinct, from the quiddity as it has *esse* in Plato. (This is why it sometimes seems appropriate to speak of "individual" essences or "individualized" essences, or singular or particular essences, although this is controversial.<sup>6</sup>) Likewise, substantial forms can be spoken of as numerically distinct actualities in individual things; but by abstracting from their individual determinations in individual things, we can speak of a common form—e.g. the substantial form of

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Joshua P. Hochschild, "Kenny and Aquinas on Individual Essences," *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 6 (2006): 45-56.

man common to Socrates and Plato and all other human beings—as specifically one, that is, in a sense as “universal.” So it does not seem that we can distinguish essence and substantial form just as universal vs. particular.

Nor can we distinguish form from essence simply by availing ourselves of Aquinas’s point that essence includes both form and matter.<sup>7</sup> After all, Aquinas says essence only includes “undesigned” or “common” matter. *Designated* or determinate matter is the principle of individuation; the *undesigned* “matter” that we are including in the essence—because it is formulated as part of the definition of the thing—is, as part of the essence, occupying the role of a formal principle.<sup>8</sup> The essence of man “includes matter” only insofar as we can’t define man except as a *kind* of material thing; but then, doesn’t *materiality* enter into the essence of man formally, as a part of the determination of the kind of thing a man is?<sup>9</sup> It seems that, proceeding up the Porphyrian tree, we simply spell out that man is a rational, sensitive, living, *material* substance. But if this is what is meant by the “universal” or “common” matter that is included in the essence of man “along with” the form, it is hard to see how this matter *adds* anything to the form. Especially given the thesis of the unicity of the substantial form, the form by which something is a material substance, made up of some kind of matter, must be that very form by which the material substance is the specific kind of material substance it is. If this is all that is meant

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<sup>7</sup> The claim is sustained throughout Aquinas’s career. See e.g. *De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 2 and *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 75, a. 4; the claim will be discussed further below.

<sup>8</sup> In the words of Fr. John Wippel, the essence is “the formal part” of that of which it is the essence. *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D. C.: the Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 205.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Maritain, *An Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935), 211, n. 3 (continued to 212): “This unindividuated or common matter [included in the essence of man], taken simply as receiving the form and determined by it, and not as the primary root of certain characters (the individual characters) of the subject, is made known to us by the form: *materia cognoscitur per formam, a qua sumitur ratio universalis* (St. Thomas, *loc cit.* [In VII *Metaph.*, lect. 10] Cf. *De Verit.*, q. 10, 1, 4 & 5), and is part of that which we have here termed the *immateralized being* (*archetypal being*) or *formal being* of the thing (*forma totius, seu potius forma quae est totum*).”

by affirming that an essence of a material being “includes matter,” it is hard to see how essence and substantial form differ at all.

As for the difference between substantial form and soul, this too seems problematic. As a good Aristotelian, Aquinas frequently invites us to identify the soul of a living material substance with its substantial form. But if we identify them with each other, why do we say that Socrates is composed of soul and *body*? Perhaps someone would argue that we should instead say that Socrates is composed of his soul and *prime matter*? After all, in calling the soul substantial form, Aquinas says that it is the form of the body. To say that does not imply that the soul is composed *with* the body; the soul as substantial form of the body could be composed *with* prime matter, thus producing the body of which it is the form. Given that such a body obviously must have a substantial form by virtue of which it is a body, and again, given the thesis of the unicity of substantial forms, this substantial form by which the body is a body must be the soul that has already been identified as its substantial form.<sup>10</sup> So, in referring to the body of which the soul is the form, we are referring to something that has that relevant form.<sup>11</sup> It is like when we refer to such-and-such a shape as the *form of the statue*. The statue is a statue because of the form, and we don't say that it is composed of form and statue; we say it is composed of form and, say, bronze.

But this line of argument is inadequate. Because, if we attend to what Aquinas says about soul and body, we have to admit that in addition to saying that the soul is the *form of the body*, he does say, quite clearly, that the individual living substance is *composed of soul and body*, as a whole is made from distinct parts. In *De Ente et Essentia* for instance, he says: “Man is said to be [composed] from soul and body, as

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<sup>10</sup> Aquinas, *Quest. de Anima*, q. 9: “since a soul is a substantial form because it constitutes a human being in a determinate species of substance, there is no other substantial form intermediate between a soul and prime matter; but it is the soul itself which perfects a human being according to diverse levels of perfection, so that he is a body, and a living body, and a rational animal.” Cf. *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 76 ad. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Frederick C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Penguin, 1955), 155: “...to call the soul the form of the body is to say that the soul is what makes the body a human body.”

*from two things some third thing is constituted which is neither of those [two]; for a man is neither soul nor body.*"<sup>12</sup>

#### IV. CLARIFICATIONS

To address the puzzle of how to understand the difference between substantial form, soul, and essence, I will proceed by considering each of these principles in their own right.

##### 1. Socrates = substantial form + prime matter

The language of form comes from the context of natural philosophy and the analysis of change. Change involves matter—an underlying subject—receiving form. And because all physical things come to be, that is, are a result of change, each can be conceived as a composite of matter and form. Form is that by which something has being; it is the principle of actuality. What it actualizes, the principle of potentiality, is matter. In the case of accidental change, the form is an accidental form and what receives it or is actualized by it is something that already has some substantial being: it is a substance. In the case of substantial change, the underlying subject or matter that receives the form cannot already be a substance. In *De Principiis Naturae*, Aquinas first introduces that which is in potency to substantial being as matter *from which*, as opposed to matter *of which*—then simply as matter in its proper sense, as opposed to the looser sense of matter that includes the subject that is in potency to accidental being. Eventually, he introduces the notion of *prime matter*, that which is only in potency to being without any actuality of its own; only this can be the subject of the substantial form by which the individual substance comes to be. So, an individual material substance is said to be composed of substantial form and prime matter. Since the substantial form is the principle of all grades of actuality of the composite, the other, material, principle that it informs in itself has no actuality; it only has potency. That is why the material substance is said to be composed of substantial form and prime matter.

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<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, *De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 2: "ex anima enim et corpore dicitur esse homo sicut ex duabus rebus quaedam res tertia constituta quae neutra illarum est, homo enim neque est anima neque corpus." Cf. *Summa Contra Gentiles* II, 69: "Non enim corpus et anima sunt duae substantiae actu existentes, sed ex eis duobus fit una substantia actu existens."

Notice, however, that there are different ways of signifying what something is, according to the different grades of actuality for which the substantial form is responsible. Socrates is a man, and he is an animal, and he is a body. In each case here, the predicates—"man," "animal," "body"—are substantial predicates; they speak of what Socrates is essentially, but with greater or lesser specificity. Indeed, we can even name the grades of actuality that these terms signify in Socrates—his humanity, his animality, his corporeity. We could even speak of each of these as distinct forms, but the distinction between them is merely rational, not real. That is the point of the thesis of the unicity of substantial forms already mentioned: there is not a plurality of substantial forms in a substance, one for each grade of substantial actuality; rather, the one substantial form of the substance communicates all grades of substantial actuality. So, while in *ratio* corporeity, animality, and humanity all differ, they are in reality all the same one substantial form, only conceived in different respects.

## 2. Socrates = soul + body

We speak of a soul in the context of that part of natural philosophy that seeks to account for why some material things are alive and have certain vital functions. In a pre-philosophical sense, the soul is the principle of life, whatever that may be. The philosopher seeks an analysis of what kind of thing or principle the soul is.

Now, by speaking of life, we are logically isolating one grade of actuality, the vital perfections of the living material substance, from other grades of actuality, like its materiality. But this grade of actuality is a substantial actuality, which is why the Aristotelian philosopher is so keen to identify the soul with the substantial form. The soul is the substantial form named insofar as that form is the principle of life; but then it differs only rationally and not really from that substantial form by virtue of which the living body is a body.

Thus, Aquinas can even say that a living substance's bodiliness or corporiety is its soul,<sup>13</sup> insofar as both name the one substantial form by

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<sup>13</sup> Aquinas, *Quaestiones disputate de Spiritualibus Creaturis*, a. 3 ad 14: "Corpus autem quod est in genere substantiae, habet formam substantialem quae dicitur *corporeitas*, quae non est tres dimensiones, sed quaecumque forma substantialis ex qua sequuntur in materia tres dimensiones; *et haec forma in*

virtue of which the living material substance is a living material substance.

This must be the sense of bodiliness signified by “body” when we say that the soul is the *form* of the body. For, as we saw above, when we say that the soul is the form of the body, the body we are talking about is the genus of the being of which the soul is the soul.<sup>14</sup> In everyday terms, in this sense, Socrates is the body.

But we also speak of a body that Socrates *has*. In this sense, the body of Socrates is not his genus, but his part. True, this part of him is what it is thanks to the same one substantial form of Socrates; but it is referred to as a part insofar as it can be conceived of not only apart from, but in a sense *excluding*, the further perfections—life, rationality, etc.—that make Socrates the kind of thing he is. Recognizing this—for there is the same ambiguity in Latin between the *corpus* that Socrates is and the *corpus* that he has—Aquinas described two different senses of

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*igne est igneitas, in animali anima sensitiva, et in homine anima intellectiva.” Summa Contra Gentiles, Bk. IV, ch. 81: “Non enim sunt diversae formae substantiales in uno et eodem, per quarum unam collocetur in genere supremo, puta substantiae; et per aliam in genere proximo, puta in genere corporis vel animalis; et per aliam in specie puta hominis aut equi. Quia si prima forma faceret esse substantiam, sequentes formae iam advenirent ei quod est hoc aliquid in actu et subsistens in natura: et sic posteriores formae non facerent hoc aliquid, sed essent in subiecto quod est hoc aliquid sicut formae accidentales. Oportet igitur, quod corporeitas, prout est forma substantialis in homine, non sit aliud quam anima rationalis, quae in sua materia hoc requirit, quod habeat tres dimensiones: est enim actus corporis alicuius.” Cf. Compendium Theologiae, Bk. I, ch. 154.*

<sup>14</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 76, a. 4 ad 1: “Aristotle does not say that the soul is the act of a body only, but ‘the act of a physical organic body which has life potentially’; and that this potentiality ‘does not reject the soul.’ Whence it is clear that when the soul is called the act [of the body], the soul itself is included [in the body]; as when we say that heat is the act of what is hot, and light [is the act] of what is lucid; not as though lucid and light were two separate things, but because a thing is made lucid by the light. In like manner, the soul is said to be the ‘act of a body,’ etc., because by the soul it is a body, and is organic, and has life potentially. Yet the first act is said to be in potentiality to the second act, which is operation; for such a potentiality ‘does not reject’—that is, does not exclude—the soul.”

“body.” One is an exclusive sense, which names the body Socrates has (body as a part) and the other a non-exclusive sense, which names the body Socrates is (body as a whole).

Corresponding with this, we can distinguish exclusive and non-exclusive senses of “soul.” The non-exclusive sense indicates the substantial form as principle of life, but not excluding other perfections, including corporeity, communicated by the form; these other perfections then do not have to be added to it, for they are virtually or implicitly included. The exclusive sense of “soul” indicates the substantial form exclusively as principle of life, leaving outside of its meaning the perfection of corporeity, which therefore has to be considered as something added.

This helps us make sense of how we can say that Socrates’ soul is his substantial form, and also that his soul is composed with body and not prime matter. Socrates’ soul is his substantial form, but when I refer to it as his substantial form, I am implying every grade of actuality, and its complementary metaphysical principle is prime matter—this is “soul” in the non-exclusive sense. When I refer to Socrates’ soul as a part of him, which constitutes the whole together with his body, I am implying only the grade of actuality of life in the exclusive sense, and so distinct from the bodiliness, in the exclusive sense, by virtue of which he has a body. Of course that body is a body by virtue of the same substantial form by which it is alive. But the soul considered in its exclusive sense differs from the substantial form as one grade of actuality to the full grade of actuality communicated by that form.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The position sketched here is explored in much greater detail in Gyula Klima, “Man = Body + Soul: Aquinas’s Arithmetic of Human Nature,” in Brian Davies, ed., *Thomas Aquinas: Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 257-73. [Also available online at: <http://www.fordham.edu/gsas/phil/klima/BODYSOUL.HTM>.] Incidentally, Klima’s distinction of different ways of signifying the one substantial form by which a living body is a body and alive solves the difficulties raised in the last section of another article in Davies’ anthology, Christopher Hughes, “Matter and Actuality in Aquinas,” 61-76.

### 3. Socrates = essence + designated matter

In what context do we speak of *essences*? In the sense used by Aquinas, *essentia* pertains to answering the question of *what* something is (and hence it is paired with *esse* which answers to the question of whether something is or that by which it is); it is what is captured by a definition. (It is also called quiddity, and more typically corresponds to the Greek *to ti ein einai* than *ousia*.) And it is also called nature, or common nature.

It is true that Aquinas will loosely refer to the essence as “form,” but only loosely.<sup>16</sup> As we have seen, form, as principle of actuality in an individual thing, is individual; we can speak of Socrates and Plato having “the same form,” but their forms are only *specifically* the same—the form of Socrates is something that exists<sup>17</sup> and by which Socrates exists; the form of Plato is something that exists and by which Plato exists, and these are clearly distinct forms—one can exist while the other does not. Indeed, although I find this rarely emphasized, since forms are principles of actualization, which make actual individual beings to be, forms themselves have an aspect of particularity or individuality about them.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to this, the essence, in its intelligibility, must not have in it anything that is individual and therefore unintelligible; as something common to many, determining species, it must abstract altogether

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<sup>16</sup> Aquinas very carefully handles those passages in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* where form seems to be identified with essence; see Armand Maurer, “Form and Essence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas,” *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951): 165-76. But Aristotle’s position may not be as unambiguous as Maurer describes; Aristotle suggests composition in the essence of material things in *Metaphysics* IX, ch. 10 (1051b17). See Thomas Aquinas, *In IX Metaph.*, lect. 11 (§§1901-1903) and Cajetan’s *In De Ente et Essentia*, §29.

<sup>17</sup> Of course, material forms exist not as *quod est* but as *quo aliquid est*—but then, so long as we keep in mind the analogical senses of being, it is not inappropriate to say that forms exist.

<sup>18</sup> Also perhaps relevant here is that, while forms are principles of actuality corresponding with matter as principles of potentiality, Aquinas conceives of essences as principles of potentiality, corresponding with being (*esse*) as a principle of actuality.

from particularity.<sup>19</sup> Only then can it be *understood* and *defined* as something common to many.

The non-particularity of the essence is why the individual qua individual does not have an essence, because the individual qua individual does not have a definition;<sup>20</sup> or, if an individual does have an essence qua individual, that essence could not be defined.<sup>21</sup> A definition is formulated and understood as something common—at least potentially common—to many. The individual qua individual can be sensed, but not understood, and so is not subject to definition. Given the non-particularity of the essence, it would seem that for Aquinas it is

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<sup>19</sup> Famously, the nature absolutely considered also must abstract from universality. But, as Aquinas explains in his careful handling of the problem of universals in *De Ente et Essentia*, it is the fact that it is conceived absolutely, that is in abstraction from particularity, which makes it possible to speak of the nature in an individual mind—directing that mind to attend to the nature absolutely considered as one thing common to many—to acquire universality as an accident.

<sup>20</sup> *De Ente et Essentia*, ch. 2: “Haec autem materia in diffinitione hominis, in quantum est homo, non ponitur, sed *poneretur* in diffinitione Socratis, si Socrates diffinitionem haberet.”

<sup>21</sup> *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV. 65: “the essence of a singular [qua singular] is made up of signate matter and an individual form: thus the essence of Socrates [qua Socrates] is made up of this particular body and this particular soul, even as the essence of man in general is made up of soul and body, as stated in 7 Metaph. Wherefore, since the latter are included in the definition of man in general, so would the former be included in the definition of Socrates, if he could be defined.” (Singularis autem essentia constituitur ex materia designata et forma individuata: sicut socratis essentia ex hoc corpore et hac anima, ut essentia hominis universalis ex anima et corpore, ut patet in VII Metaphysicae. Unde, sicut haec cadunt in definitione hominis universalis, ita illa caderent in definitione socratis si posset definiri.) Cf. *De Veritate* 2.7: “Intellectus autem cognoscens essentiam speciei, per eam comprehendit omnia per se accidentia speciei illius: quia, secundum philosophum, omnis demonstrationis, per quam accidentia propria de subiecto concluduntur, principium est quod quid est: unde et cognita propria essentia alicuius singularis, cognoscerentur omnia accidentia singularis illius: quod intellectus noster non potest: quia de essentia singularis est materia signata, a qua intellectus noster abstrahit, et poneretur in eius definitione, si singulare definitionem haberet.”

only in a very qualified sense that we can speak of an essence of an individual qua individual.<sup>22</sup>

The non-particularity of the essence is also why we speak of it being in need of a principle of *individuation*.<sup>23</sup> The general Aristotelian position is clear, that the essence is individuated by matter. But there are difficulties with this position. First, the essence can't be individuated by prime matter, which is not actually anything on its own. Second, there also has to be a sense in which matter is included in the essence, since it is part of the nature of material beings to be material beings. So the matter that individuates can neither be prime matter, nor can it be the formal materiality already included in substantial form.

Here Aquinas's solution is well-known, and has already been mentioned: the essence is individuated by *designated* matter. Designated matter is matter with the first grade of actuality that marks it out as some particular bit of matter and not some other. As noted, Aquinas recognizes designated matter also to distinguish it from undesigned matter or common matter, the matter included in the essence. But what does it mean that non-designated matter is included in the essence? It is not obviously clear.<sup>24</sup> The form of a material being is

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<sup>22</sup> We should distinguish two things that could be meant by "individual essence": one, the common nature as it has being in an individual (we could call this "the individualized essence"); the other, the particular essence of an individual qua individual (we could call this "the singular essence"). [For one account of individual essences, see Hochschild, "Kenny and Aquinas on Individual Essences."]

<sup>23</sup> As far as I can tell, Aquinas does not address the problem of individuation as a problem for *forms*, but as a problem for *common natures* or *essences*. On the different kinds of questions which "a principle of individuation" might serve to answer, see Peter King, "The Problem of Individuation in the Middle Ages," *Theoria* 66 (2000): 159-84. [Also available online here: [http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/articles/Mediaeval\\_Individuation.pdf](http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/articles/Mediaeval_Individuation.pdf).] See also Georgio Pini, "Scotus on Individuation," *Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics* 5 (2005): 50-69.

<sup>24</sup> Maurer seems to suggest that *prime matter* is also included in the essence: the composite includes prime matter, and so, "Although unintelligible in itself, prime matter is thus essential to the full intelligibility of the composite and enters in full right into the essence of a material being" (Maurer, "Form and Essence," 175).

called a material form, not in the sense that it is made up of matter, but in the sense that for it to be is for it to be in, or to actualize, matter. But then, as we saw previously, it seems as if materiality is already included in the very nature of such forms; why then, when it comes to describing the essence, do we have to say that it doesn't include "only" form but "also" matter? How does the essence differ from the substantial form?

I think we can make sense of this if we recall that the designated matter is matter with the first grade of material actuality. What communicates this first grade of actuality to the designated matter that individuates the essence must be the substantial form. The essence, therefore, which is individuated by designated matter, cannot be the same as the substantial form which actualizes designated matter.

In fact, it is Aquinas's clear and considered position that there is a real distinction between the essence and the substantial form. For reasons that remain somewhat obscure, Aquinas consistently expresses this as the distinction between the *forma totius* and *forma partis*, attributing the distinction to Avicenna (and occasionally opposing it to the doctrine of Averroes).<sup>25</sup> The terminology is confusing, inviting explanations that themselves are not always clear.<sup>26</sup> The literal

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<sup>25</sup> E.g. *In IV Sent.*, d. 44, a. 1b ad 2; *Quodlib. Quest.*, II, q. 2, a. 2; *SCG IV.81*; *In VII Metaph.*, lect. 9 (§§1467-69).

<sup>26</sup> E.g. Peter King, "The Problem of Individuation in the Middle Ages": "Aquinas distinguishes two kinds of forms: those including matter in their definition, and those not. The form 'humanity' includes matter in its definition, since it is rational animality; since animals are physical objects, matter must be involved in some fashion. On the other hand, the forms of immaterial objects clearly do not involve matter; more exactly, certain forms need not be enmattered to exist. Now forms occurring in material objects can be viewed either as the form of the whole object (*forma totius*), in which case the form is the complement to the *matter* of the object, or as the form of part of the object (*forma partis*), specifying only the formal principle of the object, in which case the form is the complement of the *material principle*" [English italics added]. I am not sure what difference King means to indicate between the matter and the material principle. Jorge J.E. Gracia's "Towards a Metaphysics of Existence" (in *The Classics of Western Philosophy: A Reader's Guide*, ed. Jorge J.E. Gracia, Gregory M. Reichberg, and Bernard N. Schumacher [Blackwell, 2003], 137-42) says: "In one sense, 'an essence'

translations—form of the whole and form of the part—are only partly illuminating. The *form of the whole* is the form of the whole composite—but not including designated matter; so it is the form of the whole of what something is. The *form of the part* is the form of one part of the composite—the part left over being prime matter.

To complicate matters, Aquinas says that the *forma totius* (essence or quiddity) can itself be referred to according to different modes of signification: *as a whole* (by the concrete term, e.g. “man”) or *as a part* (by the abstract counterpart term, e.g. “humanity”). In the first case, it can be predicated of that whole individual (qua member of a species); in the second case, it can only be predicated of that principle by which the individual is made a member of the species, but not of the individual itself.

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means everything that is expressed in the definition of the substance in question; this is why it can be predicated of the individuals who have such an essence. Accordingly, the essence of man embraces everything that is part of the definition of man, including materiality. In another sense, however, ‘an essence’ means just the form that, united to matter, constitutes the individual substance. Accordingly, the essence of this man, for example, refers only to the form of this man, which joined to this matter constitutes the individual man. Aquinas calls the first *forma totius*—generally translated as ‘form of the whole,’ but better expressed as ‘the whole form’—and the second *forma partis*—again generally translated as ‘the form of the part,’ but better expressed as ‘the form that is a part.’ The status of the second is quite clear, for it is the individual essence of an individual being (*ens*)” (140). I do not find Aquinas treating the *forma partis* or substantial form as the “individual essence.” Also, consider Gyula Klima, in “Man = Body + Soul”: “if we distinguish corporeity as that substantial form on account of which whatever has it exists in a material, spatio-temporal manner, whether the thing in question is alive or not, then the corporeity thus distinguished will clearly coincide in all living bodies with their soul, conceived as that substantial form on account of which whatever has this form is alive, whether it is a body or not. Therefore, in this non-exclusive sense, both the corporeity thus conceived and the soul thus conceived are nothing but the form of the whole, that is, the essence or quiddity of a living body.” But if soul or substantial form are the *forma totius*, how does Klima account for the real distinction between the essence (*forma totius*) and the substantial form (*forma partis*), which he acknowledges earlier in the paper?

So, when we *name* the essence (i.e. with the abstract term, such as “humanity”) we signify the *form of a whole* (i.e. the whole essence) as a *part* (i.e. as a part of the whole individual being). When we *signify* the essence in *naming a member of the species* (i.e. with the concrete term, such as “man”) we signify the form of the whole (the whole essence) as a *whole* (i.e. as designating the whole composite individual).

Aquinas, of course, says that the essence differs from the form because it includes, in addition to form, also matter. On my account, however, it seems that in a sense the substantial form “includes” more than the essence—it implies being (actually), and it implies particularity, communicating even the first grade of actuality to prime matter (pure potentiality) to make the individual actual not only as the *kind* of thing it is but as the *particular* thing that it is. (I think this is why Aquinas makes the survival of the soul the basis for the survival of the whole individual in the resurrection: *SCG IV. 81.*) On this account, what is included in the individual’s essence that is not included, or is obscured, in the substantial form is not *matter* but *intelligibility*.

#### V. CONCLUSION

These reflections lead to the following account of how the substantial form, soul, and essence differ when considered as components of an individual living material substance, united respectively with prime matter, body, and designated matter. The individual’s soul is the grade of actuality of the individual’s life. The individual’s essence is every grade of actuality of the individual excluding its particularity. And the individual’s substantial form is the whole range of the individual’s actuality, including not only what places it in a species but what makes it that particular individual.