

THE IMMATERIAL SOUL AND ITS DISCONTENTS

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SUMMARY: 1. Introduction. 2. Haldane's Thomistic Immaterialism. 3. The Argument of 75.5: A Common Misunderstanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

IN this paper I will examine a relatively recent objection posed to Aquinas' argument for the immateriality of the soul in article Ia.75.5 of the *Summa Theologiae*. The objection is that the argument is fallacious. For want of a better name, I will use the name coined by Robert Pasnau for the fallacy, namely, The Content Fallacy. The objection is posed directly by Joseph Novak in *Aquinas and the Incorruptibility of the Soul*,¹ and Pasnau in his article "The Content Fallacy" and his monograph *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*.² Pasnau describes it as "the fallacy of conflating facts about the content of our thoughts with facts about what shape or form those thoughts take in our mind." Because they directly pose the objection, from here on out I will refer to them jointly as NP. John Haldane accepts the objection as sound, and thus fatal to Aquinas' actual argument in 75.5. However, he thinks the conclusion of the argument, that the soul is immaterial, can be saved if a modification is made to the argument. Indeed, Haldane explicitly conceives of himself as responding to NP on behalf of Aquinas if we but make the modification to the argument

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¹ J. NOVAK, *Aquinas and the Incorruptibility of the Soul*, «History of Philosophy Quarterly», 4 (1987), pp. 405-421. Novak is not directly concerned with 75.5, but Aquinas' broad argument for the incorruptibility of the human soul in 75.6 and in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* II.79. See pp. 406-411. However the problem Novak diagnoses is to be found in 75.5 as setting up 75.6.

² R. PASNAU, *Aquinas and the Content Fallacy*, «Modern Schoolman», 75 (1998), pp. 293-314. IDEM, *Thomas Aquinas On Human Nature*, University Press Cambridge, Cambridge 2001. In *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, Pasnau does not consider the argument of 75.5. However he attributes the fallacy to Aquinas in a number of other places, particularly 75.2 which is on the intellectual soul as incorporeal subsistent (p. 57 note 11) and 86.1 which is on how the intellect knows singular things. However, in *Aquinas and the Content Fallacy*, among the many places he diagnoses the fallacy in Aquinas' work is 75.5 (p. 304, notes 12 and 14).

he suggests.³ This saving of the argument by Haldane in opposition to NP is why I separate his discussion from theirs. But it will be an important part of my discussion to keep in mind that Haldane fundamentally agrees with NP that Aquinas' unmodified argument commits the Content Fallacy. I will argue that NP and Haldane misread Aquinas' argument by attributing to him an account of representation, intentional content, and intentional objects that he does not hold. I will make some brief remarks at the end on what is taking place in 75.5 to better understand the argument. But given the constraints of space in the paper, I will not have the opportunity to defend Aquinas' argument.

2. HALDANE'S ARGUMENT FOR IMMATERIAL SUBSISTENCE IN 75.5

I will approach the objection through Haldane's response to NP in aid of saving what he takes to be the Thomistic immaterialism of the soul set out in question 75 as a whole. A striking feature of Haldane's defense of Immaterialism in Aquinas is that he takes Aquinas to be arguing for Immaterialism in both articles 75.2 and 75.5. So I would like to consider briefly the beginning of question 75. In Aquinas' setup of question 75, he first argues in 75.1 that a soul as first principle of life cannot be so in virtue of being a body. Life may be manifest in two different sorts of activity – intellectual activity or motion. The Platonic and Aristotelian setting of this point has to be kept clearly in mind. It isn't just any motion that displays life for Plato and Aristotle, but motion that is not imposed on an object from without, but in some sense comes from within the being that is moving – not rocks but worms. And it also has to be kept in mind for the argument of the entire question that Aquinas is not assuming that there is some one type of thing, soul, which in order to be a principle of life must be a first principle of *both* motion and intellectual activity. It is entirely possible at the beginning of 75, indeed throughout 75, that there are two broad types of soul with no overlap, namely, a type of soul that is a principle of motion and another type of soul that is a principle of intellect. Indeed, Aquinas won't argue that the human intellectual principle is identical to the human principle of motion until question 76, articles 3-4. For all we know in question 75, there might be two or more souls for any human being, one the first principle of human motion and another the first principle of human intellectual activity. The significance of this is that we do not know and should not assume in reading question 75 that when Aquinas alternatively discusses soul as principle of motion and soul as principle of intellect that he is talking about the same individual thing in different ways. After all, soul for most living things is not an intellectual principle.

³ See J. HALDANE, *The Metaphysics of Intellect(ion)*, «Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association», 80 (2006), pp. 39-55. For Novak and Pasnau as direct objects of Haldane's response, see p. 51.

So 75.1 argues that the character of soul as first principle of life cannot be so in virtue of being bodily, lest every bodily thing be alive and give rise to either motion or intellectual activity or both. 75.2 then argues that a soul considered more narrowly as an intellectual principle is an incorporeal agent and thus an incorporeal subsistent thing. Here we see an important clarification on the notion of *incorporeality* between 75.1 and 75.2. The argument of 75.1 is that soul as first principle of life isn't so in virtue of being a body or bodily. It does not follow however that soul is thus an incorporeal *thing* or subsistent. 75.2 however argues that soul as intellectual principle is an incorporeal thing or subsistent. So we need to recognize Aquinas distinguishing 'incorporeal' in the sense of not being identical with corporeality, the point of 75.1, from 'incorporeal' in the sense of *thing* or *subsistent*, the point of 75.2. The shape of a ball, for instance, is not corporeal in the sense of being a body or bodily, since it is the shape of a body. And yet it is no incorporeal thing or subsistent. This distinction between the two senses of 'incorporeal' is confirmed by 75.3, when Thomas argues that the souls of other animals are not subsistent. They are incorporeal in the sense of 75.1, as any first principle of life is. But they are not incorporeal in the sense of 75.2, the sense of incorporeal thing or subsistent. So Thomas is distinguishing in 75.1 and 75.2 being *incorporeal* from being an *incorporeal thing*.

According to 75.2, an intellectual first principle is subsistent because it is the first principle of an incorporeal act, an act that is neither the act of a body nor of an organ of a body. The reason given in 75.3 for the souls of other animals not being subsistent is that they do not have any incorporeal acts. Without examining the details of either Aquinas' argument or Haldane's criticism of it, Haldane takes the argument of 75.2 to be fatally flawed, and he does not attempt to salvage it as he attempts to salvage the argument of 75.5. But what is of interest to us here is that Haldane believes that 75.5 is actually arguing for the very same conclusion as 75.2, that is that the soul is an incorporeal subsistent. It's just that 75.5 uses the term 'immaterial' where 75.2 had used the term 'incorporeal'. And so Haldane treats the "incorporeality" of 75.2 as meaning the same thing as the "immateriality" of 75.5.

Where the argument of 75.2 for the soul as incorporeal subsistent is fatally flawed according to Haldane, Aquinas succeeds at arguing for the same conclusion in 75.5 if we make the modification to the argument that he calls for in response to NP. But of course what that implies is that Haldane takes the argument of 75.5 in arguing for immateriality to be arguing for subsistence, that is, that 75.5 is arguing for immaterial subsistence. That Haldane takes 75.5 to be an argument for immaterial subsistence is confirmed by the broad point of his paper which is to use the immateriality of 75.5, suitably repaired by his modification of the argument, to argue against Physicalism broadly construed in recent Philosophy of Mind, to argue that is, that there are non-physical things

or subsistents, the immaterial soul being a prime example. Physicalism is defeated if one can show that there are non-physical, that is, immaterial things or subsistents; one does so by focusing upon «the conceptual intentionality of abstract thought.»⁴

Here then is the argument Aquinas gives for immateriality in 75.5:

«[...] it is clear that whatever is received in a thing is received in it according to the mode of the receiver. So each thing is such that there is cognition of it insofar as its form exists in the one who has cognition of it. But an intellective soul has cognition of an entity in that entity's nature taken absolutely (*in sua natura absolute*); for instance, it has cognition of a rock insofar as the rock is a rock taken absolutely. Therefore, the form of a rock taken absolutely, i.e., according to its proper formal notion (*secundum propriam rationem formalem*), exists in the intellective soul. Thus, an intellective soul is an absolute form and not something composed of matter and form. For if an intellective soul were composed of matter and form, then the forms of the things would be received in it as individuals, and so the soul would know them only as singulars, just as happens in the case of the sentient powers, which receive the forms of things in a corporeal organ. For matter is the principle of individuation of forms. Therefore, it follows that an intellective soul, along with every intellectual substance that has cognition of forms taken absolutely, lacks a composition of form and matter».⁵

This is the argument that the critics, NP, take to be fallacious. Haldane summarizes it as follows:

- 1) Intellectual acts are essentially constituted by conceptual universal natures.
- 2) No materially instantiated property is a universal.
- 3) Therefore, conceptualized universal natures are not materially instantiated.
- 4) What is essentially constituted by non-materials is itself non-material.

The first point to note here is that in the original passage Aquinas talks of “matter” as opposed to his earlier talk of “body” in 75.2. On the other hand, Haldane introduces a term, ‘universal’, that is absent from Aquinas’ argument as found in the text of 75.5, and in this he follows both Pasnau and Novak. Instead, Aquinas himself talks not of universals, but of natures and forms taken “absolutely,” which is to consider a nature or form “according to its proper formal notion.”

The difference between Aquinas’ terminology of a ‘form taken absolutely’ on the one hand and Haldane’s, Novak’s, and Pasnau’s terminology of a ‘universal’ on the other is important. Aquinas’ own language harkens back to his

⁴ J. HALDANE, *The Metaphysics of Intellect(ion)*, cit., p. 39.

⁵ In the translation of Alfred Freddoso. <http://www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/Part%201/st1-ques75.pdf> Notice that the text speaks of knowing the nature “absolutely” in virtue of the form existing “absolutely” as principle in the intellect.

discussion in the *De ente et essentia* in which he explicitly distinguishes the notion of considering a nature or form absolutely from considering it as a universal – a nature or form considered absolutely is *not* a universal according to Aquinas. Universal is the mode of *being* that pertains to a form as existing within intellect. When speaking of a form as “universal” we are not *considering the form absolutely*. It is the nature of a rock that is *considered* absolutely, not *existing* absolutely, that is subject to cognition for the purposes of 75.5. Even more so it is not a universal that is subject to cognition.⁶ So by writing here in 75.5 of “a nature taken absolutely,” Aquinas means to be excluding the thought that when an intellectual soul cognizes the nature of something what it cognizes is a universal nature. Along with Haldane, Novak and Pasnau regularly attribute *universal* to the content or object of thought.⁷ And so when Haldane substitutes ‘universal nature’ for Aquinas’ language of ‘nature taken absolutely’, they are attributing to Aquinas in 75.5 the view that he intends to exclude in his discussion, the view that in cognition what is cognized is a universal of some sort.⁸ I will leave further discussion of the importance of this point for later elaboration.

The second point to note is that Haldane’s summary does not actually paraphrase what must be the conclusion of the argument on his construal of it. But that is easy enough to supply, given the paraphrase of the rest of it.

- 5) Intellectual acts, being essentially constituted by non-materials are themselves non-material.

Even with this conclusion, the argument is a bit awkward as an interpretation of the actual passage, since Aquinas does not talk about the intellectual *acts* of the soul being constituted by the absolute forms of the things it cognizes, but, rather, the *soul itself* receiving those absolute forms. This latter way of putting it makes sense for Aquinas, since the article is devoted to arguing about whether the soul, not its acts, is immaterial. Perhaps Haldane would respond that it is in virtue of the intellectual acts being informed by those absolute forms that we infer that the soul is said to receive those forms. That may be in the order of discovery. But it is worth noting that in the order of explanation

⁶ See my *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 2003, pp. 26-39 and especially pp. 191-192.

⁷ For Novak see, *Aquinas and the Incorruptibility of the Soul*, cit., p. 409. Novak is explicit there in suggesting that for the purposes of his paper the distinction that one may draw between ‘immaterial’ and ‘universal’ as he understands it is of no importance. For PASNAU see *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, cit., pp. 311-312 and pp. 316-318. And *Aquinas and the Content Fallacy*, cit., p. 295.

⁸ It should be noted that universals existing in the intellect can be cognized by a secondary act of reflection upon the intellect’s acts of cognizing existing natures considered absolutely.

Aquinas actually holds that it is in virtue of the soul receiving the forms in intellect that it is rendered capable of manifesting the act specified by the form first received.⁹ But having brought up those acts, and as presented, Haldane's summary does not have the conclusion of Aquinas' argument and requires additional premises to get it. Again we can supply the missing premises and conclusion for him.

6) Intellectual acts are acts of the intellectual soul.

7) A thing is as it acts.

8) The intellectual soul, acting non-materially is non-material.

NP and Haldane think this argument is fallacious. However it is Haldane's position that it can be fixed, and thus provide a sound argument for the conclusion that the soul is an immaterial subsistent in just such a way that its subsistent existence provides a stumbling block to contemporary *Physicalism*.

3. THE ARGUMENT OF 75.5: A COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING

In proceeding forward, I will argue that NP and Haldane misunderstand the argument in 75.5, despite their conflicting appraisals of its final validity. Premise 4 of the argument is the problem for NP and Haldane: What is essentially constituted by non-materials is itself non-material. In the language of intentional content, representation, and representational content, the thought is that the argument in 75.5 makes an invalid move from the intentional content of a representation to a characteristic of the representation itself. That move is presupposed in the language of Haldane's premise 4 when we identify the intentional content of a representation with whatever it is that essentially constitutes an intellectual act.¹⁰ The claim is that such an inference from the character of the represented, the intentional content, to the character of the representation is invalid. A painting of a pipe is not itself a pipe, and so we cannot conclude that a painting smokes from the fact that what it represents smokes.

NP charge that Aquinas thinks that in intellectual activity the mind has as intentional objects immaterial universals presented to it by mental representations expressed in intellectual acts. Because the intentional objects provide the intentional content of the intellectual acts, immateriality in that case is part of the intentional *content* of the representation. The intentional objects provide the intentional content of the representations. But as we have seen

⁹ See my *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, cit., pp. 170-171 and pp. 218-224.

¹⁰ Because I will argue that Novak, Pasnau, and Haldane all make a common interpretative mistake, I will not consider here the extent to which Haldane's particular expression of the argument captures or fails to capture the different precise ways in which Novak and Pasnau think the troublesome premise is to be expressed.

it is a fallacy to conclude that the representation itself is immaterial because it represents something immaterial, just as it is a fallacy to conclude that the painting smokes because it represents something that smokes. Pasnau in particular gives this fallacy the name, “The Content Fallacy,” – attributing to the vehicle of the representation the characteristics of the intentional content of the representation, that is, the characteristics of what is represented. So notice the importance of distinguishing between the content of the representation and the vehicle of representation, in my example the pipe and the canvas with paint, to get the fallacy off the ground. In the case of the argument of 75.5 as understood by NP and Haldane, the content-vehicle distinction is between the immaterial content of the representation and the intellectual act that grasps that representational content.

In responding to this objection, Haldane accepts the view from the critics that according to Aquinas immaterial universals are represented in thought to the intellect that thinks – they form the intentional or representational content. But Haldane responds that we can fix this argument by denying the basis for attributing the fallacy to the argument. Attributing the fallacy involves distinguishing between the content of the representation and the bearer or vehicle of the representation. So Haldane suggests that we modify Aquinas’ argument by denying this distinction between content and vehicle. He writes:

«Suppose that instead of distinguishing representations as vehicles of content from representational content as such, one identifies sensory acts with their sensuous contents, and intellectual acts with their conceptual contents, treating both as pure *Vorstellungen* or cognitive presentations. On that account the presentation of a material particular as content is identical with the occurrence of a material particular, a state of the sensory system of the subject. Similarly, the presentation of an abstract universal, being immaterial in content is thereby immaterial in substance». ¹¹

So by denying the distinction between representational vehicle of content and representational content, Haldane can maintain that no illicit move from one to another can occur, and the fallacy is thus avoided.

But there are immediate problems with this suggestion of Haldane’s as a response to the Content Fallacy, philosophical difficulties having nothing to do with the interpretation of Aquinas in particular. The suggestion proves too much. Without further clarification it suggests that there are no properties of the thought-content not had by the thought-act or thought-state. How can that be? The *content* of the concept dog involves the property *can bark*; and we are told by NP and Haldane that it also includes *universal* and *immaterial*. If it doesn’t include those latter characteristics in the representational content it can’t commit the Content Fallacy in moving to attribute them to the repre-

¹¹ J. HALDANE, *The Metaphysics of Intellect(ion)*, cit., p. 53.

sensation. But presumably part of the point of the idea of conceptual content is that what it presents involves features and properties that can be predicated of the individuals that fall under it – the content consists of properties *said of* the thing, as in “a dog can bark” and “Fido can bark because he is a dog.”¹² But if *immaterial* and *universal* are also part of the intentional or representational content of the concept, that is, properties involved in it, then it seems that we ought to predicate of Fido that he is immaterial and universal, not just that he can bark.

However, we do not want to do that. Fido is a paradigm of materiality and particularity. If Fido is not a material particular what is? Conversely, it seems that we ought also to say that the intellectual act can bark, since as identical with the content it presents it has the properties involved in the intentional content among which are *immaterial*, *universal*, and *can bark*. In other words, by positing this simple identity of representational or intentional content with the representational act in order to overcome the fallacy of attributing immateriality to the act from the immateriality of the act content, Haldane appears to open the way for all the elements of the content to be attributed to the act including *can bark*, *can walk on four legs*, *can reproduce*.

Now here Haldane might invoke Frege's distinction between the *marks* of a concept and the *properties* of a concept.¹³ The marks of a concept are those properties that are predicated of the objects that fall under the concept. So *can bark* is a mark of the concept *dog*. The properties of the concept are those second order properties that are predicated of concepts, but not necessarily the objects that fall under the concept. Properties of a concept like *dog* would be such things as *universal*, *abstract*, *immaterial*, properties that are not predicated of dogs. There is a basis for attributing such a Fregean distinction to Aquinas, since in the *De ente et essentia* he distinguishes between natures *absolutely considered* and the modes of existence of natures, either in *extra-mental* reality or *intra-mental* reality. And recall that I pointed out above the significance in passage of 75.5 Aquinas' use of the form taken absolutely when speaking of “absolute forms,” where NP and Haldane substitute “universal.” According to Aquinas the nature absolutely considered consists of a *ratio* the elements of which are predicated of beings that fall under it. On the other hand, features of the different modes of existence, like being *here* or *there*, *now* or *then*, *particular* or *universal*, are not predicated as part of that *ratio*. In fact Aquinas makes this distinction precisely to avoid saying things like Fido is *qua* dog a universal or abstract as we would say that *qua* dog he can bark.

However, as Aquinas' discussion in the *De ente* suggests, invoking such a distinction cries out for an account of why in intellectual presentations

¹² See my discussion of predication in *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, cit., pp. 28-31.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 303, note 42.

we have such widely diverse kinds of properties associated with concepts, namely, those that are predicated of the objects that fall under the concepts, and those that are *associated* with concepts but not predicated of the objects that fall under them, particularly if the presentations result from mental acts. Aquinas can say that the properties of a concept are those features that pertain to the mode of existence of a nature or form in mental activity. While the form provides the *ratio* or intelligible structure of an intellectual act, *universal* and *immaterial* characterize the mode of *existence* of that form or nature *existing as* the form of the intellectual act; they do not specify the intentional *content* of the form or nature so existing. And so when we predicate a form or nature of some being *in re*, we predicate only those features of its *ratio* as such, not the features it has as existing in the intellect – in the case of the concept *dog* we predicate *can bark* and *can reproduce*, but not *is universal* and *is immaterial*. But to introduce that distinction is just to reintroduce the content-vehicle distinction in speaking of *universals* as existing in the intellect as its acts, a distinction Aquinas has no difficulty introducing; that is, among other things, just the point of the *De ente et essentia* at that stage.

Haldane, on the other hand, having asserted that there is a simple identity between conceptual content and conceptual act, an identity that in the face of NP's objections Haldane thinks validates the inference from immaterial content to immaterial subsistence, cannot now avail himself of any such distinction between the *marks* and the *properties* of a concept in order to exclude some features while letting others in – to exclude, that is, the odd thought that the concept *dog* is not just universal and immaterial, but also barks and reproduces.

In addition, NP and Haldane do not simply claim that what is presented to intellect is immaterial; they claim that what is presented is an immaterial abstract universal. Now it is at least an awkward result for NP that Aquinas only seems to have committed the Content Fallacy with respect to immateriality and not abstractness or universality. But Haldane is in a much worse position here than NP with his solution to their fallacy. His solution claims that properties of the conceptual presentation just are the properties of the conceptual act or state. So his solution positively requires that the act must be as substantially universal and substantially abstract as it is “substantially immaterial.” So if Haldane is right, in terms of the entire argument of 75.5 Haldane's solution would commit Aquinas to more than the view that the soul is immaterial, but also that it is an abstract universal. However Aquinas provides arguments in close proximity to 75.5 for individual human souls of individual human beings.¹⁴ So Haldane's solution is not a mere modification to Aquinas'

¹⁴ Ia 76.2.

argument, saving it by rendering it valid. It saves it at the cost of rendering it inconsistent with Aquinas' larger discussion of the soul.¹⁵

How is it that my intellective acts, *qua* acts, can be abstract? In terms of Aquinas' conclusion about the soul, how can the soul be a universal? One would have thought that acts, *operationes*, are paradigms of particular *concreta* distinguished from *abstracta*. As particulars, they are acts that take place at certain times and not other times as modifications in a certain individual and not others; so how can such *operationes* be universals – perhaps they fall under universals, but how can they *be* universals? How is my particular act of thinking now about what NP and Haldane identify as the abstract immaterial universal *dog* – a particular act that appears to be distinct from my particular act of thinking about *dog* yesterday – how is that particular act any more an abstract universal than my particular act of sitting now as distinct from my particular act of sitting yesterday? To respond that they are universal in terms of what they present, not in terms of what they are as *operationes*, is simply once again to redraw the content-vehicle distinction that Haldane has abandoned to avoid the fallacy.

Indeed the situation gets worse still for both NP and for Haldane. Aquinas does not think that *what* is presented is merely the form devoid of matter. What he thinks is that it is the nature *as such* or *absolutely considered* that is presented, based upon the distinction he drew in the *De ente et essentia*. But the nature of a dog includes matter. To not know the matter of a corporeal being is to fail to know its nature. To be sure, Aquinas thinks the matter of the nature is known through the absolute form alone existing in the intellect as a principle of knowledge. So there is no isomorphism of parts to parts between the concept as act of intellect and the nature understood or “presented” by means of that concept.¹⁶ That lack of isomorphism between the nature known ab-

¹⁵ Of course Haldane could respond that he is not interested in saving Aquinas' argument, but using Aquinas' argument to develop a valid argument regardless of how the result stands in relation to Aquinas. Even so, it looks to be an awkward result to have an argument the conclusion of which tacitly implies that the soul is a universal.

¹⁶ Notice that the sense of ‘isomorphism’ at play in my statement is not the simple etymological sense of ‘isomorphism’, which just is *same form*. In that etymological sense, according to the Aristotelian there is a sameness of form between the nature that is understood and the conceptual act by which it is understood. But we do not simply understand the form of the nature understood by the conceptual act with that form; we also understand its matter through that form. The sense of isomorphism I have in mind here, in denying that there is an isomorphism of part to part, is something like the mathematical notion of a function that is one-to-one and onto, preserving the structure between a domain and a range. While the nature known has a formal “part” and a material “part”, the concept simply has a formal part, and so there is no structural similarity between mental act and thing understood. For an argument against attributing the sort of isomorphism of representational structure to Aquinas, see my *The Identity of Knower and Known: Sellars's and McDow-*

solutely and the form in intellect in virtue of which it is known is in fact what Aquinas is presupposing in the argument of 75,5 to draw the conclusion that the intellectual act is immaterial. The nature which is a form-matter composite is known because the intellect receives the form without the matter that is correlative to it in natural material existence outside the intellect.

So if we are going to use the language of conceptual content and presentation to understand Aquinas, the conceptually presented nature of a corporeal being must include matter, since corporeal natures are constituted hylomorphically from matter and form; to not understand them as with matter would be to misunderstand them. So what Aquinas thinks characterizes a material nature considered absolutely is form *with* matter, although such a consideration does not advert to the matter as here rather than there, now rather than then, of such and such mass rather than of such and such other mass, and so on. For example, we can think of a dog as a living material being, subject to material change and thus to time, space, mass, qualities like color, odor, and so on, without the particular exigencies of this time, that space, such mass, such and such color, such and such odor, and so on of this particular dog rather than some other particular dog. The only existing matter that dogs have is what Aquinas calls “designated matter.” But to characterize matter without thinking of it as here or there, now or then, of this mass rather than that, Aquinas will speak of “undesigned matter.”

So again, sticking with the language of conceptual presentation, it is true that “designated matter” is not part of the way that corporeal natures are presented through intellectual acts. Through intellect, Fido is not presented as here rather than there, of this mass rather than that, and so on. But he is presented as a being subject to being here or there, as subject to some mass, and so on. And that is to present Fido in such a way that his matter is undesigned in the way he is presented, which is quite different from presenting him as having matter that exists as undesigned. “Undesigned matter” is an element of such a conceptual presentation to intellect; it is not a special kind of matter that exists.¹⁷

So what is conceptually presented in intellection is not immaterial *simpliciter*; on the contrary what is presented is material but undesigned material. But then whether or not Aquinas commits the Content Fallacy as NP charge or could avoid it in the manner suggested by Haldane, it turns out that in terms of what they all presuppose about Aquinas, what Aquinas must mean

ell's Thomisms, Presidential Address of the American Catholic Philosophical Association, «Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association», 87 (2013), pp. 1-30.

¹⁷ For an exhaustive discussion of Aquinas on these issues concerning *matter* see J.F. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington 2000.

for all of them by *immaterial* in arguing that the soul is immaterial, is that the soul is in fact constituted from matter, just undesignated matter. On their understanding, he must be committed to this since what is presented in the intentional content is undesignated matter, and the Content Fallacy is supposed to involve attributing to the vehicle of representation the characteristics of the represented.

However, there is no evidence for this position in Aquinas, as the only matter that exists is matter under particular conditions of being here rather than there, now rather than then, of this mass rather than that mass. Indeed it is difficult to know what it could possibly mean to suggest that there is such a thing in reality as undesignated matter, much less that the soul is partially constituted by it. 'Undesignated matter' is a way of describing corporeal beings as subject to time, space, quantity, material quality and so on, but in ways that do not take into account their particular places, times, quantities, and material qualities. Perhaps the phrase 'undesignated matter' is misleading, as it may look like 'undesignated' is not just a grammatical modification of the word 'matter', but perhaps an ontological characteristic of existing matter itself under certain conditions. A better phrase might perhaps be 'matter undesignated' since that is open to specification as 'matter *undesignated in our thought of it*', and that phrase does not suggest that lack of designation is a metaphysical feature of matter itself. In any case, undesignated matter does not exist. And certainly it does not exist in the intellect. After all the entire point of 75.5 is to argue that the intellect is completely immaterial, that is, purely formal, and receives the forms of things, that is, without matter of any sort.

Something has gone badly off the rails in this discussion of Aquinas' argument in 75.5, off the rails on the part of both NP and Haldane in his response to them. It has gone off the rails in two ways. First, both NP and Haldane are struggling with the attribution of a representational theory of thought to Aquinas. In NP, attributing this theory to Aquinas gives rise to the distinction between the representational content and the representational act or state. Haldane in attempting to overcome the fallacy accepts the terms of that debate, only to reject one aspect that is typically taken for granted in such theories, namely, a distinction between representational content and vehicle. But I have argued elsewhere that the understanding of the role of concepts as bound up in a representational theory of thought attributes to Aquinas a theory of representation that he does not hold.¹⁸

Here is where an ambiguity between "intentional object" and "intentional content" or "representational content" comes to the fore. Speaking of "content" is reminiscent of all the various spatial metaphors characteristic of the

¹⁸ See my *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, cit.

early modern Theory of Ideas in speaking of the mind as a container or space within which mental life takes place and mental objects are to be found. One might think that what we mean by “intentional object” is whatever it is that we think about through a mental act. But the “intentional content” of a concept or mental act suggests that the mind is a kind of container of things, internal mental contents that reside within it and which can be identified with mental representations. Suppose we distinguish at least notionally the idea of *intentional content* from *intentional object*. Then we can ask whether the intentional content just is the intentional object. If we say that it is the intentional object, then it will look like what it is that we think about has its existence as a kind of mental entity, perhaps presenting and representing to us extra mental objects that correspond to these intentional objects. On the other hand, if we deny that the intentional objects of thought are the intentional contents of thought, then the intentional objects can be extra-mental objects in no way dependent upon the mind or its acts for their existence.¹⁹

Having denied that the intentional content of thought is identical with the intentional object of thought, one might then maintain that by “intentional content of thought” one means the intelligible character of a mental act, in which case the existence of the content is dependent upon the act for which it is the content. Here the question may arise whether anything in the world answers to such an intentional content.

So it is a substantive philosophical thesis in need of argument that the intentional object of thought is identical with the intentional content of thought, that is, whether what we think about, the intentional object, is something *in* the mind, the intentional content, depending upon the mind and its acts for its existence. But as a matter of fact, Aquinas argues at length that what we think about in the first instance cannot be any such mental “contents.”²⁰ In the language of *intentional objects*, what is first thought about is not in any way a mind dependent object. Intentional objects are worldly beings; in particular what we think about through intellect are primarily material natures existing in extra mental things, that is, *in rebus* not *in mente*.

But the position that the critics and Haldane attribute to Aquinas requires seeing the formal structure of a conceptual act, its content, as in some sense cognitively identical to the intentional object of thought. This interpretation of Aquinas is why they substitute the “abstract universal” as what the intellect “grasps in cognition” for what Aquinas has in mind when he says “the form taken absolutely.” The abstract universal according to Aquinas is a product of the intellect’s activity of abstraction. NP and Haldane identify that abstract

¹⁹ See Sellars excellent discussion of these possibilities for thinking about intentional objects in *Being and Being Known*, «Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association», vol. 34 (1960), pp. 28-49.

²⁰ ST 1a.84.3 and 1a.85.2.

universal that is produced by and dependent upon the intellect for its existence with the intentional object of thought. So it becomes necessary to distinguish between the content of the thought as *what* is represented and the thought as the representation--the content-vehicle distinction. Because the form as content existing in the intellect is not particular but abstract and universal it appears that the intentional object of the intellect is an abstract universal.

In fact, attributing the Content Fallacy to Aquinas is a bit surprising and ironic, as it is strikingly similar to a fallacy that Aquinas himself charges others with in this setting within the *Summa*. The fallacy he has in mind he associates with Plato, and consists in attributing to the thing known the characteristics of the knower in knowing it.²¹ The error would be committed just as much if one were to attribute to worldly objects propositional structure from the fact that in thought we make judgments with propositional structure about the world. But for Aquinas the most striking example of this fallacy occurs amongst those who would argue that because our thoughts are characterized by universality in extending to many, the *being* that we think about, the intentional object, must itself be characterized by universality, that is, *be* a universal.

Strictly speaking this is not the same fallacy as Pasnau's Content-Fallacy; it is rather something like the converse. But notice the parallel – thinking universally implies a universal thought about. The Content Fallacy goes the other way – thinking about an immaterial universal implies immaterial universal thought. Aquinas clearly identifies the first as a fallacy. Of course it is conceptually possible for one to recognize the first fallacy and not the second, and thus to fall prey to the second. But to fail to recognize the second would appear to be extraordinary since diagnosing and avoiding the first fallacy consists in distinguishing the characteristics of *what* is thought about from the thinking itself, which is the same distinction one makes in diagnosing and avoiding the second “Content” fallacy. Thus, it is ironic that Aquinas would place so much emphasis upon not falling prey to the one fallacy in the same general setting within which he is charged with falling prey to its converse.

Indeed the irony is heightened when we consider the presupposition of NP's analysis, namely, that what the intellect thinks about, the intentional object of its acts, is an immaterial universal. After all, the point of Aquinas' invocation of what we might call the Error of the Platonists is precisely to deny that what the intellect knows or thinks about is an immaterial universal; and his arguments in questions 84.1 (against the Platonists) and 85.2 (against *intelligible species*) make clear that it matters little whether one claims that that supposed immaterial universal object is mind independent (84.1) as the Platonists

²¹ ST Ia.84.1.

thought or a mind dependent reality (85.2) as others may think.²² These are arguments against the view that *what* the intellect knows, its “intentional objects” are immaterial universals. And yet we are told by NP and Haldane that Aquinas commits the Content Fallacy in the same general discussion of human nature because he presupposes that the intentional object of thought, its content, is an immaterial universal. No doubt Aquinas thinks that the intellectual act has the character of being an immaterial universal. But from that one cannot conclude that what is known in and through that act, the intentional object of the act, is an immaterial universal. That mistake is what allows them to substitute an immaterial universal for what Aquinas says is the form *taken absolutely*. So charging Aquinas with the Content Fallacy requires, ironically, committing what Aquinas himself diagnoses as a fallacy.

Aquinas can only be charged with committing the Content Fallacy if he thinks that what is known or “represented” is an immaterial universal. But he does not think that. He is clear that primarily and in the first instance what is known is the nature of material things *existing in* those material things, existing not as abstract immaterial universals, but as concrete material particular natures numerically divided among the many individuals having them. Such natures are never abstract immaterial universals; they are “considered absolutely” but exist as particulars *in rebus*. There is no error in considering them this way, so long as one does not assert that they exist this way, any more than there is error in considering an apple without considering its color so long as one does not assert that it exists without color. Thus, attributing the Content Fallacy to Aquinas, or attempting to answer it as Haldane attempts to, is based upon a general misreading of Aquinas on representation and the objects of intellectual cognition.

4. A MISUNDERSTANDING OF IMMATERIALITY

The second rail upon which the account of Aquinas goes awry in this discussion is that it misunderstands the sense of ‘material’ and ‘immaterial’ in 75.5. Recall that Haldane thinks that 75.2 and 75.5 argue for the very same conclusion, namely, that the intellect is immaterial. In fact the two articles argue for two quite different conclusions. The problem for Haldane is that in terms of what the arguments actually aim for, and his desire to employ Aquinas to engage contemporary Physicalism in the Philosophy of Mind, he needs the argument of 75.2 to work, the one he thinks is irreparably unsound, not the argument of 75.5 which he thinks can be fixed. I won’t defend the argument of 75.2 here. But what I want to do for the rest of the paper is give an account

²² See my discussion in *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Toward a More Perfect Form of Existence*, cit., chapt. 8.

of what Aquinas is doing in 75.5 as opposed to 75.2 in order to properly understand the sense of 'immaterial' in 75.5. It will be seen that that sense of 'immaterial' isn't at all useful in engaging Physicalism.

Antecedently, we might think it odd that Aquinas provides two distinct arguments for the immateriality of intellect or soul in the very same question, question 75, but three articles apart. Even if Haldane were correct that the argument of 75.2 is unsound, presumably Aquinas thought it sound. Why then another argument for identically the same conclusion three articles later? To proceed in such a fashion gives the *Summa* the appearance of confused organization, the sort of "proliferation of superfluous questions, articles, and arguments" that Aquinas wrote in his introduction that he planned to avoid in writing the *Summa*. Of course that he wanted to avoid it is no argument that he does not fall prey to his own criticism.

However, if we look closely at the two articles we can see that they do not argue for the same conclusion as Haldane supposes they do. I hinted at this difference earlier when I pointed out that Haldane substitutes talk of the "material" in 75.2 for Aquinas' own talk of the "bodily" or "corporeal". Now the actual point of 75.2 is to argue that the soul is subsistent. To achieve that conclusion, Aquinas begins with an initial argument that the intellectual principle that we call soul is "*incorporeal*," [*animam hominis, esse quoddam principium incorporeum...*»] that is, that it does not have a bodily nature. But Haldane identifies this conclusion that the soul does not have a bodily nature with the conclusion of 75.5 that the soul is "immaterial."

However, the context of 75.2 makes it clear that what Aquinas has in mind by his use of "incorporeal" is to argue that the intellectual principle or soul is not a bodily substance; he confirms that conclusion by arguing further that neither does it employ a bodily organ, that is, a bodily part of a bodily substance; it is a non-bodily subsistent through and through. Of course in 75.1 Aquinas had also argued that it is not in virtue of being bodily that the soul is a first principle of life. That argument did not distinguish between the two features that manifest life – self movement and thought. But it also did not establish that soul, either as first principle of movement or as principle of intellectual activity, is an incorporeal subsistent. It just isn't corporeal as a principle of life. In 75.2 noting, as with Plato before him,²³ that soul can be considered as principle of motion or of intellectual activity, he argues from the nature of soul as intellectual principle that such a soul is subsistent. Because the intellectual principle has an incorporeal act that is not the act of a bodily organ or bodily nature, it is an incorporeal subsistent, that is, an incorporeal thing that can be the locus of agency and a proper and primary subject of predication, a

²³ I don't mean to suggest as a matter of history that Aquinas has Plato directly in view, and is reacting to him.

conclusion that Plato would heartily welcome. And so 75.2 establishes a different sense of ‘incorporeal’ than is expressed in 75.1, for 75.2 is about subsistent incorporeal *existence* while 75.1 is not.

This account of 75.2 is confirmed by the argument of 75.3 where Aquinas argues that the souls of brute animals are not subsistent. 75.1 had not distinguished the human soul from the souls of other animals, but had treated them all generically as first principles of life. So as principles of life the souls of brute animals fall under the conclusion of 75.1 as much as the intellectual human soul does. And so it is true of the souls of other animals that it is not because they are bodily that they are first principles of life. Argument 75.1 is an argument based upon the genus *animal* to the conclusion that no animal soul, as a principle of movement, is so in virtue of being a body. But that conclusion is not sufficient to establish that the souls of animals are in general subsistent. It is only in virtue of that which distinguishes the human animal, intellectual activity, that the soul of a particular type of animal can be a non-bodily subsistent. And 75.3 confirms this conclusion, as it argues that since the souls of brute animals lack an activity proper to them apart from body that while they are incorporeal like any soul in the sense of 75.1, nonetheless, unlike the human animal soul they are not incorporeal subsistents in the sense of 75.2. It follows then that being non-bodily or incorporeal in the sense of 75.1 does not entail subsistence while being non-bodily or incorporeal in the sense of 75.2 does entail subsistence. So 75.1 and 75.2 distinguish two different senses of ‘incorporeal’.

What then of 75.5? 75.2 is about the soul as *incorporeal*, while 75.5 is about the soul as *immaterial*. In contemporary philosophy we may tend to use ‘immaterial’ as a synonym for ‘incorporeal’, and such a use may often be harmless. But is it important that Aquinas does not do so in 75.2 and 75.5? Is that difference significant for understanding what is happening in 75.5, and whether Haldane is right to assimilate the conclusions of 75.2 and 75.5? Allowing for a synonymous use that we may be prone to, from the perspective of contemporary Physicalism suppose we call the position of article 2 *Malignant Immaterialism*²⁴ if we are to call it Immaterialism at all. There is a causally potent being that can be the value of bound variables in our descriptions of the world, but not the bound variables of physical science; that being is the soul as intellectual principle. But is this first conclusion that an intellectual soul is an incorporeal subsistent or in a manner of speaking “malignantly immaterial” the same conclusion as is argued for in article 5? Is article 75.5 another more successful argument for Malignant Immaterialism?

²⁴ I use the phrase “Malignant Immaterialism” not because I endorse its negative connotations, but to adopt for the sake of argument the perspective of the contemporary Physicalism that Haldane would like to employ Aquinas to undermine.

No. 75.5 argues that the soul is not composed of matter and form. And it provides two arguments for that conclusion. Aquinas writes, «A soul does not have matter. This can be seen in two ways. The first way stems from *the nature of a soul in general* [...]. The second way stems from *the specific nature of a human soul insofar as it is intellectual*». ²⁵ Here we see Aquinas using the Aristotelian logical structure of *genus*, *difference*, and *species*. But despite the distinction between the generic and the specific, both will be shown to lead to one and the same conclusion in 75.5 – that the soul is immaterial. The “nature of the soul in general” of course covers the souls of all living things, plants, animals, and human beings. But since the conclusion that the soul is immaterial follows at both the generic and specific levels, it is clear that here the human soul is immaterial in just the way any other animal soul is immaterial. The human soul is no more or less immaterial than is Fido’s soul, or the soul of the oak tree outside my window for that matter, given the argument of 75.5. And yet, if for the sake of argument we use the term ‘immaterial’ to analyze 75.2 where Aquinas in fact uses ‘incorporeal’, the point of 75.2 and 75.3 is to show that the human soul is not immaterial in the way the souls of other animals are, since it is subsistent where they are not.

Indeed, at the generic level shared with other living things Aquinas’ conclusion in 75.5 is that the human soul is immaterial in the way that any form whatsoever is immaterial, not just any soul. In the Aristotelian analysis of corporeal being, we are given two constitutive principles – the form that is the principle of actuality and the matter that is the principle of potentiality, potentiality to various modes of change, substantial or accidental. In an accidental change it is the substance that is called matter in acquiring or losing an accidental form, while in a substantial change “prime matter” is posited as the subject of the change in acquiring or losing a substantial form. The conclusion is then almost trivial against the Aristotelian background – form is immaterial as such because it is *not* the material principle of a corporeal being. In this sense even the shape of a bronze sphere counts as immaterial – it is a formal principle, not a material principle.

Presupposing that a soul is a form, Aquinas writes in the first argument that «it is impossible that a part of [a form] be matter, if we say that matter is in potency as such, because form insofar as it is form is act; however that which is in potency as such is not able to be a part of act, since potency is repugnant to act, as being opposed to it». ²⁶ The substantial form of iron, whatever it may

²⁵ «[...] anima non habet materiam. Et hoc potest considerari dupliciter. Primo quidem, ex ratione animae in communi [...]. Secundo, specialiter ex ratione humanae animae, in quantum est intellectiva» (ST Ia.75.5).

²⁶ «Impossibile est quod pars eius sit materia, si dicatur materia aliquod ens in potentia tantum, quia forma, in quantum forma, est actus; id autem quod est in potentia tantum,

be, is an immaterial form, and so on. We can have corporeal substances with immaterial forms, precisely because ‘material’ is not to be confused with ‘corporeal’. The material is the principle of potency and change in the corporeal. But the corporeal is constituted from the material and formal.

Aquinas thinks we can call a material form immaterial without contradiction, since the term ‘immaterial’, which means not-material, does not involve the same sense of the term ‘material’ as we have in mind in speaking of “material forms.” A form is called a material form because it is the form of a bodily or corporeal subsistent, such subsistents being composed hylomorphically of matter and form – it is a material form because it is the form that informs the matter resulting in the body or something corporeal. On the other hand, any and all forms are called immaterial in the sense that they are not the material principle of whatever subsistents they are principles of. We can call this sort of predication involved in the second instance *negative essential predication*, the sort of predication involved in saying, for example, that matter is changeless since strictly speaking it is only bodily beings that are changeable in virtue of the matter that is the principle of change in them, or matter is eternal since it is not measured by time, as only things that are changeable are measured by time, and so on.²⁷

Here subscripts are useful. Let us say something is Immaterial₁ just in case it is *not* a material principle in the sense that matter is considered an intrinsic principle of change for that which changes. Against the background of what I earlier labeled “Malignant Immaterialism”, we might say that Immaterial₁ specifies a Benign Immaterialism. And let us say that something is Immaterial₂ just in case it is a subsistent thing not having matter as a constitutive element in its metaphysical makeup.²⁸ In that case, a shape is Immaterial₁ but not Immaterial₂. On the other hand, an angel or a god, if such exist, is Immaterial₁ *and* Immaterial₂. But the important point for us to see is that in 75.5, St. Thomas is

non potest esse pars actus, cum potentia repugnet actui, utpote contra actum divisa» (*ibidem*).

²⁷ Notice that the human soul is both a material form in being the form of a bodily subsistent, namely, the human being, and an incorporeal subsistent according to 75.2. Presumably this is only possible because the *esse* of the human being is the *esse* of the subsistent human soul. See Ia.76.1 ad 5 where Aquinas makes this point explicitly. Notice also in the discussion Aquinas often contrasts the subsistent soul with other “material or accidental forms,” using “material” there as in “the form of a material subsistent.” See Ia.75.6.

²⁸ This is not the same distinction between Immaterial₁ and Immaterial₂ made by Novak in *Aquinas and the Incorrutibility of the Soul*, p. 409. Novak’s Immaterial₁ looks similar to what I am calling Immaterial₂. However, his Immaterial₂ is what he calls the intentional immateriality of objects of thought, and is the basis for his attributing the Content Fallacy to Aquinas, as he claims that Aquinas moves illicitly from Immaterial₂ to Immaterial₁. My Immaterial₁ isn’t that at all. It is simply the negative immateriality of any form not being a material principle, which does not mean that it is in some an “intentional immateriality.”

only arguing that the soul is Immaterial₁. He is not arguing that it is Immaterial₂. This difference is confirmed if we look back at 75.2 and 75.3. The result of 75.5 is that all souls, human and animal alike, are Immaterial₁. It is the result of 75.2 that a human soul as intellectual principle is Immaterial₂. And yet Aquinas is anxious to argue immediately in 75.3 that the souls of other animals are not Immaterial₂. Thus since the souls of non-human animals are Immaterial₁ (begrudgingly immaterial) and not Immaterial₂ (malignantly immaterial), Immaterial₁ cannot be the same as Immaterial₂. And it is Haldane's mistake to think that Aquinas is arguing that the soul is Immaterial₂ in 75.5.

But why the two arguments for the conclusion that the human soul is Immaterial₁ in 75.5? Isn't this just more confusion, providing two arguments for the same conclusion? No. In question 75 Aquinas leaves us with a set of *aporiae* on the human soul because he is at that point arguing from a theological perspective that is open in many ways to a Platonist account of the soul. So 75.5 establishes that whether you think of a soul as a first principle of life of an animal body or a soul as a first principle of intellectual acts, doing so does not matter for the conclusion that it is Immaterial₁. A human soul is immaterial₁, begrudgingly immaterial, whether you think of it as a first principle of movement or as a first principle of intellectual activity. And the reason he argues that such a soul is Immaterial₁ is that he will use that conclusion in the next article, 75.6, to argue that the human soul is incorruptible, that is, that it does not cease to exist upon the death of the human animal. But clearly Immaterial₁ is not sufficient to establish that conclusion, since the souls of other non-human animals do corrupt along with the death of the animals for which they are souls. On the contrary, in 75.6 Aquinas introduces the conclusion of 75.2, that the intellectual soul is an incorporeal subsistent, that is, Immaterial₂ in conjunction with the conclusion of 75.5 that it is Immaterial₁ to argue that life cannot be separated from the intellectual soul by bodily death, that is, that the intellectual soul is incorruptible.²⁹

If Haldane were correct in thinking that 75.2 and 75.5 provide two different arguments for the same conclusion, then Aquinas' argument in 75.6 would be incoherent. In fact, it would render the entire argumentative structure of question 75 incoherent. Question 75 is an extended argument that the human intellectual soul is an incorporeal (75.1), immaterial (75.5), incorruptible (75.6) subsistent (75.2), that is different from other animal souls (75.3) and that is not a human being (75.4). Each article up to and including 75.5 is designed to argue for and put into place the premises of that extended argument. By the time one gets to the conclusion of 75.6, one might then think the best way to think

²⁹ His argument here is reminiscent of the last argument that Plato gives in the *Phaedo*. But it would take another paper to show why Aquinas' argument is not identical to Plato's argument.

of a human soul is as a kind of angel – a non-human incorporeal immaterial incorruptible subsistent capable of intellectual operation. But Aquinas will have none of that, as he concludes the question with 75.7, an argument that the human soul is not a species of angel. It is the conclusion of that article that provides the transition to question 76 in which Aquinas will explore the nature of the human soul in relation to the body, and conclusively push aside the Platonism he leaves open in 75 for a decidedly Aristotelian account of the soul as substantial form of the body.

Conclusion Recognizing that the immateriality₁ of 75.5 is utterly mundane, helps us to return to the Content Fallacy and reevaluate it as a charge against the argument of 75.5 by NP and Haldane even as the latter attempts to repair the argument of 75.5. The presupposition of the fallacy is that it is something special about the cognitive intentionality of intellectual activity that drives Aquinas to argue for immateriality₁. That something special is supposed to be the representational character of thought. On this reading, it appears that Aquinas binds intentionality and representation up with immateriality both in the object of intellectual intentionality and the subject of intellectual activity. In that respect, the presupposition of charging Aquinas with the Content Fallacy looks to be almost a kind of Cartesian reading of Aquinas in which the latter maintains that both the objects of thought and the thinking form a distinct immaterial realm from the material realm. But this is a mistaken approach to Aquinas attributing to him something akin to the strong distinction Descartes draws between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

To be sure, the second argument Aquinas gives us in 75.5 focuses “specifically” upon the notion of soul as principle of intellectual activity. It argues that in intellectual activity we know particular objects not as particulars but according to their natures – not this object as opposed to that object, but both as stones, which is to know them according to their natures considered “absolutely.” Aquinas’ Aristotelianism claims that that knowing according to the natures considered absolutely requires the reception of the intelligible forms that characterize those natures into the intellectual soul. But it is significant that when Aquinas is speaking of *what* is known he speaks simply of the natures considered absolutely, while in speaking of *how* they are known he speaks of the reception of the *form* of the natures considered absolutely. Recall what I argued earlier about the nature with form and matter undesignated versus the form of the nature in intellect.

However, placing the discussion in the context of the reception of form places it firmly within the larger setting of the Aristotelian analysis of change. The content-vehicle picture that motivates the Content Fallacy lends itself to a picture in which the soul is a kind of container and a mysterious entity enters into it. Then it appears that the characteristics of the container, perhaps its materiality, pose a problem for the containment of this mysterious imma-

terial thing that enters into it, unless we deny that the container is material. Thus the Content Fallacy is committed.

But the Aristotelian setting of the analysis invites us to abandon this sort of pictorial metaphor. The soul is in cognitive potentiality to intellectual understanding. For example, it is in cognitive potentiality to understanding stones as stones rather than as here and now versus there and then, as well as dogs as dogs, and so on. Aquinas then invites us to consider what would be the case if that cognitive potentiality were a material potentiality in the Aristotelian sense. A material potentiality is the principle of individuation for material forms that actualize beings as the sorts of beings they are. Here the being we are talking about is the being of a certain sort of cognitive act. In the reception of form in intellectual activity then, if the intellectual potentiality were a material potentiality, we would have a materially individuated cognitive act directed at an intentional object. But Aquinas reminds us that we know what such materially individuated cognitive acts are. They are acts of sensation directed upon particulars to the exclusion of other particulars. «[...] just as happens in the sensitive powers which receive the forms of things in a corporeal organ, for matter is the principle of individuation of forms»³⁰. But such acts do not bear intentionally upon the natures of things considered absolutely. So maintaining that the cognitive potentiality of intellectual acts is a material potentiality will fail to capture the distinctive character of intellectual intentionality – that it is distinct from sensation in bearing upon natures considered absolutely. Thus we must deny that intellectual activity is the *actus* of a material potentiality, that is, that in the reception of form in intellectual activity, the form is received by a material principle.³¹ It must, on the contrary, be received by a formal principle – «not something composed of matter and form»³².

However, the result of this argument is not some new mysterious notion of “immateriality” that is bound up with and explains cognitive intentionality, as NP and Haldane presuppose in charging Aquinas with the Content Fallacy. On the contrary, according to Aquinas it is the ordinary immateriality of any formal principle whatsoever, the point he made in the first argument of 75.5. And of course that simple notion of immateriality does not explain or even make possible cognitive intentionality in the sense of being sufficient for it. For if the immateriality that Aquinas argues for in the second argument of

³⁰ «[...] Sicut accidit in potentiis sensitivis, quae recipiunt formas rerum in organo corporali, materia enim est principium individuationis formarum» (ST Ia.75.5).

³¹ Of course one might say that Thomas hasn't excluded that it be received in a special kind of matter different from the ordinary matter of material things. Perhaps a “spiritual matter.” Aquinas shows in various ways that he is aware of this possibility, although he ultimately rejects it as betraying a misunderstanding of the nature of matter within Aristotelianism.

³² «[...] Non autem aliquid compositum ex materia et forma» (*ibidem*).

75.5 were sufficient for cognitive intentionality and thus explained it, all beings having form would be cognitively intentional beings – a kind of pan-cognitivism which would of course entail pan-psychism, the view that all things are alive, since as Aquinas notes life is manifest by thought as well as by motion.

Aquinas's argument in 75.5 does not commit the Content Fallacy and yet there is no argument against Physicalism in 75.5's argument for the benignly immaterial character of soul. Ironically, if there is an argument against it, it is to be found in 75.2 where it is argued that a soul as principle of intellect is an incorporeal subsistent. But according to Haldane, if not NP, the argument of 75.2 is irredeemably unsound.³³ Perhaps it is. I do not have space here to consider it and reconsider it in light of Haldane's objections to it. In that respect, the soul may still suffer from some discontent.

ABSTRACT: Recent critics of Aquinas' discussion of the soul in question Ia.75 of the Summa Theologiae, Joseph Novak and Robert Pasnau, have charged that he commits a fallacy in a number of places in arguing for the various characteristics of the soul, a fallacy that Pasnau dubs the Content Fallacy. The fallacy consists in attributing to the vehicle or act of cognition the characteristics of the object of cognition. Novak charges that Aquinas does so in arguing for the incorruptibility of the soul from the incorruptible character of the objects of thought. Pasnau attributes it to Aquinas in a number of places, including arguments that the soul is incorruptible and that it is immaterial. John Haldane presupposes the criticism, but attempts to reply to the critics and salvage the argument for immateriality in Ia.75.5 of the Summa Theologiae in order to put it to use in opposing contemporary Physicalism in the Philosophy of Mind. Primarily considering Haldane's efforts to fix the argument, I argue that the critics and Haldane are mistaken in attributing the fallacy to Aquinas and Ia.75.5 in particular. The critics and Haldane identify the object of understanding with an immaterial abstract universal. If Aquinas' arguments commit the fallacy, presumably Aquinas should also have argued that the soul is an abstract object and a universal. But he does not do so. In addition, the fallacy presupposes a theory of representation of intentional objects that Aquinas does not hold. Finally, Ia.75.5 is misread as arguing for immaterial subsistence in the effort to make it address Physicalism, and needs to be placed within the Aristotelian analysis of change from potency to act in cognition in order to properly understand what it is arguing for.

KEYWORDS: Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, John Haldane, incorruptibility of the soul, Joseph Novak, Robert Pasnau, Physicalism, theory of representation.

³³ Although it is worth recalling as noted above that Pasnau thinks the argument of 75.2 also commits the Content Fallacy.

STUDI