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Reconstructing Aquinas's World

Themes from Brower

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Abstract and Keywords

This article focuses on some topics in Jeffrey Brower's recent and excellent book, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World: Change, Hylomorphism, and Material Objects*. Part of Brower's goal for the book is to reconstruct Aquinas's views. I offer some reflections on Brower's use of this metaphor of reconstruction, before considering four topics in some detail. These are: 1. Brower's discussion of the relation between Aristotle's Ten Categories and the not-obviously-connected four-fold division of being into substance, form, prime matter, and accidental unity. 2. Brower's interpretation of prime matter as "non-individual stuff." 3. Brower's account of numerical sameness without identity along with some discussion of how this is supposed to be useful for solving a particular puzzle about accidental change. 4. I'll close with some reflections on Brower's somewhat novel solution to a longstanding problem with Aquinas's metaphysics of the afterlife.

Keywords: Aquinas, hylomorphism, metaphysics, being, Categories, change, afterlife, Jeffrey Brower

Few, probably, would deny that scholarship in medieval philosophy ought to aim at explanation, where the data to be explained are old philosophical texts. Explanation of this kind of data takes the old words (the texts) and puts them into new words (the scholarship). The scholar might have a certain audience in mind when choosing the new words. An audience of other medievalists will expect the new words to be similar to the old words. Students or a non-academic audience will expect the new words to be a simplification of the old words. And so on. Jeffrey E. Brower's new words,¹ predominantly, belong to the discourse of contemporary analytic metaphysics; I surmise, then, that the audience for whom Brower's book can be explanatory comprises analytic metaphysicians and historians of philosophy who are well versed in analytic metaphysics.

Brower says that one of his central goals in the book is "to offer a precise reconstruction of the essential elements of Aquinas's ontology of the material world" (vii). Reconstruction is not an unusual metaphor for a certain kind of scholarship in the history of philosophy, but it is a controversial one and one worth thinking about. We might think of the old words as the materials for the old construction (the timbers of the old house) and the new words, the words of contemporary analytic metaphysics, as the materials for the new construction. Let's extend the metaphor: Brower the scholar is Brower the builder and he is reconstructing Aquinas's ontology of the material world for his audience, those who speak the language of contemporary analytic metaphysics.

But what sort of reconstruction? St. Martin's Cathedral, Ypres, was reconstructed after World War I according to its original design. By contrast, **(p. 185)** Christopher Wren's reconstruction of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, bears little outward resemblance to its eponymous medieval predecessor destroyed in the fire of 1666. There is also an extended sense in which Thomas Jefferson's original Rotunda at the University of Virginia was a reconstruction of the (still standing) Pantheon in Rome. So what sort of work is Brower up to?²

My overall impression from the book is that Brower conceives of his own work more along the lines of Jefferson's Rotunda than either the new St. Paul's or the new St. Martin's. Far from thinking there is anything seriously the matter with the old construction, he deeply admires it, as Jefferson admired the Pantheon. He is committed to the preservation of medieval buildings and is happy to see Aquinas's works endure in Paris, Cologne, and Naples in their gothic splendor. This admiration inspires Brower to share these works with contemporary metaphysicians, as Jefferson shared the Pantheon with the people of Virginia. But precisely in order that it be appreciated by his intended audience, Brower of West Lafayette³ cannot just copy the old works—the contemporary metaphysicians are not typically in a position to appreciate achievements of the old world; he must reimagine them, expressing them in a manner which gives his contemporaries the opportunity to value them as much as he does.

The metaphor of reconstruction in scholarship in the history of philosophy is controversial because its most ordinary sense implies that there is something wrong with the old words. I take it that this is not the sense Brower intends. Nor, even, do I take it that Brower thinks the new words, the language of contemporary analytic metaphysics, are better than the old, the language of scholastic philosophy. It seems to me simply that Brower has, for whatever reason, found it helpful for his own understanding of Aquinas's ontology of material objects to think about it in relation to the contemporary analytic literature, and (perhaps) therefore has guessed that other contemporary analytic folks might find it easier to see what is valuable about Aquinas's ontology of the material world if it were expressed, and its merits judged, in the language of contemporary analytic metaphysics. However, some will find fault with Brower's new words even with this clarification of the sense of his reconstruction. The new and the old are different enough from each other that one might reasonably appreciate one **(p.186)** and not the other, just as an admirer of the Pantheon might be unmoved by Jefferson's original Rotunda (and vice versa).

Those who do not already possess some fluency in and appreciation of the discourse of contemporary analytic metaphysics are unlikely to find Brower's book very useful. This is because the vocabulary and style of contemporary analytic metaphysics are no easier to understand, or even any likelier to be on the track of truth, than the (reliably translated, if need be) vocabulary and style of medieval scholastic metaphysics. So for those not already fluent in analytic metaphysics, much of Brower's book just will not work for them as an explanation of Aquinas's views. But the new stuff is more widely taught and read than the old, which makes it the de facto canonical language of metaphysics in the English-speaking philosophical world. This means that many philosophers need a Brower-style reconstruction of an old philosophy in order to take it seriously as philosophy. For this reason, among others, Brower has done a great service to the Anglophone philosophical world. My guess is that some medievalists will sniff at Brower's book for being insufficiently historical and insufficiently wedded to Aquinas's own way of expressing himself. For many others, however, these qualities will be among its virtues. We medievalists need a book like this, not to prove that what we do is worth doing but to help outsiders see this.

The thirteen chapters of the book are broken up into five parts: Part I. Introduction, which gives an opinionated account of Aquinas's fundamental ontology; Part II. Change; Part III. Hylomorphism; Part IV. Material Objects; and Part V. Complications, which considers several natural and supernatural phenomena that might be seen to challenge Aquinas's canonical formulations of the issues discussed in the first four parts. As a way of offering readers a sense of both the scope of the book as a whole along with its precision and argumentative rigor, I will focus on four somewhat narrow but important topics. These are: 1. Brower's discussion of the relation between Aristotle's Ten Categories and the not-obviously-connected four-fold division of being into substance, form, prime matter, and accidental unity. 2. Brower's interpretation of prime matter as "non-individual stuff." 3. Brower's account of numerical sameness without identity along with some discussion of how this is supposed to be useful for solving a particular puzzle about accidental change. 4. I will close with some reflections on Brower's somewhat novel solution to a longstanding problem with Aquinas's metaphysics of the afterlife. There is far more worth talking about here than I will get to. The book is deep, complex, and much of it, in particular Parts II and III, is among the most exciting contemporary work I have read either in metaphysics or in medieval philosophy. I will quibble over a few things later, so let me make it clear now: this is an excellent book, which I will be consulting for a long time.

(p.187) 1. The Division of Being

Early on, Brower makes the claim that according to Aquinas, "the world or 'all that there is' can be exhaustively described in terms of two general ontological types—namely God and creature" (3). Shortly thereafter Brower defines a type of being in the following way: "*F* is a type of being if and only if some *F*s (one or more) can or do exist" (4). Given this, Brower thinks that "*being* turns out to be the most general possible ontological type, with all other ontological types serving as specifications or subtypes of it" (4). These claims, as claims about what Aquinas thinks, are quite frankly astonishing. The most strident critic of Duns Scotus on univocity could not have written a better summary of what is supposed to be problematic with Scotus's theory. Aquinas, the defender of analogy, is supposed to be the champion who keeps God separate from the world, transcending any concept through which we humans conceive anything we can naturally conceive.

A few pages later Brower takes up Aquinas's venerable distinction between essence and existence in creatures. Given Aquinas's insistence that this distinction is real, does it not imply that among the things there are we must include not just substances but "individual acts of being or existence" (17)? No, says Brower. "As I see it, the whole point of Aquinas's distinction between essence and existence in creatures is to emphasize their contingency or lack of aseity. Likewise, I think his talk of creatures being 'composed' of essence and existence is a figurative way of expressing the same point, and hence not to be taken literally" (17). Here is one who speaks not as the Thomists speak.

Brower's method here is bound to seem cavalier to some. He does, later on, give an account of Aquinas on analogy, but these early violations of Thomistic shibboleths set a sort of tone for the book: Brower is not primarily writing for those who already know a lot about Aquinas. He is framing Aquinas's views in his own way, on his terms, in order to make them suitable for engaging contemporary analytic debates and to persuade outsiders that they are cogent. That said, I think what Brower says about Aquinas is on the whole accurate, once his interpretive moves are properly seen within the context of his project as a whole.

Brower's Aquinas thinks that being divides into four irreducible types: prime matter, form, substance, and accidental unity. Brower distinguishes irreducibility from fundamentality or basicity in order to allow for extra divisions among these four irreducible types; substance, for example, is divided into God and created substance, but both alike are substances and hence the irreducible type, substance, is not reducible to types other than **(p.188)** substance. Also, form divides into substantial form and accidental form, but not into any type other than form.

Prime matter's main characteristics are being non-individual and being the ultimate substratum of material substances and accidental unities (more on this in the following section). The special mark of *form* is to be an inherent, rather than a subsistent being: substantial forms inhere in prime matter and accidental forms inhere in substances. *Substances* themselves (e.g., Socrates and God) are specially characterized as basic particulars, whereas *accidental unities* (e.g., seated Socrates) are non-basic particulars. A particular in this context means "a being that is both subsistent and individual." A basic particular in this context means "a particular that is not itself composed of any particulars," and a non-basic particular means "a particular that is composed of at least one particular" (24).

Having laid out this four-fold division of being, Brower then introduces the perhaps better-known division of being into the Ten Categories. Aquinas clearly thought that the four- and ten-fold divisions were compatible with each other, but it is not clear exactly how he envisioned this compatibility. Of the four, only substance has a clear match in the ten. How should we make sense out of the other nine in relation to the original four?

Brower here divides form into substantial and accidental, and claims that all the remaining nine Categories find their proper place as determinations of accidental form. But there is a wrinkle here. Aquinas himself says that the Ten Categories apply to created *modes of being* rather than to *created beings* (45). An *F* is the sort of thing that can be a type, whereas an *F-ness* is the sort of thing that can be a mode. Thus, "*F* is a type of being if and only if some *F*s (one of more) can or do exist" (4), and "*F-ness* is a mode of being if and only if something does (or can) exist as an *F*" (45). Brower thinks that an accurate mapping of the Ten onto the Four has somehow got to preserve this obscure insistence on modes over types.

This switch from types to modes complicates Brower's presentation of Aquinas's fundamental ontology. We now have to explain both the compatibility of the four-fold and ten-fold division of being, along with the switch from talk of categories or types of being to modes of being. Here I wish Brower were a little clearer, though I admit I find the material intrinsically very difficult so failure to understand may be due more to the reader than the author. Despite the difficulty, here is Brower's picture as I see it. Belonging to a type of being can itself be explained, namely, by existing in a certain fundamental way. As Brower puts it:

[God and created substances] belong to fundamentally different types—*God* and *created substance*, respectively. But as we have seen, they appear to belong to such types, for Aquinas, precisely because they exist in fundamentally different ways. Thus, **(p.189)** it is because God exists in the mode of absolute independence, whereas created substances do not, that the general type *substance* must itself be further subdivided into the more specific, also more fundamental, subtypes *God* and *created substance* (46).

So types of being are explained by modes of being, and therefore modes are in some sense the more fundamental target of the task of dividing being. Since types are posterior to modes, we can look for correlates of the four-fold division of types of being among the modes of being. And this is what we find: prime matter exists in the mode of non-individuality, form in the mode of inherence, substance in the mode of basic particularity, and accidental unities in the mode of non-basic particularity. As we have just seen, that substance divides into two types, created substance and God, is to be explained by the modes of absolute and non-absolute independence. That form divides into two types is to be explained by two fundamentally different modes of inherence: substantial forms exist in the mode of inherence in prime matter, whereas accidental forms exist in the mode of inherence in substances. And that accidental form divides into nine types is to be explained by nine fundamentally different modes of inherence in substance. Given this picture, it looks like we get a one-to-one correlation between types and modes.

But things evidently are more complicated even than this, in a way that raises a worry about the cogency of Brower's mapping of the ten onto the four. The problem is that, as Brower is well aware, Aquinas denies that each accidental category has as its correlate, in the world of concrete substances, its own distinct type of accidental form. There are no relation forms, for example; the mode of being toward another is ultimately explained by a substance's possessing some non-relative form, such as an accidental form of quality. So it is not clear to me, either in Aquinas or in Brower, how the architecture of types and modes ultimately maps onto concrete things in the world. Later on in the book, Brower explains that Aquinas insists that the division of the accidental categories "must be understood not in terms of distinct classes of beings but rather in terms of distinct modes of being" (206). So far, so good: we are supposed to let the modes of being, rather than concrete individual forms or substances or accidental unities, shape our understanding of the categories (types) of being. But Brower continues, "What is more [...] Aquinas insists that one and the same form or property can be associated with distinct accidental modes of being, and hence fall under more than one of the accidental categories" (206). Brower focuses on action and passion, showing how Aquinas thinks that these two modes of being, associated with two accidental categories, are fully accounted for, ontologically speaking, by one thing, a motion. But then it is not at all clear to me how the division of the nine accidental categories can be mapped onto the type, form. If you can get an accidental mode and/or category of being (**p.190**) without a distinct type of form, what ultimately explains the decision to call these nine accidental modes/categories, determinations or specifications of the type, form? Brower may have a totally reasonable answer to this question, but I was not able to figure it out from the book.

I will close this section with a quibble. As I mentioned earlier, Brower does address Aquinas's doctrine of the analogy of being. Ultimately, for Brower, the analogy of being is a way of marking the fact that being comes in several different, fundamental modes. To be a form is a fundamentally different mode of being (inherence) than the mode of being a substance (basic particularity). That God and created substances are only analogously spoken of as substance is, for Brower, precisely (and completely?) because each exists in a fundamentally different mode of being. I myself am inclined to think that this is not all there is to Aquinas's doctrine of analogy as it applies to the difference between God and creatures (it seems dandy as an account of analogy as applied to the differences between different modes of creaturely being). First, the account here still conceives of being as the most general type, with God as a type of being, albeit a fundamental type. It looks like we are still in the land of the Scotus-caricatures. Second, Brower's account seems to be too metaphysical and insufficiently epistemological. Part of what drives Aquinas to say that the words we use to talk about God only apply to God analogously is that God's essence is beyond our ken. But on Brower's account, we are supposed to be able to say what the distinctive mode of being God is—the mode of being absolutely independent. What is there not to understand about this? If absolute independence is that whereby God instances the type, God, then it seems like we actually do have pretty good access to the divine essence—something Aquinas vehemently denies. What role can be left for human cognitive limitation to play in forcing an analogical construal of our God-talk? Aquinas obviously wants our cognitive limitation to play a big role, but Brower's account of Aquinas seems to disregard its role altogether.

2. Prime Matter as Non-Individual Stuff

Brower says that prime matter is in some ways “the most distinctive type of being there is for Aquinas” (18). In the previous section we saw that Brower thinks its characteristic mode of being is non-individuality. A thing is individual in the relevant sense if and only if it has actuality through itself and belongs to some natural kind or species. Prime matter does not have actuality through itself; famously, Aquinas says that prime matter is “pure potentiality.” Nor does prime matter belong to any natural kind or species. **(p.191)** Now I confess to not really understanding the use of the term “non-individual” to describe Aquinas's view of prime matter; that is, I do not know why “individuality” and “non-individuality” are terms used in this context. But it is pretty clear from Brower what “non-individual” is supposed to denote. There are not kinds of prime matter, such as gold, wood, water, etc.—prime matter is uncharacterized. And it does not exist through itself or on its own; it only exists and only can exist united with form. There can be distinct portions of prime matter, and Aquinas does indeed assign to prime matter the role of individuating substances, but prime matter plays this role without itself being individual in the relevant sense.

Aquinas's account of prime matter as pure potentiality strikes some as incoherent. This apparent incoherence is well summarized by the following argument, which Brower labels The Simple Argument: (1) If prime matter is a being in pure potentiality, it has no actuality. (2) But prime matter exists, and whatever exists has actuality. Therefore (3) Prime matter cannot be a being in pure potentiality, but must rather be a being in actuality (31).

Brower thinks Aquinas would reject (1). There are at least two senses of actuality, and the claim that prime matter is pure potentiality is incompatible with just one of these senses of actuality. In the broad sense of actuality, anything that exists in any way whatsoever is actual. In the narrow sense, only what has actuality through itself is actual. Prime matter is actual in the broad sense, not the narrow. So (1) is false. That prime matter lacks narrow-sense actuality, that it can only exist insofar as it composes something with form, is for Aquinas a theoretical primitive (33).

Brower thinks of Aquinas's prime matter as atomless gunk, which is a type of being every part of which is composed of parts and is therefore infinitely divisible (119). But what is really distinctive of Aquinas's conception of prime matter, as opposed to other medievals' conceptions, is that prime matter is not merely gunky but that it is non-individual and hence, as Brower argues, closely resembles a contemporary conception of stuff. (Non-individuality, again, means belonging to no natural kind and lacking actuality through itself.) Ned Markosian thinks that stuff is distinct from things, that it is what ordinary objects are made of, that it cannot exist without things, can enter into part-whole relations, and that there are distinct portions of stuff (34, 126). One important difference between Aquinas's and Markosian's conceptions of stuff is that for Markosian stuff is not gunky, but Aquinas thinks that prime matter is what Brower calls *gunky stuff*. Additionally, for Aquinas there is just one type of prime matter—it does not come in the kinds, such as water, gold, wood, which are often recognized by gunk theorists as kinds of stuff.

Brower's interpretation of prime matter entails that it is not a basic particular, and this fact about prime matter comes to play an important **(p.192)** role in the hylomorphic substratum theory Brower develops on Aquinas's behalf. I will say more about this in the following section, but for now it is worth saying that on Brower's substratum theory some portion of prime matter serves as the substratum of a substantial form, where the substratum and substantial form together constitute a material substance. Prime matter is just the sort of thing in which substantial forms (or properties of a special, essence-constituting kind) can *inhere* but which substantial forms cannot *characterize*. Prime matter does not become a horse or have a horsey soul when the soul of horse begins to inform it. Instead, when the soul of a horse inheres in prime matter a new substance is generated, a horse, and this horse has a horsey soul. And the reason prime matter cannot be so characterized by substantial form is precisely because it is not a particular (basic or otherwise). The *horse*, not its prime matter, is for Aquinas and Brower the basic particular and the bearer of properties.

3. Numerical Sameness without Identity

Substances and accidental unities are peculiarly related. Socrates is a substance; he is *composed* of prime matter (his non-individual substratum) and a substantial form (his soul). But Socrates himself is the substratum of his various accidental properties, such as his height, weight, and skin color. With each and every one of his accidental properties, Socrates composes a distinct accidental unity. Thus there is the accidental unity composed of Socrates and his paleness, another composed of Socrates and his being six feet tall, and so on. That's a lot of things! How are they related?

Brower develops the idea, on Aquinas's behalf, that a substance and an accidental unity are numerically the same but not identical. Brower deploys the notion of numerical sameness without identity in a very specific way. He tells us: it just means that the things so related (numerically the same but not identical) completely overlap with respect to their matter (94). More officially, numerical sameness without identity says that for any hylomorphic compounds x and y , where x does not equal y , and any time t , x is numerically the same material object as y at t if and only if x and y share all their prime matter in common at t (94). So a substance and an accidental unity which has that substance as a part are numerically the same *material objects* but are not identical to each other. The reason they are not identical to each other is, of course, that the accidental unity is a composite of a substance *plus* an accidental form.

Brower puts this distinction to many magnificent uses. Here I will focus on just one, which concerns a solution to a puzzle about accidental change. **(p.193)** Distinctive of accidental change is that “it involves a subject (more specifically, a substance) that not only *possesses* distinct forms or properties over time, but is successively *characterized by* these same properties.” That is, it is not just that some substance has one property, *F*-ness, at one time and another property, *G*-ness, at another time, but rather that the substance is *F* at one time and is *G* at another time. Now, on what Brower calls an Aristotelian conception of forms, a conception that Aquinas undoubtedly endorses, a hylomorphic compound is characterized by some form or property by having that form or property as a *constituent*. So consider the substance which is *F*. In order to be *F*, it must have *F*-ness as a constituent. So the substance plus *F*-ness constitute one hylomorphic compound. But inasmuch as hylomorphic compounds are what they are in virtue of their formal and material constituents, it would seem that for that compound to lose *F*-ness just would be for it to cease to exist. It would seem then that hylomorphic compounds non-contingently have the constituents they have, and hence that accidental change is impossible.

Numerical sameness without identity lets us say that a substance and *some other* hylomorphic compound, an accidental unity, can share numerically the same prime matter but fail to be identical. So the hylomorphic compound consisting of the substance and *F*-ness is an accidental unity which has the substance as one of its parts. When the substance ceases to be *F* the accidental unity is destroyed, but the substance is not destroyed. When it begins to be *G* a new accidental unity begins to exist, an accidental unity which has the substance and *G*-ness as constituents. In every case of accidental change, a new accidental unity comes into existence; but because the enduring substance is the substance-constituent of each successive accidental unity, it is *derivatively* characterized by the property constituents of each accidental unity. So, for example, the accidental unity white-Socrates is white *primarily*, but the material substance, Socrates, is white *derivatively*, because Socrates is a part of white-Socrates.

4. Metaphysics of the Afterlife

A current hot topic in Aquinas scholarship concerns Aquinas's metaphysics of (human) afterlife. Brower takes up this topic in the concluding chapter of the book and offers an original solution to what he calls The Problem of the Afterlife.

For philosophical and theological reasons, Aquinas thinks that the human soul is not only the substantial form of a human being, but also that it is immortal. So when a human being dies, its soul lives on. But it is not obvious, **(p.194)** taking all that Aquinas has to say about the afterlife into account, that the survival of a human soul is sufficient to guarantee the survival of the human being whose soul it was. The problem is that Aquinas seems to accept the following three claims but they also seem to be inconsistent: (1) human beings are essentially human; (2) human beings cease to be human at death; and (3) human beings do not cease to exist at death, but rather survive. (1) is completely uncontested; no one doubts Aquinas thought this. (2) and (3) are well-supported by textual evidence, both explicit and implicit.

In their attempts to present an Aquinas with a consistent view about the metaphysics of the afterlife, most commentators fall into one of two camps. The *cessationists* hold that a human being such as Socrates ceases to exist at death, but that he will exist again when his soul begins again to inform prime matter. The *cessationists* reason that from (1) and (2) we can infer that at death human beings cease to be. The inference is not unreasonable given a modal conception of essence according to which for all x , if x is essentially F then x cannot exist and not be F . *Cessationists* then have the interpretive burden of suppressing or explaining away texts which support (3). The other camp, the *survivalists*, hold that even if Socrates ceases to be human at death, he does not cease to be; the continued disembodied existence of Socrates's soul is sufficient to guarantee the continued disembodied existence of Socrates. Moreover, since (1) is uncontested in this debate, the *survivalists* hold that since Socrates is essentially human and since on their view Socrates continues to exist, it follows that Socrates continues to be human. So the *survivalists* assume the interpretive burden of suppressing or explaining away texts which support (2).

The easy route, and the one I once felt forced to take, is simply to judge that Aquinas was inconsistent on this particular issue. Brower takes a harder route. He claims to have found a way to show that properly understood (1)–(3) are consistent. The most important move is to deny the modal conception of essence. It does not follow, according to Brower (and Brower's Aquinas) that if x is essentially F then x cannot exist without being F (or, in possible worlds talk, it does not follow that if x is essentially F then there is no possible world in which x exists and is not F). Instead, Brower attributes to Aquinas a *dispositional* conception of essence according to which for all x , if x is essentially F , then x cannot exist and not be *disposed* to be F . Brower's Aquinas evidently thinks it follows from being by nature disposed to be F that x cannot permanently be not- F without ceasing to exist. I do not think this follows and will come back to this later. For now, the important point is that the dispositional account of essence *allows for the possibility that x is essentially F and that it is not- F* . Applied to the human case, we can say that possibly, Socrates is both essentially a human being and at death ceases to be a human being without ceasing to exist. Taking all the textual evidence into **(p.195)** consideration, we can infer that Aquinas thinks that actually, Socrates is essentially a human being, that Socrates ceased to be a human being at death, and that he continued to exist after his death. A consistent triad.

Brower distinguishes between human persons and human beings as a way to establish some tidy language with which to discuss his new interpretation. The idea is that Socrates is always (necessarily?) a human person, but that he is a human being only when he has both prime matter and his soul as his metaphysical constituents. When his soul is separated from prime matter at death, Socrates ceases to be a human being but goes on being a human person. Brower labels his new view, somewhat misleadingly, I think, as *non-human survivalism*, which he summarizes as “the view according to which all human beings survive their death as human *persons* but not as human *beings*” (300).

Brower motivates non-human survivalism first by considering it as the best way to understand the metaphysics of the Triduum. During Christ's three days of death, Aquinas tells us, the second person of the Trinity remained hypostatically united with Christ's prime matter (existing in the tomb under the form of a corpse) and Christ's soul. Since soul and body were separated, Christ was really dead and he really ceased to be a human being. But because Christ is also a person suppositing divine nature, Christ cannot cease to exist and therefore does not cease to exist at death. Here we have an example of a human death which results in both the ceasing to exist of a human being and the continued existence of the person who was a human being. This example points the way toward Brower's generalization of non-human survivalism to cover all cases of human death.

As Brower himself says, there are important differences between Christ's personhood and merely human personhood. For the most part Brower does a fine job making all the relevant qualifications needed to keep his view cogent. But properly qualified, there is one big metaphysical cost to buying Brower's non-human survivalism, which for me at this point is insurmountable.

Here is the cost. Brower must hold that a human person in the interim state after death and before the resurrection is a substance which has just one part. His view requires a rejection of the mereological axiom of weak supplementation, a highly intuitive axiom. Weak supplementation says that if x is really and truly a part (a *proper part* in the language of mereology) of some whole, y , then y has some proper part, z , other than or *disjoint* from x . In other words, anything composed of parts has at least two of them. To talk about a thing having just one part is a forced way of talking, and mereology highlights this awkwardness with the label "improper part" for any part, x , of some whole, y , such that y has no other part besides x . To be an improper part is not really to be a part, say I. I think it follows from weak supplementation that the only possible relation between a whole and its one fake part is *identity*. Thus, I think that Brower's claim that Socrates **(p.196)** continues to be a human person while he has soul as his one fake part commits him to the view that Socrates, the human person, is *identical with* his soul. But then Socrates is always identical with his soul, even when he is united with prime matter. But this is just Platonism or Cartesianism about human persons—a bad result for Thomists.

Brower and Aquinas deny that Socrates is identical with his soul, of course. Brower wants there to be a genuine part-whole relation between Socrates's soul and Socrates. To get this result he needs to deny supplementation, as he does (309). Doing so lets him continue to talk of Socrates's soul as a part of Socrates without reducing the relation between Socrates and his soul to identity. At this point I am prepared to claim, by way of objection, only that I just cannot make sense of the idea that a whole can be composed of just one part, and I especially cannot make sense of the idea that a person can be composed of, not identical with, its disembodied soul, if this soul is its one improper part. I wish Brower had spent more time reflecting on the aftermath of his rejection of weak supplementation.

As if this were not bad enough, Brower closes with a suggestion that strikes me not just as unintuitive and difficult to understand but just plain wrong. Brower reflects that, on his non-human survivalist view, "Socrates clearly continues to be a composite or compound of some type after death, insofar as he remains composed of a proper part." But, Brower adds, the single part which composes Socrates is a "hylomorphic part," a substantial form. Hence, Brower concludes, "the relation that he bears to it presumably remains a type of hylomorphic composition" (310). Here is the problem. Either Brower has in mind that Socrates is related to his one part in some way analogous to the way matter and form are related to each other in a hylomorphic compound, or Brower has in mind that Socrates is related to his one part in some way analogous to the way in which a whole hylomorphic compound is related to its matter and form. Clearly it cannot be the former, since Socrates is supposed to be the whole composed of his one part. But almost as clearly it cannot be the latter, because *ex hypothesi* there is simply nothing there with which Socrates's soul can make a composition.

So, ultimately, until I can find a way to make sense of the idea of one part composing a whole with which it is not identical, I cannot accept Brower's version of non-human survivalism. But the real achievement here is that Brower really has, I think, shown that Aquinas's (1)–(3) are consistent. The original formulation of The Problem of the Afterlife (these three seem to be inconsistent) is therefore finally solved. But now we have a New Problem of the Afterlife: can Thomists make any sense of the idea of a person being related to its soul and only its soul as whole to part?

I have elsewhere (and independent of Brower's book) made exactly the distinction between human beings and human persons which Brower here (**p. 197**) makes, and for pretty much exactly the same reasons.⁴ But, digging in my heels when it comes to supplementation, I argue that a human soul must receive, *by a special act of God*, some supplemental part so that the soul can continue to compose, rather than be identical with, a human person. I draw on the mystical tradition of *deification* to suggest that this part is a person-constituting divine grace or maybe even God himself. I write this description of my own paper as a way of helping Brower out. If *this* is what it takes to hold on to *both* Brower's way of making the triad consistent *and* supplementation, then, you may well think, so much the worse for supplementation.

One final criticism, which is a bit of a nitpick. As I mentioned earlier, Brower's Aquinas thinks it follows from being by nature disposed to be *F* that *x* cannot permanently be not-*F* without ceasing to exist. Brower characterizes the "Thomistic Conception of Natures" in the following way: If *x* is essentially *F*, and *F*-ness is *x*'s primary nature, then *x* is non-contingently disposed to be *F* (and hence such that *x* cannot permanently cease to be *F* without ceasing to exist)" (299, italics mine, for emphasis). I do not think this follows. Here is why: suppose Socrates spends 10,000 years waiting for his reunion with matter. What is to prevent him from going on disembodied for 10,001, or 100,000, or 10 billion years? There is no lifespan to a disembodied soul. Surely it can indefinitely subsist without union with matter. But if indefinitely, why not permanently? I know Brower is following Aquinas on this issue but I have never been able to take Aquinas seriously on this point. I understand that it is *fitting* that a disembodied soul, which is after all a substantial form, should be eventually reunited with matter. But that it *must* be (after some amount of time?) as a condition for its existence, strikes me as totally unmotivated. Again, a nitpick probably, but as Brower is normally an extremely careful and clear thinker and writer, I wish he had clarified or defended this strange teaching of Aquinas.

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Ward, Thomas M. "Transhumanization, Personal Identity, and the Afterlife: Thomistic Reflections on a Dantean Theme," *New Blackfriars* 96 (2015), 564-75.

Notes:

⁽¹⁾ Jeffrey E. Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World: Change, Hylomorphism, and Material Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁽²⁾ Jefferson's Rotunda was destroyed in the late nineteenth century and rebuilt to a somewhat modified design. The building has since undergone several renovations designed in part to restore it to Jefferson's plans and to make repairs. Ignore this later history of the building. I am only interested in the relation between Jefferson's original building and the Roman Pantheon.

⁽³⁾ Brower is Professor of Philosophy at Purdue University, in West Lafayette, Indiana.

(⁴) Thomas M. Ward, "Transhumanization, Personal Identity, and the Afterlife: Thomistic Reflections on a Dantean Theme," *New Blackfriars* 96 (2015), 564-75.