

## Aquinas's Troubles with Human Death: A Prospective Solution<sup>1</sup>

From a philosophical and theological point of view – but also from the view of common language – death is defined as “the separation of the soul and body.”<sup>2</sup> In the case of Saint Thomas Aquinas his views regarding death are not fully clear<sup>3</sup> with this being somewhat strange due to Aquinas being a philosopher who makes use of Aristotelian ontological categories and additionally strengthens them with his own modification – the supreme substantial composition of the essence and existence, in relation to death makes use of, in fact, a position elaborated by... Plato (!). One could reply that Aquinas' concept of the soul is more akin to the Platonic one rather than the Aristotelian one – the soul is a spirit, albeit an “incomplete” one, an incomplete substance, but a substance nonetheless and is therefore a being “in itself” with its own act of existence. In Aristotle the soul was necessarily connected with matter and could not exist without it. Aquinas assumed Aristotle's concept as a more realistic one, because it grants the possibility for explaining the unity of the human being which was not granted in Plato's concept. Aquinas overcame the difficulties of Aristotle and Plato in relation to the soul, however it seems that for some reasons he “stopped” at the analysis of corporeality assuming the Platonic understanding of death – the separation of 2 substrates of being which in an Aristotelian understanding constitute/formulate the unity of being. This would be some sort of incoherence in a consistent analyses of the problems from the ontic side although he made a significant step forward, elaborating upon the concept of the soul comprehended as a form that is not engulfed in matter and does not result from its potentialities but is created by the Creator *ex nihilo*. It constitutes therefore a spiritual substance which exists in itself but is incomplete. Hence, the manner of understanding the

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<sup>2</sup> See B.Mondin, *Preegzystencja, nieśmiertelność, reinkarnacja*, (Preexistence, Immortality, Reincarnation)) transl. M.Wojewoda, WAM, Kraków 2006, p.171.

<sup>3</sup> J. Mundhenk in his work *Die Seele im System des Thomas von Aquin: Ein Beitrag zur Klärung und Beurteilung der Grundbegriffe der thomistischen Psychologie*, Hamburg 1980, on p. 119 draws attention to the fact that Aquinas, indeed, did not contemplate the problem of death philosophically or theologically, but he accepted only the axiom that it is the separation of the soul and body.

sorts of connections and relations between these substrates of being undergoes quite a radical change. The existence of this type of form (the soul) is not by necessity connected with matter and is not a result of how matter is organized, to the contrary – matter is organized by the form existing in it from within in a way of adapting to the “needs” of this form – in order for its “incompleteness” to find its completion. Hence, one can infer the ontic primacy and supremacy of form over matter, but on account of its structure it is incomplete and the material substrate is necessary and required for a variety of actions of the whole of a being.

And here we have a point requiring clarification – since Aquinas understood death as a complete division (separation) of these sub-components of a human being – the material and spiritual, in a Platonic manner, then what are the grounds of this?<sup>4</sup> Even more so, Aquinas argued that the human soul, the immaterial form, cannot be destroyed, although a soul bereft of the body is neither a human nor a person. Perhaps Aquinas succumbed to sensual obviousness<sup>5</sup> and the “terror of death” which according to his descriptions is terrifying, although as a theologian he should not give in to that, being aware of the resurrection and the afterlife, or as a philosopher, knowing of the indestructability (immortality) of the soul. Only someone lacking faith (or theological knowledge) and knowledge about the nature of the human soul (two factors are an important basis – supernatural and natural – of the hope of expecting an afterlife) can succumb to the intellectual and emotional paralysis accompanying the experience of death.

As one can infer from the undeniable obviousness, Thomas accepted both premises of this hope – faith in Revelation and the acquired as well as personally justified knowledge about the nature of the soul. It seems therefore that for some reasons – perhaps mentioned psychological reasons – he ceased to contemplate the nature of life and death.<sup>6</sup> He

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<sup>4</sup> J. Pieper points out that death itself is “one of the most profound conundrums of being in general, which one most accurately should call a ‘mystery’. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas did not have a shadow of doubt in this respect.” See *Death and Immortality*, St. Augustine's Press, South Bend 1962, p. 53. If this is the case, then from where is such a radically defined stance on death and what is the explanation of one's own ontological categories which seem to be on the boundaries of rationality? Similarly R. Pasnau in his article *Philosophy of Mind and Human Nature*, pp. 348 – 370, in: *Oxford Handbook of Aquinas*, Oxford 2012, states on p.363 that as a consequence of death the destruction of the body is self-evident.

<sup>5</sup> J. Pieper in his work *Death and Immortality* on p. 43 pointed out that this was indicated by Thomas Aquinas himself: *Quaest. disp. de pot.* 9, 2, ad 14, *Sth* I, q. 29, a. 1 ad 5, *Sth* I, q. 75, a. 4, ad 2. The state of the soul's existence after the destruction of the body is hindered and thus greatly limited in its actions, whereas in common language the separated soul is called a “ghost”.

<sup>6</sup> H. Majkrzak in his book *Antropologia integralna w Sumie Teologicznej św. Tomasza z Akwinu*, [*Integral Anthropology in St. Th. Aquinas' Summa Theologiae*], SPES, Kraków 2006, p. 105 starts a chapter entitled *Ciało*

comprehended death as having the essence of the human being “torn apart,” with this seeming to be “worse” philosophically and less adequate than that what was presented by Plato.<sup>7</sup> According to Plato, the union of the soul<sup>8</sup> with the body was not necessary by nature, therefore separating the soul and the body is something totally compatible with the actual nature of the human being and in specific conditions<sup>9</sup> is even salutary. In essence, the separation of the soul and the body is a return to the lost state of a better life, in accordance with the nature of the soul understood as a pure spirit.

Perhaps the acceptance of this definition of death was inspired by the will of being in accordance with the dogma of “the resurrection of the body,” but it seems that the resurrection of the body does not require such a level of “ontologization” because this resurrection is about further life with God which in turn must have its own ontic consequences. The dogma itself

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*człowieka* [The Human Body] with a presentation of certain axioms (to use a term from logic). He states 1) “The body is the primary reality which we notice in the human being.” Therefore, we have an assertion of the primacy of perception (cognition) and that it constitutes a certain reality. 2) “The human being as an entity created by God and participating in God is a greatly complex being.”

<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this is close to the theological understanding of death as a punishment for sins. Of course understanding death as a consequence of sin seems very appropriate, for according to the Bible death came about as a result of the devil’s envy (*Book of Wisdom* 1,13: “God didn’t make death. God takes no delight in the ruin of anything that lives. (...)”, and 2,24: “Death entered the universe only through the devil’s envy. Those who belong to the devil’s party experience death.”) and is the consequence of sin as the separation from the source of life – God (at least in a functional way, in the sense of personal relations and not in the ontic sense, for this would equate to the annihilation of the being on account of the necessary relation to the existence of the Absolute as the principle which maintains the contingent existence of the human being as well as that of every created being). This must end with some sort of impairment of life and nature itself, as one that is derived from this source is a result of creation.

<sup>8</sup> J. Pieper in his work *Death and Immortality* (p. 32) whilst commenting on Aquinas’ term *ratio mortis* (from *Compendium Theologiae* 1, 230, no. 483: (...) *animam a corpore separari*), refers to K. Rahner’s opinion (*Zur Teologie des Todes*, Herder, Freiburg 1961. p. 18), that this definition is “(...) considered to be so obvious that from the point of view of theology this description of death must be considered to be classic.” J. Pieper, however, stresses the important remark by K. Rahner that “(...) this definition refers to only the “description” of dying which does not grasp in any way the “proper essence of death”, additionally this description is insufficient, because this “term remains unclear” (Rahner, p. 19). J. Pieper commenting on this statement points out nonetheless that: “(...) there is no room for any unclarity” and that: “Separation is equivalent to severing the bonds.” One can also append these analyses by stating that death is not the same as the process of dying. In fact, dying refers to the entire human being, but not death itself as was argued by most philosophers. It seems, however, that death itself should be understood differently than was classically accepted by Plato.

<sup>9</sup> This condition was that the soul was not to be contaminated in its eternal life by the matters of the body and that those matters shall not “lure” the soul back to the body, with this resulting in the necessity of reincarnation, incarnation into some other body in order to “atone” for one’s inappropriate life – from the point of view of the genuine nature of the soul – and thus a possibility of cleansing oneself.

can be understood as having emphasis put in another sense – that of the immortality of the soul, the principle of the life and identity of the human being as well as pointing to the fact that everything that has been lost in the process of dying shall be restored (without some closer description of what is destroyed and what is commonly referred to as the body) in such a way in order for the being and consequently the human life to be truly human in the perspective of the eternal, beatific presence of God.

What is therefore the premise for such a concept of death and should Aquinas accept it in accordance with that which he knew?<sup>10</sup> Was it permissible and was it not possible to formulate another understanding of death within the framework which he devised in his metaphysics that would not be contradictory with them or with the principles of theology<sup>11</sup>? The Platonic understanding of death should have been discarded, for there the union of the soul and body is not necessary per se, their elements constitute separate substantial realities with the dominance of the spiritual component – the soul that moves and therefore animates the body. After the body is abandoned by the soul, it decomposes due to the lack of the stimulating and animating component which life fundamentally has as its essence. The Aristotelian understanding of death was similarly incompatible with the state of metaphysical knowledge, being comprehended as the destruction of the form organizing matter as a result of factors degrading the body and thus destroying the soul, as something that is genetically and existentially dependent on the body and with it comprises one substance.

By decoupling the existence of the soul from the body and on the other hand ascribing the body to the soul as a necessary factor for an incomplete form, Thomas Aquinas had no choice but to consider death as a terrible tearing up of the human being. This in fact made death something even worse for Aquinas than for Plato.<sup>12</sup> But on what basis can one accomplish this when they are only based on the necessity of defining death in a specific

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<sup>10</sup> The following question seems to be adequate – what did he not know or what did he not take into consideration?

<sup>11</sup> One must add that although the Thomistic system is treated sometimes as a collection of axioms (the famous set of Thomistic theses), Thomism should be understood as a method of realistic philosophizing which in the name of compatibility with reality, i.e. truth, must be open to reality, new discoveries, and a deeper or more adequate understanding of one's own theses as well as the meaning of one's own discoveries or the accomplishments of realistic philosophy.

<sup>12</sup> J. Pieper admits in his work *Death and Immortality* on p. 42 that, "(...) this state of affairs is shocking, although it is hard to deny it." In a manner similar to C.S. Lewis he calls the "separated" soul a "ghost" (p. 43) and draws attention to the fact that after the loss of the soul one cannot be called by their name because a human person is a person as far as he/she is animated by the soul.

system of metaphysics or do they have some other basis for an understanding of death apart for systemic understandings? Perhaps death could be comprehended in a different way within the metaphysical framework. Ultimately, do we have a basis in experience to understand death as the substantial severance of the human being? Such a solution seems to be in accordance with experience, namely that which is material (and therefore visible) is destroyed, whereas that which is immaterial and thus invisible<sup>13</sup> endures, even though it is invisible. This solution is also compatible with theology because it is emphasized many times in the Scriptures that resurrection takes place by the will of God and even Christ himself rose (resurrected) through God's power<sup>14</sup>.

It seems, however, that the question of interpreting this human experience remains a totally crucial factor. Based on the system of realistic metaphysics one can infer that the body as a metaphysical principle is not what one experiences. We experience only the "whole" human being and if we speak of the body, we talk about it in a common sense meaning, as a set of organs – limbs, core, head as the essential parts of it and in turn the organ's composing parts – the face, hair, eyes, ears, fingers, skin colour etc., i.e. the general form or shape and size of a specific human being and thus his or her individual characteristics manifesting themselves essentially in sensual cognition.<sup>15</sup>

I propose to describe all of this as the organism and in fact the destruction of the biological organism as a result of death does not leave a shade of doubt about this. This is manifested by the termination of all lively functions and the gradual decomposition of the anatomical structure and the loss of the functional whole. A question remains, however, whether the biological organism can be equated with the body as the metaphysical principle in such an understanding that death would be considered as the severance of the ontic structure?

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<sup>13</sup> The juxtaposition of visible and invisible appears in Plato's argumentation for the nature of the soul in his dialogue – *Phaedo* (79 a 6) and thus in this context the attempt "to cope with" death and find some certainty as far as the subsequent perseverance of the human being is considered. Although this consideration is made on the basis of a more realistic, rather than systemic or belief-based, approach because the participants of the dialogue refer to various sorts of experiences and situations found in everyday life.

<sup>14</sup> See *Acts of the Apostles* 2,32: "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it."

<sup>15</sup> See the fragment of the entry by M.A. Krąpiec (in: *The Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, v. 2, Lublin 2001, pp. 176-186) titled "Human body" where on p. 176 he pointed out, "(...) in the common use the term "body" often refers to a person that is already dead, because when a person is still alive he or she is not just a body. Only thanks to philosophical reflection can one endow the term "human body" a specific meaning that is dependent on a given philosophical system. In general by the body one understands the human being as he or she manifests itself externally with his or her actions in the material world."

It seems, nonetheless, that the human organism is an attributive system (a set of specific accidentals) whereas the body as a sub-ontic element of a being composition is a constitutive element of the human substance. In other words, can the change of the attributive system (the destruction, decomposition of the organism) lead to substantial changes thus comprising the separation of two necessary sub-ontic components of a substance connected with each other in a necessary and not accidental relation? More so, if the principle of the substance is spiritual, does it contain existence in itself? However, is the second factor (i.e. the organized body) potentially and completely reliant on the principle organizing its being and granting it substantial existence? Is this ultimately the situation when it turned out that the entirety of human existence, and therefore the entire being, in its essential elements and even those derived from its attributive determinants, was completely created by God the Creator and not only in part (i.e. basically the soul, as was classically perceived)?

Whilst for Plato death was something ontically positive,<sup>16</sup> for Aristotle, as is clear, it was the greatest evil because death was the end of life and the actual existence of the being. Then for Aquinas should death not be something better than for Plato? It seems that death remains worse, destroying the structure of the being, but better than in the case of Aristotle, with Aquinas maintaining an intermediary character between these aforementioned philosophers and only in the supernatural dimension (through the resurrection) is death better than in the case of Plato. Can one then attempt to identify the aforementioned alternative description of death? If the organism was only something attributive (a set of accidentals), because it enables only biological life and indirectly is necessary for the development of spiritual life, its destruction should not be interpreted as the destruction of the entire material basis for being because the change, as far as the accidentals are concerned, does not have to be, and in the case of human beings is not, a substantial change, although from an external point of view (we do not have another at our disposal) death seems to be a substantial change, i.e. the destruction of the being. Yet as Thomas Aquinas himself argues, death is not the destruction of a being because that which is substantial or essential for the human being remains – the possibility of a personal (spiritual) life because a human being's fundamentals (i.e. the intellect and the will) remain in the spiritual subject (i.e. immaterial soul) and

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<sup>16</sup> Under the condition, however, that during one's life a human being liberated oneself from the constraints of the body through philosophy. Otherwise there was a threat of getting into even worse relations with the body, namely moving into bodies even less perfect than humans – those of animals, according to Plato's "theory of reincarnation."

preserve everything that a human being has established during his or her life. Therefore, all of the notions acquired by way of cognition in the intellect as well as all the inclinations and decisions thus made are placed somehow in the will.

Undoubtedly it was hard for Aquinas to separate the body from the organism. Only the development of early modern and contemporary scientific knowledge has led to an increasingly greater understanding that the organism as perceived and examined is a specific sort of whole. But this organism is an attributional whole (composed of accidentals) and cannot be identified with the body as a metaphysical principle of the substantial existence of the human being, in particular on account of the immaterial soul, the complementary (though dominating) principle defining the character of the human substance. According to Aristotle, the body was entirely organic for the form is a result of how matter is organized. Hence the entire organism is identical to the body and an organism is a result of a body's forming and actualizing and is expressed in this same actualizing. In case of the human being, the body as a metaphysical sub-ontic substrate is a consequence of the immaterial soul and most of all as a result of necessary ontic relations and thus is stronger than the system of accidentals - the organism. The body however belongs to the essence of the human being and it seems that the body cannot be "torn out" from it. At most, the body can undergo certain changes of an accidental character. Hence one can only speak of transformations of the body in the case of the destruction of a specific system of accidentals – the organism, which only modifies the substance of the human being and of course does not constitute it.

The fundamental question is whether the destruction of the organism is the destruction of the body and the reduction of the human being to the state of a "separated soul." If the organism can be treated as a set of accidentals, then it seems that the answer is "no." The destruction of the (biological) organism would therefore mean only the radical reconstruction of the body but not its annihilation because as a metaphysical principle the body necessarily belongs to the substance, the permanence of which is guaranteed by the soul – a form with an immaterial character. We cannot succumb either to the "terror of death" which according to sensual perception seems to be the destruction of the human<sup>17</sup> or to the definition of death suggested by Plato whose intellectual stance was determined in the aforementioned manner.

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<sup>17</sup> J. Pieper in his work *Death and Immortality* cites on p. 49 Thomas Aquinas who stated that "among the bad things that happen to people, death is by far the worst" (*Compendium Theologiae* I, 227, no. 477) and that death is "the worst of human sufferings" (*ibid*, no. 475) as well as that death robs man of that which is "most worthy of love: life and being" (*Quaest. disp. de ver.* 26, 6 ad 8).

Contemporary reflection in the Thomist current of philosophy clarifies basic approaches which once had been coined in the heat of a dispute between competing views, but also under the overpowering influence of reality itself, which is interrogative and demands explanations for, sometimes very important, existential issues, especially death and the question of the afterlife, both with respect to its possibility of occurring and the manner in which it could occur.

Being at a certain distance from those times as well as having certain suggestions from other philosophical inquiries, especially from the phenomenological current and also taking into account the contemporary discoveries of biology, one can attempt a new glance at the once proposed solutions of these eternally actual most interesting existential questions relating to the human being which are connected with the foundation of human existence. One of them would indeed be the proposal to reach for the old approach to human corporeality with the distinction of the organism and the body, as well as the distinction appearing in phenomenological discourse of the internal and external body.<sup>18</sup>

The proposed distinction between the body and the organism as well as the suggestion that death refers only to the organism modifies the traditional understanding of death and sheds a new light in this direction. First of all, this distinction solves certain paradoxes which are specific to the “classical” understanding of death. Some thinkers who are aware of this distinction’s sharpness tried to avoid this distinction in a variety of ways, even reverting to Revelation.

What is most clear is that:

1. Death as a process taking place on the ground of a being’s accidentals nevertheless destroys the substantial structure of a being, the existence of which is not caused by the organization of matter, but is the act of existence of an immaterial – and therefore created – soul.
2. After death is understood as the “separation of the body and soul,” the human being moves into the unnatural state of a “separated soul”.
3. There is an aforementioned hiatus between the natural tendency of the being towards immortality on account of the immaterial (immortal) principle of the existence of the being (the human soul) and the lack of the natural power to fulfill this tendency.

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<sup>18</sup> See the famous German differentiation between der *Leib* and der *Koerper*.

4. The human being is a human person, the body belongs to the essence of the human being, death destroys the structure of the being, the human being ceases being a person and is subjected to death entirely passively and becomes depersonalized.
5. The understanding of death as taken from one of the concepts of being and the human being (the Platonic conception) becomes simply and literally transposed to a completely different understanding (the Thomistic conception).

Nonetheless, with such a proposed change of the understanding of death, traditional solutions of problems connected with death need a reformulation or a reinterpretation. Additionally, reformulation and reinterpretations are needed when considering the course of death or the question of a potential afterlife and resurrection.

Biological – metabolic life is natural for this world and is necessary for the human being to function as a material-biological entity, but biological – metabolic life is a necessity relative to the circumstances of creation and the necessity to draw epistemic material and basic goods (sustenance, energy, shelter, clothing, and other things necessary for life) from this world, possibly with the intermediation of other people.<sup>19</sup> A similar case is found in granting a person those interpersonal relations thanks to which human beings indeed fulfill themselves. This was noticed already by classical thinkers, starting with Plato and, in particular, by Aristotle in his concept of bilateral, mutual benevolence, i.e. friendship, up until Christian thinkers who were additionally inspired by Christian Revelation and its commandment to love God and one's neighbor.<sup>20</sup> After completing or ending one's life, the human being would approximate to a more internal life in the sense that his or her subjectivity and personality would be strengthened, directed more to the inside or else be based on the internal in order to be more "by one's own way" in a way that is not forced out by the "open" biological organism who is subject to all possible stimuli, suffering (being "passionate") by the hand of all external influences which are supposed to "fill in" the interior and help a person internalize oneself and start to live one's own life.

After processing in one's own way that which came from outside, there is an ever growing empowerment of the human being. Freedom, authenticity, being oneself, and owning oneself is therefore greater, with life increasingly resembling spiritual life since the life of

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<sup>19</sup> Or even with God, who himself became a man, as is said in Christian Revelation.

<sup>20</sup> The basis for this was revealing the nature of God as personalized love.

plants and animals is essentially restricted to reacting to stimuli and fulfilling one's own nature in a way that is programmed, expressed in adequately instinctive actions.<sup>21</sup> Thus, although in the initial stage of life, which is organic and bio-metabolic in its "phenomenology," the human being is directed to "the exterior" and must in perpetual targeting struggle for his or her interior. This was emphasized already by Plato, who said that the body constantly constitutes an obstacle. Later Saint Paul pointed to the "afflictions of the body", which were indicated also by Christian interpretations. In opposition to this, when the human being's personal life continues to develop, he or she begins to have an increasingly internalized, spiritual life, with this being indicated by various concepts of Christian asceticism<sup>22</sup>, but not only by these concepts.<sup>23</sup>

After death – understood as the degradation of the biological organism – there is no need for recreating (or "rebuilding") a similar so "externally" directed organism like the former bio-metabolic one because during a person's entire life in the world it was possible to acquire various pieces of information about the world as well as improve one's own activities, targeting them at external objects – goods which absorb one's appetitive powers with the will being greatest of all. In this sense, everything that one needed from the external world, not being in oneself from the very beginning but appearing during one's life, actualizes and improves the personal mode of life with this thus enabling an ever more perfect fulfillment of one's nature. However, as a result of the aging processes of the organism<sup>24</sup>, with this process constituting a means for acquiring information, knowledge, and wisdom from the world as well as being a tool for various acts by which a human being perfects one's appetitive powers, but also thanks to which he or she lives "in the world", the organism becomes less and less useful in fulfilling these functions. In a Platonic way one can say that from a certain point the process of aging starts being an obstacle, becoming only an opportunity for a person to

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<sup>21</sup> Of course in the case of animals in relation to plants, we have a growing level of autonomy of action the more sophisticated an animal is.

<sup>22</sup> These concepts drew attention to the gift of grace and how the entire process of the "spiritual construction" of the human being is supported by grace. The spiritual construction of the human being was not only the effect of one's own effort. Moreover, this construction is not only about self-improvement, but also carries out in the context of the Divine Person as well as the other people accompanying a human being in his or her daily life.

<sup>23</sup> See e.g. ancient philosophy as a form of asceticism: P.Hadot, *Filozofia jako ćwiczenie duchowe [Philosophy as spiritual exercise]*, transl. P. Domański, ALETHEIA, Warsaw 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Or on account of other possible impairments hindering the functioning of the organism such as illnesses, injuries, accidents, etc.

manifest his or her transcendence over matter and to overcome matter's increasing resistance. In this sense, the ultimately occurring phenomenon of death turns out to be natural in this aforementioned context and nonetheless becomes a release from the nuisances which grow with age.

In such a state the human being has already everything from the world that is needed and necessary for him or her to live in another shaping of the body – constructing another organism more adapted to personal life which during earthly life already developed in a specific manner dependent on the mode of life of a given human being. Personal life, as was mentioned before, becomes increasingly interiorized and the human being becomes increasingly empowered, dependent upon oneself and one's own spiritual nature with this spiritual nature becoming actualized and developed, so one can then assume that the new organism (or the newly formulated body) after the death of the previous, biological-metabolic one, shall be more “internalized” and adapted to fulfilling, in an improved manner, personal activities. This “internalization” can also consist of “turning away” from the world in its structural organization, i.e. the lack of the necessity of the ontic-functional character which existed at the moment of the emergence of the initial developmental phases of the human being, where he or she came to be as a “blank sheet.” The new or rather continued life after death must complete that which had not been fully realized, what in fact could not be fulfilled during one's former life as was elaborated by M.A. Krąpiec in his original concept of an active death.<sup>25</sup> This is the opposite of the abovementioned passive, experienced, and comprehended ultimate decomposition of the human biological organism. This is an external experience as well as an experience of the dying person (although in this case to a lesser degree because, for the soon to be deceased, death is a personal internal experience), but most of all death is an experience of the external observers of the process who remain alive.

One can also notice the two-fold nature of human life expressing itself from one side in the initial radical targeting of “the exterior” in order to build one's own internal life and with time – on the other hand – this changes one's direction and the human being begins to live more internally, spiritually, and personally and in this time the activity and the dexterity of the organism starts to diminish with time heading to its limit. The new organism then seems to become shaped for the need of the more internal, inward, and spiritual life, thus corresponding more to the adequate nature of the person which initially is completely

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<sup>25</sup> See M.A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek [I – man]*, KUL, Lublin 2006, pp. 442-456.

dependent on the functioning of the bio-metabolic nature, whereas later this new organism is most completely adapted to empowered personal life and its needs. The concept of active, personally understood death may constitute some sort of means or manner of settling the nature of this “future” organism.

In this context, the concept of death destroys only the biological-metabolic organism, with this enabling life in “this” world to have an advantage over the concept of the “separated soul” which, though such an existence still is impaired, awaits the fully formulated corporeality of the resurrection. This would then not contradict human nature on account of a still present component – the body (although the body would lack its natural system of accidentals – the organism). In such a situation would the soul attempt to form some sort of a “new organism,” a system of accidentals adequate to the new circumstances? Would this be possible only with God’s assistance? The argument for the necessity of God’s power is that the “original” organism of the human being (due to God’s will) is supposed to be shaped in part by the influence of the substantial form itself and partially through the genetic influence of the parents. After death, the substantial form remains with its “ontic power” but this form does not experience such a type of influence as is found in the case of the parents. The human being, as numerous philosophers point out, after death remains “alone with oneself.” One can also add that this occurs in a very distinct way, for one is “forced” to be this way by the destruction of the organism which granted a person contact with the external world and other people. The only thing which remains for a person after the death of the biological organism is to turn to one’s own interior with that being what remains after one’s experience of death. If during death only the organism is destroyed, one might hope that that which shall remain will grant a person greater opportunities for human and personal action than in the concept of the “total denudation” of the body. In this sense the problem of the unnatural character of existence in the state of a “separated soul” would not occur.

In the concept of death as the destruction of only the biological-metabolic organism, questions of the sort as “What body shall be resurrected?” become irrelevant. Indeed, it is not the “body” that is resurrected (unless one can understand by this some sort of bodily transformation) because the body still exists in the subject in its substantial form from the moment of being brought into existence. Nonetheless, the body gains only a new “organic” dimension in the sense of ultimate determination in the direction towards the subsequent life of the new situation of the human being. Just as this dimension originated from the parents, after the genuine resurrection the true or the last (ultimate) parent shall be God himself. In this

sense, one can even speak of a “new creation”, for in this perspective the situation of a “first man” would seem to be repeated, with the whole human with all of his or her determinants coming from God.

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### **Aquinas’s Troubles with Human Death: A Prospective Solution Summary**

From a philosophical and theological point of view – but also from the view of common language – death is defined as “the separation of the soul and the body”. In the case of Saint Thomas Aquinas his views regarding death are not fully clear with this being somewhat strange due to Aquinas being a philosopher who makes use of Aristotelian ontological

categories and additionally strengthens them with his own modification – the supreme substantial composition of the essence and existence, in relation to death makes use of, in fact, a position elaborated by... Plato (!) And this in spite that he accepted the concept of human being given by Aristotle as more realistic, as better explaining the unity of it. However Aquinas overcame the difficulties of Aristotelian and Platonic solutions, yet it seems that from some reason “he stopped” in analysis of corporeality, accepting the Platonic understanding of the death: the separation of two principles of human being which (along Aristotle’s work) create the unity of it.

The distinction between the body and the organism proposed in the article modifies the understanding of human death and sheds a new light on it, that it concerns only the biological organism. If however such proposed change of understanding of death is acceptable and justified, in the consequence one needs to reinterpret traditional solutions of the problems associated with the death, like its process (what is going on during it), a life post mortem, the resurrection. Some suggestions will be made in the article.

**Keywords:** body, soul, organism, death, philosophical anthropology