

Philosophy 115
Philosophy of the Human Person
Lecture #34

The Human Soul

1. The human soul is immaterial (cf. Adler, ch. 4)

two contrary extreme views

dualism

thesis—the mind and the body are existentially distinct

Adler's argument against this

if the mind and the body are existentially distinct, then what happens to the brain should not affect mental phenomena

but it does

as in sleep, trauma, &c.

so, the mind and the body are not existentially distinct

reductive materialism

thesis—the mind and the body are not even conceptually distinct

Adler's argument against this

if the mind and the body are not even conceptually distinct, then all references to mental events should be avoidable

but they are not

as can be seen by contrasting the physiologist's and the experiencer's description of conscious states

so, the mind and the body are conceptually distinct

two contrary moderate views

(differing over the dependence of the mental on the physical)

non-reductive materialism

thesis—brain activity is necessary and sufficient for mental states

Adler's argument against this

Concepts have universality

Nothing having universality can be embodied in matter

So, Concepts cannot be embodied in matter

If conceptualization were the activity of a physical organ, then concepts could be embodied in matter.

So, conceptualization is not the activity of a physical organ

If conceptualization is not the activity of a physical organ, then brain activity not sufficient for mental states

moderate immaterialism

thesis—brain activity is necessary, but not sufficient, for mental states

it is necessary and sufficient for some kinds of mental states

but not for others (not conceptualization)

Adler's argument against this

as above, adding

Any activity that is not the activity of a physical organ, is the activity of something that has an immaterial component
So, conceptualization is the activity of something that has an immaterial component

2. The human soul is subsistent (cf. Aquinas, Q. 75, a. 2)

subsistent = capable of independent existence

the main argument

(1) Anything that has an operation *per se* is a subsistent thing.

(2) The intellectual principle [human soul, mind] has an operation *per se* (i.e., apart from the body)

So, (3) The intellectual principle [human soul, mind] is subsistent.

the argument for P2:

(4) Anything that (a) is not a body and (b) has an action for which it uses no bodily organ has an operation *per se* (i.e., apart from the body).

(5) The intellectual principle [human soul, mind] (a) is not a body, and (b) has an action [viz., understanding] for which it uses no bodily organ.

So, (2) The intellectual principle [human soul, mind] has an operation *per se* (i.e., apart from the body).

the argument for P5:

(6) Anything capable of knowing all bodies is a thing that (a) is not a body and (b) has an action for which it uses no bodily organ.

(7) The intellectual principle [mind] is capable of knowing all bodies.

(5) The intellectual principle [mind] is a thing that (a) is not a body and (b) has an action for which it uses no bodily organ.

does this mean that, if a bodily correlate of intellectual activity could be found, Aquinas would give up the claim that intellectual operations are *per se* operations of the soul?

No—“the body is necessary for the action of the intellect” (75.2 ad 3)

but the body only provides the *object on which* the intellect acts (“the phantasm”)

to undermine subsistence, the body (or organ) would have to be at least the instrument by which the soul acts

(cf. further discussion at 75.6 ad 3; and 89.1)

what about animals? (a. 3)

The case for subsistence

the argument for the subsistence of the intellectual principle on the basis of intellectual operations applies also to the sensitive principle on the basis of intellectual operations (since animals can perceive all corporeal things)

The case against:

(1) No operations accompanied by changes in the body are operations *per se* (i.e., apart from the body).

(2) The operations of the sensitive soul are accompanied by changes in the body.

So, (3) No operations of the sensitive soul are operations *per se* (i.e., apart from the body).

So, (4) The sensitive soul is not subsistent.

3. The soul is incorruptible

incorruptible = not capable of ceasing to exist

NB: the thesis is that there is no *natural* way for the soul to cease to exist

God could annihilate it if he wanted to

two kinds of corruption distinguished

corruption *per accidens*

two sub-cases

the corruption of an accident when the substance in which it inheres is corrupted

e.g., of the chameleon's color when the chameleon dies

the corruption of a material form on the corruption of the substance it is the form of

e.g., of a chameleon's soul when the chameleon dies

definition—corruption forced by the corruption of that on which a thing depends for its existence

corruption *per se*

two sub-cases

the corruption of an accident when the substance becomes something else

e.g., of the chameleon's color when the chameleon changes color

the corruption of a substance, when form & matter are separated

e.g., of a chameleon when it dies

argument that the human soul is not susceptible to corruption in either of these senses

corruption *per accidens*

(1) No subsistent thing is corrupted *per accidens*.

(2) The human soul is a subsistent thing.

So, (3) No human soul is corrupted *per accidens*.

corruption *per se*

(4) No subsistent form is a thing which can be corrupted *per se*.

since ...

(5) No things which are inseparable from their own existence are things which can be corrupted *per se*; and

(6) All subsistent forms are things which are inseparable from their own existence.

(7) The human soul is a subsistent form.

So, (8) The human soul is not a thing which can be corrupted *per se*.

final argument:

(9) Anything that is not corrupted *per se* or *per accidens* is incorruptible.

(3 & 8) The human soul is not corrupted *per se* or *per accidens*.

So, (10) The human soul is incorruptible.

4. The creation of the human soul (cf. Aquinas, Q. 90)

two possibilities for the origin of the human soul

production by an act of generation, just as for any other form:¹

argument for this

Every actuality of matter is educed from the potentiality of that matter.

The soul is the act of corporeal matter, as is clear from its definition.

Therefore, the soul is educed from the potentiality of matter.

argument against²

The rational soul does not depend for its existence on corporeal matter,

i.e., it is subsistent, and exceeds the capacity of corporeal matter

Anything that does not depend for its existence on corporeal matter is not educed from the potentiality of matter.

So, it is not educed from the potentiality of matter.

production by an act of creation

NB: only God can bring things into being by an act of creation

so, every human soul is directly created by God.³

argument

the human soul, unlike the souls (or forms) of dogs and trees, is a subsistent form.

a thing must be made in a way suitable to its mode of existence.

Accidents (color, for example) cannot properly be said to exist;

properly accidents are only modifications of things that exist.

Substances can properly be said to exist

existence belongs precisely to them, not to some other thing of which they themselves are merely some kind of modification.

Non-subsistent forms can no more properly be said to exist than can accidents.⁴

they emerge with the proper organization of matter

the form is, under the proper circumstances educed from, led out of, the matter.

Subsistent forms, like substances (subsistent things), can be made.

Material substances by generation from pre-existing matter.

the rational soul (not being a corporeal being) cannot be made from pre-existing matter

proper organization of matter is not sufficient to bring it into being

It must be made from nothing, i.e., by creation.

¹ Ibid., Q. 90, a. 2, arg. 2.

² Ibid., Q. 90, a. 2 ad 2, which is based on Q. 75, a. 2.

³ Ibid., Q. 90, a. 3, based on Q. 45, a. 5.

⁴ Ibid., Q., 90, a., 2, corpus: “properly speaking, it does not belong to any non-subsistent form to be made; but such are said to be made through the composite substances being made.”

The Incorruptibility of the Intellect

	corruption <i>per accidens</i>	corruption <i>per se</i>
	definition—corruption forced by the corruption of that on which a thing depends for its existence	definition—corruption in which one form is replaced by another
applied to accidents	the corruption of an accident when the substance in which it inheres is corrupted e.g., of the chameleon's color when the chameleon dies	the corruption of an accident when the substance becomes something else e.g., of the chameleon's color when the chameleon changes color (form <i>green</i> replaced by form <i>brown</i>)
applied to material (non-subsistent) forms or substances	the corruption of a material form on the corruption of the substance it is the form of e.g., of a chameleon's soul when the chameleon dies	the corruption of a substance, when form & matter are separated e.g., of a chameleon when it dies (form <i>chameleon</i> replaced by form <i>bone, muscle, &c.</i>)
not applicable to the human soul, a immaterial and subsistent form	not possible (1) No subsistent thing is corrupted <i>per accidens</i> . (2) The human soul is a subsistent thing. So, (3) No human soul is corrupted <i>per accidens</i> .	(4) No subsistent form is a thing which can be corrupted <i>per se</i> . since ... (5) No things which are inseparable from their own existence are things which can be corrupted <i>per se</i> ; and (6) All subsistent forms are things which are inseparable from their own existence. (7) The human soul is a subsistent form. So, (8) The human soul is not a thing which can be corrupted <i>per se</i> .

final argument:

- (9) Anything that is not corrupted *per se* or *per accidens* is incorruptible.
 (3 & 8) The human soul is not corrupted *per se* or *per accidens*.
 So, (10) The human soul is incorruptible.