

Marquette University

e-Publications@Marquette

---

Philosophy Faculty Research and Publications

Philosophy, Department of

---

4-2012

## Suarez, Immortality, and the Soul's Dependence on the Body

James B. South

Marquette University, james.south@marquette.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://epublications.marquette.edu/phil\\_fac](https://epublications.marquette.edu/phil_fac)



Part of the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

South, James B., "Suarez, Immortality, and the Soul's Dependence on the Body" (2012). *Philosophy Faculty Research and Publications*. 265.

[https://epublications.marquette.edu/phil\\_fac/265](https://epublications.marquette.edu/phil_fac/265)

## Suárez, Immortality, and the Soul's Dependence on the Body

James B. South

The starting point for this essay is the year 1500. As a date, it certainly sounds auspicious—a mere seventeen years before Luther and his ninety-five theses, thirty years before Copernicus put down in writing some of his thoughts, forty years before the issuance by Pope Paul III of *Regimini militantis ecclesie* and the founding of the Society of Jesus, and forty-eight years before the birth of Francisco Suárez. In 1500, in a classroom in Padua, Pietro Pomponazzi stated that two conditions needed to be met in order to show that the soul is immortal: the soul (or the intellect at any rate) must be (1) free from bodily location and (2) free from the mediating role of bodily powers. In his technical language, if the soul is to be considered immortal, the body cannot be a subject for an immortal intellectualive soul, that is, the soul's operations cannot exclusively take place in bodily organ. At the same time the soul should not need the body as an object, that is, the body cannot be a necessary condition for all operations of the intellect.<sup>1</sup> It was another sixteen years before Pomponazzi would publish his famous treatise *On the Immortality of the Soul* in which he argued that neither condition could be defended philosophically. That was three years after the Fifth Lateran Council in its eighth session declared that there were three most pernicious errors corrupting the minds of the faithful: that the rational soul is mortal, that there is one rational soul for all humans, and that either of these claims can be true according to philosophy. In short Pompanazzi's later work set off a firestorm of controversy over the issue of immortality. It is too big a question to ask here what it was about these twenty-five years or so that made the issue of immortality so crucial and the rhetorical pitch so high. It was certainly not unprecedented to doubt the demonstrability of immortality. Scotus had done so, and Cajetan during the 1520s—after becoming a Cardinal—classed the immortality of the soul, along with the Trinity, as topics about which philosophers had no certain knowledge. Nonetheless between the Council and the Pomponazzi affair,

<sup>1</sup> See Pietro Pomponazzi, *Corsi inediti dell'insegnamento padovano*, II: *Quaestiones physicae et animasticae decem* (1499–1500; 1503–4), ed. Antonino Poppi (Padua: Antenore, 1970), 1–25. The two conditions are stated on 18.

as Martin Pine has correctly noted, the controversy concerning immortality 'produced the most important debate within sixteenth century Christendom prior to the Reformation.'<sup>2</sup>

In what follows I connect Suárez to this immortality debate. Suárez certainly knew Pomponazzi's work, although most scholars writing on Suárez are more likely to situate him in the context of the tradition of Scholastic thought rather than the more secular Aristotelianism prevalent at Padua and elsewhere in Italy throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Typically, in fact, Suárez situated himself within the Scholastic tradition and that self-positioning is apparent in the texts on which I focus. Nonetheless, I think that a careful reading of Suárez's discussion of immortality shows that his thought here was decisively shaped by Pomponazzi's challenge.

Suárez's most extensive discussion of immortality occurs in Disputation 2, question 3 of his *Commentary on the De anima*.<sup>3</sup> After having treated of the nutritive and sensitive souls in the first two questions of the disputation, in Question 3 he asked: 'Whether the principle of human understanding is something incorporeal, subsistent, and immortal?' In answering this he drew six conclusions. The first was that the human soul is immaterial and subsistent. We will return to the argument he provided for that view. He then provided a second conclusion: the human intellectual principle is immortal. And then a third conclusion: the oldest and most important philosophers think the soul is immortal, as do the vast majority of humans throughout history. And these ancient philosophers and this multitude of common humanity came to this conclusion through the light of natural reason apart from the illumination of faith. At this point, though, Suárez admitted that there is one striking omission in his list of eminent philosophers who accept immortality, namely Aristotle. Accordingly he promised to return to a discussion of Aristotle's own account. Having treated the philosophical arguments for immortality, he proceeded to discuss the place of the claim of immortality within the realm of faith. So Suárez's fourth conclusion is that it is 'most certain' according to the Catholic faith that the soul never perishes. The fifth conclusion is that faith teaches not only the immortality of the soul but that the soul is immortal by its nature and not through some special gift of God. Finally, he maintained that it is most pious and

<sup>2</sup> Martin Pine, *Pietro Pomponazzi: Radical Philosopher of the Renaissance*, Saggi e Testi 21 (Padua: Antenore, 1986), 61. Pine provides a good overview of the work of Pompanzzi, carefully situating it within its historical context and connecting it with previous thinkers such as Duns Scotus and Cajetan (Thomas de Vio).

<sup>3</sup> This work dates from 1572, early in Suárez's career as a teacher at Segovia. The work was never published in his lifetime, although late in his career he began revising it for publication. The edition printed in Suárez, Francisco, M. André, Charles Berton, and Antoine Théophile Duval, R. p. *Francisci Suarez . . . Opera omnia* (Parisiis: apud Ludovicum Vivès, 1856) is based on a 1621 edition compiled by P. Alvarez. Alvarez used the revised text as it existed through the first eighteen questions, combined with the earlier text and various supplemental texts. I follow instead the recent critical edition of the manuscripts of the 1572 lectures: Francisco Suárez, *Commentaria una cum questionibus in libros Aristotelis De anima*, edited by Salvador Castellote, 3 vols: (Madrid: Sociedad de Estudios y Publicaciones (vols. 1 and 2) and Fundación Xavier Zubiri (vol. 3), 1978–91. I will abbreviate future references to this work as CDA. This text is available online at <<http://www.salvadorcastellote.com/investigacion.htm>>.

consistent with faith to hold that the immortality of the soul can be demonstrated through natural reason.

In this chapter I will avoid talking about the last three points since such a discussion would take us too far afield by propelling us into a study of the context of Suárez's teaching and the need to deal with the skeptical tendencies within both the Catholic and Protestant discussions of immortality. Instead, in what follows we are only going to treat his conclusions concerning the philosophical arguments for immortality and the interpretation of Aristotle.

One additional preliminary note is in order. As I proceed the reader might be surprised that no mention is made of Averroes. In fact Suárez devoted a separate question to Averroes's teaching concerning the intellectual soul. Still the dispute between Suárez and Averroes was not the same as the one that he treats in the question on immortality. Certainly Averroes thought that the intellectual soul is immortal. Hence, it makes sense that the question of the number of intellects would arise subsequent to Question 3, which gives us reason to believe that the intellectual soul can exist apart from the body. However, in case you are curious about Suárez's attitude towards Averroesism, he considered it not only opposed to faith but philosophically 'sheer delirium and unintelligible error.'<sup>4</sup>

## I: The probable arguments

While the bulk of this chapter will deal with Suárez's one demonstrative argument for immortality and his reading of Aristotle, I would be remiss if I did not mention the arguments that he thought indicated, but don't prove, that the soul is immortal. These arguments are unoriginal and I think it is pretty clear that Suárez included them because they were current. There is a noticeable lack of enthusiasm and, more striking still, an uncharacteristic brevity in his treatment of them.

The first has to do with God's providential governance of the world. The point here is that the wicked are to be punished and the virtuous rewarded. Yet looking around it is pretty obvious that the world does not work that way—the wicked live lives full of delight, while the virtuous live lives filled with toil. This is incompatible with God's ruling providence. Accordingly there must be an afterlife in which the good receive what is due to them and the wicked receive their just deserts.

A second argument concerns the end of the soul. Everything has an end in which it rests once it has achieved it. Yet we rarely find rest in this life because of all the troubles we meet with along the way. So the soul's immortality is needed to provide an opportunity to rest in our beatitude.

A third argument concerns a natural desire in humans, namely, that we all desire to live forever. It would be strange if such a natural desire were frustrated. Oddly Suárez

<sup>4</sup> 'merum delirium et error inintelligibilis' (CDA, disp. 2, q. 4, no. 2, 1: 254).

does not dwell on this argument, even though he surely knew it was the centerpiece of Marsilio Ficino's argument for human immortality in his *Platonic Theology*.<sup>5</sup>

Instead he quickly moved on to a fourth argument, one taken from human dignity. It is clear, he stated, that humans are both the head (*caput*) and end of the entire universe. As such, it would be absurd should humans live no longer than the beasts who serve them or more briefly than the sun that provides *us* with warmth.

Finally the fifth argument was concerned with virtue. The idea is that our awareness of immortality is the foundation of virtue. Without such an awareness of immortality, humans would live as animals and would fall into baseless thoughts such as 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die,' or (quoting Augustine) 'If the soul is mortal, I think that the palm goes to Epicurus.'<sup>6</sup>

Now all of these arguments are contestable. More importantly, all had in fact been contested. Pomponazzi had argued, for example, that virtue was its own reward and that the rationality of pursuing virtue was relatively evident. I do not want to dwell on the strengths and weaknesses of these arguments in any detail. It is sufficient to note that Suárez was convinced that these arguments were not demonstrative. He stated that the most powerful is the first: the wicked must be punished and the virtuous rewarded if indeed God is the providential ruler of the world. Their most striking commonality is that all concerned what we might call the practical side of human life: our desires, virtue, happiness, and the like. By contrast, the demonstrative argument to follow is firmly situated on the theoretical side.

## II: The demonstrative argument

The second conclusion in the Third Disputation is that the immortality of the soul can be demonstrated evidently by natural reason. That is a very strong claim and one hopes for a strong argument. Here's the argument:

St. Thomas demonstrates this conclusion at I, q. 75, a. 6 from what has preceded, for the rational soul is *per se* subsistent; therefore, it is incorruptible. The consequence is clear, for it is corrupted either *per se* or *per accidens*. Now, it is not corrupted *per accidens* since it belongs to something to be generated and corrupted in the way in which it exists. Therefore, in the case of that to which existence belongs *per se*, it belongs to it to be generated or corrupted *per se*, or it belongs to it in no way. Now, he proves that it does not belong to it *per se*, for what is form alone and subsistent cannot possibly be corrupted *per se*. It is proved: for, what belongs *per se* to something cannot possibly be separated from it. Now, existence belongs *per se* to form. Therefore, it is impossible for existence to be separated from form; therefore, it is impossible for form to be corrupted.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Marsilio Ficino, *Theologia Platonica*, Book I, chapter 1 and Book XIV. For discussion, see Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Il Pensiero Filosofico di Marsilio Ficino* (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1988), 200–12.

<sup>6</sup> 'Comedamus et bibamus, cras enim moriemur. . . Si animus est mortalís, in animo meo Epicurus habet palmam' (CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 32, 1: 202).

<sup>7</sup> 'Hanc conclusionem demonstrat D. Thomas, I p., q. 75, a. 6, ex praecedenti, nam anima rationalis est per se subsistens; ergo est incorruptibilis. Patet consequentia, [nam] vel corrumpetur per se, vel per accidens;

Suárez asserted that this argument is sufficiently metaphysical, acute, and demonstrative, but he also admitted that it is obscure and proceeds to provide some clarification.

First Suárez did a little definitional work. After all one might think it a bit odd to say that nature could intend corruption *per se* since it is more accurate to say that nature intends generation *per se*. So he clarified the sense of corruption by restricting corruption *per se* to that which first terminates a corruption, that is, to what primarily ceased to exist in a corruption. By contrast corruption *per accidens* occurs when something ceases to be as the result of the cessation of something else. This rather concise account is illuminated by an example: when fire is generated from air, air is said to be corrupted *per se*. But the form of air and some of its accidents are said to cease to be as a result of such a *per se* corruption, that is, they are corrupted *per accidens*. So, restricting himself to forms, Suárez accepted that a form could be corrupted in two ways: it could be corrupted *per accidens*, that is, when the whole is corrupted. That is, when air becomes fire the form of air is corrupted since the form of air cannot exist on its own. It is in this way that all material forms cease to be. But as a subsistent form the human soul is different from a material form since it does not cease to be when it is separated from its body because it has its being *per se* and independently of the body. Thus the corruption of a subsistent form, say the form of a human being, must be corrupted *per se* if it is corrupted at all. Of course the assumption here is that existence belongs to subsistent forms *per se*.<sup>8</sup>

That assumption warrants additional explication and Suárez provided it. Existence belongs to form in such a way that through form it belongs to the form to have existence. So if a form is subsistent, existence belongs to it as such as it is the proper receptive capacity of existence. But if a form is not subsistent, existence belongs to it as a principle by which the composite exists. In short a form is that which fulfills the proper receptive capacity of existence, and hence we cannot attribute existence to anything except by attributing form to it. And, obviously enough, it follows that we cannot separate existence from something unless we separate it from its form. But since a form cannot be separated from itself, if existence belongs to a form as such, then the form cannot be separated from existence, and that means the form is incorruptible.<sup>9</sup>

Now, I want to say two things about this argument. First the argument is not very strong, and second Suárez recognized, despite his claim to the contrary, that it was not a very strong argument. Now the relative weakness of the argument is easy to characterize, and Robert Pasnau has done a nice job summarizing the worry (although as we shall see, the argument against it goes back at least to the sixteenth century). Aquinas's

non per accidens, quia sic competit alicui fieri et corrumpi sicut et esse; ergo cui convenit per se esse, convenit per se fieri et corrumpi, vel nullo modo convenient. Quod autem non per se conveniat probat, nam quod esse forma tantum et subsistens, impossibile est per se corrumpi. Probat, nam quod per se alicui convenit, impossibile est separari ab illo; esse autem per se convenit formae; ergo impossibile est separari ab illa; ergo impossibile est corrumpi' (CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 21, 1: 188).

<sup>8</sup> CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 21, 1: 188.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. no. 22, 1: 190.

argument (and Suárez's) is either badly mistaken or contains a serious omission. In Pasnau's words, 'by establishing that the human soul is subsistent, he has shown that it is not destroyed simply in virtue of the body's being destroyed. . . . Yet the human soul might be dependent on the body in some other way.'<sup>10</sup> And, as Pasnau further notes, this objection apparently occurred to Aquinas himself, since in *Summa theologiae* 1a.75.6 he raised this very claim as an objection and recognized the tight link between intellectual cognition and bodily existence:

Moreover, nothing exists without its own proper operation. But the proper operation of the soul, which is to understand with a phantasm, cannot exist without the body. For, as is said in the *De anima*, the soul understands nothing without a phantasm (*De anima* III, 7 431a16–17); and the phantasm does not exist without the body (*De Anima* I, 1 403a8–10). Therefore, when the body is destroyed, the soul cannot remain.<sup>11</sup>

Aquinas's response to this objection is striking: 'To the third, it must be said that to understand with a phantasm is the proper operation of the soul insofar as it is united to a body. But, separated from the body, it will have another mode of understanding, similar to other substances separated from the body, as will be clear below.'<sup>12</sup>

Pasnau's assessment of this response is that it is 'lamely ad hoc.'<sup>13</sup> In short Aquinas just admitted that his argument for immortality is either a complete sleight of hand or woefully incomplete. Unless he could properly show that the intellect can operate without the body, he did not really have a proof for the immortality of the soul. Or, with a slightly different emphasis, unless it can be shown that the intellectual soul does not need the body *at all*, it has not been shown that the intellect can survive when the body is destroyed. So even granted the claim that the soul is subsistent, Aquinas does not have a convincing argument for its immortality.<sup>14</sup>

I now move on to my second claim, namely, that Suárez was aware of this gap in Aquinas' argument. For support we need only look at the structure of his question on immortality. Suárez devoted two and a half pages to a discussion of the demonstrative argument. Yet he devoted eleven pages to discussing exactly those passages in Aristotle that Thomas mentioned in his third objection. And, it should be added, he devoted

<sup>10</sup> Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 366.

<sup>11</sup> 'Praeterea, nulla res est sine propria operatione. Sed propria operatio animae, quae est intelligere cum phantasmate, non potest esse sine corpore, nihil enim sine phantasmate intelligit anima; phantasma autem non est sine corpore, ut dicitur in libro *De anima*. Ergo anima non potest remanere, destructo corpore' (ST, 1a. q.75, art. 6, obj. 3, 11: 26–8).

<sup>12</sup> 'Ad tertium dicendum quod intelligere cum phantasmate est propria operatio animae secundum quod corpori est unita. Separata autem a corpore habebit alium modum intelligendi, similem aliis substantiis a corpore separatis, ut infra melius patebit' (ST, 1a. q. 75, art. 6, resp. 3, 11: 32).

<sup>13</sup> Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, 366.

<sup>14</sup> Since this chapter is not about Aquinas, I am not going to worry further about the way Aquinas himself deals with the possible ad hoc quality of his response. The interested reader could profitably consult Joseph Owens, 'Aquinas on the Inseparability of the Soul from Existence,' in *Towards a Christian Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 291–306; Richard Cross, 'Is Aquinas's Proof for the Indestructibility of the Soul Successful?' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 5 (1997): 1–20.

much more time to these passages than any other discussion in this question. In short he recognized that everything hinged on these texts and how they should be interpreted.

As previously mentioned, in 1500 Pomponazzi set the parameters for the way this question was going to be discussed in the sixteenth century and placed the emphasis on the intellect's dependence on phantasms rather than its *per se* subsistence. Indeed in his discussion of Aquinas in the *De immortalitate* of 1516 Pomponazzi did not even mention the argument for immortality based on subsistence. Instead he argued that Aquinas misunderstood the way the intellect depended on the body in cognition. When Gasparo Contarini, a former student of Pomponazzi, wrote his treatise against the *De immortalitate*, it was precisely this fact that he seized on. Pomponazzi, he claimed, had overlooked the key role that subsistence played in the Angelic Doctor's argument. But once this aspect of Thomas' argument was brought to his attention Pomponazzi became dismissive, stating that an Aristotelian account of form and matter requires that the form cannot be separated from the body in any natural way. The emphasis there is on the 'natural' since Pomponazzi did recognize at least one instance in which form and matter are separated: the case of the sacrament of the Mass. But that was clearly a miraculous separation, not a natural one, and Pomponazzi maintained that the philosopher should not explain the relation of soul and body in terms of a divine miracle.<sup>15</sup>

So despite Contarini's attempt to reorient the discussion, Pomponazzi returned to the crucial issue of the relation between the intellect and corporeal organs in cognition:

By the interior senses we know the universal in a certain way. For although we cannot attain the pure universal through the interior senses, we still arrive at a certain indeterminate knowledge that is, as it were, the mean between the singular and the universal, and which is called the knowledge of the indifferent singular. For we think of the elephant, although not of this one or that one, but it still is not a universal cognition. After these cognitions, we ascend through the intellect to the nature of the elephant in a universal sense, which is neither a definite individual nor a particular cognition, since the first is the function of the external senses while the second is the function of the internal senses. But although this occurs in this way, nevertheless it is not free from some support (*admiriculo*) of sense because it cannot be accomplished without a phantasm, as we experience in ourselves.<sup>16</sup>

So in stressing that Pomponazzi connected sense cognition and intellectual cognition in such a way that the intellect cannot exist without sense, I want to show that the terms of the debate as Suárez had to address them were to be found in an account of cognition rather than in the metaphysics of form. And it is an account of cognition in which the demarcation between sense (both external and internal) and intellect becomes clear. In addition to the apparent philosophical incompleteness of Aquinas' argument, then, the debate over immortality as framed by Pomponazzi contributed to Suárez's strategy in discussing texts from Aristotle even after having given what he claims is a demonstrative argument for immortality based on subsistent form.

<sup>15</sup> For discussion of Pomponazzi and Contarini, see Pine, *Pomponazzi*, 144–53.

<sup>16</sup> Pomponazzi, *Apologia* I, 1, cited and translated by Pine, *Pomponazzi*, 193 (translation slightly modified by me). The *Apologia* dates from 1518.



### III: Suárez and some texts from Aristotle

'The mind of Aristotle is exceedingly obscure on this point.' Suárez was talking about Aristotle's view concerning immortality. Despite the obscurity of Aristotle's texts, he had a definite view of how to read them. Aristotle, Suárez believed, accepted the immortality of the soul but for some reason never said so explicitly (perhaps because he did not have a demonstrative argument or perhaps because he had nothing to say about the status of the separated soul).<sup>17</sup> Suárez tried to convince us that there are passages that reveal the real mind of Aristotle. But rather than run through Suárez's reading of a number of Aristotelian texts, I simply want to show how he approached the problem of interpreting Aristotle. For from that starting point we shall soon be in a position to see his absolutely critical and rather startling move.

There are three passages from the first book of the *De anima* around which Suárez framed his discussion.<sup>18</sup> The first of these is set forth as a conditional: if understanding is phantasy, that is, a kind of imagination or it is not without imagination, then understanding cannot exist without the body. The other two texts he considered were propositions that Aristotle set forth as 'foundations and first principles' for investigating the question of immortality. These are (1) if the human soul has some proper way of being affected or some proper operation, it can be separated from the body and (2) if there is no proper way of its being affected, or there is no proper operation, it is not separable. These two go together since they follow from another claim in Book I: operation is proportioned to potency and potency is proportioned to form—so that operation follows form as a second act to the first act. Setting aside discussion of the conditional, Suárez drew the following conclusion from the two first principles found in Book I: if an operation has no dependence on the body as from a subject, then the form from which it flows will have no dependence on the body as from a subject. This rather opaque conclusion simply means that the intellect's operation (and hence the form to which it is proportioned) must not exist in a corporeal organ. But if *every* operation has a dependence on the body, the form will have a dependence as well. Thus it takes *only one operation with no dependence on the body* to show the independence of the form no matter how many other of its operations might be so dependent.<sup>19</sup>

Let us slow down, though, and see how he derived that conclusion from the two first principles. In his discussion of these two first principles Suárez began from the

<sup>17</sup> 'Est enim in hac parte obscura valde Aristotelis mens' (CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 36, 1: 210–12).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. no. 38, 1: 214. Cf. 'A further problem presented by the affections of soul is this: are they all affections of the complex of body and soul, or is there any one among them peculiar to the soul by itself? To determine this is indispensable but difficult. If we consider the majority of them, there seems to be no case in which the soul can act or be acted upon without involving the body; e.g. anger, courage, appetite, and sensation generally. Thinking seems the most probable exception; but if this too proves to be a form of imagination or to be impossible without imagination, it too requires a body as a condition of its existence. If there is any way of acting or being acted upon proper to soul, soul will be capable of separate existence; if there is none, its separate existence is impossible' (ARI, 403a2–12, 1: 642).

<sup>19</sup> CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no.40, 1: 216.

following basic premise: all vital operations, that is, all the operations that living beings perform, for example, breathing, eating, sensing, and, in humans, understanding, have their origin exclusively in the soul. This follows from the very definition of the soul as the first principle of life. Now some operations of the soul, for example, growth, nutrition, and sensing originate in the soul but are perfected in the body. The technical term that Suárez invoked here is that they are all 'subjected' (*subiectantur*), that is, they exist in the body as in a subject. These operations are the so-called 'common' operations of the soul. By contrast a *proper* operation of the soul is one that originates in the soul, as all vital operations must, but also is received in the soul (and so exists in the soul) without any corporeal instrument. The contrast is straightforward. Consider vision—the power of vision originates in the soul but can occur only by means of a corporeal instrument, the organ of sight. Take away the organ of sight, say through injury, and vision cannot perform its operation. So what Suárez must find to prove the soul's immortality is a proper operation—one that needs no corporeal instrument for its functioning since only such an operation would not exist in the body as in a subject.<sup>20</sup>

Prior to Pomponazzi it was assumed that if one could show that there existed such a proper operation of the soul—understanding was the primary candidate—that would suffice to show that the soul did not depend on the body in such a way as to jeopardize its immortal status. As Suárez put it: 'thus, if an operation has no dependence on the body as on a subject, the form [the soul] will not have one.'<sup>21</sup> But as we have seen, Pomponazzi changed the terms of the debate with his claim that the problem of dependence was not just a matter of where the operation is terminated. Instead he pressed the objection that the 'objective' dependence of the soul on the body was sufficient to block the conclusion of immortality. That meant that Suárez could not rest with the mere assertion that there is an operation of the intellect that does not exist in a bodily organ subjectively. After all, Pomponazzi himself was as convinced of that position in regard to intellectual operations just as much as anyone who holds to immortality. As we saw in Pomponazzi's response to Contarini the issue comes down

<sup>20</sup> Much of the way that Suárez set up the problem came from Aquinas's *Sentencia libri De anima*, Book I, lectio 2: 'Quamvis autem hoc Aristoteles scilicet aperte manifestet in tertio huius, nihilominus tamen quantum ad hoc aliquid exponemus. Nam intelligere quodammodo est proprium animae, quodammodo est coniuncti. Sciendum est igitur, quod aliqua operatio animae aut passio est, quae indiget corpore sicut instrumento et sicut obiecto. Sicut videre indiget corpore, sicut obiecto, quia color, qui est obiectum visus, est in corpore. Item sicut instrumento; quia visio, etsi sit ab anima, non est tamen nisi per organum visus, scilicet pupillam, quae est ut instrumentum; et sic videre non est animae tantum, sed est organi. Aliqua autem operatio est, quae indiget corpore, non tamen sicut instrumento, sed sicut obiecto tantum. Intelligere enim non est per organum corporale, sed indiget obiecto corporali. Sicut enim philosophus dicit in tertio huius, hoc modo phantasmata se habent ad intellectum, sicut colores ad visum. Colores autem se habent ad visum, sicut obiecta: phantasmata ergo se habent ad intellectum sicut obiecta. Cum autem phantasmata non sint sine corpore, videtur quod intelligere non est sine corpore: ita tamen quod sit sicut obiectum et non sicut instrumentum.' I cite texts from the Leonine edition of Aquinas's *Sentencia libri De anima* (Rome: Leonine Commission, 1984), 45: 1.

<sup>21</sup> 'Et ideo si operatio nullam dependentiam habet a corpore, ut a subiecto, nec forma illam habebit' (CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 40, 1: 216).

to the 'objective' relation between imagination and intellect. If the intellect is dependent on the imagination as an object, then it cannot be immortal.

What Suárez thus needed in order to overcome Pomponazzi's argument was a passage where Aristotle stated that the human soul does have some operation objectively independent of the body as well as subjectively independent. Now there is one very famous passage that suggests Suárez is out of luck and that is the third passage from *De anima* I, the conditional previously mentioned: if understanding is phantasy, that is, a kind of imagination, or it is not without imagination, then understanding cannot exist without the body.<sup>22</sup> In addition there is a very famous claim in book III of *De anima*,<sup>23</sup> which Suárez summarized bluntly as, 'we neither understand nor can understand without imagination.'<sup>24</sup> Now from the conditional and the claim in Book III, Suárez set out the argument he must refute:

1. If to understand is imagination, or not without imagination, the soul is not separable.
2. To understand is not without imagination.

Therefore,

3. The soul is not separable.

One way to deal with this argument is to do exactly what Aquinas did. Without naming Thomas, Suárez pointed out that distinguishing between understanding in this life and understanding simply speaking is a possible strategy. That is, while in this life we cannot understand without imagination, it can be claimed that in the next life we can. Suárez, however, rejected this move, stating that 'this solution is displeasing.' He gave two reasons, both of which seem consistent with Pasnau's objection that such a move is 'lamely ad hoc.' Indeed Suárez seems even harsher: 'what is advanced,' he said, 'is rendered useless in every way.'<sup>25</sup> In other words it assumes what needs to be proven by assuming two different 'states' of the soul, one when it is in a body and another in which it is apart from the body. As a solution it begs the question because it asserts that the soul can understand without a phantasm when it is separate from the body, but what needs to be proven is that the soul can exist apart from the body in the first place.

Suárez then proceeded to make a three-fold distinction about the way that an operation of a power can depend on another material power. An operation can be elicited from a power the way that an act of imagining, for example, is elicited from the imagination. In another way, though, an operation might depend on a power insofar as the latter provides an object for the operation. The examples he mentioned involve the way that a sensitive appetite depends on imagination and the way that the imagination

<sup>22</sup> ARI, 403a8-9, 1: 642.

<sup>23</sup> ARI, 427b27-428a5, 1: 680.

<sup>24</sup> 'intellegere nostrum neque est nec esse potest sine phantasia' (CDA, disp. 2, a. 3, no. 42, 1: 220).

<sup>25</sup> 'Quia reddit processum omnino inutilem' (ibid. no. 45, 1: 226).

depends on external sensation. And in a third way the operation can depend on the power as something concomitant. This last sense of dependence, Suárez tells us, is the most improper kind of dependence, so it is unlikely that this is what Aristotle meant in the conditional under consideration. So only the two proper senses of dependence can be involved in Aristotle's claim, and Aristotle was asserting that if understanding is imagination, that is, if it is an operation elicited from imagination, or an operation not without imagination—if it is of the same order with the operation of imagination, in other words—then intellect is not without a body. These are, of course, just Pomponazzi's 'subjective' and 'objective' dependencies in slightly different language. In short assuming the first two senses of dependence, the operation of the intellect will always need a body and thus there will be no proper operation of the intellect since any operation it performs is common to both the soul and the body. This, and only this, is the proper way to interpret what Aristotle meant in the first premise of the argument.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the second premise, there is no way to get around it since it is a given in Aristotelian discussions of cognition. There is no understanding without imagination. Yet everything is going to turn on a construal of the way in which the proper operation of the intellect depends on imagination. Suárez has now set up the problematic in such a way that dependence will jeopardize immortality only if the soul has no proper operation at all, that is, if all its operations require the body in the way that an act of imagination requires imagination or as imagination requires sensory experience.

The recurring theme in Pomponazzi's *De immortalitate*, reiterated forcefully in his response to Contarini, is precisely the dependence of the intellect on imagination, which is the same sort of dependence that imagination has in relation to sensory experience, that is, objective dependence:

But although the human intellect, as has been considered, does not use quantity in knowing, nevertheless, since it is joined (*coniunctus est*) to sense, it cannot be released entirely from matter and quantity, since it never knows without a phantasm, as Aristotle says in *De anima* III: 'The soul does not know at all without a phantasm.' Hence, it thus needs the body as object. Nor can it know a universal unqualifiedly but always sees the universal in the singular, as everyone can observe within himself. For in all cognition, however far abstracted, it forms some bodily image (*idolum*).<sup>27</sup>

Accordingly what Suárez had to do was develop an account of at least one operation of the soul that does not require the body as either a subject (sense one above) or an object (sense two above). And the way he attempted that was by emphasizing that the only

<sup>26</sup> CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 45, 1: 228.

<sup>27</sup> 'At quamvis intellectus humanus, ut habitum est, intelligendo non fungatur quantitate, attamen, quoniam sensui coniunctus est, ex toto a materia et quantitate absolvi non potest, cum numquam cognoscat sine phantasmate, dicente Aristotele tertio *De anima*: Nequaquam sine phantasmate intelligit anima. Unde sic indigens corpore ut obiecto neque simpliciter universale cognoscere potest, sed semper universali in singulari speculatur, ut unusquisque in se ipso experiri potest. In omni namque quantum cumque abstracta cognitione idolum aliquod corporale sibi format' (Pomponazzi, *Tractatus de immortalitate animae*, Ch. 9). The translation is by William H. Hay in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, eds. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, and John Herman Randall Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 319.

way the intellect is dependent on imagination is in the improper third sense of the term—dependence as concomitance. Suárez's actual statement of this view was almost breathtaking in its casualness. He explained that Aristotle was talking about dependence in the subjective and objective sense in premise one but obviously spoke of dependence in another way in premise two. The crucial text of *De anima* III<sup>28</sup> that seemed to suggest that understanding depended on imagination thus had to be read in the third sense of dependence. Suárez concluded: 'and thus this text is solved.'<sup>29</sup> Now he does not continue discussing this issue in the question on immortality. Rather he indicated that he would treat it when he discussed the way in which the intellect depends on imagination, a topic he didn't return to until Disputation Nine. Since Suárez has now opened himself to the charge that his solution is lamely ad hoc, I want to explain just how he characterized the dependence at issue between the imagination and intellect.

#### IV: Suárez and the proper operation of the intellect

In the Ninth Disputation, Suárez provided an account of the proper operation of the intellect that he thought could underwrite the independence of the soul from the body and, by extension, preserve immortality. He did so by radically reconfiguring the relation between imagination and its product, the phantasm, and the work of the intellect. The standard story of the relation between phantasm and intellect was a causal one. The details might vary between accounts, but that there was some causal relationship seems to have been mandated by Aristotle's assertion that there is no understanding without imagination. Yet Pomponazzi made clear that an attachment to a causal account would make immortality problematic. The very term he used, *adminiculum*—a support, or instrument—suggests an instrumental function of imagination for intellect, and we saw that Suárez accepted the fact that using the body as an instrument would render an operation common rather than proper.<sup>30</sup> So, what Suárez did—indeed, what he had no choice but to do, given the way he had set up the problem—was to reject any causal connection, even an instrumental one, between the operation of imagination and the operation of the intellect.

Elsewhere I have argued that Suárez was committed to a view which I have called 'cognitive process dualism,' the view that 'no material cognitive process (that is, sensation) can really effect a spiritual cognitive result and no spiritual cognitive process can effect a change in a material cognitive power.'<sup>31</sup> Such a modularity of cognitive processes renders problematic Aristotle's claim, which Suárez clearly accepted, that there could be no

<sup>28</sup> ARI, 427b27–428a5, 1: 680.

<sup>29</sup> 'Et ita solvitur iste locus' (CDA, disp. 2, q. 3, no. 45, 1: 228).

<sup>30</sup> Pine translates *adminiculum* as 'cooperation with,' but that doesn't strike me as quite right given Thomas' discussion in the passage from *Sentencia libri De anima*, Book I, lectio 2 and his use of 'instrumentum.'

<sup>31</sup> See my 'Singular and Universal in Suárez's Account of Cognition,' *Review of Metaphysics* 55 (2002): 796ff.

understanding without imagination. After all, how might we account for the necessity of the phantasm unless it played some causal role? Under pressure to find a proper operation for the intellect, Suárez risked disassociating sensory and intellectual experience. Here is the crucial passage from Disputation Nine in which Suárez described the most improper form of dependence holding between imagination and intellect:

For it must be noted that human imagination (*phantasia*) and intellect are rooted in the same soul and thus it is that they have an order (*ordo*) and harmony (*consensio*) in their operations. Hence, . . . from the fact that the intellect operates, the imagination also operates. Therefore, in this way, I judge that of itself the potential intellect lacks species, but the soul has a spiritual power to produce in the potential intellect species of those things that sense knows. [This happens] not by the sensible imagination concurring efficiently with that action, but by being related as matter, or by exciting the soul, or at any rate (*sane*)<sup>32</sup> by being an exemplar. And thus it happens that as soon as the soul knows (*cognoscit*) something from imagination, through its spiritual power it depicts (*depingere*), as it were, that thing in the potential intellect.<sup>33</sup>

The central point of this passage is clear enough: the soul itself is the *only* causal agency in the production of the intelligible species through which the intellect performs its proper operation. That is, the intellect has no dependence in either of its two proper meanings on imagination. Of course this raises a host of additional problems, none of which can be addressed here. Suffice it to say that Suárez's account provided more than an ad hoc explanation for how the intellect could operate apart from the body in the afterlife since it operates apart from the body *now*. It is not the case that the intellect after death will be in a different state than that in which it finds itself now. It will still be a power of the soul whose operation is causally dependent on the soul alone and not the body. If the soul becomes aware of the world in some different way, that would not change the fact that the intellect is not dependent on the imagination except in a most improper way.

While I do not want to discuss issues surrounding the way that the separated soul exists and knows,<sup>34</sup> I do want to provide two additional passages from the discussion of the separated soul that bear on the issue of a correct understanding of this improper sense of dependence. Here is the first:

For species and habits of the intellect and will are spiritual since they are in a spiritual subject and do not depend on the body in any way. This is because the body is neither a material nor efficient

<sup>32</sup> The Oxford Latin Dictionary reports that 'sane' can mean 'soundly' or have a concessive force. I have opted for the latter here.

<sup>33</sup> 'Est enim advertendum phantasiam et intellectum hominis radicari in una anima; et hinc est quod in suis operibus habent ordinem et consonantiam; unde patebit . . . quod eo ipso quod intellectus operatur, etiam imaginatio operatur. Ad hunc ergo modum arbitror intellectum possibilem de se esse nudum speciebus, habere tamen animam virtutem spiritualem ad efficiendas species earum rerum, quas sensus cognoscit, in intellectu possibili, ipsa imaginatione sensibili non concurrente effective ad eam actionem, sed habente se quasi materia, aut per modum excitantis animam, aut sane per modum exemplaris. Et ita fit quod statim ac anima per phantasiam cognoscit aliquid, per virtutem suam spiritualem quasi depingit rem illam in intellectu possibili' (CDA, disp. 9, q. 2, no. 12, 3: 96).

<sup>34</sup> I have started work on that project in an unpublished paper, 'Some Themes in Suárez's Account of the Separated Soul.'

cause of them since it is of an inferior order. Nor can any other meaning of dependency be imagined.<sup>35</sup>

Notice that this passage is careful to mention the two *proper* types of dependency. It would be hard to find a passage that more clearly makes the point that the intellect does not depend on the body as either a subject or an object. Yet less than a page later we find the following:

For [the intellect] does not depend on it [the body] as on an organ, but depends on it as something providing species in this life and because of a certain concomitance of operations. Nevertheless, this is not essential to the intellect, but falls to it when it is in the body on account of the actual collection (*colligationem*) of these powers. Nevertheless, if the sensitive powers are removed, this dependency does not remain.<sup>36</sup>

I bring these two passages up to show why it is so hard to recognize the point Suárez was making about dependence. He simply did not have a distinct term to describe the improper dependency that characterizes the relation between the proper operation of the intellect and the body. Thus, he slipped rather too easily back to a term more obviously relevant to a proper dependency. Given the precise and proper senses of the term 'depend,' though, it was simply wrong to say that the intellect depends on the body:

The angelic intellect has from its nature innate species of all realities that, as it were, flow from the proper power of the intellect as (*quasi*) passions flow from an essence. However, the sensitive power, especially (*maxime*) the external senses, lack species and receive them from outside objects. Now *our intellect also* by its nature lacks species—in which it also falls short of the perfection of an angelic intellect—nevertheless it has a certain agreement with it, namely, that as soon as our soul knows some reality through the imagination, a species representing that reality flows (*dimanare*) from the intellect itself. So, this agency is more in the manner of a certain emanation of the species from the intellect, and thus this agency is not a distinct power.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> 'Species enim et habitus intellectus et voluntatis sunt spirituales, cum sint in subiecto spirituali nec pendunt a corpore ullo modo, quia corpus non est causa illarum materialis nec efficiens, cum sit inferioris ordinis, nec potest fingi alius modus dependentiae' (CDA, disp. 14, q. 3, no. 3, 3: 466).

<sup>36</sup> 'Nam non pendet ab illo ut ab organo, sed ut a ministrante species in hac vita et propter quamdam concomitantiam operationum; hoc tamen non est essentiale intellectui, sed accidit illi dum est in corpore propter actualem colligationem istarum potentialium, tamen, ablatis potentiis sensitivis, non manet haec dependentia' (CDA, disp. 14, q. 3, no. 5, 3: 468). Especially worrisome in this passage is Suárez's claim that the dependence is only needed in this life since it looks as if Suárez might have been relying on the same distinction that Aquinas relied on to provide an argument for non-dependence. But it is important to stress that what was 'lamely ad hoc' about Aquinas's introduction of this distinction was that it begged the question, which was also Suárez's point in calling it useless.

<sup>37</sup> 'Angelicus enim intellectus ex natura sua habet inditas species omnium rerum, quae quasi dimanant a virtute propria intellectus, quasi passiones ab essentia; potentia autem sensitiva, maxime exteriores et speciebus carent et illas ab extrinsecis obiectis recipiunt; intellectus autem noster et ex natura sua speciebus caret—in quo et a perfectione angeli declinat—habet tamen convenientiam aliquam cum illo, scilicet quod statim ac anima nostra cognoscit per phantasiam rem aliquam, dimanat ab ipso intellectu species repraesentans rem illam. Unde haec efficientia potius est per modum cuiusdam emanationis speciei ab intellectu, et ita non est potentia distincta illa efficientia (CDA, disp. 9, q. 8, no. 18, 3: 234–6, my emphasis). Leen Spruitt in his *Species Intelligibiles: From perception to knowledge* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1994), 2: 304, rejects any

Two points need to be made about this. First, the context of the passage involves the denial of the distinction between the agent intellect and the potential intellect. Suárez admitted that this was an unusual but not unprecedented stance to take. Nevertheless he found it attractive for the simple reason that otherwise he would have been at a loss to explain the purpose of the agent intellect apart from its work in conjunction with imagination. At the same time—and this is the second point—the passage clearly suggests a kind of innatism in relation to intelligible species. After all, Suárez's commitment to 'cognitive process dualism' made the production of intelligible species concomitant with the operation of imagination, but causally unconnected with it. In other words, it was merely the occasion for the production of the species.

Let me sum up. Suárez has argued himself into an account of the intellect in which the intellect must do it all, as it were, because the traditional distinction between agent and potential intellects has been eradicated. In addition the intellect is not causally connected to the other vital operations of the soul, the common operations. Although, thanks to an inner harmony or consonance among its powers, the intellect thinks whenever the imagination imagines. The upshot, though, is that by making these radical claims Suárez did preserve a proper operation for the intellect—an operation that depended on the body neither subjectively nor objectively, but still depended on the body's role of imagination.

The thoroughgoing insistence by Pomponazzi on the inextricability of matter and form, even where that form is a human intellect, had pushed Suárez into a kind of incipient dualism. Of course he was only halfway there since he remained committed to a hylomorphic analysis of substances, including human beings<sup>38</sup> and also because he did not have Descartes' conception of matter. Nonetheless in consolidating all intellectual functions within a 'mind' causally unaffected by the body he was clearly pushing the boundaries of Aristotelian thought. Hence it does not appear too surprising when Suárez writes: 'However, in human beings, even though a human being is what especially subsists, nonetheless this subsistence is due especially to the soul, which is united to a body not as if it were receiving support from the body, but rather as using it as a conjoined instrument.'<sup>39</sup>

innatism in Suárez, yet he does so only by reading the just cited passage as exclusively about angelic cognition. Josef Ludwig, however, in his earlier *Das akaisale Zusammenwirken (sympathia) der Seelenvermögen in der Erkenntnislehre des F. Suárez* (Munich, 1929), 56–7, notes that this passage refers to the human intellect. For more discussion on the question of innatism in Suárez's account of cognition, see my 'Suárez on Imagination,' *Vivarium* 39 (2001): 152–6.

<sup>38</sup> Just how hylomorphic Suárez's account ultimately was remains unclear. So, for example, he argued that the soul even when united to a body it informs is a 'semi-person.' At the same time he held that the soul was the form of the body and that in the very essence of the notion of form we find that it is apt to inform matter (CDA, disp. 1, q. 3, 1: 90). This view is stronger than Aquinas's assertion that the aptitude to inform is not part of the essence of form (see SCG, 2.81). An especially puzzling passage occurs in his account of the subsistence of the soul: 'However, in human beings, even though a human being is what especially (*praecipue*) subsists, nonetheless this subsistence is due especially to the soul, which is united to a body not as if it were receiving support from the body, but rather as using it as a conjoined instrument (*sed potius ut utatur illo ut instrumento coniuncto*).'

<sup>39</sup> 'At in homine, licet quod praecipue subsistit sit homo, tamen haec substantia praecipue est ratione animae, quae unitur corpori, non ut sustentetur ab illo, sed potius ut utatur illo ut instrumento coniuncto' (CDA, disp. 14, q. 1, no. 2, 3: 446).



In conclusion it may worth noting certain similarities between Suárez and Descartes, without indicating any influence. The passages in Descartes that resonate most strongly with Suárez's account as I have presented it might be these:

We make such a judgment not because these things transmit the ideas to our mind through the sense organs, but because they transmit something which, at exactly that moment, gives the mind occasion to form these ideas by means of the faculty innate to it. Nothing reaches our mind from external objects through the sense organs except certain corporeal motions, as our author himself asserts in article nineteen, in accordance with my own principles. But neither the motions themselves nor the figures arising from them are conceived by us exactly as they occur in the sense organs, as I have explained at length in my *Optics*.<sup>40</sup>

The ideas of pain, colours, sounds and the like must be all the more innate if, on the occasion of certain corporeal motions, our mind is to be capable of representing them to itself, for there is no similarity between these ideas and the corporeal motions.<sup>41</sup>

One aspect of these passages that strikes me as especially significant is the identification of pain, colours, and sounds as innate. While Suárez was careful to demarcate the sensitive operations of the soul from the intellectual, it is nonetheless true that he thought that our intellectual awareness of such states must be innate, at least if we are to generalize the claims about intelligible species in the passage above to cover all intelligible species. For Suárez intelligible species can represent both singulars and universals. But since an intelligible species is not caused by anything bodily, and is produced from the intellect only on the occasion of some sensory operation, it would seem that even sensations of singular sounds must be innate.

As interesting as it would be to compare these passages more fully, the point of this chapter is not to show that Suárez is a proto-Cartesian, but rather to show that the radical moves Suárez made within the tradition were quite well motivated. Thus historians of philosophy ignore the context of a thinker like Suárez with some peril when we read him simply as someone who did not understand Aquinas properly.<sup>42</sup> In addition, that context is one that is decisively shaped by the philosophical movements of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and that fact, in turn, suggests that if we really want a proper appreciation of the transition to modern philosophy, we are likely to find it only through additional explorations of sixteenth-century thinkers.

<sup>40</sup> 'Judicemus... non quia istae res illas ipsas nostrae menti per organa sensuum immiserunt, sed quia tamen aliquid immiserunt, sed quia tamen aliquid immiserunt, quod ei dedit occasionem ad ipsas, per innatam sibi facultatem, hoc tempore potius quam alio, efformandas. Quippe nihil ab objectis externis ad mentem nostrum per organa sensuum accedit, praeter motus quosdam corporeos, ut ipsemet *author noster*, in art. 19, ex meis principiis affirmat; sed ne quidem ipsi motus, nec figurae ex iis ortae, a nobis concipiuntur, quales in organis sensuum fiunt, ut fuse in *Dioptrica* explicui' (René Descartes, *Comments on a Certain Broadsheet*, AT 8b: 358–9, CSMK 1: 304).

<sup>41</sup> 'Ac tanto magis innatae esse debent ideae doloris, colorum, sonorum, et similibum, ut mens nostra possit, occasione quorundam motuum corporeorum, sibi eas exhibere; nullam enim similitudinem cum motibus corporeis habent' (*ibid.*).

<sup>42</sup> For a recent example of this mistake, see the discussion of Suárez in P. J. Fitzpatrick and John Haldane, 'Medieval Philosophy in Later Thought', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A. S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 300–8.