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# How St. Thomas Goes Beyond Aristotle in His Treatment of the Soul

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HOW ST. THOMAS GOES BEYOND ARISTOTLE IN HIS

TREATMENT OF THE SOUL

by

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A thesis submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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## I. INTRODUCTION: ST. THOMAS AND ARISTOTLE

There is no expression occurring with greater frequency in the works of St. Thomas than dicit Philosophus. Yet his use of the authority of Aristotle must have given him many uneasy moments. In following it he was going counter to the philosophical tradition founded on St. Augustine and espousing a philosopher whose adaptability to the Christian faith was a matter of considerable doubt. But the Augustinian philosophy, as St. Thomas well realized, embodied fundamental difficulties which many centuries had failed to solve. Though consistent in the main with Christian theology it was at odds with itself. An altogether new approach to these underlying problems was necessary, an approach which St. Thomas perceived in the recently recovered works of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> But the difficulties before St. Thomas were not the same as those which had confronted Aristotle, or at any rate they had assumed entirely new proportions. Christian Revelation and the natural course of time had thrown into sharp relief certain questions which Aristotle had glimpsed in bare outline or not at all. It was the task of St. Thomas not only to resurrect Aristotle--others could do that--but to acclimatize him to an atmosphere which was very different from that of ancient Greece and the shaded groves of Athens. Otherwise Aristotle might have lived, but his existence would have been an unhappy, and, as far as Christian philosophy was concerned, a fruitless or even dangerous one.

Before the twelfth century medieval philosophers, with the possible exception of Scotus Erigena, had produced no unified body of thought which

might be called a system. The great philosophies of antiquity were lost to them,<sup>2</sup> and the elements of Platonism and Aristotelianism which they possessed were so incomplete and mutually contradictory that no attempt to synthesize them produced a complete and coherent system of thought. The only element which remained more or less static during the greater part of the Middle Ages was the philosophy which St. Augustine had built upon Plato, and which became in time the only philosophy acceptable to the majority of orthodox Christians. In the time of St. Thomas the Franciscans, among whom St. Bonaventure was outstanding, were spokesmen for the Augustinian school, and they held with great tenacity to the conventional doctrines of the necessity of illumination in knowledge, the essential identity of the soul and its faculties, and the presence in man of more than one substantial form. In this way they believed that they had safeguarded beyond reproach the spirituality and immortality of the human soul.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian world suffered a shock when, in the twelfth century, the works of Aristotle were introduced into western Europe from Spain through the agency of the Moors and Arabians. The system of the Greek philosopher contained many doctrines that were contrary to faith, or at least that could easily be interpreted that way. The commentaries on the text, moreover, which in itself was not very close to the original, were tainted by Neoplatonism, determinism, and other excesses of a similar nature. It is little wonder that the conservatives in the universities of the west became even more steadfast in their defense of Augustinianism. Some of the more radical, however, accepted Aristotle just as he was offered by the Arabians, and were not unnaturally led to profess the eternity of the world,

the impossibility of free will, and the shadowy immortality of the soul allowed by Averroes, the commentator supreme.

But there were a few who saw a third avenue of approach to this new problem. Many parts of the Aristotelian system, notably the physics, were so unquestionably better than anything which had previously been known that it seemed only a matter of time before they would win widespread acceptance. But if this happened in opposition to the philosophers of Christianity, it was not improbable that the less desirable elements would be taken along with the rest, so that the triumph of the Arabian Aristotle would be seriously detrimental to the interests of the faith. There was, however, a rather obvious fact which offered a bright ray of hope. The commentary of Averroes on Aristotle differed considerably from that of Avicenna, for example, and both of these were clearly distinct from the original of Aristotle. Thus it would seem altogether feasible that another interpretation was possible, and the most logical course was to reconcile Aristotle with Christianity, and make him, not an enemy, but an ally. This St. Thomas, with the aid of translations directly from the Greek, set out to accomplish.

But it would be a mistake to think that St. Thomas, exclusively as a theologian, adapted the philosophy of Aristotle to his own preconceived religious beliefs. For, strictly speaking, there was no definite philosophy of Aristotle, on many important points at least, which he could employ. This is attested by the fact that there were almost as many versions of Aristotle in existence as there were commentators. Even if there was general agreement among those who were not Augustinians that Aristotle

spoke the truth, there was the question of what Aristotle actually said. St. Thomas had first to produce a consistent philosophical synthesis out of the Aristotelianism which was at hand before he could place the wisdom of the Greek at the service of theology. Moreover, if the purpose of St. Thomas had been exclusively theological, it is difficult to see why he chose a course that was so definitely opposed to the ecclesiastical tradition of his day. Certain portions of Aristotle, if not entirely ignored, could have been interpreted more in conformity with the opinions of his contemporaries. But above all, the fact that St. Thomas shows such a thorough understanding of the principles of Aristotle and of the Aristotelian spirit makes it most unlikely that his view-point was at all times that of a theologian. That philosophy is intended to serve theology he did not doubt; but that philosophy has a definite place in the science of thought he was equally certain.<sup>4</sup> The basic principles of thomism are those of Aristotle, of a man who had never heard of the Christian Revelation, and the synthesis of St. Thomas has purified Aristotelianism and rendered it complete by deducing from its proper principles all that is logically implied in them. That St. Thomas has followed without mishap the narrow course between the extremes of Augustinianism and Averroism is probably the most outstanding manifestation of his genius.<sup>5</sup>

It is the thorough sympathy of St. Thomas with Aristotle that makes him disagree with some of the teachings of St. Augustine just as Aristotle had departed from certain doctrines of Plato. Although St. Thomas appreciated to a much greater extent than Aristotle Plato's attempt to create a world of ideas in which truth and goodness are absolute, still the



confidence in the ordinary experience of men which he had in common with Aristotle made him oppose any separation of the real and ideal worlds that would make one exist as a mere shadow, without any of the substance, of the other. But St. Thomas was assured that an abode similar to the ideal world of Plato is the destiny of man; this was in accordance with both his faith and his philosophy. Aristotle, of course, did not have the faith, but he had a philosophy which would seem to demand such an assurance as one of its important tenets. The fact, however, that his system has shown itself capable of so many diverse interpretations demonstrates the absence of a clear and decisive view-point on such questions as the immortality of the soul and the end of man. It was the task of St. Thomas, for the sake of his faith and his philosophy, to interpret and complete the work which Aristotle had begun so well in order that there might be no doubt about the most vital problem in the life of man and in his philosophy.<sup>6</sup>

## II. ARISTOTLE ON THE SOUL

The theories of Aristotle were especially appealing to the mind of St. Thomas because they fitted in with the nature of reality as it is, not as it might be. This is clearest perhaps in regard to the human soul. Since man inhabits a natural and material world, it is fitting that he possess a being that is in some way common to everything in his sphere of existence. But every material being is a composite, in the Aristotelian explanation of reality, of matter and form, of which the former is identical with potentiality, the latter with actuality. In living beings there is a principle which distinguishes them from the inorganic world, and the

general term for this higher kind of form is "soul." Thus the distinction between a living and a non-living being has its foundation in the form alone, for it is the form which actuates the potencies of the indeterminate matter.

Man is numbered among the living composite beings, and, to preserve uniformity in the treatment of all members of this class, his soul should also be defined as the form of his body, "the first actuality of a natural body having in it the capacity of life."<sup>7</sup> Thus Aristotle reconciles the presence of the soul in a body which Plato declared rather a prison from which it were better that the soul be delivered and depart unfettered to a life of contemplation in the world of ideas. In the philosophy of Plato the soul is a purely spiritual being that acts as a motor of the body, and, since its presence in the body is altogether accidental to its real nature, the soul may be defined as the man.<sup>8</sup> According to Aristotle, however, man has a natural right to exist in a material universe, and his definition of the soul as the form of the body establishes that right. Like all other forms the human soul is the actuality of a particular body, and its presence in that body is not only favorable to it, but demanded by its very nature.

There is one attribute of the human soul, however, which distinguishes it from lower forms in the scale of life, a function which is not contained in the potency of matter, and which is, therefore, not an actuality of matter. Aristotle is fully convinced of this, and is most severe with those who make no distinction between the soul of man and of lower beings.

He criticizes the teaching of Empedocles,<sup>9</sup> for example, that the elements of all material things must be in the soul in order that the soul may have knowledge of them, affirming, on the contrary, the doctrine of Anaxagoras<sup>10</sup> that the soul must be unmixed with anything else, for if it were itself a body the intrusion of its own form would hinder the reception of the forms of external bodies. While soul in general is the form of a body and has no actuality apart from its function of actuating a bodily organ, still in the case of the human intellect and speculative faculty it would seem that "it alone is capable of separation from the body, as that which is eternal from that which is perishable."<sup>11</sup> This intellect, which is "developed in us as a self-existing substance,"<sup>12</sup> comes to us from without,<sup>13</sup> and it is through it that man is able to participate in divinity.<sup>14</sup>

Aristotle does not hesitate to emphasize his belief that the intellect is a substance which was not made to perish,<sup>15</sup> for it is the only element in man that can exist apart from the body. As a matter of fact, it is only when "separated that it is its true self, and this, its essential nature, alone is immortal and eternal."<sup>16</sup> The intellect cannot be destroyed, for

"if anything could destroy it, it would be the feebleness of age. But, as things are, no doubt what occurs is the same as in the case of the sense-organs. If an aged man could procure an eye of the right sort, he would see just as well as a young man. In like manner, then, thought and the exercise of knowledge are enfeebled through the loss of something else within, but are in themselves impassive."<sup>17</sup>

Doubtless, then, there is in man an element which, because of its immateriality and subsistence, is immortal. What this element is, however,

Aristotle is not sure, and his indecision is clearly reflected in the notorious disagreement of his commentators throughout the subsequent history of philosophy. There are, indeed, many questions which Aristotle has left unanswered. In the first place, if the intellect comes from without, joining itself to the other potencies of the soul, is it not possible that it may at some time sever that connection? This seems to be what Aristotle holds, for even during its stay in the body, it holds aloof from the lower activities of the soul, and might be called, in the words of Zeller, the "universal as distinguished from the individual element in man."<sup>18</sup> Since the intellect is something separate from the body,

"reasoning, love and hatred are not attributes of the thinking faculty but of its individual possessor, in so far as he possesses it. Hence when this possessor perishes, there is neither memory nor love: for these never did belong to the thinking faculty, but to the composite whole which has perished, while the intellect is doubtless a thing more divine and is impassive."<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, although this acting intellect is separable and eternal, "we do not remember because this is impassive, while the intellect which can be affected is perishable and without this does not think at all."<sup>20</sup> All forms of personal activity Aristotle refers either to the lower powers of the soul, which act only in conjunction with the body, or to the possible intellect, which perishes with the dissolution of the body. We might even inquire of Aristotle how thought could be considered an activity of the separated intellect, for "as without sensation a man would not learn or understand anything, so at the very time when he is actually thinking he must have an image before him."<sup>21</sup>

Since only the acting intellect survives the destruction of the body,

many commentators have agreed that Averroes the Arabian, whose influence was great in the later Middle Ages, was justified in declaring that Aristotle postulated but one intellect for all men.<sup>22</sup> This interpretation, however, would seem to oppose Aristotle's description of the acting intellect as "a distinct species of soul."<sup>23</sup> In his treatment of soul in general as the principle of life, the acting intellect is distinguished only as one kind of soul from others, and in urging man to exercise his highest faculties Aristotle declares that the "intellectual element in him...is thought to be the man himself."<sup>24</sup> Since, on the other hand, it is a general Aristotelian principle that the ground of individual existence is matter, it is a perplexing question whether any individuality will be preserved in the intellect when it has been separated from the body. For if the distinction of personality lies in the possible intellect and lower faculties, there will be no personality after death. If, on the contrary, personality is embodied in the acting intellect, which "abides immutably within the circle of its own life, without receiving impressions from without or passing any part of its activity beyond itself," "untouched by birth and death, and by the changes of the temporal life,"<sup>25</sup> the future life holds little hope for the exercise of individual activity. This vagueness is characteristic not only of the physics and psychology of Aristotle but of his ethical system as well, for nowhere does he make any provision for the highly important question of a future life or concern himself with preparing for it.

### III. OTHER DOCTRINES ON THE SOUL

In the philosophy of St. Augustine, which held almost undisputed sway

up to the twelfth century, and whose adherents attempted in many an encounter to stem the increasing tide of Aristotelianism, there are difficulties altogether different from those encountered by Aristotle in his theorizing upon the nature of the soul. At first sight the doctrine of Plato as modified and propounded by St. Augustine would seem very promising from the standpoint of Christian thought. The soul is the permanent and immutable element in man, giving life to the body; in itself the soul is a complete substance, radically independent of the body. Not only is the soul indifferent to its connection with the body, but it regards the body more or less as a tomb, from which it hopes some day to make its escape to the world of ideas, where it will be confronted by the pure intelligible beings which it knows in this world only by a sort of vague reminiscence. The spirituality of the soul and its immortality are so unhesitatingly presented by Plato that the early Fathers of the Church, anxious as they were to defend the existence of a future life, received his assistance with open arms.<sup>26</sup>

There is one very important distinction, however, between the teaching of Plato himself and the interpretation given it by the early Christians. From Scripture had come a wonderful prophecy: the soul of man was to live forever, and joined to it in eternal life was to be the body it had upon earth. This doctrine of Revelation gave the body a new dignity, for Christ Himself had ascended into heaven after the Resurrection, the reuniting of His soul and body. The coming of Christ had brought glad tidings both to the soul, which was thus liberated from the bondage of original sin, and to the body, because by virtue of the incorruptibility of the soul it too

was to enjoy immortality. But if the body was to be united to the soul for all eternity through the wisdom of God, could it be thought of any longer as a tomb, separation from which would allow the soul to attain the fullness of its spiritual life? How could the disjunction of soul and body be deemed a benefit of the soul or of man if God was to make the union of the two eternal? It became difficult to consider the presence of the soul in the body unnatural, and even more difficult to maintain that the soul had a capacity for greater happiness without the body if God Himself out of His wisdom and Providence had promised man unending happiness in the union of body and soul. Thus Revelation had bestowed upon the entire man a dignity that must be reckoned with in philosophy. But the soul is not man; it is the soul of man. The body as an essential part of the being of man had received for all time its rightful position in the human compound.

This new teaching is reflected in St. Augustine as well as in most of the earlier Christian thinkers. But there was no little difficulty experienced in reconciling the philosophy of Plato to the precepts of faith. In St. Augustine we find such statements as: "Homo igitur, ut homini apparet, anima rationalis est mortali atque terreno utens corpore."<sup>27</sup> This attitude no doubt shows a firm intention of preserving the immortality of the soul by making it independent of a body which is corruptible; but the unity of man seems to be placed in extreme jeopardy. St. Augustine attempts to explain his position in conformity with the word of Scripture. "Quid est homo? Anima rationalis habens corpus. Anima rationalis habens corpus non facit duas personas, sed unum hominem."<sup>28</sup> But if the definition of the soul

is the same as that of man, what becomes of the unity of man which Christian philosophy must uphold? It is true that there is a decided improvement in the Christian concept of the union of soul and body over that of Plato. Man is no longer the accidental result of the workings of nature; still less is the compound of his being the product of violence in the order of the universe. St. Augustine realized that he must affirm the unity of man in a somewhat different manner from that of Plato. But he was at a loss how to proceed. Asking himself whether body and soul are like two horses drawing the same chariot, he cannot make a reply.<sup>29</sup>

The contradictions encountered in the system of Plato are insurmountable for a philosophy which accepts as fundamental the unity of man. The only other reputable solution to the problem was the theory of Aristotle, which declares that body and soul are merely a specific example of matter and form, the common factors of all physical beings. Since matter and form cannot exist apart from each other, each being an incomplete substance needing the other for existence, the unity of man's nature is affirmed satisfactorily. But if we accept this explanation we must justify another important precept, the separation of the soul from the body, and the consequent immortality of the soul. For if body and soul, as matter and form, make up one complete substance, what will happen to the components of that substance when it is destroyed?

The apparent indifference of Aristotle to the after life of man intensifies the problem for his followers. Of the many attempts in the Middle Ages to reconcile the teaching of Aristotle with religious dogma,



that of Avicenna was one of the most influential. This noted Arabian declared<sup>30</sup> that two points of view were possible with regard to the soul. In the first place, it might be considered in itself, a spiritual substance, simple, indivisible, and consequently indestructible. In its relation to the body, however, the first and most fundamental of the functions it exercised was that of form. Here is a combination of Plato and Aristotle; the former speaks on the soul in itself, the latter on its informing the body. That this solution of the problem was deemed the final word on the centuries-old question is obvious from the reception accorded it by such men as Alexander of Hales and St. Bonaventure. Even Albert the Great, the admiring student of Aristotle, is in sympathy with such a fusion of theories, stating, "Animam considerando secundum se, consentiemus Platoni; considerando autem eam secundum formam animationis quam dat corpori, consentiemus Aristoteli."<sup>31</sup>

But that this eclecticism is a futile attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable is evident. It is impossible to consider the soul as the proper form of the body and at the same time to define it in itself without reference to the body. As long as its relation to the body is not included in its essence it must remain true that the union of soul and body is merely accidental. It does not remove the difficulty to say that it is natural for the soul to inform the body, or even that the soul has an inclination toward the body, for in neither case is an explanation offered for the very essential unity of man which Christian philosophy must recognize and which it had long been seeking to justify. The problem still remains to confirm both the unity of man and the incorruptibility of his soul.

For Plato, of course, there is no question of the state of the soul after it leaves the body; but he does not and can not explain how a creature which is an intrinsic part of a natural universe should be compounded of elements so unmaturally suited to each other. In the teaching of Aristotle there are two main difficulties which call for explanation. In the first place, if the soul is the natural form of the body, and "there is no more need to enquire whether soul and body are one, any more than whether the wax and imprint are one,"<sup>32</sup> what becomes of the soul when it is no longer one with the body? This is probably the most obvious question that could be put to Aristotle. But there is a problem which is more subtle than this and more difficult of solution, one which concerns that point of the Aristotelian theory which has always been the chief attraction of Aristotelianism to philosophers defending the natural unity of man, namely, the essential unity of the soul as the form of the body.

In general it would seem clear that in man the soul is the one, indivisible source of all activity, whether vegetative, sensitive, or intellectual. For

"knowledge and health are the shape and in some sort form, the notion and virtual activity, of that which is capable of receiving in the one case knowledge, in the other health...Now the soul is that whereby primarily we live, perceive, and have understanding: therefore it will be a species of notion or form, not matter or substratum."<sup>33</sup>

Thus there is but one soul or form which is the principle of every operation of man. But are there in this soul many parts, each of which is the source of a particular activity, and which are separable from one another? Aristotle, although we shall later discover some uncertainty in his stand,

appears to think not. He condemns the doctrine of those who attribute the activities of man, not to the whole soul, but to various parts of it.

"Some say that the soul is divisible, and that one part of it thinks, another desires. What is it then which holds the soul together, if naturally divisible? Assuredly it is not the body: on the contrary, the soul seems rather to hold the body together...If, then, the unity of the soul is due to some other thing, that other thing would be, properly speaking, soul. We shall need, then, to repeat the enquiry respecting it also, whether it is one or manifold. For, if it has unity, why not attribute unity to the soul itself at the outset?"<sup>34</sup>

It is not hard to understand why St. Thomas built his system on the theories of Aristotle. But the Greek philosopher is not always so definite and unequivocal as a Christian philosopher would demand. This indecision is especially marked in the case of the intellect and its relation to the other powers of the soul. If the intellect comes from without, how does it become a form of the body at all? When it departs from the body, moreover, it has received no distinguishing mark from its early sojourn, because it is entirely impassive. One wonders what peculiar right the intellect "which makes everything" possesses that allows it to survive the dissolution of the body, while the intellect "which becomes everything" perishes,<sup>35</sup> if the necessary qualification for immortality is immateriality. The possible intellect is fully as immaterial as the acting intellect, for it can receive the intelligible species illuminated and abstracted by the acting intellect. The only reason that might explain the destructibility of the possible intellect is that it is a part of the individual, the composite, while the acting intellect is neither individual nor any part of the composite. This explanation is supported by Aristotle's statement that in

the separated intellect there is neither memory nor love nor any other of the characteristics which serve to distinguish one individual from another. This lack of concern for the destiny of the individual is emphasized by the fact that for Aristotle there is no individualization within a species apart from matter; the separated intellects would seem incapable of distinction, especially since they retain no mark of their union with the body. These are some of the shortcomings in the Aristotelian treatment of the soul which had to be reconciled and supplemented by St. Thomas.

#### IV. ST. THOMAS ON THE SUBSTANTIALITY OF THE SOUL

It was first necessary for St. Thomas, in discussing the soul, to set forth its substantiality in more explicit terms than the haphazard references of Aristotle, although the principle involved, as is usually the case in St. Thomas, is Aristotelian. The intellect has an activity which is peculiar to it, and which it does not communicate to the body, namely, the power to abstract forms from matter and think of them apart from their material conditions. But nothing can act per se unless it exists per se, for only that being has activity which is in act, and its acts in accordance with its mode of being. The soul is therefore immaterial and subsistent. Moreover, man is capable of knowing through his intellect the natures of all bodies. But if the intellect had itself the nature of some body, it would not be able to know all bodies, because that which is material is by that very fact limited in nature. For this reason the intellect cannot be a body. Nor can it use a bodily organ, for the limited nature of that organ would make it impossible for the intellect to know all bodies. Thus the soul is proved to be a subsisting being.<sup>36</sup>

Although it is subsisting, St. Thomas is careful to avoid the implications which Plato would give the term. The error of thinkers previous to St. Thomas was that they combined two complete substances and wondered why they could not obtain one substance. For St. Thomas the soul is subsisting, but not in its complete nature. To complete that nature it needs a body, and, impelled by the desire of perfecting itself, it gives substantiality to matter, so that whatever actuality there is in the composite is derived from the soul. In itself the soul is the weakest of intellectual beings, for in the presence of pure intelligibles it perceives nothing. Since the only intelligibles within its reach are those which are darkened by matter, it is necessary for the soul to unite itself to matter in order to get in touch with them. This it does by giving substantiality to matter in such a way that a composite being is formed, but in the composite there is only the substantiality given it by the soul. Thus it is necessary for the soul to be united to a body in order that it may attain the fullness of its nature, which originally is in potency to all intelligibles contained in matter but actually possesses none. Without the soul, the body could not subsist at all; without the body, the soul would remain blind. Man, therefore, is composed of a soul which, though subsisting, is an incomplete substance, and a body which subsists only by virtue of its being informed by the soul. The essential unity of man is hereby defined and confirmed with the clearness and finality for which Greek and Christian philosophers had hitherto searched in vain.<sup>37</sup>

#### V. THE INTELLECT AS FORM OF THE BODY

But how can the intellect be united to the body as form? Aristotle

called the intellect something apart, for that which is immaterial would not seem capable of informing a body. St. Thomas uses the authority of Aristotle, not only to prove his point, but to set Aristotle himself aright. Since Aristotle says that it is by means of the soul that man thinks, then by calling the intellect a thing apart, he must have meant, says St. Thomas, that the intellect is not the act of a corporeal organ. The ultimate principle of a thing's activity is its form, because the form is its actuality, and it acts only in so far as it is in act. But the form of man, which is the soul, must be the principle of the various activities performed by man, such as nutrition, sensation, locomotion, and understanding. If anyone were to deny, then, that the intellectual soul is the form of the body, he could not explain how understanding is the proper activity of this man. But that this man possesses understanding and knows that it is he himself who understands, is clear from ordinary experience.<sup>38</sup>

If the intellectual soul is the form of the body, there must be an intellect for each individual, for it is impossible that many individuals possess the same form. Moreover, whenever we speak of one principal agent and two instruments involved in an operation, we say that there is one agent and two actions. If, for example, a man touches different objects with his two hands, there will be two sensations of touch but only one person who touches. Thus if there is one intellect for two men, who are distinguished from each other in some other way, there will be only one act of understanding and only one intelligent being. Nor can a diversity of phantasms make the intellectual activity of one man distinct from that of another. The form of the possible intellect is not the phantasm, but rather

the intelligible species abstracted from the phantasm. But in one intellect there is only one intelligible species abstracted from many different phantasms of the same species, as is clear in the case of a man who has many phantasms of stone, but only one intelligible species of stone which he has abstracted from them. By means of that one intelligible species he knows the nature of stone despite the diversity of phantasms. Thus a diversity of phantasms would not cause a diversity of intellectual operations in several men who possessed among them but a single intellect. We must admit, accordingly, an individual intellect for each man. 39

But in man there are other operations than the merely intellectual. How can these be reduced to a single form as their principle, especially since all the powers of the soul except the immaterial are of themselves perishable? It was on this account that the Franciscan school postulated a multiplicity of substantial forms, fearing that the essential corruptibility of the vegetative and sensitive potencies compromised the incorruptibility of the soul from which they sprang.<sup>40</sup> St. Thomas gives an answer in complete accord with the principles of Aristotle and with the Christian tradition which sought in its philosophy for the unity of man that faith had affirmed. A multiplicity of forms in man would destroy the simple unity of his nature, for a thing is simply one only by virtue of a single form from which it derives its being. If man, therefore, exercised the various activities of his nature through different forms, he would not be simply one. For this reason Aristotle

"contra ponentes diversas animas in corpore inquirat,  
quid contineat illas, id est quid faciat ex eis unum.

Et non potest dici, quod uniantur per corporis unitatem: quia magis anima continet corpus, et facit ipsum esse unum, quam e converso."<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, if a being were animal through one form, and man through another, then animal could be predicated of man only accidentally, and man could not truly be said to be that which was animal. To avoid these absurdities all the activities of man must be reduced to a single form as their principle.

Having refuted the arguments to the contrary, St. Thomas proceeds to show how the intellectual soul contains within itself the lower powers of man as their source. All forms which are of different species are distinguished by the possession of greater or less perfection, as in the order of nature the living is superior to the non-living, animals to plants, and men to irrational animals. Here St. Thomas employs the statements of Aristotle that forms are like numbers, differing from one another by the addition or subtraction of unity, and that different kinds of forms are like different figures, one of which contains another and exceeds it. In the same manner the intellectual soul contains in its power whatever is possessed by the sensitive souls of brutes and the nutritive souls of plants.

"Sicut ergo superficies quae habet figuram pentagonam, non per aliam figuram est tetragona, et per aliam pentagona, quia superflueret figura tetragona, ex quo in pentagona continetur: ita nec per aliam animam Socrates est homo, et per aliam animal, sed per unam et eandem."<sup>42</sup>

St. Thomas replies very briefly but effectively to those who would require a multiplicity of forms in man in order to safeguard the immortality of his intellectual soul. The sensitive soul does not possess incorruptibility of itself, but receives it because it is joined to the intellectual soul which is incorruptible. The soul, therefore, which is merely sensitive is



corruptible; but that which has an intellectual together with a sensitive principle is not corruptible. For although the sensitive power does not bestow incorruptibility, neither can it take it away from the intellectual power to which it is joined.<sup>43</sup>

## VI. THE PRODUCTION OF THE SOUL

In the production of the human soul St. Thomas accepts two principles of Aristotle. The first is that the intellectual soul is not present in the body from the beginning of the latter's existence. The body at first contains a vegetative soul only, then a sensitive soul, and finally, when the proper degree of development has been attained, the ultimate perfection of form, the intellectual soul. St. Thomas is careful to maintain, however, that one form succeeds another by displacing it entirely, not by being added to it in the composite.<sup>44</sup> Both Aristotle and St. Thomas hold, moreover, that the intellectual soul must come to the body from outside, or, as Aristotle says, "through the door."<sup>45</sup> But what meaning, we are led to inquire, can this have in Aristotle? It certainly can not refer to an act of creation by God, because the God of Aristotle can produce nothing outside himself by an act of will; being entirely independent of any creature, he is deprived by Aristotle of the virtually transient activity to which St. Thomas ascribes creation. The intellect, Aristotle seems to say, is exempt from birth as well as from death; this would attribute to it a certain kind of preexistence, though, as Zeller says,<sup>46</sup> in a rather impersonal sense. Again we are almost led to the conviction that Aristotle believes the intellect to be nothing other than the divine spirit, or God, for it

seems to be eternal and impassive, and yet, in the system of Aristotle, it can be neither an emanation from, nor a creation of, God. But to call the acting intellect God could be reconciled only with difficulty to Aristotle's belief in the infinitely transcendental nature of God's operations; for, after all, the intellect is, in some obscure sense at least, a part of the individual soul.

It is clear, at any rate, that Aristotle never even remotely speaks of the creation of the soul, and seems to regard its origin as insoluble.<sup>47</sup> But this would never do for St. Thomas, who had before him the Scriptural account of the creation of all things by God, and the creation, in particular, of man: "Creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam."<sup>48</sup> Since the human soul is subsisting, unlike the forms of other material things, it must be created. The basic reason for this is that the becoming of anything, since it is the means whereby the thing receives existence, must be in conformity with the mode of existence. Since non-subsisting forms exist only by virtue of the existence of the composite, existence and becoming cannot be attributed to them in the full sense of the term, for they become only because the subsisting composites become of which they are a part. But the rational soul, being a subsisting thing, can be said properly both to exist and to become. But it cannot be produced out of any substrate, whether material, because it is an immaterial being, or spiritual, because spiritual substances cannot be generated, that is, receive a new substantial form. It is necessary, accordingly, for the soul to be created.<sup>49</sup>

Since the origin of the soul is brought about by creation, it is the

result of an immediate act of God. Not even an angel can create, because the action of any creature always presupposes something already existing which can be transmuted. Only God, Who is the cause of being universally, can produce being from nothingness.<sup>50</sup> In reply to those early Fathers who for various reasons held that the soul was created before the body, St. Thomas employs an argument which, though Aristotelian, Aristotle had neglected to remember. In the universal order of nature the perfect comes before the imperfect. But the soul is by itself an incomplete substance, and needs the body to perfect its nature. Since God created all things in the entire perfection demanded by their species, He must have created the soul together with the body, since it is only a part of the human composite and without the body has not its natural perfection.<sup>51</sup> Here St. Thomas departs from the tradition of St. Augustine, whose teaching on this point is in conformity with his definition of the soul as a complete nature in itself. St. Thomas' doctrine of creation, not only of the soul, but of being in general, is such a decided advance on Aristotle that its importance cannot be overestimated. The full import of creation may be realized only by considering it in relation to the final end of man, and in this respect the philosophy of Aristotle is notably deficient.<sup>52</sup>

Thus far St. Thomas has established the unity of the soul which Aristotle had aimed at but failed to reach. In general Aristotle is very clear about the unity and simplicity of the soul, because it is in accord with his cosmology that the unifying principle in any composite is the form. But in the case of the human form the power of intellectual activity of which man is capable cannot be explained in terms of an ordinary composite

being, since there is no material element involved. Although Aristotle realized far better than Plato that man is essentially bound up in a material universe, he could not comprehend how the spiritual element in man is an intrinsic part of his nature, for it seemed to him too far above the human sphere of existence. Although man partakes in the divinity through his intellect, that activity is not altogether natural to him; it is more than human.

"...such a life would be better than man could attain to; for he would live thus, not so far forth as he is man, but as there is in him something divine. But so far as this divine part surpasses the whole compound nature, so far does its energy surpass the energy which is according to all other virtue. If, then, the intellect be divine when compared with man, the life also, which is in obedience to that, will be divine when compared with human life."<sup>53</sup>

To explain how an immaterial activity which of its nature shows divine influence is an essential part of the substantiality of a being composed of matter and form, although he would have liked to regard it as that, seems to have been beyond the powers of Aristotle.

St. Thomas has shown how the intellectual soul is the natural form of man, and contains virtually within itself the lower powers. He has established its right to be the substantial form of the body, indeed, the very command of its nature to be such a form. This is merely carrying Aristotle's principles to their logical conclusion, and, moreover, on a strictly natural plane; St. Thomas finds no need of baptizing Aristotle in order to utilize his teachings. It is an instance of one philosopher building upon the foundation of another, but remodeling that foundation in order to erect a more stable superstructure.<sup>54</sup>

## VII. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Aristotle had declared that the intellect is immortal. St. Thomas proves, as Aristotle could not, that the intellect is part of the soul, an inseparable part, since the soul is simple. Therefore, the soul must be immortal.<sup>55</sup> This is the essence of St. Thomas' doctrine on the immortality of the soul; although both premises of the syllogism are Aristotelian, Aristotle could not arrive at the obvious conclusion because he did not realize the full import of the premises. Some of the other arguments employed by St. Thomas may also be mentioned in order that we may see how Aristotle has been carried to lengths he had not dreamed of, yet with which he would not have disagreed.

Whatever pertains to anything essentially cannot be taken away from it, as, for example, animality from a man. It is clear that being pertains to the form, for anything that has being possesses it by virtue of its proper form, so that being can in no way be taken from the form. A composite being perishes by losing the form whence it derives its being. But the form does not perish per se. With the destruction of the composite and the being which was brought about by the form, the form may perish per accidens if it is such that it has not its own being but only the power of giving being to a composite. But if there is a form which has its own being, it must of necessity be incorruptible. For being cannot be taken from that which has its being unless its form be separated from it; but if that which has its being is the form itself, that being cannot be separated from it. We have already seen that the human soul is a subsisting being, that it is a form possessing its own being, and not merely the power of giving being to a

composite. Accordingly, we must say that neither per se nor per accidens is the soul corruptible.<sup>56</sup>

The influence of Aristotle may be noted to a lesser extent than that of Plato in another proof adduced by St. Thomas. Nothing suffers destruction from that in which it has its perfection, for perfection and destruction are contrary states. But the perfection of the soul consists in a certain abstraction or withdrawing from the body, in which the soul is perfected both in knowledge and in virtue. The knowledge of the soul becomes greater as it is led to consider objects which are more immaterial. Virtue consists in refusing to give way to the passions, and in modifying them and holding them in check. Since both of these perfections demand a kind of separation from the body, there can be no destruction of the soul because of a complete separation from the body at death. It cannot be objected that, while the perfection of the soul is brought about by a separation from the body in its mode of operation, its destruction consists in a separation according to its being. The operation of a thing demonstrates its substance and its very being, for the proper operation of a thing follows its proper nature. This means that the operation of a thing cannot be perfected unless the nature or substance is perfected. Consequently, if the operation of the soul receives greater perfection in being separated from the body, its nature certainly will not suffer destruction in such a separation.<sup>57</sup>

From the nature of the possible intellect, which St. Thomas naturally believes a part of the soul, the immortality of the soul may also be

demonstrated. Since that which is received into anything else is received according to the nature of the recipient, the incorruptibility of the possible intellect may be proved from the fact that it receives the forms of things in so far as these forms are actually intelligible. But they are actually intelligible only because they are immaterial and universal, and consequently incorruptible. The existence of these incorruptible forms in the possible intellect demonstrates the incorruptibility of the possible intellect and of the soul of which it is a part.<sup>58</sup> This is St. Thomas' answer to the declaration of Aristotle that the possible intellect, being passive, is perishable.<sup>59</sup> It is indeed perplexing why Aristotle had declared the possible intellect corruptible, even though he realized that it is immaterial. The argument of St. Thomas on this point is supported by his strong defense of intellectual memory. Avicenna had denied intellectual memory, saying that sense memory is possible only because of the preservation of the sensible species. But the intellect, being without a corporeal organ, cannot preserve the intelligible species, because that which is in the intellect through its species must be present only when the intellect is in act. St. Thomas, on the contrary, refers to his fundamental principle that whatever is received by anything is received according to the mode of the recipient. But the intellect is far more stable and immobile than any sense faculty could be. If, then, the sensitive powers can retain the sensible species apart from the actual apprehension of the object, so much more should the intellect be able to preserve the intelligible species.<sup>60</sup> Applying this reasoning to the argument for the incorruptibility of the soul, St. Thomas makes it more evident that the

possible intellect is not perishable, since it can not only receive the forms of objects immaterially but also retain those forms. There seems to be little explanation of Aristotle's position on the question, unless we attribute it to his indifference toward the continuance of the individual personality, which he often appears to place in the possible intellect, or accept the theory of Avicenna that the possible intellect must turn to the acting intellect, which is separate from the individual and one for all men, whenever it wishes to receive the intelligible species which the acting intellect has already abstracted and stored away.

The immortality of the soul is so essential to the system of St. Thomas, as to any Christian philosophy, that he demonstrates it in every possible manner. Having set forth as many metaphysical proofs as he can muster, he finds place for a demonstration which, although it lacks the absolute finality of the others, utilizes a truth of the moral order that may be even more convincing because it is less abstract. Both St. Thomas and Aristotle insist that there is no natural appetite which exists in vain. Aristotle did not apply this principle to the universal desire of men for immortality; but St. Thomas, deeming the future life of even more importance than the present, does not let the opportunity pass. Since, in the case of those beings which can have knowledge, conscious appetite is proportioned to apprehension, man, who has for the object of his knowledge being universally and simply, desires to possess being always. He does not apprehend being conditioned by space and time, as do irrational animals. If this appetite of man is not to remain unfulfilled, the soul of man must be immortal. 61



## VIII. THE SEPARATED SOUL

If the soul is to have an existence after its departure from the body, the requirements of that existence must be considered. That the soul will be much more than an intellect which is always thinking but has neither the means of thinking nor anything to think about, as Aristotle has described it, is evident from the nature of the soul as St. Thomas has already set it forth. In discussing the separated soul many of the implications of the thomistic theory are brought to light for the first time. For Plato and St. Augustine the soul on departing from the body entered the fullness of its spiritual life, no longer bound down by its earthly companion. But for St. Thomas the soul without the body is not in its natural state, and its mode of operation apart from the body demands much care on his part.<sup>62</sup> The potencies of the separated soul, the powers which it can exercise, especially its capacity for obtaining knowledge, and finally the individuality it possesses when separated from the matter by which it was individualized, all require of St. Thomas extreme delicacy of treatment, in which Aristotle is of little assistance.

Although all the determinations of the human composite and all its substantiality are derived from the soul as their principle, not all the potencies of the soul have the soul as their subject. The vegetative and sensitive potencies of their very nature require a body for their operation. For this reason St. Thomas is very severe with those who hold that in the separated soul such potencies as these can be actualized, or even that they exist in the separated soul in any way except virtually.<sup>63</sup> We must note,

however, that the vegetative and sensitive potencies do not perish at death as though they belonged to the body, while the intellect, being apart from a corporeal organ, survives. This is the very situation in which Aristotle apparently forgets his stand on the unity of the soul.

"But we must examine whether any form also survives afterwards. For in some cases there is nothing to prevent this; e.g. the soul may be of this sort--not all soul but the reason; for presumably it is impossible that all soul should survive."<sup>64</sup>

On the other hand, it may be possible to understand Aristotle as we do St. Thomas, as saying that no part of the soul perishes in the strict sense of the word, but that some potencies exist in the separated soul only virtually. Aristotle is not very explicit on this point, but other passages, especially those in which he alienates the acting intellect from the rest of the soul, make his doctrine questionable.

Aristotle sometimes stresses the physical conditions of purely spiritual activities to the extent of making them appear intrinsically necessary to those activities.<sup>65</sup> This is perhaps the reason for his denying love and memory, for example, to the separated intellect. St. Thomas has difficulty in explaining the activities of the separated soul because in his system separation from the body is beyond the nature of the soul, though not contrary to it. The soul when joined to the body exercises knowledge by making use of the phantasms which the sense faculties provide. When separated from the body, however, it has no phantasms, but it is then able to understand pure intelligibles with the aid of infused species, as do the other spiritual substances. But St. Thomas has to admit that the soul's knowledge under such conditions is imperfect. Although in general

it is a higher form of knowledge to apprehend the intelligible directly, still this method is imperfect in the case of the soul, to which abstraction from phantasms is natural. For the more perfect spiritual substances can have very clear knowledge through the medium of a few forms, since they possess higher powers of understanding than man. But the human soul, being the weakest of spiritual substances, needs many more forms in order to have a sufficiently clear knowledge of reality, and these it can obtain only through union with a body and the use of phantasms. Since, therefore, it possesses but few forms when able to apprehend intelligibles directly, its knowledge will be general and confused.<sup>66</sup> But in addition to such knowledge as the soul may thus acquire, it will possess the intelligible species which it received while joined to the body, and whatever knowledge God may grant it through the enlightenment of divine grace.<sup>67</sup>

#### IX. INDIVIDUALITY AND PERSONALITY

The chief difficulty in many ways with the Aristotelian treatment of the soul, or of man in general, is the slight and rarely manifested interest in the destiny of the individual. While Plato subordinated the individual man to the Idea of Man, the philosophy of Aristotle would seem to raise the position of the individual by denying to the universal subsistence outside the individual. But, though he looks continually to the future, Aristotle is thinking only of the species,<sup>68</sup> a fact which makes his system of ethics almost pointless and without much ground in reality. This attitude is reflected in the individuality which Aristotle allows each man and the soul when it has been separated from the body.

For Aristotle the principle of individuation is matter; there is no difference between forms of the same species. But how can matter, in so far as it is matter, be the ground of individuation, since of itself matter is formless and indeterminate? It is difficult to see how a form which is of itself universal can be united to matter which is of itself indeterminate in such a way that many individuals of the same species will result. On the other hand, even if Aristotle had succeeded in obtaining a multiplicity of individuals by joining the same specific form to various portions of matter, what would become of the distinction between these individual forms when they were separated from matter? Apart from matter one form should be identical with every other of the same species. Both these questions St. Thomas finds it necessary to answer in order to secure the individuality of the separated soul and also of the soul as it exists in the body.

The principle of individuation for St. Thomas is matter, not matter in general, but materia signata quantitate, matter which has, as it were, been earmarked, and assigned to a certain space which it holds to the exclusion of all other matter. The fact that a form actualizes a definite quantity of matter distinguishes it from every other form which is specifically like it.<sup>69</sup> But it must not be thought that there first exists a diversity of matter for which a diversity of forms is created. On the contrary, matter is inferior to form, and exists for the sake of form, rather than conversely.<sup>70</sup> In the same sense, then, that matter is the principle of individuation, it is also the ground of individuality. But if we define an individual as a being which is distinct from all other beings and is itself

indivisible into other beings, individuality consists, not in matter, but in the concrete substance taken as a whole. The matter is individuating only by virtue of its integration with the being of the substance, and, since the being of the substance is nothing more than the being given it by the form, individuality must be a property of the form as much as it is of the matter. Strictly speaking, individuality would seem to pertain more to the form than to the matter, because all the substantiality of the composite which is individual is derived from the form. "On pourrait dire que c'est bien la matiere qui individualise la forme, mais que, une fois individualisee, c'est bien la forme qui est individuelle."<sup>71</sup> The form as such, however, is not individual unless it has been individualized in matter. Thus St. Thomas avoids a reproach often directed against Aristotle, that the differences between individuals in a species are only accidental. For St. Thomas the very form is individual, but only, of course, when it has been individualized by a definite quantity of matter.

Aristotle says that

"it is the most natural function in all living things, if perfect and not defective or spontaneously generated, to reproduce their species; animal producing animal and plant plant, in order that they may, so far as they can, share in the eternal and the divine. For it is that which all things yearn after, and that is the final cause of all their natural activity...Since, then, individual things are incapable of sharing continuously in the eternal and the divine, because nothing in the world of perishables can abide numerically one and the same, they partake in the eternal and divine, each in the only way it can, some more, some less. That is to say, each persists, though not in itself, yet in a representative which is specifically, not numerically, one with it."<sup>72</sup>

Aristotle is very open to the suspicion that such a statement applies to men as well as to other material beings, because for him the destiny of the individual is submerged in that of the species. The individual is born, lives for a short time, and disappears forever without leaving a trace behind him. But what difference, as long as the species endures? Other individuals will come to take his place, and they in their turn will be replaced by others. The species can subsist only in the individuals, but the individual passes and the species endures.

St. Thomas does not underestimate the importance of the species, but his primary concern, in the case of man at least, is for the individual. Since the various species are different grades of perfection in the representation of the divine essence, God must provide for the continuance of each species in accordance with His purpose in establishing it in the divine plan. Thus there need be only one individual in each species among incorruptible beings, but for the conservation of the species among corruptible beings there must be many individuals in a species.<sup>73</sup> But among corruptible beings man is a case apart. For his soul subsists and has a destiny when separated from the body that philosophy must recognize. The species, of course, endures because it subsists in many individuals, but the individual man also endures because his soul is immortal. Thus the principal intention of nature with regard to man is less for the species than for the individual. St. Thomas is able to make this decided improvement on Aristotle not only because of his doctrine of immortality but also because of his concept of creation. Since the incorruptible part of man's nature is the soul, which is the result of the direct creation of God,

we may say that the intention of the author of nature is manifested in the multiplication of man in the species and in the immortality of the individual soul.

"Sic igitur homini ex parte corporis, quod corruptibile est secundum naturam suam, competit generatio; ex parte vero animae, quae incorruptibilis est, competit ei quod multitudo individuorum sit per se intenta a natura, vel potius a naturae auctore, qui solus est humanarum animarum creator."<sup>74</sup>

Since the form upon becoming individualized in matter receives an individuality that is owing less to the matter than to the substance of the composite, which itself receives its substantiality from the form, St. Thomas can readily explain the distinction of souls when they have been separated from the body. For it is not every diversity of form that constitutes a difference of species. The multiplicity of separated souls follows, not from a difference in the formal constitution of the souls, but from a diversity of substance. The substance of this soul is different from the substance of every other soul. This difference of substance does not proceed from a difference in the essential principles of the souls but from their being commensurate with different bodies. These commensurations remain in the souls even after their bodies have perished, just as the very substance of the souls remains. Every soul according to its very substance is the form of a particular body; otherwise it would be united only accidentally to the body, and the union of soul and body would be a unity not per se but per accidens. In so far as the soul is a form it is commensurate to a body, and since the substantiality of the composite by which the soul is individualized is the substantiality given it by the soul, this

individual substantiality remains in the soul even after it has left the body.<sup>75</sup>

Although it is true that in every species of material beings there are individuals, still the individual man has a very particular significance which the others lack. The laws of the universe fall upon all classes of being, but in a different manner. The inorganic world is so governed by these laws that it neither cooperates with nor reacts to them. Among plants and irrational animals, especially the latter, there is a reaction to the laws of nature; but this reaction is determined in each case by the action which the being suffers, so that St. John Damascene well says of animals, "non agunt sed magis aguntur." Man, on the other hand, being possessed of reason and the power of free choice, cooperates with God in carrying out the plan of the universe and attaining his own destiny. It was Christian philosophy which distinguished the individual man from the members of other species by giving him the name of "person." It is in the De Duabus Naturis of Boethius that we find the definition of person which was accepted by the philosophers of the Middle Ages: "Persona est rationalis natura individua substantia."<sup>76</sup> The soul of man is the principle of rationality and liberty, and also of his individual substantiality. Thus it is his soul which elevates him to the dignity of person, and it is the basis of the personality which is such an inseparable part of his nature. The man of St. Thomas and of Christian philosophy possesses a far greater dignity in the universe than that of Aristotle, for it is his privilege to cooperate with God by directing himself toward his ultimate end.



## X. THE SOUL IN THE HIERARCHY OF BEING

It is significant that in his synthesis of philosophy and theology, the Summa Theologica, St. Thomas proceeds from the discussion of being in general to that of the various kinds of being and their activities. It was his firm conviction that the proper operations of any class of being are determined by its position in the general scheme of the universe, in what has been called the hierarchy of being. Since the creative act of God flows uniformly through all creatures as they proceed from it in diminishing perfection, there are no gaps between the various grades of creatures. "Supremum enim inferioris naturae attingit id quod est infimum superioris."<sup>77</sup> The idea of a hierarchy is Neoplatonic in origin: nothing passes from one extreme to another except through a medium. But St. Thomas does not use the hierarchy merely for the sake of symmetry or design in the intricate convolutions of his system. Since every operation is the realization of an essence and every essence is a certain degree of perfection in the divine plan, the operations of any being will indicate its proper place in the universal hierarchy of being. On the other hand, once we have given a being its position in the hierarchy its particular nature and activities will be made more clear when we have compared it to other ranks in the hierarchy.

The Aristotelian principle that all knowledge begins with sense is thus given new meaning in St. Thomas. Since the mode of knowledge of any being follows its mode of existence, we may distinguish three grades of knowledge among creatures. Sense is the act of a bodily organ, and is consequently concerned with forms as they exist in matter. But there is a

power of knowing which is neither the act of a bodily organ nor connected in any way with matter, namely, the angelic intellect, which has for its object forms subsisting without matter. The intellect of man is midway between these two, for it is not the act of a bodily organ, but it is a faculty of his soul, which is the form of a body. Thus the object of the human intellect is the form existing in matter, not as it exists in matter, however, but as it is abstracted from matter and all material conditions.<sup>78</sup> Being on the border line between the spiritual and the material, man shares in the activities of both; he is truly a creature of two worlds.<sup>79</sup>

#### XI. THE ACTING INTELLECT

Having a clearer concept of the position of man in the universe, and especially of his relation to God, St. Thomas is far more definite than Aristotle on such questions as the nature of the acting intellect. He has proved that the intellectual soul must be the form of the body. But there is an urgent reason, in addition, why the acting intellect should be a part of the individual soul and not a separate entity which is one for all men. In demonstrating that each man possesses an acting intellect, St. Thomas not only resolves the indecision of Aristotle, who was interpreted very unfavorably on this point by the Arabians, but also renders unnecessary the theory of illumination advanced by St. Augustine.

It is true, says St. Thomas, that there is a separate intellect from which man derives his faculty of knowledge. For whenever there is anything which has a participated being, and is mobile and imperfect, there exists prior to it something which is its own being, and is immobile and perfect.

But the intellect of man merely participates in the power of intelligence, since not the entire soul is intellectual, but only a faculty of it; man's knowledge is acquired by the process of reason, which is a kind of motion; and that knowledge is imperfect, for it proceeds from potency to act and is always limited. Thus there must be an intellect higher than that of man from which the human intellect derives its power of knowing. But this intellect we call God, Who is the creator of the soul and in Whom alone the soul will find perfect happiness. But we must also place in man a power received from God by which his intellect renders potential intelligibles actually intelligible, for in all perfect natural beings there are powers proper to the individuals, powers which they have received from the universal causes. There is nothing in nature, however, which is equal in dignity to the human soul, and it is fitting, therefore, that it possess a power derived from the universal cause of intelligence by which it can abstract intelligible species from phantasms. For this is a power which is most proper to its nature, and God cannot deny what is required by the essence of a being.

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St. Augustine, in postulating direct illumination of the soul by God in the act of intellectual knowledge, deprived man of the activity which makes him most godlike, thinking perhaps that he glorified God by not allowing man to participate in this most worthy of all possessions. But the God of St. Thomas is more generous, as it were, for he grants man this power in accordance with the demands of his nature.<sup>81</sup>

St. Thomas makes a concession to St. Augustine, however, by accepting his doctrine that man knows in the divine reasons. But he is more explicit than St. Augustine in his denial of man's ability during this life to know

the divine reasons in themselves. The intellect of man, since it is a participation of the uncreated light of the divine intellect, in which are contained the eternal reasons of all things, may be said to have all its knowledge in the divine reasons. "Unde in Psal. IV, 6, dicitur: 'Multi dicunt: Quis ostendit nobis bona?' Cui quaestioni Psalmista respondet dicens: 'Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine.'"<sup>82</sup>

## XII. CONCLUSION: ST. THOMAS AND REVELATION

If we were to inquire why St. Thomas makes such a notable advance on Aristotle in his treatment of the soul, we should be obliged to admit that his greatest assistance was the Christian Revelation.<sup>83</sup> The God of Aristotle is not the creator or efficient cause of the universe, and consequently in the philosophy of Aristotle there is no Providence. The universe, it is true, moves toward God as its final cause, but this is without any government or cooperation on the part of God. With the concept of creation derived from Revelation Christian philosophy possesses a God Who is intensely interested in a universe that is progressing in accordance with His eternal plan. The God of Christianity is an efficient as well as a final cause. Because God can have no end outside Himself Aristotle rightly denied any but an immanent activity to Him. But in Christian thought God, through an immanent though virtually transient activity, produces a reality outside Himself because He is the end of creation and the production of creatures is the result of His Love for Himself and His desire to extend His goodness to creatures. Whereas the God of Aristotle moves the universe by being loved, that of St. Thomas moves it by loving.

This relation of the creature to the creator has a pronounced influence on the thomistic treatment of the soul. In the philosophy of Aristotle we have a doctrine of the soul which suggests and forms the basis of the complete and consistent teaching of St. Thomas. St. Thomas demonstrates convincingly the unity of man's nature and the immortality of his soul by showing how the intellect can be both a substance and the natural form of the body. He insists upon the supremacy of man in nature by justifying his individuality and personality. But for St. Thomas the soul implies much more than this. It is his soul which makes man an "image" of God, as distinguished from other creatures which, as effects of God's power, are merely "vestigis".<sup>84</sup> Because of his soul the life of man is a journey to God, in Whom the ultimate and perfect happiness of man consists. The dignity of the human person, his dominion over the universe, and his supernatural end, all of which have their source in Revelation, are reflected in the philosophy of St. Thomas. For this reason he is able to bring the principles of Aristotle to a logical and satisfactory conclusion, privileged as he is to judge the natural life of man in the light of the supernatural and give it thereby its full significance.<sup>85</sup> In the things which pertain to this world he is a follower of Aristotle.<sup>86</sup> But there is another world to which he also turns his gaze, saying with St. Augustine, "Fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te."<sup>87</sup>

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1. Cf. Maritain: (Chapter VI) A Monument to St. Augustine, p. 212 sq: Augustinian philosophy was at an impasse in the days of St. Thomas because it wanted the means of establishing itself as a science. St. Thomas made philosophy a science by defining the domains of philosophy and theology.
2. On the general stagnation of intellectual activity which preceded the recovery of the ancient Greek philosophies, cf. Gilson: The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 10 sqq.
3. Ibid., p. 16.
4. It is no mere coincidence that medieval philosophy reached its greatest heights at the time of most perfect accord between philosophy and theology. On the relation between philosophy and theology, as conceived by St. Thomas, cf. Contra Gentiles, II, 4; also In Boethium de Trinitate, q. 2, a. 3: "Sicut autem sacra doctrina fundatur super lumen fidei, ita philosophia super lumen naturale rationis"; also Summa Theologica, II-II, q. 167, a. 1, ad 3um: "Studium philosophiæ secundum se est licitum et laudabile propter veritatem quam philosophi perciperunt, Deo illis revelante, ut dicitur Rom. I."
5. Cf. Gilson: The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, pp. 17-23.
6. Cf. Gilson: L'Esprit de la Philosophie Medievale (premiere serie), p. 8 sqq.
7. De Anima, II, 1, 412 a 27.
8. Alcibiades, I, 130.
9. De Anima, I, 5, 410 a 7.
10. Ibid., III, 4, 429 a 18: "The mind, then, since it thinks all things, must needs, in the words of Anaxagoras, be unmixed with any, if it is to rule, that is, to know..."
11. Ibid., II, 2, 413 b 26.
12. Ibid., I, 4, 408 b 18.
13. De Generatione Animalium, I, 3, 736 b 28.
14. De Partibus Animalium, II, 10, 656 a 7.
15. De Anima, I, 4, 408 b 19.
16. Ibid., III, 5, 430 a 22.

17. Ibid., I, 4, 408 b 19-25.
18. Aristotle and the Earlier Peripatetics, p. 131.
19. De Anima, I, 4, 408 b 25-29.
20. Ibid., III, 5, 430 a 23.
21. Ibid., III, 8, 432 a 7.
22. Cf., for example, Lattey: St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 85:  
 "What then is it that survives? Apparently only the active intellect, which most modern commentators agree was rightly interpreted by Averroes as being one in all men."
23. De Anima, II, 2, 413 b 26.
24. Ethica Nichomachea, IX, 4, 1166 a 17.
25. Zeller, op. cit., p. 135.
26. St. Augustine, of course, was one of the most ardent recipients of Plato. If Plato and Porphyry, he says, could have combined their doctrines on the soul, the result would have been a wholly Christian concept: De Civitate Dei, XXII, 27 (Migne: Patrologia Latina, vol. 41). Another highly laudatory reference to the Platonic concept of the soul is ibid., XIII, 19, in which the similarity between certain phases of Platonic and Christian thought is emphasized.
27. De Moribus Ecclesiae, I, 27 (Migne, vol. 32).
28. In Ioannis Evangelium, XIX, 5 (Migne, vol. 35).
29. De Mor. Eccl., I, 4 (Migne, vol. 32): "Quid ergo hominem dicimus? animam et corpus, tamquam bigas vel centaurum?...Difficile est istam controversiam dijudicare."
30. Cf. Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., p. 185 sqq.
31. Summa Theologica, II, tr. 12, q. 69, membr. 2, a. 2; quoted in Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., p. 287.
32. De Anima, II, 1, 412 b 6.
33. Ibid., II, 2, 414 a 8-14.
34. Ibid., I, 5, 411 b 5-12.
35. On the relation between the acting and the possible intellects, cf. ibid., III, 5, 430 a 10-25.

36. Sum. Theol., I, q. 75, a. 2; Con. Gent., II, 50, 51; Quaestio Unica de Anima, a. 1.
37. How St. Thomas has utilized the various elements in the philosophical tradition up to his time in defining the unity of man may be seen in Sum. Theol., I, q. 89, a. 1; ibid., I, q. 75, a. 2; Qu. Un. de An., aa. 1, 2; Quaestio Unica de Spiritualibus Creaturis, a. 2. On the eclecticism of St. Thomas, cf. Sertillanges: S. Thomas d'Aquin, vol. 2, pp. 327-331. St. Thomas is evidently in accord with the principle expressed by St. Justin in II Apol., XIII: "Whatever has been well said among all men belongs to us Christians." Cf. Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., p. 29: "Toute verite est chretienne comme par definition."
38. Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 1; Con. Gent., II, 68, 69; Qu. Un. de An., a. 2; De Spir. Creat., a. 2.
39. Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 2; Con. Gent., II, 75, 76; De Spir. Creat., a. 9.
40. For an exposition of St. Bonaventure's doctrine on this point, cf. Gilson: La Philosophie de Saint Bonaventure, p. 311 sq.
41. Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 3; Con. Gent., II, 58.
42. Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 3.
43. Ibid., I, q. 76, a. 3, ad lum.
44. The reasons which St. Thomas advances are given concisely in Con. Gent., II, 89.
45. On the production of the various parts of the soul, especially the intellect, cf. De Generatione Animalium, II, 3, 736 a 31; De Anima, I, 4, 408 b 18.
46. Op. cit., p. 122; cf. discussion, on p. 96, note 1, of Aristotle: De Generatione Animalium, II, 3, 736 a 31.
47. Aristotle seems to hint at the insolubility of the problem in De Generatione Animalium, II, 3, 736 a 31.
48. Genesis, I; quoted in Sum. Theol., I, q. 90, a. 2.
49. Sum. Theol., I, q. 90, a. 2; Con. Gent., II, 87.
50. Sum. Theol., I, q. 90, a. 3.
51. Con. Gent., II, 84. For the Aristotelian principle involved, cf. Metaphysica, XII, 7, 1072 b 20; ibid., XIV, 4, 1091 a 34. On the creation of the soul in St. Thomas as compared to other theories



- concerning its origin, cf. Janet and Seailles: History of the Problems of Philosophy, vol. 2, p. 195.
52. For a discussion of the final end of man and its treatment by scholasticism, cf. Mercier: The Challenge of Humanism, p. 146 sqq. On the final end of man as beatitude, cf. Rousselot: L'Intellectualisme de Saint Thomas, p. 31 sq. On the method by which St. Thomas perfected the ethics of Aristotle, cf. Lattey: op.cit., p. 162 sqq.
53. Ethica Nicomachea, X, 7, 1177 b 26.
54. Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., p. 187 sqq.
55. Qu. Un. de An., a. 2, ad 2um. On the immortality of the soul as advanced by Aristotle, cf. Janet and Seailles: op.cit., p. 356.
56. This argument is best stated perhaps in Qu. Un. de An., a. 14.
57. Con. Gent., II, 79. The influence of the Platonic concept of the soul on Christian asceticism may be noted to a slight degree in such a line of reasoning as St. Thomas uses in Con. Gent., II, 81.
58. Qu. Un. de An., a. 14; Con. Gent., II, 79.
59. There is a very significant statement of St. Thomas in his Commentaria in III Libros Aristotelis De Anima, lect. 10, where he attempts to reconcile the text to his own interpretation of the possible and the passive intellects. In De Spir. Creat., a. 9, St. Thomas contrasts the possible and the passive intellects, as he does also in Con. Gent., II, 60, 61.
60. Sum. Theol., I, q. 79, a. 6. For a direct refutation of Avicenna, cf. Con. Gent., II, 74.
61. Sum. Theol., I, q. 75, a. 6; Con. Gent., II, 79; Qu. Un. de An., a. 14.
62. That St. Thomas realized the advantages of the Platonic doctrine in this respect may be seen in Sum. Theol., I, q. 89, a. 1.
63. Sum. Theol., I, q. 77, a. 8.
64. Metaphysica, XII, 3, 1070 a 24.
65. Cf., for example, De Anima, I, 4, 408 b 27. But that this stand may be interpreted in accordance with the teaching of St. Thomas, cf. Con. Gent., II, 81: "Circa alias vero animae operationes, sicut est amare, gaudere, et alia huiusmodi, est aequivocatio cavenda."
66. Sum. Theol., I, q. 89, a. 1.

67. Ibid., I, q. 89, aa. 2, 4, 5; ibid., I, q. 12, aa. 1, 6, 8, 9.
68. Cf. infra, note 72.
69. For a concise discussion of St. Thomas' theory of individuation and personality, cf. D'Arcy: Thomas Aquinas, pp. 147-153.
70. Compendium Theologiae, Pars I, cap. 71: "Neque igitur formae ideo sunt diversae, ut competant materiis diversis, sed materiae ideo sunt diversae, ut competant diversis formis." Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 5: "Cum forma non sit propter materiam, sed potius materia propter formam; ex forma oportet rationem accipere quare materia sit talis, et non e converso."
71. Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., p. 207.
72. De Anima, II, 4, 415 a 26-b 7.
73. Sum. Theol., I, q. 47, a. 2.
74. Ibid., I, q. 98, a. 1.
75. Con. Gent., II, 81.
76. Quoted in Sum. Theol., I, q. 29, a. 1. Mercier (op. cit., pp. 116-119) shows that scholasticism is the link between Aristotle and modern dualism.
77. Pseudo-Dionysius: De Divinis Nominibus, VII, quoted in Sum. Theol., I, q. 78, a. 2.
78. Sum. Theol., I, q. 85, a. 1.
79. Qu. Un. de An., a. 1. Con. Gent., II, 81: "Cum anima humana...sit in confinio corporum, et incorporearum substantiarum, quasi in horizonte existens aeternitatis, et temporis, recedens ab infimo, appropinquat ad summam: unde et quando totaliter erit a corpore separata, perfecte assimilabitur substantiis separatis quantum ad modum intelligendi, et uberius influentiam earum recipiet." Sum. Theol., I, q. 76, a. 5: "Anima autem intellectiva...secundum naturae ordinem infimum gradum in substantiis intellectualibus tenet; intantum quod non habet naturaliter sibi inditam notitiam veritatis, sicut Angeli; sed oportet quod eam colligat ex rebus divisibilibus per viam sensus, ut Dionysius dicit VII. c. de div. Nom." On the position of the human soul in the hierarchy of being, cf. Tonquedec: La Critique de la Connaissance, p. 453 sq. For a fairly complete discussion of the relation of superiority of form to self-consciousness, cf. D'Arcy: op. cit., pp. 75-97, 210 sq.
80. Sum. Theol., I, q. 79, a. 4; De Spir. Great., a. 10; Qu. Un. de An., a. 5; Con. Gent., II, 76. In Con. Gent., II, 78, St. Thomas sets forth his

interpretation of Aristotle. Cf. also the comment of St. Thomas on the text of Aristotle; In III De Anima, lect. 10. On the interpretations given to Aristotle on the acting intellect by St. Thomas and Averroes, cf. Hicks: Aristotle De Anima, p. lxvi: "Regarded as interpretations of Aristotle's doctrine, these two conflicting views, which divided the allegiance of the later schoolmen, cannot both be right, but may both be wrong. Aristotle himself was free from the preconceptions of his two commentators; he was not a Moslem mystic nor a Christian theologian."

81. On the Augustinian doctrine of illumination, cf. Gilson: Introduction a l'Etude de Saint Augustin, p. 103. For the teaching of St. Bonaventure on this point, cf. Gilson: Phil. de S. Bonav., p. 326; also St. Bonaventure: De Scientia Christi, q. 4, fund. 23 et c., V 19 et 22-24; Itinerarium Mentis in Deum, c. III n. 1-4, V 303-305.
82. Sum. Theol., I, q. 84, a. 5. On the treatment accorded St. Augustine and other authorities by St. Thomas, cf. Grabmann: Thomas Aquinas, His Personality and Thought, p. 47 sqq. On the fidelity of St. Thomas to the Fathers of the Church, cf. Maritain: op. cit., p. 223.
83. On the influence of Revelation on the philosophy of St. Thomas, cf. Rousselot: op. cit., p. 195, note; Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., p. 5; Gilson: The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, p. 28 sqq.
84. Sum. Theol., I, q. 93, aa. 1, 6; cf. Gilson: L'Esprit de la Phil. Med., pp. 169-172.
85. How St. Thomas made use of Revelation but made his ethics a natural, not a theological, science, cf. Lattey: op. cit., pp. 132-140. On the mystical element in the philosophy of St. Thomas, cf. Grabmann: op. cit., pp. 173-176.
86. Cf. D'Arcy: op. cit., p. 71; "It is at this point that St. Thomas rejoins St. Augustine. For his journey over the earth he had taken Aristotle for his companion. Now that he begins to ascend to the Paradiso he calls upon St. Augustine. It is at this point also that the thinker and saint meet in the Christian philosopher." On St. Thomas as the "Christian Doctor," cf. Gilson: The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, pp. 23-30. Cf. also Maritain: op. cit., p. 199: "There is not only concord and harmony, but a fundamental unity, in their wisdom"; ibid., p. 219: "How foolish to oppose Thomism and Augustinianism as two systems...! The first is a system, the second is not."
87. Confessiones, I, 1 (Migne, vol. 32).

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