

Thomas Aquinas' Anthropology

Stuck in the Middle with You

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This essay will offer a brief discussion of Aquinas' view of the human soul; its relation to the body, and the question of their separation at death; whether the separated souls persist, and if they do, does such 'life after death' constitute the person still, or is it somehow less than being so? In asking such anthropological questions, at a meta-level, an endeavour is made to outflank certain possible temptations, which usually come in the guise of easy dualisms. The first, unsurprisingly, being that of soul and body, but by extension the distinction between material and immaterial, time and eternity, and so on. A term employed to that end, is that of zoology. If in the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth, doing so *ex nihilo* then all that exists falls under the conceptual reach of this term. A useful fruit of this is the exposure of a certain prejudice, progeny of said dualisms, these indicating that we are taking something wholly for granted (namely, that life after death is a good thing, that we understand what resurrection means, or that angels are superior in an univocal sense to humans). This would be a failure to take up and enact the paradox of theology which entails a radical *epoché*, one that confronts the Abrahamic faiths, for they entail speaking about that which cannot be spoken.

Introduction

Thomas Aquinas' anthropology can be thought of in terms of the ancient idea of *mixis*, *mikton*, or *krāsis*, wherein ingredients (say, form and matter) come together to generate something new, here, a person. This anthropology is tripartite: *Soma*, *Psychē*, and *Pneuma*.¹ As he puts it: 'Man is said to be [composed] from

¹ A tripartite anthropology goes back to Plato; subsequently it is found in the Jewish-Hellenistic reading of Genesis 2:7, most evident in St Paul (1 Thess. 5:23). Most instructive is that Philo of Alexandria, Flavius Josephus and St Paul writing at the same time, but from very different perspectives, all employ a tripartite division of the human.

soul and body, *as from two things some third thing is constituted* which is neither of those [two]; for a man is neither soul nor body.² Aquinas says the soul has to be form of the body and spirit. Moreover, he brings out a twofold act-potency relationship, one hylomorphic: prime matter in relation to substantial form; and the other, the essence – composed of matter and form – serving as a potential principle to substantial act of existing – *esse*. The composite essence is actualised, and at the same time receiving and limiting, appropriately. Moreover, it is of the essence of the human soul to be a substantial form of the body *and* concomitantly a spirit.³ Hence it is on the horizon of the corporeal/incorporeal: ‘The human soul is a kind of horizon, and a boundary, as it were, between the corporeal world and the incorporeal world.’⁴ Likewise, the soul ‘exists on the horizon of eternity and time.’⁵ In this way, it is fitting for God to become human more so than, say, an angel. There is here something analogous to a marriage of soul and body, wherein they become one flesh, as it were. Aquinas certainly challenges what we take to be common sense, namely, the absolute distinction between material/immaterial, for instance, and outflanks any simple dualism. Here is a telling example: ‘corporality, considered as a substantial perfection in man is no other than the rational soul.’ Or, ‘corporeity in man is the intellective soul.’⁶ Indeed, elsewhere Aquinas undermines both the atheist and the religious in terms of their imaginations, for both tend to think of the soul being in the body, the only difference is that the atheist insists it cannot be found, and therefore is non-existent. It is true that form is in matter, but it also contains matter. Thus, he says, ‘though corporeal things are said to be “in” something as in what contains, nevertheless spiritual things contain those in which they are: as the soul contains the body.’⁷ The crucial point being that rather than any ghost in the machine (Gilbert Ryle’s phrase), it is more true to speak of *a machine in the ghost*. Conversely, the soul is a part of the human.⁸ Crucially, there is no intermediary between soul and body, so maybe it is more a question of hendiadys rather than strict dualism.⁹

Modern imaginations are, however, sometimes prone to argue in a rather sophomoric manner. For example, we will read stories about those such as Phineas Gage, apocryphal or not, wherein the poor railway worker was struck by a line of track, which passed right through his head. Subsequently his personality changed, and so on. The point of concern is the inference, whether explicit or implicit, that such cases point to the nonexistence of the soul. This seems most myopic and culturally laden, labouring under the impression that today is

² *EE*, Ch. 2.

³ *DV*, q. 16, art. 1., ad 13.

⁴ *In III Sent* prol.

⁵ *ScG II*, c. 86, n. 12.

⁶ *SCG IV*, 81; *Q. De spirt. Creat* a3 ad 17m.

⁷ *ST*, 1.8. ad 2.

⁸ *ST I*, q.75. a.4.

⁹ *Q. de anima*, q. 9.

obviously more advanced than the past. Aquinas tells us, 'if certain corporeal organs have been harmed, the soul cannot directly understand either itself or anything else as when the *brain* is injured.'¹⁰ We can conclude that the above inference is purely cultural or one of mere fashion, rather than wholly thought through. The co-dependency of soul and body is what is to be expected of such a marriage beyond union. The body, for Aquinas, is *plenitudo animae*, in that 'the natural body is a certain fullness of the soul. Indeed, if the members did not find their completion in the body, the soul could not fully exercise its operations.'¹¹ This marriage, or *mixis*, challenges our understanding of not only the human here *in via*, but post-mortem also. First, it should be noted that for Aquinas the being of the rational soul, 'which is that of the composite, remains in the soul even when the body is dissolved; when the body is restored in the resurrection, it is returned to the same being (*esse*) which persisted in the soul.'¹² This being analogous to how we are restored each day, materially speaking (namely, molecular turnover); and more, rise from a most dark sleep every morning. Yet there is more to this, more because we are tempted often to interpret such matters from the need of the body, from its perspective, that is from a state of corruption, from which the soul comes to rescue it. This is true, no doubt, but the body comes to rescue the soul also, saving it from its unnatural state: 'For it is natural to the soul to be united to the body, it is unnatural (*contra naturam*) to it to be without a body, and as long as it exists without a body it does not have the perfection of its nature.'¹³ The separated soul is amputated, handicapped, maimed, or in ontological trouble.¹⁴ Why? Because for Aquinas the soul is not *me*: 'It is plain that a human being naturally desires his own salvation. But the soul, since it is a part of the human body is not the whole human being, and my soul is not I (*anima mea non sum ego*). Even if the soul were to achieve salvation in another life, it would not be I or any other human being.'¹⁵ The soul as a part cannot be predicated of the whole (*nulla pars integralis praedicatur de suo toto*). It is for this reason that any separated soul has only a general and confused knowledge.¹⁶ Just as Aquinas rejected ideogenic illumination in this life, even in

¹⁰ *De spiritualis creaturis*, a.2; emphasis mine

¹¹ I Sent., dist. 3. Q.2, a.3, ad 1: 'Anima enim est natura ipsius corporis.'

¹² SCG, Book IV, 306, n. 11.

¹³ ST I, q.118, a.3.

¹⁴ Bernhard Blankenhorn calls it handicapped; *The Mystery of Union with God. Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015, p. 224; and Bazán says the soul is in 'ontological trouble'; "The Highest Encomium of Human Body", *Littera, sensus, sententia. Studi in onore del prof. C.J. Vansteenkiste*, ed. A. Lobato, Milan: Studia Universitatis S. Thomae de Urbe 33, 1991, pp. 99–116, at p. 109 [I would like to thank Vivian Boland OP for very kindly sending me this article]. Spencer calls the separated soul 'maimed'; Mark K. Spencer, "A Reexamination of the Hylomorphic Theory of Death", *The Review of Metaphysics*, 63 (2010), pp. 843–70, at p. 853.

¹⁵ In I Cor, 15.2.

¹⁶ See ST I,89, a.3 c.

paradise,¹⁷ so that remains true for the separated soul, and that is why according to him, God must provide images for the soul, and even then, because this is in a sense *praeter natural*, it remains confused. This signals the most intimate unity between soul and body.

Above we noted that our imaginations, atheist or otherwise, tend to think of the soul being in the body, and according to some, it would seem, the soul is immortal, naturally, as it were, being something divine. That being the case we fail to think of it as creaturely. In addition, the presumption is that immortality is automatically a good thing, or rather what it entails. Those who argue for the soul's immortality do so because, for them, it is understood as an independent spiritual substance. We have seen above that for Aquinas things are more complicated, indeed his hylomorphism presents a quandary in this debate. For him, following Aristotle but going beyond him, the soul exists by way of the act or *esse* of a composite, or for us a *mixis*, and is somehow the subject of this act of being (*Ipsa est quae habet esse*). The soul, in short, is subsistent, a subsistent form, more precisely. The danger here being that such subsistence transmogrifies into a substance *per simpliciter*. This would fracture hylomorphism and render Aquinas' position a stark form of Platonism. In *Questions on the Soul*, Aquinas asks can the soul be both a form and an entity – a *hoc aliquid*. In this text and those that follow, he argues that, yes, the soul can indeed subsist *per se*, but crucially it is not complete in either a species nor the genus of substance.¹⁸ Consolidating this, Thomas insists that the soul is intrinsically, that is, naturally, the form of the body. That being the case, both body and soul act as co-principles of the composite. It should be recalled that being is for the sake of operation, therefore the soul is united to the body so that its faculties can work. '[T]he union of the soul and body does not take place for the sake of the body, namely, that the body may be ennobled, but for the sake of the soul, which needs the body for its own perfection'.¹⁹ So much for Phineas Gage. To repeat, the soul being the form of the body gives two perfections here, one substantial, namely, that its nature will be, that is, it will be the soul, and an accidental perfection, as it were, which is its operation, namely, achieving intellectual knowledge.²⁰ The human soul does not naturally occur on its own; in this way it is like a normal body part, say, a severed hand, an unnatural state, no doubt. The difference being of not only the ability to inhere (as a type of relation) but to subsist; therefore we can understand its unique mode of being as one of mixed subsistence, as an incomplete substance, which is exhausted by the human soul.²¹ No other creature exemplifies this.

¹⁷ *ST*, I, q.94, a.2.

¹⁸ *Q. de anima*, a.1.

¹⁹ *QDSC*, p. 77.

²⁰ See *Q. de anima*, a.1, ad 7m.

²¹ See Jeffrey E. Brower, *Aquinas's Ontology of the Material World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, Part V.

Hendiadys: 'Up' and 'Down'

Aquinas' account of the soul is concerned to avoid eclectic Aristotelianism wherein the soul is both a complete Platonic spiritual substance and a complete Aristotelian form. In different texts his approach is often in reverse, being so because of the concern at hand. The two main approaches are either one beginning with *descent* (into matter) or one beginning with *ascent* (from matter); the latter begins with the soul as form, whilst the former treats the soul as an intellectual substance or creature. Most of the texts involve both ascent and descent, except perhaps in the *Compendium of Theology* which mostly concerns itself with descent as it is not really interested in Aristotelian form, given its remit. The two approaches can also be characterised as being either more theological (descent) or philosophical (ascent), though never as wholly distinct but more in terms of emphasis. There is a unity here, in terms of anthropology, despite philosophy beginning with form and then defining the soul as the highest form, which begins to transcend matter in its operations;²² whilst theology begins with the soul as the lowest of the intellectual substances that requires matter to operate. This mixed approach converges on the same truth. Analogously, just as the lowest intellectual substance must be in union with matter, so too must the soul after death. Christians call this need resurrection. Again, Aquinas employs both methods to avoid certain problems. By beginning with form, that is with ascent, Platonic dualism is avoided, for without ascent it would seem there is no reason for a soul to be embodied, except accidentally. Substance, or descent, avoids materialism, wherein there would be no soul, and therefore no human at all. The highest form concludes that the soul is complete in existence, it has an incorruptibility, but is incomplete as an essence, as it is only substance in a loose way. In other words, the soul does not need to be *in alio* to subsist, it has *per se* existence, although it does need to be *in alio* to be complete, for only the composite, the *mixis*, qualifies as substance. Accordingly, the soul needs the body, or matter, hence descent (or indeed resurrection). On the other hand, form as essence is complete, but not as existence, hence ascent: The body needs the soul.

A most telling passage from Aquinas informs us that 'the highest point of the lowest always touches the lowest point of the highest, as Dionysius makes clear in the seventh chapter of *De Divinis Nominibus*; and consequently the human soul, which is the lowest in the order of spiritual substances, can communicate its own actual being to the human body, which is the highest dignity, so that from the soul and the body, as from form and matter, a single being results.'²³ This idea of touching is most reminiscent of Plato's *ἐφάπτηται*, which recalls Heraclitus' fragment, 'The way up and down is one and the same (*ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία και*

²² See *ST I*, 76, 1.

²³ *QDSC*, 2, italics mine.

ὠντή)²⁴ Aristotle tells us ‘For up and down are not the same for all things.’²⁵ One need only think of Jacob’s Ladder (צקע *Sulam Yaakov*) here, to aid our imaginations, for the angels ascend and descend, and the reverse. Zoologically this is certainly the case, whether, for example, when considering angels, the separated soul, or a plant. The unity of descent and ascent, of form and matter, body and soul, philosophy and theology, is brought out when we realise that hierarchy is suffused with both Proclus’ idea of converting love (*eros epistreptikos*) and providential love (*eros pronoetikos*), by which ‘lower’ and ‘higher’ serve each other. And the beautiful is to be found in the least. As St Gregory of Nyssa says, ‘there is produced, by virtue of a superior wisdom, a mixture (*suanakrasis*) of the comprehensible with perceptible creation, so that *nothing in creation is rejected*.’²⁶

We should note that the unicity of both ‘up’ and ‘down’ is intimated insofar as the soul and prime matter are analogous to each other – in terms of potentiality, as Aquinas says they are.²⁷ Prime matter, which is pure potency for Aquinas, and therefore lacks all form, desires form. Indeed, it is nothing other than an orderedness to form and act,²⁸ the corollary being that matter is ecstatic. Similarly, soul (theology or descent), and body (philosophy or ascent) are born together. By way of an aside, we can maybe discern such a complementary approach in the Gospels wherein the angel Gabriel, on the one hand, announces the Incarnation to poor, Jewish shepherds, which we can think of as descent or condescension, in this more strictly theological sense. On the other hand, the wealthy Gentiles, namely, the ‘Wise men’, do not receive any such message. In the end, though, they must be told by a Jew where the King is born. It may be fruitful to think of the marriage of descent and ascent in this way. We have, in a sense, for Aquinas, *form or act all the way down*.²⁹ Concomitantly, we have *matter all the way up*, at least in terms of potentiality or the real distinction between essence and existence: except for God.

Foraging for Act: Ontological Dependence

The human soul has what Bazán calls a double ontological status: existentially independent (*esse etiam suum est supra corpus eleuatum*), witnessed in its intellectual operations, which transcend matter, yet dependent on the body (*complementum sue speciei esse non potest absque corporis unione*).³⁰ The depend-

²⁴ Heraclitus, 61 [F38].

²⁵ *De anima*, II, 415b28–416a5.

²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Oratio catechetica* 6.2; emphasis mine.

²⁷ See, for example, *DV*, q.8.6.c.

²⁸ In *Phys. Lect.* 15, n. 138. Also see SCG II, c.23.

²⁹ See Robert Pasnau, *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 131.

³⁰ *Q de anima*, q. 8; see Bazán, “The Human Soul. Form and Substance? Thomas Aquinas’

ence of the soul is the very point of commonality between Plato and Aristotle that Aquinas discerns so well, and he is able to do so because his imagination is truly metaphysical and not physical, which seems to subdue any operational principles by subjugation to spatiality: Here as opposed to there; up contrasted to down, in an almost mechanical fashion. Theology must think in lateral terms, for we never know what will qualify as first or last, up or down, consecrated or mundane. Resonating with what follows, Joseph Ratzinger is correct to say that, 'The anthropology desired should weld together Plato and Aristotle precisely at the points where their doctrines were mutually opposed.'³¹

What is most crucial here is the prioritising of actuality (*ἐνέργεια*) over potentiality (*δύναμις*), which is more important than that of form and matter; indeed it somewhat relativises those concepts. This way, it matters less if something is material or immaterial, except zoologically speaking, but rather whether it is in act or not, and in which way. This democratises Plato's and Aristotle's approaches. For we think of Aristotle in terms of sensibility actualising the soul in terms of all knowledge, including self-knowledge. That is, without sensible species the soul remains unknown to its very self. It must be actualised. From a wholly different Platonic perspective, or so we are told, the soul looks to higher spiritual intellects, and in so doing leaves the sensible behind. In short, Aristotle has the soul, which does not know itself, look down for sensible species, whilst Plato has the soul look up to higher self-knowing angelic intellects. In one sense this is true, though I am hesitant to admit that, for its truth is minimal as both Plato and Aristotle pursue the same quarry. Aquinas realises this and works out a fitting mediation of the two trajectories. If we truly prioritise act over potency, abandoning additive logic, wherein we spatially build and demarcate, and return to our zoology, we realise that the soul though looking to immaterial intellects does so to look for actualisation – this is the commonality between Plato and Aristotle, one that can be emphasised when recalling that such angelic intellects belong also to the *menagerie of creation*.³² To that end, both approaches are illuminationist just as they are both empiricist (higher intellects are creatures after all). Moreover, it should be recalled that though angelic creatures are higher than us zoologically, they are not so theologically, for it is we humans as rational animals who judge the angels (1 Cor. 6:3), doing so as it is we who bear the *imago dei*. The zoology of creatures varies greatly, but all *creatures forage for act*, except, of course, God, characterised by Aquinas as *ipsum esse subsistens* or *actus purus*. This foraging renders creatures analogically similar for they have the same, one Creator.

Critique of Eclectic Aristotelianism", *Archives D'Histoire et Littéraire du Moyen Age*, 64 (1997), pp. 95–126, at p. 123.

³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology. Death and Eternal Life*, 2nd edition, trans. Michael Waldstein, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007, p. 148.

³² See In DC, prop.15.

Soul as Forma (simplex) and Motor (multiplex)

The soul is of course a form, as it is in this sense simple (*simplex*), and therefore static, as there is no potentiality for change, as such. Yet the soul is to be treated as dynamic when considered as principle of its own operations (*operationis principium*) in relation to it being a potential whole (*totum potentiale*).³³ This distinction arises for Aquinas in this way: ‘Therefore, in the nature of corporeal things matter does not participate *per se* in *esse*, but through form: for form coming to matter makes it actually exist (*ipsum esse actu*) as soul to body. Thus, in composite things we can consider a twofold act and a twofold potency. First, matter is a potency with respect to form, and form is its act. Second, nature as constituted by matter and form is a potency with respect to its *esse* insofar as it receives it.’³⁴ For Aquinas, essence includes both matter and form, hence the soul is not the essence, as its *ratio* does not include matter with which it is contrasted, and to which it gives *esse*, as act to potency. To reuse a quote: ‘Man is said to be [composed] from soul and body, *as from two things some third thing is constituted* which is neither of those [two]; for a man is neither soul nor body.’³⁵ There are three principles here: *esse*, form and matter, and whilst these account for the unity of any composite being, in so doing preclude any notion of parts, it would seem. The question arises then as to how any being is to operate; and after all, for Aquinas, being is proportioned to operation. Kahm presents the conundrum well, ‘In a certain sense, operation is essential to the soul; in a certain sense, however, it is not.’³⁶ Put differently, the soul cannot be essentially operation as it is simple, yet in terms of final causality operation must be essential, for a being is what it does, or is meant to do. Moreover, for Aquinas, a living being – here the human – is by definition a self-mover; after all for the stone to move we kick it, but not the animate, necessarily.³⁷ Given Aquinas’ defence of Aristotle’s unmoved mover, of which there can be only one, then on pain of contradiction, and even though simple, the soul cannot move *per se*, or better, be the *per se* cause of its own motion. Aquinas gives the example of a how a hot thing cannot heat as a whole or all at once, as that would mean it is actually hot and potentially hot simultaneously.³⁸ Aquinas offers three forms of *per accidens* motion, and it is the last of these that is of interest here, namely, that which moves according to a part. This way, the soul, which is simple, yet finite, must move according to its

³³ *Q de anima*, q. 9.

³⁴ *QDSC*, a.1.

³⁵ *EE*, Ch. 2.

³⁶ Nicholas Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotion’s Participation in Reason*, Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019, p. 33. Kahm offers the only real, sustained engagement with this, to which we are indebted.

³⁷ *ST I*, q.18.

³⁸ *In VIII Phys.*, I.7.

parts. But how does the soul have such parts? A soul does insofar as the parts are thought of as powers, and it is in this way that the soul is not to be approached as *forma* but as *motor*, and in so being as *multiplex*.

Now, it may be thought that such powers are merely ways of describing the soul in its manifold operations, but this cannot be the case, as that would be equivalent to arguing that an essence was its *esse*. As Aquinas points out, 'As *esse* itself is the certain actuality of an essence, so *operari* is the actuality of an operative potency or power. Each of them is in act this way: essence according to *esse*, power according to *operari*. But since no creature is its own *operari*, its own *esse*, for that is only true of God, it follows that the operative power of no creature is its essence. Only in God is essence the same as operative power.'³⁹ This fundamental distinction seems to fall without notice, and such neglect causes many unnecessary problems. The distinction between a soul and its powers can be noticed between the powers themselves; one power moves another, such as reason moving the irascible. This would not be possible 'if all the powers were the very essence of the soul, since the same thing in the same respect does not move itself, as Aristotle proved. It follows therefore that the powers of the soul are not its very essence.'⁴⁰ We would not mean to argue, surely, that reason and the irascible were the same as moving and moved? Following his teacher Albert the Great, Aquinas argues that the powers are predicamental accidents, as they are not a substance, nor the soul's essence. Echoing God as *bonum diffusivum sui*, and as the soul's *esse* flows into the body or matter, here the powers of the soul flow from the subject or its form, but do not signify the essence of that soul. Such powers are the soul's parts in relation to total power (*totalis virtutis eius*),⁴¹ or *totum potentiale* (potential whole), and not parts in relation to its essence. Accordingly, the type of being they possess is in *esse*. The potential whole is to be contrasted with a universal whole which is present to each part according to its whole essence and power; Aquinas' example being 'man is animal'. A second whole is an integral whole. Here, the whole cannot be a predicate of any part either in terms of essence or power. For Aquinas, this would be equivalent to saying, 'the wall is the house.'⁴² The potential whole is, for Aquinas, the middle way, and accordingly can be predicated of a part in terms of its whole essence but not its whole power, such as when we say a soul is its own powers. 'The soul is a form insofar as it is act and likewise insofar as it is a mover, and thus it is according to the same thing that it is a form and that it is mover, but nevertheless its effect insofar as it is a form and insofar as it is a mover differs.'⁴³ Crucially Aquinas says, 'In consequence of the fact that the soul, then, is the form of the

³⁹ QDSC, a.11.

⁴⁰ QDSC, a.11.

⁴¹ See Kahm, *Aquinas on Emotion's Participation in Reason*, p. 44.

⁴² QDSC, a.11.

⁴³ *Q de anima*, q. 9. ad. 2.

body, there cannot be any medium between the soul and the body. But in consequence of that fact that it is a mover [*motor*], from this point of view nothing prevents many media there: for obviously the soul moves the other members of the body through the heart, and also moves the body through the spirit.⁴⁴ Or again (and here is the tripartite anthropology), 'It must be said that the soul is said to be united to the body through the spirit, insofar as it is the mover, because that which is moved first by the soul in the body is the spirit.'⁴⁵ The spirit moves the body, whilst the body moves the soul. 'The soul grants substantial *esse* to each of them [parts] according to that mode that is fitting for the operation of these parts [...] it is necessary that the order of instruments be according to operations [...] But insofar as it grants *esse* to the body, it immediately grants substantial and specific *esse* to all the parts of the body. And this is why many say, namely, that the soul is united to the body as form without medium, but as a mover through a medium.'⁴⁶

This begins to throw light on our anthropology: 'Since it is the same form which grants *esse* to matter which is also the principle of action, and because each thing acts insofar as it actually is, the soul, as is true of any other form, must also be a principle of operation. It must be noted that, because operation comes from something that actually exists, in accord with the level of forms in the perfection of existing is their grade of power of operation. And insofar as some form enjoys greater perfection in granting *esse* to that degree does the form have a greater power in acting.'⁴⁷ To repeat: as principle of substance the soul is without parts, but as principle of operations or actions it has parts. The higher the grade of act or form and therefore *esse* of material existence, the more complex the actions, as greater difference will be known, cognised and thereby united.

Interestingly, on the one hand, for Aquinas, the higher can do that which is less, as in 'he who can carry a thousand pounds can carry one hundred.'⁴⁸ Hence, the human can do that which both animals and plants can, and this ability stems from the human's characteristic ability, namely, the intellectual soul. So, there is something of an inter-species aristocracy. Yet on the other hand, there is an intra-species aristocracy too, in terms of nobility of soul, but at the same time there is an intra-democracy in terms of the very individual, one that is more than useful as analogy for how different modes of *scientia* work, or the many sciences, just as it does for how Christian sacraments work (see below). Most importantly, the highest powers of the soul do not virtually contain that which lower powers can do (here Aquinas follows his teacher, Albert). The soul certainly contains virtually all powers, in terms of its essence, for the soul causes the many to flow from

⁴⁴ QDSC, q. 3.

⁴⁵ SPC, art. 3, ad. 9.

⁴⁶ Q de anima, q. 9.

⁴⁷ Q de anima, q. 9.

⁴⁸ See QDV, q.10, a.1.

its unity. Crucially though, if we speak in terms of the powers themselves there is no reduction. That is to say, the higher power does not contain the lower. Put differently, the power of the potential whole (*totum potientiale*) is not abrogating the validity of the lower. Reason cannot do what kidneys do, no matter how hard it thinks. The lower are not united in the higher (this is true for *scientia* also). The soul as principle of all powers possessed contains them virtually as their sole cause, but does not contain them formally. Aristotle's image of the tetragon in a pentagon is apposite. Indeed, for Aquinas there is no continuum on which powers reside, likewise the sciences.⁴⁹ The soul unites powers as it delegates to them independence, otherwise independence would not make any sense: a kidney on a bicycle. Yet, independence is for Aquinas real: 'If there are two people, one of whom writes one part of a book and the other another part of, then "we wrote that book" is not literally correct, but a synecdoche inasmuch as the whole stands for the part.'⁵⁰ The soul, in terms of being a mover, is master of one (intellect), and Jack of some.

As alluded to above, this logic is transferable. Very briefly, the Cyriline⁵¹ understanding of the hypostatic union, adopted by Aquinas, renders Christ's humanity a proper instrument of his divinity analogically comparable to the relation between body and soul. This is also apparent in the causal efficacy of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, as articulated by Aquinas after his 'Greek turn' (from the *Summa Contra Gentiles* II onwards), wherein at Orvieto he read both St John Damascene and St Cyril of Alexandria, along with the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon; a shift echoed perfectly by his concomitant development of his understanding of Christ's two wills (again, as a result of *ressourcement* – here Constantinople III), the human one entailing freedom (*liberium arbitrium*), and being an *instrumentum divinitatis* just as the sacraments are. It should be recalled that Aquinas was *the only* scholastic to employ Damascene's phrase. In so doing, he was rejecting *sine qua non* causality, or covenantal causality, which arguably gave rise to an occasionalist interpretation that itself fell into nominalism eventually. Contrary to this, instrumental causality consists in the profound relation of downward participation, between Christ's humanity and the sacraments as instrumental efficient causes of salvation. Again, this is analogous to the soul and its powers. In sum, Christ's humanity, the sacraments, and the soul's powers, all entail efficacy, indeed instrumental efficient causality. Yet this does not encroach on Christ's divinity, or the grace which the sacraments bestow, nor the priority of the soul. Conversely, Christ's divinity, God's grace, or the soul do not subjugate or abrogate their instruments.

⁴⁹ In *De sensu et sensate*, 18: 449a9.

⁵⁰ *ST*, III, q.67, a.6, ad 3.

⁵¹ St Cyril of Alexandria.

The Soul as a (Constitutional) Monarch

As discussed above, the soul betrays that it is not fully immersed in matter, doing so in two seemingly contradictory ways. First, *dependence*, which is twofold: it requires a body (what is either birth or death after all), and one with requisite operations (and therefore health). In addition, it requires *species* to know itself, that is, to be actualised – and as we know, here Plato and Aristotle are joined, and in this way so is the soul in terms of operation pre-mortem (pre-lapsarian and post-lapsarian) and post-mortem (pre- and during beatitude). Second, *independence*, again twofold: The soul has its own independent act of being (*esse per se absolutum, non dependens a corpore*); and operates without an organ. Its independence accommodates or picks out its dependence and vice versa. So, we can argue that a certain operation of the soul transcends matter, yet conversely this very achievement signals and highlights, if we take the time to notice, its sheer dependence on that which it is not, as such. Again, the integral human is from the beginning most dependent and most independent. The former, because it is only partially determined by a general process, that is, its species requires help, not in terms of enhancement, but just in terms of its integral nature, as it was created in grace. Zoologically, the human's altriciality speaks volumes to this. Yet, this vulnerability is the source of its exceptionalism.

As we know, for Aquinas, the soul as form cannot account for the soul as mover, and again the same soul as principle has two effects: *forma et motor*. That the soul as form, or as essence, is not present to the whole opens up this space for the soul in terms of operation, which in turn signals the dependence on the body, and at the same time its operations that transcend the body – the vulnerability (dependence) and the exceptional excellence, in terms of non-bodily operations (independence) are the same, only looked at from different angles, arguably hendiadys once again. In other words, the human can say the word 'body'. It can only do so because of the body, yet in not being the body, it can transcend and thereby know it. The word 'matter' signifies just such a truth. Pure matter is a contradiction in terms, of course, hence there is strict correlation with form. Here lies the problem or difficulty with materialism. This is most obvious when we realise that 'matter' is its own undoing: whispered and an avalanche of contradiction ensues, engulfing every bid for location.

Throwing light on the above, having articulated Aquinas' veneration of the body so successfully elsewhere,⁵² Carlos Bazán identifies an apparent tension wherein the unity of body and soul is threatened; a threat only removed, he argues, in his more mature writing, namely, in the *Summa* or partly at the same time in *Q de anima*. In these later texts, Aquinas is clear that the human was only ever gratuitously immortal in the garden: 'before the original sin the

⁵² See Bazán, "The Highest Encomium of Human Body", pp. 113–4.

human body was incorruptible not by nature but by a gift of grace.⁵³ By contrast in earlier works, such as *De malo* for instance, incorruptibility is correlative to the soul or form, and corruptibility to matter, which, it would seem, implies a dualistic tendency in his anthropology: 'insofar as immortality is natural for us (because of our soul), death and corruption [due to our material nature] are unnatural for us.'⁵⁴ Bazán is correct, at first blush, but given more general considerations or wider parameters this seems not to be the case, quite the opposite. Here are just a few points of consideration. First, we know that it is not the body that sins but the soul. Also, the soul, and by extension the angels' incorruptibility seems to be more natural, or fitting, but this is easy to misread. First, some angels fell, we are told, and in terms of the supposed conflagration at the end of time when death itself is thrown into the lake of fire, we can suppose the fallen angels, whom the humans will judge, are in a spot of bother, too. Yes, they are *naturally* incorruptible, zoologically speaking, but not immortal, metaphysically speaking, as we know they are creatures, and in so being, their essence and existence are distinct in real terms.

The form of the human, its soul, naturally transcends matter, therefore subsistence is fitting. Yet, this is only a partial anthropological reading of the soul. This soul is such that it cannot but subsist in a truncated manner. Corruptibility correlated to matter, whilst incorruptibility correlated to form is, therefore, purely *descriptive* in terms of appropriate operations. That the incorruptibility of the human in the garden was by grace is telling, for it shows that all creatures are by God, and not by means of divine jealousy, but rather the sheer generosity of creation. The eschaton of course tells us just that, for corruptibility will end only as we subsist more fully in God. Consequently, Bazán is wrong to extract a philosophical thesis from this – since there isn't one to be had. Due to the soul's natural operation it speaks already of transcendence, something birthed by its body or matter, form's co-principle. Bazán is too quick to read through a modernist lens, wherein being incorruptible is deemed a most obvious good. Well, not for the soul: that the soul can be rendered separate is its corruptibility, metaphysically, something echoed in less extreme situations, for instance, its simultaneous independence from, yet simultaneous dependence on, matter (see above).

Indeed, those such as St Irenaeus will argue that if indeed humans had been naturally incorruptible, sin would have been also and redemption seemingly impossible. Death, or better, corruptibility, is not univocal and cannot be for theology, whose economy along with its metaphysics, is one of *mixis*. After all,

⁵³ *ST I*, q.76, a.5 ad.

⁵⁴ *Q de malo*, q.5, a.5, v. 258–270; see B. Carlos Bazán, "A Body for the Human Soul", *Philosophical Psychology in Arabic Thought and the Latin Aristotelianism of the 13th Century*, ed. L. Xavier López-Farjeat and J.A. Tellkamp, Paris: Vrin, 2013, pp. 243–77, at p. 274.

we are instructed to 'let the dead bury their dead.' (Matt. 8:22). In one sense, corruptibility of humans is tied to their matter, but again, only in this very particular sense. To repeat, *the soul is corrupted in being separated*; it could not, in terms of its operation, be otherwise, for the alternative could only be utter annihilation. Therefore, the form its corruption must take, zoologically speaking, is separation. Yet if one argues for a separated soul that is in some sense, indeed any sense, complete, or untouched by death (the survivalist position, so-called), then dualism is unleashed, and disintegration follows. Theologically this is comparable to the heresy of Docetism, which comes from the Greek *dokein* (to seem) – we only seem to be human, or to be alive, for the soul's relationship with the body will be epiphenomenal at best.

Bazán again displays his own modernism when underplaying the fact that for Aquinas the matter which he notes as naturally corruptible is a part of the *one* human. To be consistent he would have to deny Aquinas' point that it is the soul which transcends *in via* in terms of its operation, having no need of an organ (yet standing in need of an operational body). Only if Bazán disputes these distinct modalities pre-mortem, which he would not, then he should not misread the different modalities of form and matter post-mortem. Put another way, he would have to deny the soul's particular 'talents' here and now, and thereby indulge in a radical democracy wherein, for instance, the sensitive was able to do what the rational soul does. He does not do this; hence he is begging the question when he does so post-mortem. In short, his zoology is truncated, and is not theological enough, lacking the requisite *epoché*; here, suspending our natural understanding of life and death.

Seeing God and Our Neighbour

In relation to the beatific vision, something comes to the fore, something of radical consequence that throws light on the above. Aristotle asked: in what does happiness consist? For Aquinas, our final end is God, therefore objectively speaking, this brings the appetites to rest. Aristotle might have understood this, we can speculate. Aquinas, however, deems this Aristotelian notion of beatitude imperfect. Why? Because the speculative sciences, in this case contemplation, cannot fulfil all of happiness. We do not simply want to know that God exists, which we now do, but the human wishes to know His very essence. We desire something which is beyond our finite capacities. For Aquinas, such an impossibility is satisfied by way of God's grace, unsurprisingly. In the *Summa* Aquinas asks whether the body is required for the happiness of man.⁵⁵ We know by now the answer is yes. In terms of perfect beatitude, though, a peculiar implication

⁵⁵ See *ST*, I, II, q.4, a.5.

creeps in. Perfection can belong to something in two ways: by being part of its essence, or by being required for its perfect existence. The body, of course, cannot be considered as belonging to the essence of beatitude objectively speaking, for that essence is God. But the body is required subjectively speaking, for we say this contemplation is ours, hence after the resurrection beatitude is increased not intensively, but extensively. The human as composite is so integral that even if the separated soul enjoys the vision of God, the body extends this beatitude. It is now the human's beatitude. Arguably, for Aquinas this is a philosophical position, insofar as he has argued by way of hylomorphism for the inadequacy of the separated soul. Then he makes the surprising move by arguing, from a theological point of view, that the full human brings with it its many lived dimensions – friends, family, and so on. God is the object of perfect beatitude, so any such dimensions cannot be involved in this objective essence. Yet, Aquinas does then say that this society contributes to the 'wellbeing of beatitude' – *ad bene esse beatitudinis*.⁵⁶

Consonant with this, Augustine asserted that the human intellectual soul cannot see God's substance the way angels do and speculated that such inferiority results from the soul's 'natural appetite' to govern the body. *Desiderium* or *inclinatio ad corpus* prevents the soul from fully aspiring toward God as long as it is not in control of the body,⁵⁷ or as Aquinas says, 'Perfection of beatitude cannot exist if perfection of nature is lacking [...] This is why the separated soul cannot attain the ultimate perfection of beatitude.'⁵⁸ The beatific vision of God *per essentiam* is a gift for the glorified human, not the body, nor the soul, and yet not even for the resurrected human on their own. The soul, as we know, yearns for its body, its grace overflowing into the body, and the grace of the resurrected person overflows too. 'So, if there were only one soul enjoying God it would be blessed, without having a neighbour to love. But, given a neighbour, love of that neighbour follows from perfect love of God. Consequently, friendship is related to perfect beatitude as accompanying it.'⁵⁹ Is this not Augustine's idea of the mutual company in God?⁶⁰

Body and soul are born together, and in some sense die together – they are most certainly 'friends'. Yes, for Aquinas the soul lives on, but does so in an unnatural mode of being, a broken union, which some would render a divorce, rather than catastrophic separation. Surely, that's why Christ wept for Lazarus?

⁵⁶ *ST*, I-II, 4, 8, c. See Bázan, "The Highest Encomium of Human Body", p. 116.

⁵⁷ See Saint Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vols. 41–42 of *Ancient Christian Writers. The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, ed. Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt, and Thomas Comerford Lawler, New York NY: Paulist Press, 1982, vol. 2, Book 12, Chapter 35, § 68, pp. 228–29.

⁵⁸ *QDP*, q.5, a.10

⁵⁹ *ST* 1–2, q. 4, a. 8, ad 3.

⁶⁰ See *On Genesis*, Book VIII. Also see *On the City of God*, Book 22.

'The separation of the body is said to hold the soul back from tending with all its might to the vision of the divine essence. For the soul desires to enjoy God in such a way that the enjoyment also may *overflow* into the body, as far as possible. And therefore, as long as it enjoys God without the fellowship of the body, its appetite is at rest in such a way that it would still wish the body to attain its share.⁶¹ Or, 'Man's beatitude principally consists in an act of the soul from which it *overflows* onto the body. Nevertheless, there will be a certain beatitude of our body insofar as it will see God in creatures that can be sensed, and especially in the body of Christ.⁶² The use of the word *flow* here is crucial, for it is such reunion and the beatific vision with creation itself being a result of the diffusion of the Good (*bonum diffusivum sui*), and even more certainly *ex nihilo*. 'Hence it is said by some people, and not inappropriately, that "the good, as such, is diffusive", because the better a thing is, the more does it diffuse its goodness to remote beings',⁶³ (just as it recalls the fittingness (*convenientia*) of the Incarnation). Yet for Aquinas the disembodied soul enjoys the full beatitude (qualitatively speaking) yet as mentioned, it is extended (that is, quantitatively) after the reunion of soul and body.⁶⁴

Interestingly, unlike Plotinus, for example, Aquinas insists that even when experiencing union with God, souls are not absorbed; they do not lose themselves. Indeed, both angels and separated souls can cognise other things, doing so without thereby being distracted from their experience of God.⁶⁵ This is the case because experience of God and other cognitive acts are of a different order. The resurrected, glorious body of the blessed will be adapted to the state of beatitude, apt to rejoice in the beatific vision. Delight or pleasure is not required for beatitude, Aquinas tells us. Nevertheless, in the same way that the grace of youth results from youth itself, pleasure is a concomitant of the beatific vision.⁶⁶ For Augustine, we as creatures will perhaps see each other and rejoice together joined in one society with God.⁶⁷ In the fourteenth book of *Paradiso*, waiting for the resurrection entails longing for body, above all the mother's. Bodies, therefore, are not mere adjuncts to the *visio Dei* but instruments of another vision, that of the persons the blessed loved before death reduced them all to disembodied souls. Restored flesh gives beatitude its fullness, especially as it allows communion with the *mother*: 'So prompt and eager seemed to me one chorus and the other to say 'Amen!' that well they showed desire for dead bodies – maybe not for themselves, but for the mamas, the fathers and the others dear to

⁶¹ ST I-II, q.4, a.5, ad.4.

⁶² IV Sent., dist. 49, q.2, ad.6.

⁶³ SCG III, c.24, 8.

⁶⁴ See Aquinas, ST, Ia-2ae, Q. 4, art. 6, 2:606-7.

⁶⁵ See QQ, 9.4.2.

⁶⁶ ST, Ia-2ae, Q. 4, art. 1-2, 2:604.

⁶⁷ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, Book 8, Chapter 25, § 47, p. 66.

them before becoming imperishable flames.⁶⁸ Similarly, for Aquinas, a *societas amicorum* might contribute to the accomplishment of beatitude; nonetheless, the essential glory of the beatific vision resides in God, not in humanity.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The above discussion of Aquinas' view of the soul and the body is an exercise in avoiding a domestication of anthropology, an outcome of an impoverished imagination. Regarding impoverished imaginations, the angels offer a telling metaphysical and theological lesson, in terms of theology's paradox or *epoché*, one that often goes unnoticed. When the women discover the empty tomb, the missing body of Christ, they are told: 'Do not be amazed (*ἐκθαμβείσθε*). You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here.' (Mark 16:6). Similarly, recall the passage from Acts (1:11), wherein Christ is 'lifted into Heaven.' Two angels then turn up and chastise the onlookers: 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?' The impoverished imagination suffers a distorted wonderment. What would it entail, after all, to look up to 'see' the ascension? How high would Jesus be? Likewise, the command of not to be amazed, and the parochial references, inoculates against the idea of cheap miracle. Echoing this sensibility, when Christ encountered the women at the tomb, the casualness is telling: '*chairete*', 'good morning', *the lack of drama is dramatic*, as it were. There is here, revolution, yet fittingness. This resurrected person is, after all, God incarnate, for whom creation is, yet is the same person that cried at the tomb of Lazarus. Once again, we have the marriage of ascent and descent. Yet there is no flattening, the removal of tension or specificity. The angels speak using geographical terms. It is not the Christ, but Jesus of Nazareth, likewise, in Acts, it is men of Galilee, just as further in the same verse of Mark the angels tell the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee. Most telling is that the resurrected Jesus appears as a man not as some figure all in white and glowing, as with the transfiguration. The angels at the tomb are dazzling, but not Jesus, even if he no doubt does some peculiar things. On the one hand eating broiled fish, just as he rose with his scars, validating history, and on the other, passing through walls. This is our *epoché*, as it sets our natural understandings adrift, and precludes domestication. Interestingly, this is analogous to how Plato employs a mix of language, colloquial and otherwise, to characterise participation arguably to wrongfoot our temptation to reify, technically or otherwise.⁷⁰ By so doing,

⁶⁸ *Paradiso*, Book 14, ll. 61–66, p. 188.

⁶⁹ See *ST*, 1a–2ae, Q. 4, art. 8, 2:608.

⁷⁰ For example, *metalambanein*, *metalepsis* (have or get a share of, participation, sharing); *metechein* (to have of, partake, share in); *methexis*, *metaschesis* (participation); *meteinai* (to

the *mixis* is kept in play, for here, *methexis* cannot settle down to announce one thing. To conclude, this is the marriage of transcendence and immanence, soul and body, time and eternity; the very paradox of theology which Aquinas' understanding of the soul embodies. We are indeed stuck in the middle (*metaxu*), and this is our anthropology, just as it is our metaphysics of *mixis*.

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share, add a share to – Plato does not use the later substantive *metousia*), *metadidonai* (give a share in); *koinōnein*, *koinōnia* (sharing, communion), etc.

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Abbreviations of Thomas Aquinas' Works Cited:

EE	<i>De ente et essentia</i>
In De anima	<i>Sententia super De anima</i>
In I Cor	<i>Expositio super Primam Epistolam S. Pauli ad Corinthios</i>
In DC	<i>Expositio super librum De causis</i>
In	<i>De sensu et sensate</i>
In Phys	<i>Sententia super Physica</i>
In Sent	<i>Scriptum super libros Sententiarum</i>
Q. de anima	<i>Quaestio disputata de anima</i>
QDSC	<i>Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis</i>
Q de malo	<i>Questiones disputate De Malo</i>
QDP	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei</i>
DV	<i>Quaestiones disputatae de veritate</i>
QQ	<i>Quaestiones quodlibetales</i>
SCG	<i>Summa contra Gentiles</i>
ST	<i>Summa theologiae</i>