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978-0-521-02919-3 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 11 - Man, (1a. 75-83)

Timothy Suttor

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The *Summa Theologiæ* ranks among the greatest documents of the Christian Church, and is a landmark of medieval western thought. It provides the framework for Catholic studies in systematic theology and for a classical Christian philosophy, and is regularly consulted by scholars of all faiths and none, across a range of academic disciplines. This paperback reissue of the classic Latin/English edition first published by the English Dominicans in the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the Second Vatican Council, has been undertaken in response to regular requests from readers and librarians around the world for the entire series of 61 volumes to be made available again. The original text is unchanged, except for the correction of a small number of typographical errors.

The original aim of this edition was not narrowly ecclesiastical. It sought to make this treasure of the Christian intellectual heritage available to theologians and philosophers of all backgrounds, including those who, without claiming to be believers themselves, appreciate a religious integrity which embodies hardbitten rationalism and who recognise in Thomas Aquinas a master of that perennial philosophy which forms the bedrock of European civilisation. Because of this the editors worked under specific instructions to bear in mind not only the professional theologian, but also the general reader with an interest in the 'reason' in Christianity. The parallel English and Latin texts can be used successfully by anybody with a basic knowledge of Latin, while the presence of the Latin text has allowed the translators a degree of freedom in adapting their English version for modern readers. Each volume contains a glossary of technical terms and is designed to be complete in itself to serve for private study or as a course text.

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ST THOMAS AQUINAS
SUMMA
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Latin text and English translation,
Introductions, Notes, Appendices
and Glossaries



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IN AN AUDIENCE, 13 December 1963, to a group representing the Dominican Editors and the combined Publishers of the New English *Summa*, His Holiness Pope Paul VI warmly welcomed and encouraged their undertaking. A letter from His Eminence Cardinal Cicognani, Cardinal Secretary of State, 6 February 1968, expresses the continued interest of the Holy Father in the progress of the work, 'which does honour to the Dominican Order, and the Publishers, and is to be considered without doubt as greatly contributing to the growth and spread of a genuinely Catholic culture', and communicates his particular Apostolic Blessing.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

THE TEXT AND TRANSLATION

THE TEXT is that of the Leonine edition. Some variants from the Piana edition have been given in footnotes. Manuscript variants not affecting the argument have been ignored. The punctuation and paragraphing are the editor's.

The translation is meant to stand on its own as a piece of English, but with concessions both in structure and vocabulary which recall the ritual and technical character of the Latin of the Schoolmen. For technical terms I have sometimes used paraphrase, and have sometimes found equivalents. But others remain, abrupt and awkward: 'agent intellect', for instance, becomes 'abstractive understanding'. The Glossary is designed to clarify these word-usages. Nothing much can be done about the *Weltanschauung* terms, 'act' and 'potentiality' and 'form', except transfer them, more or less baldly, into English. They were conveniences, linguistic short-cuts, like the suffix -ism in modern English, hinting a theistically unified world-view by their nimble adaptation to very different situations. Marxist dialectic contains such terms, but modern English does not.

FOOTNOTES

Those marked by asterisks give textual variants. Those signified by a superior number are St Thomas's own references, with the exception of no. 1, which refers to parallel texts in his own writings. Those signified alphabetically are editorial references and explanatory remarks. Where these last became too bulky I transferred the matter to an Appendix, with a footnote reference.

REFERENCES

St Thomas's Biblical references in this treatise are to the Vulgate, but not verbatim (cf 1a. 78, 1, obj. 3; 1a. 82, 3, obj. 3). I have given whichever English translation seemed to fit his context best. Patristic references are to Migne (PG, Greek Fathers; PL, Latin Fathers). Abbreviations to St Thomas's works are as follows:

Summa Theologiae, without title. Part, question, article, reply; e.g. 1a, 3, 2 ad 3. 1a2æ. 17, 6. 2a2æ. 180, 10. 3a. 35, 8.

Summa Contra Gentiles, CG. Book, chapter; e.g. CG 1, 28.

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Scriptum in IV Libros Sententiarum, Sent. Book, distinction, question, article, solution or *quæstiuncula*, reply; e.g. III *Sent.* 25, 2, 3, ii ad 3.

Compendium Theologiæ, Compend. Theol.

Philosophical commentaries: On Aristotle's *De Anima*, *In De an.*; on his *Metaphysics*, *In Meta.*; on the Dionysian *De divinis nominibus*, *In De div. nom.*

Quæstiones de Anima, Q. de anima.

Quæstiones quodlibetales (de quolibet), Quodl.

References to the commentaries of Albert and Bonaventure on the *Sentences* take the same form as the references to Thomas's commentary. Commentaries on the *De anima* by Albert, Averroës and Themistius are given as *In De an.* The Halesian *Summa* is given as *Summa theol.*

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INTRODUCTION

SOMETIMES the orientation of a culture depends not on poetry, myth or legend, but on a highly technical treatise. The study on the *Categories* by the Aristotelean school was a case in point, and Boëthius's theological works were another. It is safe to suggest that this treatise on man was a third.

How original was it? By our standards the bibliography is thin. St Thomas used Aristotle's *De Anima* much more than any other writing, though he frequently clarified its meaning from the *Physics*, *Metaphysics* and *Ethics*, and less frequently from the logical and minor biological treatises. From Scripture he extracted no more than a score of passages which suited his purpose. His patristic sources were Augustine, *Super Genesim ad litteram* and *De Trinitate*, and Pseudo-Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus*. He drew rather less on Nemesius and Damascene, *De fide orthodoxa*, less again on the *City of God*, on Boëthius, on the *Heavenly Hierarchy*, and on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. One is struck by how little he repeated his predecessors, and how radically he reorganized the material they had left.

In order to enter into his thought we have to live with the great debates of the early Church, when 'the Word became flesh' was translated into 'God became a man', or the axiom that nothing was healed by Christ that was not assumed by him. To maintain its position against Marcion and the Manichees had meant accepting man's vegetable life as an essential part of him. Against Arius and Apollinaris it had meant understanding man as at once body, soul and spirit, a *natural* unity of the spiritual and the psychical and the physical. Against the Monophysites it had meant making it clear that Christ, like man, has one existence but not, like man, one nature. The technical terms, the linguistic precision tools, with which the early Councils lifted the Christian system clear of confusions are the terms that govern this analysis of man: substance, nature, person, subsistence, reason, will. The Christological debate had involved the construction of a theological anthropology.

The polarization had lain between Nestorianism and Monophysitism. However distant those debates may seem from this Aristotelean-looking study of human nature, we must reject the illusion that it stemmed mainly from Aristotle. He was a useful catalyst, yet St Thomas's authentic genealogy as a psychologist is found in the first six Councils. And the present treatise, written 1266–8, roughly at the same time as his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, was a footnote to their work. It

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probably did more than any earlier document, and perhaps more than any later document, to confirm Christians in the realization that ensoulment (active) and embodiment (passive) are the same process looked at from different angles.

What was original was the analysis of the conspiracy of flesh and spirit in man's yearning for God. Making use of the old terms, he taught that 'the soul' is the one and only 'form' in which 'the body' exists, so that it is improper to treat 'them' separately. Yet the usage leaves its mark on his text, in sentences which do not do sufficiently delicate justice to the reciprocal and co-relative intelligibility of the nouns 'soul' and 'body', which are better thought of as gerunds. Indeed, he often uses the concrete noun *corpus* when we might expect the abstract *corporeitas*. So also when treating of the Trinity, he uses *persona* where there might be a reason for preferring *personalitas*; when treating the Eucharist, *substantia* instead of *substantialitas*. He recognized that concrete terms better expressed than abstract terms the conditions of actual being,¹ but another point of theological method was involved in this sort of terminological conservatism. Though, after Boëthius, the most resolute appropriator of Greek wisdom, he wrote with conscious loyalty to his tradition and culture. That was a Christian Latinity, the theological coinages of which are still sound currency. If the Fathers had not coined abstract nouns when discussing man's unity, Thomas was reluctant to do it for them. Perhaps the concrete nouns 'soul' and 'body' indicated better than anything else could have done the manner in which humanity differed from all other 'material forms'. Hence talk of 'body' and 'soul', which strongly suggest two *things* to us, colours a treatise which from beginning to end insists they are not two things but two sides of one single thing, a man.

Dogma is the signature left by a deeper encounter with God, and to understand St Thomas we have to grasp that this constitutes his point of view. The phrase 'point of view' is much abused: it is used to conceal failure to view, or even downright refusal to view. Its true meaning is surprisingly close to that of the medieval term 'abstraction'. The process we call abstraction, because Boëthius gave it that name, involves adopting a point of view. The one St Thomas adopts is less that of natural or metaphysical philosophy, though they are found, than of the theological understanding which may follow our utter commitment to God above and beyond all creation. This is a view from within faith—and in full Pauline sense. His treatise on man was what it said it was, a commentary on *Genesis* 1–3.

Four other points invite comment. First: the treatise on man shapes the

¹e.g. 1a, 13, 1 ad 2, vol. 3 of this series, ed. H. McCabe.

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whole of theology. Obviously what St Thomas will say on law, passion, sin, grace and virtue will depend on what sort of being he holds man to be, and so will his teaching on the meaning and purpose of the Incarnation. Less obviously, what we can assert of divine personality depends on what we can assert of our own. But I am thinking of a somewhat subtler though related point. While the depth of a theology may be measured by the pleasure with which it talks of God, its firmness and consequent durability as a structure will always be measured by its analysis of what man is.

Second, we may say that a true theological understanding of man comes *down* from the cloud-enshrouded mount of revelation into the daylight world of history and poetry and numbers and metaphysical logic, nevertheless it is the order of pure understanding that we describe in this way, not the order in which we construct a language to signify and communicate it.

Third, since St Thomas's day man's reflection about himself has been marked by a tradition of epistemological paralysis. By that I mean the fear (or the hope) that we know only our own thoughts, particularly when it comes to knowing heaven and hell. How can you employ faculties on an inquiry into their own trustworthiness? However I do not wish to make short work of such a long debate. All the same I will say this: every human thought carries an implicit metaphysic with it. Next, you cannot defend the value of man's hidden knowledge of the metaphysical without defending the value of his knowledge of the physical. We know the real God, He Who Is, only if we are open to the real world—and conversely.

Fourth, the same holds for the scientific revolution, man's empirio-metric analysis of his own bodily actions and reactions. Illuminating as this has been, it in no way increases or diminishes the evidence St Thomas's treatise on man is rooted in, the original matrix of primitive sense-experience and immediate reflection. Indeed, scientific advance through hypothesis and verification, being an essentially reflective process, is, like philosophical doubt, a specimen of the kind of evidence he built on. What scientific advance has thrown light on is the nature of embodiment in detail, but the immortal spirit there remains even when the Copernican earth proves to be no Privileged Centre. Man's manner of access to the non-material world of meanings is likewise not essentially affected by any light Darwinist-Mendelian theory might throw upon man's late arrival on the scene or on his genetic antecedents. Nor by the dramatic advances of modern medicine, such as endocrinology, or the electrical analysis of the brain and the nervous system, or our isolation of DNA. Equally, the psychoanalytical discovery of how wordless and unanalysed events in somebody's history determine conscious behaviour does not alter the fact that such events, including sexual drives, symbolize metaphysical stances

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whether we will or no. These crucial scientific discoveries have often caused a painful breaking of images, and have strangled much ancient rhetoric, but they have left intact the main structure of the anthropology of the following pages.