Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature

This is a major new study of Thomas Aquinas, the most influential philosopher of the Middle Ages. The book offers a clear and accessible guide to the central project of Aquinas’s philosophy: the understanding of human nature. Robert Pasnau sets the philosophy in the context of ancient and modern thought and argues for a series of groundbreaking proposals for understanding some of the most difficult areas of Aquinas’s thought: the relationship of soul to body, the workings of sense and intellect, the will and the passions, and personal identity.

Structured around a close reading of the Treatise on Human Nature from the *Summa theologiae* and deeply informed by a wide knowledge of philosophy and its history, this study will offer specialists a series of novel and provocative interpretations, while providing students with a reference commentary on one of Aquinas’s core texts.

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Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature

A Philosophical Study of *Summa theologiae*

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Contents

List of Abbreviations  page viii
Acknowledgments  x
A Note to the Reader  xi

Introduction  1
In.1. Overview  1
In.2. The scope of the study  3
In.3. On human nature  7
In.4. A philosophical study  10
In.5. The larger context  10

PART 1. ESSENTIAL FEATURES (QQ75–76)

1. Body and soul  25
   1.1. What is a human being?  25
   1.2. The ancient naturalists  30
   1.3. The argument for soul as actuality  34
   1.4. The crucial role of prime matter  40

2. The immateriality of soul  45
   2.1. The essential bodily component  45
   2.2. The rational soul as a subsistent form  48
   2.3. The sensory soul as a material form  57
   2.4. Dualism  65

3. The unity of body and soul  73
   3.1. The failure of nonreductive theories  73
   3.2. The unity of substances  79
   3.3. Body and soul as a unified substance  88
   3.4. Reductive materialism  95

4. When human life begins  100
   4.1. Conception  100
   4.2. Infusion and abortion  105
   4.3. Identity and discontinuity  120
   4.4. The plurality of forms debate  126

Excursus metaphysicus: Reality as actuality  131
PART II. CAPACITIES (Q077–83)

5. The soul and its capacities 143
   5.1. What is a capacity? 143
   5.2. The distinction between the soul and its capacities 151
   5.3. The balancing act 157
   5.4. An Aquinian circle? 160
   5.5. The hidden essence of soul 164

6. Sensation 171
   6.1. Does Aquinas have a theory of sensation? 171
   6.2. Functional analysis 172
   6.3. Sensibilia 180
   6.4. Common sense and consciousness 190

7. Desire and freedom 200
   7.1. Natural appetite 200
   7.2. Voluntary agents 209
   7.3. Rational choice 214
   7.4. Freedom 220

8. Will and temptation 234
   8.1. Is the will a myth? 234
   8.2. Must the will be rational? 235
   8.3. Weakness of will 241
   8.4. How the passions tempt us 252
   8.5. A politic rule 257

PART III. FUNCTIONS (Q084–89)

9. Mind and image 267
   9.1. Forms and intentions 267
   9.2. Seeing as: Sensation per accidens 270
   9.3. Phantasms 278
   9.4. The turn toward phantasms 284

10. Mind and reality 296
    10.1. Quiddities 296
    10.2. Empiricism and illumination 302
    10.3. Abstraction 310
    10.4. Universals 318
    10.5. Intelligere 324

11. Knowing the mind 330
    11.1. The inscrutable self 330
    11.2. Reflection, not introspection 336
    11.3. The middle ground 347
    11.4. Other minds 355
## CONTENTS

12. **Life after death** 361
   12.1. *Incorruptibilis* 361
   12.2. Can a separated soul continue to function? 366
   12.3. A foreign state 377
   12.4. Identity and resurrection 380

Epilogue: Why Did God Make Me? 394

**Notes** 405
**Bibliography** 465
**Appendix: Outline of the Treatise (ST Ia 75–89)** 485
**Index** 489
List of Abbreviations

CT Compendium theologiae (Leonine vol. 42)
InC In epistolam primam ad Corinthios
InDA Sentencia libri De anima (Leonine vol. 45,1)
InDC In libros De caelo et mundo expositio
InDDN Super librum Dionysii De divinis nominibus
InDH Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus (Leonine vol. 50)
InDMR Sentencia libri De memoria et reminiscencia (Leonine vol. 45,2)
InDSS Sentencia libri De sensu et sensato (Leonine vol. 45,2)
InDT Super Boetium De trinitate (Leonine vol. 50)
InGC In librum primum De generatione et corruptione expositio
InJoh Super Evangelium S. Ioannis lectura
InLC In librum De causis expositio
InMet In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum expositio
InNE Sententia libri Ethicorum (Leonine vol. 47)
InPA Expositio libri Posteriorum (Leonine vol. 1*,2)
InPH Expositio libri Perihermenias (Leonine vol. 1*,1)
InPh In octo libros Physicorum expositio
InPs Postilla super Psalmos (Parma vol. 14)
InRom In epistolam ad Romanos
QDA Quaestiones disputatae de anima (Leonine vol. 24,1)
QDIA Quaestio disputata de immortaliitate animae
QDM Quaestiones disputatae de malo (Leonine vol. 23)
QDP Quaestiones disputatae de potentia
QDSC Quaestio disputata de spiritualibus creaturis
QDUVI Quaestio disputata de unione verbi incarnati
QDV Quaestiones disputatae de veritate (Leonine vol. 22)
QDVC Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi
QQ Quaestiones quodlibetales (Leonine vol. 25)
SCG Summa contra gentiles
SENT In quatuor libros Sententiarum
ST Summa theologiae

(1a = first part; 1a2ae = first part of second part; etc.)

References to ST 1a typically cite just question and article (e.g., 85.3c, 29.1 ad 4).

I use an abridged version of the title to refer to the following short treatises: De substantiis separatis (Leonine vol. 40); De quattuor articulis (Leonine
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

vol. 42); De unitate intellectus, De ente et essentia, De principiis naturae, De operationibus occultis naturae, De mixtione elementorum (Leonine vol. 43).

In cases where the Leonine reference system might prove inconvenient, I provide within brackets the older Marietti reference.

Theories refers to Pasnau (1997c).
Acknowledgments

At a time when many young scholars are unemployed or badly under-employed, I’ve been fortunate (in part just plain lucky) to have had two very good jobs, one now at the University of Colorado, and the other at St. Joseph’s University, Philadelphia’s fine Jesuit college. I drafted this book, in its entirety, over the course of four years at St. Joseph’s, and I am grateful to the students, faculty, and administration there for their support and friendship. More recently, CU/Boulder has provided an ideal setting for extensively revising that first draft.

I’ve been helped by many people in writing this book, particularly by Chris Shields, who patiently read and discussed every chapter with me. Thanks for help with smaller pieces also goes to the late Norman Kretzmann and to Audre Brokes, Christina van Dyke, David Boonin, Michael Gorman, Paul Studtmann, Jeff Hause, Tom Bennigson, Renée Smith, Mark Case, Eleonore Stump, Paul Hoffman, Gyula Klima, Jack Zupko, Gabriela Carone, Richard Cameron, Brian Leftow, Rega Wood, Allen Wood, and the staff at Loome Theological Books. Participants in a fall 2000 graduate seminar at Boulder – particularly Kate Waidler and Theresa Weynand – provided much useful feedback, and the Kayden Manuscript Prize provided financial support. Finally, I was the beneficiary of generous comments from two readers for Cambridge University Press, Richard Cross and Martin Tweedale.

I began preliminary work on this book in 1994, while still in graduate school. As the book has developed, I’ve been led to pursue many issues that simply would not fit within the confines of this single volume. As a result, most of the articles I’ve published over the last few years have grown out of the chapters that follow. Though the articles occasionally borrow paragraphs from the book, they are in every case offshoots – detached appendices, if you like – rather than rough drafts. The endnotes provide references to this work where appropriate. I spent a year in 1994–95 translating Aquinas’s Commentary on Aristotle’s De anima (New Haven, 1999), which proved to be the ideal preparatory study for this book. My first book, Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages (Cambridge University Press, 1997), discusses related problems of mental representation and intentionality. Here I mostly pass over those issues.
A Note to the Reader

I have tried to write a book that would help the novice, stimulate the non-specialist, and provoke the specialist. To this end, I have sought to avoid technical philosophical jargon (both scholastic and analytic), or else to explain it clearly. Readers puzzled by a term should look to the index for cross-references. I have also tried to write each chapter, and when possible each section within a chapter, in such a way that it could be read independently. Readers interested in a particular topic can turn directly to the relevant sections, using as their guide the table of contents, the outline of the Treatise, and the summaries that precede each chapter.

I have used endnotes rather than footnotes so as not to distract from the main thread of the argument. These notes largely concern the secondary literature on Aquinas and interesting parallels to other philosophers, old and new. I have tried to make each endnote substantive enough to be worth the effort. From time to time I’ve placed important notes within boxes in the main text, to provide a kind of rest stop for the drowsing reader (or perhaps an entrance point, for the browsing reader).

In the end, this has become a rather large book (though it is much too small for the range of topics I discuss). Unfortunately, Part I is the most difficult and tendentious. But one needn’t start there. Readers most interested in perception and knowledge might begin with Chapter 6 and then skip to Chapters 9–11. Readers most interested in metaphysics will want to start with Part I, and then perhaps skip to Chapter 12. In fact, almost any order will do.