

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Ia. 50-64

Angels

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SUMMA THEOLOGICÆ, Ia. 50, I

POST HÆC CONSIDERANDUM est de distinctione corporalis et spiritualis creaturæ. Et primo de creatura spirituali, quæ in Scriptura Sacra angelus nominatur; secundo de creatura pure corporali; tertio de creatura composita ex corporali et spirituali quæ est homo.

Circa vero angelos considerandum est:

primo, de his quæ pertinent ad eorum substantiam;
secundo, de his quæ pertinent ad eorum intellectum;
tertio, de his quæ pertinent ad eorum voluntatem;
quarto, de his quæ pertinent ad eorum creationem.

De substantia autem eorum considerandum est:

et absolute;
et per comparisonem ad corporalia.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1A. 50, 1

WE COME NOW to the division of creatures into spiritual and corporeal. I will take first the purely spiritual creatures,^a which the Bible calls angels (50–64); then those that are only corporeal (65–74); thirdly, the creature called man, composed of spirit and body (75–102).

As to the angels, I consider:^b

- first, their substance^c (50–3);
- then their intellectual power (54–8);
- then their will (59–60);
- and lastly, their production in being (61–4).

Their nature will be examined:

- first, simply in itself (50);
- and then in relation to the world of bodies (51–2).

^aVarious expressions are used for angels in this treatise: they are ‘creatures’ or ‘substances’ distinguished as ‘spiritual’, ‘non-material’, ‘incorporeal’, ‘intellectual’ or ‘separated’ (i.e. from matter). St Thomas begins with ‘spiritual’ probably because this epithet was closest to biblical usage, and also because the other terms will be justified one by one in the course of the work. A spiritual being, in the sense intended, is one that understands and consciously loves. The only being of this kind we experience is man, in whom spirit combines with matter; but St Thomas saw no *a priori* reason why spirit should not exist on its own, without body, ‘pure’, and this article will set out reasons, drawn from the nature of God and the doctrine of creation, for holding that spirits of that sort do exist. He was of course aware that in any case the 4th Lateran Council of the Church in 1215 had affirmed the existence of a ‘spiritual’ part of creation distinct from man (see *infra*, 51, 1, note *a*).

^bA preview division of the whole treatise. Note that the problem of evil in the angels is tacitly included under that of their creation.

^cSubstance: that which is in itself and not in another as in a subject. But here the term is used more loosely to mark off the consideration of angels as ‘things’, which will precede the study of their activities (Questions 54–60) and their origin (Questions 61–4).

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 50, 1

Quaestio 50. de substantia angelorum absolute

Circa substantiam vero eorum absolute quinque quaeruntur:

1. utrum sit aliqua creatura omnino spiritualis et penitus incorporea;
2. supposito quod angelus sit talis, quaeritur utrum angelus* sit compositus ex materia et forma;
3. quaeritur de multitudine eorum;
4. de differentia eorum ad invicem;
5. de immortalitate seu incorruptibilitate ipsorum.

articulus 1. utrum angelus sit omnino incorporeus

AD PRIMUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod angelus non sit omnino incorporeus. Illud enim quod est incorporeum solum quoad nos et non quoad Deum non est incorporeum simpliciter. Sed Damascenus dicit quod angelus *incorporeus et immaterialis dicitur quantum ad nos, sed comparatus ad Deum corporeus et materialis invenitur.*² Non ergo est incorporeus simpliciter.

2. Præterea nihil movetur nisi corpus, ut probatur in *Physic.*³ Sed Damascenus dicit ibidem quod angelus est *substantia intellectualis semper mobilis.*⁴ Angelus ergo est substantia corporea.

3. Præterea, Ambrosius dicit, *Omnis creatura certis suæ naturæ circumscripta est limitibus.*⁵ Circumscribi autem proprium est corporum. Ergo omnis creatura est corporea, angeli autem sunt Dei creaturæ, ut patet in *Psal.* 148, *Laudate Dominum, omnes Angeli ejus;* et postea subditur, *Quoniam ipse dixit, et facta sunt; ipse mandavit, et creata sunt.*⁶ Ergo angeli sunt corporei.

SED CONTRA est quod dicitur in *Psal.* 103,⁷ *Qui facit Angelos suos spiritus.*

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod necesse est ponere aliquas creaturas incorporeas. Id enim quod præcipue in rebus creatis Deus intendit est bonum, quod consistit in assimilatione ad Deum. Perfecta autem assimilatio

*Piana omits

¹cf CG II, 46 & 49. *De substantiis separatis* 18

²*De fide orthodoxa* II, 3. PG 94, 866. St John Damascene (†749), Doctor of the Church, last of the Greek fathers and first of the systematic theologians

³Aristotle, *Physics* VI, 4. 234b10

⁴see note 2

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE ANGELIC NATURE

Question 50. the angelic nature

There are five points of inquiry with regard to the angelic substance in itself:

1. is there any entirely spiritual and incorporeal creature?
2. granted such a thing as an angel exists, is it composed of matter and form?^d
3. are there many such beings?
4. how do they differ among themselves?
5. are they immortal (i.e. incorruptible)?

article 1. is an angel an entirely incorporeal being?

THE FIRST POINT:¹ 1. It seems that an angel is not entirely incorporeal. What is only incorporeal in relation to us and not to God, is not incorporeal from every point of view. Now John Damascene says that angels *are not incorporeal and immaterial in comparison to God, but only in comparison to us.*²

2. Besides, Aristotle has shown that only bodies are mobile,³ while Damascene, in the place quoted, says that an angel is *an ever moving intellectual nature.*⁴

3. Moreover, Ambrose says that *every creature has definite natural limits.*⁵ Now to be limited is characteristic of bodies; and the Psalmist makes it clear that angels are creatures.⁶

ON THE OTHER HAND, we read in the *Psalm, Who makes his angels spirits.*⁷

REPLY: There must be some incorporeal creatures, because what God chiefly intends in creation is to produce a goodness consisting in a likeness

¹*De Spiritu Sancto* 1, 7. PL 16, 753. St Ambrose (†397) bishop of Milan, Doctor of the Church

²*Psalms* 148, 2

³*Psalms* 103, 4

⁴Matter and form. Two points may be noted here. (1) The first two articles of this Question are about the *intrinsic* structure of angels; the further question whether, granted their intrinsic incorporeity, they none the less have or use bodies will come up in Question 51. (2) Again, the question whether, granted a being's incorporeity, it could nevertheless be still 'material' in some way was one that made sense for St Thomas, since for him the concept of matter was distinct from the concept of body. But he will maintain (art. 2) that in actual fact matter and bodies are co-terminous, and that angels are *not* part of the material-corporeal world.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, 1a. 50,

effectus ad causam attenditur quando effectus imitatur causam secundum illud per quod causa producit effectum, sicut calidum facit calidum. Deus autem creaturam producit per intellectum et voluntatem, ut supra dictum est.⁸ Unde ad perfectionem universi requiritur quod sint aliquæ creaturæ intellectuales. Intelligere autem non potest esse actus corporis, nec alicujus virtutis corporeæ: quia omne corpus determinatur ad hic et nunc. Unde necesse est ponere, ad hoc quod universum sit perfectum, quod sit aliqua incorporea creatura.

Antiqui autem, ignorantibus vim intelligendi et non distinguentes inter sensum et intellectum, nihil esse existimaverunt in mundo nisi quod sensu et imaginatione apprehendi potest. Et quia sub imaginatione non cadit nisi corpus, existimaverunt quod nullum ens esset nisi corpus, ut Philosophus dicit in *Physic*.⁹ Et ex his processit Sadducæorum error, dicentium non esse spiritum.¹⁰ Sed hoc ipsum quod intellectus est altior sensu, rationabiliter ostendit esse aliquas res incorporeas a solo intellectu comprehensibiles.

1. Ad primum ergo dicendum quod substantiæ incorporeæ medium sunt inter Deum et creaturas corporeas. Medium autem comparatum ad unum extremum videtur alterum extremum, sicut tepidum comparatum calido videtur frigidum; et hac ratione dicitur quod angeli Deo comparati sunt materiales et corporei, non quod in eis sit aliquid de natura corporea.

2. Ad secundum dicendum quod motus ibi accipitur prout intelligere et velle motus quidam dicuntur. Dicitur ergo angelus substantia semper mobilis quia semper est actu intelligens, non quandoque actu et quandoque potentia, sicut nos. Unde patet quod ratio procedit ex æquivoco.

3. Ad tertium dicendum quod circumscribi terminis localibus est proprium corporum; sed circumscribi terminis essentialibus est commune cuilibet creaturæ, tam corporali quam spiritali. Unde dicit Ambrosius

⁸Ia. 14, 1; 19, 4

⁹Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 6. 213a29

¹⁰cf *Acts* 23, 8

^eThe argument as given raises difficulties, as Cajetan remarks in loc. Here it may suffice to note two points. (1) It is clear that the completeness of the God-likeness towards which the universe is assumed to tend is completeness in respect of kinds or types of being, not of individual realizations of such 'kinds'. It would be absurd to say that the universe must actually resemble God to the utmost degree realizable in an individual creature, for God could always create a greater one. (2) Granted that kinds of being are meant, the argument that the purely intellectual kind of creature must exist because God creates by intellect and will (and the universe must resemble him 'perfectly') only follows if the origin of things is identified, not just with an idea in God's mind, but with an idea precisely as existing *mentally*. Intellectual beings are more like the divine *mind* than other things are.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE ANGELIC NATURE

to himself.^e Now an effect resembles its cause in the degree that it represents that element in the cause which was at work in the causing; it is by its heat that a hot thing heats other things. But God causes by his intellect and will, as we have seen;^g whence it follows that the universe would be incomplete without intellectual creatures. And since intellection cannot be the act of a body or of bodily energies—body as such being limited to the here and now—it follows that a complete universe must contain some incorporeal creature.^f

The early philosophers went wrong here, because they did not grasp the power of intelligence, and so failed to distinguish between sensation and understanding.^g They thought that nothing existed except what could be sensed or imagined; and as nothing is imaginable except bodies, they thought that nothing but bodies existed, as Aristototele says.⁹ The same confusion underlay the error of the Sadducees, who denied the existence of spirits.¹⁰ The truth is that the mere fact that intellect transcends the senses is itself a reason for thinking that there exist spiritual beings to which only intellect can reach.

Hence: 1. The incorporeal substances are midway between God and corporeal things, and the point midway between extremes appears extreme with respect to either; the tepid, compared with the hot, seems cold. Hence the angels might be called material and bodily as compared with God, without implying that they are so intrinsically.

2. In a loose sense, understanding and willing are called movements and it is in this sense that angels can be described as 'ever moving', with their intelligence always in act and not like ours only intermittently. So the objection depends on an ambiguity.^h

3. Spatial limitation is characteristic of bodies. But there is a deeper essential limitation conditioning all creatures, whether spirits or bodies;

^fSo far as this argument goes the incorporeal creature it concludes to need be nothing 'higher' than the human soul as St Thomas conceives this—a subsistent form (see art. 2, note *a*) which at the same time in-forms matter; unless indeed the term 'creature' implies a wholeness in being that our soul does not have considered apart from its body. In any case he defers until Question 51, 1 the question whether angels are by nature joined to bodies.

^gOn the early materialists St Thomas follows Aristotle, cf *De anima* III, 3, 427a21 *Physics* IV, 6, 213a29.

^hThe distinction implied is between movement in the strict sense which is when a subject passes from one condition to another with loss of the former; and in a looser metaphorical sense when a subject becomes actual in a new way without any loss of what it already was. What is common to the two cases is the potency-act relation, which is why the second can loosely be called movement. It is in this latter sense that the mind 'moves' when it knows: see 1a. 14, 2; 18, 1; *In De Anima* 1, lect. 10; and with regard to the angelic mind, *infra* 53, 1, notes *b* & *d*; 56, 1, note *b*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SUMMA THEOLOGICÆ, Ia. 50, 2

quod licet quædam locis corporalibus non contineantur, circumscriptione tamen substantiæ non carent.¹¹

articulus 2. utrum angelus sit compositus ex materia et forma

AD SECUNDUM sic proceditur:¹ 1. Videtur quod angelus sit compositus ex materia et forma. Omne enim quod continentur sub aliquo genere est compositus ex genere et differentia, quæ adveniens generi positum ex genere et differentia, quæ adveniens generi constituit speciem. Sed genus sumitur ex materia, differentia vero ex forma, ut patet in *Meta.*² Ergo omne quod est in genere est compositum ex materia et forma. Sed angelus est in genere substantiæ. Ergo est compositus ex materia et forma.

2. Præterea, in quocumque inveniuntur proprietates materiæ ibi invenitur materia. Proprietates autem materiæ sunt recipere et substare; unde dicit Boëtius quod *forma simplex subjectum esse non potest.*³ Hæc autem inveniuntur* in angelo. Ergo angelus est compositus ex materia et forma.

3. Præterea, forma est actus. Quod ergo est forma tantum est actus purus. Sed angelus non est actus purus; hoc enim solius Dei est. Ergo non est forma tantum, sed habet formam in materia.

4. Præterea, forma proprie limitatur et finitur per materiam. Forma ergo quæ non est in materia est forma infinita. Sed forma angeli non est infinita, quia omnis creatura finita est. Ergo forma angeli est in materia.

SED CONTRA est quod Dionysius dicit quod *primæ creaturæ sicut incorporales et immateriales intelliguntur.*⁴

RESPONSIO: Dicendum quod quidam ponunt angelos esse compositos ex

*Piana: *hoc autem invenitur*, same sense

†Piana: *ita et*, as well as

¹¹see note 5

¹cf I *Sent.* 8, 5, 2; II, 3, 1, 1. *De ente et essentia* 5; *CG* II, 50 & 51. *Quodl.* IX, 4, 1. *De spiritalibus creaturis* I. *Quodl.* III, 8. *De substantiis separatis* 5 & 18

²Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII, 2. 1043a19

³*De Trinitate* 2. PL 64, 1250. Boëtius, Manlius Severinus Boëtius (c. 480–c. 525) whose translations of Aristotle's *Topics*, discovered in the middle of the twelfth century, formed part of the 'New Logic'. His writings, notably the *Consolation of Philosophy*, formed a bridge between classical and early medieval thought.

⁴*De divinis nominibus* 4. PG 3, 693. 'Dionysius' was allegedly the man St Paul converted on the Areopagus (cf *Acts* 17, 33) and later the first bishop of Paris. In fact he is the unknown author of a *corpus* of writings which synthesize Christian teaching with neo-Platonic thought, and since he draws on Proclus (411–85) and

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE ANGELIC NATURE

as Ambrose himself observed, *Though not contained by bodily limitations, nevertheless their substance is limited.*¹¹

article 2. is an angel composed of matter and form?^a

THE SECOND POINT:¹ 1. It would seem so. For everything contained in a genus includes two factors, the generic factor and a superadded 'difference', which constitutes a species in the genus. Now the generic factor is material, and the difference formal. Therefore whatever is in a genus is composed of matter and form. Angels are in the genus 'substance', and so composed of matter and form.²

2. Besides, where the properties of matter are found, there is matter. Now it is proper to matter to be receptive and be a subject of modes of being; as Boëthius says, *A pure form cannot be a subject.*³ But such properties are found in angels.

3. Moreover, form means actuality. Hence what is merely form must be a pure actuality, only God is such; therefore angels cannot be pure forms.

4. Again, the only thing that limits form and makes it finite is matter; a form without matter would be infinite. But no creature is infinite, and the angelic form is certainly created; so it must exist in matter.

ON THE OTHER HAND Dionysius says that *to think of the first creatures as incorporeal is to think of them as immaterial.*⁴

REPLY: Those who maintain^b that angels are composed of matter and form

is quoted by Severus of Antioch (c. 513), he wrote about A.D. 500 and was probably a native of Syria.

^aMatter and form: respectively, the determinable and the determining factors in bodily things; what they are made of and the intrinsic principle 'making' them. They are correlative terms, but by extension 'form' can also be used to mean a matter-less actuality in which the mere potentiality to exist (*esse*) is realized; and the angels, for St Thomas, are such matterless 'forms'. As this art. shows, he rejected the notion of 'spiritual matter' held by some of his contemporaries. For him every spiritual created being, even the human soul, is intrinsically immaterial, even though its actual existence is potential with respect to the creative power of God. The difference between angels and human souls—which, though immaterial, actualize and vivify bodies—will be brought out later (51, 2).

^bNote the present tense. The Franciscan theologians in general upheld the view St Thomas is combating and he may have had St Bonaventure (1221–74) particularly in mind. But the idea that angels were in some sense material or bodily had been fairly common in earlier Christian thought especially in the West (see *infra*, 51, 1, note a). It was to reappear in Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-02917-9 - Summa Theologiae: Volume 9 - Angels, (1a. 50-64)

Kenelm Foster O.P.

Excerpt

[More information](#)

SUMMA THEOLOGICÆ, 1a. 50, 2

materia et forma; et hanc opinionem astruere nititur Avicebron.⁵ Supponit enim quod quæcumque distinguuntur secundum intellectum* sint etiam in rebus distincta. In substantia autem incorporea intellectus apprehendit aliquid per quod distinguitur a substantia corporea, et aliquid per quod cum ea convenit; unde ex hoc vult concludere quod illud per quod differt substantia incorporea a corporea sit ei quasi forma, et illud quod subjicitur huic formæ distinguenti quasi commune sit materia ejus. Et propter hoc ponit quod eadem est materia universalis spiritualium et corporalium, ut intelligatur quod forma incorporeæ substantiæ sic sit impressa in materia spiritualium sicut forma quantitatis est impressa in materia corporalium.

Sed primo aspectu apparet esse impossibile unam esse materiam spiritualium et corporalium. Non enim est possibile quod forma spiritualis et corporalis recipiatur in una parte materiæ; quia sic una et eadem res numero esset corporalis et spiritualis. Unde relinquitur quod alia pars materiæ sit quæ recipit formam corporalem, et alia quæ recipit formam spiritualem. Materiam autem dividi in partes non convenit, nisi secundum quod intelligitur sub quantitate; qua remota, remanet substantia indivisibilis, ut dicitur in *Physic*.⁶ Sic igitur relinquitur quod materia spiritualium sit subjecta† quantitati: quod est impossibile. Impossibile est ergo quod una sit materia corporalium et spiritualium.

Sed adhuc ulterius impossibile est quod substantia intellectualis habeat qualemcumque materiam. Operatio enim cujuslibet rei est secundum modum substantiæ ejus. Intelligere autem est operatio penitus immaterialis, quod ex ejus objecto apparet, a quo actus quilibet recipit speciem et rationem. Sic enim unumquodque intelligitur in quantum a materia abstrahitur; quia formæ in materia sunt individuales formæ, quas intellectus non apprehendit secundum quod hujusmodi. Unde relinquitur quod omnis substantia intellectualis‡ est omnino immaterialis.

Non est autem necessarium quod ea quæ distinguuntur secundum intellectum sint distincta in rebus; quia intellectus non apprehendit res secundum modum rerum, sed secundum modum suum. Unde res materiales quæ sunt infra intellectum nostrum simpliciori modo sunt in

*Some mss.: *in intellectu*, in the mind

†Piana: *substantia subjecta*, a substance subject to

Some mss.: *substantia quantitate*, is like substance for quantity

‡Piana: *quod substantia intellectus*, the nature of mind

⁵*Fons vitæ* II, 16. (BA51); III, 46(BA 182). 4. Avicebron or Avicbrol (c. 1020–58): Solomon Ibn Gabirol (c. 1020–58), a Spanish Jewish philosopher and poet who wrote in Arabic whose book *The Fountain of Life* had been put into Latin in the