

*Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*  
By  
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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
MA of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth.**

**Presented to the  
Faculty of Philosophy  
National University of Ireland, Maynooth.**

**November 2004**

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Dedicated to the memory of my mother and father  
and my brother Joseph.

Also for my husband Andrew and my children Tracy, Ciara,  
David and Alan with much love.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to Professor McEvoy for his encouragement during the past few years and particularly throughout the MA degree course. I am particularly indebted to Dr. Michael Dunne, my supervisor, who encouraged me in my interest in St. Thomas Aquinas, directed the focus of my research and offered the support and motivation I needed to develop my work. I wish to express my gratitude to him for his help and guidance over the past few months but I thank him also for his words of encouragement and valuable advice throughout my undergraduate days in Maynooth College. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to all the lecturers in the Faculty of Philosophy, who, over the years have enriched my studies with their enthusiasm and knowledge. A sincere thank you also to all those concerned with the Secretary's office over the years, in particular Ms. Ann Gleeson. Finally a word of thanks to my fellow students for their help and support and in particular I would like to remember Adrian O' Brian who died tragically during the course of the MA degree and was sadly missed by all concerned.

**Author's Declaration:**

I hereby declare that this project represents my own work and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, by me or by another person, for the purpose of obtaining any credit/grade. I agree that this project may be made available to future students of the College.

Signed: Denise Ryan.

Dated: 10<sup>th</sup> November 2004.

## Abstract

In this thesis I will examine St. Thomas Aquinas's treatment of human nature and connect my findings with his conception of the ultimate end of human existence. As a theologian St. Thomas held the position that man's ultimate goal is happiness or *beatitudo* – which consists in the vision of God. Thomas explores the resources that are to be found in human nature and in particular those that are needed in order to achieve happiness to some degree in this life, and then considers the infinite happiness that is to be found in God alone.

I show how St. Thomas's solution to the mind-body problem is relevant today, albeit in a world which measures success in terms of power and wealth but yet longs for what today we might term a spiritual dimension to our lives. The underlying principle for St. Thomas is that the rational soul is the unique form of the body, that is, that the soul actualises the body. Body and soul form a composite, a unity of matter and form. In exploring the powers of the soul and St. Thomas's explanation for the soul's immortality I examine some of the interpretations made by contemporary Thomist scholars.

St. Thomas emphasises the autonomy of the person, the capacity to reason and to make choices. In order to explore St. Thomas's ethics I will consider intellect and will which are, for him, the two great powers of the soul and show that although distinct they are not separable. St. Thomas believes that we can and do act with real freedom, otherwise we cannot speak meaningfully about responsibility and in addition the application of reward and punishment would be futile.

The second part of my thesis is a discussion of St. Thomas's treatise on happiness, highlighting his conviction that human beings are not free in one respect – that is in their desire for the certainty of eternal life or *beatitudo*. According to St. Thomas human beings always act according to what we believe to be the 'good' but being human also means that we can be very much mistaken in our judgements and decisions.

Finally I aim to show that St. Thomas's overall achievement was to produce a synthesis of Christian philosophy with the natural philosophy of Aristotle. Also, by drawing on elements from Jewish and Islamic thought, St. Thomas proves that it is possible for us in the twenty first century to move forward and to explore every avenue to find a common ground between the various disciplines of science, philosophy and theology. All have the common goal of seeking to understand and explore human nature and human destiny.



## Abbreviations

*InDA* *Sentencia libri De anima* (Leonine vol. 45, 1)

*QDM* *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* (Leonine vol. 23)

*QDV* *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* (Leonine vol. 22)

*SENT* *In quatuor libros Sententiarum*

*ST* *Summa Theologiae*  
(1a = first part: 1aIIae = first part of the second part)

# Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature

## Background -Life and Times

Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274) is considered one of the great thinkers of the later Middle Ages, a time which was marked by major changes in intellectual thought that challenged the Church's authority not only in theology but also in philosophy. He was born into a society in which the social standing of your family determined the course of one's life. Accordingly as the son of a prominent noble family – the counts Aquino, Thomas received his early education at the Benedictine Abbey of Monte Cassino, followed by an education in the liberal arts at the University of Naples where he became acquainted with the order of friars known as the Dominicans. Much against the wishes of his family Thomas joined the order “sometime between 1242 and 1244”.<sup>1</sup> This was a period that enjoyed a revival of interest in academic work – a rebirth of Europe due to improvements in climate, agricultural methods, food supplies and a growth in trade. Intellectually a great philosophical system, the works of Aristotle became available in the West and were now being studied and interpreted in the light of western theology – heavily influenced by Neoplatonism. Thomas was “at the receptive age of intellectual adolescence”<sup>2</sup> when the works of Aristotle were introduced to the universities in Europe; in July 1239 he started to attend the recently founded university in Naples (where he first became interested in the new Dominican Order), after a short interval (during which time his family tried in vain to steer him away from his Dominican associations), Thomas was sent to the University of Paris

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<sup>1</sup> Davies, B. (ed.) *Thomas Aquinas – Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Knowles, D. “The Historical Context of the Philosophical Work of St Thomas Aquinas” in Kenny, A. (ed.) *Aquinas – A Collection of Critical Essays*. London – Melbourne: Macmillan and Co Ltd, 1969. p. 15.

from 1245-1248 to study theology under Albert the Great who had a great interest in Aristotle. Subsequently he moved to Cologne with Albert to the Dominican *studium generale*. By 1252 he was back studying in Paris and in 1256 he became a master of theology. Aristotle was now taught in full at the University of Paris – his thought was made available to the western world via the Latin translations of his works and through the writings of the Arabic philosophers, Avicenna and Averroes and the Jewish philosopher Maimonides. Thomas also had the advantage of new and accurate translations made by his fellow Dominican, William of Moerbeke (1215-1285). The availability of the Latin translations with their new terminology caused confusion and some resentment on the one hand among the theologians of the old school; on the other hand it provided Thomas and others with an enthusiasm and stimulus to incorporate the new way of thinking into Christian doctrines. Aristotle's works offered philosophical arguments and principles from which the theologian could draw. For example Thomas's famous proofs for the existence of God draw upon principles of Greek natural philosophy rather than presupposing his theological beliefs. Thomas's thinking was first and foremost theistic<sup>3</sup> but under the influence of his teacher Albert the Great he began what was to become his lifetime's work of integrating philosophy and theology into a single system. Thomas separated them only in regard to **how** each arrived at truth – faith is based on Revelation whose truth is based on reasoned faith, the philosopher on the other hand reasons from experience and comes to understanding of higher things but both have the common goal of searching for the truth. Thomas wanted to re-enforce this unity by creating a balance between the natural world of Aristotle and the supernatural world of faith and yet remain loyal to his belief in the role of God in all of nature.

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<sup>3</sup> Davies, p. 8.

My thesis will attempt to show that Thomas's philosophical arguments regarding the soul are as relevant today in the twenty-first century as they were in the centuries up to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond. Thomas's account considers the physical, speculative and spiritual nature of man, focusing on the truth and goodness that can belong to each and every human being. Contemporary philosophy has much to learn from Thomas's account of the uniqueness of person and from his conviction that there is an order and purpose to our lives that guides us in our search for fulfilment and happiness. In order to consider each of these aspects I will first discuss Thomas's treatment of the unity of body and soul and his philosophical argument for the soul's immortality; secondly I will investigate his philosophy of mind and show that first and foremost it is through experience gained from the senses that the intellect comes to know anything. In the course of his discussion on intellect and will we witness Thomas's confirmed belief in the spirit and goodness of human nature which I will discuss with reference to the theory that man's ultimate desire is for happiness, in so far as this may be possible in this life and for beatitude in the next. I will be referring to two texts of the *Summa Theologiae*, from the first part (1a) entitled "Man" containing questions 75-83, and from the first part of the second part (1a2ae) entitled "Purpose and Happiness" containing questions 1-5; references cite the part, question and article and, where applicable, the objections, the *corpus*, *sed contra* or *responsio* of the article. These topics will be discussed with the aid of various commentaries and interpretations and, when it may be relevant, I will refer to other parts of the *Summa Theologiae* in order to clarify Thomas's point of view. To begin I will give a brief account of the sources used by Thomas and of the main influences on his writing.

## Sources

In his writings on human nature Thomas owes much to his predecessors and contemporaries and refers to them throughout his works. Thomas's works follow the Scholastic method that flourished in this period – the thirteenth century being regarded as the high point of Scholasticism, a particular way of systematising theological doctrines and beliefs. One of the greatest figures in this regard is St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) who laid the ground for his successors – his famous phrase *fides quaerens intellectum* established the priority of faith over reason but also the continuity between the two. Following the Scholastic tradition Thomas distinguishes different degrees of authority among the authors cited – the highest source is the Word of God expressed in the Gospels; at the next level are the teachings of the Church Fathers such as St Augustine, Gregory the Great, and Dionysius the Areopagite; next in the hierarchical order are the “ancients” – the Platonists and the Stoics for example and following these Thomas enters into discussion with such authorities as Albert and Bonaventure. The chief philosophical source on human nature for Thomas is Aristotle, in particular the *De Anima*, while for his treatise on happiness Thomas explores Boethius's *De consolazione*. Finally the arguments of the Islamic and Jewish commentators provoke much debate – for Thomas they were “both adversaries and collaborators in researching the truth about God and the human person.”<sup>4</sup>

In order to examine the various influences on Thomas's writing it might be helpful to select a key area for discussion e.g., the first question of the Treatise on human nature enters into the great debate that looks at the two sides of man – “body” and “soul”.

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<sup>4</sup> Pope, S. (ed.) *The Ethics of Aquinas*. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2002. p. 20.

Thomas's position is clear – that a human soul without a body is not a human person, that body and soul form a composite. To appreciate the arguments and conclusions put forward by Thomas we must first take a brief look at the various theories on the soul that were available to him and to bear in mind the difficulties he faced in writing a treatise that from the beginning to the end emphasises a natural unity of body and soul.

### **Influences**

The Christian thinking of St Augustine dominated most of the Middle Ages until the rise of Aristotelianism and, while Augustine is a considerable influence on Thomas's theology, they stand apart in their understandings of the soul, in the importance of the body in the constitution of human nature and in their respective theories of knowledge. Following the Neoplatonic principle that the lower exists for the higher Augustine's theory of the soul is characterised by the definition of man as a soul making use of a body (*anima utens corpore*). Soul is something that does not occupy space, an unextended substance that comprises powers of the soul – memory, understanding and will, which taken together are regarded as an image of the three Persons in the one God. In the same vein he follows the Platonic view of the human soul as a “substance partaking of reason adapted to ruling a body.”<sup>5</sup> The self is identified with the rational soul (*ego animus*) in *Confessions* (X.9.6) – (Augustine is following Plotinus here – *Enneads* 1.1.3 who in turn is following Plato – *Alcibiades*, 129E) – emphasising that the “the values of the soul must be pursued over and above the distractions of the body.”<sup>6</sup> Although Augustine ranks among the most quoted and

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<sup>5</sup> Fitzgerald, A.D. (ed.) *Augustine through the Ages – An Encyclopedia*. Michigan – Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999. p. 809.

<sup>6</sup> Dunne, M. *Divine Illumination in Augustine's Theory of Knowledge*. Medieval Philosophy Course 2001-2002. Faculty of Philosophy, Maynooth. p. 13.

appreciated of all of Thomas's authorities he seeks to reformulate the doctrine of a soul using a body to be more in accord with the doctrine of the Incarnation<sup>7</sup> rather than its connection to "angelism".

His teacher St. Albert was one of the first to promote the benefit of studying the philosophical works of Aristotle with the commentaries of Avicenna and Averroes. St. Albert was admired by his students for his encyclopaedic mind that he used to give "a more or less complete presentation of all of the views then known regarding the soul as the animating principal of the body."<sup>8</sup> His view is that the soul is the perfection of the body and that the soul has intellectual powers that do not depend on a bodily organ. Albert stresses the importance of soul, he accepts Augustine's theory of soul using a body, but rather than saying that soul is **in** the body Albert's view is to say that the body is **in** the soul – that the body participates in the existence of the soul. He derives his theory of soul from a consideration of the soul's essence apart from its faculties. Albert attempts to explain the composite of mind and body by reconciling the views of Avicenna and Aristotle. The Aristotelian doctrine of the soul as the act of the body is combined with the theory that soul, as a perfection of the body, is capable of existing apart from the body in the same way as "a sailor can exist without a ship."<sup>9</sup> But it fails to give an adequate explanation of soul and body as forming a real unity – this is what Thomas hopes to develop.

Bonaventure derives his understanding of soul from scripture – union with God is the goal of the human soul and in line with his contemporaries Bonaventure holds that the

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<sup>7</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XI. Introduction and notes by Timothy Suttor. Blackfriars, Cambridge: Eyre and Spottiswoode Limited, 1968. p. 19. (note c).

<sup>8</sup> Dunne, M. Three Thirteenth century authors on the soul. p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

soul is immortal – as a substance in its own right the rational soul is a *hoc aliquid*. The soul's immortality gives it power to act upon the body, as such the soul is both the “*perfectio et motor corporis*”. As a composite it is not a perfect substance, its receptivity to thoughts, desires, emotions is explained in terms of spiritual matter. This is the theory known as universal hylomorphism; that “just as bodily things are made of matter and form, so spiritual substances are made up of form and a spiritual matter.”<sup>10</sup> Bonaventure holds that the human soul desires to be united to a body and in turn the body desires to act as a companion to the soul.

The main source of Thomas's doctrine of the soul – “according to which the soul and the body constitute a single substance – standing to each other in the relation of form to matter”<sup>11</sup> is to be found in Aristotle's *De Anima* (On the Soul). Aristotle defines the soul as the first actuality of an organic physical body<sup>12</sup>, as that “which confers a structure or ordering in terms of an end and makes something to be a living thing.”<sup>13</sup> Aristotle's notion of soul however, had left the way open to interpreting his view of the soul as something material.

Although there was general agreement among medieval scholars on many basic issues – that human beings have a soul – that they are composites of soul and body – that the soul is immaterial and created by God – that it is immortal – problems arose when these issues were placed alongside the Aristotelian philosophy and subjected to rigorous examination. The brief account given so far can serve as a background to the task facing Thomas, he is aiming at a philosophical study of what it means to be a

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* Vols. 1-2. p. 158.

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, *De Anima*, II i 412b 4-6 quoted in Dunne, M. Aristotle (384-321B.C.) on the Life-Principle. Greek and Hellenistic 2000 – Faculty of Philosophy. p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



human being, treating the body and soul as correlates, explaining the unity of soul and body as a unity of form and matter, without this unity we do not have a complete human being.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Dunne, Three Thirteenth century authors on the soul. p. 13.

## St. Thomas's theory of the soul

### **Concept of Soul**

Thomas begins his study by questioning what can be said about (1) soul itself (2) soul's union with the body and (3) powers of the soul taken generally. The term "soul" is also used to refer to that part of the intellect or mind that is immaterial, or, in a modern sense it may be said to refer to the spiritual dimension in human nature. In the course of the discussion Thomas argues philosophically that the soul and the body form a composite – that a living human being is a unity of form and matter and this in a unique and individual way – and that the way in which a human being understands universal meanings and makes free decisions also points to the non-corporeal nature of soul.

### **Actuality as non-bodily**

Turning now to question 75 of the first part of the *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter referred to as ST) article one is concerned with whether the soul is corporeal and in the *corpus* of the article the argument for the soul's incorporeality rests on Aristotle's explanation of form as actuality. Thomas distinguishes various principles of life e.g. the eye as the principle of sight – it is an actuating principle because it is a body of such-and-such a kind. Actuating principles such as sight, hearing and heart, are corporeal but the soul as the **first** principle of life encompasses the whole of what it is to be a human person – the visible and the invisible. Pasnau uses the example of the heart to explain Thomas's "body of such-and-such a kind"<sup>15</sup> – what we have in mind is the structure and function of the heart not the physical stuff that comprises the

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<sup>15</sup> Quod autem est actu tale habet hoc ab aliquo principio quod dicitur actus eius ST.1a, q.75, a.1. (*Responsio*).

heart. When it comes to a living as opposed to a dead body we talk about a principle, the soul, from which it receives its actuality.

There are significant limits to Thomas's argument in article 1 (Q75) according to Anthony Kenny who comments on the comparison made between the non-bodily nature of the soul to the non-bodily nature of heat. Heat, he argues is a property of matter in the same way as shape belongs to something but it is not a "this something". While we certainly have to accept that soul can only be described in abstract terms and perhaps, as Pasnau suggests, Thomas may be generalising, extending his remarks to all natural phenomena, living and non-living, nonetheless it is an unlikely comparison. It compares a substantial with an accidental form – heat could never exist without a subject, without being the heat of something. It does seem here that to be an actuality is to be incorporeal. However we should be aware that Thomas changes his emphasis as he proceeds "sometimes (he) treats the body as the whole material substance of which the actualities are parts" at another time it is stated that corporeality is a first form that is received in matter but subsequent to receiving this first form the body does not contain any further actualities – the suggestion is that all actualities are contained within the soul, but as Pasnau states that leaves out accidental forms such as colour of hair etc.<sup>16</sup> There are, it seems, different degrees of actuality – the more things become material, the less actuality they possess. Thus, prime matter although it is a concept which we understand as that which remains when all actuality is stripped away, it is the most incomplete of all beings since it can have no existence and no actuality.

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<sup>16</sup> Pasnau, R. *Thomas Aquinas on Human Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p. 408 (note 6).

Thomas often writes of the relationship between soul and body as in Aristotelian hylomorphism – he develops the theory to say that in the relationship, the body, which is mutable and composed of matter and form, is actualised by the soul that is the form or actuality of the body. The argument for saying that soul is a form just so and absolutely<sup>17</sup> rests on the distinction between the forms received by the senses and those received by the intellect. The senses receive the form of things in a physical organ – only knowing the singular because of its material composition e.g., in the case of sight – the form of sight is the visual power which receives sight from the bodily organ whereas the intellective soul knows forms apart from the concrete and therefore is itself not composed of matter and form.<sup>18</sup> The question whether the soul is composed of form and matter raises the issue of spiritual matter – a theory of soul first posited by Ibn Gebirol (1021-1058 – known in the west as Avicbron) in the *Fons Vitae* (*The Source of Life*). Many wrongly attributed the origin of the doctrine (known as the doctrine of universal hylomorphism) to the writings of St. Augustine but it appealed to St. Bonaventure as it “had the advantage of offering a clear defence of the radical difference between the created and the Creator.”<sup>19</sup> The doctrine is based on the premise that all matter is essentially potentiality – therefore intellect that passes from ignorance to knowledge is matter – not corporeal matter but a spiritual sense of matter. Thomas rejects this theory stating that the acquisition of knowledge relies on the absorption of universal ideas that do not pertain to matter. Thomas’s theory of universal ideas will be discussed in connection with his theory of the agent intellect and its abstractive powers.

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<sup>17</sup> ST.1a, q.75, a.5. (*Responsio*).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. Si enim anima intellectiva esset composita ex materia et forma, formae rerum reciperentur in ea ut individuales; et sic non cognosceret nisi singulare, sicut accidit in potentiis sensitivis, quae recipiunt formas rerum in organo corporali. Materia enim est principium individuationis formarum.

<sup>19</sup> Dunne, *Three Thirteenth Century Authors on the Soul*. p. 3.

## Union of body and soul

In his investigations on the soul's union with the body (Q.76) Thomas sets himself a number of questions that concentrate on how understanding is linked to a body. The obvious argument that we are individually aware, that each of us recognises and is aware that we can communicate is demonstrated by comparing how a colour is seen by a "seer" but remains in the object, to how an object is presented to each intellect and how its meaning is understood by the individual. Also the fact that each of us experiences sensations can only mean that the intellect is in some way connected to the body. But how can something immaterial be linked to something material? It is wrong to say that it is linked to the body as its mover or that someone understands something because he is moved into action by his understanding since drive or motivation as an intellectual activity must precede understanding. The doctrine of soul using the body as an instrument – as body **being** used for understanding is rejected as it implies a purely physical communication. Thomas's argument relies on a principle that equates being and unity, as a complete substance an individual is a being in the fullest sense and is therefore an *unum simpliciter*.<sup>20</sup> Pasnau applies a broad metaphysical account to explain Thomas's position regarding the understanding which is united to the body as its form.<sup>21</sup> While he acknowledges that matter and form are central to the theory Pasnau proposes taking matter as an actuality to help explain, among others things, the unity of body and soul. Actuality is a basic principle for Thomas – reality is understood as composites of certain sorts of actuality. Viewed as a manifestation of actuality matter is subject to change, namely, alteration, generation and corruption but non-material substance is free of all such actuality, is subsistent

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<sup>20</sup> Sic enim aliquid est ens quomodo et unum. ST.1a, q.76, a.1. (*Responsio*).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. ...quod hic homo intelligit quia principium intellectivum est forma ipsius. Sic ergo ex ipsa operatione intellectus apparet quod intellectivum principium unitur corpori ut forma. See also Pasnau, pp. 138-139.

and can in principle exist apart from the body.<sup>22</sup> The evidence for the soul's subsistence, that is, that it has an independent existence, is provided by the fact that the mind is capable of knowing "the natures of all bodily things."<sup>23</sup> Thus the mind is distinguished from the physical because it is not determined in the same way as for example sight or hearing are restricted by nature. The claim that the intellect does not operate through a bodily organ does not mean that Thomas is denying any role to the senses, but only that he believes in a power of the intellect or soul which is not acted upon in a material or sensory way.

Question 76 can be better understood in light of this – mind or intellect is composed of two parts – the first is the understanding while the second part is connected to the body through the nervous system<sup>24</sup> or what we today would call the brain. Thus there are parts of the soul that actualise the body in a material sense (how positive thoughts have positive effects on the body) and those that actualise it in the formal immaterial sense. The rational soul, according to Pasnau's reading, contains various types of actualities. The term "bundles of actualities" seems to reduce human beings to their souls but instead Pasnau believes that Thomas's single form of soul gives rise to a body "composed of a complex variety of actualised forms which is nevertheless one thing in the strongest sense."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Separata autem a corpore habebit alium modum intelligendi, similem aliis substantiis a corpore separatis, ut infra melius patebit. ST. 1a, q.75, a.6 ad 3.

<sup>23</sup> ST.1a, q.75, a.2. (*Responsio*).

<sup>24</sup> ...quae quidem habet duplex subjectum: unum scilicet intellectum possibilem, et aliud ipsa phantasmata quae sunt in organis corporeis. ST.1a, q.76, a.1. (*Responsio*).

<sup>25</sup> Pasnau, p. 139.

## **Individuality**

The question of individual mind caused lively debate in Thomas's time and is addressed in Question 76, article 2 of the first part of the *Summa Theologiae* – where Thomas discusses the view held by Averroes that there is one intellect for all men. Originating with the difficulty in interpreting Aristotle's text regarding intellect, it gave rise to great debate with regard to the traditional teaching on personal immortality. Thomas provides various reasons why there cannot be just one intellect for all men – he argues (1a, q.76, a.2, objection 2) that such a view would abolish the different rewards and punishments allotted to individuals. Such a view would lead to absurd consequences – there must be as many men as there are intellects. For Thomas the soul is individuated by the form of the body, the beliefs and judgements I hold are distinguished from those held by someone else. The rational soul is the form of the body and as the soul's existence involves embodiment it could only make sense to speak of an individual soul belonging to an individual person. Intellect he states enjoys a “principle” in relation to man's other faculties – just as we have distinct sense-powers we also have distinct intellects. If it was the case of just one intellect how could we explain how in many situations there are different views, and how we need to enter into dialogue to find common ground (1a, q.76, a.2, objection 4).

## **One Substance – One Soul**

Pasnau connects this passage with some of Thomas's views on life after death. The idea that death is merely a separation of soul and body goes back to Plato but Thomas, unlike Plato, believes that when I die, I, as a complete human being, go out of existence but my soul continues to exist apart from my body until the Last Day of Judgement. Pasnau interprets Thomas's statement in (1a, q.76, a.2, objection 2) as

saying that while the number of souls accords with the number of bodies what he means is that souls are not individuated by their bodies. Souls are substances that have individual characteristics from birth, although the soul changes over time there is in each of us a central core that makes us who we are – this marks out the differences between one individual and another.<sup>26</sup> This allows for theories of personal identity that endure beyond bodily and psychological change.

What is most puzzling to Pasnau is that according to Thomas the separated soul is “not I”. However what is more important in Thomas’s view is that separated soul gives a “crucial place to bodily resurrection.”<sup>27</sup> Taking the view that a person’s soul is not entirely that person, but that it is a part of the person, Pasnau suggests we could say that “I” partly continue to exist. But to be fully human requires both body and soul and while we may not comprehend how souls exist between the moment of death and resurrection as Christians we are familiar with the doctrine that our bodies will be united to our souls on the last day. The Resurrection is not amenable to proof according to Thomas but his metaphysical concept of the formal matter of individuation provides the basis for his belief that “separated souls must be re-united with the same bodies they once had.”<sup>28</sup>

The next two articles of question 76 deal with two closely related issues coming under the heading of the plurality of forms debate. Thomas opposes the view that there are in man three different souls – sensitive, nutritive and rational. His consistent argument is one substance, one substantial form; the sensory and by implication the nutritive

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<sup>26</sup> Pasnau, p. 385.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 390.



soul is cast off when the rational soul is infused into the body.<sup>29</sup> The unicity-of-form doctrine was Thomas's greatest contribution to medieval scholasticism but many opposed his view, such as Peter John Olivi (1247-1298) and John Peckam (1220-1292). Thomas holds that "the rational soul corrupts all prior forms, whereas Peckam and others believe that the rational soul perfects these prior forms."<sup>30</sup> In the last article (a.8) Thomas reaffirms his position regarding the soul's unity with the body. Because it is a substantive not an accidental form, soul gives existence and is present to each part of the body.

Question 77 distinguishes between the essence of the soul and the activity of the soul – between what a thing is and its potentiality. There is no such distinction in God, his essence and capacities are one and the same. The human soul's activities are potentialities, not actualities; intellect, for example, is just one among many powers. Pasnau develops this in the context of question 79 article 1 which focuses specifically on the case of intellect. Identifying the essence of soul with its activity would entitle us to say that having a soul involves constant activity of either the senses or of intellect – just as having a soul means always being alive (*vivere est esse*).<sup>31</sup> But we cannot be said to be always using the powers of the intellect or the senses, therefore, it is concluded that the power to carry out certain operations is not identified with the soul's essence.

This was a major topic of debate among Thomas's contemporaries and after his death; his theory was rejected by Henry of Ghent (1217-1293), John Duns Scotus (1265-

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<sup>29</sup> Ad tertium dicendum quod prius embryo habet animam quae est sensitiva tantum; qua abjecta, advenit perfectior anima, quae est simul sensitiva et intellectiva, ut infra plenius ostendetur. ST.1a, q.76, a.3 ad 3.

<sup>30</sup> Pasnau, p. 128.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

1308) and William of Ockham (1285-1347). Their arguments must be presented alongside Averroes's view that all human beings share a common intellect as described above. Rather than distinguishing the soul's essence and its capacities Scotus and Ockham accepted the plurality of forms theory – that different forms compose the soul, that the powers of the soul are identified with it and that there is a separate form within the soul that actualises it. Scotus wanted to eliminate all distinctions between the soul and its capacities, and he appeals to the authority of St. Augustine, as did many authors in the thirteenth century who did not approve of the use of Aristotle's metaphysics, particularly in matters of theology. Ockham, following Scotus, employed the line of reasoning for which he is most famous – his principle of parsimony, that there is no point in doing something through many things if it can be done through fewer.<sup>32</sup>

Thomas distinguishes the soul's essence and its capacities when he states that the intellect and each of the capacities flow from the soul's essence (1a, q.77, a.6, corpus). Capacities are further distinguished in terms of their objects and actions (1a, q.77, a.3) – an action differentiates its power. Against this it is argued that capacities are prior to actions<sup>33</sup> which Thomas concedes but states that an act is at first a concept and can be understood as a goal or something that is pursued according to a plan (1a, q.77, a.3, ad 1). A further distinction is made between those capacities that operate without a corporeal organ (intellect and will) that “have the soul's essence as their subject”<sup>34</sup> (1a, q.77, a.5, corpus) and the remaining capacities that have the composite

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<sup>32</sup>*Reportatio* II.20. (Pg 436). Although the principle is associated with Ockham, Scotus had already appealed to a similar principle in denying the real distinction: “We should posit few, where many are not necessary” (*Reportatio* II.16; vol.23, p. 73). Quoted in Pasnau, p. 427 (note 13).

<sup>33</sup> Actus autem est posterior potentia; objectum autem est extrinsecum. Ergo per ea potentiae non distinguuntur secundum speciem. ST.1a, q.77, a.3, objection 1.

<sup>34</sup> Pasnau, p. 161.

of body and soul as their subject. Apart from these distinctions the question again arises as to how intellect is related to the soul. Pasnau returns to “the soul’s union with the body”(1a, q.76), which according to him is the “linchpin of the Treatise”<sup>35</sup> – there the explanation is that “each man understands because his intellective principle is his formative principle” (1a, q.76, a.1). The argument serves two purposes – on the one hand we identify this principle with the soul and on the other hand it leaves room to establish that intellect and will are parts of the human soul and like all the soul’s capacities flow from the soul’s essence. Pasnau makes various connections between questions 76 and 77 and refers to the associations made by Thomas with regard to intellect and the soul stating that the explanation for the soul “as the principle of intellective cognition”<sup>36</sup> at least discharges the claim that all human beings share a single intellect.

### **Concluding remarks**

Pasnau refers to a number of authors who claim that Thomas’s account looks like a type of dualism. The human being is clearly defined as a composite of body and soul and Thomas gives philosophical arguments for the soul’s immortality. However the theory goes beyond a dualistic account and to my mind the explanation given by Pasnau – that of the two classes of actuality, different in terms of how it occurs in material as opposed to immaterial being, expresses the unity that Thomas wants to convey. Body and soul exist, not as two separate entities but in and through and for the sake of the other.

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<sup>35</sup> Pasnau, p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

There is something puzzling, as Pasnau states surrounding the notion of the separated soul as being not “I” when separated from my body. Does this lead to the position of one intellect for all men? Perhaps it is that part of the mind which for Thomas is the key to his ethics – the will, which I will discuss later in its relationship to intellect, reason and free will.

## Sensation

### **Role of the senses**

Before entering into a discussion regarding the intellect we will first look at the role of the senses that are described as the prerequisites of intelligence. Describing Thomas's treatment of the senses both Pasnau (2002) and Kenny (1993) state that he pays less attention to the senses than a modern reader would expect. However, much to his credit and despite the often very negative views regarding the human body during his lifetime and after, he does place great emphasis on the role of the senses in his study of human nature. Pasnau states in Thomas's defence that he shows himself as too much of a philosopher to "let so interesting a subject pass without study."<sup>37</sup>

Question 78 of the first part of the ST. describes the senses as one of a set of powers, which belong to the soul, the external senses include the traditional five – sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell.

Although Thomas refutes<sup>38</sup> the possibility of more than one soul he does distinguish between different powers of the soul, the vegetative, the sense-soul and the rational soul. The corpus of article 1 distinguishes the powers according to their objects; thus the object of the vegetative power is no more than the body, the object of the senses are not just an individual's own body but also outside bodies and the object of the intellectual powers extends to universal being. Two further distinctions are made when considering the powers that relate to external objects; first the powers that take in information through sensation or the intellect and secondly where the power of the soul is drawn to the object either through the appetitive power which sets up the objects as goals to be pursued or through the locomotive power which enables the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 163.

goals to be reached by bodily behaviour.<sup>39</sup> The appetitive powers are treated in ST.1a, qq. 80-83 which will be discussed shortly.

Thomas wants to show that the senses are given to us by nature for particular functions – the sensible features of the world are so designed as to make an impression on our senses which are distinguished according “to the differences among those sensible features and the differences among the kind of impressions they make.”<sup>40</sup> Pasnau discusses some of the difficulties involved in Thomas’s overly mechanical application of the power-to-object doctrine. The objects of sensation for Thomas are (1) the proper or primary sensibles – those objects which can be detected using one sense, e.g., colour or sound; (2) the common or secondary sensibles which can be detected by more than one of the senses e.g., shape and size which, as Kenny states can be seen as well as felt,<sup>41</sup> these make an impact on the senses indirectly by having a quality – an object being white or sweet. Both the proper and the common sensibles create impressions and alter our senses in a primary and secondary way respectively and are termed *sensibilia per se*. In contrast, things such as trees, birds and attributes, e.g., being a musical person are termed *sensibilia per accidens* since they themselves are not sense objects but are manifested to us through the sensible qualities of colour, sound, touch etc. Sensation for human beings is therefore almost always sensation *per accidens*. We can, as humans, explain the various sensations we experience since they are “accompanied by continuous conceptualisation.”<sup>42</sup> In this respect, Pasnau states, it is irrelevant “whether the small yellow shape you see

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<sup>39</sup> ...ad consequendum enim aliquod desideratum et intentum omne animal movetur. ST.1a, q.78, a.1 (*Responsio*).

<sup>40</sup> Pasnau, p. 186.

<sup>41</sup> Kenny, A. *Aquinas on Mind*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Pasnau, p. 271.

happens to be a real bird or a mechanical bird.”<sup>43</sup> The difficulty that Pasnau highlights is Thomas’s insistence that the proper sensibles are the primary objects of sensation. According to Pasnau Thomas had to have been aware of the commonly held view that all sensible qualities such as colour, sound and heat are reducible to various kinds of objects in motion – the case of sound could be explained as “a product of the air’s being put into local motion.”<sup>44</sup> But Thomas views the primary sensibles as the basic features of the external world that cannot be reduced to the category of quantity. His explanation for the transmission of sound depends rather on a causal link.<sup>45</sup> While Kenny<sup>46</sup> dismisses much of Thomas’s account of the physical processes of sense perception as almost always mistaken Pasnau attempts to rescue it by appealing to a form of modern physicalism – in the case of colour, e.g., he states that the quantities involved are “the reflective properties of a surface”<sup>47</sup> and that “it is this quantity that makes an impression, primarily and per se, on the senses.”<sup>48</sup>

### **External and Internal Senses**

In the next two articles Thomas discusses the external and internal senses, the senses for Thomas are passive in nature and are changed through the action of an external sense-object. Two types of change are necessary for changes in sensation to take place (1) is the natural type of change when e.g., the form of heat acts on something (this applies to animate or inanimate objects) and (2) change is described as intentional when it acts on the sense or senses – when sight is involved the form of colour acts on

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>45</sup> Nam sonus ex percussione causatur et aeris commotione. ST.1a, q.78, a.3. (*Responsio*).

<sup>46</sup> Kenny, p. 34.

<sup>47</sup> Pasnau, p. 185 and see p. 431 (note 16). “More precisely: ‘Of all those things around us which “have” a particular colour, the great majority owe their colour to their ability to absorb light of some energies more readily than light of others.... A given material can absorb photons only of particular energies because each arrangement of an electron cloud contains a specified amount of energy’ (Rossotti 1983, pp. 38-39).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

its passive power to be received by the eye. The senses differ in their mode of intentionality – sight for example is the most purely intentional since no change takes place in the eye itself or in the object sensed. The question of infallibility enters into any account of cognition, and although the external senses have been designed by nature to be reliable sources of detection Thomas’s account allows for the fact that things do go wrong, this may be due to particular circumstances that impede the senses or a person can be mistaken due to injury or loss of a particular sense.

### **Common Sense**

Turning to the internal senses Thomas questions how an animal can grasp a thing not only when it is present but also when it is absent, also how animals receive the form of sense objects, retain and conserve them. These faculties, common to both man and animals are common sense, the imagination, the estimative power (instinct in animals) and memory. According to Pasnau the common sense is the source and also the terminus of the impressions received by the external senses. Taken literally Thomas states that each particular sense appropriates its proper object but that something has to account for how we discriminate between the objects of the senses –“ neither sight nor taste can discern the difference between white and sweet”<sup>49</sup> this is the task of the common sense or, as Pasnau calls it, a *comparitive operation*. A second function of the common sense is what Pasnau terms a *second-order perception* “it is one thing to sense a sensible quality, another to sense one’s sensing of that sensible quality.”<sup>50</sup> The distinction is made in order to abstract the sense with which man and animal alike assemble sensory information into a unified whole. With regard to the senses the

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<sup>49</sup> Ad secundum dicendum quod sensus proprius iudicat de sensibili proprio, discernendo ipsum ab aliis quae cadunt sub eodem sensu, sicut discernendo ipsum ab aliis quae cadunt sub eodem sensu, sicut discernendo album a nigro vel a viridi. Sed discernere album a dulci non potest neque visus neque gustus, quia oportet quod qui inter aliqua discernit, utrumque cognoscat. ST. 1a, q.78, a.4 ad 2.

<sup>50</sup> Pasnau, p. 193.



common sense is perceptual rather than conceptual, but this is at a basic level of performance. As we go up the scale the common sense does have an influence on the intellect e.g., we make judgements that involve both sensory and intellectual responses.

### **Estimative/Cogitative Power**

The estimative power, *vis aestimativa* is what we commonly call instinct in animals; it explains how animals know certain things that are useful or harmful to it – the sheep fears the wolf because its estimative power triggers a warning. Animal instinct goes no further than the demands of its bodily functions and needs, but as human beings we can conceptualise, reason and reflect on our fears and desires. This power is called cogitation, *vis cogitativa* when applied to the human mind. Also called the particular reason it compares “individual intentions” in the way that the reasoning intellect compares “universal intentions”(1a, q.78, a.4, corpus). Animals lack the sort of conceptualisation that enables human beings to see objects as belonging to this or that category, “the closest animals come to such categorising is when they put something into the class of things to be fled or pursued.”<sup>51</sup> It is also, according to some Thomists, the power which grasps the individual existence of things.

### **Imagination**

The imagination, *phantasia* is a treasure store of information (1a, q.78, a.4) received through the senses, it is the power of the mind to retain and produce phantasms or images. It composes and divides imagined things viz., we can combine the image of gold and the image of mountain to produce the single form of a golden mountain. In

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<sup>51</sup> Pasnau, p. 271.

his commentary Kenny is critical of Thomas's positioning of the imagination among what he calls the "genuine" senses. Imagination cannot be held up to examination as is the case of the senses – it belongs to the individual and can be deemed neither right nor wrong. To paraphrase Kenny's remarks – he states that there is no such thing as putting a man right about the contents of his imagination and on this account he concludes that a sense-faculty that cannot go wrong is not a sense faculty at all.<sup>52</sup> Kenny highlights an altogether different aspect of the imagination, that of the creative imagination of the poets, the scientist and the storyteller but this he maintains, would more appropriately be considered among the intellectual powers. The imagination for Thomas simply stores images; they do not necessarily involve further associations whereas memory is left with the impressions from the past.

### **Sense-Memory**

Memory is a capacity which receives further discussion as one of a number of intellectual powers but here as one of the internal senses it is attributed to man and animal alike, but, while both share the capacity to remember things from the past only humans have the power to recall things – this is called *reminiscentia*.<sup>53</sup> Memory is a power to conserve intentions – those things we have already instinctively learned from experience, and although we now know that memory "goes far beyond mere repetition and association"<sup>54</sup> it makes sense to say that instinct combined with memory explains how over time an animal becomes familiar with its surroundings and instinctively recognises and trusts its master.

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<sup>52</sup> Kenny, p. 39.

<sup>53</sup> Ex parte autem memorativae, non solum habet memoriam sicut cetera animalia in subita recordatione praeteritorum, sed etiam reminiscentiam, quasi syllogistice inquirendo praeteritorum memoriam, secundum individuales intentiones. ST.1a, q.78, a.4. (*Responsio*).

<sup>54</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XI. p. 140 (note b).

The senses are for Thomas entirely physical – while soul and body constitute one agent, performing one activity, sensation is entirely due to changes in the body. Pasnau quotes from (1a, q.78, a.1, corpus) which states that sensation is not brought about through any “bodily quality” – suggesting a non-material explanation of sense experience. But Thomas is referring to the four elements – earth, air, fire and water – and their associated qualities and, as Pasnau explains, “bodily quality” belongs to the language of pre-modern science. Thomas is dismissing the elements as an explanation for the basic operations of life and attributes this power to the *heavenly bodies*. Supporting this Pasnau quotes from Thomas’s work entitled *Sentencia libri De anima* (reference abbreviated to InDA) – “rays from the heavenly bodies transform all of lower nature.”<sup>55</sup> Thomas wants to explain sensation in terms of matter alone, the life-giving elements of the sun’s rays although composed of a different kind of matter than that found on earth is biologically responsible for much of our plant, animal and human needs but this requires further study and explanation in light of developments in the sciences since the Middle Ages. There is much in the account of human reproduction also that is open to correction but if we consider the fact that spermatozoa within semen were only discovered in 1677<sup>56</sup> we can appreciate the earlier difficulties that faced those concerned with ethical questions such as abortion and the debate concerning when human life begins. Again the spontaneous generation of life from matter was only refuted by Pasteur in 1859.

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<sup>55</sup> InDA II.14.303-4. (Leonine vol. 45,1) – quoted in Pasnau, p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> Pasnau, p. 104.

### **Concluding remarks**

Despite Pasnau's statement that Thomas's theory of sensation is "heavily indebted to earlier thinkers,"<sup>57</sup> his emphasis on the senses as a primary source of knowledge deserves special mention. This was a time when the Christian message was one of charity and love for mankind and yet people lived with the fear of punishment and final damnation for their transgressions. In particular, the body was considered a major source of temptation. Thomas showed great courage in attributing such importance to the senses; in doing so he paved the way for much debate among the empirical and idealist views of his successors.

From a philosophical point of view the senses must be considered alongside the intellect, this is a topic which I will return to later in the discussion on the agent or abstractive intellect. To place the discussion within a modern context I recently heard a discussion on radio reporting on research currently being carried out by students on a condition known as "synaesthesia."<sup>58</sup> This is where there is confusion among the senses, it is a sensation produced at a point different from the point of stimulation e.g., in colour-hearing. It is not in any way debilitating and it was said that, on the contrary people have used it to their advantage in devising memory techniques. Research into this and other connections between the senses and the intellect can help us to further our understanding of the cognitive power. The senses for Thomas make various connections, both externally and internally. They have no meaning apart from the body, in this they are like the rest of the physical world and understood in this way re-

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>58</sup> Interview of 12<sup>th</sup> March 2004 on RTE radio 1 with Dr. Fiona Newell – Lecturer in Cognitive Neuro Science and Ciara Finucane – Researcher. They are involved in a project with the Genetics department, Trinity College, Dublin, and are both part of the psychology department.

enforce Thomas's belief that intellect and will remain in the body after death but that the sensory soul of human beings as is the case for animals, is not subsistent.

## Intellect

Soul gives life to plants, animals and man alike but what distinguishes man's life is the rational soul, the intellect – it transcends both the vegetative and sensory powers of the soul.

Thomas's philosophy of mind begins with the question (1a, q.79, a.1) – whether the intellect is a capacity of the soul or whether it is its essence. In the reply Thomas states that essence (*essentia*) is related to existence (*esse*)<sup>59</sup> in the same way that a power is related to its activity – a potentiality that is actuated by some outside agent. The priority of the soul in relation to any or all of its activities has already been established; that the soul is the first principle of life (1a, q.75, a.1, corpus); that the essence of the soul is distinguished from its power in terms of a first “act ordered towards second act.”<sup>60</sup> The first actuality is simply to exist as a *hoc aliquid* – “this sort of existence is precisely what the soul's essence brings about,”<sup>61</sup> second actuality is the operations that are carried out by a human being (1a, q.77, a.1, corpus); we are told also that all the capacities of the soul flow from the essence of the soul (1a, q.77, a.6). To say that the intellect / understanding is the soul's essence is to say that it is identical to the soul, that the intellect itself is its being but it is in God alone whose act of understanding is His very Being. The distinction between the essence and existence of God and that of man can be explained in terms of the composite nature of human beings. The essence of a material substance lies not only in the composition of form and matter but “there is another composition in them, between the composite essence

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<sup>59</sup> Sicut enim potentia se habet ad operationem ut ad suum actum, ita se habet essentia ad esse. ST.1a, q.79, a.1. (*Responsio*).

<sup>60</sup> Et sic ipsa anima, secundum quod subest suae potentiae, dicitur actus primus ordinatus ad actum secundum. ST.1a, q.77, a.1. (*Responsio*).

<sup>61</sup> Pasnau, p. 156.

and the act of existence.”<sup>62</sup> These must be regarded in one sense as really distinct or as Spade states “one could not really know what a thing is without knowing whether it is.”<sup>63</sup> In God there is no such composition – His essence is his act of existing.

### **Active and Passive Intellect**

The understanding is therefore a power of the soul, it functions in two ways – first the mind is said to be passive (1a, q.79, a.2), it is *as a thing which can receive something without losing anything thereby*. Initially human understanding “has no concepts and exercises no judgements;”<sup>64</sup> we begin our lives with a mind like a blank page on which nothing is written, a *tabula rasa*. We are first able to understand and afterwards we come actually to understand, thus the passivity involved in the intellect is when something it starts from a state of potentiality becomes one of actuality, when it knows. Secondly, human beings have what is known as the agent or active intellect (1a. q.79, a.3) – each person has their own agent intellect. This accounts for the mind’s ability to abstract universal concepts from the particular sense experience. The agent intellect actualises those things held “potentially” in the passive intellect – it is needed to actualise intelligible things by abstracting *the thought of them from their material conditions*.<sup>65</sup>

This power of abstraction raises another area of contention among many philosophers from as far back as Porphyry (c.A.D. 232-304). In the *Isagoge* or introduction to the *Categories* of Aristotle, he posed three questions concerning genera and species

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<sup>62</sup> Spade, P.V., “Medieval Philosophy,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Western Philosophy*. Kenny, A. (ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. p. 91.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XI. pp. 150-151 (note b).

<sup>65</sup> Oportebat igitur ponere aliquam virtutem ex parte intellectus quae faceret intelligibilia in actu per abstractionem specierum a conditionibus materialibus. ST.1a, q.79, a.3. (*Responsio*).

(Boethius translated the work into Latin). As Luscombe points out Porphyry “states but does not seek to pursue the question whether these predicables exist in human understanding only or also in reality, whether also they are incorporeal or corporeal, and whether they exist apart from sensible objects or only with them.”<sup>66</sup> The question raised the problem of how we understand something in the mind as universal and outside the mind as individual and sensible. Thomas believed that the intellect is capable of grasping concepts but because of its function of abstraction it cannot directly cognise particular corporeal things. On the other side the senses cannot cognise universals because they cannot receive an immaterial form. Scotus held the opposite view – that the intellect is able to grasp the individual as such. He distinguished two types of knowledge, intuitive knowledge – what we know to exist, and abstractive knowledge – which answers to the question of what a thing is, its “thisness”. It would seem preferable to follow in the Scotist tradition – i.e., that each individual person or object has its own unique *haecceitas* – its own essence that can be grasped by the intellect. However, both Pasnau and Kenny interpret Thomas as saying that it is not possible for us to attain knowledge of individuals by intellect **alone**, that anything **appearing** before us is going beyond intellectual thought. Even if we speak of something in place and time we have left the realm of pure thought. It is by combining the universal ideas with sensory experience that we come to know the individual. Thomas’s view becomes clear when he refers to the *universal nature in the particular*<sup>67</sup>, the nature of a human being apart from the particular human being.

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<sup>66</sup> Luscombe, D. *Medieval Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. p. 18.

<sup>67</sup> Pasnau, p. 317.



## Memory

Memory as belonging to the senses – *the body's matter*<sup>68</sup> is distinguished from the greater power of the understanding to retain knowledge. The latter is a power *more stable and unchanging than any physical thing* and belongs to the intellectual part of the soul.<sup>69</sup> Sense-memory which fixes a thing in the past belongs to the realm of the particular and therefore corresponds to a bodily organ, what we normally refer to as the brain. This reinforces what has already said about memory in animals, it is just as important for their survival as it is for humans but it belongs to man to remember the pleasure experienced in e.g. listening to a particular piece of music or to recall as St. Augustine states “the innumerable principles and laws of numbers and dimensions.”<sup>70</sup>

## Reason

Reason and understanding belong to the same power, man as a rational animal uses his reason to understand and to grasp the truth of anything.<sup>71</sup> Reason is divided into two distinct functions, according to Augustine *wisdom is attributed to the higher reason, science to the lower*. While angelic power of knowledge is in the same category as man's rational power angels have perfect possession of truth whereas man comes to the truth in a *less perfect manner*.<sup>72</sup> Just as we understand eternity through our understanding of temporal things so also we have a notion of the Divine *through understanding created things* (1a, q.79, a.9, *responsio*). Reasoning is to understanding

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<sup>68</sup> ST.1a, q.79, a.6. (*Responsio*).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*. Book X.xii (19). Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. p. 190.

<sup>71</sup> ST.1a, q.79, a.8. (*Responsio*).

<sup>72</sup> Et ideo vis cognoscitiva angelorum non est alterius generis a vi cognoscitiva rationis, sed comparatur ad ipsam ut perfectum ad imperfectum. ST.1a, q.79, a.8 ad 3.

as acquiring is to having – from first principles it *studies what has been found*.<sup>73</sup> This article refers to the role of reason with reference to the intellectual powers but reason also influences our judgements as regards the appetitive powers of the soul i.e., the sensory and intellective desires which are discussed in the next section.

### **Other activities of the Soul**

The only separation of powers for Thomas is between the abstractive and the recipient powers. Intelligence, which Aristotle states *is concerned with basic simplicities where error does not enter* (1a, q.79, a.10, *sed contra*), is an activity of the mind that is included among a number of different states of understanding. Likewise the speculative and practical minds are distinguished only in their intentions. The speculative or theoretic mind *knows but does not relate what it knows to action merely considering the truth; whereas we speak of the mind as practical when it orders what it knows to action*.<sup>74</sup>

Synderesis is another activity of the soul; it is described in article twelve of question seventy-nine as a habit, a natural disposition through which we understand first principles in the moral sense. Pasnau states that Thomas holds that synderesis is never extinguished, that an individual knows when he is doing something wrong. Thomas's position is stated in *Quaestiones disputatae De veritate* which is quoted by Pasnau as someone's "... reason is weighed down by the disposition of vice, so that in choosing

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<sup>73</sup> ...inde est quod ratiocinatio humana secundum viam inquisitionis vel inventionis procedit a quibusdam simpliciter intellectus, quae sunt prima principia; et rursus in via iudicii resolvendo redit ad prima principia ad quae inventa examinat. ST.1a, q.79, a.8. (*Responsio*).

<sup>74</sup> Nam intellectus speculativus est qui quod apprehendit non ordinat ad opus, sed ad solam veritatis considerationem; practicus vero intellectus dicitur qui hoc quod apprehendit, ordinat ad opus. ST.1a, q.79, a.11. (*Responsio*).

he does not apply **his** universal judgement to the particular situation.”<sup>75</sup> Conscience is distinguished from synderesis in that it applies principles to concrete situations – when we supply knowledge of what we have done or intend doing our conscience responds appropriately. Both synderesis and conscience *incite us to do good and deter us from evil*.<sup>76</sup> But whereas synderesis is infallible, conscience “is a process of reasoning, and, like any such process, it can result in mistaken conclusions if its premises are false or it fails to be valid.”<sup>77</sup>

### **Concluding remarks**

The agent intellect for Thomas is the abstractive power to form concepts that cannot be derived from sense experience. Kenny states that Thomas’s theory of the agent intellect places him in a middle position between empiricist philosophers who argue that the only knowledge which we can lay claim to arises from “recurrent features of experience and rationalist philosophers who claim that individual ideas are inborn in every member of the species.”<sup>78</sup> But according to Thomas there are no fully innate ideas, even propositions that are self-evident originate in concepts or ideas derived from experience. In holding that the mind begins as a *tabula rasa* Thomas is in agreement with the empiricists but against them and in agreement with the rationalists he believes that the experiences that animals share with humans cannot be the basis on which we form concepts and beliefs.

Both sense perception and the acquisition of intellectual information are according to Thomas a matter of the reception of forms in an immaterial manner in the mind. This

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<sup>75</sup> QDV. 16.3 ad 3, quoted in Pasnau, p. 244.

<sup>76</sup> Unde et synderesis dicitur instigare ad bonum et murmurare de malo, in quantum per prima principia procedimus ad inveniendum et judicamus inventa. ST. 1a, q.79, a.12. (*Responsio*).

<sup>77</sup> Davies, B. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. p. 236.

<sup>78</sup> Kenny, A. *Aquinas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980. p. 75.

refers to Thomas's doctrine of the intentional existence of forms. When I see an object it exists "intentionally" both in my vision and in my intellect, the former, existence in nature is called *esse naturale*, the latter, existence in mind, *esse intentionale*. The form exists without the matter of which it is composed of in reality. The form of an object exists in the individual object as individualised and as composed of matter and it also exists in my mind but as immaterial and universal. But intentional existence is not to be thought of as immaterial existence – according to the theory when I see the redness of the setting sun redness exists in my eyes and "even in the eye the sensible form is a form of the matter to be found in the sense-organ."<sup>79</sup> Intellect, because of its nature – because it is not composed of matter has the ability to be informed by forms existing intentionally. Aquinas's doctrine of the intentional existence of forms is considered one of the most interesting contributions ever made to the philosophy of mind. The doctrine raised the two deep philosophical problems – it is essential to any thoughts that they should be *someone's thoughts* and that they should be thoughts *of something*. Thus Thomas, following in Aristotle's footsteps, laid the foundation for the central ideas of phenomenology, a whole new approach to philosophy devoted to the examination of consciousness and its objects. It derived many of its themes from the scholastic tradition although the meaning underwent considerable transformation. Phenomenology as inaugurated by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was first inspired by Franz Brentano (1838-1917) who "combined a grounding in Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>80</sup> Moran, D. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. London: Routledge, 2000, p. 23.

## Appetitive powers of body and soul

### **Sensory and Intellectual appetites**

The second great power of the mind – the will – is the subject of the next three questions, (ST.1a, qq. 80-83). First there is a general discussion as to what is meant by saying that the will is an appetitive power which functions as two distinct types of appetite and secondly the will is discussed in relation to the other powers of the soul.

At the most basic level of appetite is what is moved automatically, such as substances like fire and its tendency to spread or, as Kenny proposes, the vital activities of plants in their achievement of growth.<sup>81</sup> This is distinguished from the appetite in living things which goes beyond this natural inclination, it involves sensory appetite which is common to all living things. Thirdly, there is the intellectual or rational appetite which belongs to man alone. The appetitive power of the soul can be defined as the ability to tend towards objects of awareness.<sup>82</sup>

Both Pasnau and Kenny point to difficulties in the criteria used to distinguish sensory and intellectual appetite. Kenny states<sup>83</sup> that the official criterion for a sensory desire is that it is a want arising from sense-perception; on the one hand this will include the desires of the art-collector, which are according to Kenny intellectual rather than sensual; on the other hand it excludes hunger that arises from the sensuous aroma of food in the vicinity. If the criterion is limited to stating that sensory wants are wants for sense-gratification this would leave out the many other functions of the sense appetite, especially those of its irascible component, such as the flight of the lamb and

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<sup>81</sup> Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, p. 61.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

the charge of the bull. To say that wants are bodily feelings seems to include all natural desires yet a desire for a work of art cannot be said to be a physical feeling.

Thomas's position could be upheld according to Pasnau if we consider **how** such objects of desire are conceived. An appetitive power is described as *a passive power, born to be moved by a thing apprehended*<sup>84</sup>, focusing on what moves the appetite. Pasnau uses the example of someone having a sensory and a rational desire for an orange – they are different desires since one seeks to satisfy the specific sensory craving while the other conceives of the orange as being beneficial to one's health.

This highlights the controversy over the will's alleged passivity. Scotus, for example, following the Franciscan tradition, describes the will as *simpliciter activa* – absolutely active; desire is the activating force in all that we do and, according to Suttor in an editorial comment “nothing created other than the will is the total cause of the will's act of willing.”<sup>85</sup> Suttor elaborates further that “whereas Scotus sought the key to the understanding of human appetite in love-as-decision, Thomas found it in enjoyment.”<sup>86</sup> Like Thomas, Duns Scotus put Aristotelian thought at the service of Christian theology but he and his followers opposed many of the tenets of Thomism. Against Thomas, as we have seen, Scotus accepted the plurality of forms but in particular he rejected Thomas's theory of the will since it placed excessive emphasis on the use of reason. This will be highlighted below when we examine Thomas's arguments for freedom of the will in the treatise on happiness.

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<sup>84</sup> Potentia enim appetitiva est potentia passiva, quae nata est moveri ab apprehenso. ST.1a, q.80, a.2. (*Responsio*).

<sup>85</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XI. p. 267.

<sup>86</sup>“ But the real key to his short treatment of appetite is the fact that a human drive is never just a drive to have something, it is a drive to have it and to have it in mind. Enjoyment is perfect in the knowledge that something is being enjoyed, as Kierkegaard, too, was to insist.” ST. Vol. XI. p. 197.

Pasnau argues for both an active and passive sense of will in Thomas's theory. Evidence for this can be seen in the activity of the will in choosing and making decisions – this will be discussed under the heading of free-will. Thomas never claims that the will is not active – that the will is passive in the sense that it is moved by its object “does not preclude its being both active and free.”<sup>87</sup>

To identify the will as rational appetite according to Pasnau is simply to identify the source of the will's choices. The will chooses according to reason but from among many alternatives – it is influenced and motivated by the emotions and by the passions. Article three of question eighty explains how the mind through reason and the will controls the passions i.e., the sensory appetite. The sensory appetite is our reaction to bodily needs and desires – mainly hunger, thirst and sex. It has two components – (1) concupiscible i.e., what the sensory soul desires and (2) irascible – what the sensory soul must fight off, *it tends to overcome and rise above threats*.<sup>88</sup>

What has already been described as instinct in animals and the cogitative power in man also influences our reactions in any situation. But whereas the sheep runs away the moment it sees the wolf, man waits for the command of the higher appetite – the will. It is the will which first submits. As humans what we have to do is to try to resolve the conflicts that arise between reason on the one hand and sensation and imagination on the other.<sup>89</sup> The will, however, has but one goal – to act according to

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<sup>87</sup> Pasnau, p. 239.

<sup>88</sup> Una per quam anima simpliciter inclinatur ad prosequendum ea quae sunt convenientia secundum sensum, et ad refugiendum nociva; et haec dicitur concupiscibilis. Alia vero per quam anima resistit impugnantibus quae convenientia impugnant et nocumenta inferunt; et haec vis vocatur irascibilis. ST.1a, q.81, a.2. (*Responsio*).

<sup>89</sup> Unde experimur irascibilem vel concupiscibilem rationi repugnare per hoc, quod sentimus vel imaginamur aliquod delectabile quod ratio vetat, vel triste quod ratio praecipit. ST.1a, q.81, a.3 ad 2.

one's conception of what is good – the *will is concerned with good in all its forms*,<sup>90</sup> this is its one basic judgement.

As Pasnau states it might look as if Thomas's ideal of the virtuous person is a life entirely free of passion – it is, he states, the case that Thomas's position is “diametrically opposed”<sup>91</sup> to the philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) who was one of the major figures of his century. Hume was sceptical about the reliability of reason. As Popkin<sup>92</sup> explains even the claims of mathematics and logic are questionable according to Hume's account since they too are based on human interpretation. But Hume was directing his argument against our knowledge of the world. According to Popkin Hume goes on, “to insist that although sceptics hold that all is uncertain and that we have no measures of truth and falsehood, nobody was ever sincerely and constantly of this opinion.”<sup>93</sup> As regards the passions Hume believed that the goals or end of our behaviour are set by our desires and emotions, he stated famously that reason is and ought to be the slave of the passions.<sup>94</sup> From Pasnau's wider reading of the *Summa Theologiae* he concludes that Thomas believes that some passions can have a positive effect on our lives. One type of passion which he admires is that which is consequent to judgement, the passion to do something valuable – the irascible power for example, is a passion giving us the determination to fight for what we want. He rejects those passions which are acted upon without any prior judgement, reason or consideration of the consequences. In this context Pasnau<sup>95</sup> makes reference to the distinguished philosopher – Martha Nussbaum who takes the view that we can

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<sup>90</sup> ST.1a, q.82, a.5. (*Responsio*).

<sup>91</sup> Pasnau, p. 262.

<sup>92</sup> Popkin, R. “David Hume” in *The Pimlico History of Western Philosophy*. London: Pimlico, 1999. p. 457.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Pasnau, p. 262.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



learn from such passions and that they are often the best guides to appropriate action. Allowances must be made for both sides – consider how raw emotions can and do contribute to our development but also given the uncertainty of life we also need to consider the reasons and arguments before taking action.

Recent scholarship is also focussing on Thomas's theory of the emotions in the *Summa* and in his other works. In his paper – "Aquinas and Emotional Theory Today" Patrick Gorevan discusses Thomas's treatment of the various aspects of the relationship between knowledge and emotion and the fact that his theories have a lot to offer to modern-day discussions of emotional theory. Briefly, Gorevan points out such themes as the unity of emotion as expressed in Thomas's conception of passion, also the physical and emotional feelings connected to the passions which are described as acts of the sense appetite, but also passions of the soul. In discussing the various responses to Thomas's theory Gorevan refers to Thomas's distinction between knowledge and emotion in order "to turn to the real and close links he (Thomas) finds between emotion and knowledge."<sup>96</sup> Thomas emphasises how we gain knowledge by connaturality, how we first learn by our very being, "by receiving and being conquered by the object of our love."<sup>97</sup> Gorevan states that Thomas's general theory of the passions stresses how we can know things more intimately and personally through our emotions. For example, Thomas discusses his theory of love in the context of *beatitudo*, the human desire for the good. This is to be found in his treatise entitled "Purpose and Happiness" which as stated earlier will be discussed alongside the treatise on "Man".

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<sup>96</sup> Gorevan, P. *Acta Philosophica*, vol.9 (2000). p. 148.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.

## Necessity and the will

The argument for the freedom of the will (*liberum arbitrium*) is dealt with in the final question on the capacities of human beings (ST.1a, q.83). But in the first article of question eighty two (ST.1a, q.82, a.1) necessity in relation to the will is considered. The first type of necessity discussed is that of coercion – when someone is physically compelled to do something against his or her will; secondly, a type of necessity arises from those things necessary for survival – our basic needs that can also be described as utility.<sup>98</sup> Thomas employs the concept of the understanding – how it must *of necessity cleave to first principles* – to demonstrate how the will is determined by a particular type of necessity that affects it objectively. The will is determined by its goal – it is not free as to its object, that is, the desire for ultimate fulfilment. While we do exercise freedom in choosing the **means** – things for the sake of the end – we are not free in choosing the **end**. The will is acting for the highest good, as an intellectual power it acts in the knowledge that its object is the good.<sup>99</sup>

Kenny rejects the parallel drawn between the assent of the intellect to first principles to that of the acceptance of values by the will. While he can accept necessity following from necessary truths it is not the case that what leads to a necessary end is itself necessary. Who decides on **what** is necessary to achieve happiness? Also, on this account necessity and liberty in the will requires a theological context – Kenny states this “was not needed for his account of necessity and liberty in the intellect.”<sup>100</sup>

Pasnau claims we must understand the theory from the most generalised conception of

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<sup>98</sup> Et haec vocatur necessitas finis, quae interdum etiam utilitas dicitur. ST.1a, q.82, a.1. (*Responsio*).

<sup>99</sup> Human understanding has no tendency not to understand objects because it *is* a tendency to understand objects. Human will has no tendency not to make such known goods its objective because it consists of a tendency to make known goodness in things its objective. *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XI. pp. 218-219 (note a).

<sup>100</sup> Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*. p. 70.

happiness, referring to the way Thomas “often explains our capacity for free decision in terms of our capacity for understanding universals.”<sup>101</sup>

Is it the case therefore that given the right information there would be only one course of action open to us? Pasnau states we seem to be free only because of our ignorance.<sup>102</sup> Socrates also believed that all moral failings are the result of ignorance but whereas Socrates denied the possibility of acting against reason, Thomas held the view that reason can be influenced by the passions, and that they in turn affect the will. What we today describe as weakness of will is an apt label for acting against reason and failing to focus on what is really important. According to Pasnau this allows us to maintain Thomas’s position that the will is *simple attraction, without passion or perturbation of soul*.<sup>103</sup> That is the belief that we will experience this sort of simple affection if we ever exist as dis-embodied souls. But as Pasnau states “having a body changes everything.”<sup>104</sup>

### **Freedom and the Will**

The argument for freedom of the will is based on the premise that man is a rational animal who reasons from experience, acts freely and chooses from several possible courses. Thomas argues that human beings have free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) from the very fact that they are rational. Reason as we already noted exerts a causal influence on the will but it is through various operations of the will – *aliquid ex parte*

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<sup>101</sup> Only that which has intellect can act through a free judgement, insofar as it cognises the universal nature of the good, on the basis of which it can judge that this or that is good. So whenever there is intellect there is free-decision. (59.3c; See 1a2ae.1.2 ad 3) quoted in Pasnau, p. 219.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>103</sup> Alio modo significant simplicem affectum, absque passione vel animae concitatione, et sic sunt actus voluntatis. ST. 1a, q.82, a.5 ad 1.

<sup>104</sup> Pasnau, p. 243.

*appetitivae*<sup>105</sup>, and intellect – *et aliquid ex parte cognitivae virtutis*<sup>106</sup>, that one enjoys freedom of *decision*. It is generally accepted that the term *liberum arbitrium* is not identical to freedom of the will, it refers to a specific act of the will, that of choice – *electio*. One author describes it as “the will understood as interwoven with and dependent on intellect.”<sup>107</sup>

Pasnau tests his compatibilist reading of Thomas’s theory. This is the view that the will is free even if determined by outside factors. Thomas’s third objection (1a, q.83, a.1) argues that God is the cause of our actions and therefore we are not free in our decisions. How can this can be explained in a way that is consistent with our freedom? God is the creator and first cause *on which both natural and free agents depend*<sup>108</sup> but just as God does not prevent the processes of nature neither does he *prevent voluntary action from being voluntary but rather makes it be precisely this.*<sup>109</sup>

The will is a discerning tool – it is subject to reason to a certain extent but it is also subject to habits and passions (1a, q.83, a.1, ad 5) that come to the fore to influence whether we follow or reject the dictates of reason. Pasnau believes that it may seem as if Thomas’s account of the will appears to intellectualise the will, and is therefore at odds with the realities of human nature. But while intellect or reason may guide the will, intellect alone does not determine the will. The will is open to the suggestions of the intellect but the latter never necessitates any choice on the part of the will. As a contingent power the will must be determined by something external. This concerns

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<sup>105</sup> ST.1a, q.83, a.3. (*Responsio*).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Stump, E. “Aquinas’s Account of Freedom” in Davies, (ed.) *Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. p. 286.

<sup>108</sup> ST.1a, q.83, a.3 ad 3.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

the self-movement of the will and is referred to in the following quotation from Thomas's account in *De malo* – "*the will's movement comes directly from the will and from God.*"<sup>110</sup> Pasnau states that this point is developed at greater length in the *De malo*. A distinction is made between the exercise of the will and how the will is determined. The will is moved by itself and as previously stated it chooses from a range of possibilities offered by the intellect – in this it is said to be determined. But Thomas refers to what are termed our higher-order volitions, these are our individual habits or dispositions that influence the outcome of the back and forth exchange between reason and will, a relationship which can be traced back to God as the first cause.<sup>111</sup> Higher-order volitions help to distinguish between absolute necessity and conditional necessity. Natural appetites explain absolute necessity – there is no question here of freedom – plant, animal and man alike must follow the course of nature to varying degrees. Conditional necessity, while less restrictive requires both animal and man to behave and react in certain ways. But because man has higher-order beliefs and desires he makes his own individual choices, human beings determine their own actions for good or for ill – "*not simply by the brute design of nature and the happenstance of events.*"<sup>112</sup>

The remaining articles on the question of the freedom of the will are concerned with whether to describe free decision as a power and if it is a power is it an appetitive power or a cognitive power? Free decision is categorised as a faculty, named so from its activity. It is not a natural tendency as in the assent to self-evident principles, such

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<sup>110</sup> Pasnau, p. 227. Quoting from (*QDM 3.3c*).

<sup>111</sup> This initial impulse comes from God, who not only creates the human soul but somehow puts the soul into motion, beginning the long dialogue between our rational powers. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

as our desire for ultimate happiness.<sup>113</sup> Thomas holds that free decision is an appetitive power although judgement and reasoning are cognitive powers. This conclusion is reached, according to Kenny<sup>114</sup> through Thomas's appeal to Aristotelian analysis of the key notion of choice. He agrees with Aristotle that it is an appetitive power – it is a *well-advised desire* (1a, q.83, a.3, *responsio*).

### **Concluding remarks**

In summary then the will is an inclination, a rational appetite desiring goodness (1a, q.82, a.1). Intellect presents certain objects or actions to the will as being good; the latter in turn is guided by intellect in choosing the good. Everything, plants, inanimate objects, animals and human beings, has an inclination to the good according to their mode of being. This, in human beings is called rational appetite or the will. Just as the will directs the intellect in various ways, the intellect in turn moves the will. In this way “the will can be moved to will as distinct from not willing – the ‘exercise’ of its act; or it can be moved to will this rather than that particular thing – the ‘specification’ of its act.”<sup>115</sup> Regarding the exercising of its act the will is free in most instances to pursue or to reject a particular object or act but there are situations in which the will seems to be overpowered by the intellect. Stump<sup>116</sup> cites the example of a prisoner who tries to not think about what is happening next door to him where other prisoners are being tortured, but their screams force him to think about what he wants to stop thinking about. As far as the act is concerned the will wills only what the intellect presents at that time. This can at one time be considered good, at another time it may be considered not good, “so that there is nothing about them which must constrain the

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<sup>113</sup> Ea autem ad quae naturaliter inclinamur non subsunt libero arbitrio, sicut dictum est de appetitu beatitudinis. ST.1a, q.83, a.2. (*Responsio*).

<sup>114</sup> Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*. p. 80.

<sup>115</sup> Stump, in Davies, (ed.) *Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. p. 278.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*.

will of any agent always to want them.”<sup>117</sup> But Thomas will say that the will is moved necessarily in one particular way, that is in our desire for happiness – *beatitudo* in this life and the vision of God in the afterlife - a topic which I will attempt to discuss next.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

## Happiness

The Treatise on Man (ST1a, qq.75-83) forms a link between free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) as discussed above and Thomas's focus on actions that proceed from reason and will in the *Secunda Pars* of the same. I will attempt to discuss Thomas's treatment of happiness (*beatitudo*) as outlined in questions 1-5 in the *Prima Secundae* or, the First Part of the Second Part of the *Summa Theologiae* (hereafter 1a2ae, qq.1-5). This treatise was written in the last years of Thomas's life although it is also held that Thomas worked on it all his life.<sup>118</sup> Evidence for this can be found in Pinckaers' comments on the sources, composition and situation of the treatise.<sup>119</sup> Thomas discussed happiness in several different works e.g., Pinckaers highlights the *Commentary on the Sentences*<sup>120</sup> and the *Summa contra Gentiles* in which we are told Thomas uses the term *felicitas* to convey the message that happiness consists wholly in the vision of God. These and several other texts address the question of happiness from which Pinckaers states we have a sketch of Thomas's treatment of happiness in the *Summa*.

Pinckaers emphasises the important position given to the treatise on happiness in the *Summa* – happiness as the last end is also the starting-point for Thomas's discussion on morality. The questions, he states, are “not merely a simple preamble to the moral section of the work, but form a veritable keystone which dominates the whole.”<sup>121</sup> Further he raises the problem of scholars who have separated Thomas's moral theology from his theory on happiness in the mistaken belief that happiness must be

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<sup>118</sup> Pinckaers, S. “The desire for happiness as a way to God” in *Thomas Aquinas – Approaches to Truth*, James McEvoy and Michael Dunne. (eds.) Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002. p. 54.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54 “...where Peter Lombard studies the final ends and the various degrees of blessedness among the saints, according to Christ's saying that ‘there are many mansions in [his] Father's house’.”

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.



forfeited in order to live according to the moral law. He refers to Immanuel Kant's duty-oriented morality that led to his critique of *eudaimonism*. Kant (1724-1804) was "the first philosopher to put the concept of 'duty' at the very centre of ethics."<sup>122</sup> Duty, according to Kant is to be "performed entirely for its own sake, not in order to promote human happiness or fulfilment."<sup>123</sup> According to Norman, Kant's ethics must be examined against the background of eighteenth-century German Protestantism and that in contrast to the monastic tradition of "other-worldly asceticism" it is worldly activities which "provide the setting in which one is required to exhibit moral goodness,"<sup>124</sup> thus giving rise to Kant's stress on duty for duty's sake.

In examining the rights and wrongs of the human desire for happiness, Thomas wants to establish a basis for a moral theory by considering the natural desires of man, one that begins with the individual's inner being and actions and one that maintains Thomas's position with regard to the unity of body and soul. The short treatise on happiness looks at the pre-moral conditions that we need to consider before acting for an end and the post-moral condition of being happy with that act.<sup>125</sup> Before entering into the treatise proper it might help to use the analogy Pinckaers<sup>126</sup> makes when referring to the finality or end involved. The end is compared to a spinal column controlling the "structure of morality"<sup>127</sup> – a continuous finality rather than the disconnectedness of any particular aims of human nature. Thus to begin we will

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<sup>122</sup> Norman, R. *The Moral Philosophers – An Introduction to Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 71.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> "First settle the can he thinks, then afterwards the ought". *Summa Theologiae*. Vol. XVI. Introduction and notes by Thomas Gilby. Blackfriars, Cambridge: Eyre and Spottiswoode Limited, 1969. p. xiv.

<sup>126</sup> Pinckaers, p. 57.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

understand happiness in the most general light and examine the main tenets of the treatise to reach the particular views held by Thomas.

## Sources

The principal sources that Thomas refers to in the question on happiness are taken from Scripture and the commentaries of the Fathers, in particular St. Augustine; the philosophical sources are Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *De Anima* and Boethius's *De Consolatione*. Thus we have the teaching on happiness handed down by the Christian tradition in the writings of St. Augustine and Boethius together with Aristotle representing the best philosophical tradition. Pinckaers makes the point that to understand Thomas's writing – characterised by him as “rational precision”, we need to be fully acquainted with his sources and to appreciate the emphasis he places on the relationship between reason and the powers of the soul or intellect, as we have already seen, and, as we shall see the predominant position he gives to reason in regard to faith.

The treatise on happiness begins with the question – “does acting for an end apply to man?” indicating at once the nature of Thomas's ethics, his teleological view of the created world in general and of human nature in particular. One can see the comparison with the opening remarks of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* – “Every skill and every inquiry, and similarly every action and rational choice, is thought to aim at some good;”<sup>128</sup> Aristotle's view is that everything we do is for the sake of the fulfilled life – he uses the Greek word *eudaimonia* which is equivalent to the Latin word used by Thomas, *beatitudo*, meaning blessedness or happiness. Aristotle argues

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<sup>128</sup> Crisp, R. (ed.) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 3. (Bk.1. ch.i.)

that happiness is the ultimate end – chosen only for itself, never for the sake of something else. Happiness is also the most complete end and sufficient in itself. Aristotle’s “function argument”<sup>129</sup> echoes throughout the *Summa*, particularly in the context of the fulfilled and happy life. The argument states that in order to discover what fulfilment consists in we must inquire as to its function. For human beings to function well is to exercise the capacities or powers found in the human soul – “a human being’s characteristic activity is the exercise of reason.”<sup>130</sup> Following Aristotle Thomas would agree that the intrinsic good of a human being would involve the exercising of reason to the best of their ability. Thomas’s view is that while we can achieve happiness in this life by exercising rationality in accordance with the virtues, the happiness to be found in the next life needs another kind of virtue.<sup>131</sup>

St. Augustine’s first completed work on happiness is *De beata vita* but “the theme turns up in three great works of his maturity (*Confessions; Commentary on the Psalms; The City of God*)”<sup>132</sup>. Thomas’s treatise on happiness opens with the words – *man is made to God’s image* – conveying something of the “rich theological background”<sup>133</sup> of the work which is largely filled in by St. Augustine. His theory of happiness and the means of attaining it are determined by his Christian faith. An indication of the esteem in which Thomas held Augustine’s authority and knowledge can be seen in the many quotations he refers to throughout the treatise – forty-two quotations are recorded by Pinckaers.

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid. p. xiii.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> “Aristotle linked all virtues to happiness in this life; Augustine linked them all to happiness in the afterlife. Thomas himself argues that humankind has as ends *both* kinds of happiness and so needs *two* kinds of virtue: divinely infused as well as naturally acquired (ST.1a,IIae, q.51, a.4).” Kent, B. “Habits and Virtues (1a2ae, qq. 49-70)” in Pope, p. 118.

<sup>132</sup> McEvoy, J. Happiness, Friendship, and the *Summum Bonum*. Faculty of Philosophy, Maynooth. p. 2.

<sup>133</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XVI. p. xvi (note a).

One example, which is used to consolidate Thomas's own position is taken from the *Confessions* Book X (Augustine's account of his search for God) where Augustine speaks of happiness as joy in truth.<sup>134</sup> In this same article Thomas disagrees with Augustine's position that happiness is an act of the will. Thomas argues that if happiness is a matter of willing *a needy man would straightway have all he wanted* (1a2ae, q.3, a.4). The question as to whether happiness is intellectual or if it comes from the will is discussed at greater length below. But even this scant account of a single article highlights the need for a close reading of Thomas's sources and their respective backgrounds.

The *De Consolatione* of Boethius should also be explored for his theory on happiness – as Pinckaers states such a reading “is practically a necessity if we are to grasp the depths and nuances of Thomas's problematic.”<sup>135</sup> Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was born c.480 into a prominent senatorial family. In 523 he fell from favour and was accused of treason and after a year in prison he was executed under the emperor Theodoric the Ostrogoth. It was during his imprisonment that he wrote his masterpiece *The Consolation of Philosophy* which had a profound influence throughout medieval Europe and still has a unique appeal for the modern reader. Boethius relates how Lady Philosophy visited him in prison to offer him her consolation and to cure him of his grief. The reader accompanies him on his journey to realising that complete happiness is not to be found in this life but consists in seeing the Good, which is God. Thomas quotes from Books II and III of the *De Consolatione* re-enforcing his argument that happiness is not to be found in any worldly possessions

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<sup>134</sup> Secundum quod Augustinus dicit, quod beatitudo est *gaudium de veritate*; quia scilicet ipsum gaudium est consummatio beatitudinis. ST.1a2ae, q.3, a.4. (*Responsio*).

<sup>135</sup> Pinckaers, p. 54.

and, as Boethius himself had learned, status or power do not help one to achieve peace of mind or security. Boethius was an authority on the texts of both Plato and Aristotle and also on Neoplatonism, the *De Consolatione* would therefore “take up all the highest ethical and metaphysical developments of antiquity.”<sup>136</sup> Thomas quotes one particular quotation in three separate articles (1a2ae, q.2, a.1, objection 2) (1a2ae, q.3, a.2, objection 2 & (1a2ae,q.3, a.3, objection 2) albeit for different purposes. The quotation refers to the way human beings strive in countless and various ways to reach the common goal of happiness.<sup>137</sup> But however we envisage the accumulation of goods – wealth, honour, power, glory and pleasure – he concludes that want in this life can never be fully removed.

### **The Purpose of Human Activity**

The first question of the treatise on happiness asks whether we should speak of man acting for an end. According to Thomas every action, whether human, animal or inanimate is done for the sake of an end. Animals tend toward it by their natural appetite while human beings can knowingly and willingly set themselves in motion towards an end. Thomas draws on Aristotle’s authority<sup>138</sup> (*Ethics*,1i.1094a4) that actions in themselves can be values, *honesta*, or pleasurable, *delectabilia* and therefore not just a means, *utilia* to something else. The Greek word *teleios* as used by Aristotle to describe ends or goals conveys Thomas’s meaning of the end as a good that is conceived in the mind. It is translated as that which is complete, final or perfect and “the more an end is pursued for its own sake and not for the sake of other ends,

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<sup>136</sup> McEvoy, p. 6.

<sup>137</sup> “It is clear, therefore, that happiness is a state made perfect by the presence of everything that is good, a state, which as we said, all mortal men are striving to reach though by different routes.” Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by Victor Watts, Penguin Classics, 1995. p. 48. (Book III, Ch.,ii).

<sup>138</sup> ST.1a2ae, q.1, a.1, objection 2.

the more complete it is.”<sup>139</sup> Man differs in this respect from non-intelligent creatures in that he is *master of what he does* and necessarily has free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) re-enforcing the conclusion of question eighty-three above.<sup>140</sup>

In article three of the same question, Thomas, quoting from Augustine – *according as their aim is worthy of blame or praise so are our deeds worthy of blame or praise* – argues that the end as necessitated by the will determines the nature of a human act but that the act must be evaluated according to the intentions of the agent. For example the taking of a human life, as a physical event is basically always the same, yet when considering it as a moral act, the reasons for carrying it out must be taken into account, e.g., whether a murder is committed in self-defence or if someone is acting to appease his anger.

The end orders mans’ actions in two ways – the order of intention and the order of execution. The end as intention is the essential foundation for any action. As for the order of execution of an act Thomas argues, following Augustine, that there has to be one ultimate end. There may be many intermediary ends but the final end sets everything in motion – the end is “the goal to which the goals of other actions are subordinated.”<sup>141</sup> All things desire completion, not in the sense that something passes away and is no more but that it has reached its fulfilment and wants for nothing more.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Crisp, p. 208.

<sup>140</sup> Illa ergo quae rationem habent, seipsa movent ad finem: quia habent dominium suorum actuum per liberum arbitrium, quod est *facultas voluntatis et rationis*. ST. 1a2ae, q.1, a.2. (*Responsio*).

<sup>141</sup> McNemy, R. “Ethics”, in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*. Kretzmann N. and Stump E. (eds.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. p. 199.

<sup>142</sup> Oportet igitur quod ultimus finis ita impleat totum hominis appetitum, quod nihil extra ipsum appetendum relinquatur. ST. 1a2ae, q.1, a.5. (*Responsio*).

The ultimate end is a perfect good which requires intermediate ends – secondary objects of desire, subordinate to the supreme good but “noble and delightful in themselves.”<sup>143</sup> Thomas concedes that we are not always consciously aiming towards the ultimate end. In this life, we can only act with incomplete certainty in any of our actions – we do not, according to Pasnau “adhere to God himself with complete certainty.”<sup>144</sup> But there can only be one final end for the individual human being and for all human beings.

Thomas speaks of happiness in two ways – the abstract and the concrete, the former refers to the fact that all things strive toward fulfilment, the latter refers to what determines the final end. Some want a life of pleasure, others riches (this is the topic of the following question which deals with objective happiness) – but who decides on what constitutes the ultimate end? Using the analogy of the sense of taste he states that agreement can be reached by choosing that which most appeals to cultivated tastes. Applying the analogy we should hold that those who live the most moral life seek the ultimate end.<sup>145</sup> But as Wieland concludes, “this can only apply if all agree on what constitutes the most moral life.”<sup>146</sup> Quoting from Augustine in the final article of this question Thomas uses the term *beatitudo* establishing that God is the ultimate end for all things without exception. Pinckaers states that the ultimate end creates a solidarity between man and other creatures but that man differs in that he can know and love God, animals only know *after their fashion*.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XVI. p. 145.

<sup>144</sup> Pasnau, p. 218.

<sup>145</sup> Et similiter illud bonum oportet esse completissimum quod tanquam ultimum finem appetit habens affectum bene dispositum. ST.1a2ae, q.1, a.7. (*Responsio*).

<sup>146</sup> Wieland, G. “Happiness (Ia IIae, qq. 1-5)” in Pope (ed.) p. 58.

<sup>147</sup> Nam homo et aliae rationales creaturae consequuntur ultimum finem cognoscendo et amando Deum: quod non competit aliis creaturis, quae adipiscuntur ultimum finem in quantum participant aliquam similitudinem Dei, secundum quod sunt, vel vivunt, vel etiam cognoscunt. ST.1a2ae, q.1, a.8. (*Responsio*).

## Objective Happiness

Pinckaers develops his analogy of the pathway to God – the right side of a column or path represents the objective side of happiness and this is dealt with in the second question of Thomas's treatise on happiness. The form of the question is negative as Pinckaers states, in that articles 1-4 state that happiness is not to be found in external goods such as riches, honours, fame and glory; nor in the internal endowments such as health, knowledge or virtue as stated in articles 5-7; the final article is the culmination of the question stating that man's happiness cannot be realised in any created good but it is God alone who brings complete happiness to man.

In the *sed contra* of article 1 Thomas appeals to Boethius as the authoritative view quoting from the *De Consolatione* which states that amassing wealth is hateful, whereas to be generous, *largitas*, is splendid. He divides riches into two classes, natural and artificial. Natural riches are there to sustain us – food, clothing etc., artificial riches are those which are above and beyond our ordinary needs. Wealth is a means, never an end – let alone the final end as Wieland states.<sup>148</sup> In support of his argument that possessions only bring temporary happiness Thomas quotes from Scripture (John 4:13) *Whosoever drinks of this water*, which signifies temporal benefits, *will thirst again*. Political achievements that bring honour, glory and fame satisfy the natural desire for happiness but do not constitute happiness itself. Honour is due to a person for an excellence which he has in his character or for an action heroically performed but it must be viewed as a mark of recognition and confirmation of worthiness by the wise and experienced. Honour, Aristotle states in the *Ethics*,<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Wieland, p. 60.

<sup>149</sup> *Ethics*, 1,5.1095b24.



seems to belong more to those who honour than to the person honoured.<sup>150</sup> Even less value is attributed to fame and glory, which according to Boethius, can often be the result of *lying reports broadcast to the multitude* (1a2ae, q.2, a.3, *responsio*). They depend on human estimation and are therefore subject to error and illusion.<sup>151</sup> Fame is usually short-lived, whereas happiness *beatitudo* essentially remains forever. Likewise power can be used for good or for evil, it is “morally ambivalent, and dependent upon virtue for its good use.”<sup>152</sup>

Each of the external goods can be present both in a good or a bad man whereas *beatitudo* is complete well-being, incompatible with any evil. The very nature of *beatitudo* implies self-sufficiency and according to Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* Bk.1.ch.7.1097b) “we take what is self-sufficient to be that which on its own makes life worthy of choice and lacking in nothing.”<sup>153</sup> Even with all of the above *a person may still be wanting in many indispensable gifts, such as wisdom, health of body and so forth* (1a2ae, q.2, a.4, *responsio*). And although the latter are likewise fleeting and short-lived they are rated more highly than wealth and ownership of property just as the welfare of the soul is rated more highly than that of the body (1a2ae, q.2, a.5). Lastly pleasure and desire, the pleasures of the senses are considered. Boethius speaks of pleasures in terms of excesses that cannot render a person happy since in this respect *the very beasts are happy too* (1a2ae, q.2, a.6, *sed contra*). The good that is connected to bodily pleasure is not man’s full good – it is neither the heart nor an essential property of happiness. Thomas employs the distinction between the sense

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<sup>150</sup> ST.1a2ae, q.2, a.2. (*Sed Contra*).

<sup>151</sup> Est etiam aliud considerandum, quod humana notitia saepe fallitur, et praecipue in singularibus contingentibus, cujusmodi sunt actus humani. Et ideo frequenter humana gloria fallax est. ST.1a2ae, q.2, a.3. (*Responsio*).

<sup>152</sup> McEvoy, p.8. Happiness, Friendship and the *Summum Bonum*.

<sup>153</sup> Quoted in Crisp, (ed.) Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. p. 11.

capacities of the individual and the universality of spiritual knowledge; spiritual things are unbounded compared with material things.<sup>154</sup> Wieland concludes that what Thomas wants to show is that the desires of the body cannot encompass the immensity and universality of human fulfilment.<sup>155</sup> That being the case the next article (1a2ae, q.2, a.7) addresses the question as to whether a good quality of soul makes a man's happiness. For Thomas something that is in potentiality cannot be the final end; therefore the soul, itself a potentiality, cannot have the force of an ultimate end. Although we do gain or possess the good by means of the soul and its capacities, desire cannot be completely fulfilled in this life. Happiness is a good of the soul in that it seeks happiness through the soul's activities and powers and is therefore founded on a thing outside of soul.<sup>156</sup>

The fact that there is nothing in the created world that can completely satisfy man's will and desire can be seen in the universal desire to know the first cause – *nor shall we come to rest until we come to see the cause for what it really is* – (1a2ae, q.3, a.8, *responsio*). Even if we knew no more about God but that he exists we would still have a natural desire to find him. To reach complete happiness requires the mind *to come through to the essence itself of the first cause*.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Sicut immaterialia sunt quodammodo infinita respectu materialium, eo quod forma per materiam quodammodo contrahitur et finitur, unde forma a materia absoluta est quodammodo infinita. ST.1a2ae, q.2, a.6. (*Responsio*).

<sup>155</sup> Wieland, p. 61.

<sup>156</sup> Ad tertium dicendum quod beatitudo ipsa, cum sit perfectio animae, est quoddam animae bonum inhaerens: sed id in quo beatitudo consistit, quod scilicet beatum facit, est aliquid extra animam, ut dictum est. ST.1a2ae, q.2, a.7 ad 3.

<sup>157</sup> Et sic perfectionem suam habebit per unionem ad Deum sicut ad objectum, in quo solo beatitudo hominis consistit, ut supra dictum est. ST.1a2ae, q.3, a.8. (*Responsio*).

## Subjective Happiness

Returning to Pinckaer's analogy – the left of the column or the path to God is concerned with “the action of the person who is following it, and principally with the intellect, which grasps the good and presents it to the will.”<sup>158</sup> This represents the subjective aspect of happiness which asks that we conceive of the final end in a spiritual sense, transcending all reality in order to reach God. In this sense the essence of happiness is non-creaturely (1a2ae, q.3, a.1) but for man to make the ascent involves much striving on his part.

Clearly man strives for happiness through many activities. Man is in potentiality throughout his life, actively involved in various occupations. But happiness is gained when man enters eternal life as the quote from Scripture (John 17:3) tells us – *This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God* (1a2ae, q.3, a.2, ad 1). Accordingly there are various degrees of perfection – God is the highest and absolute perfection of being, his very existence is his happiness. Happiness, in the case of angels is the simple and everlasting activity joining them to God. Angels possess uninterrupted happiness whereas man's happiness is incomplete and, quoting from Aristotle he sums up the argument – *We call them happy, but only as men* (1a2ae, q.3, a.2, ad 4). Wieland interprets Thomas as saying that if we take God to be the highest standard and if we measure the various levels of happiness against God's attributes of simplicity, actuality and absolute completion, on the one hand “the most complete human activity proves to be deficient to such a degree that complete happiness only appears as divine promise, but not as human achievement;”<sup>159</sup> on the other hand as

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<sup>158</sup> Pinckaers, pp. 58-59.

<sup>159</sup> Wieland, p. 62.

mortals we share in God's lasting unity, the more we search for the truth the more our lives will take on the sense of continuity that is found in the angels and in God.

Sensitive activity is not a *constituent* of happiness but enters into *beatitudo* as it does with the intellect (1a, q.78) i.e., as an **antecedent** it prepares the mind and is preliminary to understanding; as a **consequent**, sensation can share in an overflow of joy from the soul to the body i.e., the perfect happiness to be found in heaven. Thomas, following Augustine states that the senses – the body – will be reunited to the soul for the Final Judgement (1a2ae, q.3, a.3, *responsio*) but he also speaks of being united with God in a way which does not depend on the senses.<sup>160</sup>

According to Thomas happiness is an activity of the intellect, not of the will as Augustine held (1a2ae, q.3, a.4). As stated by Thomas in the *sed contra* – *happiness is knowing God, which is an activity of mind*, it can only consist in an act of reason. Thomas argues that the will is either striving after an end that is not yet attained or the will is delighting in the fact that it has achieved its end, the delight being a consequence of this achievement.<sup>161</sup> This leads into the debate between Thomists and Scotists, the latter emphasising the will as desire. Both accounts have their respective followers and as Gilby states some questions, the present one among them – whether happiness is intellectual or whether it comes from the will – are not just for a period, but perennial.<sup>162</sup> Thomas insists that knowledge must be present if we are to know love but he also states that love *ranks above knowledge as an impulse* but in order to have a deep and lasting love some *activity of mind* is also required (1a2ae, q.3, a.5, ad

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<sup>160</sup> Non autem tunc operatio qua mens humana Deo conjungetur, a sensu dependebit. ST.1a2ae, q.3, a.3. (*Responsio*).

<sup>161</sup>Sic igitur essentia beatitudinis in actu intellectus consistit, sed ad voluntatem pertinet delectatio beatitudinem consequens; ST.1a2ae, q.3, a.4. (*Responsio*).

<sup>162</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol. XVI. p. 152.

4). While both Thomas and Duns Scotus agree that the act of understanding is certainly prior to the will it is the fact that the will is determined by nothing other than itself that brings about a total freedom of the will for Scotus and for the first time the position known as voluntarism is held by subsequent authors. In his writing Cross expresses the opinion that there is much to be said in favour of Thomas's account but equally the account Scotus gives for the will and for wrong-doing seem very plausible.<sup>163</sup> Scotus held that in addition to its natural inclination the will has an inclination to justice, called respectively the *affectio commodi* (affection for the beneficial or advantageous) and the *affectio iustitiae* (the affection for justice).<sup>164</sup> The former seeks self-fulfilment in *beatitudo*, the latter in justice. To say that the will is solely directed to the attainment of *beatitudo* is not according to Scotus conducive to freedom. He argues that it cannot be that the will automatically wills happiness as this would "automatically constrain the intellect to consider happiness all the time."<sup>165</sup> The *affectio iustitiae*, because it is distinguished from the natural inclination to the good allows for a genuine freedom of the will according to Scotus. His account allows for the fact that the will modifies its natural bent and for the fact that we can be driven by something other than the natural inclination to will *beatitudo*.

Something similar can be identified in Thomas's account of the will when it is moved necessarily in its natural inclination for goodness which is "overwhelmingly apparent to the agent."<sup>166</sup> When the end can only be attained in one way – Stump<sup>167</sup> refers to the example of when crossing the sea requires using a ship (1a, q.82, a.1, *responsio*) –

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<sup>163</sup> Cross, R. *Duns Scotus*. New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 85.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Stump, E. "Aquinas's Account of Freedom" in Davies, B. (ed.) *Thomas Aquinas – Contemporary Philosophical Perspectives*. p. 288.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

*natural necessity is not incompatible with willing.* Also Thomas is not saying that we act immorally due to mistakes in deliberation. His account is much more complicated according to Stump<sup>168</sup> who offers one instance in Thomas's account which allows for the fact that the will can deliberately go against its natural inclination. In a case of incontinence where the intellect is presenting something as good but the will is not willing; intellect is being moved by opposing desires – the object in question is represented as both good and not good. She refers us to Thomas's account in the *Summa* (1a2ae, q.17, a.2, and a.5, ad 1) in which he describes the intellect as “double-minded”. Equally the author refers to the case in which an individual may have to choose from a number of options but in such cases there must be considerable interaction between the intellect, the will, the passions and as she concludes this is a situation familiar to anyone who has had to force themselves into doing something which he/she originally feared or disliked.

Regarding the contrast between the intellectualism of Thomas and the voluntarism of Scotus, Gilby states that it would be “somewhat misleading if one side suggests cold thinking and the other warm feeling.”<sup>169</sup> According to him, the issue is not whether the intellect is superior to the emotions but which is the most dominant in achieving *beatitudo*.

The intellect, man's highest power functions at two levels according to Thomas – the speculative or theoretical level and the practical level. This distinguishes the activity of contemplation that is sought for its own sake from the practical reasoning that is designed for an end. The latter could be described as causality in the mental sphere,

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., pp. 280-1.

<sup>169</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XVI. p. 151.

the practical activities of the mind; whereas contemplation brings man closer to God and the angels, it is that *which is best in him* (Aristotle's *Ethics* ix, 8 & x.7. 1169a2 & 1178a2). This was an important question in the thirteenth century as it refers back to the controversy between Thomas and Latin Averroism. Bonino states that Aristotle distinguished between the theoretical and practical life in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* conveying an "exaltation of the theoretical life."<sup>170</sup> But for Thomas philosophical contemplation alone cannot be man's ultimate end. The imperfect *beatitudo* we can have in this life is primarily centred on contemplation and in a secondary sense on the activity of the practical intelligence *governing our deeds and feelings*.<sup>171</sup> Thomas, elaborating on the mind's assent to *beatitudo*, argues that the theoretical sciences which study the material world do so through the senses and therefore cannot provide man's ultimate happiness – *we cannot rise to a direct knowledge of bodiless substance* (1a2ae, q.3, a.6). Even the angels, as bodiless substances have derivative existence, it is God alone whose existence is his essence. Angels are far superior to us and as ministers of God can help man to know God (1a2ae, q.3, a.7); we can contemplate on the angels as a part of being but not as man's final goal. Intellect can only know fulfilment when it knows – *what really is* (1a2ae, q.3, a.8) i.e., the essence of a thing. Thus man seeks to know not only that God is the first cause of the world but also to know the essence of the first cause.

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<sup>170</sup> Bonino, Serge-Thomas. "Charisms, Forms, and States of Life (IIaIIae, qq 171-189)" in Pope (ed.) p. 345.

<sup>171</sup> Et ideo ultima et perfecta beatitudo, quae expectatur in futura vita, tota principaliter consistit in contemplatione. Beatitudo autem imperfecta, qualis hic haberi potest, primo quidem et principaliter consistit in contemplatione; secundario vero in operatione practici intellectus ordinantis actiones et passiones humanas, ut dicitur in *Ethic.* ST.1a2ae, q.3, a.5. (*Responsio*).

## The Conditions of Happiness

Question four deals with the conditions of happiness – in what does happiness consist? Happiness cannot exist without joy or delight – the two are related as Wieland states like cause and effect.<sup>172</sup> The will finds rest in an activity because it sees good in the activity, delight follows from this but it is not what forms the nature of the activity. Delight, as we understand it, is a consequence of happiness; the rightness or wrongness of the actions revolve around *the activity in which the will finds rest, and not the actual resting because of it* (1a2ae, q.4, a.2, *responsio*). But cause and effect coincide in the delight that follows the vision of God, since happiness exists essentially in seeing God. Comprehension is another condition of happiness (1a2ae, q.4, a.3). It is required by the intellect since the latter has only an incomplete knowledge of the end and it is also required by the will since comprehension also refers to that which is striven after. The will is expressed in terms of the lover seeking the beloved and the various experiences involved, e.g., happiness can be expressed as a feeling of hope just as the lover hopes that the *beloved may yet be reached*.<sup>173</sup> Rightness of will or living a good life is an antecedent condition of happiness. It is compared to an arrow that *has to be accurately flighted to hit the target* (1a2ae, q.4, a.4, ad 2). Rightness of will is an *attendant condition of final happiness* which is linked to the beatific vision of God (1a2ae, q.4, a.2, *responsio*). It is the cause of man's acting out of love within the notion of goodness in general. Rightness of will according to Wieland implies nothing other than the suitable orientation to the end.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Wieland, p. 64.

<sup>173</sup> Et haec est habitudo sperantis ad speratum, quae sola habitudo facit finis inquisitionem. ST.1a2ae, q.4, a.3. (*Responsio*).

<sup>174</sup> Wieland, p. 64.



Thomas develops his earlier treatment of the immortality of the soul (1a, q.75, a.2) – that while neither the soul or the body could exist without the other in this our earthly existence it is not so with the beatific vision. Since it excludes all sense mediation the beatific vision does not require the body – the *soul subsists in its* existing (1a2ae, q.4, a.5, ad 2). In reply to St. Augustine’s remark that the soul still craves the body Thomas distinguishes between the disembodied soul as wholly at rest because it has attained the object of its desires, and the subject, the individual human being, which has not as yet reached every perfection of happiness, *the good is not possessed in every manner that can be wished for* (1a2ae, q.4, a.5, ad 5), although Thomas states that some souls do acquire the status of angels.<sup>175</sup> This brings us back to the question raised by Pasnau as to what happens to the separated soul and body between death and the Resurrection and to his concern that the separated soul is not the “I” that existed for a certain period of time as a human being. Pasnau resolves the latter problem by subscribing to Thomas’s metaphysical account of matter and form, of a human being as a composite of body and soul, an *unum simpliciter* (1a, q.76, a.1, ad 6) and as inseparable in this our mortal life. Thus the separated soul cannot possibly be the whole human being.<sup>176</sup> It is matter individuating the form that gives each of us our personal identity both in this life and in the next; as Pasnau states “sameness of body is accounted for in terms of sameness in form.”<sup>177</sup> However, the resurrected body is not the same corruptible body of this world but what Thomas refers to as the

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<sup>175</sup> ....quia etiam modo aliquae animae beatorum sunt assumptae ad superiores ordines angelorum, clarius videntes Deum quam inferiores angeli. ST.1a2ae, q.4, a.5 ad 6.

<sup>176</sup> “Abraham’s soul is not, strictly speaking, Abraham himself; it is rather a part of him (and so too for others). So Abraham’s soul having life would not suffice for Abraham’s being alive...The life of the whole compound is required: soul and body (IV *SENT* 43.1.1.1 ad 2; see 2a2ae 83.11 obj. 5 & ad 5)” – quoted in Pasnau, p. 386.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 393.

immortal body.<sup>178</sup> This follows Augustine's explanation of the soul overflowing into the body and allowing the body to participate in its happiness and perfection – *God made soul of so potent a nature that from its brimming happiness the strength of incorruption flows into lower nature* (1a2ae, q.4, a.6, *responsio*). As Wieland concludes “in this the body participates in its own way in the fullness of divine wealth”<sup>179</sup>. In its spiritual existence the body does not require external goods, since our bodies are *no longer animal but spiritual* (1a2ae, q.4, a.7, *responsio*). Although we do require external goods throughout our mortal lives, yet, as we draw closer to God in the contemplative life we become less dependent on those goods. In the final article on the conditions of happiness Thomas agrees with Aristotle that we need friends for many reasons, that we may do good for them and delight in the fact that they also do good but primarily friends will give support in both the active and contemplative life. Augustine believes that there is friendship among spiritual creatures but that the nature of their friendship is deepened because it also implies friendship with God.

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<sup>178</sup> Ad tertium dicendum quod ad perfectam operationem intellectus requiritur quidem abstractio ab hoc corruptibili corpore, quod aggravat animam; non autem a corpore spirituali, quod erit totaliter spiritui subjectum, de quo in *Tertia Parte* hujus operis dicetur. ST.1a2ae, q.4, a.6 ad 3.

<sup>179</sup> Wieland, p. 64.

## Gaining Happiness

The critical factors for happiness are the intellect and the will which apprehend and grasp the universal good. But the final question of the treatise which discusses the means to gaining happiness raises the difficulty as to how we, as human beings can understand the supernatural. Gilby explains that in one sense the life of grace is supernatural to man because it belongs to the Divine, but understood in another sense – that we as human beings have the capacity “to be acted on by grace”<sup>180</sup> may help to explain the possibility, not the fact of the divine vision. Wieland also argues for the “fundamental openness or receptivity of the person for the infinite essence of God.”<sup>181</sup> He states that if this were not the case it would mean that the individual who strives for the good in this life would be essentially a different person in eternity. The question of human openness to God leads to Thomas’s statement that there are various degrees of happiness in this life. The more open a person is to receiving God the more he can be said to share in the infinite goodness of God.

Following Augustine Thomas lists the imperfections of our lives on earth – unavoidable ills, ignorance of our minds, bodily pain, and all the familiar things that can be our lot and yet it is our nature to grasp at life and to *shrink from death* (1a2ae, q.5, a.3, *responsio*). Life as we experience it, Wieland concludes cannot “fulfil the human desire for longevity and reliability.”<sup>182</sup> We cannot reach anything like a vision of God in this life but we can experience reflections of true beatitude (1a2ae, q.5, a.3, ad 3). The partial happiness of this life can be lost and as Aristotle states, we are happy – *as men are, whose nature is subject to change* (1a2ae, q.5, a.4, *responsio*).

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<sup>180</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XVI. p. 119.

<sup>181</sup> Wieland, p. 65.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*.

Happiness in the next life is a state free from evil or fear of losing this good. No one would relinquish his happiness when it has been found, as it is what the will necessarily desires. The mind is so raised *above all other things* (1a2ae, q.5, a.4, *responsio*) that no force or external factor can threaten this happiness.

Man cannot attain complete happiness through his natural resources (1a2ae, q.5, a.5). This is not to be regarded as a failing on the part of nature, since man has been granted intellect and its powers, and also free-decision. In this he is free to choose or reject the path to God. Nor can man come to happiness through the action of superior or angelic creatures whose abilities and activities are limited. While angels can assist human beings – *by bringing them into readiness* (1a2ae, q.5, a.6, ad 1) – the ultimate end comes from the first cause which is God.<sup>183</sup> The penultimate article asks whether good deeds are required in order to gain happiness from God. Human beings gain happiness through their activities which are termed “merits” and agreeing with Aristotle Thomas regarded happiness as the reward for virtuous acts carried out through the proper disposition of the will.

Thomas concludes his treatise on happiness with the question as to whether every human being desires happiness. Augustine<sup>184</sup> is cited as the authority and in the *sed contra* Thomas concludes that everyone in fact, desires to be happy. While we all desire happiness in what is called the abstract sense of happiness, not everyone agrees, as we have discussed earlier, where this happiness lies, i.e., the concrete sense of happiness. In the first sense the will tends by nature and of necessity but in the

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<sup>183</sup> Ad tertium dicendum quod angelus beatus illuminat intellectum hominis, vel etiam inferioris angeli, quantum ad aliquas rationes divinatorum operum non autem quantum ad visionem divinae essentiae, ut in *Primo* dictum est. ST. 1a2ae, q.5, a.6 ad 3.

<sup>184</sup> Si minus dixisset, “Omnes beati esse vultis, miseri esse non vultis”, dixisset aliquid quod nullus in sua non cognosceret voluntate. ST. 1a2ae, q.5, a.8. (*Sed contra*).

second sense an error in reasoning may lead some either to *think things are true which in fact are barriers to knowing the truth* (1a2ae, q.5, a.8, ad 3) or perhaps, it is stated in the reply, they do not know *about the object which gathers all good together*.

### **Concluding remarks**

Thomas argues that everything tends of its nature to the good, which philosophically can be understood as man's final cause. The *final cause* answers the question as to what motivates us to do anything? Because we have a goal or a meaningful purpose in view of which we live and love and hold our beliefs. As to the question of the *material cause*, the search for happiness in material or created goods, Thomas sets out to show that man is capable of extending himself beyond created goods. If man seeks fulfilment in material goods he is compromising himself since *he can reach out to the infinite* (1a2ae, q.2, a.8, ad 3). The *formal cause* of happiness, *beatitudo formalis* is the acquisition and possession of the object of happiness, *beatitudo objectiva*. In the present life we can only achieve incomplete happiness and this is done through the "possessing" activity which is contemplation. Possession is explained as visualisation of the end, it is the delight that accompanies the beatific vision. The *efficient cause* or how happiness is gained lies in the vision of God, a person is "by nature able to possess the infinite good"<sup>185</sup> but this is given to us as a gift from God and with it certain responsibilities.

According to Gilby<sup>186</sup> utilitarianism can be contrasted with Thomas's ethical theory in that it too is a form of the teleological theories found in ethics; utilitarianism shares the common ground that all action is for the sake of some end. The most well known

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<sup>185</sup> Wieland, p. 67.

<sup>186</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XVI. p. 147.

utilitarian of the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) defines utilitarianism as...

“The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure.”<sup>187</sup>

But a distinction that is found in Thomas’s ethics is that man is ordered to an end other than himself while the doctrine of utilitarianism refers to something created and is dependent on the judgement of man and therefore limited and subject to error. Agreeing with Thomas, Maritain states, “the greatness of man consists in the fact that his sole end is the uncreated good.”<sup>188</sup> As a theologian and a Christian philosopher Thomas locates happiness in God who is to be loved for his own sake, a theme which, as we have seen runs throughout the treatise on happiness. And according to a more recent study of Thomas’s theological ethics “that in which beatitude consists is something *extra animam*,”<sup>189</sup> not any created good. When Thomas speaks of God as object, *objectum*, we must understand it in the medieval sense, not in a modern sense that requires us to attribute meaning or significance to it. In the pre-modern sense, according to the author the object “is that which attracts the attention of the human being – evoking or provoking, focusing or occluding, this or that act of reasoning or choosing.”<sup>190</sup> The uncreated good which Thomas speaks of is *beatitudo*, the love of

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<sup>187</sup> Mill, J.S. “In Defense of Utilitarianism”. Reprinted from Mill’s *Utilitarianism* (1863) in Timmons, M. (ed.) *Conduct and Character: Readings in Moral Theory*, Third Edition. Canada: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999. p. 115.

<sup>188</sup> Maritain, J. *An Introduction to Philosophy*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1930. p. 204.

<sup>189</sup> Kerr, F. *After Aquinas – Versions of Thomism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002. p. 129.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

God which is unique and according to Gilby' "it is not God alone whom we love, but God above all."<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol. XVI. p. 148.

## **Conclusions regarding both human nature and *beatitudo***

It is clear from the treatises on human nature and on happiness that will and intellect are the keys to Thomas's ethics and that they are intimately linked when it comes to human actions. The will has free decision (*liberum arbitrium*) because the intellect has power over itself in that it possesses the capacity to reason. But this capacity has two aspects, the subjective and the objective. The good that I desire is subjective, whatever I desire may or may not be desirable but I am free to follow or reject my own reason. However, total happiness, the object, is what the will necessarily wills and in this respect, according to Thomas we are not masters of our desire for ultimate happiness.

Both treatises describe a movement from exterior things to the interior to the superior. Thus man as a composite of body and soul receives sense impressions as the primary source of knowledge but it is through the intellect that man transcends the physical. As a rational animal man seeks the truth which is the formal object of the intellect,<sup>192</sup> for Thomas the intellect is defined by its relation to truth.<sup>193</sup> The same movement applies in the case of morality when the will tends toward an object that is presented to it by intellect; this is the source of free decision. But what makes us happy is not to be found in external wealth, political achievements, power or any bodily attributes such as health, beauty and strength, not even in what in a modern sense is called the self. It is only by constant striving on our part that we learn to choose the particular goods that will lead us to our ultimate end which consists in God alone.

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<sup>192</sup> Lebech, M. Life of the Mind – Lecture notes – 1<sup>st</sup> Semester 2002, Faculty of Philosophy, Maynooth.

<sup>193</sup> Sicut bonum nominat id in quod tendit appetitus, ita verum nominat id in quod tendit intellectus. ST.1a, q.16, a.1. (*Responsio*).



The problem of morality as Gilson states is “how to determine the particular goods we should choose, and, knowing them, how to determine our acts in view of these ends.”<sup>194</sup> In his treatise on happiness Thomas answers the fundamental question that comes before any other i.e., in what consists the last end of man. For Thomas man’s last end is a supernatural good, the beatific vision is reached, not through the imperfect knowledge of this world but is to be found in the teachings of Revelation. Thomas is writing in the *Summa Theologiae* as a Christian theologian and for this reason some scholars have argued that his philosophical standing is compromised since his writing is greatly inspired by the Bible and the authority of the Church. Kenny defends Thomas against the allegation that he (Thomas) is “looking for good reasons for what he already believes in.”<sup>195</sup> As Kenny states Descartes could also be accused of writing under similar circumstances and that Bertrand Russell’s criticism does not hold sway either since he “in the book *Principia Mathematica* takes hundreds of pages to prove that two and two make four, which is something he had believed all his life.”<sup>196</sup>

The theory that man’s ultimate end consists in the vision of God has also been questioned. In his paper Alan Donagan<sup>197</sup> discusses Thomas’s natural law theory and discusses it in the context of a natural end and the use to which Thomas employs it in his ethical theory. Thomas, according to Donagan, defines a lie as speech that is contrary to the speaker’s mind and he quotes from the *Summa Theologiae*, II-II,110,3;

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<sup>194</sup> Gilson, E. *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1955. p. 379.

<sup>195</sup> Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*. p. 11.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>197</sup> Donagan, A. “The Scholastic Theory of Moral Law in the Modern World” in Kenny, A. (ed.) *Aquinas – A Collection of Critical Essays*. London / Melbourne: Macmillan, 1969. pp. 325-339.

*...since words are naturally signs of thoughts, it is unnatural and wrong for anyone by speech to signify something he does not have in his mind.*

Donagan expresses concern over the fact that Thomas's argument presupposes the principle of a natural end and further he does not agree with Thomas's statement that speech is related to the alleged end of expressing what is in the speaker's mind. But if we apply Thomas's teleological theory, that the goal or aim of an action or a thought is what is paramount then perhaps we can appreciate Thomas's argument. If I tell a lie because I believe someone's life is in danger, that is, if I know that morally I am acting for the right reason obviously this is different to my telling a deliberate lie which may cause hurt or cause harm to someone. We cannot omit the many powers of the soul when trying to interpret the statement in question; mind as we have seen must be viewed in its wider context. Donagan suggests that we can accept Thomas's account if we apply Kant's principle – that "man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself, not merely as a means for arbitrary use by this or that will" and he continues that since this implies that if man is so ordered, "it must be in a way consistent with his nature as an end."<sup>198</sup>

A further explanation for the presupposition of the end in Thomas's account is found in Alasdair MacIntyre's discussion on truth as a good.<sup>199</sup> Thomas's account of the end in his treatise on happiness is comparable to the movement of the mind to achieve truth. His conception of the truth as a good must be understood within his wider teleological account. Only then, according to MacIntyre can we understand that human beings are characteristically seeking the meaning of the good and also of

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., p. 337.

<sup>199</sup> MacIntyre, A. "Truth as a good: a reflection on *Fides et ratio*," in McEvoy & Dunne (eds.) *Approaches to Truth*. pp. 141-157.

truth.<sup>200</sup> In his writing on truth as a good MacIntyre refers to Pope John Paul's encyclical – *Fides et Ratio* in which he states that the autonomy of philosophy is “no more or no less the autonomy of the enquiring human being.”<sup>201</sup> As individual human beings we each seek meaning in our lives guided by reason but also in the knowledge that as human beings we are subject to emotions and human desires, experiences in which reason cannot always prevail.

The presupposition of truth as the constitutive of our good is according to MacIntyre this “inescapable presupposition that commits us to acknowledgment of the autonomy of philosophy.”<sup>202</sup> Philosopher and theologian alike seek the truth; as a theologian Thomas defended Divine revelation, as a philosopher he sought the truth without appealing to Divine revelation. Thomas's writing is testament to the fact, as stated by MacIntyre, that revelation can inform philosophical enquiry and in this regard *Fides et Ratio* “gives it an added significance as so central to human nature that, when that nature is transformed by grace through faith, it does not and should not cease to question.”<sup>203</sup> Pasnau likewise endorses the view that Thomas brings together the tasks of both philosophy and theology – “Aquinas's focus is theological, as he conceives of that, but it is for this very reason also philosophical, as we conceive of that. His view that final causality gives shape to human nature provides a rationale and a sample of why theology for him is continuous with philosophy for us.”<sup>204</sup>

Thomas's treatise on human nature discusses man as he is in himself, created by God; the treatise on happiness marks the journey of man as he returns to his creator; both

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Pasnau, p. 22.

treatises reflecting Thomas's belief that what we can say about God depends on what can be said about man who is a "compact of natural claims and of supernatural needs for grace and mercy."<sup>205</sup> Thomas, as a theologian can make that real connection between the natural and the supernatural. But do we not already get a glimpse of it when we witness the goodness in human nature, in those who sacrifice their lives to help others, in the extraordinary strength of those who survive injustice and forgive the perpetrators?

Any moral theory worth the name must take account of the darker side of human nature which was evident during Thomas's lifetime no less than it is at the present time. Already the first years of the twenty first century have witnessed horrors such as September 11, 2001 and the subsequent paranoia and fear that it has engendered throughout the world. At present we are receiving daily news from Iraq, the Middle East and the Sudan reporting some of the worst cruelties and injustices ever imaginable and even closer to home we have problems of addiction and the growing number of suicides among young people. It is certainly a sign of the times when we look at the rise in the number of people seeking help from psycho-therapists and counsellors. But on the positive side we are witnessing a corresponding increase in an awareness of the spiritual dimension in our nature, a dimension which must be explored if we are to live life to the full. Spirituality is described as "theological psychology"<sup>206</sup> and, although Thomas would not have used the term in the modern sense yet there is a connection to be found in his writing if one considers spirituality as "a pattern of belief stimulated by one's own times."<sup>207</sup> Thus spirituality must not be

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<sup>205</sup> *Summa Theologiae*. Vol.XVI. p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> O'Meara, T.F. *Thomas Aquinas – Theologian*. Notre Dame / London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997. p. 211.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*.

considered as separated from theology – “healthy theology overflows into spirituality and vice versa.”<sup>208</sup> Thomas’s treatment of the human person as made in the image and likeness of God is deeply spiritual, both body and soul “contribute to make ethical decisions and to living a spiritual life.”<sup>209</sup>

Thomas’s spiritual writings attracted many followers in the centuries after his death, including the philosopher Edith Stein (1891-1942), the youngest daughter of a large Jewish family who converted to Catholicism in 1922 and from that time on she focused her philosophical reading upon the medieval scholastic writers, in particular Thomas and John Duns Scotus. Thomas’s spiritual theology can be seen in Stein’s account of value in the person. As far as Stein is concerned we see “what the person *is* when we see which world of value she lives in, which values she is responsive to, and what achievements she may be creating, prompted by values.”<sup>210</sup> Thus for Stein a person’s character is formed according to their response to values, a topic which she develops in her treatise “Individual and Community”<sup>211</sup> in which she gives priority to the emotions in stating that emotion “is a ‘being closer’ that pertains to a person proper”<sup>212</sup> – a position which may have been influenced by Scotus’s account of the emotions in ethical matters. Spirit for Stein is real and present when we share meaning, it is...

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p. 214.

<sup>210</sup> Stein, E. *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities*. Translated by Mary Catharine Baseheart and Marianne Sawicki. Washington: ICS Publications, 2000. p. 227.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., pp. 129-314.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

“concretised by meaning, not matter, which means that several individuals can share the same spirituality, and also that spirit can be investigated as such in whatever incarnates it, in particular in anything produced by humans, such as literature, history or art”.<sup>213</sup>

Stein also accounts for freedom of the will in her account of causality and motivation in the mental sphere – causality shows in our life-feelings<sup>214</sup>, in the changing amounts of vitality and sluggishness that a person experiences and as such they are determined and necessary; motivation<sup>215</sup> on the other hand is not determined, it describes the meaning we individually attach to any set of circumstances. As in the case of Thomas’s *liberum arbitrium* a person may be directed in a certain direction but simply choose to go against it – when presented with a state of affairs which “defines a range of possibilities, and if the knowing subject departs from this range, it proceeds irrationally.”<sup>216</sup>

In both treatises Thomas emphasises the unity of body and soul. As human beings we are governed by both mind and body and individually we have a responsibility to be true to ourselves and to strive to become the best that we can be in this our earthly existence. The assumption that everyone has a goal in life is so basic to our nature that we pass most of our days unaware of its importance to our well-being and happiness. But a goal, doing something because we believe it is intrinsically good in itself and desired by us as such, gives us a perspective and forces us to reflect on what is important and meaningful to us and, although we may not think in terms of an

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<sup>213</sup> Lebech, M. Study Guide to Edith Stein’s Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities. MA.Degree Seminar 2004.

<sup>214</sup> “Not only the quality but also the ‘strength’ of the effect depends on the origin, except that the strength here isn’t measurable as in the area of physical nature”. Stein, p. 15.

<sup>215</sup> “Motivation, in our general sense, is *the* connection that acts get into with one another: not a mere blending like that of simultaneously or sequentially ebbing phases of experiences, or the associative tying together of experiences, but an *emerging* of the one *out of* the other, a self fulfilling or being fulfilled of the one *on the basis of* the other, *for the sake of* the other”. Stein, p. 41.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

ultimate goal in a theological sense nevertheless every step we take to reach our human potential will ultimately lead us to completeness.

Thomas's discussion on freedom of choice speaks volumes today in a world that offers far greater choice in the moral sense as much as it does in every other sphere of our lives. The challenge for us today is in learning how to exercise those choices in order to produce a system that accepts changing values, one that develops a language that invites discussion at every level and one that is open to the deep and searching questions of our times, while at the same time maintaining the overall common good as its foundation. Thomas's legacy to us is his insight into philosophy and theology; his life of dedication and commitment may stand in stark contrast to the affluent wealth and pleasures we enjoy today and yet it serves as a reminder to us all that no matter how vastly different our worlds or cultures may be the questions surrounding our human existence remain the same. His insights into human nature force us to reflect also on how man over time has always been and will always be subject to temptations such as greed for wealth and power and yet has it not always been in man's nature to yearn for something higher? Belief in the afterlife may be crucial to Thomas's account yet even the sceptic can appreciate that it is only by reflecting on the big issues such as human nature and the meaning and goal of our lives that we can begin to open our hearts and minds to the diverse and changing views of others. It is this search for truth that lies behind Thomas' writing, a search that influenced many successive generations in the process of finding new ways to understanding man and his Creator. Thomas initiated what we today would describe as a holistic view of man and his place in the universe. In both treatises he highlights the uniqueness of the individual but equally he stresses our relationships with others and above all with our

Creator. And although we need to place much of his writing in the context of its time the synthesis he sought to establish between philosophy and theology has remained relevant to us today. In addition we are currently witnessing a greater openness and receptivity between religion and the sciences in which each realises not only their respective limitations but also the strengths and values of the other. In this way philosophy, theology and science can meet and complement and enrich each other. Finally the sheer size of the output of Thomas's work is testament to his genius, his methodical questioning, his searching and inquiring nature represent a timeless challenge to us all, believer and non-believer alike, for Thomas "contemplation was a journey, and research a quest for truth."<sup>217</sup>

Thomas's treatment of human nature and his belief that man's ultimate end is the life of the spirit provide a real starting point for a discussion on how we can begin to take a fresh look at a system which lays a foundation for the moral judgement of human acts and which is also the meeting place of human wisdom and divine truth.

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<sup>217</sup> O'Meara, p. 215.



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