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*MAN*  
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Man (Gk. ἄνθρωπος, Lat. *homo*) is a concretely living being of a corporeal and spiritual nature.

The general human culture is full of multiple questions on man and various answers to them, for the reflection of man about himself seems to be as old as human history. It is expressed and confirmed, for example, by the inscription on the architrave of the temple of Apollo at Delphi: Γνῶθι σαυτόν (“Know thyself”). In this context, I am going first to review the most general and culturally important statements on the subject of man, and then present the developed and rationally justified conception of man as a personal being who, by his action, transcends nature, society, and himself. This conception, unique in world literature, finds its expression in St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*, which presents a justifying context for man’s origin and life, ontic structure, individual and social actions as rationally conditioned, and the eschatic fulfillment of his natural desire for happiness by the intervention of the Incarnate God—Jesus Christ. In his *Summa*, Aquinas

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nas not only considers and rationally justifies all the basic aspects of the nature of man who transcends the world by his conscious and free action, but also takes into consideration various anthropological theories developed in ancient Greece and Rome.

### **Pre-Systemic Statements**

In the ancient Indian philosophico-religious thought that is available to us today, man (*puruṣa*, *manuṣya*) was included in one of five sub-groups of domesticated animals: cows, horses, goats, and monkeys, and differed from them in his ability to perform sacrifices; furthermore, only man (and that was to testify to man's supreme dignity) could free himself from the circle of palingenesis by definite modes of life. That liberation, however, did not affect man as a whole, but only his internal element which determined "being oneself" (the self, selfness). Moreover, the ultimate liberation was not achievable by all people, but only those from the highest social castes.

In ancient Greek philosophy, although man is similar to the gods, yet he differs from them in that he is mortal and dwells on the earth; as a being subject to the influence of time and change, he is also subject, in his earthly life, to evil and misfortune. Therefore, according to the ancients, those whom the gods love die young.<sup>1</sup> Philosophers, trying to gain knowledge of the universe and man's place in it, regarded man as a "microcosm." Man belongs to the world of animals, but he differs fundamentally from them in that not only does he receive information from the world, but also understands the information; nevertheless, man is deficient in his endowments (such as physical strength, natural fur, etc.) in comparison to certain other animals.

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<sup>1</sup> In Homer's *Iliad* (VII, 131), there is the belief that the soul abandons man with his last breath, or loss of blood.

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In Hesiod's stories, it was Zeus who burdened humans with a hard and toilsome life, but he also gave them the law as the highest good. One of the heroes, Prometheus, in a desire to alleviate human misery, stole fire from the gods and gave it to man; Prometheus taught man not only to use fire, but also, as Aeschylus completes Hesiod's myth, to cultivate various arts (especially the "art of moral life"), which were supposed to constitute man's "second nature."

In ancient Greek thought, then, man appears as more and more perfect; in fact, he is perfect to such a degree that, for Protagoras, man is "the measure of all things." Thus, what at first appeared as a distinct deficiency (in comparison with the endowments of animals) over the course of time came to be regarded as the cause of the coming into being—thanks to intellectual cognition and the use of language—of culture and art. Man is, then—as Diogenes of Apollonia, a disciple of Anaxagoras, observed—the only creature who "looks up to the heavens" (and not, like animals, down at earth), and therefore he can be compared to the gods who look down from "on high," understand cognized things, make use of language, and recognize the law.

### Elements of the Orphic-Platonic Vision

In the Orphic philosophico-religious current, there is a view (which had an important influence on Pythagoreanism and Platonism) that the human soul has a divine origin: it emerges from a deity and returns to it at the moment of man's death; the soul is a divine and immortal element, different from the body in which it resides only for the time of earthly life. Plato compares the soul's abiding in the body to its abiding in a tomb (σῶμα—body, σῆμα—tomb), or in a prison from which it can be freed by a virtuous life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Plato, *Cratylus*, 400 B–G.

In agreement with the doctrine of the migration of souls he received from the Orphics and the Pythagoreans, Plato conceived of man as an eternally existing soul that—as a result of its offenses—became tied to a body. Those offenses had to be of various kinds, because souls could be tied to different bodies (e.g., to the body of a man, a woman, or even an animal). In such a situation, the man-soul tied to the body can only have one purpose, namely, to free himself from the body and return to his original spiritual state. The fall of the man-soul could have happened, since (according to those beliefs, and also on the basis of internal human experience) the human spirit (soul) is expressed in its action in various ways: desire, courage, and reason (symbolized by a many-headed insatiable hydra, a lion, and a man). This threefold action of the human spirit is manifested in the organization of the political state formed by three social classes: the craftsmen, the soldiers, and the rulers, among whom justice should reign, that is, each should receive what is due to him. Only those who know the purpose of man's life can rule the state; this purpose (i.e., to be freed from forced incarnation) can be accomplished through a rational and just life. Only philosophers know about the good which is effusive and all-encompassing. It is thus necessary to build such a state that, by the application of law, will make the just life possible (or impose it by force), and thereby will enable a return to the state of a pure spirit. The state ruled by philosophers and good laws requires the continuous education and improvement of man. The entire educational process—*παιδεία*—creates culture (i.e., the rational “cultivation” of man) according to the model of the very idea of “man”—the idea which, as general and necessary, is the sum of perfections that man should achieve during his connection to the body. *Paideia* is based on intellectual cognition; corporeality hinders the soul from having insight into pure truth, which the soul was in possession of before its incarnation; once tied to the body, the soul must force its way through to and discover anew the knowledge that it has possessed *al-*

ways. The attainment of knowledge consists in recalling (ἀνάμνησις) that which is the soul's life, namely, the truth. When the soul, as a consequence of its fall, becomes incarnated in matter, it passes through the "river of forgetfulness"—Λήθη, and therefore only by anamnesis can it return once more to the sphere of truth—ἀλήθεια. Hence, man's knowledge of the world as a whole is a knowledge by anamnesis. According to Plato, this is an additional argument for the immortality and eternity of the soul:

[I]f the truth of all things that are is always in our soul, then the soul must be immortal; so that you should take heart and, whatever you do not happen to know at present—that is, what you do not remember—you must endeavor to search out and recollect.<sup>3</sup>

Anamnesis is present in all the modes of cognition: in doxal cognition, dianoetic cognition, and in the highest type of cognition—noesis. Without anamnesis, man would possess no knowledge; only the soul in its intellectual vision is capable of understanding that which it contemplates.

For the colorless, formless, and intangible truly existing essence, with which all true knowledge is concerned, . . . is visible only to the mind, the pilot of the soul. Now the divine intelligence, since it is nurtured on mind and pure knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul which is capable of receiving that which befits it, rejoices in seeing reality for a space of time and by gazing upon truth is nourished and made happy until the revolution brings it again to the same place.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Plato, *Meno*, 86 A–B, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 3, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1967). Available at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>.

<sup>4</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247 C–D, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 9, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1925). Available at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>.

The vision of the world and man in Plato's writings is conditioned by a twofold presupposition: the primacy of cognition over being, and the acceptance of certain (in particular Orphic) mythological visions of man. The primacy of cognition over being is expressed in the fact that cognition does not flow from a cognitive interiorization of the world of senses and individuals, but it is an operation of the spirit which sees the "objects" of its cognition. Depending on the character of cognition, various types of objects of cognition appear. In noetic cognition, the objects of cognition are ideas; in dianoetic cognition, these are mathematical constructs; in doxal cognition, changing and individual objects can be cognized. The universe is arranged as a consequence of, and a dependent on, cognition: the world of ideas, the world of mathematical constructs, and the world of changing individual beings. In all this, it is not clear how the world of ideas is related to the world of mathematical constructs or to the world of changing individuals; the latter merely participates in the world of ideas and that of mathematical constructs. The primacy of cognition over the objects of cognition, however, is beyond doubt, and the objects of cognition themselves (ideas, numbers, and the world of shadows, that is, that of individual beings) are in large measure a consequence of cosmogonic myths and purely intellectual speculations. The dialogue *Timaeus* provides a good illustration of this, for there appears the demiurge who is the maker of the world of changing individuals resulting from the synthesis of matter and spirit.

Since the soul is a spirit-intellect, possessing the truth within itself, it can never be deprived of this truth completely. Therefore, the type of knowledge by anamnesis (which only apparently makes human cognition independent of the world of changing material individuals), which was adopted from Plato by many philosophers in later times, became a recognition sign of the reception of Platonism, especially in terms of emphasizing the active role of reason in the process of intellec-

tual cognition. That was the case with ancient and medieval Christian philosophy, and then—with Descartes—it was passed on to modern European philosophy.

### Aristotle's Conception of Man

In relation to the Platonic conception of man, Aristotle made a fundamental change. He rejected the mode of cognition by anamnesis in favor of genetic empiricism. Philosophers who succumbed to mythological interpretations were treated by Aristotle with contempt, which was already true in Book I of his *Metaphysics*, that is, when he still regarded himself as a Platonist; instead of accepting myths, he undertook studies of nature, which found their reflection in his treatise *Περὶ ψυχῆς* (*On the Soul*). There is no clear evidence that Aristotle first accepted the Platonic-Orphic conception of man, and only later, distancing himself from the thought of his master, came to his own conception.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Naturalism*

In the real world, Aristotle distinguished lifeless substances (τὰ ὄντα ἄψυχα), which in keeping with the views of his time were reduced to the four basis elements: earth, water, air, and fire, and a fifth one—ether, from living substances (τὰ ὄντα ἔμψυχα) that possess a soul (ψυχή) as a source of life within themselves. The soul, being a source of life, occurs in the following hierarchy: the vegetative soul (ψυχή θρεπτική), the sensitive soul (ψυχή αἰσθητική), and the rational soul (ψυχή νοητική). The soul, as the life-giving factor, is the object of special interest for Aristotle; he devoted a separate work to the soul—*Περὶ ψυχῆς* (*On the Soul*), in which he depicted it as existing at three differ-

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Paweł Siwek, “Wstęp [Introduction],” in Arystoteles, *O duszy* [*On the Soul*], trans. Paweł Siwek (Warszawa: PWN, 1988), 7–44.

ent levels (vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual), and which are united in man. The myth describing the conversation between Midas and Silenus, according to which it is best for man to die young, since life on earth has the character of a punishment, was negated by Aristotle.<sup>6</sup> Man is the noblest among the animals living in this world, which is evidenced by his natural existence obtained in accordance with the normal course of nature (φύσει τε καὶ κατὰ φύσιν γέγονε). Thus man is not to be pitied, but is “like a god” in comparison to other creatures.<sup>7</sup>

Aristotle rejected the apriorism of cognition in relation to the real world of changing individual beings. Cognitive processes do not determine the object of human cognition—as took place in Plato’s conception—but on the contrary, it is reality that triggers human cognition; man, through the application of various cognitive methods, can cognitively interiorize this reality. Human cognition begins at the moment when the reality of the real world affects the human senses—first the external, and then the internal senses (especially imagination and memory). Reading the data of sensory cognition, the intellect comes to know necessary contents and produces general concepts—both in the area of mathematical cognition and in metaphysical cognition, which express the essential states of things. The mode of being, then, differs from the mode of cognition—things existing in an individual manner can be cognized in a general and necessary manner in a cognitive system of science. The source of cognition is empirical (derived from sensory experience), but the mode of cognition is rational; intellectual cognitive understanding permeates all the degrees (respectively corresponding to external senses, internal senses, and reason) of human cognition. It is not cognition and its structure that determines the object of

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<sup>6</sup> See Malcolm Davies, “Aristotle Fr. 44 Rose: Midas and Silenus,” *Mnemosyne* 57, no. 6 (2004): 682–697.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Protrepticus*, ed. & trans. D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson (2017), 42. Available at: <http://www.protrepticus.info/protr2017x20.pdf>.



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cognition, as was the case in Plato's philosophy; it is reality that triggers in man the cognitive processes which, taking various forms and methods, make it possible to understand this reality. Aristotle's position on the mode of human cognition, later called the theory of abstraction, had a fundamental influence on the shape of science and of philosophy. The philosophical trends, that contrary to Aristotle's realist stance accepted elements of Platonic apriorism, led to post-Scotist currents, such as Cartesian and Kantian subjectivism, or post-Kantian philosophical systems.

The basic difference between Plato's and Aristotle's positions on the character of human cognition consists in the fact that in Plato man is regarded as a spirit-mind living an "immanent" eternal life, whereas in Aristotle man is a product of nature. The process of cognition in man results, as in animals, from the action of natural factors on man's cognitive faculties; before that action there were no *a priori* cognitive processes in man, nor are there any; for man has not always existed, his existence (life) begins in time. Hence, all human operations, including cognitive operations, have their definite beginning, namely, the action of reality (nature) on man's sensory and intellectual faculties. Cognition becomes the reception and interiorization of the ontic contents of the existing world. The rationality of human cognition is nothing other than the interiorization of the intelligibility of the really existing world. It is not man who brings nature before the tribunal of reason (as Kant says in a Platonic vein), but it is the world, its actually existing content expressed in cognitive signs of senses and reason that constitute the realm of the rationality of human cognition. This is why the reading and understanding of the reality being researched, including the reality that is man himself, are so important for Aristotle.

### *The Soul as a Source of Motion*

Aristotle, setting about an understanding explanation of animate beings (especially man), was aware of the difficulties involved in the task:

Holding as we do that, while knowledge of any kind is a thing to be honoured and prized, one kind of it may, either by reason of its greater exactness or of a higher dignity and greater wonderfulness in its objects, be more honourable and precious than another, on both accounts we should naturally be led to place in the front rank the study of the soul. . . . Our aim is to grasp and understand, first its essential nature, and secondly its properties; of these some are taught to be affections proper to the soul itself, while others are considered to attach to the animal owing to the presence within it of soul.<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle referred to the views of his predecessors on the subject of the soul:

For our study of soul it is necessary, while formulating the problems of which in our further advance we are to find the solutions, to call into council the views of those of our predecessors who have declared any opinion on this subject, in order that we may profit by whatever is sound in their suggestions and avoid their errors.<sup>9</sup>

Many philosophers before Aristotle (Thales, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Democritus, Anaxagoras, and finally Plato) conceived of the soul as a principle of motion, but their understanding of motion was different from Aristotle's—for them, motion was a (self-) movement. Consequently, they conceived of the soul as that which by its nature is in motion, after the model of a body in motion. That resulted in the concep-

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<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 402a, trans. J. A. Smith. Available at: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/soul.1.i.html>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 403b.

tion of the soul as being incessantly in the motion understood in local-spatial terms:

[B]elieving that what is not itself moved cannot originate movement in another, they arrived at the view that soul belongs to the class of things in movement. This is what led Democritus to say that soul is a sort of fire or hot substance; his ‘forms’ or atoms are infinite in number; those which are spherical he calls fire and soul, and compares them to the motes in the air which we see in shafts of light coming through windows.<sup>10</sup>

Aristotle also mentioned the doctrine of the Pythagoreans on the subject of the soul:

[A]ll seem to hold the view that movement is what is closest to the nature of soul, and that while all else is moved by soul, it alone moves itself. This belief arises from their never seeing anything originating movement which is not first itself moved.<sup>11</sup>

While presenting the opinions of his predecessors and contemporaries (i.e., Plato) on motion as originating from the soul, Aristotle conceived motion in an entirely different way. His conception of motion (Book XI of the *Metaphysics*) followed from the conception of being as composed of act and potency, and in the sphere of material beings—as composed of matter and form; he thus conceived motion as “the act of a being in potency.” Moves, coming from the soul as a source of motion, are nothing other than the actualization of the potency of a particular being. This means that a concrete being—which is a particular (hylomorphic) kind of composite of a potential factor (a passive factor) called matter, and a factor that determines and constitutes the content of being, called act (form), which makes it possible for us to deal with “this here” (τόδε τι) being—is capable of moving itself through its own form which is the source of further action. The action of a being is this

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 403b–404a.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 404a.

being's "second act," which is rationally justified in ontic terms by its "first act," which is its form.

Aristotle's reasoning does not follow the direction set by previous philosophical thought (including Plato's) that the soul as a source of motion "externally" puts the living body in motion. Although this source "externally" putting living bodies in "vital" motion can be conceived of in widely varied ways, all theories of that type are unacceptable, since they presuppose an erroneous concept of motion as external to the living body. Having presented these theories (including the Platonic theory, to which he devotes much attention), Aristotle ultimately rejects them as he shows that they involve contradictions. He proposes to think of motion not as something separate from a being that is in motion (from a "moved" being), but as an "act that is in potency as such." He sees an internal connection of motion with being: motion is the actualization of a being's potency. In the *Metaphysics*, he writes that there are as many kinds of motion as there are those of beings, for motion is the act of a being in potency. Such an understanding of motion, revolutionary in comparison with previous conceptions, indicates the dynamism of being. The reason for its movement, therefore, should be sought in being itself. In Aristotle's understanding, to be a being is fundamentally to be a substance, since it is substance that stands at the foundations of the understanding of reality. Dynamic substances, subject to motion, must be composed of at least two factors: one that is the reason for passivity which he called matter (ὕλη), and which performs the function of potency, and another that is the reason for movement, which he called form (μορφή), and which performs the function of act (ἐνέργεια). The composition of substance from potency (δύναμις) and act (which has two names: ἐντελέχεια and ἐνέργεια) occurs in all natural substances. These substances, possessing in themselves act-form (ἐντελέχεια), are capable of performing movement (ἐνέργεια). The ἐνέργεια is proportional to the form (εντελέχεια) that constitutes the be-

ing. Living substances, as observation confirms, express themselves through their nourishment, reproduction, growth, and sensory cognition. The soul as the factor that constitutes the living being—the factor that performs vital functions conceived precisely as life—is thus the form, that is, the first act (*entelécheia*) which manifests itself in various vital actions as a secondary act. For this reason Aristotle calls the soul the first act (*ἐντελέχεια ἡ πρώτη*) of a body that possesses life in potency, insofar as life is understood as various vital operations. The soul, being a form (*entelécheia*), expresses itself in secondary (second) acts which also flow out of the organs of the body. These acts presuppose “potencies” proportional to them, that is, the faculties of the soul. Every soul is an *entelécheia*, that is, a form that organizes a parcel of matter to be a concrete being. As observation confirms, the living beings of nature generate various forms of motion (action), such as nutrition, sense cognition, and intellectual cognition. As forms of motion (action), each is certainly an act: a “second act”—an act that is secondary to the fundamental form of being that is *entelécheia* (the substantial form). Since these actions sometimes occur and some other times do not, it must be admitted that the secondary act is also potentialized. Keeping in mind the conception of act and potency—as well as the proportionality between them—it is possible to learn, from the analysis of an act, about what the source of this act is. The soul, conceived as “the first act of a physical organic body possessing life in potency,” appears as composed of its faculties which are the direct source of the appropriate vital action. The soul, while organizing the body, simultaneously organizes the appropriate organs through which it acts.

The manifestations of life (“second acts”—*ἐνέργεια*), such as taking nourishment, exist “in potency,” which means that a living being can use its faculties (although it does not use them constantly) for meeting the needs of the soul (the “first act”). The conception of potency and act (or matter and form in material beings) became for Aristotle the

basis for the definition of the soul as a source of life. What was especially important in his theory, as it made possible the discovery of the structure of the soul, was the affirmation of the fact that potency and act are transcendently (that is, wherever there is a composition of potency and act) and necessarily ordered to one another. Act and potency ordered to one another pertain to the same ontic order: if act belongs to the order (category) of substance, then the potency ordered to it also belongs to the order of substance; vital acts—emanated from substance, characterized by the non-necessity of action, relating to the categories of time and space, and those of action and the reception of action—are accidents in their ontic structure; they are evidence that the soul has its own faculties of action which are subjected in the appropriate organs of action of the living being. The understanding of the soul as the “first act of a physical body that has life in potency” is thus rationally grounded.

The conception of potency and act—applied by Aristotle, and confirmed by the nature of the soul as acting through faculties—invalidates the Platonic conception of the soul as an independently existing spirit (a divine entity) that acts with its whole being, permeates different levels of reality, and is incarnated in different forms of living matter. If there is, however, no proportionality and no ordering between various structures of living matter and the spirit, no new substantial being of a definite nature and natural action can arise from matter. Without the necessary ordering of potency to act, the coming into existence of a being, that is characterized by coordinated action, is not possible. That is why it is impossible for the soul as an independently existing spirit, as a being that is “pure” by its nature, to be joined with any living matter which indeed has its own act of life, its own “entelechy.” That line of reasoning made Aristotle conclude that the conception of the soul, as source of motion separate from matter and attached to already-living matter, would have destroyed the unity (which, according to Plato and—to some degree—Aristotle, is the foundation for being a

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being) of the being that arose (following the assumption that henology is superior to ontology, which means that being a being results from “unification” fulfilling the requirement of non-contradiction, that is, being only “this” and not “this and non-this” at the same time).

### *Exclusion of Reincarnation*

Aristotle’s conceptions of the soul and of man flow from his understanding of natural beings. This is the understanding that requires, under threat of falling into contradiction, the acceptance of both the composition within being of various non-identical factors, and the ontic unity of natural beings. And it is free of contradiction only when in one being its component elements are to each other as potency to act, as matter to form. Between these factors, then, there is a necessary ordering that excludes joining other factors which might disturb substantial unity. The material-potential sphere always has appropriate disposition toward a proportional form-act. Therefore the soul, being a source of life, can only be an actual, essential component of a being, but not something perfect in itself and coming to a being from outside. The soul cannot join a living being from outside, because ontic forms are pre-contained in the potentiality of matter itself. This essentially precludes the mythical views of Plato that the soul as a source of life can be connected from outside as pre-existing “in itself.” Plato’s conception distorts the understanding of being as essentially one; were it true, there would be no natural beings that were substantially one, but only peculiar ontic collages whose operations would have various sources of action that are incompatible with each other, that is, uncoordinated and ineffective. Nature does not know such beings.

The Aristotelian conception of the soul—as the “first act of an organic physical body possessing life in potency”—is a rational explanation of the structure of the living being; it is at the same time a critical response to Plato’s and the Platonists’ mythical understanding of the

soul as an eternally existing spirit that is connected in time with certain natural bodies. Aristotle regarded Plato's position as being in contradiction with the facts and the rational understanding of natural beings as substantially (essentially) one; for natural beings show their unity in action flowing from one and the same source, form, conceived as the first act of a being, from which second acts can emerge. Such second acts (nutrition, sense cognition, etc.) really exist; in natural beings, there is a structure revealing the faculties (organs) proper to the vital activities of these beings (such as eyes, ears, organs of nutrition, sensation, etc.). The entire structure of being is thus connected to the soul as the factor that organizes the body in a purposeful manner, that is, for its own good. How, then, can the factor called the soul, understood as a source of movement, organize the body of a man or an animal from outside? And, if the soul does not organize the body from outside, then two souls should exist as two sources of action that are independent of one another and connected to one another only accidentally. Then, however, the human being (or the animal being) would be a collage of beings which generate uncoordinated (not subordinate to each other) actions resulting from different ontic sources and manifesting a lack of internal cohesion (a lack of unity) in the human being (or the animal being)—that would be similar to the ontic collage of a tree and a mistletoe (a parasitic plant growing on trees). Ontic activities that do not come from the same source may turn out to be injurious to each other. But the analysis of natural beings, that is, beings that arise as the result of generation in nature, indicates that they bear no traces of internal disharmony; for the structure of a natural being is an organic structure containing formed organs which are the direct sources of action and serve the good of the whole of a natural substantial being. All these attributes of a natural organic being lose their meaning in the Orphic-Platonic conception of the soul and the related conception of reincarnation (palingenesis).



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*Objectivity of Action*

The soul as the first act of a natural organic body is manifested in its action which is understood by Aristotle as a “second act.” The second act consists of various vital operations that mark the nature of the soul as an internal source of life. Various vital operations flow from their immediate sources, called the faculties of the soul; these faculties establish a special hylomorphic structure, that is, they are composed of the matter (ὕλη) of particular organs and their secondary forms (e.g., vision, hearing, and touch in the sensory order, or nutrition, respiration, and reproduction in the vegetative order). Aristotle devoted much attention to describing the action of these faculties as secondary (second) acts of a living substance. The particular faculties of the soul, ordered to action, are what in the definition of the soul is described as “having life in potency;” it is these faculties of the soul that are the immediate source of action. This action sometimes occurs and sometimes does not, since not all faculties act all the time; the action of the faculties of the soul is thus characterized (in the ontic respect) by contingency and accident: actions are not independent substantial beings, but they are “radiated” from the primary source (faculty) of action—the substance. The actions of the soul, as its “secondary acts,” are subject to the general law of action—objective determination (all actions are of some character, they are determined; indeterminate actions do not exist), and thereby the question of the objective determination of the actions of the soul arises.

By his exposition on the objects of the actions of the faculties of the soul, Aristotle attempts to describe the objectivity of sensory actions, and then to explain what he understands by the concept of the “object of action.” Aristotle divides objects of action into the so-called proper objects (the common objects) and the accidental objects; this division is intended to eliminate misunderstandings that could upset the

conception of the “proper object” as that which—as the scholastics would say—“enters into the definition” of action. The understanding of the object of actions, including the so-called proper object, results from the application of the theory of act and potency to the philosophical explanation of the ontic structure of the living being, especially man. Given the necessary ordering of potency to act (especially the act that appears in actions), “active potency” is described as a source of action, and thereby it is possible to arrive at an understanding of the ontic state of what is called a faculty of the soul. Since the soul exists as the first act, then by the acts of this soul, called secondary acts, one can directly determine the source of these acts, that is, the active potency, and so the faculty of the soul through which the living being—formed by the soul as this living being’s “first act”—acts. Consequently, it turns out that the human soul in itself is not absolutely simple. While it is simple in its essence, the soul has its faculties as the direct sources of actions; these actions are observable in our cognition (if it did not possess faculties of action as different from its essence, the soul would be a pure act or, in point of fact, God). The accidental and contingent character of the soul’s actions indicates that the soul in its being is not a pure act, but is composed of essence and its faculties which are active potencies. This is an important argument against the Platonic conception of the soul as a spirit (νοῦς) which thinks and acts with its whole being.

Having affirmed that the acts of the soul (including acts of intellectual cognition) are not always being performed in man, Aristotle had to take the position that acts of intellectual cognition do not constitute the essence of the soul; they are only accidents and, as accidents, require a special source for their action, that is, an active potency as a faculty of the soul by which the soul manifests its life in action. The soul cannot thus be (in its existence within the body) absolutely uncompounded, but it must be composed in a special way of essence and its faculties (*totum potestativum*) as the appropriate sources of action.

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There are as many faculties of the soul as there are proper objects of action that characterize particular faculties; it is the proper objects of the soul's action that form the special character of particular actions (their irreducibility to actions of another type), and thereby indicate that separate and specific faculties of action (as active potency that constitutes the source of action) must exist in the soul. It is the proper objects of the action of a living being that determine this being's action, and specify it by influencing the cognition of the sources of direct action, and thereby affecting the understanding of the soul as the "first act" of the physical (natural) organic body that has life ("second act," action) in potency. Due to having life in potency, the body has in its structure faculties of action (as active potencies) which are the direct sources of action. The proper object of action is necessary for the action of a living being. To deny proper objects is tantamount to a denial of the existence of determined actions, for every action is directed to an object; proper objects determine action and make it possible to know action.

Determined action flows from the function of final causation. In its action, a living being must be motivated, for motive is what causes action to occur, rather than not occur. For the living being then, the motive of action is a kind of good by which the being takes real action, and thus perfects itself. By its action, the being "expresses itself" externally; without action, there would be no life. If the living being (especially man) is to perform an action that did not previously exist, then, for this action to occur, the being must be brought out of neutrality (i.e., passivity) in relation to action. Only the good understood as an end can be a motive for the occurrence of an action. The good shows an end for various actions of a living being (to see rather than not see, to hear rather than not hear, to take nutrition rather than not, to perform cognition rather than not, etc.). Actions are "called to existence" by concrete goods; goods motivate the coming into existence of an action, and determine the action to achieve them.

The objectivity and teleology of action are intertwined into one. In every action, there are three causes which operate together, and without which there would be no real action: the final cause which is the motive of action, the exemplar cause which determines the action by giving it internal ordering, the efficient cause which is the immediate source of action. An actual action would not come into existence without its motive (i.e., the end which is a concrete good for a living being) and its rational ordering (i.e., the determination of action; for an action, having a defined motive and object, must be ordered precisely by its object which is at the same time its motive). All this results from the direct source of the determined and purposeful action of a living being. Aristotle holds that action is determined by a proper object; in human cognition (sensory and intellectual), it is the proper object that excludes error. The rationality of cognition is an expression of the rationality and teleology of nature itself. Although he did not explicitly determine the ultimate sources of the rationality of being, Aristotle—having taken the position that the rationality of human cognition flows from the interiorization of reality as it is given—implicitly admitted the real being itself to be a source of rationality. In its action, nature that is a rational structure expresses itself rationally, and thereby teleologically and objectively as well. The proper object of the action of a living being cognitively determines and defines the character of an action. An action as unnecessary in itself indicates its direct source which is the acting faculty; the acting faculty, since it is proportional in its ontic nature to an action, is an accidental structure, and so it presupposes a substantial structure—the soul which is conceived as the first act of an organic body possessing life (vital acts) in potency.

Man as ζῷον λογικόν (an animal capable of rational cognition) arouses particular interest in the philosophical understanding of the world. In his biological structure, the rationally cognizing man is an animal whose life manifests itself in acts of sensory cognition (includ-

ing both external and internal senses), and in affective drives (ὄρεξις) which—being of a psychophysical nature—are acts common to soul and body. The action of the reason, including spiritual (i.e. separate from matter) acts of rational cognition, ranks the acts of a psychophysical nature. It is because of the reason that the soul rears above other living beings—this view of Aristotle calls to mind the conception of the Platonic soul which (as a spirit-reason) is an abode of cognitive forms (ideas)—and so it is capable of knowing everything, because it contains nothing that is matter: *cognoscitivum aliquorum nihil eorum habet in sua natura*.<sup>12</sup>

Reason, according to Aristotle, is the factor that characterizes man. In his introduction to Aristotle's treatise *On the Soul*, Paweł Siwek wrote:

Man owes to his reason the features which differentiate him from all other creatures, and which assure him an entirely exceptional place among them. These features include speech<sup>a</sup>, the social, economic, and political system<sup>b</sup>, science, the feeling of obligation, justice, and law<sup>c</sup>, the ability of free choice<sup>d</sup>, virtue and vice<sup>e</sup>, etc. There is even no lack of people—adds Aristotle—who think that the gods are people who during their life rose to the heights of moral virtue<sup>f</sup>. «If therefore nature—as he concludes—makes nothing without purpose or in vain», then it must be supposed «that nature has made all [what we can see in the world] for the sake of men»<sup>g</sup>.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica*, I, q. 75, a. 2: “Now whatever knows certain things cannot have any of them in its own nature; because that which is in it naturally would impede the knowledge of anything else.” Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947). Available at: <https://dhspritory.org/thomas/summa/>.

<sup>13</sup> Siwek, “Wstęp [Introduction],” 28–29 [<sup>a</sup> *Polit.*, I, 2, 1253 a 10; VII, 13, 1332 b 4; <sup>b</sup> *Polit.*, I, 2, 1253 a 2, 8; III, 6, 1278 b 19; *Eth. Nic.*, I, 5, 1097 b 11; <sup>c</sup> *Polit.*, III, 10, 1281 a 35 f.; 16, 1287 a 27–30; <sup>d</sup> *Hist. Anim.*, I, 1, 488 b 24–25; <sup>e</sup> *Polit.*, I, 2, 1253 a 16, 31 f.; <sup>f</sup> *Eth. Nic.*, VII, 1, 1145 a 23–24; <sup>g</sup> *Polit.*, I, 8, 1256 b 20–22; *Phys.*, II, 2, 194 a 34–35].

### *Intellectual Cognition*

When he cognizes intellectually, man is in a special situation; for he can cognize necessary, general, constitutive structures and relations as relations, and he can express all this in concepts produced in the cognitive process. Conceptual cognition, characterized by generality, necessity, and invariability, constitutes an important cognitive domain. This type of cognition received special attention by Plato. Aristotle, while residing for twenty years in Plato's Academy, got to know in detail the problem of intellectual cognition, so decisive for philosophy; he provided a sound explanation of this fact without appealing to innatism which he himself rejected. The process of intellectual cognition is analogous to sensory cognition; there exists an object of cognition (i.e., a concrete real being) that in a special way acts on the cognizing subject. The cognizing subject cannot contain within itself what the object is.

In order for vision to see a given color, e.g., green, it cannot become green itself, or even in general it cannot possess any color, for otherwise its own color would obscure the proper color of an object seen; e.g., being green, it would see everything in green. For a similar reason the reason cannot possess any attribute belonging to the thing that can be cognized by it: «Therefore, since everything is a possible object of thought—says Aristotle with emphasis—mind in order, as Anaxagoras says, to dominate, that is, to know, must be pure from all admixture»<sup>a</sup>. Because the reason or mind is not in its cognition restricted only to a certain *category* of being (unlike what takes place in the senses), but extends to all being both actual and potential, present, past, or future, real or merely possible, therefore it «can have no nature of its own, other than that of having a certain capacity. Thus . . . [it] is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing»<sup>b</sup>. This capacity is

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real, and it must be based on some existing thing. This thing is the human soul . . .<sup>14</sup>

It is proper to the nature of the reason that it cannot contain anything that becomes the object of its cognition: *cognoscitivum aliquorum nihil eorum habet in sua natura*. Therefore the reason, capable of cognizing everything, cannot be material or possess any material organ, for this would make cognition impossible for it. The reason is only a potency—a capacity of cognition without any limitation, for it can cognize everything; and so it is immaterial.

If thinking is like perceiving, it must be either a process in which the soul is acted upon by what is capable of being thought, or a process different from but analogous to that. The thinking part of the soul must therefore be, while impassible, capable of receiving the form of an object; that is, must be potentially identical in character with its object without being the object. Mind must be related to what is thinkable, as sense is to what is sensible. Therefore, since everything is a possible object of thought, mind in order, as Anaxagoras says, to dominate, that is, to know, must be pure from all admixture; . . . it follows that it too, like the sensitive part, can have no nature of its own, other than that of having a certain capacity. Thus that in the soul which is called mind (by mind I mean that whereby the soul thinks and judges) is, before it thinks, not actually any real thing. For this reason it cannot reasonably be regarded as blended with the body: if so, it would acquire some quality, e.g., warmth or cold, or even have an organ like the sensitive faculty: as it is, it has none. It was a good idea to call the soul ‘the place of forms’, though (1) this description holds only of the intellectual soul, and (2) even this is the forms only potentially, not actually.<sup>15</sup>

Considering the process of cognition (which is analogous in the mental order and in the intellectual order) and the subject that cognizes

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 32 [<sup>a</sup> *On the Soul*, III, 429 a 13–18; <sup>b</sup> *On the Soul*, III, 429 a 18–24].

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III, 429 a.

intellectually (with the immaterial faculty of the reason), the question arises, how can the cognized material world (material beings) act upon the intellect that is immaterial, and in what way can this material world be cognized? After all, there is no proportion between the material stimulus, sent from a concrete material being, and the immaterial reason. A material stimulus (because of belonging to a different ontic order) cannot actualize the cognitive process of the intellect, for matter does not act, as an act, upon a spirit; the cognitive stimulus seems thus to be disconnected from the concrete cognized being, but, if it is true, then our contact with the world is broken. Aristotle was aware of these relations of dependence.

Is it then possible to find a solution to this problem which at the same time will allow to establish the receptivity of cognition to the material stimuli coming from the really existing world, and to preserve the proportion between the immaterial reason of the man who cognizes and the material world which is cognized? Aristotle claims that the system of sensory cognition is coordinated with the immaterial factor, called the active reason (νοῦς ποιητικός), which makes the process of cognition possible (free of contradiction). The process of rational cognition begins with the senses being released from the state of cognitive indifference by a physical stimulus (e.g., a color which in the eye becomes a physiological stimulus, and thereby releases the faculty of vision from cognitive indifference).

[T]he initiative of the external object, according to Aristotle, consists in the action that it performs on the environment with the help of its powers—δυνάμεις. They are its different properties falling under the senses (αἰσθητά): color, sound, smell, etc. When, by accident, an organ endowed with the capacity to receive forms without matter (αἰσθητήριον) is found within their range, these properties elicit in it a special kind of change (ἀλλοίωσις) which actualizes the organ's capability, i.e., its potency, and allows the individual to experience a given form in-



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wardly. This experience is a single undivided act (vision, hearing, etc.), although it is a result of two different causes: the external object and the individual endowed with sensory life.<sup>16</sup>

The reason that cognizes intellectually identifies itself in a special way with the object of its cognition; the object must be “present” in an individual fashion in the reason, as an image or phantasm. A phantasm, however, is not necessary, unchanging, or general in its structure, whereas intellectual (rational) cognition is general, stable, and necessary. The representation of a thing as an “expressed image” in the imagination is an interiorization of an imagined thing; it is a special cognitive presence of the object of cognition in the cognizing subject. Still, it is an individual sensory phantasm; therefore, the content of the object of cognition given in a phantasm must be “necessitated” and “generalized” by giving it features of stability and invariability (which after all are confirmed by man’s cognitive self-consciousness). Aristotle, while keeping in mind the general theory of action, came to the conclusion that if something which did not previously exist is subjectivized, then there must exist an active factor that causes such an effect—in this case: the state of intellectual cognition. Something must exist that generalizes and necessitates the object of cognition, presented as an individual phantasm—this something is called the active reason, and it is opposed to the potential reason in which cognition occurs. There then exist, as it were, two reasons: the active reason which makes cognition possible, and the potential reason which cognizes.

There must exist, according to Aristotle, a spiritual factor that is separate from matter, resistant to external influences, and unmixed with any other elements; this factor is the active reason which like a light can illuminate that in the phantasm which is characteristic of the concept: the general features of a phantasm, its necessary ontic features, and its

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<sup>16</sup> Siwek, “Wstęp [Introduction],” 24.

unchanging features. Although individual, every phantasm is an image of a being, and therefore potentially contains all such features; all that is needed is a proper spiritual faculty that can penetrate the image and display the features proper to intellectual cognition—the features which appear explicitly in the concept as an act of intellectual cognition.

Aristotle confirms that the Platonic doctrine of noetic (conceptual) cognition, which is performed in separation from matter, is not mixed with anything unintelligible, and concerns what is general and stable. In order to acquire intellectual cognition characterized by such features, a force is necessary which in its own way will purify the “spiritual” object of cognition of matter by liberating it from and in the data of imagination. If one accepts concepts in the process of intellectual cognition, one must also accept an active factor, that is, the active reason. If one did not accept it, one would have to subscribe either to the Platonic innatism which entails anamnesis in cognition, or to sensualism which sees no difference between sense cognition and intellectual cognition; but both positions are unacceptable, since they are in disagreement with the facts of psychic life and the rational vision of the world. Aristotle’s hypothesis of the active reason invalidates the claims of innatism and sensualism. The hypothesis of the active reason is necessary for explaining—in a decontradictifying way<sup>17</sup>—the fact of the receptivity of rational cognition to the material and spiritual world.

### *Desire*

Another important element of the Aristotelean conception of man and his soul is the ability of desire, that is, the psychic striving for a known good. In his *Περὶ ψυχῆς* (*On the Soul*), Aristotle shows the pro-

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<sup>17</sup> Decontradictification is a metaphysical method for identifying the ultimate causes the negation of which would be the negation of a being that is being explained.

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cesses of desire or appetition in connection with motion which he conceives as a consequence of appetition.

Let us next consider what it is in the soul which originates movement. Is it a single part of the soul separate either spatially or in definition? Or is it the soul as a whole? If it is a part, is that part different from those usually distinguished or already mentioned by us, or is it one of them?<sup>18</sup>

Considering the so-called parts that are the faculties of the soul in vegetative, animal, and rational orders, Aristotle indicates the existence of motion as a consequence of appetition which can be both sensory and intellectual:

[A]nd lastly the appetitive, which would seem to be distinct both in definition and in power from all hitherto enumerated. It is absurd to break up the last-mentioned faculty . . . for wish is found in the calculative part and desire and passion in the irrational; and if the soul is tripartite appetite will be found in all three parts.<sup>19</sup>

Since Aristotle distinguishes in the soul three levels: vegetative, sensory, and rational, and each of these levels has its own “form,” that is, a factor that determines a specific mode of being, it becomes clear that each form generates its own (natural or cognitive) inclination (appetite) for motion. At the vegetative level, there is a natural inclination (appetite) which is manifested by nutrition and reproduction. At other levels, the motion of an animal or a man, performed with the help of appropriate bodily organs, is a consequence of a perceived practical good that, in sensory or rational estimation, became a motive (goal) of actions connected with that motion. In the subject in motion, there are thus (1) two associated (natural and cognitive) aspects of action which engage different faculties of the soul, and (2) a cognitive faculty that

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<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III, 432 a.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, III, 432 b.

acts on the basis of either sensory and imaginative cognition or rational cognition. The motion of a subject can be perfected only by making an accurate judgment on a practical good which is a real good for the subject, that is, a good that corresponds to the nature of the subject; such a good then can become really an object of appetite, that is, it can become a real motive for motion in the desiring subject.

Having affirmed the sensory vision of the practical good (recognized as practical by the faculty of sensory estimation, called natural instinct, which infallibly guides the action of animals) and the intellectual vision of the good (which becomes the motive for rational action), one must also affirm the existence of separate appetitive faculties, namely, the faculty of sensory appetite and that of intellectual appetite which in man is the will.

Turning his attention to conflicts that occur in the realm of appetition, which arise as a result of the variety of man's psychic faculties (especially sensory appetites and rational cognition), Aristotle recalls that appetites appear in two ways: as concupiscible, when their object is a good appropriate for the nature of the cognizing subject, a good that attracts to itself the appetitive faculty, and as irascible or, as it was later called, combative. Irascible appetite is aimed at effectively removing some evil, that is, something that does not concretely correspond to the nature of sensory appetite; irascible appetite (anger) arises against a concrete evil; the removal of this evil makes it possible to achieve a good appropriate for the nature of the animal (or man's animal aspect). There are thus two sensory appetitive faculties: concupiscible appetite and irascible appetite. The acts of these appetites are conditioned by imagination and sensory estimative judgments concerning the concrete suitability of a good for the nature of a cognizing subject (or its unsuitability which produces acts of irascible appetite). In man, beside irascible and concupiscible sensory appetites, there is a rational appetite, called will, whose object is the good as good and as the recognized

purpose of action and of the stimulation of the motor forces of a subject.

Considering Aristotle's doctrine as a whole, it seems that he did not paint a complete picture of man. Certainly, he was right in rejecting the conceptions of his predecessors concerning the soul, but, when formulating his own conception of the human being, he was unable—for he did not know the conception of the creation of the soul by God—to bring it to a rational completion. He did, however, present an ingenious theory of act and potency in light of which he could interpret and understand the action and the structure of the human being. Nevertheless, his theory, when addressing the problem of the origin of man and of the human soul in particular, encountered facts that could not be reconciled with it. For since man's intellectual actions manifest the structure of the human soul as immaterial, the soul (just as immaterial) cannot emerge from the potentiality of matter; the soul cannot thus be explained without falling into contradiction as having its origin in material transformations. It was only St. Thomas Aquinas who finally resolved Aristotle's dilemma and brought his thought to its successful conclusion. Aristotle did not know the conception of creation, and that ultimately made it impossible for him to resolve the problem of the origin of the human soul which in its rational action turns out to be immaterial and underivable from matter.

### *Elements of Aristotelianism in Modern Conceptions of Man*

Aristotle's vision of man as a "rational animal" and a product of nature appeared in the history of anthropology in the form of various formulations of evolutionism. Even in the Middle Ages, certain thinkers (Albert the Great, Peter of Auvergne) still believed that intermediate beings exist between the highly organized animal world and man (e.g., Pygmies). Descartes, who made the clear and distinct concept (i.e., a "subjective concept" produced by man) the object of philosophical

analysis, considered *cogito* which manifests the human soul to be a fundamental concept; for reality is either *res extensa* (i.e., matter) or *res cogitans* (i.e., spirit). What our cognition is primarily and undoubtedly given is *cogito, ergo sum* which means *ergo sum cogito* (I am a spirit-soul), since the expression *ergo* cannot indicate a conclusion; for Descartes rejected inference in favor of the evidence of ideas. In such an approach, that which is first, and which is rationally justified as an object of cognition, is the reason for cognition (since the soul cannot be unconscious of itself). Henceforth, to cognize something means to discover the meaning or sense of something in the field of consciousness. In this way, the cognizing subject becomes an *a priori* factor of cognition. This happens explicitly in Kant's system, where the objectivity of cognition is created by the subject. Thus, when receiving impressions, man becomes, as it were, "Plato's cave," in which it is only the shadows of things that are seen; the shadows are interpreted by man's "I" which determines the sense of the things.

The creative consciousness of the German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel), the post-Kantians, and the phenomenologists, shows that modern conceptions of man are still inspired by Platonism. Platonic elements can be found in Bergson's conception of "memoire," that is, the "memory of oneself" in the changeable matter of one's body. The historical sequence of philosophical conceptions of man created by ancient, medieval and modern thinkers undoubtedly bears traces of Plato's views which reduce man to self-consciousness, to a spirit, only temporarily connected to the matter of the human body. It finds its further confirmation in the mind/body dualism in contemporary anthropology.

Theories of evolution after Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley, became popular, especially when—as a result of Hegel's theory which rejected the value of the principle of non-contradiction—some supporters of evolution stopped respecting the principle of non-contradiction in

their formulations of evolutionary theories. That allowed, for instance, Ernest Renan to present a view of man's evolution toward becoming a god, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to propose his famous theory of evolution leading to the "Omega" point in which man reaches a state of deification.

Evolutionary theories rightly accent the dynamism of being (which has already been noticed by Aristotle), but when they go beyond the boundaries of the law of non-contradiction, they depart from rationality in explaining reality (for being cannot be produced from non-being, because being and non-being cannot be the same). The conception of the spirit (including the human soul) as a subject of evolution is especially out of step with reality; for all the forms of evolution presuppose a composition of parts, while the spirit (including the human soul) is in its essence uncompounded and simple, and so it is not a subject of evolutionary becoming.

### **Man as a Personal Being**

The questions concerning man, left unanswered by Aristotle, were faced by St. Thomas Aquinas who, when commenting on Aristotle's writings, was interested more in investigating the truth of things, than in being literally faithful to the written works of the great philosopher of Stagira. St. Thomas, keeping in mind the difficulties resulting from Platonism and Aristotelianism, formulated his own conception of man by referring to the problems raised by Aristotle, and by commenting on Aristotle's writings in such a way as to purify them of their internal contradictions. It was all the more successful because Aristotle's general method of philosophizing and his conception of act and potency helped Aquinas to clearly identify problems and propose rationally justified, verifiable solutions.

### *The Experience of Being a Man*

First, Aquinas had to establish the facts concerning the human being and action by subjecting them to a philosophical explanatory interpretation based on the Aristotelian method of decontradictifying explanation which consists in discovering and indicating such real factors (for real facts) that their negation would have to be tantamount to the denial of these facts (in the form of internally contradictory propositions, or in the form of a negation of the facts previously established). In establishing the fact of being a man, Aquinas appealed to internal experience, but he broadened the understanding of experience known to Aristotle as ἐμπειρία—the cognition of the presence (existence) of the object given in sensory cognition. St. Thomas appealed to the internal intellectual experience accessible to every human individual. What is common to the traditional concept of experience and intellectual (spiritual, internal) experience is the affirmation of the existence of the subject; in this case, the subject is one being—the one who experiences and at the same time is experienced. Aquinas thus stated: “[F]or each one is conscious that it is himself who understands . . . it is one and the same man who is conscious both that he understands, and that he senses.”<sup>20</sup> Experience concerns *esse* and *seipsum esse*; my internal experience is thus the experience of the existence of “myself” (*seipsum*); while existing, I simultaneously cognize intellectually and sensually, that is, it is in my cognitive life that I fulfill myself as a man. For a man is “the same one” who cognizes both intellectually and sensually. Existing as a subject who acts both in the spiritual order and the sensory order, a man experiences that the “I” given in experience (*se esse, seipsum esse*) exists as a subject of actions recognized by him as “his own” actions (*intelligere* and *sentire* are undoubtedly actions, not subjects; at the same

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<sup>20</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 76, a. 1, resp.: “Experitur enim unusquisque seipsum esse qui intelligit . . . ipse idem homo est, qui percipit se et intelligere et sentire.”



time, however, each of them is an action of a kind that reveals the same subject which has its own existence and identity in action). Therefore, in my internal experience, I monitor my own subjectivity as identical in its spiritual and sensory-material action. The “I” is given to me not from the side of its content, but from the side of the fact (act) of its existence. This means that I experience that I exist (live), but I do not know the content of this experience, that is, I do not know my concrete nature. My nature is given to me only from the side of the subjectivity of my actions. As a subject, I produce (and I feel it) my spiritual actions (e.g., in the form of intellectual cognition) and sensory actions.

The “I” is immanent in the actions that are “mine,” for it is I who am the subject of these actions. I am the subject of my actions of intellectual cognition and my actions of sensory cognition; I experience that it is I who thinks, I who understands, I who sees, I who suffers pain. The presence (immanence) of the “I” in all my actions is beyond doubt, for it is constantly experienced by me. At the same time, I experience that none of my actions—spiritual, sensory, or vegetative, although they may at times be extremely intense—have ever exhausted or appropriated the whole content of “I,” for I constantly transcend myself (i.e., all my actions: each individual and all together) and experience my self-transcendence; therefore, even when going through the greatest of pains, man is still capable of thinking and loving, or fulfilling himself in other kinds of action. Thus, beside the indubitably experienced immanence of the “I” in my heterogeneous actions, there also exists the transcendence of the “I” over all actions that are “mine,” taken individually or together, experienced intensely or mildly. Man is not entirely reducible to his actions already done; he is always capable of producing new actions of other kinds.

The internal experience of one’s own “I” is given as the experience of the subject of one’s own actions. The subject (*sub-stantia*) is constantly experienced as the same in all its actions, both biological and

psychic, sensory and spiritual—cognitive, volitional and appetitive. The same subject of different actions is given to us basically from the side of its existence, and not from the side of its internal content. This means that I experience that I live, but I do not experience my own nature, and therefore I do not immediately know what my essence is. In order not to conjecture about myself, but rather properly explore and cognize my essence, I must enter another stage of the cognitive process (no longer an immediate experience of the existence of my own subjectivity), namely, I must analyze “my” actions which flow from the same source—my own “I,” experienced by me as existing.

In the immediate experience of being a man, I make use of a signless type of cognition; I do not need the mediation of any signs to know that I live as one and the same subject that produces from itself actions which are mine. The cognition of the nature (essence) of the experienced “I,” however, cannot be performed directly, but must be mediated by signs-images obtained from my action. I must first analyze the structure and functioning of “my” cognitive (sensory, intellectual, spiritual) and appetitive (emotional and volitional) actions, and then use the obtained data as a foundation for drawing conclusions on (by virtue of the principle of proportionality between act and potency) and assessing the nature of the subject from which those actions come. While roundabout, it is the only available way to cognize the nature of the human being. It necessarily starts with collecting information and creating an image-sign that plays an indispensable role in mediating the cognition of man’s nature. The explanation of man’s nature which is cognitively mediated requires a detailed description of the analysis of what is called the structure of “my” actions and the way they function; for this is what constitutes the foundation for inferences concerning human nature.

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*The Source of Activity: The Soul*

As one monitors his actions in internal experience, one affirms his identity and unity. Identity is the same as unity, that is, undividedness. The experience of unity—despite the heterogeneous types of “my” action which are not reducible to each other—indicates an identical source of my various actions emerging from the “I.” In living beings, this source of action is the soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) which at the same time is the source of the being’s identity and of its undividedness, that is, its unity. The fact that man experiences the unity and identity of the “I” operating within actions irreducible to each other and within their ontic structures (for the actions of vegetative, sensory, and spiritual life—intellectual, volitional actions, or those of love—are not the same) means that the factor, called the soul: (1) embraces the whole being and all its parts individually and together, and (2) is one form that organizes the human body, is superior to it, and transcends it by initiating spiritual actions in the form of intellectual cognition, consciousness, and self-consciousness. Man cognizes things within their necessary ontic relationships, and he also knows that it is he himself who cognizes them. Man’s intellectual cognition most greatly manifests his “I.”

The soul as the source of man’s operations, including immaterial operations, appears as immaterial. Where does the soul come from?

According to Plato, the soul is eternal, immaterial, external to the body, but joined to the body as a result of some spiritual fault. In Aristotle, the soul is a form of the body; man is a natural being (resulting from generation), and so the human soul must also be a consequence of natural material-substantial changes (this crack in Aristotle’s theory is inexplicable, for it is unthinkable that the immaterial soul could be a natural consequence of material changes—spirit cannot come from matter, just as being cannot come from non-being; and, in the context

of the principle of non-contradiction which says that “non-being is not being,” matter in relation to spirit appears as a “non-being”).

St. Thomas Aquinas was the only one to provide a satisfactory and rational solution to the problem of the origin of the soul. His solution follows from a general understanding of being as existing and a conception of contingent reality which presupposes a necessary reality which is the absolute being called God who is reality as such, for God is pure existence. All other beings possess existence; they are real beings by the fact that they possess existence, for each thing that exists (that possesses existence) is a being. In this understanding of reality, the human soul as immaterial (for it produces from itself immaterial actions) is in its essence (as a form) simple and uncompounded; it cannot come into existence as a result of evolving changes, for, in what is simple in its nature, there is nothing to change. The fact that the soul produces from itself spiritual operations of cognition and volition means that it exists as a being. Its being a being is not reducible to being a form (i.e., the organizer of the body and of action by the body), because spiritual operations are in their structure<sup>21</sup> independent of the body’s matter. The soul which is able to produce from itself immaterial (accidental) beings must exist in itself as a being that is at the same time the form-organizer of its body. The soul, existing in itself as in the subject of its existence, cannot arise as a result of the action of the forces of nature, for it transcends nature. Therefore, since existing in such a way, it is called to existence by a special act, that is, it is created by God. “Being created” is understood here in a basically negative way, for it only separates the origin of the soul from natural factors. In order to explain and rationally justify the coming into existence of the soul (such as manifests itself in man’s internal experience) in a positive way, one must refer to an absolute source of being, that is, to the Absolute.

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<sup>21</sup> In their structure, but not in their functioning.

Only the Absolute-God can call into independent (subjective) existence a substance that is simple and uncompounded in its essence, that is, an immaterial (spiritual) substance. This state of affairs is the only one which is not contradictory to actions that are immaterial in their ontic structure, that is, actions of intellectual cognition and volitional love.

### *The Existing Soul: A Reason for Life*

Right from the beginning of its functioning, that is, from the moment when male and female gametes join to form a single fertilized cell, the human soul created by God as a being existing in itself organizes a parcel of matter for itself to be a human body; it does this on the basis of a full genetic code, received from the fertilized cell, that with an enormous number of bits of information determines the action of the human body, and thereby influences the overall shape of man's vital actions—range from the origin of the first cell to the moment of biological death. St. Thomas expressed this in the following way:

The soul communicates that existence in which it subsists to the corporeal matter, out of which and the intellectual soul there results unity of existence; so that the existence of the whole composite is also the existence of the soul. This is not the case with other non-subsistent forms. For this reason the human soul retains its own existence after the dissolution of the body; whereas it is not so with other forms.<sup>22</sup>

Since the soul (in consequence of its creation, that is, its being called into existence directly by God) exists in itself as in its own adequate subject, it organizes for itself (on the basis of the genetic code) a parcel

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<sup>22</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 76, a. 1, ad 5: “[A]nima illud esse in quo ipsa subsistit, communicat materiae corporali, ex qua et anima intellectiva fit unum, ita quod illud esse quod est totius compositi, est etiam ipsius animae. Quod non accidit in aliis formis, quae non sunt subsistentes. Et propter hoc anima humana remanet in suo esse, destructo corpore, non autem aliae formae.”

of matter to be a human body, and at the same time imparts its existence to the body.

The soul not only imparts its existence to the material body it forms, but also acts through this body; otherwise this imparting of existence would be without purpose. Man's experience says nothing about actions performed without the mediation of the body. All his actions (cognitive, appetitive, or motor) are performed with the help of and in connection with his body which is constantly organized by his soul. The functioning of man's vital operations (i.e., the human action) always appears as connected to the body, which does not mean that the ontic structure of some of those operations is not immaterial, as is the case with the spiritual action of man's faculties—the reason and the will. These faculties emerge directly from the soul as so-called active potencies whose intellectual acts (i.e., cognition that takes the form of concepts, judgments, or acts of reasoning) and volitional acts (i.e., love that takes on various expressions) are just immaterial. Neither reason nor will has an organ of its own. The brain and nervous system constitute a system of organs of sensory cognition, whereas acts of intellectual cognition and acts of rational appetite do not emerge from any organ, although they are performed in connection with the action of sensory cognition and appetite (emotions). The action of the senses provides support for the functioning of spiritual action. The human spirit (the human soul), as Aquinas notes, is a spirit "lowest in hierarchy," for the human soul can only act through matter. However, as it exists independently of the body (for it exists in itself as an adequate subject), the soul is a spiritual being; hence, specifically human operations (actions of rational cognition and of rational appetite) are in their ontic structure uncompounded and immaterial—though they function (i.e., they really act) through matter. While the structure of matter is not completely known, such a knowledge is not at all necessary to divide matter from the spirit which cognizes structural relations in a general and non-

accidental way, and thereby is superior to individual, non-necessary, potential cognitive structures in sensory cognition.

It is noteworthy that the natural sciences, including natural anthropology, basically use the Cartesian conception of matter as *res extensa* (extended, i.e., spatial and temporal thing), and thereby restrict the cognition of matter to knowing its integrating parts, apprehended together with quantitative relations. Although it is quantitative elements that basically organize matter (by being appropriately arranged among themselves, as Aristotle stated), yet material beings are also conditioned by their qualities, relations, being somewhere and sometime, acting, and being acted upon.

The immateriality of the structures of actions which emerge from the subject (the soul) is indicative of the nature of the soul itself (the immateriality of the soul). The functional connection of these actions with sensory-material processes, on the other hand, is evidence that man's soul, although existing in itself as in a subject, is at the same time an organizer of matter (a form organizing a parcel of matter to be a human body). The soul thus understood cannot function independently of matter; for matter is an essential correlate of the soul. Hence, in human acts of intellectual cognition and volitional love, there is constantly present a material component in which the human spirit (intellect and will) works. This confirms man's ontic structure to be the only case in nature of a synthesis of matter and spirit. The spirit manifests itself in the structure of acts of intellectual cognition and volitional love, for in these there are no essential features of matter: essential potentiality and individual contingency as the opposites of necessity and generality.

### *Man—Person*

Both rational actions of (intellectual) cognition and those of volition (in the form of love that first appears in choosing, in acts of decision about, a rational motive which is a real good) manifest *in actu ex-*

*ercito* (i.e., in the course of concomitant reflection) a subject which is called “I.” “I”—as a consciously and freely acting subject that explicitly appears in acts of decision in which a practical judgment, being an act of intellectual cognition, is freely chosen—is that which, in the tradition of Christian philosophy, has been called a person.

The conception of the person was formulated in Christian theology to explain the ontic structure of Jesus Christ, who, according to the proclaimed faith, is true man and true God. According to monophysitism (one of the interpretations which appeared in early Christianity), the person of Christ is to be understood as one being—*μόνη φύσις*, which means that Christ is at the same time one nature: either a divine nature into which His humanity is “fused,” or a human nature which is enveloped in His divinity only from outside. The councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon accepted the doctrinal conception that Christ is one being, for He is one divine person (one subject of actions) who has two natures: divine and human. The divine person, who has existed forever, imparts His existence to human nature. Since the subject of actions is an existing being, it is the divine person who (as an existing being) is the subject of all the actions of Jesus Christ. As a man, born in his human nature of Mary of Nazareth, Jesus Christ is not a human person; He has, however, human nature which was received into the subject of the eternally existing Word (Logos). In other words, since all operations are ultimately the operations of an existing subject which in this case is the eternally existing person of the Logos, Mary of Nazareth as the mother of Jesus is the Mother of God (*Θεοτόκος*). And, since to be a being in the highest degree is to be a person who ultimately is a subject of all the action of a being, all the human actions of Christ are the action of the Word.

The next problem concerned the difference between nature and person. In the rational order, the person appears as a highest form of being; to be a being in its highest and noblest form is to be a person.



Then, what is that which determines that some natures are persons, while others are not? In answering this question, it was emphasized that only a rational being can be a person. The factor constituting a personal being was then searched for in the rational nature; it resulted in various philosophical and theological interpretations which tended toward universally recognized neo-Platonism, or, occasionally, Aristotelianism.

The most widespread definition of the person was the one provided by Boethius: *rationalis naturae individua substantia*.<sup>23</sup> This definition seemed to continue the tradition of Platonism by the expression *individua* (non-divided), that is, a conception that regards “the one” as the element that determines the being of a thing (everything that is real presupposes unity and non-division). Aristotle, on the other hand, saw reality basically in substance—everything that is a being is a substance, or something joined with substance. Boethius’s definition was then suited to an irenic solution to the problem of the person. But interpretative controversies surrounding the understanding of the person did not cease due to tendencies to reduce the fact of being a person to certain features of a rational nature (e.g., thought, social rank, substantial modality).

### *The Person—A Self of a Rational Nature*

Aquinas called attention to the fact that, in the order of rational substances, the factor that determines the being of a being at the same time determines the being of a person. The factor that constitutively determines each being is the existence of a being. Something is a real being not because it is, for instance, a man, an animal, a plant, or a mineral, but because it actually exists. Existence is an act, whereby something is a real being, a reality. Therefore, if it actually exists, a concrete being, in the order of rational (human or angelic) natures, is a

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<sup>23</sup> “An individual (single) substance of a rational nature.”

personal being. It is not a modality or property of a being (positive or negative, as is the case according to Duns Scotus—*negatio dependentiae actualis et aptitudinalis*) that determines that a particular being is a person, but it is the actual existence of a being of a rational nature. It is because (returning to conciliar Christological sources) Jesus Christ exists by the existence of God-Logos, that He is a person; moreover, He is a divine person, not a human person: He is a divine person who possesses a human nature, besides a divine one.

Returning to the problem of man's personal being, it must be admitted that the existence of the subject called "I" is given to man in the internal experience of being a man (in subjective cognitive registration). That this "I" is given to him from the side of its existence means that man knows (experiences) that he exists as a subject in "his" vital acts, but he does not know exactly "who" he is. The cognitive experience of the subjective "I" is a revelation of a personal being. In light of these facts, therefore, it is possible to describe the person as an "I" of a rational nature. This description contains an explanation of the nature of the person, for the "I" is manifested as an existing subject identical in its actions. Thus, the "person" is not deduced from any philosophical or theological system (as is the case in some philosophical or theological types of explanation), but it is given in the internal experience of being a man. The personal being—in the general understanding of man (in both philosophical and theological anthropology) and in explaining the individual fact of being a man—is never an end point, but always a special starting point. This is a fact of great importance, since it puts man in a unique position of being the object of cognition and experience both at external and internal levels. In both types of experience, what essentially matters is the (variously) perceived fact of the existence of an object. The fact of existence, that is, the real being (seen from outside and from inside), constitutes the object of cognitive expe-

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rience which in large measure is the basis for the cognitive process.<sup>24</sup> Experience, being the registration of an existing being, constitutes a privileged type of cognition, because it is characterized by immediacy, that is, the absence of necessary mediating factors in the cognition of content. In the process of cognition then, the experience of one's personal being which is manifested as the "I" can be accepted as directly given; it should next be explained philosophically, that is, the personal nature of man should be presented in the framework of philosophical anthropology.

It is most important to consider the character of "my" acts which are manifested in internal experience. They first include biological operations (such as nutrition, growth, generation) in their full spectrum experienced in human life. They also include higher experiences belonging to cognitive, appetitive, or motor orders. Cognitive and appetitive acts manifest themselves as differentiated in both sensory and intellectual orders of life. A philosophical analysis of these acts allows us to outline an image of human nature; this analysis does not embrace our total knowledge of man, but it is necessary in order to establish who man is.<sup>25</sup> Philosophical explanation is characterized by the application of a specific method of explanation, a decontradictifying method,<sup>26</sup> which—due to the fact that it is the only one that is capable of keeping cognition away from the bounds of absurdity—is the basis of rational cognition.

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<sup>24</sup> But not all types of cognition are experienced; e.g., the so-called intuition concerns not the fact of the being's existence, but cognitive content; hence the extension of the expression "experience" to different forms of intuitive cognition leads to misunderstandings about how cognition is understood.

<sup>25</sup> For philosophy goes beyond the questions posed by other sciences, such as how man is constructed, or how he functions.

<sup>26</sup> See note 17 above.

### *The Potency-Act Structure of the Person*

It was already Aristotle who applied the conception of act and potency in order to show man's ontic structure. The perception of the formal object of human action shows the content of an act (i.e., a defined human action). The formal object determines an action and shows what it is in its content. This allows one to draw inferences in further cognitive stages concerning the nature of the active potency (potentiality) from which the action comes forth. Besides, the role of the proper object in cognitive action is important. For it allowed Aristotle and St. Thomas to differentiate the external senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch), the internal senses (the common sense, imagination, memory, instinctive estimation), and the intellect (reason). It also allowed them to differentiate the affective (appetitive and irascible) faculties and the will (a faculty of rational appetition).

Human faculties, as active potencies, do not always or constantly act, but only when appropriate (external or internal) stimuli appear. The operations of cognitive and appetitive faculties appear not as completely divergent in their action, or as completely autonomous (which would upset man's ontic unity), but as acting under the cognitive influence of the reason and the rational appetite (will). The coordination of human actions by reason and will is not always completely effective, but it is necessary in order to preserve man's psychic unity and the predictability of human action. It is by the triggering of action in himself as in a subject that man realizes himself: he reveals his potentialities and perfects himself in action. It was already Aristotle who—in his analysis of individual morality (ethics) and in his analysis of social morality (politics)—emphasized the importance of the perfection of human action by virtue, that is, making it efficient with respect to cognitive, appetitive, and motor skills. Since man's faculties, ordered to appropriate actions, are active potencies, the only perfection of a potency is its actualization

(proper to a particular faculty): making it increasingly efficient in acting—as was said in the Middle Ages—*firmiter, prompte et delectabiliter*.<sup>27</sup> Only such actions, made efficient by the reason, can guarantee the development of a man who is predictable in his action, and a man who is perfect, that is, one who can actualize human nature which appears in many-sided, heterogeneous, but always rationally purposeful action.

In order to understand human nature which is a source of action, it is necessary to recognize the existing forms of human action, that is, the action of the reason (its nature, conditions and modes), the action of the will (as rational appetite connected with reason), and the action of emotions and their association with reason and will. The realization of man's freedom in his acts of decision which involve all forms of human action ultimately reveals the nature of man, insofar as nature means being as a source of determinate action, and insofar as determination in man's action is understood as a consequence of his self-determination. The free action of man (as a rational being) most fully reveals human nature which, while synthesizing matter and spirit in one being, manifests its transcendence over matter by ordering matter to its intrinsic transcendent end.

### **Biblical Doctrine Concerning the Transcendence of the Person**

The end revealed in human action (i.e., the good as such) indicates that man is ordered to the Absolute. The desire for happiness (an ordering toward the good as good), which is interpreted as *desiderium naturale, inefficax, videndi Deum*,<sup>28</sup> is inscribed into human nature. In

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<sup>27</sup> "Strongly, without wavering, promptly, and with pleasure."

<sup>28</sup> "A natural, while ineffective, desire to see God." Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, bk. III, q. 52 entitled: "That No Created Substance Can, by Its Own Natural Power, Attain the Vision of God in His Essence," trans. Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Hanover House, 1955–57). Available at:

this respect, philosophical anthropology is completed by theology which, while explaining biblical revelation concerning man, calls attention to many important truths connected with human life.

The philosophical explanation of man's nature is basically given in the framework of the so-called essential aspect of man. Aristotle's conception of the essential aspect of human nature is right, but his explanation of the existential aspect of human nature has turned out to be wrong; man's coming into existence cannot be treated as a result of natural evolution, for the human soul which transcends in its action all matter cannot be a consequence only of evolutionary transformations of matter. St. Thomas Aquinas showed that the human soul can arise only as a result of God's act of creation, for no natural power is adequately strong to create the human soul (that exists in itself as in a subject, and imparts its existence to a parcel of matter which it organizes to be its own body). The existence of the soul cannot be derived from any form of matter; it necessarily requires the Absolute's intervention. The Bible reveals that it was God who created man as man and woman.

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.<sup>29</sup> . . . Yahweh God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being.<sup>30</sup>

The biblical conception sets man apart among all creation by calling attention to his transcendence in relation to other beings which are subject to him; by the act of creation, man is directly connected with God. The moment of God's special intervention in the beginning of man's life calls attention to man's otherness or transcendence (which is manifested in human action). God's calling into existence of man presented by Christian revelation indicates that it is impossible for

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<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/ContraGentiles3a.htm#52>.

<sup>29</sup> *Genesis* 1:27.

<sup>30</sup> *Genesis* 2:7.

man's coming into existence to result from natural causes, that is, from transformations of matter and its forms. Such transformations, if occur for centuries or millennia, are described by the term "evolution." From the biblical point of view, the conception of man's origin as a result of evolution is excluded, for there is no place for God's special intervention in it. Furthermore, from a purely rational point of view, evolution—regardless of whether it lasts centuries or millennia—is not equivalent to the coming into existence of being from nothing. The evolutionary conception of man's origin presupposes that that toward which evolution aims and that in which it concludes should be part of reality as it is found, or belong to its component elements; and so the human psyche should be searched for within the framework of the forces of nature. Some natural scientists thought that matter is really permeated by "dispersed" spiritual particles which—as a result of their appropriate selection, gathering and solidification—arrive at an independent form of a spirit. This assertion obviously results from a naive way of imagination-based thinking which conceives of spirit as matter composed from particles, whereas it is uncompoundedness which constitutes the essence of spirit (as it does not possess matter, it cannot have constituent parts). Hence, there can be no talk of the "diffusion" of spirit in matter (as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin theorized), or of the concentration of spirit and its passing into a "new state" different from diffusion; for all this presupposes an internal subjective-essential composition of parts which is ruled out if spirit is conceived as an immaterial being.

The origin of man and of his spiritual, immaterial soul as a result of an evolutionary process is excluded, since this would be tantamount to being coming from non-being (however, beings cannot come from nothing, unless they are created by the Being). Thus, Aristotle's conception that man is only a product of nature (*φύσει τε καὶ κατὰ φύσιν*

γέγονε ἄνθρωπος) cannot be accepted without falling into contradiction.

### *The Corporeal-Spiritual Nature of Man*

Man's chief property is a special synthesis of matter and spirit, which is also shown in the biblical revelation. The human soul, as all human actions confirm, needs the matter of the human body to act. Although the results of cognition or acts of the will are immaterial in their structure, the functioning of cognition or love in man is always performed through matter. Although the soul (as a spirit) exists as a being in itself (as a subject), which is confirmed by the ontic effects (immaterial in their structure) of spiritual action, the processes of the soul's action occur in the body and through the body; there are no purely immaterial actions, for the human spirit together with matter form one source of action. It is the unique and specific mode of the human spirit's existence: it organizes matter for itself as its own body through which it can act and express itself externally, and enrich itself internally by action of (free) decision proper only to a spirit.

In such a vision, man is an exceptional being which synthesizes in his nature the world of spirit and the world of matter. Matter, however, which enters into the composition of human nature is not ultimately and perfectly mastered by the human spirit, but requires continual renewal. Matter is not completely subject to the power of the human soul, and therefore there is a crack, as it were, in human nature, which the Christian revelation explains by reference to original sin—the human spirit's disobedience and rebellion against God, which St. Augustine expressed in a few short words: *rebellis mens—rebellem carnem obtinuit*.<sup>31</sup> The internal crack in human nature (concerning its action)

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<sup>31</sup> "The rebellious spirit received a rebellious body." Cf. St. Augustine, *The City of God*, bk. 13, ch. 13, trans. Marcus Dods: "For, as soon as our first parents had transgressed the commandment . . . [t]hey experienced a new motion of their flesh, which had be-



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should be healed by continual acts of the human spirit's free decision, in which man chooses practical judgments about what is truly good, realizes the true good, and thereby constitutes himself as a being that is both rational and free.

### Man in Christian Realism

Philosophical anthropology explains the human being in the context of nature, that is, in the context of the portion of reality which is accessible to man in his natural cognition by the senses and reason. This philosophical explanation is the foundation for understanding man as the source of personal actions. But does the traditional philosophical anthropology really cover the whole of human actions? Does man's transcendence that appears in his actions extend to a broader range of problems concerning human life after death, provided that the human personal being is immortal? Does the philosophical understanding of man not require a sort of completion by resorting to some elements of biblical revelation and theological interpretations of what divine revelation has to say about man?

St. Pope John Paul II's explicit statement: "Man cannot be completely understood without Christ,"<sup>32</sup> and his encyclical letter *Fides et ratio* suggest that anthropological thought should be fortified by con-

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come disobedient to them, in strict retribution of their own disobedience to God. For the soul, revelling in its own liberty, and scorning to serve God, was itself deprived of the command it had formerly maintained over the body. And because it had willfully deserted its superior Lord, it no longer held its own inferior servant; neither could it hold the flesh subject, as it would always have been able to do had it remained itself subject to God. Then began the flesh to lust against the Spirit . . . in which strife we are born, deriving from the first transgression a seed of death, and bearing in our members, and in our vitiated nature, the contest or even victory of the flesh." (In *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight; available at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1201.htm>.)

<sup>32</sup> This statement was given in Warsaw during the Pope's pilgrimage to Poland in 1979.

sidering additional aspects of human action and its causes, which in an essential way supplement the purely philosophical understanding of man who appears as—to use Martin Heidegger’s wording—a “being-toward-death.” Heidegger also called attention to man’s so-called *existentialia* which are a consequence of “Geworfenheit,” that is, the involuntary thrownness of man’s individual existence into the world: the irrational world which acquires rationality as a consequence of human thought being anchored in it, or perhaps the rational world which imparts the foundations of understanding to man, when he makes contact with it by cognition. Heidegger’s *existentialia*—including a special guardianship exercised over things (*Fürsorge, Zunhanden-sein*), man’s common-fate (*Mitsorge, Besorge*), a tragic man’s fate (*Sorge*) ultimately directed toward death (*zum Todesein*)—lead to persistent questions that man must answer. These questions (addressed by biblical revelation) are those which man cannot avoid in his personal life, but must do his best to reply them with real-life answers—“real-life” answers are those which can direct man’s life and make it rational in ultimate terms. These questions concern the possibility of explaining man’s being and action, that is, constructing an integral anthropology.

What is then the meaning of the human being? A rationally justified answer to this question is provided by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologica*. An examination of the *Summa*—as a proposal for an ultimate understanding of what it means to be a human person—leads to a solution (essential for philosophical culture) to the problem of who man is in his being and action.

### *The Rational Context of Personal Life*

The first part of the *Summa*, while discussing problems concerning God and creation, especially the problem of man’s ontic structure, addresses the issue of “man’s being thrown into the world,” including

such questions as: Into what sort of world is man thrown? What does it mean to be thrown? How is man to be understood?

The environment of human life (i.e., the world) appears as a being that is rational in its essence, for it is legible and understandable to its ultimate limits (i.e., the existence of God). The first questions in the *Summa*, in which Aquinas analyzes the problematic of whether God can be known from an examination of really existing being, put human cognition in the field of ontic intelligibility which is the reason for human rationality. The question about the existence and cognizability of God presents human cognition with the problem of understanding being. What is ultimately the being that appears to human cognition? This being is ultimately legible in five different ways (intrinsic to *Aquinas's Five Ways* of proving God's existence) which show the ultimate meaning of being as really existing.

Being primarily appears as constantly being fulfilled in existence, constantly actualizing its existence which is both acquirable and losable. The drama of existence that must constantly be actualized is something fundamental also for man, for his existence is given to him, and he faces the constant risk of losing it. No earthly being imparts existence to itself, for no earthly being is existence. The existence of earthly beings, however, fulfills itself, actualizes itself. Thus, the potency and actualization of the existence of man and all other earthly beings require, as a condition for rationality, the existence of the Being that of and through itself is existence. And this is the first way (*Aquinas's First Way*) that leads to the perception of the world's rationality. That which in earthly beings constitutes their beingness (real existence) is ultimately actualized by the Being that of and through itself is existence, and that is called God. To a certain degree, this conception was already in Aristotle's mind, in the form of his definition of motion: "The fulfillment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is mo-

tion;”<sup>33</sup> hence the proof *ex motu* to which St. Paul would refer in his speech at the Areopagus: “For in him we . . . move.”<sup>34</sup>

The existence of being which is realized in concrete beings finds its subject in these beings in the form of an ontic effect that comes into real existence in a definite content. The coming into existence of an effect that did not previously exist points to the cause of the effect. This cause is ultimately the Being that exists through itself. When a being realizes its existence, it indicates God as the source of its coming into existence. And this is the line of the second way (*Aquinas’s Second Way*) in showing the source of reality—God. This state of affairs reveals that the world cannot exist of itself, for it is not the master of its own existence. St. Thomas notes that “that which is possible not to be at some time is not,”<sup>35</sup> but it receives its existence from the Necessary Existence—God.

The first three of *Aquinas’s Ways* leading to the perception of God are ways of considering the act of existence in being, for it is the act that constitutes the real order of being.

*Aquinas’s Fourth Way* examines the real content (essence) of being which appears as hierarchized in its universal and transcendental properties. Beings that have come into existence as effects are one, true, and good, to greater or lesser degree; we know this spontaneously, while evaluating and choosing what is better: that which is more undivided (one) and less destructible, that which is truer and less falsified, and that which is less apparent and more attractive as an enduring end (good). The world of beings—characterized by analogical transcendental perfections that only to an incomplete degree are realized in individuals—clearly points to God who alone is *per se* and absolutely perfect,

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<sup>33</sup> *Physics*, III, 201 a 10–11: “Ἡ τοῦ δυνάμει ὄντος ἐντελέχεια, ἧ τοιοῦτον, κίνησις ἐστίν.”

<sup>34</sup> *Acts* 17:28.

<sup>35</sup> *S.Th.*, I, q. 2, a. 3, resp.: “[Q]uod possibile est non esse, quandoque non est.”

in whom alone there is the identity of existence and universal perfections.

Various actions that emerge from the reality dependent in existence indicate the purposefulness of the world's action which is necessarily connected with God as a personal being, and so as a being that knows, loves, and directs the world. The structure of action includes the following: a motive for which action exists rather than not existing, a cognitive determination of ways to achieve the end of action, and the actuality of action. As the source of the world's action, God is a personal being who rationally and lovingly directs the action that really and actually permeates the existing world (*Aquinas's Fifth Way*).

### *God: A Source, Exemplar, and End*

The human reason's reading of the existing world of beings shows that being is intellectually intelligible to the very limit of intelligibility; this limit appears as God, existing through Himself as the source, exemplar, and end (good) of beings that are effects.

Human existence, although contingent and oriented toward death, finds itself in the rational context of a world that comes from God and is completely dependent upon God in its existence (being). A deeper cognition of the world of created beings (especially through *Aquinas's Fourth Way*) indicates, in an analogical sense, what we usually call "God's nature" which—described positively (in a cataphatic way) or negatively (in an apophatic way)—shows God's perfections: goodness, infinity, unity, truth, cognition, love, participative presence in the world, ideative cognition, happiness, etc.

God's cognition, love, and happiness become clearer by the revelation of God's inner life in the Trinity of Persons. God is not "lonely" in His infinite life. He eternally manifests Himself to Himself as the Begotten Thought-Word. This Word passes into the eternal "Breath of God's Love" (*Verbum spirans amorem*) toward Himself and toward

everything that is “in and from God.” In his *Summa Theologica*, when considering reality, St. Thomas shows that the cognizable and rational world of beings comes constantly from God (living a perfect personal life), whose infinite creative knowledge and unending love give birth to happiness that we can conceive of only by analogy upon the background of our imperfect cognition of beings-effects.

Creativity is God’s first action in relation to the world of beings. The latter come into existence in a process of incessant creation which also includes the preservation of beings in existence, for the *conservatio in esse* is nothing other than a *creatio continua*.<sup>36</sup> The conception of the creation of the world from nothing (i.e., from no pre-existing substrate), and thus of the negation of the existence of any form of being apart from God, shows the profound rationality of reality (which comes completely from God), and rules out any idea of emanationism.

When considering the effects created by God, St. Thomas indicates the creation first of the world of rational spirits (whom the Bible calls “angels,” i.e., messengers of the divine rule). The world of matter also comes entirely from God and is dependent on Him in its existence. Thus, the act of creation relates to both pure spirits and matter. The creation of the world of spirits (and so, rationality not limited by matter), and of the world of matter, is the context for the creation of man.

Man as an ontic synthesis of spirit and matter is a particular object of God’s creative action. God imprints His own image and likeness in man by directly creating man’s soul. The soul, existing autonomously, imparts its existence to matter and organizes matter to be a human body. Thus, the human soul exists as one spirit which is uncompounded in its essence and not subjected to the process of evolution in being. In its action, however, the human soul does depend on matter, which it

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. *S.Th.*, I, q. 9, a. 2, resp.: “Thus, as the production of a thing into existence depends on the will of God, so likewise it depends on His will that things should be preserved; for He does not preserve them otherwise than by ever giving them existence.”

organizes for itself and of which it is the form; it means that all man's actions are permeated by materiality, that is, potentiality and dependence on the body. On the other hand, the ontic structure of certain effects of human action turns out to be immaterial; this is the case in man's intellectual (cognitive) and volitional (spiritually emotional) life whose immaterial effects clearly reflect the immateriality of its cause: the human soul. Nevertheless, an analysis of man's ontic structure, based on manifestations of human action, shows the essential ordination of the immaterial soul to the material body, for all the forms of the soul's action (vegetative, sensitive, and spiritual) are performed with the help of the body's powers. Man's spiritual life, then, is conditioned by the matter concretized in his body; it is called, as it were, to perform and manifest a synthesis of the spiritual and material creation.

From the perspective of God's creative process and God's cognition and ideas (where His creative process finds its source), man appears as a person constituted after the model and likeness of God Himself. The human person is a concrete expression of God's perfection and ontic richness; man is not an inert being thrown into the world, but a concrete person who, through his own action, is supposed to realize the perfection of God's idea concerning himself. Man fulfills his task by actualizing his personal potentialities by means of acts of decision, made according to the measure of a person, and so, consciously and freely.

In biblical revelation, the undisturbed process of man's actualization is called paradise. At the same time, however, the biblical paradise turned out to be a scene of the drama of man's free choice: the freedom given to man became an occasion for his evil choice—sin. In consequence of bad decisions on the part of people (as well as some angels), God's rule over the world became complicated. Now, the realization of God's thought concerning the human person requires, as a *conditio sine*

*qua non*, not only the genuine commitment of a man to making good choices, but also a special assistance on the part of God.<sup>37</sup>

### *Man's Decision and Its End*

The individual man, who lives in the state resulting from the fall of the “first parents,” must make his way through life by taking actions which, due to being human, are also moral. The problematic of man’s moral attitudes and actions is covered in the *Pars Prima Secundae* of Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*. It sheds light on key factors that make it possible to perform particular acts, so that they constitute the *optimum potentiae* (i.e., the rational and good human action). In human action, the most important thing, since it is the reason for action’s coming into existence, is an understanding of the end which is simultaneously the motive for action. Action’s end (motive) is man’s fulfillment in happiness, for the nature of a contingent being includes its own completion. This completion, considered objectively (as the good in itself—the supreme good) and subjectively (as the good that completes a man who acts rationally), is happiness conceived in the proper sense. The production of an action under the influence of a rationally perceived motive is an action of the will and a manifestation of the volitional side of man’s life. For this reason, St. Thomas makes an in-depth analysis of the volitional aspect of human action, especially the most important moment of action—decision (*electio*) that consists in choosing such a concrete practical judgment that indicates the obligation to achieve a particular good in a moral act; the achievement of this good makes it possible to reach (brings closer to) the ultimate end of human life. Such a decision-making choice of the will presupposes corresponding processes of ra-

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<sup>37</sup> These matters are presented first in the *Secunda Pars* of the *Summa Theologica*, and then in the *Tertia Pars*, which shows the role of Jesus Christ as man’s Mediator, Saviour and Redeemer.



tional deliberation which should culminate in producing a morally good act.

Moral act is constituted by the following factors: the object (good or bad) of an act, the circumstance in which an act is performed, the subjective intentions connected with action, and the engagement of all other human potentialities (apart from the will itself that produces an act). All the factors must be evaluated from the point of view of man—a consciously and freely acting being. Human freedom fulfills itself in the choice of the will, and so, in the act of decision in which a synthesis is made of cognitive and appetite-volitional factors of the human person. A right moral choice (a choice made by the will of a judgment concerning the good that man must realize in action in order to constitute himself as good) indicates man's internal rectitude (or his internal depravity, if a choice is wrong).

In order to understand human moral choices, we should consider man's emotional sphere which is an important factor in the formation of human conduct, and so in the order of human morality. Emotions appear at times to be in disagreement with the commands of reason. When the emotions are too autonomous and independent from the commands of reason, it is very difficult for man to make right decisions. But having known the character of human emotions, their basic manifestations and ontic structure, man can do internal work on subordinating these emotions to rational action. Emotions should be subject to the order of reason, so that man's acts can be truly rational.

St. Thomas makes a detailed analysis of human emotions as factors that mark human action. As emotions facilitate (or at times impede) man's action, so stable skills toward good or evil acquired as the consequence of human actions are a factor conditioning moral rational conduct. These acquired skills are virtues or vices, that is, effective habits of man that are acquired by the repetition of certain acts. The acquired habits improve or worsen human potentials and direct sources of action.

Thus, there is a need to examine immediate subjects of these habits (reason, will, and emotions) from the point of view of their ability to make steady improvement, so that human actions become more human (i.e., more rational and free). A reflection about possible skills (about making the sources of human action virtuous) in the natural order opens the way for seeing possibilities of improving human habits through the supernatural order, that is, the infused virtues: the gifts and beatitudes of the Holy Spirit, as Christian revelation teaches.

As a realist in his approach to man, St. Thomas also considers man's inclination to sin (a consequence of original sin which permanently weakens natural actions of a person) and its effects and manifestations: acquired vices. The problematic of sin is so important and relevant to understanding man that St. Thomas carries out a detailed analysis of it that makes possible a deeper understanding not only of man as a subject of vices and their effects (sins), but also of diverse influences that human sins and their evil effects exercise. Man as a subject of sinful acts, and also as one who generates evil by these acts, constitutes an important object of knowledge which allows for deeper understanding of both human nature as the source of human action (for *agere sequitur esse*) and social life which is filled with perils and failures resulting precisely from man's various sins. One cannot truly understand man without taking into account his evil, sinful action which causes real threats to individuals as well as to communities where evil is particularly destructive. This fact makes it necessary to provide commensurate assistance for man as a source of personal action. While one kind of assistance appears externally in the form of legal regulations, another kind takes the form of God's supernatural action (grace) and reaches the depth of man's soul.

Law, understood in its fundamental ontic (real and intentional) structure, is a particularly important factor in the activity of man, especially of man living in society—both a natural society (the family, so-

cial organizations, the state) and a supernatural society (which is the Church understood in the light of faith). St. Thomas's conception of law is something exceptionally significant in the domain of jurisprudence, because it is built on the foundations of the philosophy of law and permeated by the theological understanding of law.

According to classical philosophical thought, the phenomenon of law is something natural that has come into existence together with man whose life becomes a protected good. Law therefore concerns human interpersonal actions that are due to man on account of his good. Law constitutes a necessary condition for man's life and his personal development. Hence, the good of man achieved by human actions is due to man by virtue of his nature. The good of man is manifested in his natural inclinations ordered to the preservation of life, the transmission of life (by generation in socially accepted conditions), and personal development. Man's personal development occurs in three orders: intellectual cognition, moral conduct (by choosing and realizing the human good), and creativity (in various domains of life that realize the beauty of human actions). The law understood as the realization of the human good is the foundation for all positive laws that regulate human actions, especially in the social order. No regulation of positive law, however, can be in conflict with the real good of man; for it would then be an illusory law that could not bind human conduct which is by nature ordered to the realization of a real good.

St. Thomas extends the general understanding of law to the understanding of the religious laws and precepts of both the Old Testament and the Church of his time. The religious laws and precepts are applied for the sake of the increase of man's good and inner perfection, and they can never disturb man's relationship with God as a person, with whom man is joined in his religious life.

Considering man's being ordered to participating in the life of God as a person, a life that completely exceeds the potentialities of na-

ture, St. Thomas ponders the question of grace as a necessary condition and at the same time a starting point of the supernatural life that continues in the beatific vision.<sup>38</sup> He understands grace as a special trace of the Incarnate Word, and a transformation of the soul after the example of man's Savior and Redeemer. Grace is to make the human person capable of participating in God's knowledge, love, freedom, and happiness, according to the promise of Christ himself. Grace makes possible the beatific vision in which God Himself becomes the content directly experienced by man. Grace which is God's self-imparting ultimately guarantees the realization of God's intention for man, the intention formed at the moment of the creation of man's soul. The supernatural order—built into the structure of the human being and his action transcending matter—supplements the natural potentialities of human nature that, in its deepest content, is obedient to God's action which, in tradition, has been usually called the potency for obedience (*potentia oboedientialis*).

### *The Actualization of Personal Potentialities*

After providing an outline of the natural and supernatural dimension of human action, by which man actualizes his natural and supernatural potentialities, St. Thomas analyzes the specific ways in which these potentialities are actualized, and which lead man to form special habits (virtues). These (supernatural and natural) virtues, and God's particular assistance (called the gifts of the Holy Spirit) in achieving them, are presented in opposition to the vices and sins that deform them; for man, in his action, faces the possibility of choosing either good or evil. Therefore, the understanding of man as a person who actualizes his potentiality cannot be one-sided, that is, without considering the threats to, or even the loss of, the rational meaning of human

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<sup>38</sup> See *S.Th.*, I-II.

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life. The detailed analysis of the ways in which man actualizes virtues, or loses himself in sins opposed to virtues, is based on experiences which have been collected by mankind for centuries, and which allow us to see the richness and variety of human life as it appears in human knowledge and conduct.

Man's conduct is an expression of his moral life. Morality is an essential form of human action; therefore, analyses of human action are particularly highlighted in the *Summa Theologica*. The action of man as man is characterized by rationality and freedom. Aquinas uses an important distinction made in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where Aristotle notes that rational cognition occurs at three levels of human cognitive activity: theoretical cognition (ordered to attaining the truth), practical cognition (which is an actualization of human potentialities in attaining the good), and creative (artistic) cognition (which is ordered to the realization of beauty as a special synthesis of truth and good). These cognitive levels overlap with each other to some degree in concrete human action, but there are some specific aspects that determine whether we are dealing with theoretical, practical, or creative cognition. Practical cognition is realized in the personal life of every man, insofar as every man is actualized to action by his acts of decision. Not every man makes scientific discoveries, nor is every man a creator in the field of art, but every man must act in a human way, that is, he must perform acts of decision concerning how he should act. And this is exactly the domain of morality: every action of man should actualize him as a rational and good man, that is, simply as a man. An analysis of the different (virtuous or sinful) ways of man's action essentially determines the understanding of who man is.

St. Thomas begins his consideration of the concrete modes of man's action with an analysis of the so-called theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. These virtues, highlighted especially in New Testament revelation, are an illustration, as it were, of how a child lives in

the horizon of the care of his parents. This is the way of life that Christ indicated as the right way for us to relate to God for whom we are children, as it is expressed in the daily prayer “Our Father.”<sup>39</sup> The fundamental form of the relation of a child to his parents is then the way of living in faith, trust, hope, and love. A child, born in a family, receives from his parents everything that he needs for human life; together with the skill of using speech, he receives information about the world; he must believe this information (which at the beginning is the only source of his knowledge) in order to survive. Faith is then the first source of information; in the process of gaining knowledge, however, elements of faith accompany man throughout his life, since he is not in a position to verify all information. We would not have survived as children, if we had not accepted information as true with trust in our parents. The same attitude and the same way of life—characterized by trust, hope, and love—are also necessary for man in the supernatural dimension of life in which man is grafted, and which is the only real way of man’s life in eternity. The analysis of the theological virtues helps us to consciously and concretely take a position on what man should do, and what he should ultimately desire. The development of these virtues leads man into a more conscious human life that aims (through death) toward eternity, and it also allows him to better understand humanity itself as given to man for fulfillment.

The supernatural order of life does not destroy man, but—on the contrary—it is intended to ennoble human nature which acts in the context of experienced natural reality. There is a developed philosophical and theological tradition in which various forms of human conduct have been considered, insofar as this conduct is foreseeable as a consequence of habituated sources of human action; these sources include the human reason, the rational will, and the emotions (in their irascible-

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<sup>39</sup> *Matthew* 6:9–13; *Luke* 11:2–4.

combative and appetitive character of action). The many-sided habituation of the action of these faculties—and thereby the ennoblement of man himself as the author of his acts—is expressed in the form of the so-called cardinal virtues which are divided into particular subvirtues, and which have their opposites in vices generated by evil action.

Since man is a rational being, the reason as the indubitable guide of human conduct must be—in its action which is ordered to the realization of the good—properly prepared. The readiness of the reason to efficacious action is called prudence; as a phronetic cognition, prudence was already mentioned by Heraclitus, and then introduced into the domain of ethics by Aristotle. Prudence encompasses a wide domain of actions (those anchored in the past and in the memory of things past, and those grounded in the individual and social present) and concerns forecasting that plays the role of a special individual providence in the rational action of the human person.

Another important domain of human life is covered by justice which ennobles the human will by strengthening it in rational stability to render to each what is due to him. Justice that concerns both the life directed by law and other forms of life in common with other people was treated in biblical and philosophical traditions, especially in the ethics of Socrates and Plato, as a particularly sublime form of perfect human life. Justice is that by which people recognize and respect divine and human laws. A deeper analysis of the problematic of justice allows to discern a correspondence between various forms of conduct and some special forms of justice. The different forms of justice (especially legal, distributive, and commutative justice) find their expression in individual and social judgments on what falls under the judgment of justice; they are seen with special clarity in judgments on unjust action concerning persons or things. Man's attitudes to his parents, family, homeland, and nation, are part of a special domain of action which can

ennoble man and be judged as just, or corrupt man and be judged as unjust.

The rational realization of prudence is conditioned in large measure by the habituation of human emotions, especially those which assist in removing a threatening evil, that is, those which should be ennobled by the virtue of fortitude. Fortitude gives man power to prudently attack an emerging evil in order to conquer, withstand, or not surrender to it. In difficult moments of life, fortitude can find expression in heroic acts, such as martyrdom; in daily life, it concerns matters that may seem to be trivial, such as patience and endurance; sometimes, it can also be expressed in the form of magnanimity and humility.

The demonstration of man's nature in action ennobled by fortitude (or depraved by a lack of fortitude or an abuse of it) is not neutral for the life of individuals or societies. Neither is the case of temperance. The ennoblement of man by submitting his appetitive emotions to the rule of reason in the form of the virtue of temperance completes the vision of human rational conduct. Temperance puts a rational rein on man's emotions, whereby he can curb his spiritual or corporeal greediness in different domains of life. Although temperance is usually situated in the domains of human sexuality and nutrition, it also concerns the movements of the human psyche in spiritual domains, such as: malice, hubris, invasive or unnecessary curiosity, elevating oneself above others. Temperance assists man not only in getting under control important and necessary biological forces connected with the vegetative side of his life, but also in the realm of spiritual desires which, if not controlled or ennobled, cause devastation in man's individual and social life.

*The God-Man as the Reason for the Fulfillment of  
the Human Person*

Man's ontic structure is a source of understanding who man is, and how he actualizes himself as a dynamic and potential personality.



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The actualization of the human person's potentialities takes place on the way to the end-purpose of his life which concludes with the death of his body (his soul, which is not subject to death, remains alive). At the same time, the question of man's end-purpose entails great difficulties concerning the understanding of the meaning of human life. The human soul—which exists in man despite the corruption of his body, and which itself is not subject to corruption—is capable of a new and perfect life; however, in attaining such a life (implicitly foreshadowed by his spiritual acts), man himself is powerless. Although there is a natural desire in man for God as the ultimate fulfillment of human inclinations, this desire on the part of man is ineffective.<sup>40</sup> Only God can fulfill man's natural desire in this respect. The Bible (especially the New Testament) reveals that it is the Logos (the Incarnate Word) who, as Jesus Christ, is the author of human salvific fulfillment; by His human life, death, and resurrection, Jesus Christ actualizes the deepest (i.e., obedient) potency of the beatific vision of God. He thus stands in the central point of man's personal dynamism as the One who, by His divine power, is capable of ultimately actualizing that which is infused by God Himself (who directly creates the human soul), that is, the desire for ultimate (in the beatific vision), unchanging, and eternal happiness. Christ, as He Himself revealed, actualizes man's eternal life in God. He alone, as God-man, can become the mediator in relation to God the Father and at the same time the Savior of man, thereby fulfilling all the natural desires infused into human nature. Christ's teachings and deeds (in the form of His redemptive martyr's death and salvific resurrection) are an argument of faith for the truth of the rational vision of man.

St. Thomas, taking the position of faith and showing the salvific form of the Incarnate Word, completes the vision of integral anthropology. He indicates and justifies the idea that man, as a concretized (con-

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. note 28 above.

densed, as it were) thought of God, has both his own origin and his supra-rational fulfillment; man's fulfillment is achieved not by his own powers, but by the power of God who—by Jesus Christ's human nature that has its subject in the existence of the Logos—crowns human life.

Man is God's creature who, admittedly, succumbs to evil, but who, through his rational and good acts, aims toward his destiny given by God and fulfilled by the God-man—only such a conception completely explains the meaning of being a man and the fulfillment of humanity by the saving power of Jesus Christ in every human person.

### *The Ultimate Personal Decision*

The rational fulfillment of man, through his acts of decision which synthesize human nature as a whole, is something arduous, something that is never perfect or complete over the course of life and in the constant "flow of matter" in the human body. Fully free and perfect acts of decision require a clear and perfect cognition and a will that realizes perfect love—and this is not fulfillable in the course of human earthly life.

In man, however, there is a real prospect for the fulfillment of his humanity at the moment of "passage," that is, the death of his body. The moment of death can be conceived as a man's personal experience, not merely as an "event from outside" (as the disintegration of matter). Death as a man's personal experience can become the ultimate completion of his humanity and lead to the ultimate development of his cognitive acts and acts of love—the development which ultimately makes possible a perfect decision of choosing the good. At the moment of the ultimate choice of the good, the human spirit, in its state of super-consciousness, sees the ultimate meaning of being, and thereby it sees the First Reality in its source, that is, God who clarifies the whole meaning of being; this meaning is that which has been pursued by man's cognition in all his life, and to which all scientific discoveries

have eventually led. God, present to man in his new state, appears as the Good for which human personal decisions have been striving throughout life. All this allows man to make his ultimate personal decision which is the free personal choice of the Good (i.e., God), and not of himself who is a contingent being (a being by participation)—choosing himself would be “hell” and an ontic absurdity.

The act of man’s ultimate personal decision finds its consequence in the possibility of subjecting the fundamental forces of matter—which can finally become obedient to a man who has arrived at personal fulfillment—to the spirit. In Christian revelation, this is called the resurrection. The process leading to man’s resurrection and fully personal life is conditioned by the salvific intervention of the Incarnate God—Jesus Christ. Hence, the ultimate understanding of man in his personal life is not possible without the revelation culminating in Christ and his salvific mission. The Christian vision of man completes many correct and true cognitive intuitions of Aristotle.



## **MAN IN THE UNIVERSAL ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **SUMMARY**

The author attempts to first review the most general and culturally important statements on the subject of man, and then present the developed and rationally justified conception of man as a personal being who, by his action, transcends nature, society, and himself. This conception, unique in world literature, finds its expression in St. Thomas Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae*, which presents a justifying context for man’s origin and life, ontic structure, individual and social actions, and his eschatic fulfillment by the intervention of the Incarnate God—Jesus Christ. In his *Summa*, Aquinas not only considers and rationally justifies all the basic aspects of the nature of man who transcends the world by his conscious and free action, but also takes into consideration various anthropological theories developed in ancient Greece and Rome.

## KEYWORDS

man, soul, body, creation, death, resurrection, person, decision, nature, second nature, action, morality, fulfillment, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Jesus Christ, Christian philosophy, Christian anthropology, Thomistic personalism, Universal Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

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