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UNITARY AND DUALISTIC ASPECTS OF ANTHROPOLOGY BY THOMAS AQUINAS IN RELATION TO A HUMAN BEING AS *IMAGO DEI*

In his *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas defines the human being as consisting of a physical and spiritual substance¹. Robert Pasnau refers to this and remarks that it is very difficult to imagine a clearer declaration of anthropological dualism (Pasnau, 2004, p. 45-46). This recognition of dualistic moments in Aquinas work is further supported by research of C. B. Bazán, who showed many layers and facets of this anthropological dualism (Bazán, 1983; 1991; 1969). Metaphysical considerations, especially limitations of the dualistic reach, are to be found in my own work (Slováček 2014). If we have a slightly more particular idea of the relationship between Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle and his philosophical psychology, as formulated mainly in the second book of the famous text *On the Soul*, it becomes necessary to try and understand it in a deeper way.

In this article, we will try to show the relationship between the unitary and dualistic dimension in Thomas's philosophical anthropology

¹ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 75 pr.: "Post considerationem creaturae spiritualis et corporalis, considerandum est de homine, qui ex spirituali et corporali substantia componitur." Unless otherwise specified electronic publications of texts by Thomas *Corpus Thomisticum.org* are used.

as is present mainly in influential *De ente et essential* and supported by other texts. At the same time, we will try to assess the relation between them, not only from the philosophical point of view, where we believe that Thomas's metaphysics occupies the fundamental position in relation to anthropological doctrine, but also in terms of the very influential biblical image of a human being as *imago Dei*. We are also of the opinion that the anthropological stance of Thomas (partly dualistic in Pasnau's opinion, containing dualistic moments according to Bazán) is not an inconsistency, which would be difficult to imagine in such a prominent place as the introduction to the anthropological part of *Summa Theologiae*.

1. *De ente et essential* and its anthropological impact

The opusculum called *De ente et essential* is one of the most valuable texts in the Western philosophical tradition. In its centre there are two philosophical problems, namely the problem of general concepts and the real distinction between essence and being (Aquinas, *De ente et essential*, prooemium). Although these two problems are very closely related, as through concepts we grasp the essence of things, it is the former that is decisive in terms of the aspect of our interest.

Thomas asks, what general (especially *genus*) concepts indicate and what they relate to. His answer is that they denote all substantial forms belonging to the relevant genus. But in an implicit (*implicite*) way (*Ibid.*, §27). As an example, Thomas chooses the concept of body (*corpus*), which cannot be considered as a coincidence. Thus, the term *body* can be used in two ways. It denotes all substantial forms which realization is three dimensional, regardless of what other perfections connected with this form may be (*Ibid.*, §26). But it can also denote a form, of which nothing else than its three-dimensional realisation results (*Ibid.*, §25).

The first way of thinking about general concepts is in accordance with indivisible unity of substantial forms that Thomas Aquinas considered to be Aristotelian and which he defended in confronting the so-called eclectic Aristotelianism based on the originally Avicennian belief that what is divisible intellectually is also divisible in reality (Cf. Bazán, 1997. Verbeke, 1977, p. 78*-79*. Zavalloni, 1951, p. 428). The second way of using the *body* term is derivative or aspectual (*secundum quid*), which Thomas himself points out when he uses the phrase *cum praecisione* (Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, §27).

The assumption of the unity of a substantial form in *De ente et essentia* harmoniously meets with the rejection of the unambiguous use of general concepts. However, with regard to the studied issue, it is very important that even for Thomas, to use the *body* term *cum praecisione* is of value – as we will see. Of course, it is not suitable in the metaphysics domain, where this approach, utilised by Avicenna and many of Thomas's predecessors (Bazán 1969, 1983), threatens the autonomy and unity of substances and especially the unity and autonomy of human beings. Nevertheless, it can be useful in moral context, where we may need to speak about the soul and body relation as a relation between the mover and the moved as is apparent in Thomas' two conceptions of hierarchy we can think of (Cf. Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis*. Bazán, 1969).

In *De ente et essentia*, we meet two basic types of hierarchy – ascendant and descendant (Cf. Tomarchio, 200-2001. Sweeney, 1999). The former describes and grasps the hierarchy of forms within the context of nature, so here we can use physics as a main analytical instrument (Aquinas, *De ente et essentia*, §79, §88). The latter does the same with the order of intellects (*Ibid.*, §76) and here we have to use metaphysical means, which is precisely, what Aquinas did propose in *De ente et essentia*. The first hierarchy begins with forms of elements and

ends with the soul of a human being, the form of the human body. The second begins with God and ends with the soul of a human being considered as subject of thought and will. It is obvious that both types of hierarchy are not fully compatible. While Thomas works with forms as correlative principles of matter in the first case, that is, with soul as the principle of being, the second hierarchy is focused rather on acting substances.

An interpreter of these two strands present in *De ente et essentia* could be tempted to evaluate Thomas's psychological position as, at the very least, hesitant or slightly disordered and not quite clear, which to some extent is confirmed by other passages where he sometimes identifies the soul with form, sometimes with essence, sometimes with intellect. Nevertheless, it seems that the dual classification of the soul corresponds to two ways in which we think about general concepts. Just as we can give account of the *body* as a universal concept relating to all forms resulting into three-dimensional realization, to which the form of stone as well as the form of a human being belong, or *cum praecisione* to forms that result in nothing else but their three-dimensional realization, we can approach soul in the same way. Once as a form, next as a form that establishes thinking and will, that is, the highest capacities of a human: intellect unmixed with matter.

In *De ente et essentia*, we deal with this rather harmonic relationship between the unitary theory of a human being and its dualist counterpart which is, however, put on a different level. In the commentary on *Sentences of Peter Lombard*, we meet the same analogy of the two ways of approaching soul, now formulated in a very explicit way². The human soul can thus be determined in two ways, both as a

² "Quia cum anima sit quid incorporeum, sibi proprie non accidit pati, nisi secundum quod corpori applicatur. Applicatur autem corpori et secundum essentiam suam, secundum quod

form and as a subject of activity, that is, as a substance. What is remarkable for Thomas's solution is the fact, that it is not inconsistency, but a systematic approach that ensures legitimacy and meaningfulness of a dualist vocabulary or approach which is, anyway, more intuitive and useable e.g. in theology and moral philosophy, as we will see below (cf. Bazán 1991). In the following chapter, we will focus on some other illustrations within the presented aspect in some later texts.

2. *Quaestiones disputate de anima* and the problem of substantiality

As is apparent, at the centre of our attention is not Thomas's attempt to reject or critically deal with anthropological dualism, although his fight with the so-called eclectic Aristotelianism was extremely difficult. The rejection of this very influential understanding of a human being, permeating even our language, is already prefigured by the application of hylomorphism at the anthropological level. However, it turns out that only receptive utilization of Aristotle legacy is not Aquinas' last word. If we look for later evidence of this active approach, we can find it in one of the anthropologically most serious texts, in the first question of *Quaestione disputate de anima*, where Thomas asks whether the soul can be both a form and a substance (*hoc aliquid*).

At first sight, Thomas's answer is ambiguous. The substance (*hoc aliquid*) is, above all, what is through itself and what is complete in the respective genus. The soul, however, fulfils only the first condition – soul is the subject of intellect and will. As it is also the form of a body, that is, a form of corporeality, and as such it is the act of the body and shares its being with the matter, the soul is not complete in the appropriate genus.

est forma corporea, et secundum operationem suarum potentiarum, prout est motor ejus. Secundum autem quod applicatur corpori ut forma, sic non consideratur ut quid subsistens, sed ut adveniens alteri (...).“ (Aquinas, *Super Sent.*, lib. 3 d. 15 q. 2 a. 1 qc. 2 co. Cf. also *Super Sent.*, lib. 4 d. 43 q. 1 a. 1 qc. 1 ad 3.)

Thus, in the examined text, Thomas describes the soul as a *hoc aliquid* in a limited sense³. On the basis of *Summa Theologiae*, we can consider the soul as a subject of activity parallel to the parts of the body too, the hand, the foot, etc.⁴.

Thus, if the soul or intellect (i.e. the soul as the integral part) fulfils the conditions only partially, it is not a substance in the full sense. Perhaps it could be said that it is not a substance at all. However, Thomas tries to avoid this conclusion, although the well-respected hylomorphism in the psychological field would lead him to it. However, the aforementioned examples of parts of the body can be some help in understanding this hesitation. The soul is *hoc aliquid* in the same sense as hands or feet are *hoc aliquid*. However, similar examples can also be found in *De ente et essentia*, where the body (*corpus*) is compared with them. This allusion to the older text, or at least to the earlier solution, suggests the way to read the answer in *Questiones disputatae de anima*. If we use the same approach as in *De ente et essentia*, we come to the following conclusion. The term soul refers *cum praecisione* to the form of a human being to the extent that it exceeds the possibilities of the matter, or, even more precisely and with regard to *Questiones disputatae de anima* even more correctly, to the extent that the thinking is independent of the matter. In this regard, the soul can be understood as a substance, although it is not complete in its own genus.

The outlined considerations show one important conclusion, which can be confirmed by a glance at the above-mentioned texts, in

³ “Relinquitur igitur quod anima est hoc aliquid, ut per se potens subsistere; non quasi habens in se completam speciem, sed quasi perficiens speciem humanam ut forma corporis; et similiter est forma et hoc aliquid.” (Aquinas, *Questiones disputatae de anima*, a. 1, co.)

⁴ “Ad secundum dicendum quod non quaelibet substantia particularis est hypostasis vel persona, sed quae habet completam naturam speciei. Unde manus vel pes non potest dici hypostasis vel persona. Et similiter nec anima, cum sit pars speciei humanae.” (Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 75. a. 4 ad 2.)

which we can meet the distinction between the concept of soul as a form and soul as a (integral) part, or a substance (*hoc aliquid*). Only hylomorphic perspective is not enough to deal with the anthropological theme (Cf. Bieniak, 2010, 40-46). If we are to answer the questions concerning the way of our lives (How to live?), we need to acknowledge dualistic approach too, but only on appropriate level and only with overarching metaphysical account of man.

Of course, it is possible to disagree with this statement because, at the very least, it does not respect the position of metaphysics as the most advanced philosophical discipline (Cf. Wippel, 1984, p. 56-67). At this point, however, it is necessary to consider several circumstances: a) even for Aristotle, contemplative life was not the only dimension of perfection of a human being, it was *zoon politikon* too. For Thomas Aquinas, a human being is primarily a moral being as well; b) the idea of knowledge for knowledge's sake is completely strange to Thomas (Cf. Mensching, 2006, p. 31-39. Aertsen, 2005. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 91 a 3 co.); c) the object of interest of the *sacrae doctrinae* is the soul as far as it moves the body, and to what extent it recognizes and decides how we, also as material beings, will live; d) the substantial comprehension of the soul corresponds to the sense in which a human being is the image of God (*imago Dei*) above all.

As another proof of Thomas's intention, we can consider the question of the way the soul is connected with the body or what their relationship is, which actually has two levels that we will briefly deal with before we focus our attention on the human being as the *imago Dei*.

3. Man as a *horizon et confinium*

In our introduction we have mentioned the difficulty with philosophical account of such a being as human is. This can be confirmed by a quick

glance at the most influential anthropological positions: Aristotle failed in his promise to answer the question of how the soul of a human being is an act of the body (form) and the principle of knowledge at the same time (Aristotle, *On the soul*, II, 415a 11-12); Augustin, despite his verbal Platonism, defended his intentions against strict dualism, and the human body was not just a prison for him (Cf. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 84 a. 5 co. Armstrong, 2002, p. 400). Avicenna had to sacrifice an Aristotelian assumption of the indivisibility of substantial forms with his conception of the intellectual soul as the *perfectio* of the body (Slováček, 2014, p. 44-66). Averroes, certainly not in the end, did deny a human soul (form of the body) the performance of its highest capacity, i.e. of rational knowledge; human soul is the source of only *intellectus in habitu* (Davidson, 120).

The problem of the indivisible unity of a human being was a great challenge for Thomas Aquinas, too. This is proven by the fact that he constantly returned to it, and with the help of his essential philosophical instruments, whose basic elements can be found in the early text of *De ente et essentia*, he always strove for a more precise formulation of his answer. Through comparing the different forms of this answer, we can trace the evolution of Thomas's position. For the purpose of our text, however, we will only make a comparison of the *Summa contra Gentiles* (1259-1264) and *De substantiis separatis* (1271), which will show the reach and depth needed for such a task.

In Book 68 of the second part of *Summa contra Gentiles*, Thomas asks whether the rational substance can be a form of body (*Utrum substantia intellectualis possit esset forma corporis*). His answer is remarkable, because it makes use of the possibility of hierarchy distinction we mentioned above: ascendant and descendant. In the first case, the soul as a form is defined as the principle of the body, but whose

existence exceeds the possibilities of the material substance only (body), to the extent that Thomas justifies the claim that *the soul is not completely included or immersed in materia as other material forms*⁵. In the latter case the connection of soul and body is interpreted by means of the of the continuity of the created universe, whose linking element, eloquently called *mirabilis rerum connexio* or *horizon et confinium*, is soul as a form⁶.

The crucial elements of interpretation remain identical to what we have already seen in *De ente et essentia*. Both the approaches play an equal role in Thomas's response. But what is new to opusculum *De ente et essentia*, is an attempt to explain how soul as a form is the form of both corporeality and intellect. Thomas's response, *the soul is not completely included or immersed in materia as other material forms*, is, nevertheless, problematic. It does not respect two assumptions: a) the indivisibility of the substantive form; b) the whole presence of form in the whole body and in each of its parts.

These reflections are of considerable importance to our basic theme of dualistic aspects in Thomas's philosophical psychology. The substantial aspect of psychological doctrine by Thomas Aquinas is threatened to the extent in which the way of *neither including nor immersing* is not clearly defined. At the same time, we can notice that the problem of the position in *Summa contra Gentiles* is parallel to that of *Questiones disputate de anima*, where we also encountered strange

⁵“Unde oportet quod illud principium quo homo intelligit, quod est anima intellectiva, et excedit conditionem materiae corporalis, non sit totaliter comprehensa a materia aut ei immersa, sicut aliae formae materiales.” (Aquinas, *Contra Gentiles*, lib. 2 cap. 68 n. 12.)

⁶ “Est igitur accipere aliquid supremum in genere corporum, scilicet corpus humanum aequaliter complexionatum, quod attingit ad infimum superioris generis, scilicet ad animam humanam, quae tenet ultimum gradum in genere intellectualium substantiarum, ut ex modo intelligendi percipi potest. Et inde est quod anima intellectualis dicitur esse quasi quidam horizon et confinium corporeorum et incorporeorum, inquantum est substantia incorporea, corporis tamen forma. Non autem minus est aliquid unum ex substantia intellectuali et materia corporali quam ex forma ignis et eius materia, sed forte magis: quia quanto forma magis vincit materiam, ex ea et materia efficitur magis unum.” (*Ibid.*, II, c. 68.)

incomplete existence in terms of genus et species. Maybe the later text *De substantiis separatis* can help us.

So, in *De substantiis separatis* Thomas returns again to the problem of *mirabilis rerum connexio*, nonetheless this time chiefly from the metaphysical perspective working with real distinction conceptual instruments. Within this widened framework, Thomas distinguishes two orders of relations of act and potency in material beings: the relation of form to matter and the relation of being to substance. Our studied text in *Summa contra Gentiles* was defined by the fundamental relation of *forma dat esse*. However, *De substantiis separatis* understands the basic principle of interpretation as a *participation of being by form*⁷. By this transfer, a solution which respects both the premise of the indivisibility of the form and the presumption of its entire presence in the whole body and each of its parts is created. What goes beyond the possibilities of matter is not the form, but the being that the form shares and participates too.

However, it is not this solution of Thomas' that ensures the substantial unity of a human being. The participatory model also describes the relation between body as a part and soul (or intellect) as a part. The body (or matter, more precisely) shares the being of soul only proportionately and incompletely, and is thus ontologically inferior with regard to the whole being shared by soul (Tomarchio, 1998. Wippel, 1988). Only on the basis of these more specified considerations can we approach the explicitly dualistic level of Thomas's anthropology.

⁷"Ipsa vero res composita in sui essentia considerata, iam habet formam, sed participat esse proprium sibi per formam suam." (Aquinas, *De substantiis separatis*, c. 8.)

4. Soul as *motor* and *imago Dei*

De ente et essentia as well as *De substantiis separatis* focus on the metaphysical level. The fact that the metaphysical grasp can be considered more fundamental in terms of *theoria*, does not change its importance. So, what is the role of the dualistic level in Thomas's thinking? Part of the answer is in *Summa Theologiae*, where we can read these words:

„*Naturam autem hominis considerare pertinet ad theologum ex parte animae, non autem ex parte corporis, nisi secundum habitudinem quam habet corpus ad animam.*“ (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 75.)

Theology, and perhaps even practical philosophy too, are interested in the human being primarily in terms of soul, or, if needed, in terms of soul-to-body relation. In the anthropological part of *Summa Theologiae*, soul is defined and grasped as the form of body or as the first act of body, but, regarding the quotation above, we think the emphasis is placed on soul as a substance, as subject of actions. This corresponds to the initial definition of a human being in q. 75, which consists of a physical and a spiritual substance⁸. It is at the same time obvious that the very concept of substance must be understood in the sense defined above in the discussions about body as a part in *De ente et essentia* and as an incomplete substance in *Questiones disputatae de anima*. With this specification, we can focus on two aspects of the theologian's interest. The first is the soul itself, which will be understood from here on as a substance (subject of activities), and the other is its relation to the body.

⁸ “Post considerationem creaturae spiritualis et corporalis, considerandum est de homine, qui ex spirituali et corporali substantia componitur.” (*Ibid.*, I, q. 75 pr.)

If we first look at the second aspect, then the image presented by Thomas is unchanging. The soul moves the body (*motor*) and is its administrator (*administrans*). But behind this rather laconic definition there are several problems that prevent us from understanding the body as a mere tool. Firstly, the rational knowledge of humans is discursive and dependent on the senses. Secondly, the death of the body is a substantial change which, as opposed to the belief of Platonics, is not to be comprehended as good. The studied relation is therefore much more intimate and seems to refer to a specific human situation, which is to be a rational being in the material world, where both the relationship to other people and to God is at stake. Although moved and administered, the body is not a mere means (instrument), which corresponds to the non-substantive concept of the soul that we have discussed above. However, the meaning of the substantial concept of the soul is most evident when we focus on the way in which a human being is the image of God.

In *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas defines the concept of image (*imago*) as follows (Cf. Schin, 1993, p. 49-115): Image is more than similarity (*similitudo*). The difference is that while similarity means a passive relationship, the relation of image is determined by the active relationship of imitation, which can be considered both from the point of view of the Creator and from the point of view of the created image⁹. This aspect of activity is important for our research because with its assistance we can show why the substantial conception of the soul holds its relevance. Furthermore, an image is different as it shares species, specific differences or shape, as opposed to mere similarity that can

⁹ “Ex quo patet quod similitudo est de ratione imaginis, et quod imago aliquid addit supra rationem similitudinis, scilicet quod sit ex alio expressum, imago enim dicitur ex eo quod quod agitur ad imitationem alterius.” (*Ibid.*, I, q. 93 a. 1. co.)

consist only in sharing a common attribute (*accident*). Thus, the image of God is everything that exists and lives, everything that is wise and is able to rational understanding. From this perspective, it is possible to say that everything created is an image of God, but not to the same extent. Angels are more an image of God than people, because they are more perfect, as intellect. In the fourth article where he deals with this intellectual aspect of the image, Thomas distinguishes the following ways in which a human being is the image of God: firstly, a human being is an image of God because he/she is naturally oriented or adapted to become aware and love God. These two abilities belong to the mind of a human being, so up to this point every human is the image of God¹⁰. Secondly, a human being is an image of God to the extent that he or she becomes aware of God, either currently or *in habitu*, albeit imperfectly. In this place Thomas writes about the similarity of grace (*gratiae*)¹¹. The similarity of glory (*gloriae*) belongs to a human if he or she knows and loves God currently and perfectly¹².

From the suggested thoughts it is apparent that if Thomas writes about a human being as the image of God in *Summa Theologiae*, his focus is primarily on mind or soul, which we understand as the subject of action. This image is further elaborated and confirmed in the 6th article, where vestiges (*vestigium*) and image are explicitly distinguished. Vestiges, that is, all that just exists or lives are only similarities, which applies to the body of a human being too:

10 “Uno quidem modo, secundum quod homo habet aptitudinem naturalem ad intelligendum et amandum Deum, et haec aptitudo consistit in ipsa natura mentis, quae est communis omnibus hominibus.” (*Ibid.*, I, q. 93 a. 4. co.)

11 “Alio modo, secundum quod homo actu vel habitu Deum cognoscit et amat, sed tamen imperfecte, et haec est imago per conformitatem gratiae.” (*Ibid.*)

12 *Ibid.*: “Tertio modo, secundum quod homo Deum actu cognoscit et amat perfecte, et sic attenditur imago secundum similitudinem gloriae.” (*Ibid.*)

"So a human being resembles God in the way of image, but only regarding his/her mind; as far as other parts are concerned, a human resembles God in the way of vestiges."¹³

Even within the issue of a human being as the image of God, we are struck by the necessity of distinguishing and thinking about the relationship between the whole human being, his or her integral parts and the principles by which he/she is philosophically explained. At the same time, this approach to the soul as a part shows us why the dualistic level is so important for Thomas. Just as the determination of soul as a form of the body or its act prevents the body from becoming a mere tool and the world of senses only a temporary and unimportant place, the dualistic anthropology defends a human being against the temptation to stay too much in the order of nature, in which the soul is created after all; that is to focus only on activities very typical of only human beings. Our interpretation of the relationship and the form of the unitary and dualistic anthropological motif is confirmed by the fact that a human being as *imago Dei* is the starting point of the second part of *Summa Theologiae*¹⁴.

Conclusion

The evaluation of the relationship between the unitary and dualistic level of anthropology by Thomas Aquinas, which can be considered as our original standpoint (Cf. Slováček, 2014), depends on the perspective we

¹³ "Sic igitur in homine invenitur Dei similitudo per modum imaginis secundum mentem; sed secundum alias partes eius, per modum vestigii." (*Ibid.*, 1, q. 93 a. 6. co.)

¹⁴ "Quia, sicut Damascenus dicit, homo factus ad imaginem Dei dicitur, secundum quod per imaginem significatur *intellectuale et arbitrio liberum et per se potestativum*; postquam praedictum est de exemplari, scilicet de Deo, et de his quae processerunt ex divina potestate secundum eius voluntatem; restat ut consideremus de eius imagine, idest de homine, secundum quod et ipse est suorum operum principium, quasi liberum arbitrium habens et suorum operum potestatem." (*Ibid.*, I-II, pr. Cf. Shin, 1993, p. 36-48.)

choose. If we want to understand a human in his/her essence, we must look for the response in Thomas's metaphysics, where a human being is shown as a link (*horizon et confinium*) between the material and immaterial realm of creation. On this layer, Thomas Aquinas successfully eliminates the dualistic view of the human being as well as philosophically explains its dual physical-spiritual nature. However, if we want to understand a human in terms of its purpose and destination, if we do not want to see it as a neutral being, a dualistic approach appears to be more appropriate as it takes reason and will into account, which make a person a human being. At the same time, however, we must not lose sight of the fact that reason and will are the powers of human beings whose place is in the material world, where they are not alone.

Abstract

The present text deals with two layers of philosophic psychology/anthropology in the works of Thomas Aquinas and strives to examine the mutual relationships and interrelated meanings between these layers while paying particular attention to the biblical image of a human being as *imago Dei*. With respect to this aim, the paper contains a justification of the distinction between philosophic psychology, which understands soul as a substantial form of the human being, and dualistic philosophic psychology, which views soul as the subject of activities, or as incomplete substance. This distinction is then confirmed as confronted with the way Thomas Aquinas delimits the human being as *imago Dei* in his *Summa Theologiae*, by which means the way we understand this expression becomes more exact, and the importance of Thomas's dualistic terminology, which we encounter in his works, is emphasised at the same time.

Key words: Thomas Aquinas, anthropology, philosophic psychology, soul, body, form, substance, *imago Dei*

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