

# The Immutability of Human Nature according to St. Thomas Aquinas

## Resumo

*Aquilo que da filosofia grega foi discutido novamente há cinquenta ou cem anos atrás nos círculos filosóficos, hoje encontra-se nos jornais e até como projetos de lei na mesa dos legisladores: “O homem é a medida de todas as coisas” ou mesmo: “Tudo é em movimento.”*

*Para enfrentar erros com consequências tão graves deve-se “ir à raiz”. Nesse artigo se tenta esclarecer a identidade do ser humano, ou seja, a sua natureza como base segura para discutir as mudanças exigidas. Como autoridade para discutir tal tema foi escolhido principalmente Santo Tomás de Aquino.*

*Sua filosofia permite determinar a união substancial da alma e corpo como sendo a essência e natureza do homem. Além desses elementos imutáveis de um ente, se distinguem acidentes que permitem mudanças. Considerando esse fato, revela-se ainda mais a imutabilidade e indivisibilidade da forma substancial como base deles.*

*Aplicando esses princípios metafísicos à natureza humana, se chega à compreensão do homem que explica a experiência cotidiana: a conservação da sua unidade permanente e a possibilidade real de mudanças e crescimentos por causa de sua forma substancial.*

## Summary

*That which from Greek Philosophy was discussed again 50 or 100 years ago within philosophic circles, is today found in the newspapers and the legislative proposals of our lawmakers: “Man is the measure of all things” or even “Everything is in movement”.*

*In order to confront errors with so serious consequences it is necessary “to go to the root”. In this article the author tries to clarify the identity of the human person, or rather, his nature as a*

*firm foundation for the discussion of required changes. St. Thomas Aquinas was chosen as an authority for discussing this theme.*

*His philosophy allows one to determine the substantial union of body and soul as the essence and nature of man. Beyond these immutable elements of a being, one distinguishes accidents which allow for changes. Considering this fact, there is shown still more the immutability and indivisibility of the substantial form as their foundation.*

*Applying these metaphysical principles to the human nature, one arrives at an understanding of man which explains daily experience: the conservation of the enduring unity and the real possibility of changes and growths due to the substantial form.*

\* \* \*

## INTRODUCTION

But what if there is no such thing as a permanent human nature? What if the distinction between permanent nature and historical change is a false distinction: if man's very being is historical? —Emil Fackenheim, *Metaphysics and Historicity*<sup>1</sup>

Does man possess a stable, immutable nature? A nature that perdures throughout the ages? Or is his essence fluid—malleable, if you will? Can man be made or remade to accommodate “the desires and demands of the dominant cultural system?”<sup>2</sup>

Recent biomedical and bioscientific advances, e.g. the development and perfection of *in vitro* fertilization, have led many scientists and philosophers to conclude that man's nature can be fashioned at will, like so much putty in the hands of a child.

The purpose of this study is to counteract by demonstrating—through the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas—that human nature is immutable. It is

---

<sup>1</sup> E. FACKENHEIM, *Metaphysics and Historicity*, Milwaukee, 1961, 12.

<sup>2</sup> R. BRUNGS, “Biotechnology and the Social Order” in: *Human Life Review* 5 (1979), 41.

my fervent hope that this effort will, in some small way, serve to promote a deeper understanding of the true nature and dignity of man.

To justify this claim, I will first set forth, in condensed form, the doctrine of St. Thomas on human nature. Then I will show that according to this doctrine human nature in itself cannot change or evolve over time, as the evolutionists and historicists contend; and that man cannot create himself—that is, construct his own nature—as the existentialists contend.

## I. ST. THOMAS' DOCTRINE OF HUMAN NATURE

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a synopsis of St. Thomas' doctrine of human nature. Moreover, it is designed to set the stage, i.e. to serve as a foundation and a point of reference, for the discussions that will follow in the later chapters. It is not my intention here, however, to examine his doctrine in detail nor to analyze the controverted points of his arguments. Rather, I simply want to present the key elements.

But to begin with, what do we mean when we speak of human nature? Or in other words, what is man? How is he to be defined? St. Thomas says man is not the soul alone. "The soul, as part of human nature, has its natural perfection only as united to the body. Therefore it would have been unfitting for the soul to be created without the body."<sup>3</sup> Nor is man the body alone. "The body is not of the essence of the soul; but the soul by the nature of its essence can be united to the body, so that, properly speaking not the soul alone but the composite is (in) the species."<sup>4</sup> Man, then, is not the soul alone or the body alone, but the composite of soul and body.<sup>5</sup> Gilson neatly summarizes St. Thomas' position on this score. Man for St. Thomas, he says, is "neither his body, since the body subsists only in the soul, nor his soul, since this would remain destitute without

---

<sup>3</sup> "Anima autem, cum sit pars humanae naturae, non habet naturalem perfectionem nisi secundum quod est corpori unita. Unde non fuisset conveniens animam sine corpore creari." (*Summa theologiae* (= *ST*), I, q. 90, a. 4c; trans. by the English Dominican Fathers, London, 1920).

<sup>4</sup> "Quod corpus non est de essentia animae, sed anima ex natura suae essentiae habet quod sit corpori unibilis. Unde nec proprie anima est in specie, se compositum." (*ST* I, q. 75, a. 7, ad 3).

<sup>5</sup> *ST* I, q. 75, a. 4c.

the body: he is the unity of a soul which substantializes his body and of the body in which this soul subsists.”<sup>6</sup>

## 2. *The Substantial Union*

The union of body and soul, then, constitutes man. But what, according to St. Thomas, is the nature of this union? How is it to be explained? Gilson, for one, says it must be seen as a union that makes “one complete substance of two beings each incapable of subsisting without the other. Matter and form are realities which are incomplete, considered in themselves, but which, by reason of their union, make up one complete substance.”<sup>7</sup> Taking our lead from Gilson then, we must, in order to explain adequately the nature of man, examine the notion of soul and body as “incomplete substance.”

To this end, we must first examine the sense in which the soul is a substance, or as St. Thomas calls it, a *hoc aliquid*, i.e. a “this particular thing.”<sup>8</sup>

*This particular thing* can be taken in two senses. Firstly, for anything subsistent; secondly, for that which subsists, and is complete in a specific nature. The former sense excludes the inherence of an accident or of a material form; the latter excludes also the imperfection of the part, so that a hand can be called *this particular thing* in the first sense, but not in the second. Therefore, as the human soul is a part of human nature, it can indeed be called *this particular thing*, in the first sense, as being subsistent; but not in the second, for in this sense, what is composed of body and soul is said to be *this particular thing*.<sup>9</sup>

We can see from this, then, that the soul, though it is subsistent, does not possess a complete nature. Consequently, it cannot be considered a substance in the strict sense of the term. Why? Because a substance must

---

<sup>6</sup> E. GILSON, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 5th ed. (New York, 1956), 188.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>8</sup> *ST I*, q. 75, a. 2, ad 1.

<sup>9</sup> “Quod hoc aliquid potest accipi dupliciter: uno modo, pro quocumque subsistente; alio modo pro subsistente completo in natura alicuius speciei. Primo modo, excludit inhaerentiam accidentis et formae materialis; secundo modo, excludit imperfectionem partis. Unde manus posset dici hoc aliquid primo modo sed non secundo modo. Sic igitur, cum anima humana sit pars speciei humanae, potest dici hoc aliquid primo modo, quasi subsistens, sed non secundo modo; sic enim compositum ex anima et corpore dicitur hoc aliquid.” (*ST I*, q. 75, a. 2, ad 1).

be both subsistent and complete in itself.<sup>10</sup> The soul, however, meets only one of these criteria, namely, that of subsistence.<sup>11</sup> It is subsistent because it has “an operation (i.e. thinking) *per se* apart from the body.”<sup>12</sup> That is why it is called a *hoc aliquid*. But it is not complete in itself, that is, it does not have a complete nature because it has certain powers, namely, the senses, which require the use of a body.<sup>13</sup> Hence man cannot be called a soul.<sup>14</sup>

The soul, then, is an incomplete substance because it needs a body to complete itself. In other words, as Pegis points out, “the union of the soul to the body is a consequence of the soul’s nature, and not the cause. *Because* the soul has sensible powers, *therefore* it is joined to the body.”<sup>15</sup> For this reason, then, St. Thomas insists that man must be viewed as “a being composed of soul and body as from two things there is constituted a third entity which is neither one of them.”<sup>16</sup>

It remains, therefore, to examine the nature and properties of the primary constituents of man—that is, soul and body—and to explain the “intimate ontological relationship”<sup>17</sup> that exists between them.

### 3. The Soul

#### a) The soul as substantial form

Van Steenberghen writes that:

The dominant fact that controls Thomas’ metaphysical view of the human soul is, in brief, the *cogito*. I am conscious of thinking...Starting from this

---

<sup>10</sup> *Quaestiones de anima*, q. 1c, ed. J. Robb, Toronto, 1968, 59.

<sup>11</sup> See A. PEGIS, *St. Thomas and the Problem of the Soul in the Thirteenth Century*, Toronto, 1934, 183-84.

<sup>12</sup> “...habet operationem per se, cui non communicat corpus.” (*STI*, 75, a. 2c).

<sup>13</sup> *De anima*, q. 8c & 15c, *ed cit.*, 132 & 210 respectively.

<sup>14</sup> *STI*, q. 75, a. 4c.

<sup>15</sup> A. PEGIS, “St. Thomas and the Unity of Man” in: *Progress in Philosophy*, ed. by J. McWilliams, Milwaukee, 1955, 168.

<sup>16</sup> “Ex anima enim et corpore dicitur esse homo sicut ex duabus rebus quedam res tertia constitua que neutra illarum est”. *De ente et essentia*, ch. 2, *Sancti Thomae de Aquino opera omnia*, vol. 43, Leonine ed., Rome, 1976, trans. by A. Maurer in *Thomas Aquinas on Being and Essence*, 2d rev. ed., Toronto, 1983, 41.

<sup>17</sup> N. LUYTEN, “Soul-Body Relationship” in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Washington, D.C. 1967, vol. 13, 472.

undeniable fact, St. Thomas demonstrates that the soul, the substantial principle of this activity, must be man's substantial form, even though it itself is immaterial in nature.<sup>18</sup>

St. Thomas' argument for this claim is presented in two illuminating passages in chapter 2 of *De spiritualibus creaturis*.

(1) The human soul, which is the end of all natural forms, has an activity that goes entirely beyond matter, and does not take place through a corporeal organ; namely understanding... In as much then, as it surpasses the actual being of corporeal matter, having of itself the power to subsist and to act, the human soul is a spiritual substance; but inasmuch as it is touched upon by matter and shares its own actual being with matter, it is the form of the body.<sup>19</sup>

(2) It must be said that the soul by its very essence, and not on the basis of something added, is the form of the body. Nevertheless, inasmuch as it is affected by the body, it is a form; but inasmuch as it goes beyond a relationship with the body, it is called a spirit or spiritual substance.<sup>20</sup>

St. Thomas thus maintains that the intellectual soul is both the form of the body and an immaterial form. It is the form of the body because, as Van Steenberghen points out, "it constitutes with the material principle the human substance and (is) the unique source of all man's activities."<sup>21</sup> And it is an immaterial form, because as Van Steenberghen further notes, "it is a subsisting form, and therefore incorruptible, immortal, (and) imperishable."<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> F. VAN STEENBERGHEN, *Thomas Aquinas and Radical Aristotelianism* (Washington, D.C., 1980), 48.

<sup>19</sup> "Anima humana, quae est finis omnium formarum naturalium, habet operationem omnium excedentem materiam, quae non fit per organum corporale, scilicet intelligere... In quantum igitur supergreditur esse materiae corporalis, potens per se subsistere et operari, anima humana est substantia spiritualis; in quantum vero attingitur a materia, et esse suum communicat illi, est corporis forma." (*De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 2c; cf. G. KREYCHE in "The Soul-Body Problem in St. Thomas" *New Scholasticism* 46 (1972), 476. Trans. by M. Fitzpatrick and J. Wellmuth in *On Spiritual Creatures*, Milwaukee, 1949, 36-37).

<sup>20</sup> "Dicendum quod anima secundum suam essentiam est forma corporis, et non secundum aliquid additum. Tamen in quantum attingitur a corpore, est forma; in quantum vero superexcedit corporis proportionem, dicitur spiritus, vel spiritualis substantia." (*De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 2, ad, 4).

<sup>21</sup> VAN STEENBERGHEN, *Radical Aristotelianism*, 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

## **b) The nature and functions of the soul as substantial form.**

I will examine (1) the notion of form and matter as correlative; and (2) the means by which the soul bestows the act of being, and effects the unity of the composite.

### ***1) Form and matter as correlative.***

First of all, the substantial form is related to the body as form is to matter. “They (i.e. the soul and the body) are related to each other as matter is to form, and their union is immediate.”<sup>23</sup> What is more, it is the very nature of the soul to be the form of the body. “It belongs to the notion of soul to be the form of a body.”<sup>24</sup> And again: “the soul because of its own essence has a relation to the body, inasmuch as it is essential for it to be the form of the body.”<sup>25</sup>

The soul, then, is intimately related to the body as its form. But it is important to note here that the soul is not enmeshed in or dependent upon the matter to which it is joined. On the contrary, because the soul is an intellectual substance it transcends matter and surpasses it in nature.<sup>26</sup>

And because the actual being of a thing is proportioned to its activity, as has been said, since each thing acts according as it has being, it must be the case that the actual being of the human soul surpasses corporeal matter, and is not totally included in it, but yet in some way is touched by it. Inasmuch, then, as it surpasses the actual being of corporeal matter having of itself the power to subsist and to act, the human soul is a spiritual substance; but inasmuch as it is touched upon by matter and shares its own actual being with matter, it is the form of the body.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> “Comparantur ad invicem ut materia ad formam, quarum unio est immediata.” (*De spiritualibus creaturis*, a. 3, ad 10).

<sup>24</sup> “Est enim de ratione animae quod sit forma alicuius corporis.” (*ST I*, q. 75, a. 5c).

<sup>25</sup> “. . . anima secundum suam essentiam habet habitudinem ad corpus, in quantum hoc est ei essentiale quod sit corporis forma.” (*De spirit. creat.*, a. 9, ad 4).

<sup>26</sup> See J. MOURANT, “Cartesian Man and Thomistic Man” in: *Journal of Philosophy* 54 (1957), 375.

<sup>27</sup> “Et quia esse rei proportionatur eius operationi, ut dictum est, cum unumquodque operetur secundum quod est ens; oportet quod esse animae humanae superexcedat materiam corporalem, et non sit totaliter comprehensum ab ipsa, sed tamen aliquo modo attingatur ab ea. In quantum igitur supergreditur esse materiae corporalis, potens per se subsistere et operari, anima humana est substanita spiritualis; in quantum vero attingitur a materia, et esse suum communicat illi, est corporis forma.” (*De spirit. creat.* a. 2c).

We can see from this, then, that the soul has a peculiar and unique relation to the body. It is united to the body as its form: but at the same time it is subsistent, and therefore transcends the body.<sup>28</sup>

## **2) Act of being.**

Secondly, the substantial form is the cause of the *esse* of the substance. “Form alone is in its own way the cause of this being.”<sup>29</sup> A substance, then, is actuated by the act of being it receives from the form. But this act of being, however, does not belong to the form alone—as might be expected—but to the composite. Why? Because “matter exists only in potency, while form is that by which something is, since it is act. It, remains, therefore, that it is the composite which properly speaking is.”<sup>30</sup> This tells us, as Maurer points out, that “even though the form alone causes the *esse* of the substance, it is still only a part or principle of the composite, and so it is not the complete principle through which and in which the being has *esse*. Only the composite fits this description.”<sup>31</sup>

## **3) The unity of the composite.**

Thirdly, the substantial form effects the unity of the composite. How does it do this? It does it, first of all, by giving being absolutely to the composite.

Now it is the nature of the substantial form to give matter its existence without qualification. For the form is that through which a thing is the very thing that it is: through accidental forms a thing does not possess unqualified existence, but only qualified existence, for example to exist as large or colored, or something of this kind. Therefore, if there is a form which does not give unqualified existence to matter but which accrues to

---

<sup>28</sup> See J. ETZWEILER, “Man as Embodied Spirit” in: *New Scholasticism* 54 (1980), 366.

<sup>29</sup> “...esse suo modo sola forma sit causa.” (*De ente*, ch. 2).

<sup>30</sup> “materia enim non est nisi in potentia; forma vero est quo aliquid est, est enim. Unde restat quod compositum proprie sit.” (*Summa contra gentiles* [= SCG], Turin-Rome, 1961; trans. by J. Anderson in *Summa contra gentiles, Book Two: Creation*, Notre Dame, 1956, 129.

<sup>31</sup> MAURER, “Form and Essence in the Philosophy of St. Thomas” in: *Mediaeval Studies* 13 (1951), 174.

matter that is already existing through another form, then such a form will not be a substantial form.<sup>32</sup>

Unity, moreover, is effected by the substantial form because the soul and the body share the same act of being— that of the soul’s—which in turn becomes the act of being of the composite.<sup>33</sup>

The soul has subsistent actual being, inasmuch as its own actual being does not depend on the body, seeing that it is something raised above corporeal matter. And yet it receives the body into a share in the actual being in such a way that there is one actual being of soul and body, which is the actual being of man.<sup>34</sup>

The soul, then, shares—as in a communion—its act of being with the body.<sup>35</sup> Or put another way, the “identical act of existence which belongs to the soul is communicated to its body in order that there might be one act of existence for the whole composite.”<sup>36</sup> If this was not the case, then the substantial unity of man would be in doubt. And man would be as di Nardo says, nothing but a compound of “actually existing diverse entities,...a mere aggregation.”<sup>37</sup> But this is not so. On the contrary, there is in man, as Gilson points out, “only one single act of being, that of the soul, for the whole individual human substance, including the form, the matter, and all the individuating accidents.”<sup>38</sup> Hence the unity of man

---

<sup>32</sup> “Est autem hoc proprium formae substantialis quod det materiae esse simpliciter. Ipsa enim est per quam res est hoc ipsum quod est, non autem per formas accidentales habet esse simpliciter sed esse secundum quod, puta esse magnum vel coloratum vel aliquid tale. Si qua igitur forma est quae non det materiae esse simpliciter sed adveniat materiae jam existenti in actu per aliam formam, non erit forma substantialis.” (*Quaestiones disputatae De anima*, q. 9c).

<sup>33</sup> See R. DI NARDO, “The Unity of the Human Person”, Washington, D.C., 1961, 124.

<sup>34</sup> “Anima habet esse subsistens, in quantum esse suum non dependet a corpore, utpote supra materiam corporalem elevatum. Et tamen ad huius esse communionem recipit corpus, ut sic sit unum esse animae et corporis, quod est esse hominis.” (*De spirit. creat.*, a. 2, ad 3).

<sup>35</sup> E. GILSON, *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 209.

<sup>36</sup> “...tum quia illud idem esse quod est animae communicatur corpori ut sit unum esse totius compositi...” (*De anima*, q. 1, ad 1).

<sup>37</sup> DI NARDO, 124.

<sup>38</sup> GILSON, *Elements of Christian Philosophy*, 209.

is thereby effected by the “single existential act”<sup>39</sup> it receives from the substantial form.

In concluding this section one final point must be made: namely, that the soul functions not as substance and form—but in the capacity of a *substance as a form*. “One must maintain that the soul is an entity, as being able to subsist *per se* but not as possessing in itself a complete specific nature, but rather as completing human nature insofar as it is the form of its body.”<sup>40</sup> What St. Thomas is saying here, as Pegis observes, is that the soul is both “a substance,” and a “part of man.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, “though (the soul is) a substance, it is not in itself a whole being.”<sup>42</sup>

Consequently, it is “not a substance and a form but *substance as a form*,”<sup>43</sup> that is, it is “a substance whose spiritual nature is essentially suited to informing matter.”<sup>44</sup> And it is for this reason, then, that the soul—though a substance—is united to a body, and serves as its form.

### c) The unicity of the substantial form.

Simply put, the Thomistic doctrine of the unicity of the substantial form in man states that there is only one substantial form, which is the soul, and “by which man is made an actual being, a body, a living being, an animal, and a man.”<sup>45</sup> In support of this position, St. Thomas adduces a number of arguments which, according to Zavalloni, can be grouped under the headings of theology, metaphysics, and natural philosophy (or as Zavalloni calls it: *la psychologie et la cosmologie*). I will examine each of these categories in turn.

---

<sup>39</sup> *Op. cit.*, 209.

<sup>40</sup> “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 est forma corporis.” (*De anima*, q. 1c).

<sup>41</sup> PEGIS, “Unity of Man” 168.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> “...per quam homo est ens actu, et per quam est corpus, et per quam est vivum, et per quam est animal, et per quam est homo.” (*ST I*, q. 76, a. 6, ad 1; cf. *De spirit. creat.* a. 3c). See also F. ROENSCH, *Early Thomistic School*, Dubuque, Ia., 1964, 201.

## 1) *Theological arguments*

The theological argument centers around proving that Christ's body was the same living as when dead because of its unity with the divine person.<sup>46</sup> To this end, St. Thomas argues that the numerical identity of a body living and dead—for all persons other than Christ—is preserved only *secundum quid*. But in the case of Christ, his body was preserved *simpliciter*.

The dead body of everyone else does not continue united to an abiding hypostasis, as Christ's dead body did; consequently the dead body of everyone else is not the same *simply*, but only in some respects: because it is the same as to its matter, but not the same as to its form. But Christ's body remains the same *simply*, on account of the identity of the *suppositum*.<sup>47</sup>

Thus St. Thomas demonstrates, as Zavalloni points out, that “*le corps de toute homme est le même secundum quid, tandis que le corps du Christ est le même simpliciter*.”<sup>48</sup>

## 2) *Metaphysical arguments*

Under this head, Zavalloni devotes considerable space to explaining the development and history of St. Thomas' doctrine. Rather than repeat his analysis, I will simply single out as representative one of the more powerful metaphysical arguments that St. Thomas uses to demonstrate the unicity of the substantial form.<sup>49</sup>

The heart of his metaphysical thesis is that the forms of natural things differ from one another only in the order of perfection. “The forms of natural things are found to differ in the order of increasing perfection, as is clear to anyone who examines them.”<sup>50</sup> Because of this, the species—and the forms which determine them—can be distinguished by the act of being

---

<sup>46</sup> R. ZAVALLONI, *Richard de Mediavilla et la controverse sur la pluralité des formes*, Louvain, 1951, 267-68.

<sup>47</sup> “Quod corpus mortuum cuiuscumque alterius hominis non remanet unitum alicui hypostasi permanenti, sicut corpus Christi mortuum. Et ideo corpus mortuum cuiuscumque alterius hominis non est idem simpliciter sed secundum quid, quia est idem secundum materiam, non autem idem secundum formam. Corpus autem Christi remanet idem simpliciter, propter identitatem suppositi.” (*ST III*, q. 50, a. 5, ad 1).

<sup>48</sup> ZAVALLONI, 268.

<sup>49</sup> See GILSON, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 195 and ROENSCH, 204.

<sup>50</sup> “...differre formae rerum naturalium secundum perfectum et magis perfectum, ut patet intuenti.” (*De spirit. creat.*, a. 3c). Fitzpatrick and Wellmuth translated the phrase

which they possess. “It is characteristic of a more perfect agent to produce a more perfect form. And hence a more perfect form does by means of one thing all that lower forms do by means of different things.”<sup>51</sup>

It follows from the above, therefore, that species are like numbers. They can be changed by adding or subtracting a unit. This is why we can say with Aristotle (*De An.* II, 414b31), argues St. Thomas, that “the ‘vegetative is in the sentient,’ and the sentient is in the intellectual, as ‘a triangle is in a quadrilateral’ and a quadrilateral in a pentagon; for a pentagon virtually contains a quadrilateral for it has this and still more.”<sup>52</sup> Similarly, we can reason, he says, that “the intellectual soul virtually contains the sentient soul, because it has this and still more, yet not in such a way that there are two souls.”<sup>53</sup> Thus it is altogether fitting to conclude that in “‘this man’ there is no other substantial form than the rational soul, and that by it man is not only man, but animal, and living being, and body, and substance, and being.”<sup>54</sup>

### 3) Arguments from natural philosophy

St. Thomas’ arguments from natural philosophy are grounded on the principle that “one is consequent upon being.” “The principle of a thing’s unity is the same as that of its being; for *one is consequent upon being* (emphasis added). Therefore since each and every thing has being from its form, it will also have unity from its form.”<sup>55</sup>

This principle thus allows him to answer the objection that there must be different souls in man because the sensitive and nutritive souls are

---

“ut patet intuitu” as “as is clear to anyone who looks at all the genera and species’ of natural things.”

<sup>51</sup> “Perfectioris autem agentis est inducere perfectiorem formam. Unde perfectior forma facit per unum omnia quae inferiores faciunt per diversa...” (Ibid.).

<sup>52</sup> “...vegetativum est in sensitivo, et sensitivum in intellectivo, sicut trigonum in tetragono, et tetragonum in pentagono; pentagonum enim virtute continet tetragonum; habet enim hoc et adhuc amplius...” (Ibid.).

<sup>53</sup> “...intellectiva virtute continet; sensitivam, quia habet hoc et adhuc amplius; non tamen ita quod sint duae animae.” (Ibid.).

<sup>54</sup> “...in hoc homine non est alia forma substantialis quam anima rationalis; et quod per eam homo non solum est homo, sed animal et vivum et corpus et substantia et ens.” (Ibid.).

<sup>55</sup> “Ab eodem aliquid i habet esse et enitatem: unum enim consequitur ad ens. Cum igitur a forma unaquaque res habeat esse, a forma etiam habebit unitatem.” (*SCG* II, ch. 58).

corruptible while the intellectual soul is not. His reply, accordingly, is based on the premise that the nutritive, sensitive and intellectual principles are the same in man.<sup>56</sup> Hence he maintains that:

The sensitive (and nutritive) soul is incorruptible, not by reason of its being sensitive (or nutritive), but by reason of its being intellectual...For although sensibility does not give incorruptibility, it cannot deprive intellectuality of its incorruptibility.<sup>57</sup>

(Before I go further, it should be noted as Zavalloni points out, that St. Thomas “does not make the distinction between the problem of the plurality of forms and the problem of the plurality of souls because he cannot imagine the possibility of reconciling the plurality of forms in the soul with the simplicity of the soul itself.”<sup>58</sup>)

Moreover, this principle allows him to refute those who would claim that—because each soul is successively generated—there must therefore be three souls in man. Arguing against this position, he maintains that the less perfect sensitive and nutritive souls are, after a time, superseded by the more perfect intellectual soul.<sup>59</sup> Hence it follows, he says, that there can only be one soul, one substantial form in man.

We must say therefore that since the generation of one thing is always the corruption of another, it follows of necessity that both in men and in other animals, when a more perfect form supervenes the previous form is corrupted: yet so that the supervening form contains the perfection of the previous form, and something in addition. It is in this way that through many generations and corruptions we arrive at the ultimate substantial form, both in man and other animals.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> ZAVALLONI, 269.

<sup>57</sup> “...anima sensitiva non habet incorruptibilitatem ex hoc quod est sensitiva: sed ex hoc quod est intellectiva...Licet enim sensitivum incorruptionem non det, tamen incorruptionem intellectivo auferre non potest.” (*ST I*, a. 76, a. 3, ad 1).

<sup>58</sup> “Il ne distingue donc pas le problème de la pluralité des formes et le problème de la pluralité des âmes car il ne conoit pas la possibilité d’accorder la pluralité des formes dans l’âme et la simplicité de l’âme elle-meme.” (ZAVALLONI, 269)

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 269-70.

<sup>60</sup> “Et ideo dicendum est quod cum generatio unius semper sit corruptio alterius necesse est dicere quod tam in homine quam in animalibus aliis, quando perfectior forma advenit, fit corruptio prioris; ita tamen quod sequens forma habet quidquid habebat prima, et adhuc amplius. Et sic per multas generationes et corruptiones pervenitur ad ultimam formam substantialem, tam in homine quam in aliis animalibus.” (*ST I*, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2).

Finally, the principle of unity is used by St. Thomas as a standpoint to criticize those who hold that the soul is derived from the semen of the father or the soul of the mother.<sup>61</sup> To counter this claim he asserts that if this is truly the case as some maintain, then “in addition to the vegetative soul which existed first, another, namely the sensitive soul (would supervene); and in addition to this, again another, namely the intellectual soul. Thus there would be in man three souls of which one would be in potentiality to another.”<sup>62</sup> Hence it follows, he concludes, that the “intellectual soul is created by God at the end of human generation, and this soul is at the same time sensitive and nutritive, the pre-existing forms being corrupted.”<sup>63</sup>

#### 4. *The Body*

It remains to examine the nature of the other incomplete substance that constitutes man, i.e. the body. St. Thomas explains why the soul must be united to a body.

Since the form is not for the matter, but rather the matter for the form, we must gather from the form the reason why the matter is such as it is; and not conversely. Now, the intellectual soul, as we have seen above (q. 5, a. 2) in the order of nature, holds the lowest place among intellectual substances; inasmuch as it is not naturally gifted with the knowledge of truth, as the angels are; but has to gather knowledge from divisible things by way of the senses, as Dionysius says (*Div. Nom.* viii). But nature never fails in necessary things: therefore the intellectual soul had to be endowed not only with the power of understanding, but also with the power of sensing. Now the action of the senses is not performed without a corporeal instrument. Therefore it behooved the intellectual soul to be united to a body fitted to be a convenient organ of sense.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Zavalloni, 270.

<sup>62</sup> “...supra animam vegetabilem quae primo inerat, supervenit alia anima, quae est sensitiva: supra illam iterum alia quae est intellectiva. Et sic sunt in homine tres animae, quarum una est in potentia ad aliam.” (*ST I*, q. 118, a. 2 ad 2).

<sup>63</sup> “Anima intellectiva creatur a Deo in fine generationis humanae, quae simul est et sensitiva et nutritiva corruptis formis praesistentibus.” (*ST I*, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2).

<sup>64</sup> “Dicendum quod cum forma non sit propter materiam, sed potius materia propter formam; ex forma oportet rationem accipere quare materia sit talis, et non e converso. Anima autem intellectiva, sicut supra habitum est secundum naturae ordinem, infimum gradum in substantiis intellectualibus tenet; intantum quod non habet naturaliter sibi inditam notitiam veritatis, sicut angeli, sed oportet quod eam colligat ex rebus divisibilibus\* per viam sensus ut Dionysius dicit, VII cap., *De Div. Nom.* Natura autem nulli deest in

The body, then, is necessary so that the soul may understand. This is so because the soul must receive phantasms, i.e. “the likeness of an individual thing,”<sup>65</sup> *via* the senses in order to perform intellectual operations. Consequently, as Gilson points out, the soul:

is condemned to sterility and inaction, unless some instrument is placed at its service, an instrument like it incomplete, which the soul may organize and animate from within, an instrument which will permit it to enter into a relationship with an intelligible assimilable to itself.<sup>66</sup>

The “instrument” that Gilson speaks of is, of course, the body.

The body, as shown above, is a necessary complement to the soul. It therefore follows, argues St. Thomas, that “the very body is for the soul, as matter is for its form, and the instrument for the man that puts them into motion, that by their means he may do his work.”<sup>67</sup> This fact—coupled with St. Thomas’ statement on the role the body plays in intellection—leads us to conclude that it is part and parcel of the soul’s nature to be united to a body.<sup>68</sup> For this reason, as Pegis points out, “whatever the human body is, it is for the sake of, and in view of, the human soul.”<sup>69</sup> And that is why “we cannot explain the soul by the body; we must explain the body by the soul.”<sup>70</sup>

---

necessariis; unde oportuit quod anima intellectiva non solum haberet virtutem intelligendi, sed etiam virtutem sentiendi\*. Actio autem sensus non fit sine corporeo instrumento. Oportuit igitur animam intellectivam corpori uniri, quod possit esse conveniens organum sensus.” (ST I, q. 76, a. 5c; in the English Dominican Fathers translate *divisibilibus* as “individual” (as opposed to “divisible”), and *sentiendi* is translated as “feeling”, as opposed to “sensing”.

<sup>65</sup> “...similitudo rei particularis.” (ST I, q. 84, a. 7, ad 2).

<sup>66</sup> Gilson, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas*, 191.

<sup>67</sup> “...ipsumque corpus est propter animam, sicut materia propter formam, et instrumenta propter motorem, ut per ea suas actiones exercent” (ST I-II, q. 2, a. sc).

<sup>68</sup> “Esse quidem animae humanae dum est corpori unita, etsi sit absolutum a corpore non dependens, tamen stramentum quoddam ipsius et subiectum ipsum recipiens est corpus. Unde et consequenter operatio propria eius, quae est intelligere, etsi non dependeat a corpore quasi per organum corporale exercita, habet tamen objectum in corpore, scilicet phantasma.” (SCG II, ch. 81).

<sup>69</sup> PEGIS, “Unity of Man”, 168.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5. Conclusion

The key to understanding St. Thomas' doctrine of human nature lies in recognizing the importance he attaches to hylemorphism. He sees man as the combination of two incomplete substances—body and soul—joined together in a substantial union, and forming one complete substance, i.e. man. In short, he consistently maintains, as Pegis points out, that “the human soul is joined to the body as substantial form to matter, constituting a unitary being, with an essence that is as one in its integrity as the being whose essence it is is one in its substantiality.”<sup>71</sup>

## II. HUMAN NATURE AND EVOLUTION

### 1. Introduction

Does human nature evolve? Is man's essence a fluid, unstable reality? Or is it something static, immutable? Several philosophers of the historicist school, namely Nietzsche, Dilthey, and Bergson<sup>72</sup>, maintain that, in fact, human nature is in the process of evolving or becoming.<sup>73</sup>

Nietzsche, for one, asserts that man's nature is fluid and malleable. As he sees it, man is simply a being “that must be overcome.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, according to his reasoning, human nature at present is merely a seed from which a higher species will sprout. “...man is a bridge and not a goal; counting himself happy for noontides and evenings, as a way to new dawns.”<sup>75</sup>

Dilthey's concept of human nature is similar to that of Nietzsche's. In fact, says Palmer, Dilthey “would agree with...Nietzsche, that man is the ‘not-yet-determined-animal’ (*noch nicht festgestellte Tier*), the animal who has not yet determined what he is.”<sup>76</sup> For Dilthey, then, the nature of

---

<sup>71</sup> A. PEGIS, *At the Origins of the Thomistic Notion of Man*, New York, 1963, 22.

<sup>72</sup> I. BOCHENSKI, *Contemporary European Philosophy*, Berkeley, 1956, 122.

<sup>73</sup> W. NOGAR, “From the Fact of Evolution to the Philosophy of Evolutionism” in: *The Dignity of Science*, ed. by J. Weisheipl, Washington, D.C., 1961, 359.

<sup>74</sup> F. NIETZSCHE, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, New York, 1961, 215. See also M. LANDMAN, *Philosophical Anthropology*, Philadelphia 1969, 167.

<sup>75</sup> NIETZSCHE, *Zarathustra*, 215. See LANDMAN, 167.

<sup>76</sup> W. DILTHEY, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. VIII, Stuttgart 1968, 166.

man is an unfixed, unstable essence. And what he will eventually become will be decided by history.<sup>77</sup>

Of the three historicist philosophers, Bergson enunciates the most comprehensive philosophy of becoming. He goes to the heart of the issue and attacks the very concept of substance. “Matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming. It makes or it unmakes itself, but it is never something made.”<sup>78</sup> Consequently, man is not—indeed cannot be—a substance with a fixed essence. “There is only change, but nothing which changes; change needs no support; movement does not imply anything that moves.”<sup>79</sup> Man’s nature, then, must be in flux, i.e., in a perpetual state of becoming.

The historicist philosophers, then, are united in their belief that human nature is a fluid, evolving reality. But would St. Thomas agree? Is there anything in his doctrine of human nature, either in whole or in part, which would support such a claim? And if not, how would he answer their arguments? It is the purpose of this chapter to resolve these issues.

## **2. Substance and Accident Defined.**

The answer to the above questions lies in St. Thomas’ doctrine of substance and accident. It therefore remains to define these terms and to explain their relationship to the Thomistic teaching on human nature.

### **a) Substance**

A natural substance (as opposed to an intellectual substance, i.e. an angel) is a being—composed of matter and form<sup>80</sup>—that exists by virtue of its own act of existence.<sup>81</sup> St. Thomas defines the term in the *Summa Contra Gentiles* as “a thing to which it belongs to be not in a subject...that which has a quiddity to which it belongs to be not in another.”<sup>82</sup> And in another place he states that the term substance “signifies an essence that

---

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> H. BERGSON, *Creative Evolution*, New York, 1911, 272.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>80</sup> *De ente*, ch. 2.

<sup>81</sup> *De anima*, q. 1, ad 1.

<sup>82</sup> “Quod substantia sit *res cui conveniat esse non in subiecto*; . . . quod habeat quidditatem cui conveniat esse non in alio.” (*SCG I*, ch. 25).

has the property of existing in this way—namely, of existing of itself.”<sup>83</sup> We might therefore be justified in concluding that a substance is that which exists *per se*, i.e. a being *simpliciter*.<sup>84</sup>

But to draw such a conclusion would not be entirely correct because St. Thomas makes the distinction between a substance and its existence. In other words, he says that a substance is not existence *per se*.

To exist *per se* is not the definition of substance; because by this we do not manifest its quiddity, but its existence; and (in a creature) its quiddity is not its existence; otherwise substance could not be a genus because existence cannot be common by way of genus, since each of those contained under a genus differs according to existence<sup>85</sup>

The above definition of substance is much more complete and developed than the more familiar “existence *per se*.” Gilson, appropriately, tells us why: “that alleged definition does not point out the quiddity of the thing, but its *esse* which, in finite beings, is not their quiddity. Now where there is no quiddity, there is no thing that subsists, no substance.”<sup>86</sup> Substance according to St. Thomas, then, can be provisionally defined as “a thing having a quiddity to which it is due to be in itself and not in something else.”<sup>87</sup> (It should be noted here that because substance is a supreme genus no precise definition can be formulated for it. The one that has been conceived is, at best a “quasi-definition”).<sup>88</sup>

Taking all the above into consideration, then, we can conclude that man is a substance because he has an essence— that of rational animality—which is actuated by an act of existence.<sup>89</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> “...significat essentiam cui competit sic esse, idest per se esse.” (*ST I*, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1).

<sup>84</sup> *ST I-II*, q. 17, a. 4c.

<sup>85</sup> “Per se existere non est definitio substantiae; quia per hoc non demonstratur quidditas ejus, sed esse ejus. Et sua quidditas non est suum esse; alias non posset esse genus, quia esse non potest esse commune per modum generis, cum singula contenta in genere differant secundum esse.” (*In IV Scriptum Super Sententis*, d. 12, q. a. 1).

<sup>86</sup> E. GILSON, “*Quasi Definitio Substantiae*” in *St. Thomas Aquinas 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, ed. by A. Maurer, Toronto 1974, 122.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>89</sup> GILSON, *Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas*, n. 4, 445.

## b) Accident

An accident is an essence to whose nature it belongs to be in or to modify a substance. St. Thomas explains:

(1) It belongs to the quiddity or essence of accident to have existence in a subject<sup>90</sup>

(2) An accident is a thing to the nature of which it belongs to be in another.<sup>91</sup>

(3) ...to be in a subject is not the definition of accident, but on the contrary (accident is) a thing to which is due 'to be' in another; and this is never separated from any accident, nor can it ever be separated; because to that thing which is an accident it is always due according to its quiddity to be in another.<sup>92</sup>

An accident, then, is an imperfect, incomplete being which cannot subsist by its own power: to exist it requires the presence of a substance. Hence it is often referred to -in order to underscore its secondary, dependent status- as a being of a being (*ens entis*) and as a being *secundum quid*.<sup>93</sup>

We have learned from the above that, taken in a strict sense, an accident is merely a being of a being. It cannot exist apart from a substance. But despite this fact, there is a sense, however, in which an accident can be called a being. Why? Because it can modify the manner in which a substance exercises its powers. "...accidents are described as beings, because by them a substance is qualified or quantified, but not as though by them it is simply, as it is by its substantial form."<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>90</sup> "Quidditati autem sive essentiae accidentis competit habere esse in subiecto." (*ST* III, q. 77, a. 1, ad 2).

<sup>91</sup> "Accidens vero est res, cuius naturae debetur esse in alio." (*Quaestiones Quodlibetales* IX, q. 3, a. 1, ad 2).

<sup>92</sup> "...esse in subiecto non est definitio accidentis, sed e contrario res cui debetur esse in alio. Et hoc numquam separatur ab aliquo accidente, nec separari potest; quia illi rei quae est accidens, secundum rationem suae quidditatis, semper debetur esse in alio." (*In IV Sent.*, d. 12, q. 1, a. 1).

<sup>93</sup> See R. McCALL, "Substance" in: *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Washington, D.C. 1967, vol. 13, 74.

<sup>94</sup> "...accidentia dicuntur entia, qua substantia eis est vel qualis vel quanta, non quod eis sit simpliciter sicut per formam substantialem." (*Quaestiones disputatae De potentia*, q. 3, a. 8c).

To sum up, then: an accident is a being of a being. It exists in—and modifies a substance. Though in itself it has no distinct *esse*, it is partly because of its presence that a substance exists in a certain way.<sup>95</sup>

### c) Kinds of accidents

According to St. Thomas accidents may be classified into three different groups, namely, proper, inseparable, and separable. He sets forth his reasons for this division in q. 12, ad 7, of the *Quaestiones disputatae De anima*.

There are three genera of accidents. Some accidents are caused by the principles of the species and are called proper accidents, as ‘risible’ for human beings. Other accidents are caused by the principles of an individual, and these are of two kinds. For either they have a cause that permanently resides in the subject, and these are inseparable accidents, for example, ‘masculine,’ ‘feminine’ and other accidents of this kind; or they have a cause which does not reside permanently in the subject, and these are separable accidents, for example, sitting and walking.<sup>96</sup>

The important thing to note here is that all the accidents described above are, as Fr. Wipfel points out, “caused in some way by principles which are intrinsic to their receiving subject.”<sup>97</sup> This applies not only to proper accidents, which are caused by the principles of the species; but also to inseparable and separable accidents, which are caused by the principles of the individual. In each case, as he goes on to note, “these accidents inhere in their substantial subject. Therefore their subject serves as their receiving or material cause.”<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> For a discussion of this topic see J. Alberton’s article, “The *Esse* of Accidents” in: *Modern Schoolman* 4 (1953), 269; however, this point is disputed by interpreters of St. Thomas.

<sup>96</sup> “...tria sunt genera accidentium. Quaedam enim causantur ex principiis speciei et dicuntur propria, sicut risibile homini. Quaedam enim causantur ex principiis individui et hoc dupliciter, quia vel habent causam permanentem in subiecto, et haec sunt accidentia inseparabilia, sicut masculinum et femininum et alia hujusmodi; quaedam vero habent causam non permanentem in subiecto, et haec sunt accidentia separabilia, ut sedere et ambulare.” (*De anima*, art. 12, ad 7).

<sup>97</sup> J. WIPPEL, “Aquinas on Substance as a Cause of Proper Accidents” in: *Philosophie im Mittelalter. Entwicklungslinien und Paradigmen*, ed. J. Beckmann, Hamburg 1987, 205.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

Proper accidents include, principally, the powers of the soul. That is why risibility, which is a consequence of man's intellectual powers, must be considered an accident proper to the species. Consequently, if you are a man, then you must possess the capacity for laughter.<sup>99</sup>

Inseparable accidents are so called because, as Brown points out, "their subject cannot exist without them and remain what it is both generically and individually."<sup>100</sup> Hence they must always be joined to the individual.<sup>101</sup> If *per impossibile* they were separated—the individual would cease to be the same kind of individual. This is why, then, accidents such as sex cannot be removed from the subject.

Finally, there are separable accidents. These are accidents which *do not* have a permanent cause in their subject. Consequently, the subject can continue to exist once they have been separated from it.<sup>102</sup> St. Thomas uses instances from the predicamental category of position (sitting) and action (walking) to illustrate the manner in which this kind of accident can be realized. But we may also add the categories of quantity, quality, and passion to this list as well.

## **2. The Substantial Form: A Fluid or Stable Reality?**

The above discussion of substance and accident allows us to look at our original question—is human nature according to St. Thomas a static or evolving essence?—in a new light: Consequently, we can rephrase the question in more precise terms. It can now be put this way: could a change in an accident—or a combination of accidents—effectively change the nature of man? Or more specifically, could an accident enter into the very constitution of the substantial form and thereby transform the species into another of a different kind? For example, could man's intellect—a proper accident—be increased to such a degree that he would come to possess the wisdom and intelligence of an angel? Or, conversely, could his intellect be diminished to such an extent that his capacity to think and reason is lost?

St. Thomas does not tackle this problem directly. For the question of evolution simply did not exist in the thirteenth century. But he does,

---

<sup>99</sup> See BROWN, 92.

<sup>100</sup> BROWN, 29.

<sup>101</sup> See BROWN, 204.

<sup>102</sup> See BROWN, 93.

however, treat in detail the nature and properties of the substantial form. From his extensive writings on this subject we learn that an accident could effect a change of species, *if* the substantial form was unstable and divisible. In other words, if man's substantial form were "fluid"—i.e. unstable and divisible—then his nature would be subject to the vagaries of change and evolution.

But St. Thomas insists, as we will see, that man's substantial form *is* stable and indivisible. Hence it remains for us to examine the substantial form in light of these considerations.

### **a) The stability of the substantial form.**

Can a substantial form vary in degree either qualitatively or quantitatively? Can it be increased or diminished in any respect? St. Thomas answers in the negative to both of these questions. He adduces the following arguments to support his position.

To begin with, St. Thomas states in three places<sup>103</sup> that a substantial form is instantly—not gradually—produced. Because of this, he argues, there cannot be motion in the genus of substance,<sup>104</sup> like there can in the categories of quantity and quality. From this central point, he then reasons that no substantial form admits of more or less. These factors, when taken together, lead him to conclude that a substantial form does not vary in degree through change.<sup>105</sup>

The substantial form, therefore, must have a stable nature: it cannot vary in degree. In fact, it would be impossible for things to be otherwise.

---

<sup>103</sup>“Cum enim forma substantialis non continue vel successive in actum producatur, se instanti (alias oporteret esse motum in genere substantiae, sicut est in genere qualitatis) non potest esse quod illa virtus quae est a principio in semine, successive proficiat ad diversos gradus animae.” (*De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 9, ad 9). “Secunda pars divisionis praedictae esse non potest; quia secundum hoc sequeretur quod forma substantialis non subito sed successive in materia proveniret; et sic in substantia esset motus, sicut in quantitate et qualitate; quod est contra Philosophum;...et etiam formae substantiales reciperent magis et minus; quod est impossibile.” (*ibid.*, a. 12c). “Si enim sit aliqua forma quae recipiat magis et minus, successive acquiritur subiecto, sicut sanitas. Et ideo quia forma substantialis non recipit magis et minus, inde est quod subito fit eius introductio in materia.” (*ST III*, q. 75, a. 7c). For a discussion of this topic see BROWN, 171-172.

<sup>104</sup>See again *De pot.*, q. 3, a. 9, ad 9.

<sup>105</sup>See BROWN, 172.

Why? Because if the substantial form *did* vary in degree, then every time a new perfection was added to it a new species would be produced.<sup>106</sup>

...no substantial form is susceptible of more or less; but addition of greater perfection constitutes another species, just as the addition of unity constitutes another species of number. Now it is not possible for the same identical form to belong to different species.<sup>107</sup>

Variance in degree in a substantial form is therefore clearly impossible. Hence it must have a determinate nature, i.e., it must be “fixed,” “stable,” and “indivisible.”

...that in respect of which a thing receives its species must be something fixed and stable, and as it were indivisible: for whatever attains to that thing, is contained under the species, and whatever recedes from it more or less, belongs to another species, more or less perfect. Wherefore the Philosopher says that species of things are like numbers, in which addition or subtraction changes the species. If, therefore, a form, or anything at all, receives its specific nature in respect of itself, or in respect of something belonging to it, it is necessary that, considered in itself, it be something of a determinate nature, which can be neither more nor less.<sup>108</sup>

Since a substance receives its species from its substantial form, we can therefore say that the hallmarks of the substantial form must be those of *fixity*, *stability*, and *indivisibility*. These, then, are the properties which preserve man’s nature from the condition of flux, i.e. they guarantee that change will occur within certain fixed limits.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup>See *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup>“...nulla forma substantialis recipit magis et minus; sed superadditio maioris perfectionis facit aliam speciem, sicut additio unitatis facit aliam speciem in numeris. Non est autem possibile ut una et eadem forma numero sit diversarum specierum.” (*ST I*, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2).

<sup>108</sup>“...considerandum est quod illud secundum quod sortitur aliquid speciem, oportet esse fixum et stans\* et quasi indivisibile; quaecumque enim ad illud attingunt, sub specie continentur; quaecumque autem recedunt ab illo, vel in plus vel in minus, pertinent ad aliam speciem, vel perfectiorem vel imperfectiorem. Unde Philosophus dicit, in VIII *Met.*, quod ‘species rerum sunt sicut numeri,’ in quibus additio vel diminutio variat speciem. Si igitur aliqua forma, vel quaecumque res, secundum seipsam vel secundum aliquid sui, sortiatur rationem speciei; necesse est quod secundum se considerata, habeat determinatam\* rationem, quae neque in plus excedere, neque in minus deficere possit.” (*ST I-II*, q. 52, a. 1c).

<sup>109</sup>See BROWN, 173.

## b) The indivisibility of the substantial form.

In the above text, St. Thomas mentions in passing that the substantial form is indivisible. Unfortunately, though, he does not provide us with an explicit argument to support this claim. Hence it remains to examine those texts where his doctrine is more fully enunciated.

In the following text, his teaching is set forth in some detail.

...the substantial being of each thing consists in something indivisible, and every addition or subtraction varies the species, just as in numbers, as stated in VIII *Met.*; and consequently it is impossible for any substantial form to receive *more* and *less*.<sup>110</sup>

We learn here that the substantial form is indivisible in itself because substantial being itself is indivisible. This fact accounts for the substantial form's stability, i.e. its inability to vary in degree. Consequently, the substance itself cannot be changed in species when it receives an accidental form.<sup>111</sup>

Additional evidence for the substantial form's indivisibility can be found when we examine its relationship to its subject. When we do this, we first find that the subject participates—indivisibly—in the substantial form. “...that from which a thing receives its species must remain indivisibly fixed and constant in something indivisible. Wherefore in two ways it may happen that a form cannot be participated more or less. First because the participator has its species in respect of that form...”<sup>112</sup> Secondly, we find that the substantial form *inheres*—indivisibly—in the subject. “...because of the relationship of the form to its subject: it inheres in its subject in an indivisible way.”<sup>113</sup>

The point St. Thomas is making in these two texts is that if a participant were to vary, then the species itself would be changed. The first

---

<sup>110</sup>“Nam esse substantiale cuiuslibet rei in indivisibili consistit; et omnis additio et subtractio variat speciem, sicut in numeris, ut dicitur in VIII *Met.* Unde impossibile est quod forma substantialis quaecumque recipiat magis et minus.” (*ST I*, q. 76, a. 4).

<sup>111</sup> See BROWN, 173.

<sup>112</sup>“...id a quo aliquid habet speciem, oportet manere fixum et stans in indivisibili. Duobus igitur modis potest contingere quod forma non participatur secundum magis et minus. Uno modo quia participans habet speciem secundum ipsam.” (*ST I-II*, q. 52, a. 1c).

<sup>113</sup>“...ex comparatione formae ad subiectum; quia inhaeret ei modo indivisibili.” (*S. Thomae Aquinatis Quaestiones Disputatae De Virtutibus in Communi*).

text stresses that a substantial form is indivisible both in itself and in the manner by which it participates in its subject. And the second stresses that it is the inherence of the form itself which is indivisible.<sup>114</sup>

### **3. Relationship of Substance and Accident.**

From what has been said it is obvious that the nature of man is immutable. Yet man does change: he grows in height and weight; he increases in virtue (or vice); he gains (or loses) knowledge. All of this happens, but a man still remains a man. His nature does not change when an accidental form is joined to or removed from his substantial form. How, then, can we explain this process of nonessential change, i.e. this interaction of the substantial with the accidental forms?

#### **a) The transforming power of accidents.**

To answer this question, however, we must first explain the sense in which an accident is a form. (For according to St. Thomas all accidents are a kind of form.) He observes, first of all, that an accident is related to its subject as act to potency; therefore, he reasons, it resembles a form because it makes the subject “to be actual according to an accidental being.”<sup>115</sup> Further, he maintains an accident is like a form in that it is related to its substantial being as form is to matter.<sup>116</sup>

An accident, then, can operate as a form. And what is more, because it has this property it can also function as an act. St. Thomas explains: “The character of a form is in sharp contrast to the character of a subject: for every form, as such, is an act, whereas every subject is related to that of which it is the subject, as a potency is related to an act.”<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> See BROWN, 174-175.

<sup>115</sup> “...esse actu secundum esse accidentale.” (*SCG I*, ch. 23).

<sup>116</sup> “Forma autem illa potest a materia aliqua abstrahi, cuius ratio essentiae non dependet a tali materia. Ab illa autem materia non potest forma abstrahi per intellectum, a qua secundum suae essentiae rationem dependet. Unde cum omnia accidentia comparentur ad substantiam subiectam sicut forma ad materiam et cuiuslibet accidentis ratio dependeat ad substantiam, impossibile est aliquam talem, formam a substantia separari. Sed accidentia superveniunt substantiae quodam ordine. Nam primo advenit ei quantitas, deinde qualitas, deinde passiones et motus.” (*Exposition Super Librum Boethii De Trinitate, q. V a. 3c*).

<sup>117</sup> “Ratio formae opponitur rationi subiecti. Nam omnis forma, in quantum huiusmodi, est actus; omne autem subiectum comparatur ad id cuius est subiectum, ut potentia ad actum.” (*De spirit. creat.*, a. 1).

An accident, therefore, functions as both form *and* act. Knowledge of this fact is of essential importance for a correct understanding of the way in which an accident can affect a subject. Why? Because these properties—that of form and act—enable an accident to act as a formal cause with respect to its subject.<sup>118</sup> Hence it can modify the qualities of the subject. St. Thomas describes how this is done in his discussion of how grace acts on the soul.

Something is said *to act* in two ways: formally as whiteness makes a wall white; and in this way an accident can act upon its subject, and so grace acts upon the soul...In another way, by way of efficient causality, as a painter makes a wall white; and in this way neither grace nor any accident acts upon its own subject.<sup>119</sup>

An accidental form, then, because it operates as form and act can cause the subject to exist in new and different ways.<sup>120</sup> In other words, it introduces, as Brown points out, “a distinct actuality into the subject.”<sup>121</sup> Hence a man is affected each time an accidental form is joined to or removed from his substantial form.

An accidental form, therefore, can modify the way a substance exercises its powers. But it cannot—it must be stressed—change the essence of a substance. The joining of an accidental form to a substance produces only an accidental union, i.e. an *unum per accidens*—not a new essence, i.e. an *unum per se*. For an *unum per se*, according to St. Thomas, results only when matter and form are joined together in a substantial union. He explains:

As substantial being results from form and matter when they come together, so accidental being results from an accident and a subject when the former comes to the latter....From their union results that being in which the reality subsists in itself, and from them is produced something essentially one. An essence, therefore, results from their union....So the accident and its subject do not produce something essentially, but accidentally, one. This

---

<sup>118</sup>See BROWN, 149.

<sup>119</sup>“...agere aliquid dicitur dupliciter: scilicet formaliter, sicut albedo facit album parietem, et hoc modo accidens in subjectum agere potest, et sic gratia in animam agit,... alio modo effective, sicut pictor parietem album facit, et hoc modo nec gratia nec aliquod accidens in subjectum suum agit.” (*In II Sent.*, d. 26, q. 1, a. 3, ad 4) .

<sup>120</sup>See BROWN, 156.

<sup>121</sup>BROWN, 156.

explains why their union does not result in an essence, like the conjunction of form and matter.<sup>122</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that an accidental form when joined to a subject does not have the power to create a new essence: it can only, as we have seen, modify an existing one. To illustrate: I may, through an increase in the virtues, gain in wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; but this fact does not essentially change my human nature.<sup>123</sup> I am still a man, though I may have become a better one.

## **b) The intension and remission of accidental forms**

In addition to the manner outlined above, nonessential change in man can be explained in terms of the intension and remission –i.e. the increase or decrease–of certain kinds of accidental forms in the subject. St. Thomas maintains that some of these forms have an essence which in itself is divisible; hence, he reasons, they can be increased or decreased in a subject.

As a case in point, St. Thomas examines the way in which the accidental-forms known as the infused virtues can be intensified in a subject. Writing in the *De Virtutibus in Communi* he explains how a man can receive an increase in the actuality of charity and the other infused virtues:

But neither of those causes is in charity and the other infused virtues whereby they could not be intensified or remitted, because neither does their notion consist in something indivisible, nor do they give substantial *being* to their subject, as substantial forms do. Therefore they are intensified and remitted, insofar as their subject is reduced more to the act of these forms by the action of the agent causing them.<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup>“Sed sicut ex forma et materia relinquitur esse substantiale quando componuntur, ita ex accidente et subiecto relinquitur esse accidentale quando accidens subiecto aduenit... Ex coniunctione utriusque relinquitur illud esse in quo res per se subsistit, et ex eis efficitur unum per se: propter quod ex coniunctione eorum relinquitur essentia quedam...Unde ex accidente et subiecto non efficitur unum per se sed unum per accidens. Et ideo ex eorum coniunctione non resultat essentia quaedam sicut ex coniunctione forme ad materiam.” (*De ente*, ch. 6).

<sup>123</sup>Cf. ALBERTSON, 278.

<sup>124</sup>“Neutrum autem istarum causarum est in caritate et in aliis virtutibus infusis, quare non intenduntur et remittantur; quia neque earum ratio in indivisibili consistit, sicut ratio numeri; neque dant esse substantiale subiecto, sicut formae substantiales; et ideo intenduntur et remittuntur, in quantum subiectum reducitur magis in actum ipsarum per actionem agentis causantis eas.” (*De virt. in comm.*, a, 11c).

Some accidental forms, then—such as the infused virtues—can be intensified or remitted in a man because (1) their essence is divisible, and (2) they do not give substantial being to their subject.<sup>125</sup>

At this point, we must stress the fact that an increase in the actuality of an accidental form does not result in a corresponding increase in the actuality of the substantial form. Why? Because, as we mentioned earlier, the substantial form is indivisible; it cannot vary in degree. Consequently, a man cannot be changed in species when he receives an increase in an accidental form. For example, a man may increase in height and weight, but this fact will not make him more “man.”<sup>126</sup>

### c) The bestowal of being

Finally, nonessential change in man can be explained in terms of being: namely, the being given by the substantial and accidental forms to the composite.

St. Thomas maintains that the substantial form gives being absolutely to the composite. Hence, he reasons, any form subsequently united to it must be accidental. “...the substantial form makes a thing to be, not in this or that way, but simply, and establishes this or that thing in the genus of substance.”<sup>127</sup> And again: “Now it is obvious that any substantial form, whatever it may be, makes a being actual and is a constituent thereof; and hence it follows that only the first form which comes to matter is substantial, whereas all those that come later are accidental.”<sup>128</sup>

From the above we learn that man receives his existence directly and absolutely from his substantial form. But it must be noted, however, that what he receives is not *esse tantum*, i.e. being with qualification—but *esse simpliciter*. Now by *esse simpliciter* St. Thomas means being which is limited by an essence. In man, for example, it is *esse homo*, i.e. to be man. An accidental form, on the other hand, does not make a man to be

---

<sup>125</sup>See Brown, 180.

<sup>126</sup>Cf. BROWN, 180-182.

<sup>127</sup>“Forma substantialis faciat esse non solum secundum quid, sed simpliciter, et constituat hoc aliquid in genere substantiae.” (*De pot.*, q. 3, a. 9, ad 9).

<sup>128</sup>“Manifestum est autem quod quaelibet forma substantialis quaecumque sit, facit ens actu, et constituit; unde sequitur quod sola prima forma quae advenit materiae sit substantialis, omnes vero subsequenter advenientes sint accidentales.” (*De spirit. creat.*, a. 3c).

absolutely but only in a respect. It does this by inhering in the subject as a secondary act.<sup>129</sup>

The point of all this is that since the substantial form makes a thing to be absolutely, an accidental form can affect it only secondarily. This fact is brought out sharply in the following text.

Now it is the nature of a substantial form to give to matter its existence without qualification. For the form is that through which a thing is the very thing that it is; through accidental forms a thing does not possess unqualified existence, but only qualified existence, for example to exist as large, or colored, or something of this kind. Therefore, if there is a form which does not give unqualified existence to matter but which accrues to matter that is already actually existing through another form, then such a form will not be a substantial form.<sup>130</sup>

The preceding text insinuates clearly that the substantial form is a limited and determined entity. More specifically, it suggests that the substantial form is an act which, from the very first moment of its existence, is “sealed off,” so to speak, from further changes and determinations.<sup>131</sup> Because of this, accidental forms, i.e. forms which are “extraneous to the essence of its possessor,”<sup>132</sup> can only modify a substance; they cannot penetrate into the core of the substantial form and effect substantial change or a change in species.

To sum up quickly, then, a very complicated discussion: a man is a man because he receives substantial being—absolutely—from his substantial

---

<sup>129</sup>See BROWN 158 for a detailed explanation of the distinction between *esse tantum* and *esse simpliciter*.

<sup>130</sup>“Est autem hoc proprium formae substantialis quod det materiae esse simpliciter. Ipsa enim est per quam res est hoc ipsum quod est; non autem per formas accidentales habet esse simpliciter, sed esse secundum quod, puta esse magnum vel coloratum vel aliquid tale. Si qua igitur forma est quae non det materiae esse simpliciter sed adveniat materiae jam existenti in actu per aliquam formam, non erit forma substantialis.” (*De anima*, a. 9c). “...quod ex quo id quod est, potest aliquid habere praeter suam essentiam, necesse est quod in eo consideretur duplex esse. Quia enim forma est principium essendi, necesse est quod secundum quamlibet formam habitam, habens aliquid esse dicatur. Si ergo forma illa non sit praeter essentiam habentis, sed constituat eius essentiam, ex eo quod habet talem formam, dicetur habens esse simpliciter, sicut homo, ex hoc quod habet animam rationalem. Si vero sit talis forma quae sit extranea ab essentia habentis eam, secundum illam formam non dicetur esse simpliciter, sed esse aliquid; sicut secundum albedinem homo dicitur esse albus.” (*In Boethii De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2).

<sup>131</sup>See BROWN, 155.

<sup>132</sup>“...extranea ab essentia habentis eam...” (*De Hebdomadibus*, lect. 2).

form. An accidental form can only determine the kind of man he will be—for example, large or colored—not whether he will be a man *per se*.

#### **4. Conclusion.**

We have found from our examination of St. Thomas' doctrine of substance and accident that human nature cannot evolve or change over time. However we have also learned that man's substantial being is not something static or inert. "Men" change, i.e. they develop their powers and potentialities. But "man", i.e. the essence of humanity (or human nature) does not. As Owens puts it, "the same individual man passes through the different stages of embryo, fetus, childhood, youth, maturity, and old age, changing in many ways in size, shape, color, activities, place, time, but remaining identical in substance."<sup>133</sup>

This apparent contradiction—that is, the fact that changeable men possess an unchanging essence—can be explained by the principles governing the relationships between substantial and accidental forms. The substantial form's stability insures that changes occur only within certain fixed limits; while the transforming and modifying power of accidental forms insures that changes, do, in fact, result.

Man's substantial form, therefore, might be conceived of as being in a certain sense "elastic." I mean by this that it can endure changes only, as Fontaine observes, "within a certain range, beyond which... a being of a new kind essentially different develops."<sup>134</sup> In other words, the substantial form of a man sets limits on his capacity for change and development. Hence "if a man has not an elephant's bulk, a giraffe's neck, and a cow's stupidity, it is due basically to his substance (as determined by the substantial form); and the same principle is responsible for the lack of angelic intuition and seraphic love."<sup>135</sup>

To sum up: human nature according to St. Thomas is neither a static Parmenidean essence, nor a Nietzschean not-yet-determined existent. Rather, it is a dynamic reality that allows—within certain specific limits—a wide variety of changes and developments to occur. Man, then, can be

---

<sup>133</sup>J. OWENS, *An Elementary Christian Metaphysics*, Milwaukee 1963, 155.

<sup>134</sup>R. FONTAINE, *Subsistent Accident in the Philosophy of St. Thomas and in his Predecessors*, Washington, D.C. 1950, 76.

<sup>135</sup>FONTAINE, 72.

come many things. But not all things, as the historicist philosophers would have us believe.

### III. HUMAN NATURE AND SELF-CREATION

#### 1. Introduction.

We have learned from the preceding chapter that human nature in itself cannot change or evolve. But is there a way in which man himself can change his nature? Can man by his own actions change the essence of his species? Or put another way, can man create himself?

The radical existentialists believe he can. Why? Because for them, neither God nor natures exist. As Sartre, their leading spokesman puts it, “there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it.”<sup>136</sup> This premise, then, is the basis for their dictum that “existence precedes essence.” But what does this mean? And what is the significance of such a claim for the philosophy of human nature? Sartre explains.

...if God does not exist there is at least one being whose existence comes before its essence, a being which exists before it can be defined by any conception of it. That being is man or, as Heidegger has it, the human reality. What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounter himself, surges up in the world—and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, because there is no God to have a conception of it. Man simply is. Not that he is simply what he conceives himself to be, but he is what he wills...Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself.<sup>137</sup>

Man, then, can in effect, play God—because God does not exist. And man can create himself in his own image—or any other image he so chooses because he does not have a nature.<sup>138</sup> He is what he is solely by virtue

---

<sup>136</sup> J.-P. SARTRE, *Existentialism and Humanism*, London 1948, 28. See also L. SWEENEY, *A Metaphysics of Authentic Existentialism*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 1964, 103.

<sup>137</sup> SARTRE, *Existentialism*, 27-28.

<sup>138</sup> “This selfcreation—the making of one’s essence from mere existence—is demanded of each of us because, according to existentialism, there is no single essence of humanity to which we may logically turn as standard or model for making ourselves this or so. And this is no single concept of humanity, because there is no God. For the concept of

of his actions, i.e. the choices he makes in concrete situations. Sartre highlights this theme in the following text.

He was free, free in every way, free to behave like a fool or a machine, free to accept, free to refuse, free to equivocate; to marry, give up the game, to drag his dead weight about him for years to come. He could do what he liked, no one had the right to advise him, there would be for him no Good or Evil unless he brought them into being. All around him things were gathered in a circle, expectant, impassive, and indicative of nothing. He was alone, without support from any quarter, condemned forever to be free.<sup>139</sup>

Freedom, then, is properly speaking man's essence. That is to say, 'to be for human reality, is,' as Desan points out, 'to act.'<sup>140</sup> In other words, "it is not: first to be and then to act, but to be means to act."<sup>141</sup> Hence existence must therefore, according Sartrean logic, precede essence.<sup>142</sup>

Letroquer summarizes well the above doctrine: "Man is not what he is obliged to be by the eternal and irrevocable *fiat* of an essence: he is what he has determined to be. Man, his destiny in the world are subject to the decision of the ego."<sup>143</sup>

## **2. Human Nature and Creation.**

According to St. Thomas, can man in any sense of the word be said to "create" himself? At first glance, the answer to this question would appear to be decidedly negative. For St. Thomas says that only God can perform the act of creation: only God can create being. "Since to create is to produce being from nothing pre-existing it follows that this act

---

human nature, Sartre believes was a by-product of the traditional idea of God the maker: and so when God dies, the notion of an essence of humanity dies with him, leaving him just these particular histories of these particular selves 'to live themselves subjectively' as best they can." (M. GRENE, *Dreadful Freedom: A Critique of Existentialism*, Chicago 1948, 41-42).

<sup>139</sup>J.-P. SARTRE, *The Age of Reason*; cited by W. DESAN in *The Tragic Finale: The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* New York 1960, n. 12, 99-100.

<sup>140</sup>DESAN, 105.

<sup>141</sup>Ibid.

<sup>142</sup>"The basis of this reasoning is Sartre's contention that existence precedes essence, meaning that mankind is nothing else but what the individual man makes it to be. There is no universal essence or nature according to which man might pattern his actions and conduct. There is no abstract God to conceive it." (J. MIHALICH, *Existentialism and Thomism*, New York 1960, 15).

<sup>143</sup>R. LETROQUER, *What is Man?*, New York 1961, 58.

is exclusively God's own."<sup>144</sup> Arguing from this point he writes in the *Summa Theologiae* that

...to create can be the proper action of God alone. For the more universal effects must be reduced to the more universal and prior causes. Now among all the effects the most universal is being (*esse*) itself: and hence it must be the proper effect of the first and most universal cause, and that is God. Hence also it is said (*De Causis*, prop. iii) that 'neither (the) intelligence nor the noble soul gives being (*esse*), except inasmuch as it works by divine operation.'<sup>145</sup>

Continuing in this same vein, St. Thomas argues in the *Summa contra gentiles* that it is philosophically and physically impossible for man to create his nature. Why? Because if man could do so he would then be the cause of himself—which is an absurd concept. St. Thomas explains:

Again, whatever is caused as regards some particular nature cannot be the first cause of that nature, but only a second and instrumental cause; for example, since the human nature (*humanitatis*) of Socrates has a cause, *he cannot be the first cause of human nature; if so, since his human nature (humanitas) is caused by someone, it would follow that he was the cause of himself*, since he is what he is by virtue of human nature. Thus a univocal generating principle must have the status of an instrumental agent in respect to that which is the primary cause of the whole species. Accordingly, all lower efficient causes must be referred to higher ones, as instrumental to principal agents.<sup>146</sup>

The evidence from the above texts would seem to suggest that man lacks the power to produce existence in any way, shape, or form. But is

---

<sup>144</sup>“Cum igitur producere ens non ex ente praeexistente sit creare, oportet quod solius Dei sit creare.” (*SCG* II, ch. 21).

<sup>145</sup>“...creare non potest esse propria actio nisi solius Dei.\* Oportet enim universales effectus in universales et priores causas reducere. Inter omnes autem effectus universalissimum est ipsum esse. Unde oportet quod sit proprius effectus primae et universalissimae causae, quae est Deus. Unde etiam dicitur libro *De Causis*, quod neque intelligentia vel ‘anima nobilis’ dat esse, nisi in quantum operatur ‘operatione divina.’” (*ST* I, q. 45, a. 5c).

<sup>146</sup>“Amplius. Quicquid est causatum secundum aliquam naturam, non potest esse prima causa illius naturae, sed secunda et instrumentalis. Socrates enim, quia habet suae humanitatis causam, non potest esse prima humanitatis causa: quia, cum humanitas sua sit ab aliquo causata, sequeretur quod esset sui ipsius causa, cum sit id quod est per humanitatem. Et ideo oportet quod generans univocum sit quasi agens instrumentale respectu eius quod est causa primaria totius speciei. Et inde est quod oportet omnes causas inferiores agentes reduci in causas superiores sicut instrumentales in primarias.” (*SCG* II, ch. 21).

this an accurate analysis? Gilson says that it is. He argues that only God possesses the power to create.

Creative power is... incompatible with the condition of a creature, for a creature does not possess being of itself and cannot confer an existence which does not belong to its essence. It can only act in virtue of the act-of-being which it has previously received. God, on the other hand, is being *per se* and can also cause being. He alone is being *per se*, and He alone can produce the very existence of other beings. To his unique mode of being there corresponds a unique method of causality. Creation is the action of God alone.<sup>147</sup>

Meehan and Fabro, however, interpret the texts differently. They hold that creatures can—acting both as univocal and instrumental agents—produce some determination of a pre-existing being, i.e. existence.

Meehan, first of all, points out that St. Thomas “is careful to issue the caveat that one is not to understand God’s operation in everything in such a manner as to deny all proper operation to creatures and thereby deny finite causality.”<sup>148</sup> Creatures, in fact, may even act as univocal causes in the production of existence. As he points out, St. Thomas maintains that “secondary agents produce as their proper effects, other perfections which determine existence.”<sup>149</sup>

He stresses here that “one consideration alone need detain us at this point, viz., the precise sense in which the perfections produced by secondary causes determine existence.”<sup>150</sup> The solution to this problem, he says, lies in a correct understanding of St. Thomas’ concept of *esse*. The important thing to notice, therefore, is that according to St. Thomas *esse* is not only the most indeterminate of things, but—paradoxically—also the most perfect.<sup>151</sup> But how can this be? He explains the paradox as follows:

---

<sup>147</sup>E. GILSON, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 123.

<sup>148</sup>F. MEEHAN, *Efficient Causality in Aristotle and St. Thomas*, Washington, D.C. 1940, 309. “Sic igitur intelligendum est Deum operari in rebus, quod tamen ipsae res propriam habeant operationem.” (Cf. *ST* I, q. 105, a. 5c); „Non ergo sic est intelligendum quod Deus in omni re naturali operetur, quasi res naturalis nihil operetur...” (*De pot.*, q. 3, a. 7); “Non ergo causalitas effectuum inferiorum est ita attribuenda divinae virtuti quod subtrahatur causalitas inferiorum agentium.” (*SCG* III, ch. 69).

<sup>149</sup>MEEHAN, 323; cf. *SCG* III, ch. 66.

<sup>150</sup>MEEHAN, 323.

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 324.

Existence (according to St. Thomas) is the first and most indeterminate thing in every effect precisely because it is the most perfect. It is a simple perfection, in fact, ‘the perfection of perfections’, connoting in itself no limitation, incapable of being actuated by any other act or actuality, itself, ‘the actuality of all things.’ Consequently any limitations or determinations it may actually have are not from another and formal cause, but rather from the potency or the recipient which it formally actualizes.<sup>152</sup>

From the above he concludes that “the proper effects of secondary causes determine existence in the same way that the secondary causes, themselves, determine the action of the prime cause, viz., as recipients of a more formal perfection.”<sup>153</sup> In other words, creatures can produce existence univocally because “God has remotely conferred upon the finite agent determinate powers of operation, and proximately and mediately conjoins those powers to their proper effects by a determinate motion that is proportioned to their potentiality as well as to the effect that is to be produced.”<sup>154</sup>

The following argument from the *Summa contra gentiles*, Meehan maintains, supports this interpretation.

It is also evident that, though a natural thing produces its proper effect, it is not superfluous for God to produce it, since the natural thing does not produce it except by divine power. Nor is it superfluous, even if God can by Himself produce all natural effects, for them to be produced by certain other causes. For this is not a result of the inadequacy of divine power, but of the immensity of His goodness whereby He has willed to communicate His likeness to things, not only so that they might exist, but also that they

---

<sup>152</sup>Ibid. “...hoc quod dico esse est inter omnia perfectissimum: quod ex hoc patet quia actus est semper perfectio potentia. Quaelibet autem forma signata non intelligitur in actu nisi per hoc quod esse ponitur. Nam humanitas vel igitas potest considerari ut in potentia materiae existens, vel ut in virtute agentis, aut etiam ut in intellectu: sed hoc quod habet esse, efficitur actu existens. Unde patet quod hoc quod dico esse est actualitas omnium actuum et propter hoc est perfectio omnium perfectionum. Nec intelligendum est, quod ei quod dico esse, aliquid addatur quod sit eo formalius, ipsum determinans, sicut actus potentiam: esse enim quod huiusmodi est, est aliud secundum essentiam ab eo cui additur determinandum. Nihil autem potest addi ad esse quod sit extraneum ab ipso, cum ab eo nihil sit extraneum nisi non-ens, quod non potest esse nec forma nec materia. Unde non sic determinatur esse per aliud sicut potentia per actum, sed magis sicut actus per potentiam.” (*De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 9).

<sup>153</sup>MEEHAN, 325.

<sup>154</sup>MEEHAN, 326-327.

might be causes for other things. Indeed, all creatures generally attain the divine likeness in these two ways, as we showed above.<sup>155</sup>

Thus does St. Thomas “vindicate creature causality,”<sup>156</sup> as Meehan puts it. Moreover, St. Thomas has, as Meehan goes on to say, “without apparent sacrifice of principle or common sense realism,... steered a middle course giving honor to the divine causality without belittling creature-action, doing justice to God’s universal determination without being constrained to scrap liberty and imputability.”<sup>157</sup> In short, St. Thomas demonstrates that creatures can produce existence as univocal agents.

Additionally, argues Meehan, St. Thomas teaches that creatures can produce existence as instrumental agents.

But before we go any further, what does St. Thomas mean by an instrumental agent? Meehan insists that the term should be taken “in its more common acceptation so that it applies to anything that moves another by being moved, and thereby attains an effect beyond its own powers. Thus living beings and even free beings may be said to be instruments of God.”<sup>158</sup>

Creatures, then, can act as instrumental agents or causes. But why can they produce existence? They can produce it because they have, in effect, “been vouchsafed a part”<sup>159</sup> of the divine causality by God. Consequently,

they exercise a twofold causality—one that is instrumental in the sense that they attain to the effect that is proper to God, viz., the existence of the being that issues from their joint though hierarchic activity, another that is

---

<sup>155</sup>“Patet etiam quod, etsi res naturalis producat proprium effectum, non est superfluum quod Deus illum producat: quia res naturalis non producit ipsum nisi virtute divina. Neque est superfluum, si Deus per seipsum potest omnes effectus naturales producere, quod per quasdam alias causas producantur. Non enim hoc est ex insufficientia divinae virtutis, sed ex immensitate bonitatis ipsius, per quam suam similitudinem rebus communicare voluit non solum quantum ad hoc quod essent, sed etiam quantum ad hoc quod aliorum causae essent: his enim duobus modis creaturae communiter omnes divinam similitudinem consequuntur.” (SCG III, ch. 70).

<sup>156</sup>MEEHAN, 328.

<sup>157</sup>MEEHAN, 328-329.

<sup>158</sup>MEEHAN, 294; cf. *De Ver.*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 5.

<sup>159</sup>MEEHAN, 318.

truly proper in the sense that by their proper virtues (necessarily, of course, applied by the prime cause), the existent is in some way determined.<sup>160</sup>

St. Thomas explains this relationship of God's power and the instrumental activity of creatures as follows.

...being is the proper product of the primary agent, and all other things produce being because they act through the power of the primary agent. Now, secondary agents, which are like particularizers and determinants of the primary agent's action, produce as their proper effects other perfections which determine being.<sup>161</sup>

Based on the above, Meehan concludes that "secondary agents determine the nature of that existent which, *qua* existent, they produce as instruments of the divine action."<sup>162</sup>

Fabro also argues, as we mentioned above, that creatures can produce some degree of existence. In fact, he even asserts that they can, in a sense, cause *esse absolute*.<sup>163</sup> He bases this interpretation on an analysis of ST I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1.

He begins his analysis by first noting how St. Thomas justifies the causality of an individual substantial form.

A perfect thing participating any nature, makes a likeness to itself, not by absolutely producing that nature, but by applying it to something else. For an individual man cannot be the cause of human nature absolutely, because he would then be the cause of himself; but he is the cause of human nature being in the man begotten; and thus he presupposes in his action a determinate matter whereby he is an individual man.<sup>164</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup>MEEHAN, 318.

<sup>161</sup>"...esse est proprius effectus primi agentis, et omnia alia agunt ipsum in quantum agunt in virtute primi agentis. Secunda autem agentia, quae sunt quasi particulantes et determinantes actionem primi agentis, agunt sicut proprios effectus alias perfectiones, quae determinant esse." (SCG III, ch. 66).

<sup>162</sup> MEEHAN, 318.

<sup>163</sup>C. FABRO, *Participation et Causalité selon S. Thomas d'Aquin*, Louvain 1961, 378.

<sup>164</sup>"...aliquid perfectum, participans aliquam naturam facit sibi simile, non quidem producendo absolute illam naturam, sed applicando eam ad aliquid. Non enim hic homo potest esse causa naturae humanae absolute, quia sic esset causa sui ipsius; sed est causa quod natura humana sit in hoc homine generato. Et sic praesupponit in sua actione determinatam materiam, per quam est hic homo." (ST I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1).

But then he observes that according to St. Thomas creatures can cause *esse* only because they participate in the *esse* of God. That is to say “no created being can produce a being absolutely, except forasmuch as it causes being in this (individual)”<sup>165</sup> through participation in the divine nature.

This claim, he insists, is confirmed by St. Thomas’ doctrine of conservation as set forth in q. 104, a. 1 of the *Prima Pars*. In this well known article St. Thomas uses the example of the sun illuminating the air to illustrate his thesis. As he puts it, “being naturally results from the form of a creature, given the influence of the divine action, just as light results from the diaphanous nature of the air, given the action of the sun.”<sup>166</sup>

The point here is that just as the air becomes enlightened by sharing in the sun’s nature, so to do creatures communicate *esse* by participating in the nature of God. Consequently, if God’s power were withdrawn, creatures would be annihilated, just as the air becomes darkened when the sun’s rays are withdrawn. This shows us, Fabro says, that conservation does not imply a distinct action on the part of God, but simply the continuation of the creative act.<sup>167</sup> Hence we may conclude that creatures cause *esse* by virtue of their participation in the *esse* of God.

Further, Fabro goes on to say that creatures can, insofar as they act as “instruments” of God, cause *esse*. He reaches this conclusion by means of a detailed examination of q. 3, a. 7 of the *De potentia*.

To begin with, he notes that in the latter part of the article St. Thomas argues that all creatures are given the power to act by God. But he is quick to point out, however, that while on the one hand—God is the first cause of a creature’s action—on the other hand, the creature itself is a proper—but secondary cause—of that same action. In other words, the actions of creatu-

---

<sup>165</sup>“Nullum igitur ens creatum potest producere aliquod ens absolute, nisi in quantum esse causat in hoc...” (ST I, q. 45, a. 5, ad 1).

<sup>166</sup>“...esse per se consequitur formam creaturae, supposito tamen influxu Dei; sicut lumen sequitur diaphanum aeris, supposito influxu solis” (ST I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 1).

<sup>167</sup>“Il démontre comment la conservation ne comporte pas une action de la part de Dieu mais tout simplement la continuation de l’acte créateur.” (FABRO, 378); “Conservatio rerum a Deo non est per aliquam novam actionem, sed per continuationem actionis qua dat esse: quae quidem actio est sine motu et tempore; sicut etiam conservatio luminis in aere est per continuatum influxum a sole.” (ST I, q. 104, a. 1, ad 4).

res can in one sense be attributed to God as the first cause, and in another sense, be attributed to the creature itself as the secondary cause.<sup>168</sup>

Fabro concludes from this argument that there are, in effect, two kinds of causality: transcendental and predicamental. The first kind of causal influence is the “most efficacious, the most immediate, the most intimate, the first”<sup>169</sup> and is proper to God alone. It “constitutes.”<sup>170</sup> The second kind of cause is the immediate principle *ut quod* of a creature’s actions.<sup>171</sup> And it is constituted by the first cause. This means, then, that even though God acts in creatures, the creatures themselves have nevertheless been vouchsafed the power to act as secondary causes. Hence they can cause *esse* as instrumental agents.

The arguments of Meehan and Fabro, then, imply—over against the position of Gilson—that creatures can produce some degree of existence. However, this does not mean that creatures can, in the strict sense of the word “create.” On the contrary, as Meehan points out, creatures lack the potency required for such an act. Only God, as he insists, possesses this power. Only He, therefore, “can bridge the infinite chasm between non-being and being.”<sup>172</sup>

To sum up, then, creatures can, acting both as univocal and instrumental agents, produce some degree of being. But they cannot, however, create simple being. God alone can do that; God alone can perform the act of creation. Only His power, as Meehan elegantly expresses it, “is properly proportioned to so prime and universal an effect.”<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 7. See also J. Wippel’s analysis of this passage in “Divine Knowledge, Divine Power and Human Freedom in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent” in *Metaphysical Themes in Thomas Aquinas*, Washington, D.C. 1984, 259-60 and *Id.*, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas. From the Finite Being to Uncreated Being*, Washington, D.C. 2000, ch.XIII.

<sup>169</sup>“...’le plus efficace, le plus immediat, le plus intime, le premier’...” (FABRO, 402).

<sup>170</sup>“...on voit se construire deux plans de causalité immédiate, l’un prédicamental et l’autre transcendantal, le dernier constitue, le premier est constitué.” (FABRO, 402).

<sup>171</sup>“C’est le principe que si la substance prédicamentale est principe immédiat *ut quod* de l’agir...” (ibid.).

<sup>172</sup> MEEHAN, 282. Cf. *De pot.*, q. 3, a. 4c.

<sup>173</sup>MEEHAN, 280. Cf. *SCG* II, ch. 21; *De Pot.*, q. 3, a. 4c; *ST* I, q. 45, a. 5c; and *De substantiis separatis*.

### 3. *The Causal Efficacy of the Substantial Form.*

Man, as we have just shown, cannot create himself because he cannot cause being simply. But as we will see, man is, through the power exercised by his substantial form, the cause of his proper accidents. Since this causality is a kind of “creation,” it is necessary for us to examine St. Thomas’ writings on this subject.

To begin with, we learn that St. Thomas maintains that proper accidents are in a sense “created” by the principles of the subject.

A subject is related in different ways to the diverse accidents. *Now there are certain natural accidents which are created by the principles of the subject, and this takes place in two ways: either they are caused by the principles of the species, and thus are proper attributes which are consequent upon the entire species; or they are caused by the principles of the individual, and so they are the common accidents which are consequent upon the natural principles of the individual.*<sup>174</sup>

Elsewhere in this same text, St. Thomas goes on to state that, “*the subject is in a certain way the cause of all its accidents, insofar as the accidents are concretized in the being of their subject, yet not in such a way that all accidents are educed from the principles of their subject.*”<sup>175</sup>

This text tells us, then, the extent to which an accident is causally dependent on its subject. In point of fact, we learn here that an accident depends on its subject in much the same way as a creature depends on its creator.<sup>176</sup> But this does not mean, however, that St. Thomas wants to imply that a subject can “create” its accidents. On the contrary, his point is that the subject is a cause of being only insofar “as the accident is concretized in the being of the subject.” In other words, he does not maintain as Brown notes, “that the subject is the cause of the beginning to be, or the becoming of all its accidents.”<sup>177</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup> “...subjectum diversimode se habet ad diversa accidentia. Quaedam autem sunt accidentia naturalia quae creantur ex principiis subjecti; et hoc dupliciter: quia vel causantur ex principiis speciei, et sic sunt propriae passiones, quae consequuntur totam speciem; vel ex principiis individui, et sic sunt communia consequentia principia naturalia individua.” (*In I Sent.*, d. 17, q. 1, a. 2, ad 2m).

<sup>175</sup> “...subjectum est causa quodam modo, in quantum scilicet accidentia in esse subjecti substantificantur: non tamen ita quod ex principiis subjecti omnia accidentia educantur.” (*Ibid.*).

<sup>176</sup> See BROWN, 101.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

It is clear, therefore, that the subject cannot create being; it cannot create its nature.

#### **4. Emanation.**

In addition to the ways outlined above, proper accidents are produced by a process known as emanation. Since emanation also resembles creation it will be necessary for us to examine St. Thomas' doctrine on this important point.

What, then, is "emanation" according to St. Thomas? By emanation he means the way in which proper accidents "flow naturally and simultaneously from the actuation of the subject."<sup>178</sup> This "flowing forth" can be observed, St. Thomas says, by examining the relationship that exists between the soul and its powers.

Now it is evident from what has been said that the subject of the powers of the soul is either the soul itself alone, which can be the subject of an accident according as it has some potentiality,...or the composite. But the composite is actual through the soul. Hence it is clear that all the powers of the soul, whether their subject is the soul alone, or whether it is the composite, flow from the essence of the soul as from a principle, because it has already been said that an accident is caused by the subject according as it is in act, and received into it insofar as it is in potency.<sup>179</sup>

In emanation, then, the proper accidents are produced "not by any direct action, but as a kind of natural result of the production of the substance."<sup>180</sup> As St. Thomas goes on to say, "the emanation of the proper accidents from their subject is not by any transmutation, but by a certain

---

<sup>178</sup>C. KOSSEL, "The Principles of St. Thomas's Distinction Between the *Esse* and *Ratio* of Relation" in: *Modern Schoolman* 24 (1946-47), 94.

<sup>179</sup>"Manifestum est autem ex dictis quod potentialiarum animae subiectum est vel ipsa anima sola, quae potest esse subiectum accidentis secundum quod habet aliquid potentialitatis,...vel compositum. Compositum autem est in actu per animam. Unde manifestum est quod omnes potentiae animae, sive subiectum earum sit anima sola, sive compositum fluunt ab essentia animae sicut a principio; quia iam dictum est quod accidens causatur a subiecto secundum quod est in actu, et recipitur in eo in quantum est in potentia." (*ST* I, q. 77, a. 6c).

<sup>180</sup>J. LAURER, "The Determination of Substance by Accidents in the Philosophy of St. Thomas" in: *Modern Schoolman* 18 (1941), 34.

*natural resultance*; just as one thing naturally results from another, as color from light.”<sup>181</sup>

Now if we take all of the above into consideration, must we conclude that the emanation of proper accidents is creation? Brown, who has made an in-depth study of this issue, argues that it is not. He gives us three reasons to justify his position on this score. Firstly, he asserts that emanation does not involve any “transmutation.” That is to say, he maintains that it does not involve a temporal process whereby the subject univocally produces its accidents. Secondly, he says that emanation does not involve the production of new being. In other words, he insists that the subject lacks the capacity to create. And finally, he argues that emanation does not involve free choice in the production of accidents. More specifically, he holds that the substance itself must necessarily produce its proper accidents. It has, so to speak, no choice in the matter. That is why a man, for example, without the proper accidents of intellect and will, could not be said to be truly human.<sup>182</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that emanation cannot be considered as creation. But can a subject be considered as the efficient cause, not only of proper accidents, but of others as well? There is disagreement on this point of doctrine among several interpreters of St. Thomas.<sup>183</sup>

Kossel and Mullen, first of all, maintain outright that emanation cannot be considered as a “making,” i.e. as an efficient causation. Kossel holds that “the real efficient cause is (not the subject, but) the agent which makes the subject.”<sup>184</sup> Mullen concurs with this assessment. She holds that a substance produces its accidents by means of “secondary powers or faculties,”<sup>185</sup> rather than by emanation.

Sweeney, Montague, and John Wippel, however, see the matter differently. They each contend that emanation is a real efficient cause, but they differ on the degree of that causality.

---

<sup>181</sup>“Dicendum quod emanatio propriorum accidentium a subiecto non est per aliquam transmutationem; sed per aliquam naturalem resultationem, sicut ex uno naturaliter aliud resultat ut ex luce color.” (*ST I*, q. 77, a. 6, ad 3).

<sup>182</sup>See BROWN, 105-106.

<sup>183</sup>For a survey of this problem, see BROWN, n. 35, 136-138.

<sup>184</sup>KOSSEL, 94.

<sup>185</sup>MULLEN, 82.

Sweeney, alone among the three, insists that a substance efficiently causes *all* its accidents. This is effected, he says, through the operative powers of a substance's powers: for example, by the will which is the efficient cause of free choices, and the intellect which is the efficient cause of concepts. From these activities habits are formed, and the subject is thereby perfected and determined<sup>186</sup>

Montague and Wippel, on the other hand, hold that *only the proper accidents* are caused by emanation. For them emanation is a kind of active causality. Montague maintains that a substance is a "particular kind of act" which causes its powers.<sup>187</sup> While Wippel asserts that the subject may—because of the real distinction which exists between a substance's essence and its powers—be regarded as the efficient cause of those same powers.<sup>188</sup>

All things considered, then, can we call emanation "creation"? Yes, in a sense we can. Why? Because (1) emanation is a kind of active causality, as Montague and Wippel contend; and (2) because it effects a process of generation without transmutation or change, as Brown contends.<sup>189</sup> In these two ways emanation is, as Brown points out, "something like the creation of finite beings by the First Cause."<sup>190</sup> But it is unlike creation in several different and important ways, as Brown, Kossel, and Mullen have noted. The principal way, however, in which it differs from creation is this: creation involves the production of new being from no pre-existing subject, while emanation does not. Consequently, we must conclude that man cannot effect a creation of his nature *via* emanation.

## **5. Conclusion: Conservation and Causality.**<sup>191</sup>

As we have already seen,<sup>192</sup> man cannot operate as a completely autonomous agent, that is, as something independent of the governing power of God. Rather, all that man is and does is intimately connected with

---

<sup>186</sup>SWEENEY, 116.

<sup>187</sup>M. MONTAGUE, "Active Causality" in: *Proceedings of the Twenty-third Annual Convention of the Jesuit Philosophical Association* (April, 1962), 52.

<sup>188</sup>J. WIPPEL, "Thomas Aquinas on Substance", 211-212.

<sup>189</sup>See BROWN, 106.

<sup>190</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup>See *Ibid.*, 109-114.

<sup>192</sup>See above ch. III, 2.

the operations of the first cause. This fact is illustrated with particular poignancy in the following text.

For since an effect depends more upon the first cause than upon its secondary cause, God, who is the first cause of substance and accident, is able through his infinite power to conserve an accident in being (*esse*) after the removal of its substance, through which it was being conserved in being (*esse*) as by its proper cause, just as he can produce other effects of natural causes without the natural causes.<sup>193</sup>

God as the first cause, then, continuously acts on and in the substance, sustaining and preserving it in existence. Nevertheless, the substance is not—as might be expected—thereby rendered impotent. On the contrary, creatures are endowed with the power to operate as secondary causes. “...it is due to the power of the cause, that it bestows active power on its effect... We must therefore understand that God works in things in such a manner that things have their proper operation.”<sup>194</sup>

All in all, we see, then, that while man is dependent upon the first cause for his very existence; he is at the same time endowed with the power to operate as a secondary cause. Consequently, he can perform certain actions within a limited sphere of activity.

But it must always be borne in mind that man performs his actions at the pleasure of God, as it were. If God should choose to withdraw his conserving power, man would be instantly reduced to nothing.<sup>195</sup> Hence the absurdity of the position (i.e. that of the existentialists) that maintains that man is the sole arbiter and creator of his nature.

---

<sup>193</sup>“Cum enim effectus magis dependeat a causa prima quam a causa secunda, Deus, qui est prima causa substantiae et accidentis, per suam infinitam virtutem conservare potest in esse accidens, subtracta substantia per quam conservabatur in esse sicut per propriam causam; sicut etiam alios effectus naturalium causarum potest producere sine naturalibus causis” (*ST III*, q. 77, a. 1c; cf. WIPPEL, *The Metaphysical Thought*, VIII, 3).

<sup>194</sup>“... ex virtute enim agentis est, quod suo effectui det virtutem agendi... Sic igitur intelligendum est Deum operari in rebus, quod tamen ipsae res propriam habeant operationem.” (*ST I*, q. 105, a. 5c).

<sup>195</sup>*ST I*, q. 104, a. 1c.

## CONCLUSION

Many years ago T.S. Eliot wrote, with his typical perspicacity, that a wrong attitude towards nature implies, somewhere a wrong attitude towards God, and the consequence is inevitable doom. For a long enough time we have believed in nothing but the value arising in a mechanized way of life: it would be as well for us to face the permanent conditions upon which God allows us to live upon this planet.<sup>196</sup>

As I pointed out in the introduction, we are at present suffering from the effects of this mistaken attitude towards God and nature. And the result has been the widespread belief in the mutability of man and the concomitant formulation of pernicious plans to remake and coldly manipulate our human nature.

The writings of St. Thomas Aquinas, however, demonstrate that human nature is immutable; that it neither evolves over time, nor is created at will by man himself.

Matthew G. Hincks ORC

## Índice

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>160</b>
<b>I. ST. THOMAS' DOCTRINE OF HUMAN NATURE.....</b>	<b>161</b>
1. Introduction.....	161
2. The Substantial Union .....	162
3. The Soul.....	163
a) The soul as substantial form .....	163
b) The nature and functions of the soul as substantial form. ....	165
1) Form and matter as correlative. ....	165
2) Act of being. ....	166
3) The unity of the composite. ....	166

---

<sup>196</sup>T.S. ELIOT, "The Idea of a Christian Society" in: *The Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, New York 1975, 290.2

c) The unicity of the substantial form. ....	168
1) Theological arguments .....	169
2) Metaphysical arguments.....	169
3) Arguments from natural philosophy.....	170
4. The Body.....	172
5. Conclusion .....	174
<b>II. HUMAN NATURE AND EVOLUTION .....</b>	<b>174</b>
1. Introduction.....	174
2. Substance and Accident Defined.....	175
a) Substance.....	175
b) Accident.....	177
c) Kinds of accidents .....	178
2. The Substantial Form: A Fluid or Stable Reality? .....	179
a) The stability of the substantial form. ....	180
b) The indivisibility of the substantial form. ....	182
3. Relationship of Substance and Accident.....	183
a) The transforming power of accidents. ....	183
b) The intension and remission of accidental forms.....	185
c) The bestowal of being.....	186
4. Conclusion. ....	188
<b>III. HUMAN NATURE AND SELF-CREATION.....</b>	<b>189</b>
1. Introduction.....	189
2. Human Nature and Creation. ....	190
3. The Causal Efficacy of the Substantial Form. ....	198
4. Emanation. ....	199
5. Conclusion: Conservation and Causality. ....	201
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>203</b>