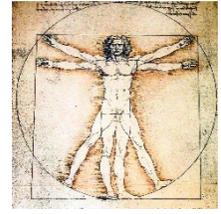




Aquinas 101: The Human Soul



Week 2: The Existence of the Soul

Basics of the Philosophy of Nature

- Aristotelian categories: initially logical, but deepened into divisions of reality in other works
- Substance and accident
- The nine accidents: quantity, quality, relation, time, place, position, possession, action, passion
- Conceptions of causality: Humean correlation vs. Aristotelian simultaneity
- The four Aristotelian causes: matter, form, efficient cause, and final cause
- Aristotle's scientific questions: Does it exist? What is it? What are its properties? What causes it?

Concept of Soul

- Greek *pneuma* and Latin *anima* refer to the breath of life: became common term for what is shared by living things, from plants to animals to humans. "What makes a living thing to be alive."
- Responsible for activities distinct to living things: nutrition, growth, sensation, and movement
- A principle of unity for each living thing; otherwise parts of soul would require another unity

Definition and Proof of the Soul

- The soul's category: it is a substance because we predicate properties and accidents of it.
- Substance can be a) matter b) form c) composite of matter and form.
- Soul is not the composite because it is a cause of it; not the matter because the body is subject.
- Substance is form and actuality; first act (possession of a thing) versus second act (use of a thing)
- Definition of soul: **the first act of a natural organized body.**
- Proof of definition as phrased by St. Thomas (*Commentary on the De anima* Bk II, 1, 3):
 - The **first principle of life** is the actuality and form of the living body.
 - But soul is **the first principle of life** in living things.
 - Therefore the soul is the actuality and form of the living body.

Relation of Body and Soul

- Aristotle: Are the soul and body one? "It is as meaningless as to ask whether the wax and the shape given to the wax by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter."
- Neither a dualistic philosophy, as in Plato or some eastern religions, or a materialistic philosophy, as in reductionistic "scientism" theories
- Some powers of the soul are not acts of organs: knowing is abstract, not particular.
- The soul is one, therefore the whole thing is characterized by its intellectual or spiritual nature.
- This makes it possible to argue that the soul survives death, even though animal and plant souls pass out of existence with their bodies.
- Understanding hylomorphism (matter/form composition) and the spiritual essence of the soul (that it is not rooted in or more organs) allows Aristotelian-Thomistic philosophers to integrate the natural sciences like chemistry, biology, and neuroscience without reducing the human person to the smallest parts.