CHAPTER XI

The Human Soul

The Principle of Life

In the early chapters of this book, in investigating the nature of life in general, we saw that the specific explanation of life as it manifests itself concretely in each organism is what we designated variously as the principle of life, the life principle, or, simply, the soul. And we saw that the soul expresses itself in three basic ways: vegetatively, sensitively, and rationally. The life principle as it is to be found in man is the rational soul, the highest form of life on earth. What distinctly characterizes the rational soul, and gives it its mark of uniqueness, is the two key powers of intellect and will. But the rational soul also encompasses within itself all the powers which are to be found in the lower forms of life, that is, in the vegetative soul and in the sensitive soul.

When we are working on the level of inquiry where we are concerned about very basic questions like the nature of life itself, in referring to the human soul we are addressing that principle within the human individual which ultimately accounts for the fact that he is a living organism. While many modern psychologists may not particularly like the term "soul," because it suggests the spiritual and the supernatural, they can scarcely deny that there has to be some explanatory principle which accounts for the sheer *fact* of life, something which accounts for the undeniable difference between living beings and non-living beings. There have been determined attempts on the part of dedicated materialists to explain life exclusively in terms of

the complexity of the organization of matter. The idea here is that there is some sort of universal law in nature which dictates that in the process of matter becoming more and more complex a certain critical point of complexity is reached where what was hitherto inanimate suddenly becomes animate. Life, then, is nothing more than matter organized in a highly complex way. It is certainly an interesting theory, but it is burdened by the inconvenience of there being no evidence for it. And there is the associated problem that certain inanimate things display an impressive degree of complexity. The question then naturally arises: if complexity itself is the explanation for life, why are these complex inanimate things not alive? The materialist would doubtless answer: Because they are not yet complex enough. To which no rejoinder can be given, for all the materialist is doing by offering that response is taking refuge in an intriguing but unproven theory.

Our sceptical attitude toward the materialistic understanding of how life relates to matter is based upon the more comprehensive approach to the whole question which was taken up so deftly by St. Thomas Aquinas. The materialist's position, reduced to its simplest governing premiss is this: life and matter are one. There is no essential difference between what is material and what is living. Life is no more than a specialized version of matter. St. Thomas responds to that position with disarming directness. If it is in fact so that life is nothing but matter, then why is not *everything* alive? We are still waiting for a coherent response to that question on the part of the materialists.

If one is serious about taking an honestly empirical approach to reality, then there is simply no denying the radical difference between the animate and the inanimate. Furthermore, there is simply no evidence to support the view that the animate can be reduced to the inanimate, the view, that is, that living matter is nothing more than matter itself, only complexly organized. All the evidence points to the conclusion that what we call life, while it is to be sure intricately mixed up with matter, is not itself matter. It is, as it were, an additive to matter, a principle which, when it inheres in matter, has a way of transforming it utterly. That principle—and we do not for a moment pretend that this issue is not without its deep and perhaps permanent mysteries[1]—as it inheres in any particular organism, we refer to as the soul, and as it inheres in that organism which is known as a human being, we refer to as a rational soul.

Modern Attitudes Toward the Soul

The likelihood that one would find a chapter entitled "The Human Soul" in any of the standard psychology textbooks used in most of our colleges and universities today is very remote. Because of the spiritual and supernatural connotations that attach themselves to the term, most modern thinkers, be they psychologists or philosophers, would be not at all comfortable with any reference to "soul" as applied to the human being,[2] albeit a good many of them might be prepared to allow "life principle" into their vocabularies, just so long as it is clearly understood that the referent of that term is taken to be something purely biological, bearing no suggestions of the transcendent.

The problems that many moderns would have with the concept of soul are related to the fact that it has traditionally been associated with the question of individual human identity. But, as we know, it is just individual human identity which modern psychology, and modern philosophy as well, has chosen to turn into a major problem. If the very facticity of the human person is going to be considered a legitimate subject for doubt, if, that is, the existential reality of the "self" or the "ego" is called into question, then, naturally enough, those who entertain such doubts are not apt to be very open to the idea of soul as we understand it. Nor can they be expected to be very sympathetic toward serious discussion of the matter. All of which simply goes to show that even the most eminent of scientists and philosophers are human beings, and as such they are all susceptible to prejudicial thinking. But prejudicial thinking in science and philosophy is particularly dangerous, because it is often mistaken for science and philosophy themselves.

Body and Soul

Man is a perfectly unified creature. He is emphatically one. That is a point which we have been continuously calling attention to. Man's essential unity took on additional interesting dimensions in our discussion, in the previous chapter, of man looked at under the aspect of personhood. Man is one, but he is a *composed* one. Man's nature is bilateral, having as it does two distinct sides to it, a corporeal side and a spiritual side. Man is composed of body and soul. Man is a unified substance, a unified substance which is expressed by his essential self

or personhood, but that unified substance, a complete substance, is a composite of two incomplete substances, or co-substances.

Lest we get so caught up in the technical terminology that we lose track of the basic realities we are trying to come to terms with and elucidate through that terminology, let us remind ourselves that when we call the body and soul incomplete substances we are directing attention to the by no means insignificant fact that neither body nor soul alone is to be considered the human person. The human person is body and soul together.

Most of us would not have any inclination to mistake the body for the human person. But the human soul, the rational life principle of a human being, is quite a different thing. The Platonic temptation seems always to be lurking about in the imagination. For those who put as much stress on the spiritual as we do, the suggestion that the person and the soul are one, that what any individual *really* is, is his soul, may not necessarily strike us as completely wrong-headed. Further clarifications have to be made with regard to the body and the soul being incomplete substances, the most important of which is that they are not incomplete substances of precisely the same kind. It would be a serious mistake to suppose that, because both are incomplete substances, body and soul are somehow on the same plane. They are not.

Body and soul are not equal. The soul is immensely more important than the body. In technical terms, we say that the soul is a subsistent substance, whereas the body is not. From our discussion of personhood we now understand that a subsistent being exists through itself, and therefore enjoys real autonomy of existence. What does this have to do with the unequal status of the body and the soul? Because the human soul is subsistent in nature it is capable of existing without the body, whereas the body, not being subsistent, cannot, as an organized quantity of matter with a specific identity, exist without the soul. Another way of putting it is to say that the body cannot exist *as a body* without the soul, but the soul can exist as a soul without the body. A separated soul does not lose its essential nature as a rational soul, but a human body, no longer informed by the soul, simply ceases to be a human body. It becomes a corpse. And it does not remain even that for long.

In order to establish the clearest philosophical understanding of the relationship between body and soul, we must make appeal here to the hylemorphic theory, reminding ourselves of how the two basic

elements of the human composite are to be viewed in the light of that theory. The hylemorphic theory, as we know, is all about the distinction between matter and form. The human body is obviously matter. It has all the characteristics of matter: it is extended, and, as such, it is divisible, and it has mass. But the fact that, as matter, it is identifiable as a human body, and not simply as a quantity of chemical elements, is explained by the presence of the human soul, the body's life principle. And, from the point of view of the body being a body at all, the soul is its substantial form. The rational soul, as substantial form, makes the body a human body.

Analyzed in terms of the hylemorphic theory, the human being is understood to be a composite substance made up of body, the matter, and the soul, which is the substantial form. In the history of Scholastic philosophy there have been from time to time certain thinkers who did not consider it appropriate that the rational soul should serve as the substantial form of the human body. They argued that it was more fitting to assume that the body has a substantial form of its own, that is, a substantial form *other than* the rational soul. We cannot here enter into a detailed discussion of this position, although the arguments which have been put forward to support it are quite interesting. We will simply address the insuperable problem which such a position entails.

If one argues that the human body has a substantial form other than the rational soul, then one ends up with two substantial forms within the one human being. This is an impossible situation. When we recall the ontological function of the substantial form, we can quickly see that any position which would advocate a multiplicity of substantial forms in any one entity is philosophically incoherent. What is the function of the substantial form? The substantial form of any entity makes it be what in fact it is. It determines it to be the kind of thing it is. And it identifies it as *one thing*, a unified individual which is distinguishable from other individuals. If, therefore, two substantial forms existed within the human person, there simply would be no human person. No unified entity would be in place. Thus there can be only a single substantial form for the human individual, and that substantial form is the rational soul.

Where is the soul in relation to the body? In our common everyday parlance we speak of the soul as being "in" the body. This will do well enough for common everyday parlance, but as philosophers we

must try to come up with more precise language to explain as best we can just how body and soul relate to one another. It is worth noting, apropos this subject, that St. Thomas makes the arresting observation that it is really more accurate to say that the body is in the soul than to say that the soul is in the body. His intention here is to emphasize that it is the soul which is the dominant and the determining principle. Our imagination tells us that the soul relates to the body somewhat as the contained relates to the its container. In this case our imagination is not a very trustworthy guide, but that is only to be expected, for the imagination deals effectively only with that which can be sensed, and therefore is not able to inform us helpfully about how a purely spiritual entity like the soul relates to the body. The imagination is limited to picturing things, but with respect to the soul we have something which literally cannot be pictured.

The body, as a physical substance, is capable of containing things. For example, it can be said to contain various of its internal organs. such as the heart or lungs. But in the strict sense, the soul, as a spiritua substance, cannot be contained. That which is immaterial lacks any quantitative extension, and therefore it cannot be said to have a physical place. But that which does not itself occupy any physical place cannot be contained in a physical body because it would literally have no place within that body where it could be located.

And yet, for all that, the soul relates to the body in such a manner that our ordinary way of expressing things, when we say that the soul is in the body, should not be regarded as an utterly absurd way of speaking. We are trying, through ordinary language, to get at a difficult reality the best we can. And, in fact, the expression does at least succeed in communicating the idea that there is something altogether intimate about the relationship between body and soul. What makes it so difficult for the human mind to grasp the precise nature of this relationship, to repeat the point made above, is the fact that one of the terms of the relationship, the soul, is purely spiritual, and our limited imagination lacks the wherewithal competently to deal with the spiritual.[3]

It perhaps would be nearer to the true nature of the relationship between body and soul to speak of the soul as being intimately "present to" the body as embracing it. The soul relates to the body in a kind of comprehensive way. It is standard philosophical usage to say that the soul is everywhere in the body. This claim stands as a corrective

to the positions which have been taken by some philosophers, who maintained that the soul was located in a very specific place within the body. René Descartes, for example, taught that the soul was to be found in the pineal gland located behind the third ventricle of the brain. But, as we have seen, a purely spiritual entity like the soul cannot be "placed" in that way at all. By the way, it was also René Descartes who erroneously posited two complete substances as constituting the human individual, an immaterial substance (*res cogitans*), the soul, and a material substance (*res extensa*), the body.

What do we mean, then, when we say that the soul is in every part of the body? First of all, the phrase "in every part" is not to be interpreted to mean contained or located, literally, in every part. What the phrase means is that the soul, the principle of life, exercises its life-giving power throughout the body, and that there is no part of the body where the life-giving influence of the soul is not felt. And it is precisely on account of this pervasive, life-giving presence of the soul that the body, as a body, is alive. There is no part of the body which is more alive than any other part of the body. The soul animates the body by making its spiritual presence felt everywhere in the body, without its being confined within the body as would one physical thing be confined within another physical thing. And it is just here where St. Thomas's observation, that it is more appropriate to speak of the body being in the soul than the soul being in the body, discloses its special significance. The soul, the superior principle on account of its spiritual character, encompasses the body entirely within the scope of its life-giving influence. There is no part of the body which escapes its influence. And it is precisely because it is spiritual that the soul can have this kind of ubiquitous influence upon the body, for nothing physical can impede or block its influence.

In order better to explain just how it is that the soul relates to the body and exercises its vitalizing influence upon it, a comparison is commonly made to the way God relates to the universe and exercises His influence upon it. God is of course a purely spiritual being, and yet we say, and truly, that God is everywhere. In theological terms we cite ubiquity as one of the attributes of God. But how can it be that God is everywhere if He is a purely spiritual being, for purely spiritual beings cannot correctly be said to be in any place, as we normally understand "place"? God is everywhere by reason of the fact that He exercises

His almighty power everywhere, even upon the tiniest mote of matter, and it is just this ubiquitous divine presence which explains the fact that the universe is maintained in existence. Analogously, the human soul exercises its influence everywhere in the body. In this case, the influential presence of the soul is not the *ultimate* cause of the body's existence (God alone has that kind of power), but it is the immediate cause of the body's existence and specifically of its existence as a *living* body.

The Substantiality of the Soul

We have seen that although the soul and the body, taken separately, are to be understood as incomplete substances, as they relate to the complete substance which is the person or the individual man, they are not, as incomplete substances, entities that enjoy the same mode of existence. The human soul represents a very special category, for, although it is incomplete in relation to the person (remember, designating the soul an incomplete substance is simply a technical way of expressing the fact that the soul of man does not constitute man as such), it is subsistent. And, again, to call the human soul subsistent is simply to say that it is able to exist separately, apart from the body.

But now we want to examine the subsistent nature of the soul more thoroughly, particularly in terms of the relationship between body and soul. There is an obvious interdependence between the two. What is the precise nature of that interdependence? Consonant with the radical differences in their respective natures as incomplete substances, the interdependence between body and soul is not equal. This inequality can be stated succinctly by saying that the body is absolutely dependent upon the soul, whereas the dependence of the soul upon the body is relative.

The absolute dependence of the body upon the soul has already been made clear by what was said earlier. The human body simply would not be a human body if the matter of which it is constituted were not informed by a human soul. The human body needs the human soul in order to exist as the kind of thing it is, a human body. The converse is not true. The human soul is not dependent upon the body for its very existence, and this fact is explained by its subsistent nature. But although the human soul is not dependent upon the body for its existence, it is very much dependent upon the body for its

operations, specifically its intellectual operations. Yet another way of expressing how the soul relates to the body, using technical terms, is to say that the soul is *extrinsically* dependent upon the body, but not *intrinsically* so.

Through our study of the process of ideogenesis we have seen that intellectual knowledge just as such—i.e., simple apprehension, judgment, and reason—is not able to take place unless the operations of sense knowledge precede it, and sense knowledge is very much body-anchored knowledge. The five external senses, for example, where the whole knowledge process begins, are, after all, physical organs. And when the critical point is reached in the process of ideogenesis where the transition is made from sense knowledge to intellectual knowledge, a transition which is effected, specifically, by the activity of the agent intellect, the agent intellect is able to act at all only because of the presence of the phantasm, the sense image from which the agent intellect abstracts the nature of the object which is being sensed. To sum up. The rational soul, which as the principle of life is the source of all vital activity in the human person, is directly dependent upon the body for its intellectual activity because intellectual knowledge as such necessarily follows from and depends upon sense knowledge. The soul knows intellectually *through the body*, and that elemental fact prompts us to call attention yet once again to the basic dictum of Scholastic epistemology: *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*—intellectual knowledge is rooted in sense knowledge.

A couple of clarifications are in order at this juncture. It is necessary, first, to appreciate the importance of a point made in passing just above: the soul is the single animating source of *everything* that goes on with respect to the human individual, be the activity corporeal or spiritual. Thus, when we say that the soul is dependent upon the body in order to know intellectually, what we are really saying is that one operation of the soul is dependent upon another operation of the soul. The sense knowledge upon which intellectual knowledge depends is as much under the control of the soul as is every other vital activity that takes place within the human person. The soul is *the* life principle, for as the substantial form of the body, it is one. The specific nature of the dependency we are talking about here consists in the fact that intellectual knowledge, which in itself is purely immaterial, works through and depends upon material instrumentation.

And that leads to the second clarification that needs to be made, also relating to the dependency of the rational soul upon the body, or, more precisely, to the dependency of intellectual knowledge upon sense knowledge. Although intellectual knowledge is very much dependent upon the material, as represented by sense knowledge, intellectual knowledge itself is totally immaterial. Once the intellect takes what it needs from the senses, it then proceeds to operate upon a purely spiritual basis. Let us consider again the three basic acts of the intellect: simple apprehension, judgment, and the reasoning process. Each one of these acts is exercised without any material instrumentality whatever, and because this is so, they escape the confining influence of time.

The idea which is, we may say, the product of simple apprehension, has nothing material at all about it. An idea is unquestionably a real entity—every thinking person will unhesitantly vouch for that fact—but ideas have no mass or extension. They cannot be physically divided. Although ideas depend upon the physical instrumentality of the brain, they cannot be said to be in the brain. Indeed, if we want to say ideas are "in" anything, it would be most appropriate to say that they are in the soul, or in the mind, to use the term St. Thomas favored when he was referring to the soul considered from the point of view of its specifically intellectual operations. (In either case "in" would be understood metaphorically.) Ideas would be, in other words, the purely spiritual qualities of a purely spiritual substance. As to the timeless aspect of our intellectual activities, this too might be better understood by considering the idea, but now from the point of view of its universal character. When I hold in my mind any idea, for example, a simple idea like "table," I am, first of all, not thinking about any particular table (this table here, or that table there), but the abstract nature of table (table-ness, as we say), table which is in no specific place (that follows from its not being a particular table), but also table that has no reference to past, to present, or to future. The thought is a reference to table pure and simple, a thought which, *as a thought*, a universal idea, is completely outside the context of time.

The Spirituality of the Soul

Now we need to reflect further on the human soul as a purely immaterial or spiritual substance. We come to understand spiritual substances in the first instance by a process of negation, that is, by

subtracting the characteristics that apply to material substances and then engaging with the pure concept we end up with as the result of that process. The reason we have to take this approach is because we cannot, by definition, have any direct empirical knowledge of that which is spiritual. So we have to get at it indirectly. Now, for the materialist the game stops right there, for he will insist that any putative "thing" of which we cannot have direct empirical knowledge is in fact a no-thing. For him, what cannot be empirically demonstrated simply does not exist. But this simply does not follow. The fact that X cannot be demonstrated by following a certain narrowly confined mode of reasoning (the empirical method) does not mean that X simply cannot be demonstrated. This would be like saying that because a certain city cannot be reached by taking a particular road, it cannot be reached at all. But now we must engage in a little exercise in negation, in order to sketch in rough outline form what it is that we are dealing with when we refer to spiritual entities such as the human soul.

Two basic characteristics of all physical substances are continuous quantity, or extension, and, relatedly, mass. Through these characteristics we can, with varying degrees of precision, empirically "pin down" any physical object and thus confidently ascertain its real existence. If we can measure something and weigh something we know that we are dealing with a real existent. We observe how it relates to other physical objects, and thus determine a place for it. We note further that it moves. We measure its velocity. And these operations only add to our confidence that we are not dealing with a figment of our imagination. In contrast to this, an immaterial entity such as the human soul has no extension (therefore, it cannot be measured and lacks a place), has no mass (therefore, it cannot be weighed), and has no proclivity to move (therefore, any talk of its velocity would make no sense). Our understanding of an immaterial entity is thus far entirely negative. Well, all this being the case, on what basis do we claim that such a thing can reasonably be said to exist at all?

The first thing we can do is turn once again to the purely spiritual nature of ideas, and then, considering them under the aspect of effects, argue back to their cause. A great deal of fascinating research has been done on the human brain and nervous system. Much informative physiological activity can be recorded, and it is reasonable to conclude that this activity accompanies the activity of thinking as such. But there

is no direct quantitative account to be had of the thinking process, nor of the results of that process, that is to say, ideas. An idea as such has never been located and precisely identified through empirical research (e.g., as a mathematical idea, an idea about color, an idea associated with the emotion of fear, a successful idea, an unsuccessful idea). And we can confidently assert that this is something which will never be accomplished, the reason for this being, of course, that ideas are immaterial, and the immaterial, by definition, is not subject to empirical verification.

And yet no one is prepared to deny the existence of ideas on account of the fact that they do not submit themselves to quantitative identification and analysis. We begin, then, with the conviction that we are dealing with something which is incontestably real, although the precise nature of its reality would seem to elude us. And we can say that all the negative evidence points to the fact that this really existent thing we call an idea is immaterial. By that we simply mean that an idea, as such, has never been empirically verified as something which is physical. Now, the principle of sufficient reason tells us that ideas do not come out of nowhere. Like everything else that really exists (whatever be the precise mode of its existence), ideas must have a cause. Here we need to call attention to an important principle pertaining to the relationship between cause and effect, the principle which says, "like cause, like effect." This means that it is not possible to have a genuine effect which is not in its essential features similar to what is taken to be its cause. The application of that principle here is that if an effect is immaterial, then its cause must also be immaterial. Now, an idea is undeniably immaterial; therefore, the cause of the idea must also be immaterial. Our general conclusion is twofold: (a) here exists a cause which explains the existence of immaterial ideas; (b) that cause, like the ideas which it brings about, is immaterial. There is, then, a purely spiritual substance which is the explanation for, among other things, these entities which we call ideas. And we specifically identify that substance as the mind, or the rational soul.

The basic principle we were following in that line of argument was *agere sequitur esse*, which tells us that the nature of a thing is revealed to us by how that thing acts. This principle provides the warrant for our concluding that the soul must be a spiritual substance, because the activity of the soul is such that it gives rise to purely spiritual entities,

i.e., ideas. But an entity which is productive of the purely spiritual must itself be purely spiritual, for an entity cannot produce something whose nature is not consonant with its own proper nature.

The Argument from the Nature of Intellectual Knowledge

Another argument for the immateriality or spirituality of the soul comes to us from Aristotle through St. Thomas. As we have noted more than once, it is essentially the soul which knows, be the knowledge in question sense knowledge or intellectual knowledge. To say this is just another way of making the point that the soul, as the principle of life, is the controlling source of all vital activity having to do with the human person. But let us consider specifically that activity of the soul which we call intellection, the activity that results in intellectual knowledge, the activity which results in, to narrow the focus, the production of ideas. Now, our guiding premiss in this consideration is that the mind must be immaterial, otherwise its entire understanding of the material universe would be seriously distorted.

The argument is as follows. We begin with the assumption that the mind knows both spiritual and material things. Secondly, we assume that the mind is capable of having a reliable, non-distorted understanding of the material world. There seems to be no good reason for questioning the soundness of either assumption. Our third assumption, and we could call this the key assumption of the argument, is that the only explanation for the mind's being able to know all kinds of material things is that the mind itself is immaterial. How is that so? If the mind itself were material (which, of course, the materialists believe it to be), then it would necessarily be material of a specific kind; that is, it would be composed of a certain number of basic elements. The result of this would be that its own material make-up would affect the way it knew anything that was material. In other words, the knowledge of all material things would necessarily be filtered through the materiality of the mind, and could only be known in terms of the specific material of which the mind is composed. The mind's matter would have a determining effect upon everything that was material and therefore things could not be understood in terms of their proper materiality. The operative principle here could be illustrated by the example of someone who is wearing blue-tinted glasses. Everything which he looks at through those glasses would appear blue to him,

and therefore he would not be able to see things in the world in their true colors. Similarly, then, if the mind were material, it perhaps might be able to have reliable knowledge of those things in the world with the same material composition as its own, but everything else would be interpreted as if composed of the same materials found in the mind.[4] But it does not appear to be the case that the human mind lacks knowledge of material things as they truly are. Furthermore, it can make very fine discriminations among material things. From this we can conclude that the rational soul is not material, but is rather a purely spiritual substance.

Beginning with the immateriality of ideas, and understanding those ideas to be effects, we have argued to the immateriality of the soul as the cause of those ideas, following the principle that like begets like. If an effect is spiritual, then the cause from which the effect emanates must likewise be spiritual. But now let us consider the soul itself, a spiritual entity, in terms of its origins. The soul is obviously subject to the principle of sufficient reason. As a contingent entity, it cannot stand as the explanation for its own existence. The soul, in other words, must have a cause. But, as a purely spiritual substance, its cause must also be a purely spiritual substance. Furthermore, the purely spiritual substance which is the cause of the soul's existence must have the power to call forth being from non-being. The only power capabl of doing that is almighty power, which means the power of God. W conclude, then, that God and God alone is the cause of the existence of the human soul. Each human soul is created directly by God.

The Simplicity of the Soul

The simplicity of the human soul is necessarily entailed in the fact that it is an immaterial substance. By a simple substance we mean one which is not composed of parts. The human person, which is a complete substance, is composed, and its principal composing entities are of course the body and the soul. The body is itself a composite (as a physical thing it could not be otherwise), but the soul is purely simple and uncomposed.

That fact might strike us at first as a bit puzzling, for we know that the soul is the source of a multiplicity of activities, as is evident by the examination we are conducting in this chapter. But does not the multiplicity of the soul's activities (the fact, for example, that it is

the ultimate explaining principle behind sensation, passional activity, and intellection) argue against its simplicity, argue against its being a single, uncomposed thing? We already have the response to this question, for we have seen that there is no contradiction in the fact of a single uncomposed entity incorporating within its essentially simple being a variety of powers which express themselves externally in a variety of ways. And this fact is articulated in the principle which says that the soul is actually one but potentially many. The many things of which the human soul is capable have but a single source.

It is true, given the way our discursive, analysis-dependent minds function, that we do talk about the human soul *as if* it were composed of parts. We speak, for example, of the intellect and the will, of the agent intellect and the possible intellect, of imagination and memory, and so on. But, though we may speak of these various faculties or powers in such a way as to leave the impression that we are dealing with parts, in fact we are not. They can be considered to be parts in a figurative sense only. A part, in the strict understanding of the term, necessarily entails materiality, and the soul, being immaterial, cannot have parts. The intellect, the will, and everything else we speak of as pertaining to the human soul, are, once again, but various ways in which the one soul manifests itself. It does not follow that because a single, simple entity, the soul, can evince a multiplicity of distinct powers that the entity itself is multiple.

Reflection upon the intellectual act of judgment can help us better to appreciate the simplicity of the soul. The act of judgment, we will recall (the second basic act of the intellect), is the act by which the mind establishes real existence in the extra-mental world. This act is publicly expressed through the linguistic judgment or proposition, as when we say, for example, "The cat is in the kitchen," or "John is a seminarian." The fact that we can predicate something of something else (e.g., predicating "being in the kitchen" of "cat," and "being a seminarian" of "John"), and then see that predication to be true, has the effect of establishing existential reality, i.e., actual, mind-independent existence. When we analyze the fundamental structure of the act of judgment, we discover that what the mind is doing in that act is placing, at the minimum, two things together. It is forging a unity which is reflective of the way things actually are. But the mind is able to do this only because of its own uncomposed simplicity. If

the mind were material, and therefore composed of parts, it would have no principle by which it could bring together in a unified whole the real parts that it sees in the external world. For example—to cite one possibility among the various kinds of difficulties which could be encountered—one part of the observed world ("John") would be registered as an idea by one part of the mind, and another part of the observed world ("a seminarian") by another part of the mind, but the mind, as a composition itself, would have no means of linking together those two mental parts and the concepts they contain. There would be nothing in the mind which would be able to transcend its own parts and thus see how they relate to one another. This would render the mind quite incapable of bringing together two distinct ideas within the context of an intellectual judgment. But the mind does, in fact, make judgments, and quite adroitly. Thus the mind is not composed; it is a simple substance.

Self-reflection is one of the hallmarks of rational creatures. We can not only think about things, we can think about the thoughts through which we think about things. We can think about the process of thinking. And we can think about the thinker who is doing all the thinking. This would not be possible were the human mind, the rational soul, not a simple substance. In the act of self-reflection the ego or the "I" is simultaneously the subject and the object of the act. There is no material composition in the soul to prevent the ego from turning back on itself. Were there such composition, part would get in the way of part, as it were. Furthermore, there would be no unifying principle whereby the whole could be aware of itself as a whole. Materiality, then, along with the composition which necessarily accompanies it, prohibits self-reflection, as is evident in the case of sense knowledge. The eye, for example, does not see itself; it does not see itself seeing.

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