

choir of praise to His magnificent grandeur, a choir of myriads upon myriads of millions of intelligent spirits, incorporated in an organism, or pure spirit, led by the great Mediator, Jesus Christ, who, in the quality of a divine person, connects that external praise of God's majesty with the eternal and infinite, which God receives from all eternity in His bosom by means of the eternal generations of the Son, the theoretical acknowledgment of the infinite, and the breathing of the Spirit, the practical recognition of the infinite, theoretical and practical acknowledgment, which terminates the infinite life of the Godhead, and keeps it plunged into infinite bliss! And thus external life and internal life are wedded into one in Christ, and to echo each other for all eternity, shared in according to the different degrees by thousands and tens of thousands of myriads of created spirits.

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## OF THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

*St. Thomas Aquinas. Sum. Theol. I. Pars.*

*The Metaphysics of the School. By Rev. Thomas Harper, S.J.*

**M**ODERN agnosticism does not content itself with denying the existence of God; it also disowns whatever might lead us to the idea of the Infinite Being. It has, consequently, not only done away with everything outside us not patent to experience, but has banished also our spiritual faculties, reason and free will, to the realm of illusions. Nay, our very soul is deemed by it an unreality, upheld by the prejudices of olden times and the superstition of the unlearned. Solid and sweeping, indeed, is this process. Yet a system of such destructive tendency bears, as it were, an antidote in itself. For, whilst it reduces all to matter or to nothingness, it at once arouses us to reaction and shows us the line of argument to be followed in its refutation. From the very foundation of agnosticism we should learn that, to maintain with convincing proofs the existence of God, we must, above all, evince the spiritual nature of our own soul. Were this latter itself but material, were its powers but sensitive, would not all our conceptions of the immaterial be mere dreams? Could we not reach the superior activity of our mind, how should we form an idea of the divine life? The spirituality, therefore, of the soul is fundamental to the truth of our notions and reasonings, is a mirror on

which we see the eternal and supersensible reflected, is the chief source from which we must draw our knowledge of the higher spheres.

It is, on this account, of paramount importance to throw light on the nature of our mind. In proportion as we strive to spread this kind of enlightenment, shall we succeed in dispelling the dismal night of materialism. As the one sided researches into the forces of the material universe have blunted the human intellect, so, on the other hand, will the science concerning our mental faculties again illumine man and correct his ideas; and as matter, exclusively considered, confines us to the narrowest and lowest sphere of nature, so will the study of the soul widen our views and carry us to the contemplation of immaterial beauty, and thence raise us to the cognizance and admiration of the infinite ocean of all being.

But how shall we know the soul? Does not our cognition begin with the sensible? Is not the intuitive perception of merely spiritual objects far above the capacity of our intellect? Certainly; so we are taught by experience, as well as sound philosophy. But, if this be so, is not the immaterial unknowable to us? and is not all that is said about it sheer conjecture? By no means; though we commence with the sensible, our knowledge does not terminate in it. We reach farther; our intellect penetrates the very nature of things presented to it by the senses, and reduces the natures themselves which it attains, by abstraction and division, to the simplest elements common to all entities. From the universal notions thus acquired we form universal principles, and, by again combining these latter, we draw conclusions. By this way of analysis and inference we become acquainted with truths hitherto unknown to us, as they were either hidden under the sensible qualities in the material substances or were above the visible universe as the causes of it. Moreover, once actuated by the cognizance of things without us, we are enabled to reflect on our own operations, and to proceed from them by reasoning into the deepest recess of our interior. A twofold world is thus exhibited to our view, the one within, the other without us, the one opened to us through our senses, the other through our consciousness, both searched into and enlarged by understanding and reason.

Let us now see whether, pursuing this train of thought, we may not only find the human soul, but also realize its nature. However, before we enter upon discussion, it will not be improper to develop the notion of the soul in general as it is common to all living beings. Furnished by this preliminary inquiry with many definitions and axioms, we shall, later on, with less difficulty treat of the human soul in particular.

## I. THE SOUL IN GENERAL.

We may define the soul as the principle of life. This definition was given by Aristotle, adopted by St. Thomas and his school, and will not, we hope, meet with any serious difficulty on the part of modern scientists. To form this idea of the soul, not by imagination, but on the solid ground of reality, it is but necessary to observe the phenomena by which we are daily surrounded. Nothing is more striking in nature than the difference everywhere manifested between the animate and inanimate bodies. These two components of the visible universe widely differ from each other in their size, figure, composition, structure, origin, duration, extinction, and, above all, in their operations. The inanimate realm is fixed and unchangeable; in it there is prevailing uniformity, stern necessity, and inertness. In the animate realm, on the contrary, there is boundless variety and activity. There we see numberless beings and species, all following their own way of acting. Each individual being develops itself, according to an intrinsic law, into a perfect organism, a whole wonderfully composed of divers parts. Each species invariably propagates itself, because the individuals, though all will be extinct after a certain period, are fitted for reproduction; whence it is that death and generation, decay and growth, are ever succeeding each other. Besides, if we direct our attention to the higher classes of living beings, to the animals, we see action no more governed by mere necessity, but proceeding spontaneously from cognition. Hence, activity is among them as various as the objects represented by their senses, and operation arises in them not from motion communicated by extrinsic causes, but from an intrinsic tendency, not from an inborn law, but from a perfection or form which they acquire from outward objects. Man, who ranks highest in this world, is capable of universal knowledge; for he dives into the nature of things, reflects upon himself, and transcending the visible universe, grasps the infinite and eternal. For this reason he is universal also in his activity, unbounded in his ways of acting and in his aims, and fit to direct his own will towards certain ends with freedom.<sup>1</sup>

As a great power, therefore, does life show itself in nature; life gives her beauty and variety, quickness and spontaneous production; life endows the higher beings with boundless knowledge, and qualifies them for arts, social connections, progress, and liberty; life brings forth ever-new effects, ever-new motion, ever-new works of genius and supreme perfection. And, not only great and wondrous, but also quite peculiar are the phenomena which it daily

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, S. Theol., p. 1, qu. 18, art. 3.

displays before our eyes. How widely different are they not from those which the inanimate realm produces around us? It will be proper briefly to point out the characteristic properties of vital actions. Life as exercised consists, according to St. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> in self-motion or self-perfection. The inanimate body cannot act on itself, but only on external objects, and hence perfects not itself, but other beings by the effect which it produces. On this account we state it to be capable of only transient activity. Nor can it, consequently, stir itself to action, that is, pass of itself from rest to motion, and *vice versa*; for, to do so, it would be necessary that it could produce in itself the form or perfection in which its act consists or from which it proceeds. Bodies, therefore, devoid of life, are determined to action solely from without. It is this that constitutes their inertia, a property which all scientists predicate of matter as such. Animate bodies, on the contrary, receive the effect of their own actions, and thus perfect themselves; wherefore we maintain that they have immanent activity. Hence it follows that they are also moved to operation by a power or principle intrinsic to them; for though an exterior object may be concurrent and awaken them, as it were, by its influence, still they act more than they are acted on, since they direct their action to themselves and turn the effect which they produce to a perfection of their own, which is not the mere product of the outward object. We may without difficulty substantiate this property of vital operation in all the different classes of living beings. It is traceable in plants. Whoever carefully examines their process of vegetation will discover that their organs do not act severally, but under the sway and for the benefit of the entire organism. Hence in vegetating they act as a whole and perfect themselves as a whole. Much more apparent is immanent activity in the animals. Do they not quite evidently perfect themselves, when from few material impressions they apprehend the concrete qualities of material bodies, retain them in their fancy and their memory, and by composing and decomposing them produce in themselves the richest variety of images? And are they not self-moving, when, in accordance with their cognition, they seek or flee from an object as it is convenient or inconvenient for them, when they pursue it to seize it or to struggle with it, when they display love and hatred and other passions?

Most striking, however, is man's self-activity. He is able to gather the knowledge of the supersensible from the sensible and to aspire to the highest ends with freedom. Undoubtedly he thus perfects himself and acts infinitely more than he is acted upon by the outward objects, and moves with the fullest self-determination. All

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<sup>1</sup> St. Theol., p. 1, qu., art. 1.

living beings, then, move and perfect themselves the more, the higher their vital functions are; whereas, at the same time we call any being that can not stir or act for its preservation, dead or lifeless. From promises as these are, we justly conclude with St. Thomas that vital action consists in self-motion or self-perfection.

Knowing the nature of the phenomena of life, we must further search into their source. Certainly they spring from a proportionate cause. In saying so we do not appeal to imagination, but to the principle of sufficient reason, which all admit on account of its compelling evidence and nobody can deny without self-contradiction. The scientists themselves who reject the existence of the soul acknowledge its truth; for all their theories and reasonings are nothing but a retracing of the natural phenomena to their proper causes. Vital actions, then, must have a source or origin, which, to denote its due proportion to its acts, we call the principle of life; and as, moreover, vital actions essentially differ from the non-vital, which they by far exceed in perfection, we further conclude that the principle of life inherent in the animate bodies is also essentially different from the cause that works in the inanimate. This second inference concerning the distinct nature of the immediate source of the vital activity, is just as certain and necessary as the first concerning its existence. Have we thus not arrived at the very definition of the soul? Above we said it to be the principle of life. Do not the grandest phenomena which we observe in the universe, and our operations of which we are conscious, give us the idea of such a power intrinsic to us and always active in us? True, we cannot see it, just as little as the scientist can perceive with his senses the force of attraction or chemical affinity; but reason tells us that it must exist and is the subject of numberless changes and actions of daily experience. Though not seen directly in its own nature, it manifests itself by its effects. We are, consequently, in admitting the existence of the soul and in defining it as the vital principle, neither imposed on by prejudices nor misled by ignorance; we but assert what evidence forces on us and what objective necessity peremptorily requires.

Yet, convincing as our reasons seem to be, they do not put the materialists to silence. These will perhaps agree that vital actions suppose a sufficient cause, an intrinsic principle in the bodies, but they persistently deny the same to be distinct from matter. In their opinion life is but a higher evolution or more artificial combination of material forces; a difference does not exist or cannot, on solid reasons, be shown to exist between the animate and inanimate bodies; and the vital principle that is thought to produce vital actions is not a reality added to matter, but a power of matter itself, in some corporal beings evolved and apparent, in others yet latent

and undeveloped. To attribute to life a higher perfection or derive it from a source above the material, they tell us, is a fiction, an assumption warranted neither by experience nor by science. We might at present leave this question unanswered, since later on we shall, at full length, prove the immateriality of intellectual life, which concerns us at present. Nevertheless, we shall here advance a general proof for the distinction of all vital principles from matter.

To this end let us once more consider the difference between vital and merely material actions. How did we define the nature of both the one and the other? Vital actions, we said, are essentially immanent, since the agent from which they proceed receives their effect and thus perfects itself. Merely material actions, on the contrary, are transient, because the body does not act by them on itself, but on another bodily subject; and from this we have further deduced that the living being is self-moving and matter is inert. Is it now possible that of two opposites the one arises from the other by evolution or by composition? In the first place, can the inert ever become self-active by developing itself? Development does not change the nature of things, but only unfolds what is latent in them. Yet, to give self-moving power to that which cannot of itself pass from rest to motion and to endow with immanent what of itself has but transient activity, is, indeed, not to educe hidden or implicit faculties from a subject, but to impart to the same a new energy. Were it not so, we should be compelled to admit that the want is the origin of motion, and that transient is the beginning of immanent activity. As to the artificial compositions, to which, in the second place, recourse is had to account for the phenomena of life, we must bear in mind that the whole has no other perfection than that of all the parts combined. Hence, what is in no way pre-contained in the latter is not at all to be found in the former. But the several molecules of matter, it is agreed, are inert and act transiently; wherefore, also, the whole composed of them must be inert and capable, not of immanent, but of only transient activity. By their union the material elements are joined together, but not reversed in their nature; therefore they have conjointly just as well as singly a tendency to outward action, which, however, will be of greater efficacy, either because they unite their forces directly towards a common object, or because one moves and determines the other in a certain proportion and according to a concerted plan. Thus bodies are formed and aggregated by nature, thus mechanisms are constructed by art. Life, therefore, dormant or dilated in matter is an absurdity, and absurdly are materialists supposing that it has been developed from the bodily substance in its primordial condition, or will be elicited from it by the help of science in future ages. The certainty of this reasoning is not lessened by

the imperfection of the knowledge which we have of the material forces; for we have deduced the impossibility we speak of from the very nature of life and matter, as inferred from the phenomena always and everywhere observed; but nature remains the same under all circumstances.

The principle, then, of any life whatever is undoubtedly distinct from matter, nay, transcends it inasmuch as vital is above physical action, as self-motion ranks higher than inertia, and as vegetation, sensation and intellection exceed in perfection material resistance or attraction, because an operation of a higher quality presupposes a power of a superior order. This being agreed to, we must conclude that the vital principle is planted in the body as in a lower element, which by its union it lifts up to a higher nature, and endows with a new energy.

From the facts thus far stated and the principles laid down, we must now draw several conclusions touching the essence of the soul in general. We infer *first* that the soul is a constituent of the *nature* of living beings. *Nature* is the first intrinsic principle of operations,—that is, such an inward source of activity as is preceded by no other one in the acting subject. In accordance with this definition, the principle of life, distinct as it is from matter, must be considered either as a nature of its own or at least as a component part of a nature. Of animate bodies matter is evidently also a constituent, and hence the vital principle is not their entire nature, but a part of the same. We may likewise call the soul an essential constituent. For nature and essence are one and the self-same thing, considered, however, under different aspects. Nature is the first principle of operation, essence is in a thing the first perfection, in which all others have their root. But it is perfection that enables a thing to action, and consequently these two intrinsic principles, that of operation and that of being, must needs coincide. For this reason, the soul is also a *substantial* constituent. To show this a short explanation will suffice. *Substance* is being in itself; it is, in other terms, the subject that sustains all inherent qualities and modes of being, and itself requires no substratum in which to inhere. It is not the self-existent, for this exists of itself and excludes dependence on an efficient cause, whilst substance exists in itself and excludes but inexistence in another thing. Nevertheless a being may exist in itself completely or incompletely, according as it stands by itself, either in every or only in some regard. The conceptions just exposed are not improperly illustrated by an instance taken from human associations. In a society we may distinguish nature, essence, and substance. Its nature is its tendency to a determinate end common to all its members; its essence is that which constitutes its being an intrinsic organization; its substance is its independence and

self-government, which it has completely or incompletely, according as it is sovereign or subject to the sway of a higher body politic as one of its branches. Has, then, the first principle of life existence in itself? Undoubtedly. An *accident*, which is naturally inherent or in need of a subject of inhesion, may be the proximate, but cannot be the first or ultimate source of perfection and operation; such can be only that reality which is, according to its very conception, unsupported and existing in itself. Accordingly, the soul must be conceived as a substance,—either as a complete one, if it stands by itself and is not a part of a being, or as an incomplete one, if, though in some regard it is in itself, still it belongs as a part to a whole. In the animate bodies, where it is composed with matter, it is of itself incomplete, for complete is but the whole made up of all its components. In some way, however, even there the vital principle must be regarded as existent in itself, inasmuch as it is a constituent part of the whole that subsists in itself, as something of the subject that sustains the accidents, and not an accident that inheres in a subject already constituted.<sup>1</sup> Hence we legitimately conclude the identity of nature, substance, and essence; for as nature cannot be the first principle of action, so essence cannot be the first root of perfection without existing in itself. This holds true and is generally admitted by philosophers with regard to natural, though not with regard to artificial beings, as in the conception of the latter an accidental form may be implied.

We infer *secondly* that the soul is a *substantial form*. *Form* in general is that which as an intrinsic entity determines a thing or stamps on it a peculiar shape; *substantial form* is that which gives specific nature to a substance; it is opposed to the *accidental form*, which comes to a subject already constituted in its substantial being. In composed substances we must distinguish two elements, one that is in itself indifferent and indeterminate, another that is differential and determinant; one that they have in common with other beings, another that is peculiar to them. In this regard nature resembles the works of art. In a statue, too, there is the material, the marble, and the figure; the block of marble is of itself indifferent and may be worked into anything; it is the figure sculptured on it that makes it to be a statue rather than a tombstone, an image of Cæsar rather than of Napoleon. The indeterminate component of a being we call matter; the determinant, form. Matter, therefore, and form, combining their own partial entities, complete each other, in order to constitute one being; matter lends itself to the form as

<sup>1</sup> "That which is the essential constituent of a substance," says Father Harper, S. J., "must itself be a substance, however partial, incomplete, and rudimentary; otherwise, the essence of a substance might be in a part composed of that which is not substance,—a contradiction in terms." *Metaphysics of the School*, vol. ii., Prop. cxlii., n. ii., page 205.



a subject for concrete existence, and the form confers on matter that which makes it an entire nature. Matter and form are thus the natural elements of compound substances. Yet not substance only, but also essence has its material and formal constituents. For if we analyze the things as to their essence, we discover in them something that they have in common, and something that is peculiar to them and constitutive of their properties; and if we attentively reflect on those two components, the common and the particular, the indifferent and the differential, we find them to be distinct from each other, sometimes in nature itself, sometimes only in consequence of our abstraction. In the first case we have the physical essence, the components of which are matter and form in the strict sense; in the second we have the metaphysical essence, the constituents of which are matter and form taken rather in a wider meaning and analogically. With regard to natural compounds it will not be difficult to observe in all particular instances that the components of their physical essence are identical with the constituents of their substance; nor can it be otherwise, since nature and substance coincide, and since we consider in either of them the parts as they are distinguished, not by abstraction, but in themselves outside our mind. But, how shall we explain the constitution of simple beings? If a thing is not composed, its essence is all form, or as some say, a pure form; for as the nature of such a being has its characteristic properties there is certainly a form implied in it, and as it excludes all essential composition, there is no matter in it, but form alone. In this supposition the form is a complete essence or substance, whereas in composites it cannot be conceived but as incomplete.

To apply these definitions to the living beings of this visible universe, the body is that constituent of theirs which they have in common with one another and also with the inanimate, and that not only logically or in our conceptions, but also in reality and independently of our mind; for frequently the very same material elements exist successively in water or air, in the plant, in the animal, and in man. The body, therefore, is indifferent, indeterminate, apt to be a component part of many natures; it is the material constituent. The soul, on the other hand, determines the body to one specific nature, for by its union it effects that the same is no more brute matter, but a living being of a certain species and endowed with a certain activity. The soul, accordingly, concurs in the constitution of animate bodies as the formal element, as their essential or substantial form; for it constitutes the characteristic property of their substance or essence. The soul is, on that account, also itself a substance, yet not a complete one, because it

is not entire of itself, any more than matter is; such they are only if united.

We infer, *thirdly*, that the soul is a *substantial act*. *Act* we take here as opposed to *potentiality*, to passive power. *Potentiality* is receptivity, the capacity in a subject of being perfected. *Act*, on the contrary, is the perfection which fills up the receptivity or capacity of a subject, not by acting upon it, but by uniting itself with it. "As operation or action," writes St. Thomas,<sup>1</sup> "which is the complement of active potentiality, corresponds with active potentiality; so that which corresponds with passive potentiality as its perfection and complement, is called act." Potentiality and act are, therefore, opposed to each other, not only by mutual relation, but also by privation or negation. Still the act does not imply so necessary a relation to potentiality that it cannot exist without it; for a perfection may also subsist in itself and thus be its own act, and not that of a subject distinct from it. If an act of that kind is free from all potentiality, it is called pure; and this pure act must evidently be an infinite perfection, since whatever is finite is yet perfectible and hence potential, and it must be self-existent, since self-existence is included in infinite perfection. Just the contrary is the case with potentiality; it implies a want of perfection, and, therefore, the more potential a being is, the more imperfect is it, so that if at last we conceive a pure potentiality without any act, we may easily understand it to be incapable of existence in nature.

A *substantial act* is that which gives a substance its perfection and completeness, and so likewise we may call an *essential act* that which gives to essence its entirety. Now, is the soul an act? Certainly, by the very fact of its being a form. For every form, as St. Thomas concludes, is an act, because it gives shape to a thing, and if a substantial form, completes matter and determines it to a specific nature, an entire principle of activity. Even if the form be pure and not destined to union with a material element, it still must be conceived as an act, inasmuch as it is its own highest and last perfection. Nay, the soul is a substantial act, for it is an act as far as it is a form, yet it is a substantial form, and, therefore, also a substantial act. The vital principle is, indeed, the main perfection that constitutes a living substance, it gives the same life, and proper action, and peculiar nature. For this reason the Scholastic doctors termed the soul the first act of the living being; for substance and essence are primary perfections in the thing which they

<sup>1</sup> "Sicut potentia activae respondet operatio vel actio, in qua completur potentia activa, ita etiam illud quod respondet potentia passivae, quasi perfectio et complementum, actus dicatur. Et propter hoc omnis forma actus dicitur, etiam ipsae formae separatae; et illud quod est principium perfectionis totius, quod est Deus, vocatur actus purus." I. Dist. xlii., qu. 1 art., 1 m.

constitute, since they are the root and foundation of all the others without resting themselves on any other ground.

We infer, *fourthly*, that the soul is but one in each living being. This follows with compelling evidence from what we have said thus far. We conceive every being endowed with life as one; the tree, the horse, the man we meet, each is in our view, one and not several beings. Why do we all think alike in this? Because unity is a necessary attribute of being, so much so that in the opinion of all philosophers one and being are convertible. The reason thereof is plain. Everything is, by its essence that which it is and nothing else. But being that and nothing else excludes plurality and establishes unity. Everything, therefore, has by its essence both being and unity, or, in other words, is one for the same reason for which it is a being.<sup>1</sup> Now, of what does the essence of a thing consist? Chiefly of its form. For if it is simple, the form is its only constituent; if it is composite, the form is, of the two constituents, the principal, because it is the form that completes and determines its specific nature, by which it is distinguished from all other things. Consequently, where there are many forms, there can possibly result only one being. The soul, therefore, as it is the substantial form, cannot be multiplied without destroying man's unity. In this conclusion, drawn from the very conception of essence and form in general, we are greatly confirmed by reflecting on the vital form in particular. The soul is the source of immanent action. Now, if there were in the same body several such principles, of which each one, proceeding to action from itself, produces an effect within itself, would they not severally possess themselves of the bodily elements in their particular interests, and quite necessarily constitute multiplicity in being as well as in operation? As little, then, as we can destroy the oneness of the living being, are we allowed to admit in it a plurality of souls? Nay, from the principles laid down and made use of as premises, we must infer that several substantial forms, of whatever kind they may be, cannot at once exist in one being.<sup>2</sup>

So much about the soul in general. Is there in the conclusions we have deduced, by aid of the old school, anything unsound? Do they not rest on undeniable facts and observations? Are the principles from which we drew them false, doubtful or not evident? Did we follow a wrong method? Or were the terms we used improper and meaningless? Does the result we arrived at not con-

<sup>1</sup> St. Thom., S. Theol. p. i., qu. 76, art. 3: "Ab eodem res habet quod sit ens et quod sit una."

<sup>2</sup> St. Thom., Quodl. I., art. 6, c.: "Impossibile est in uno eodemque esse plures formas substantiales, et hoc ideo quia ab eodem res habet esse et unitatem. Manifestum est autem quod res habet esse per formam; unde et per formam habet unitatem. Et propter hoc, ubicunq; est multitudo formarum, non est unum simpliciter."

vey a clear idea of, or give an insight into the nature of the source of life? If that be so, then all inquiries that have ever been made are absurd, all science, all knowledge, even of the material universe ceases. Never have there been researches more exact and careful than those made by the scholastic philosophers into the nature of the soul.

## II. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

From these general observations let us now pass over to the more particular investigation of the human soul. If the phenomena of life presuppose a vital principle, vital actions of a special kind prerrequisite a soul of a special nature; for between the principiant and the principiate, the source and the rivulet that flows from it, there must be a strict proportion. Therefore, where we observe in certain living beings actions not attainable to others, there we must admit a soul of a superior nature. Now, pre-eminent among all beings endowed with life is man; in him we discover an excellence, a kind of activity that makes him the king of all other realms, the gem of the universe. He, consequently, must be quickened also by a soul of pre-eminent perfection. It is into this sanctuary within ourselves, this last and innermost source of man's marvellous operations, that we shall now try to penetrate. Yet how can we reach it? Can we, perhaps, in this inquiry be led by intuition? Can we directly attain what is intrinsic to our mind? By consciousness, undoubtedly, we gain some knowledge of our very substance. For, reflecting on ourselves, we obtain cognizance of our acts as they are in themselves; but they are and must be inherent in a subject, an active principle; hence we perceive our soul as their substratum. We can even distinguish it from its acts. We are fully aware that, while the subject remains in us always the same, the acts are always changing; that acts there are many, but the subject is one; that the acts are accidental, but the subject is essential to and identical with us. However, we thus know only the existence of a permanent active principle within us, yet do not get acquainted with its constitution; we apprehend a substance in ourselves, yet do not attain its nature. Distinction must, therefore, be made between the existence and the essence of the soul; the first is, in fact, the object of immediate cognition of our consciousness, yet the other cannot come to our clear and distinct cognizance but by way of reasoning. So we are taught by the Angelic Doctor<sup>1</sup> and all sound philosophers, and

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<sup>1</sup> St. Theol., p. i., qu. 87, art. 1.

so we must judge from our own experience. For had we a direct insight into the nature of the soul, it would be impossible to question its spirituality or to entertain erroneous opinions about it. But whence should we infer the nature of that substance intrinsic to us, yet imperceptible to our direct view? From our actions. From them as from the circumference we must proceed to the soul as to the centre. As from vital operations we have deduced the essential properties of the vital principle in general, so we must from the peculiarity and the excellence of human activity gather the nature and the perfection of the source of human life in particular.

And what operations do we observe in man? He has vegetation and sensation; yet these functions he has in common with the plants and brutes, though in him they are in many regards more perfect. As a peculiar gift he has intellection and free volition; it is by them that he surpasses all other beings of this visible creation. They, consequently, most distinctly exhibit the nature of the human soul. For the highest perfection of a being is, more than any other quality, its proper form, gives a peculiar trait to all other attributes, contains all other endowments as their root, and keeps them subordinate to itself as to their end. Wherefore St. Thomas, with Aristotle, remarks that everybody appears to be what is the best in him.<sup>1</sup> Above all, then, we must inquire into the operations of the human intellect and will. Of course, according to the statement made above, we can at once infer from them that the human soul is the principle of rational life. But this does not content us; we long for a fuller knowledge of the fountain-head of our intellection and volition. And this not in vain. By closer researches we shall bring to light the essential attributes of the soul as considered both in itself and in its relation to the body. The soul considered in itself we shall see to be simple and spiritual.

First, let us speak of its simplicity. To begin our argumentation with an exact definition, simple we call that which is not composite. Now a thing can be composite in many regards, and it can be also composite in one respect and not in another. Accordingly, simplicity, too, which is freedom from composition, may be taken in a manifold sense. In the present question we consider substantial simplicity,—that is, we exclude from the soul any plurality of parts which constitute its substance. This remark is well to be borne in mind, in order not to misunderstand the subject under discussion. There is, indeed, some compositeness in the soul; for there are in it many acts which spring up and pass away, and, according to St. Thomas,<sup>2</sup> many faculties distinct from it, as

<sup>1</sup> S. Theol., p. i., ii., qu. 3, art. 5.

<sup>2</sup> S. Theol., p. i., qu. 77, art. 12.

well as from one another. And not only in the human soul is it so, but even in the purest created spirit, for God alone is absolutely and in every regard simple. Yet this compositeness does not concern us, because it is accidental and exists between the substance and its accidents, or between one accident and another; whereas, we speak of substantial composition—that is, of such as is between the components of a substance. Furthermore, the parts of a substantial whole can be of a twofold kind; they either constitute a thing in its essence, and hence are termed essential parts, or they give it but extension, and are called integrant parts. Here, again, a distinction is to be made. The several parts can be of the same or a different nature; if they are of the same, they are termed homogeneous; if of a different, heterogeneous. To illustrate the theory by examples: Essential parts in man are soul and body; integrant, but heterogeneous parts are the bodily members. An instance of a composition of homogeneous parts is a lake or a river, where all the molecules that make up the watery mass have the same nature,—that of water.

Having premised these definitions, we maintain that the soul is free from any kind of substantial composition. We commence with rejecting composition of integrant parts. First, we shall prove it to be impossible in the soul from the notions which we have of simple objects. Undoubtedly we have conceptions of not complex natures and substances. We have some knowledge of God and of pure spirits; we understand very well what is meant by the terms spirituality and simplicity; again, we apprehend acts and forms so abstract as to admit of no division whatever; as those of being, existence, relation, identity, bounty, beauty, perfection. Now all these conceptions cannot be at all in a composed subject, and, consequently, our soul is a simple substance. This we hope to prove with compelling evidence. If the active principle by which these notions are formed, and in which they inhere as accidents, be composed of several integrant parts, then the cognitive act is also composite; nay, the act and the principle must consist of the same number of components. For integrant parts, giving extension to a thing already constituted in its essence, are informed and therefore active; and integrant parts of a cognitive principle must be cognitive themselves, since they would otherwise not extend a cognitive substance as such. It is of no avail to aver that cognition may be an operation of many parts taken collectively, but not singly; as vegetation seems to be a vital act of the organism as a whole. Cognition is an immanent action produced by the substantial agent within itself, and consists in the expression of the knowable object by and within the knowing subject. That principle, therefore, is strictly cognitive, which is able to elicit such an act;

other causes concurrent to perception, as, for instance, the external object acting on our faculties, are not properly called so. All, then, depends on the manner in which the several parts we have considered coöperate towards cognition. If they are not representative by an immanent action, they are not in reality integrant components of a cognitive subject as such, but are only concurrents external to it; if they, by whatever aid, thus act and represent an object immanently, they do, as we maintain, elicit an act of perception. Something similar takes place in vegetation; all parts of the plant or the animal grow and vegetate, though under the influence of the whole organism. But if each integrant part is cognizant, what does it represent whenever we conceive something simple? Of course, it must represent the whole of such an object, it being absolutely impossible to divide what is simple. But, if that be so, there must be as many conceptions of the same thing and as many substantial principles of cognition within us, as there are parts supposed to exist in our mind, a multiplicity which is contrary to both sound philosophy and experience. We are conscious of but one conception and but one substance underlying our acts as their cause and their subject.

We may reason in the like manner from our conception of unity. Whenever we think of an organic body, or a mechanism, or an association, we conceive several parts united to one whole. Can such an idea be formed by a compound of integrant parts? We deny it absolutely. Integrant components of a cognitive principle, as we said above, must also be cognitive, so that the complete cognition of an object is the sum, as it were, of many partial cognitions. This supposed, let us ask what are the several component parts cognizant of? Does each one perceive the whole object or only a part of it? If each part of the cognitive subject perceives the entire object,—that is, the collection of all its parts, then there are in us as many conceptions of the whole and as many cognitive principles as there are integrant components of our mind admitted. But what could be more inconsistent than such a thought? Consciousness testifies to the oneness of our conception and of our intellectual power. Reason tells us that it is most absurd to conceive one intelligent principle formed of many intelligent components, since different principles of immanent action cannot possibly be united to one living substance, they being of necessity divergent in their tendencies. If, on the contrary, each part of the thinking subject conceives only a part of the object, the whole of the latter is not conceived at all, because its parts are not united, but exist separately, in the cognitive faculty. Of this an illustration will convince us. If of five different persons each one reads the fifth part of a book, they all together read all its parts, and yet the

knowledge of the book as a whole, the entire idea developed in it, is not attained by any one at all. To conceive a whole as such, it is required to comprehend all its parts collected and united, and for this again it is necessary that they all concur in a cognitive principle, which, that they may no more be divided, must itself be free from multiplicity.

Another proof of the freedom of the soul from integral composition we draw from the nature of our judgments and reasonings. We judge when, after comparing two ideas, we pronounce them to be objectively identical or different. To perform this mental operation, it is necessary that both terms be understood by one and the self-same subject. For he that, after due comparison, judges two things to agree or to differ, must undoubtedly know both of them; were he cognizant of one alone, and somebody else of the other, a judgment concerning them would be just as impossible as in a civil controversy, if of the contending parties each one should bring his cause to a different court. Now, if it is assumed that our mind, this judge within ourselves, be composite, how can all its components concur in judging? Do all, or does only one, or none of them, know both the subject and the predicate and pronounce sentence on their identity or difference? If none is cognizant of all these three things together, one perceiving but the subject, and another the predicate, no judgment at all is formed. If each integrant part of the mind has notice of the subject and the predicate and their mutual relation, there are as many judgments and judges within us as there are parts thought to exist in our soul, contrarily to our consciousness and the natural oneness of ourselves. If only one part knows the two terms and affirms or denies their identity, there is in us only one intelligent principle fit to judge, and this one principle, admitting of no composition, is our soul. In a similar way we may deduce our thesis from the act of reasoning. The mind that reasons must know not only the conclusions which it infers, but also the premises from which it makes the inference, and the reason for which the one is inferred from the other. Hence ratiocination is an indivisible act, and must, consequently, be in a cognizant subject that does not consist of many partial agents.

Lastly, we argue from the nature of reflection or consciousness. Reflection is the act by which the mind turns back upon itself and its operations. Inasmuch as the mind turns back upon itself, we come to our substance and person, we being the subject at once and the object of our cognition; inasmuch as it turns back upon its operations or perceives itself actuated by them, we know all our intellections and volitions to spring from the same self. Such being the nature of our consciousness, let us put the question: Is



a composite principle capable of being self-conscious? Again, three suppositions are possible. Either each of the several components, or none, or only one, turns back upon itself. If each one, we must perceive within our mind several selves, and refer our actions to several *mes*. Yet we are conscious of but one self, which we consider as the source and subject of all our doings. If none turns back upon itself, but one upon the other, as, for instance, the eye directs itself to the hand and the brain to the eye, no reflection at all takes place and no self is perceived, because there is nothing that makes itself the object of its own cognitive act. If only one part turns back upon itself, this alone is our mind endowed with consciousness. Thus, again, we conclude with full certainty that the self-conscious mind is not composed of parts.

All acts, then, of our intellect, conception, judgment, and reasoning, if duly analyzed, evince the substantial simplicity of the soul. No less do the acts of the will bear witness to the same truth. For does not the will also love and desire simple objects? Does it not also tend to unity among parts? Does it not likewise return to itself, approving or detesting its own acts and desiring the perfection of its own subject? We must, therefore, infer from the simplicity of the object willed the simplicity also of the volitive act and principle, and from the impossibility of dividing volition the impossibility of dividing into parts its subject. And as, according to the testimony of our consciousness, intellect and will are in the same self, and as the will does not desire but what is proposed to it by the intellect, and the intellect again is under the control of the will, there is but one soul in us, both intellective and volitive, composed of no integrant parts.

Two objections, however, might be raised against our conclusion. It might be said that integrant parts of a cognitive subject, because they are united and act conjointly, do not divide the object known, but rather reduce it to unity in the cognitive faculty. As an example the brute is alleged, which is endowed with extended organs of sensation and still shows harmony in all its acts, and knows and desires the whole of the objects presented to it. Certainly, we grant that the integrant parts of an animal act altogether in accordance and with a certain completeness, just on account of their substantial union, being made by it dependent on one another and enabled to combine their partial actions. For that, indeed, they perceive the whole exterior object, but not its unity. The reason is, first, because, notwithstanding their union and mutual influence, the several parts are, though not separated, still distinct from and outside one another in space; secondly, because each of them becomes cognizant by immanent action,—that is, by a form produced by it and inherent in it. To these two facts it is

consequent that the several integrant parts of a cognitive subject attain also several parts of the object, one outside the other, and that the cognition of one part of the organ remains distinct from that of the other. Experience confirms this theory. If, for instance, in the optic nerve a fibre is deadened, we do not see the corresponding point in the object; the same happens in our tongue and our hand. Thus we think it sufficiently explained why extended or compound principles, in spite of the union of their parts, cannot conceive unity or unite one object with another, or deduce a conclusion from premises.

Another objection is occasioned by the distinction between the soul and its faculties generally taught by the Scholastics.<sup>1</sup> This distinction supposed, is it necessary to deny the substantial composition of the soul, or do the reasons thus far brought forward prove anything more than simplicity of our intellect and our will, which are the immediate principles of all our rational acts? Certainly they do, and for many reasons. The faculties cannot be simple if the substance is composite. They are evolved from it as from their root. But from the composite the simple cannot spring, since the principiate cannot be of a higher nature than the principiant. And since integrant parts are already informed and constituted in a complete essence, each one will develop from itself a partial faculty of its own, all which are distinct from one another no less than their several sources. Hence there is as much distinction and composition in the powers of a being as is supposed to be in its substance. The difficulty proposed will yet more clearly be solved, if we consider the relation between the substance and its forces as taught by the Scholastics. The faculty, they maintain, results with necessity from the substance and is used by it as a natural instrument; it is, therefore, not the principal, but only the instrumental cause of action, not the primary, but the secondary agent. This theory they hold particularly with regard to the living substance, on account of the immanency of its actions. Accordingly, if we suppose in the soul several integrant parts, which are to be conceived as active, we must also grant that any one of them will through a faculty evolved from itself perform its own operation, distinct from that of the others, though in connection and harmony with each and all of them. So the Scholastic doctrine, when it distinguishes substance and faculty, is not opposed to the simplicity of the soul, but rather supports and illustrates it by showing what multiplicity of operation must follow from any integral composition.

After this discussion concerning the integrant parts, it will no longer be difficult to exclude from the soul every composition of

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thom., S. Theol., p. i., qu. 77, art. 1 and 2.

essential constituents. Of components that make up an essence, only one can be active, all others are of necessity passive,—that is, incomplete and indeterminate. For activity is consequent to the ultimate substantial perfection, to the essential form; and to admit more than one essential form in the same being is inconsistent. Consequently, no nature is composed of several active elements; and whenever such are discovered in a thing, they must be considered as integrant parts. Should, however, anybody not share this view of essential composition in general, he would be compelled to adopt it with regard to the human soul, if conceived to be essentially composite. For all rational acts, conceptions, judgments, ratiocinations, volitions require a simple active principle, and can impossibly be performed by a compound one. Besides, if there be several active principles in the essence of the soul, they must be in it sources of immanent action; for how could they otherwise constitute the vital principle? But this granted, evidently the unity of our life would be destroyed. If, therefore, a composition is admissible in the substance of our soul, it must be formed of an active and a passive element. Yet is there such a composition really conceivable? Decidedly not. The soul is the source of activity, even of the most perfect; it is the form which confers on us substantial completion, gives us a certain specific nature; whilst matter is the indeterminate, potential, and inactive constituent of our nature. Now, on the ground of these definitions, is it not quite inconsistent again to divide the soul into a material and a formal element, for so the passive and the active must be termed; and is it not most absurd to say that, what is merely passive concurs in constitution with that which is essentially active? This reason St. Thomas develops in the following way. "The soul," says he, "is the form either by its entire entity, or by a part of the same. If by its entire entity, matter, if understood to be a merely potential being, cannot be one of its constituents; for the form as such is an act, but mere potentiality cannot be a constituent of an act, since potentiality is repugnant to the act, being its opposite. If the soul is the form by a part only of its entity, we call that part alone soul, and the other, which it first actuates, the first subject animated by it."<sup>1</sup> We abstain from advancing other reasons taken from the specific nature of the human soul, as its

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<sup>1</sup> S. Theol. p. i., qu. 75, art. 5: "Respondeo dicendum quod anima non habet materiam; et hoc potest considerari dupliciter. Primo quidem ex ratione animæ in communi. Est enim de ratione animæ quod sit forma alicujus corporis. Aut igitur est forma secundum se totam, aut secundum aliquam partem sui. Si secundum se totam, impossibile est quod pars ejus sit materia, si dicatur materia aliquod ens in potentia tantum; quia forma, in quantum forma, est actus, id autem, quod est in potentia tantum, non potest esse pars actus, cum potentia repugnet actui, utpote contractum divisa. Si autem sit forma secundum aliquam partem sui, illam partem dicamus esse animam, et illam partem cujus primo est actus, dicemus esse primo animatum."

spirituality, to be proved later on, will be a further and final evidence of the same truth.

Essential composition, then, no less than integral is repugnant to the nature of the soul. This, therefore, is a simple substance, formed of no parts whatsoever. Hence it follows that the soul is not a body. In bodies there is always a substantial composition of essential parts, of matter and form, as the Scholastics taught, and of integrant parts, or of molecules, as all scientists admit. Moreover, the bodily substance, whatever may be its ultimate elements, must act as a compound. But the human soul is neither substantially composed nor can it bring its rational faculties into a compound action. St. Thomas<sup>1</sup> and his school have, on this account, demonstrated the simplicity of the soul by proving it not to be a body. The arguments of which they make use are nearly the same as we have set forth; some, however, they have taken from the specific nature of the bodily substance. Of these latter one deserves our special attention, since it may serve as a most efficient weapon in our warfare against materialism.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Scholastic system, or rather to the principles of sound reason, cognition in general consists in the expression of the similitude, the object by and within the cognitive principles. For whenever we are cognizant of a thing, we bear it, as it were, within ourselves; yet we have not its very reality in our mind or in our senses, at least if it is in the outer world; hence we possess only its likeness or its similitude gathered from it by our own operation. Beings, therefore, are qualified for the cognition of outward objects inasmuch as they are enabled to reproduce in themselves the forms of things distinct from them, and cognitive faculties expand the more, the wider their capacity is of receiving foreign forms. But bodies are unfit to receive the forms of other things. First, they are on the lowest grade of being, and as such they are not proportioned to the reception of the forms proper to higher grades. Secondly, the substantial forms of bodies themselves are contrary to one another and cannot at once exist in the same bodily subject, as can be seen in all substantial changes. By its impenetrability, moreover, one body excludes from itself the individual entity of the other, though of the same species. Thirdly, also among the bodily qualities there is a special opposition in consequence of their inhering in an extended and impenetrable subject. Thus, it is evident that bodies are contracted and confined to their own being so as to be unable to receive the form of whatever is distinct from them. This is, quite consequently, alleged by St. Thomas as the reason why they are destitute of cognition. He goes even farther and lays it down as a

<sup>1</sup> S. Theol., p. i., qu. 75, art. 1. Sum. c. gent. lib. i. c. 49 and 65.

<sup>2</sup> S. Theol., p. i., qu. 14, art. 1; qu. 84, art. 2.

principle, that elevation above matter is the foundation of cognitive power, and that a being is the better fitted for cognition the more immaterial it is. Hence he explains why animals have, and plants have not perception. Plants, says he, by vegetation take in the material substances of bodies; yet this being impenetrable to them, they only add it to the animated molecules which they already have. Animals, on the contrary, whilst they admit into their sensitive organs not the matter, but the material qualities of bodies, not only receive the accidental forms of outward objects in their very substance, but also give them a higher, a vital manner of existence. Conversely we must also infer that any being endowed with cognition must be elevated above matter, and that the more perfect its perception is, the farther it must recede from materiality. Now, the human soul is the source of the most extended knowledge; for it not only knows by the senses the material, but by the intellect also every kind of object, the supersensible and the spiritual, substance and accidents, essence and properties, causes and effects, the absolute and the relative. Hence the saying of Aristotle that the soul is as it were all,—that is, capable to receive the form of all things. What else, then, must we conclude but that our mind is by its nature itself completely distinct from all bodily substance, entirely opposed to it, and in some way infinitely raised above it?

Most valuable conclusions have we thus arrived at, all tending effectually to combat materialistic tendency. Anti-Christian science asserts that living bodies, even that of man, most carefully searched into, show no marks of a higher principle and manifest no activity that could not be exercised by the force of matter. And behold, if we compare vital with physical action, we at once find them to differ essentially, the one being immanent, the other transient, the one consisting in self-motion, the other implying inertness. We likewise understand it to be impossible that by any combination, however artificial, material power can be converted into vital, because composition does not change the nature of the elements and does not confer on the whole what was in no way pre-contained in the parts. Thus we discover, not by the senses, but by reason, in living beings, a substantial constituent essentially superior to matter. If we in particular examine into rational life and physical activity, we cannot but notice an irreconcilable opposition between them, and consequently conclude a difference between the principles from which they flow. All rational acts, whether of the intellect or of the will, require an essentially simple subject from which they proceed and in which they inhere, whereas material actions are produced by a compound physical agent; rational activity is unextended and free from multiplicity, material operation is extended and consists of many partial acts, one outside

the other, even as to space. Matter cannot be cognitive, the principle of rational life is the source of the widest cognition; the one, therefore, is most restricted in its nature, another most universal, another most exclusive, another most comprehensive. Can there be a greater opposition and a more glaring distinction between two principles? Indeed, not to perceive the existence of the soul and its superiority over matter, is to shut the eyes of the intellect to the most radiant light.

It is with the knowledge of the principle of life as with the science of this visible universe. At first, we notice in nature only the phenomena that strike our senses. Nor will he who has no desire or no ability to inquire into them see anything beyond them. But he who begins to analyze them finds the source from which they spring, and the forces by which they are produced, and the regularity with which they recur. Searching thus into the causes of what is obvious, the scientist penetrates into the intrinsic constitution of things and the innermost recess of their powers, and becomes cognizant of the wonderful might, greatness, and order of nature. Similarly at first sight we perceive in the starry heavens nothing but a multitude of shining points. But let the astronomer apply his instruments, let him compare star with star, follow their course, and resolve into its elements the light which they reflect. He will soon find new worlds and new systems of boundless extension; he will detect that the points which we scarcely perceive with the naked eye are heavenly bodies many times larger than our earth; he will discover on them seas and continents and with certainty infer the very material of which they are made; he will mark a wondrous harmony in their orbits, a mutual attraction and dependence without the least disturbance in universal motion, the greatest variety in an endless space, with perfect order and unity. So likewise by self-consciousness and experience we are directly cognizant of our acts without reaching our interior. Yet if by sound philosophy and without prejudice we examine such operations, we are led to the soul as their last and innermost principle within us, to a substance as their support, to a constituent of our nature as their efficient cause. Then, if we continue to reflect and inquire seriously, a new sphere is disclosed before our eyes and a new kind of perfection; for we understand the soul not to be composite as all things around us, but simple; not to have its being constituted like other parts of the universe by a simplicity of components, but by consummate oneness and simplicity; not to be restricted to its form, as bodies are, by their impenetrability, but to be all-comprising, apt to receive everything and to represent within itself all that is, all entity, all beauty. A nature, indeed, more widely extended than the heavens, transcending in perfection all visible creation.