The validity of question "what is man" and at all weight of philosophical theory of human being seems to do not doubt. This problem was undertaken also by St. Thomas Aquinas and his solution of this matter is very interesting.

At the beginning the study of the St. Thomas Aquinas’ conception of human being we should inquire into what is the inherent structure of the natural being and then go on the peculiarities and differences of things. With respect to living beings, it is first necessary to ask what all of them have in common and only then inquire into the various types of living beings. What is the common in all living beings is a soul. It means that all living beings in the natural world have an anima. That is why Aristotle begins his research of living being with a treatise on the soul. St. Thomas has accepted it.\(^1\)

In this perspective both Aristotle and St. Thomas did not begin the study of physical things by isolating their from the natural world as the fundamental

---

\(^1\) Thomas Aquinas, In I De anima, Lectio 1, n. 1, “Rerum autem animatarum omnium quoddam genus est et ideo in consideratione rerum animatarum oportet primo considerare ea quae sunt comminia omnibus animatis, postmodum vero illa quae propria st cuilibet rei animatae. [...] Aristoteles ergo volens tradere scientiam de ipsis rebus animatis, primo tradit scientiam de anima, postmodum vero determinat de propriis singulis animatis in sequentibus libris".
Consequently, the study of the soul ranks high both in the dignity of its object and in the exactness of its knowledge. In this point one doubtful principle exists, because according to Aristotle these two criteria are seldom realized in the same science. Metaphysics, for example, may seek knowledge of the principal and the highest object – it means being as being (ens inquantum ens). And according to it metaphysics is the most speculative, theoretical science of the human intellect, but consequently its method is a far cry from the precision of the another natural sciences like mathematics and physics. Metaphysics asks about the primary principle of the whole reality, mathematics about the formal conditions of this reality and physics about spiritual and material aspects of it.

Where is the place in that structure of sciences for the soul and science about it? It is no doubt that the problem of the soul is the metaphysical question. A science that ranks high in the worthiness of its object is likely to rank low in the exactness of its knowledge and vice versa. Meanwhile it is sure that St. Thomas thinks here of the two criteria as dignity of object and certainty of knowledge. Thus, we are not only seeking the knowledge as cognition of something that ranks high on the ontological scale, our knowledge of the soul is noteworthy for its certainty. For St. Thomas certainty of knowledge of the soul is grounded in human experience of life, it is a certainty that everyone is alive.

Consciousness of the natural – physical world is also consciousness of the human activity and corpuscularity. It is ordinary experience of individuating possibility, for example: I have experience it when I am aware of I have full control on my body, I can open and close my eyes, move my hands, my legs and so on. Strictly speaking, I am alive because of the vital activities in which I engage. It is ordinary, immediate experience of man. The principle of this consciousness is experience of understanding, which is the primary function of the soul. St. Thomas confirmed it in his book “On There Being Only One Intellect”. He said that we would not ask what intellect is, if we did not have the experience of understanding: “The power and irrefutability of this demonstration is clear from the fact that whoever wishes to differ with it necessarily says what is absurd. That this singular man understands is manifest, for we would never ask about intellect unless we understood; nor when we ask...
about intellect are we asking about anything other than that whereby we understand.”

The certainty that man has a soul is based on his certainty that he has a different make up from bodies that cannot perform operations that does someone alone. Consequently this certainty is not to be confused with the clear and distinct knowledge of what the soul is. For that reason Aristotle in his famous book “On the Soul” writes that it is principal to know what sets off living bodies like themselves from nonliving things. In this context he gives us specific definition of the soul. The most general speaking the soul is called the primary actuality of a physically organized body. The route to this definition assigns the thing to be defined to a type or class (genus and species) and shows how it differs from other things of that type. We must remember as well that in the ground of Aristotle’s metaphysical specification every thing can be categorized most generally by means of the distinction between substantia and accidens. The question is here to which class of them falls soul.

According to substance we have several senses if its: firstly, substance can mean form or essence, that in virtue of which a thing is called a “this”. Secondly, it can mean matter, that which is in itself a “this”. Thirdly, substance can mean the compound of both. Matter in the strictly sense is pure potentiality, form in the other side is actuality, but actuality can be distinguished further, when for example we can distinguish between one who actually has some skill but is not using it and one who has it and is actually using it.

In this way human substance is primary compound of body as matter – potentiality and soul as form – actuality. The being of body is autonomous unity in the natural world as physical object. But some kind of bodies have life in themselves, others do not. If some bodies are alive and some are not, it means that life cannot be explained by the fact that something is only a body. Also body need something other to be alive. On the other hand a physical object is alive, because is composition of the actuality and potentiality to be alive and the soul is substantial form of the living body, the actuality of a body.

---


4 Thomas Aquinas, In II De anima, lectio 1, n. 233. See also article: M. De Corte, La définition aristotélicienne de l’âme, in: Revue thomiste 45 (1939), p. 460-508.

5 Aristotle, op. cit., 412a 14-16.
potentially having life. According to St. Thomas, Aristotle means in this paradigm when he explained that body having life would be taken to be compound living substance. St. Thomas writes: “He (it means Aristotle) begins demonstrating the definition of soul that has already been given in the way mentioned, namely, through effects. And he uses this argument. That which is the first principle of living is the act and form of living things; but soul is the first principle of living in living things; therefore it is the act and form of living body”.

This paragraph is clear exposition of the role and function of the soul and body in human substance. But now there is necessary to analyze some another aspects of the St. Thomas’ conception of humanity.

The title Doctor Angelicus that was given St. Thomas by followers is not accidental. It walked here about something more perceptible and concrete, namely about science making up the indispensable key for understanding of the whole of Thomistic philosophy and his anthropology. Surely, for St. Thomas, theological speculations over the angels’ nature made up the important element of philosophical considerations at all. He sketches the distinct line of demarcation between angels, that is the world of pure spirits in the one side, and men, that is the world of the psycho-physical beings in the other side. The human soul, indifferently whether considered in state of connection with body, or else under the examination as abstract post mortem (after death), the human soul becomes something in itself different from the angel. That difference does not treat to difference of degree only, but it is ontological difference.

The angel’s essence is pure spiritual, which is unconnected in its existence with matter. Consequently, the angel is pure form only, in opposite to the human soul, which is connected with matter. This composition is fundamental relationship, though form does not be connected with matter inseparably.

---

7 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae I, q. 51, a. 1, conclusio: “In quanquumque autem genere invenitur aliquid imperfectum, oportet praexistere aliquid perfectum in genero illo. Sunt igitur aliquae substantiae perfecte intellectuales in natura intellectuali, non indigentes acquirere scientiam a sensibilibus rebus. Non igitur omnes substantiae intellectuales sunt unitae corporibus, sed aliquae sunt a corporibus separatae, et has dicimus angelos.”.
8 Thomas Aquinas, Quaestio disputata de anima II, conclusio: “...anima humana [...] est quaedam forma unita corpori, ita tamen quod non sit a corpore totaliter comprehensa quasi ei immersa, sicut aliae formae materialis, sed excedat capacitatem totius materiae corporalis...”.

---
It means that in inherent structure of man nor the body neither the soul are not completely independent substances. We have to deal with two partial substances here, consist oneself together the one total human's substance. St. Thomas shows that man is constructed as the whole, completely organized structure with the form as activity element and matter as potentiality element, that is able to be organized by form. Activity element of that structure is called soul, potentiality is called body together with all after – effects, which are capable to lead out from Aristotle’s conception.

According to that position to true substance and unity of man was come then, when we have to deal with the concrete, really existing man as the human being, and so with the whole – *compositum* constructed with this soul and this body. To be sure that in the specific sense the soul is independent to possibility existence apart from the body because it is able to activity without the physical functions. That is follow of the principle – *operatio sequitur esse*. However, such existence of the soul is very imperfect and incomplete. St. Thomas underlines that the connection of the soul with is not damage for the soul, but just the opposite this connection perfects the soul – *ad melius animae*.

In this perspective the soul is the part of humanity, it is not meanwhile the spontaneous form, which links itself with the matter only accidental. That connection as “union” can be visible the most clearly in the Thomistic science about two genera of happiness; first of them called intensive belongs to some deceased man immediately post mortem, the second called extensive and comes after the resurrection of bodies.

Ressurection will to rise not only theological character, connected with belief, but it finds important philosophical reason. It grows as metaphysical necessary renewed connection of the soul and body into the independence *compositum*, which makes up irrefutable and inseparable substantial being.

---

9 Thomas Aquinas, In Librum de anima II, 1.
10 Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae I, q. 118, a. 3, conclusio: “Cum anima sine corpore existens non habeat suae naturae perfectionem, nec Deus ab imperfectis opus suum inchoaverit; simpliciter fetendum est animas simul cum corporibus creari et infundi”.
11 Ibidem, q. 89, a. 1, conclusio: “Si [...] animae humanae sic essent institutae a Deo ut intelligenter per modum qui competit substantiis separatis, non haberent cognitionem perfectam, sed confusam in communi. Ad hoc ergo quod perfectam et priopriam cognitionem de rebus habere possent, sic naturaliter sunt instituta, ut corporibus uniantur, et sic ab ipsis rebus sensibilibus propriam de eis cognitionem accipient, sicut homines rudes ad scientiam induci non possunt nisi per sensibilia exempla. [...] Propter malius animae est ut corpori uniatur, et intelligat per conversionem ad phantasmata.”
12 Ibidem III, q. 50, a. 2, ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum, quod Verbum Dei dicitur unitum carui mediante anima, inquantum caro per animam pertinet ad humanam
The very important consequence of such position is accepting by St. Thomas only one form in man as a concrete being. In order to explain this position we must retire to Aristotle. According to him in every proper being as composition is not possible several substantial forms, but only one form, which updating possibility of one matter – \textit{forma dat esse}. Since such man is not accidental composition, but substantial unity in sense \textit{unum per se}, he has to be also full and true composition. In this meaning in every man steps out only one substantial form: "$\textit{in hoc homine non est alia forma substantialis quam anima rationalis; et per eam homo non solum est homo, sed animal, vivum, et corpus, et substantia, et ens...}^{13}$.

The human soul in the widely sense as a form is constitutively substantial form in a man and this form acts in him all function, from the lowest (corporeitaties, vegetativeness) to the highest (intellectual life).\textsuperscript{14} This proposition is a pure symptom of Aristotle’s hylomorphism and was applied by St. Thomas with all consequences in the science on human being.

In the result of that position St. Thomas was often accused of the special kind of materialism. According to this opinion he has degraded the Augustinian model of pure spirituality to conception, where the soul becomes in some special way dependent on the body. There is no doubt, that it is the unfair opinion. The prominent Polish expert of Thomistic philosophy St. Swiezawski wrote about as following: “...there is not speaking here about some faithless of the spirituality of the soul – but, that in the human conception of St. Thomas the soul states not only some origin of the spiritual life, but the same soul becomes also keystone of the uniformity of whole, psycho-physical human

\textit{naturam, quam Filius Dei assumere intendebat; non autem ita quod anima sit quasi medium ligans unita. Habet autem caro ab anima quod pertineat ad humanam naturam, etiam postquam anima separatur ab ea, inquantum scilicet in carne morta remanet ex divina ordinatione quidam ordo ad resurrectionem. Et ideo non tollitur unio divinitatis ad carnem.”.

\textsuperscript{13} Thomas Aquinas, De spiritualibus creaturis, III c, ad 14. See also: Summa theologiae I, q. 76, a. 3: “Sed enim ponamus animam corpori uniri sicut formam, ommino impossibile videtur plures animas per essentiam differentes in uno corpore esse. [...] Sic ergo dicendum quod eadem numero est anima in homine sensitiva et intellectiva et nutritiva.”.

\textsuperscript{14} See the very interesting consequens of that position: Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae I, q. 77, a. 1: “Nam anima secundum suam essentiam est actus. Si ergo ipsa essentia animae esset immediatum operationis principium, semper habens animam actu haberet opera vitae; sicut semper habens animam actu est vivum. Non enim inquantum est forma est actus ordinatus ad ulteriorem actum, sed est ultimus terminus generationis”.

p. 6
life. Hence it appears so characteristic junction of spiritual functions, even highest with carnals and at all the interrelationship of the soul and body on all fulfilled degrees of the human functions”\(^\text{15}\). Strictly speaking the composition of the soul as form and the body as matter is necessary relationship unity. The soul – form is that, what general, whereas the body – matter is the principle of individuation.

Dispute about the principle of individuation and rule of the soul has been very important problem of scholasticism in 13\(^{\text{th}}\) century. It caused also the great doctrinal difficulties, because from isolated immortality of human soul consequences were going far. They induced namely Averroes and the Latin Averroists, first of all Siger of Brabant, contradictable isolated the immortality of the human soul.\(^\text{16}\) In that ground widely discussed by contemporaries theory of monopsychism came into being.

Thomas absolutely threw aside such solution. He bases on the Aristotelian proposition about the matter as principle of individuation, as well as on unrepeatability of the individual immortality soul and composed original conception of man as commensuratio. That means that in human being the body does not is to add accidentally to the soul (\(\text{ei accidit}\)), but the essence of the given soul states its subordinating – commensuratio hereinto “this” body.\(^\text{17}\)

Commensuratio – subordinating strictly heads for St. Thomas with fundamental relationship of the unity formal – material occurs in every man, which is understood as specific compounded substance. Commensuratio of “this” body lasts for the given soul so long as the soul lasts itself. It provides in the soul the connection with matter through all the time when soul has got existence, as well spiritual soul, which was abstracted across death from the body. Such solution makes possible the individual immortality, raising in this way rank and

\(^{15}\) St. Swiezawski, Albertynsko–tomistyczna a kartezjanska koncepcja człowieka, in: St. Swiezawski, Człowiek sredniowiecza, Warszawa 1999, p. 107. See also: Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae I, q. 91, a. 3, ad. 1: “Necessarium enim fuit quod homo inter omnia animalia respectu sui corporis haberet maximum cerebrum: tum ut liberius in eo perficerentur operationes interiorum virium sensitivorum, quae sunt necessariae ad intelectus operationem [...] tum etiam ut frigiditas cerebri temperaret calorem cordis, quem necesse est in homine abundare, ad hoc quod homo sit rectas staturae. Magnitudo autem cerebri propter eius humiditatem est impedimentum olfactus, qui requirit siccitatem.”

\(^{16}\) For Averroes’ conception of immortal soul see: O. N. Mohammed, Averroes’ Doctrine of Immortality, Waterloo 1984, p. 87-88.

\(^{17}\) Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra gentiles II, q. 73. See also: De spiritualibus creaturis IX, ad 4.
validity of the composition, which constituted of the man.\(^{18}\)

In this way all differences among souls are not accidental, but substantial, and matter becomes the basic of them. Matter is here widely understood, it does not understand only directly body as corpuscularity falling every man. It expresses rather possibility – potentiality, and so elementary factor, which is able to act. It means that the matter – potentiality marks in concrete man's case whole material and spiritual area, in which man lives. On the other hand it is all, what is constituted itself concrete of *matter quantitate signata* of human existence.

Simultaneously there is place here for the divine act of creation, through that God appoints to existence immortal soul as independent substance. In this perspective the rule of God mighty be compared with the activity of brilliant artist, who through His genius created human souls.

The partly consequence of such decisions is also accepted by St. Thomas of specific epistemological solutions. According to St. Thomas in man – similarly to Aristotle – the human soul seems to be nothing more but unrecorded board – *tabula rasa*. Fundamental rule plays here the Aristotle's condition: *nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerat in sensu*. All therefore, what we get to know, we get to know through senses. St. Thomas does not hesitate to keep for Aristotle, that the human intellectual abilities are dependent in decisive degree on our physical data. Further it depends on competence our senses – the special place occupies here the sense of sight, which the best testifies about sensibility physical constitution on stimuli.\(^{19}\)

However if whole our knowing its beginning has in senses, then the human soul is not able to get to know directly itself.\(^{20}\) It is possible only through use of principle of causality, going out from usual symptoms of physical life, possible ascertainable experientially and coming to principles or causes such

\(^{18}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles* II, q. 81: „...commensurationes remanent in animabus, etiam perventibus corporibus, sicut et ipsae euram substantiae manent quasi a corporibus secundum ess non dependentes. Sunt enim animae secundum substantias suas formae corporum; [...] in quantum autem formae sunt, oportet eae esse corporibus commensuratas. Unde patet quod ipsae diversae commensurationes manent in animabus separatis, et per consequens pluralitas”.

\(^{19}\) Ibidem III, q. 84.

\(^{20}\) Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 87, a. 1, conclusio: „Intellectus humanus, cum se habeat in genere rerum intelligibilium, ut ens in potentia tantum, non cognoscit seipsum per suam essentiam, sed per actum quo intellectus agens abstrahit a sensilibus species intelligibiles.“. See also: A. Anzenbacher, Die Intentionalität bei Thomas von Aquin und Edmund Husserl, Wien-München 1972, p. 44-49.
symptoms. Finally in the whole that order one should dismiss at last to the soul, which in this meaning will be understood as the final physical cause.

Such position the acknowledgement of soul is cause for symptoms of physical life. Soul is so sure border also in meeting. In St. Thomas’ conception of the human being was something very characteristic for that fact. Namely, if the fundamental condition of humanism at all is pointed out dignity and exceptionality of human place in order of creatures, then man of St. Thomas comes it perfectly. The man is here created as the person – persona, it means he possesses strong grounded, the highest position in the natural world. Each kind of activity should be steered on the man in aim and preserve of his exceptionality and dignity.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21} See: M. Buber, Das Problem des Menschen, Heidelberg 1982, p. 28: „Thomas’ Weltsystem eine eigene Gattung ganz besonderer Art, weil in ihm die Menschenseele, der niederste der Geister, mit dem Menschenleibe, dem höchsten der Körperlichen Dinge, substantiell vereinigt ist, so daß er gleichsam als ,der Horizont und die Grenzscheide der geistigen und der körperlichen Natur‘ erscheint.“.