

Pázmány Péter Catholic University
Faculty of Theology

The Immortality of the Soul
and Basic Aspects of the
Original and Final
Integrity of the Body
in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas
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The Actuality of Thomist Interpretation
in the Recent Theology

Thesis of the Doctoral Dissertation

Written by:
Orvos Levente

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The immortality of the soul is one of the hardest philosophical topics in the history of philosophy. The reason of this hardness is not only the hardness of arguments or texts or whatever, but because of not enough scholar is reading on or dealing with metaphysical questions like this. Of course they not even working on that kind of topics, then, consequently there are hardly enough studies available. This is true especially about Aquinas's writings also. Actually in the recent years in some American Universities working on Aquinas became more and more popular. So this thing gives a little help.

As a matter of fact the actuality of this topic has given the debate which is going on 60 years now among christian theologians about soul, self, immortality and resurrection. The first voice in the row was M. Luther. According to him the soul is an alien body in the biblical tradition effected by the ancient Greek influence, and this was a non intended process. So he tried to restore some ideological and pure biblical construction by cleansing the deposit of faith from this so called Hellenism. Telling the truth the Hellenism was an essential part of the Christianity back in the Septuagint-era which has written approx. 300 BC. Because of the fact that the "Writings" for Jesus or the first Christians was this sort of Bible contains a couple of more books than the Hebrew one influenced by Greek philosophical tradition. Since Luther and Calvin of course the whole Protestantism became anti-Hellenist and anti-philosophical for the same reason.

In the mid twentieth century at first Karl Barth and then Oscar Cullmann and the Catholic Gisbert Greshake has been worked out a new philosophy-free thesis which bypassed the so called intermediate state or intermediate time. They need to maintain this because they wanted to avoid the term: soul. According to the traditional view soul is an essential part of man and after man's death the soul survive the corruption of the body. Barth and Cullmann refused platonic dualism, at least which they thought it was, so for them man is inseparable one, who do not has a soul and a body, it is just a whole living entity. Now, when man dies, the entire living entity dies, so if they want to save the personal continuity in death they need to state that the resurrection takes place immediately at the moment of death. They did so.

But at this point they have to face serious problems. On one hand by supposing that man resurrects immediately implies two bodies: one in the grave and one which is in the eternity at the end of time. On the other hand stating the thesis called resurrection in death means that there is two kind of time, not as the Greeks called them *kronos* and *kairos* but *kronos* and anything else because at the resurrection man reaches his or her final state. Consequently that eternal present which Barth and Cullmann are talking about is outside of the historical time. As a matter of fact Cullmann was an exception among them for he did not mean that resurrection is happening immediately after death. He implies a so called temporal gap in his model between death and resurrection, but not very clear who is or what is that existing in that temporal gap if the man is absolutely dead.

Cardinal Ratzinger refutes these theories, because of the listed problems, and calls for the rehabilitation of the soul. As he said first of all that accepting the philosophical background or influence in Christianity does not include accepting Platonist dualism. He offers a traditional way of saving the word soul without the dualist trap. According to him the modern theologians has forgotten

rereading the real Aquinas, because his original teaching – not the ideology of New-Scholasticism – can solve all those arising problems in the new approaches, which they hold much more serious than can be solved with the classical vocabulary and tools. Against regular views Thomas Aquinas did not accept fully the teaching of Aristotle even less accepted Platonic dualism, or – as one can think – in Ratzinger's interpretation a kind of “built in immortality”, but offered a special Thomistic way of holding the immortality of soul without stating an indestructible entity which could be an object of hate or rejection for some modern thinker.

In a dissertation like this before describing Aquinas' solution we need to go all across the way of history of Philosophy to let one know how the development of ideas went away until the mature Scholastic thinking of the Middle Ages. First of all we have to mention Plato' unavoidable role, who discovered at first in history, that all the things of the world stand on two basic principles: one material and one spiritual. The soul in Plato's philosophical system is purely a spiritual entity that is a part of divine way of being. For him the soul is the reality but the matter is not.

In Aristotle's – there is no doubt – enhanced theory the soul remains a spiritual principle, but not against matter. For the Philosopher body is not the jail of soul, being with the matter is not against the soul's nature, on the contrary, human soul needs body in the process of cognition. So when man dies it is true that the soul is immortal as in Platonism, but the separated soul cannot live like a complete human person. This is a big difference between Platonism and the view of Aristotle. For living a real human life soul is dependent on the material principle. If this is true, some may ask whether the Philosopher trusted in the separated soul's independent being after death. Yes, he trusted in it, but scholars are arguing if this soul is a part of the human composite or it is not. It seems Aristotle didn't want to break up the unity of human substance, conse-

quently the so called *anima separata* (separated soul) which survives death, is not the property of the person. Indeed Aristotle's theory has kept Plato's immortal soul, but this sameness does not mean anything. Because in Aristotle's thesis this indestructible soul is not man's own soul, consequently human person in its totality perishes after death.

Saint Thomas Aquinas has followed each great philosopher, but as a matter of fact his monumental scholastic synthesis was much more influenced by Aristotle. According to the public philosophical opinion Aquinas was not just influenced by Aristotle, but he followed the great ancient scholar almost literally. This means Aquinas' *summa* is on one hand not an original thesis, on the other hand it is completely useless reading St. Thomas, because he didn't write anything new. This opinion is false of course. It is true that Aquinas has respectfully considered Aristotle's work, but because he was not a Christian of course, Aquinas cannot follow him in all. There was a great difference between them especially in the topic of soul's immortality. Aristotle, as mentioned, believed in an eternal soul, but according to him this soul is a kind of godlike entity much more than human. So the philosopher's concept of an immortal soul was equal to believe in a human soul that perishes after death. Aquinas has revalued this opinion. So he converted Aristotle's model as the following: there is an immortal soul, which is a part of the human composite. This soul is immortal because it is a spiritual being, of course connected to the material body. For it is not as independent as the souls of the Angels. The human soul is the form of the body and so the whole human substance consists of both principles.

The structure of the soul is very similar to that of Aristotle. Other similarity is that the survival after death is just because of the rationality. But there is a significant difference at this point between Thomas and Aristotle. Actually Aquinas' and Aristotle's model has an adversarial relationship, because according to Thomas the whole rational human soul is immortal, but for Aristotle only

the active part (*intellectus agens*).

Aquinas' arguments for the immortality stands on the independent (*per se subsistent*) being of the soul. This means that although soul is the form of the body, the soul can work without the matter because of the spiritual functionality. And if it can work without the matter then it can exist without the matter too. Aquinas write about this separated soul as *substantia incompleta* which means that human soul after death is much more different than angels' soul. An angel doesn't need body to live, because it is a *substantia incompleta* i.e. an entity that is complete at its state of being. In this sense the state of a separated soul is similar to a dead person, the only difference is that soul is metaphysically alive, but cannot move, act or communicate as a living person.

I had to write about the original immortality of the body. According to Aquinas the body before the original sin was immortal, but this immortality wasn't the matter's own attribution. It was a special divine donation for the sinless and obedient man. The body was the same as ours now after the sin, so not the body's physical nature could avoid death. So when the original sin took place God didn't have to create a different mortal human nature. The only thing has changed is the gift of God perished due to sin.

Not less important thing to clear up the sameness of the body before death and the body after resurrection. If the human person dies then who is that resurrect at the last day – one may ask. According to Aquinas the separated soul is not really the human person for the soul and body person is dead, but this not means that the human person totally perished in death. Thomas shows that the numerical sameness is given also for the separated soul and also for the resurrect body. Consequently that man will resurrect who has died before. It doesn't matter if some had a regular funeral of other died in water or fire, for God doesn't need the same matter to create numerically the same body at resurrection. Without this statement it is no sense to talk about immortality.

Summarizing we can say that Luther and that theologian who stated that immortal soul means that original Christianity influenced by dualistic ideology are wrong. My goal is to show that immortal soul in the Thomistic system doesn't mean Platonism. For Aquinas the human person is soul and body together – it is one integrated entity. He cannot avoid talking about the separated soul after death on the other hand, because, if the human person perishes in its totality in death, there will not be a connection between the earth and resurrected body.