



**Piotr Mazur**

## **The Originality of Thomas Aquinas’ Anthropology, its Validity and Future**

The thought of Saint Thomas is among the most important intellectual achievements in the history of mankind. In the several hundred years since Aquinas’ death, a vast literature has been produced on his philosophy and way of philosophizing, which even today finds persistent interpreters, propagators, as well as continuators, as indicated by the multitude of forms of Thomism. The historical and systematic vitality of Aquinas’ thought is one of the most important testimonies to its universality, evident in its understanding of the world, God, and man.<sup>1</sup> While the thought has received much attention, it also meets various challenges. Some of these are due to the peculiarities of the system itself, which, encountering difficulties through the efforts of successive generations of Thomists, continues to develop, while others are the result of a changing philosophical and cultural context that affects the way it is interpreted and the assessment of its usefulness in explaining reality. Some of these challenges have already been answered by

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<sup>1</sup> “Man” refers to any human being, male or female.



Aquinas himself, while others are yet to be sought in the context of his system or even beyond it. The fact remains, however, that Thomism, with its metaphysical image of man, still has to fight for a place in modern awareness.

### **The Originality of Thomism in the Historical Aspect**

Thomas's thought was one of the great syntheses of the golden age of the Middle Ages, along with the achievements of thinkers such as Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus. This synthesis consisted of adapting Aristotelian philosophy, including anthropology, to the conditions (philosophical, religious, cultural and social) of Christianity. His anthropology, like all philosophy in the conditions of the 13th century, was not only something new, but also something revolutionary and original. The revolutionary significance of St. Thomas's thought, and the radicality of the change that took place through it in both philosophy and theology, cannot be understood without taking into account the context of its origin. Throughout the centuries, the thought of the Christian West was influenced by the Platonic and neo-Platonic image of the world and man. Until the 13th century, the medieval Western world essentially had Aristotle's logical writings at its disposal. The discovery of his systematic writings, which took place first through the influence of Arabic and Jewish thought, and then through direct translations from Greek into Latin, became a source of serious intellectual ferment. The emergence of new ideas and the free exchange of ideas were fostered by the scientific communities of the universities that were being established at that time. Although Thomas's thought was a synthesis of all scholasticism, it was not a development and culmination of scholastic studies of Aristotle's legacy. As Gilson notes,

On the level of pure philosophy, his doctrine cannot be understood as a further stage in the progressive discovery of Aristotle by the Latins. Thomism was not the upshot of a better understanding of Aristotle. It did not come out of Aristotelianism by way of evolution, but of revolution.<sup>2</sup>

Due to a tangle of cultural conditions, Thomas' thought carried with it an intellectual revolution. It owed much of its revolutionary nature to the Aristotelianism it contained, an Aristotelianism that cannot be negated or overstated. As Copleston notes,

St. Thomas's Aristotelianism is so obvious that one sometimes tends to forget the non-Aristotelian elements in his thought, though such elements certainly exist.<sup>3</sup>

The omission of non-Aristotelian elements in Aquinas' thought can hardly be considered serious. Although he clearly drew on Aristotle's achievements, especially in terms of the metaphysical orientation of his views, method and language, his thought was so different that, as Gilson ironically states, Thomas, despite his efforts, found it difficult to hide behind his Aristotelianism:

Thomas uses the language of Aristotle everywhere to make the Philosopher say that there is only one God, the pure Act of Being, Creator of the world, infinite and omnipotent, a providence for all that which is, intimately present to everyone of his creatures, especially to men, everyone of whom is endowed with a personally immortal soul

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<sup>2</sup> Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 365–366.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Copleston, *History of Philosophy*, vol. 2, *Medieval Philosophy* (New York: Image, 1993), 427.

naturally able to survive the death of its body. The best way to make Aristotle say so many things he never said was not to show that, had he understood himself better than he did, he could have said them. For indeed Aristotle seems to have understood himself pretty well. He has said what he had to say, given the meaning which he himself attributed to the principles of his own philosophy. Even the dialectical acumen of Saint Thomas Aquinas could not have extracted from the principles of Aristotle more than what they could possibly yield. The true reason why his conclusions were different from those of Aristotle was that his own principles themselves were different. As will be seen, in order to metamorphose the doctrine of Aristotle, Thomas has ascribed a new meaning to the principles of Aristotle. As a philosophy, Thomism is essentially a metaphysics. It is a revolution in the history of the metaphysical interpretation of the first principle, which is "being."<sup>4</sup>

Thomas's thought was revolutionary in relation to what it was inspired by and what it synthesized. In relation to Christian thought fundamentally inspired by Platonism, it was revolutionary because it appealed to the legacy of Aristotle. On the other hand, it was revolutionary in relation to Aristotle's philosophy because it carried with it a view of all reality that was alien to the Stagirite and an image of man different from his view. The expression of this difference from Aristotelianism was its orthodoxy, which, by the way, distinguished it from unorthodox, Averroistic interpretations of Aristotelianism.<sup>5</sup> Because of its Aristotelianism, Thomas's thought revolutionized the medieval view of the world and man. And at the same time, the conception of the world and man contained in it was revolutionary in rela-

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<sup>4</sup> Etienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, 366.

<sup>5</sup> In 1277, the Bishop of Paris, Stephan Tempier, condemned a number of theses of Aquinas' system. This condemnation was cancelled by Pope John XXII two years after the canonisation of St Thomas, which took place in 1323.

tion to what the Stagirite had proposed. And already this dual revolutionary nature testifies to the originality of both Thomas's entire system and his anthropology. This external, historical-philosophical picture of Aquinas' thought gains even more focus in the light of systematic analysis.

### **The Specificity of Aquinas' Conception of Man**

St. Thomas's picture of the human psyche primarily in terms of its functioning is essentially Aristotelian, but his conception of man is quite different. According to the Stagirite, man is a complex entity, a spiritual-corporeal substance. The soul is the reason for the ontological unity and identity of man. It is also the principle of life, which, as an act of being and a substantial form, organizes matter into a body, with which it creates an ontic unity. The soul, by virtue of its dispositions, carries out vegetative, sensory and mental functions in the body or with the body, actualizing man's ontic potentialities through them. Although Thomas shares these views in principle, he arrives at a different picture of man and a different understanding of the soul, which in Aristotle's view

is bound to matter and without it loses its reality, and thus the psyche belongs to the material world and shares its fate, while the intellect is universal and abstract and is immortal as such, and, as it were, incarnate and individualized.<sup>6</sup>

The reason for this difference lies in the application of a new interpretive key, which was Aquinas' introduction of the problem of exis-

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<sup>6</sup> Vittorio Possenti, *Osoba nową zasadą* [The person as a new principle], trans. Jarosław Merecki (Lublin: PTTA, 2017), 144.

tence and thus its ontic contingency into the metaphysical understanding of reality. As Prof. Maryniarczyk explains,

Thomas builds his existential realism on the foundation of Aristotelian realism, which was not exactly an explanation of the riddle of the existence of the world and concrete being, in which the problem of non-necessary (contingent) existence stands as the main task to be explained. (...) The world was not created out of something. So the existing world, and everything that makes up this world (including matter), ultimately has its justification by reference to the First Cause of the existence of this world (causal-creative cause). In this is expressed the essence of Thomas's revolution, the object of which was the Aristotelian conception of being and vision of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Thomas's replacement of the essential understanding of being with the existential view was original and revolutionary not only for the image of the world, but also for the image of man:

Aquinas' anthropology moves toward the concept of *esse personale*, showing the human person as a specific type of existence. Based on such an understanding of man (as a person—a unique individual), it is then possible to resolve disputes about the nature of man, such as the problem of the unity of being (based on the unity of the personal *esse*), where personal existence, which is both the deepest existential principle and the most intimate moment of the person's manifestation in the world, shows a common perspective to unilateral views of the subject and object.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *Tomizm. Dla-czego?* [Thomism. Why?], author's own translation (Lublin: Lubelska Szkoła Filozofii Chrześcijańskiej, 1994), 20.

<sup>8</sup> Arkadiusz Gudaniec, "Esse personale. Zwrot w rozumieniu człowieka" [*Esse personale*. A shift in the understanding of man], in *Nieprzemijająca nowość filozofii św. Tomasza z Akwinu* [The enduring novelty of the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas],

Thomas's achievement was to see the personal act of existence as constituting the being of man, but the scope of changes in the image of the human being was definitely broader and deeper than it might seem, as the table shows:

|  | ARISTOTLE   | THOMAS   |
|--|---|--|
| The concept of being                   | Essential—entities owe their reality to what they are: content, essence, substance form.                                    | Existential—entities owe their reality to the act of existence.  |
| Image of reality                       | The world is eternal. Entities arise and perish in the sublunar world as a result of movement initiated by the First Mover. | The world is created. Beings are contingent and as such owe their existence and continuance (providence) to God.   |
| Man's position in reality              | Man is the most perfect material entity in the sublunar world.  | Man as a person belongs to the most perfect entities in all reality ( <i>persona significat id quod est perfectissimum in tota natura</i> ) <sup>9</sup> |
| The cause of man's position in reality | Human nature is rational  | The person as a subject ( <i>suppositum</i> ) exists in rational nature.   |

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ed. A. Maryniarczyk, N. Gondek, W. Daszkiewicz, author's own translation (Lublin: PTTA, 2018), 204.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 29, a. 3. Editio Leonina (Roma: Ex Typographia Polyglotta, S.C. Propaganda Fide, 1888), 331

|  | ARISTOTLE   | THOMAS   |
|--|---|--|
| Persistence of man's position in reality | Man's position depends on the functionality (ability to use) of reason—the status of a free man or man versus the status of a slave or woman.   | A person's position is independent of the level of functioning and degree of actualization of reason.  |
| Man's relationship to the world          | Immanence to the material world with manifestations of intentional transcendence (acts of reason)   | Real immanence (through the body) and real transcendence (through the spiritual soul) to the material world.                                     |
| The way of human existence               | Man's existence is finite. He is a momentary flash of perfection (activity similar to the Absolute) in the material world. Individual or collective (?) immortality applies only to something in man (active reason). <sup>10</sup> | Man is born in time, but despite contingency he exists for eternity. Immortality is granted to the whole man and is granted to him individually. |

The existential interpretation of being made explicit in Thomas's anthropology the problem of the human being's personal relationship

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<sup>10</sup> Due to Aristotle's unclear position on the transcendent (divine) in the genesis and destiny of the active intellect, the question of aspectual immortality became the subject of various interpretations in antiquity. See: Piotr Stanisław Mazur, "Intelekt" [Intellect], in *Powszechna encyklopedia filozofii* [Universal encyclopedia of philosophy], vol. IV, ed. A. Maryniarczyk (Lublin: PTTA, 2003), 863.



with God. This includes the issues of the human being's origins, existence, development and ultimate fulfillment. The origins of man are linked to the direct creative act of God, who, at the moment of the creation of the first human cell, creates the human soul through the act of creation.<sup>11</sup> According to Aquinas, human existence is contingent and fragile, but is subject to Divine Providence, both for the sake of the species and the good of the individual person. The development of personal life is related to man's orientation toward personal relationships through acts of cognition, love and decision, but the fulfillment, the ultimate goal, the guarantor of the continuity of existence and the source of man's eternal happiness, is God. Each of these elements shows the originality of Thomas's approach to the problem of man, the manner of his existence, and the structure of being.

With the act of personal existence in mind, Thomas Aquinas also proposed an original conception of the soul, noting

that if existence is the constituting factor of being (something is being when it exists)—then man is being by virtue of his soul, which exists in himself as a subject. The human soul is not a consequence of the organization of matter, as it was in Aristotle, it cannot be produced by natural factors.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Although there are interpretations according to which Thomas advocated delayed animation, in light of the analysis—textual and systemic, made by Andrzej Maryniarczyk, it should be considered unfounded. Andrzej Maryniarczyk, *Spór o opóźnioną animację. Prawdziwy czy pozorny problem?* [The dispute over delayed animation. A real or apparent problem?], in *Wokół genezy człowieka* [On the origins of man], ed. P.S. Mazur (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Ignatianum, 2013), 55–89.

<sup>12</sup> Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec, *Rozmowy z ojcem Krąpcem. O człowieku* [Conversations with Father Krąpiec. On Man], author's own translation (Lublin: PTTA, 2008), 36.

Going even further in interpreting the distinctiveness of the Thomasian concept of the soul are J. Auer and J. Ratzinger, whose opinion is that

this interpretation of the soul is something absolutely new in relation to any interpretation of the psyche in antiquity; it is the product of Christian faith and its reflection; the denial of this fact can only flow from a profound ignorance of history [...] The concept of the soul, which was used in the liturgy and in theology until Vatican II, has as little to do with [Greek] antiquity as the concept of the resurrection. It is a specifically Christian concept, and for this reason it could only be formulated on the terrain of the Christian faith; it expresses its vision of God, the world and man in the field of anthropology.<sup>13</sup>

In Thomas's understanding, the soul is the carrier of personal existence and human dignity. It is a spiritual subject-substance transcending material reality, self-contained in being, but dependent on the body in action. The soul organizes matter into a body and forms a psychophysical unity with it. As a result, man is an entity composed of heterogeneous factors, but he is also an ontic unity. At the same time, Thomas values the body in terms of the genesis of man (the soul cannot exist without the body), the unity and completeness of his nature (the soul without the body is not a man), life and action (every action takes place in the body, through the body or with the accompaniment of the body), personal relations (mediated by the body) and *commensuratio* (the attribution of the soul to the body also in the state of its detachment). The body realistically constitutes the personal subject and participates in personal existence, and also makes possible the actualization of what is actualized in it—primarily in the mental

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<sup>13</sup> Possenti, *Osoba nową zasadą* [The person as a new principle], 144.

aspect. As a result, Thomas's anthropology reconciles the ontic unity of the human being with the transcendence of the soul over the body. Each of these aspects was relevant in St. Thomas's time and is relevant today in the discussion with extreme dualism, which contrasts man's spiritual life with his corporeality, and naturalism, which reduces it to corporeality.

### **The Validity of Aquinas's Anthropology**

Modern Thomism has many varieties: classical, Louvain, transcendental, existential, and analytic. At its core is a metaphysical view of reality, which is distinguished by realism and pluralism of being, and a reductive method of explanation. Thomism is a current of universalist philosophy, with extensive experience of functioning in culture, and clashing with the current currents of the era. Over the centuries, it has adopted itself to different cultural conditions, in which new systems kept appearing and not only certain beliefs changed, but also great philosophical paradigms shifted, such as the transition from object-oriented to subject-oriented philosophy and the transition from the philosophy of the subject to the philosophy of signs and cultural products. In the field of anthropology, too, it had to respond to various challenges. Some of them originated in philosophy, such as Cartesianism and post-Cartesian subject philosophy, Enlightenment rationalism and post-Enlightenment naturalism, idealism and the birth of modern philosophical anthropology. Other challenges came from outside philosophy, such as the decline of Aristotle's conception of science and the rise of the particular human sciences—the natural, social and human sciences, at least some of which aspire to hegemony in providing a picture of man.

The actuality of Thomistic thought should be read in the context of contemporary intellectual discourse and the dominant paradigm with-

in it. If in the post-Enlightenment era, the challenge to the theistically oriented Thomistic anthropology was variously grounded atheistic humanism, today the challenge is the naturalistic depersonalization and dehumanization of man underpinned by beliefs of a biological-ecological, scientific-technological, socio-political or critical-deconstructive nature. The shape of philosophical discourse about man today is imposed by posthumanism in the form of transhumanism, which supports itself on biological naturalism, and in the form of cultural posthumanism, which negates the foundations of the entire discourse about man. Dramatic questions about human nature arise in the context of neuroscience, the development of artificial intelligence and the virtual world, and in the social sphere—in the context of the dominance of utilitarianism and pragmatism.

In this situation, Thomism and Thomistic anthropology find themselves on the defensive. The reasons for this defensiveness can be traced to some extent to the Thomistic image of man, accusing it of being anachronistic. However, in favor of Thomism, one can reasonably argue that this defensiveness is not due to the systemic weakness of Thomism, but because, as a system with well-established views and principles, it has to defend too many things at once. In defending the metaphysical image of man, it must defend the validity of metaphysics as a system and the metaphysical way of knowing man. Within anthropology, Thomism must defend: the personal status of man, the mental and spiritual dimensions of human existence, man's position in the cosmos, and his relationship to transcendence. Thomistic anthropology is attacked by both the naturalistic tradition and the anti-naturalistic tradition. For although Thomism derives from naturalism and allows us to assimilate naturalistic accounts of reality, it is fought for its anti-naturalism. Modern and contemporary anti-naturalism, in turn, combats Thomistic anthropology for its metaphysical orientation.

Thomism is in a special situation. Some versions of Thomism seem to have become a thing of the past, such as traditional (essentialist)

Thomism, Louvain Thomism (at least as it was known at the beginning of the 20th century), and transcendentalizing Thomism. In the current situation, existential Thomism and analytic Thomism retain their vitality. Certain aspects of Thomas's thought have been abandoned, such as the Thomistic philosophy of nature. It seems that a decision is being made in our time as to whether Thomism will become a purely historical phenomenon or remain a systematic philosophy. As a historical phenomenon, Thomistic anthropology, because of its importance, has been, is, and will continue to be of philosophical interest. Thomistic thought and the detailed resolution of anthropological problems will not cease to be a subject of study. On the other hand, there is a struggle over whether Thomistic anthropology will survive as a living philosophical system for explaining man. It seems to be settled in our time whether we will use the Thomistic image of man to explain anthropological facts in the future, or whether we will speak of Thomistic anthropology as we speak of Platonic or Aristotelian anthropology. Clearly this dilemma resounds in the context of what Józef Tischner preached several decades ago:

Philosophical systems are born in time and pass away in time: time is the mode of existence of a philosophical system. It is also usually the case that a system, while passing in time, nevertheless does not pass away completely: certain theses of the old system, having partially changed their meaning and place, appear in the new systems created after it. Philosophy, as Thomism itself stated, is the work of natural reason, and the law of natural reason is development. If we wanted to absolutize any system of the concepts of "natural reason," elevating it above time, it would mean a thorough familiarization with and misunderstanding of the historical nature of philosophy and philosophizing.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Józef Tischner, "Schyłek chrześcijaństwa tomistycznego" [The decline of Thomistic Christian], author's own translation, *Znak* no. 187 (1970): 19.

As a centuries-old philosophical trend, Thomism undoubtedly values tradition. However, the fundamental purpose of Thomism is not, or at least should not be, to stubbornly sustain its continuation as a system. On the other hand, the lifespan of Thomism, which persists despite centuries of criticism and dynamic changes in the culture, earning itself the name *philosophia perennis*, also testifies to something. The measure of Thomism's vitality is not the course of philosophical discourse, nor the current state of that discourse, which is dominated by philosophical currents of one sort or another. The measure is its ability to explain reality, including who man is.

Because of its location in the discourse and because of its fundamental purpose, Thomism is constantly in a state of crisis. The threat to Thomistic anthropology is not a certain archaicness of its language or even a criticism of its metaphysical foundation. Instead, the real threat is what Josef Pieper mentions when diagnosing the causes of the agony of medieval scholasticism, which collapsed not because of the exhaustion of the system, but because of the intellectual weakness of the thinkers of the time.<sup>15</sup> In this context, the weakening or departure from the Thomistic image of man does not necessarily mean that Thomism has become obsolete. Instead, it may be a manifestation of the inability of successive generations of philosophers to bear its intellectual weight.

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<sup>15</sup> Josef Pieper states: "The degeneration of medieval philosophy occurred from within. Grabmann speaks of a suddenly occurring decay. Gilson writes that the end of medieval philosophy can only be described as ultimate spiritual confusion and disorder. De Wulf's historical study [*Geschichte der mittelalterlichen Philosophie* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), 448—P.S.M] concludes with the sentence that scholasticism collapsed not for lack of ideas, but of heads." Josef Pieper, *Scholastyka. Postacie i zagadnienia filozofii średniowiecznej* [Scholasticism. Figures and issues in medieval philosophy], trans. Tadeusz Brzostowski (Warszawa: PAX, 2000), 18–19.

## **The Future of Thomistic Anthropology**

Given the specificity of Thomistic anthropology, one can ask about its future. To what extent is it able to maintain the metaphysical image of man in culture, and because of its metaphysical core, can it still develop in any way, providing original knowledge or original justifications? Does this anthropology sufficiently address the peculiarities of modern man's existential questions about who he is, and is it capable of addressing problems relevant to contemporary anthropological discourse? Answering the questions formulated here in the affirmative, but at the same time not locking ourselves within the narrowly defined apologetics of the system, it is worth noting two basic approaches to Thomistic anthropology. The first is related to what Thomism needs and what modern Thomism as a system should be enriched with to be able to meet anthropological challenges. The second, on the other hand, is directed at what Thomism can or should offer to modern anthropology to know man reliably.

The prevailing opinion in the evaluation of Thomistic anthropology is that it is an ossified and closed system, offering a picture of man that is heavily archaized and unadapted to the state of modern knowledge. Today's anthropology has little interest in the ontic structure of man seen in the context of metaphysics. At the same time, it brings new anthropological problems and approaches their solution in a different way than it was done in the past. Due to the specificity and autonomous nature of Thomistic cognition, it is difficult to directly implement into it all that is being preached today about man. Instead, it is crucial for the development of Thomism to retain the ability to address current anthropological problems involving both relevant cultural facts (artificial intelligence, virtual world, biotechnology, neuroscience) and transformations taking place in philosophical discourse (scientism, hermeneutics, transhumanism, cultural posthumanism).

This dissimilarity of the contemporary approach to understanding human beings, as well as the approach to understanding philosophy, challenges the system that has existed for centuries, but through this can be an impetus for the development of Thomistic human studies. It is not only about addressing current anthropological problems, but also about solving them in the context of Thomism. Changes in the course of philosophical discourse open up opportunities for the system to take a new look or a new approach to old problems or to see new ways of grasping or justifying them. A similar role should be played by deepening historical research or linguistic and argumentative analysis, which analytical Thomism, for example, can help with.

In the approach of modern Thomists to anthropology, it seems important to balance the pursuit of what is new and stubborn adherence to existing solutions, while maintaining its metaphysical character. Wherever possible, one should strive to complement the system with new problems and concepts in accordance with the peculiarities of Thomism as a universalist system capable of adapting and synthesizing various concepts and positions. An example of such a creative approach to the challenges posed to Thomism by modern anthropology were the attempts, inspired by phenomenology, to find an experience that could be the starting point for Thomistic anthropology as a system, and for the description of man from a first-person perspective undertaken by Wojtyła and Krąpiec.<sup>16</sup> Parallel to the expansion of Thomism to include new problems, approaches or research perspectives, it is necessary to develop the system itself related to the deepening of research on what, why, and on the basis of what is preached within it. The continuity and sustainability of Thomistic anthropology

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<sup>16</sup> Piotr Stanisław Mazur, “Wojtyła and Krąpiec. Two Ways of Re-empirizing Thomistic Anthropology,” *Philosophical Annals* LXXI, no. 1(2023): 273–288, <https://doi.org/10.18290/rf23711.13>.



depends not only on the place it occupies in philosophical discourse. The growing influence of discourse on the evaluation of how anthropological problems are posed and solved can be contrasted with the Thomistic commitment to the cognition of reality. Paraphrasing the words of St. Peter, one can say that one should listen to reality more than to philosophers, which does not mean ignoring them altogether. Thomistic anthropology has an integral character. Its determinants are the compatibility of cognition with internal and external experience and with revelation. Within Thomism, the revealed message is a negative criterion of cognition. If cognition of reality is an expression of striving to agree with experience, then reference to revelation serves to verify the correctness of the overall picture of man and the world.

The interests of philosophers are usually very far from Thomism. Thomistic anthropology is not always known and properly understood, and the resentment towards it hinders its impact on the formation of the modern image of man. Meanwhile, the thought of Thomas is not only a vivid way of understanding man, but can also inspire the study of current anthropological problems. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Thomism in posing fundamental anthropological questions and seeking answers to them. The universalism of this anthropology makes it possible to avoid the modern bane of one-sidedness and superficiality in understanding man. By defending the ontic integrity of the human being and the irreducibility of personal life, Thomism acts as an advocate of common sense in the face of attempts to deconstruct the image of man in scientific and philosophical cognition, and in culture. Thomism can also be used to realistically address the problems posed in other philosophical traditions, where thought experiment, explanation by adaptive mechanisms (evolutionism), naturalistic explanation (methodological naturalism), and utilitarian attitudes dominate. Thomism also allows one to bypass the trap of naturalistic reductionism. In opposition to the reductionist method of cognition that is ripe in the particular sciences today, Thomism uses the

intuitive-reductive method. Seeking to explain ontic facts, it appeals to their proportional causes, that is, it looks for necessary and sufficient reasons for these facts, directing cognition not only to the closest causes, but also to the ultimate reasons. Thus, he is an advocate of a deepened and philosophically expanded cognition of man.

Despite the criticism that metaphysics still faces, there are not enough reasons to reject Thomistic anthropology, although it seems that it does not always respond to contemporary philosophical fashions and, due to the hermetic nature of its language, has difficulty participating in philosophical discourse. Emerging publications in the field of Thomistic anthropology, however, show that Thomism is a living and open system, that it lends itself to development in the field of anthropology as well, and that it can itself inspire important anthropological problems.

## **Conclusions**

Thomistic anthropology, like the entire Thomistic system, was something revolutionary and original in the 13th century. It owed its revolutionary nature to its Aristotelian provenance in relation to the Christian tradition for centuries inspired by Platonism, and to an existential interpretation of being that revolutionized the Aristotelian view of the world and man. Its originality stemmed from the creative synthesis of Aristotelianism and the belief, grounded in Revelation, that the world was created and is sustained in existence by a personal God.

Thomistic anthropology, as a synthesis of Aristotelianism and Christianity, owes its “enduring relevance” to the universalism associated with a realistic and integral image of man. This image perceives the personal status of man, related to the act of existence granted directly and sustained by God, the carrier of which is the spiritual (immaterial) soul, as a subject (a substance of being incomplete), a

substantial form and an act that organizes for itself from matter a body, with which it forms a psychophysical unity and acts in the world in order to actualize its potentialities in relations with other persons, and ultimately in relation to God.

Thomistic anthropology is and will remain original because of its metaphysical heritage, thanks to which it retains its autonomy, but also its distance and openness to the particular sciences. At the same time, the metaphysical nature of this anthropology means that it encounters today various challenges related to itself as a system, as well as those related to the contemporary anthropological debate, to which it must seek answers. The most significant challenge concerns whether anthropology will retain its character as a systematic anthropology or become a thing of the past. Emerging works on Thomistic anthropology indicate the vitality of this trend, but also each generation of Thomists must develop it and testify to the reliability of the way of cognition proposed in it and the credibility of the results of this cognition in the forming of a certain image of man.

The future of anthropology is related to what it needs to develop as a system, to grow and develop its cognition of man, to what it can be used for, and what it can offer in the modern quest for human cognition.



## The Originality of Thomas Aquinas' Anthropology, its Validity and Future

### SUMMARY

The article shows the originality of St. Thomas's anthropology in historical and systematic aspects. Its originality from the historical aspect consisted in the reference to Aristotle's thought and his concept of metaphysical cognition, which was revolutionary in relation to the intellectual tradition of the time, and in the

image of the world and man, which was revolutionary in relation to Aristotle himself. The originality of Thomas's anthropology from the systematic side is evident in the existential picture of reality, in which the world and man arise as a result of creation from nothing, man is a personal being, and his soul as a form and act of the body is at the same time an intrinsic, non-composite and immaterial subject-substance. In the following part of the article, the questions of the actuality and future of Thomistic anthropology are taken up, in light of contemporary approaches to metaphysics and various traditions and concepts of the philosophical cognition of man.

**Keywords:** Thomas Aquinas, Thomistic anthropology, Thomism, the actuality of Thomism, the future of Thomism

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