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Subject and Soul

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OVER fifteen years ago I completed a series of articles in *Theological Studies* with the title, "The Concept of *Verbum* in the Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas." The present essay originally was written as an introduction to a re-issue of the articles in book form, but the question it raises is, perhaps, significant and timely enough to merit inclusion in *Philippine Studies*.

As the reader will recall, the novelty of the *verbum* articles was their effort to show that the Thomist analysis of intellect was not merely metaphysical but also psychological, that it was concerned not only with the intellect as a power of the human soul but also with the intelligence of conscious human subjects.

The purpose of these pages will be to return to this basic point. For Thomist thought on *verbum* is metaphysical by its insertion in an Aristotelian framework, and it is psychological in virtue of its derivation from Augustinian trinitarian theory. We shall touch on each of these themes in turn to conclude with an account of the structure of the already mentioned articles on *verbum* in Aquinas.

The Aristotelian framework was impressive. First, it was a general theory of being, a metaphysics. Secondly, it was a general theory of movement, a physics in that now antiquated sense. Thirdly, it was a general theory of life, a biology. Fourthly, it was a general theory of sensitivity and intelligence, a psychology.

In this framework, since the prior components are comprehensive, the later are not pure but cumulative. Because movements exist, physical statements are not just physical; they are determinations added to metaphysical statements. Because living things move, biological statements are not just biological; they are determinations added to metaphysical and physical statements. Because sentient and intelligent beings are alive, psychological statements are not purely psychological; they presuppose and employ and determine what already has been settled in metaphysics, physics, and biology.

The use of such a framework gave Aristotelian thought its majestic coherence and comprehensiveness. The interlocking of each part with all the others precluded the possibility of merely patchwork revisions. As Prof. Butterfield has observed, to correct Aristotle effectively, one must go beyond him; and to go beyond him is to set up a system equal in comprehensiveness and more successful in inner coherence and in conformity with fact.¹

Still such attempts have been made and, indeed, in two quite different manners. There have been open repudiations of Aristotle, as in modern science and in much modern philosophy. There also has been the more delicate procedure of sublation that developed and transformed Aristotelian positions to the point where the incorporation of further and profounder doctrines became possible. Such was the method of Aquinas, and our immediate concern is to find in Aristotle the point of insertion for Augustinian thought.

It is not difficult to discern. I distinguished above four components in the Aristotelian framework. I must hasten to add that, in a sense, the distinction between the third and fourth, between biology and psychology, is not as clear, as sharp, as fully developed, as may be desired. For Aristotle's *De anima* is at once biological and psychological. It does not confuse plants, animals, and men. At the same time it fails to bring out effectively the essential difference between an investigation of plant life and an investigation of the human

¹ The point is made repeatedly by Herbert Butterfield, *The Origin of Modern Science, 1300-1800*, New York 1960.

mind; much less, does it work out the methodological implications of that essential difference.

The *De anima* is about soul. If the Platonic *nauta in navi* is suggestive of the subject, the Aristotelian soul is not. It is an inner principle constituent of life. It is defined as the first act of an organic body.² It is found in all organic bodies, in plants no less than in animals and men. Moreover, a single method is worked out for determining the differences of souls and so for investigating each species of the genus. Souls are differentiated by their potencies; potencies are known by their acts; acts are specified by their objects.³ But what is meant by an object? That is the decisive question. For the meaning given the term, object, will settle the specification given acts; the specification of acts will settle the distinction between potencies; and the distinction between potencies will settle the essential differences between the souls of plants, animals, and men.

A modern reader is apt to take it for granted that by an object Aristotle must mean the intentional term of a conscious act. But quite evidently Aquinas was of a different opinion. In his *Commentary* he defines objects in terms, not of intentionality, but of causality: an object is either the efficient or the final cause of the occurrence of an act of a potency.⁴ Nor is it easy to disagree with Aquinas. He goes beyond what is explicit in the text. But as the book of definitions in the *Metaphysics*⁵ reveals, Aristotle used his word for object, *antikeimenon*, in a great variety of meanings. In the immediate context in the *De anima* he illustrates objects not only by the sensible and the intelligible, which are the intentional terms of conscious acts, but also by nutriment, which in the case of plants has not an intentional but only a causal relation to acts.

It is at this point that there comes to light the problem to which I have already alluded. No one will complain that

² *De anima* II, 1, 412b 4 ff.

³ *Ibid.* II, 4, 415a 14 — 20.

⁴ *In II de An.*, lect. 6 sec. 305.

⁵ *Met.* D, 10.

Aristotle did not employ introspective techniques in his study of plant life. But one could well complain if a method, suitable for the study of plants, were alone employed in the study of human sensitivity and human intelligence. If the objects of vegetative activity are causal, it remains that the objects of sensitive and intellectual activity are also intentional. If vegetative acts are not accessible to introspection, sensitive and intellectual acts are among the immediate data of consciousness; they can be reached, not only by deduction from their objects, but also in themselves as given in consciousness. Finally, when conscious acts are studied by introspection, one discovers not only the acts and their intentional terms but also the intending subject, and there arises the problem of the relation of subject to soul, of the Augustinian *mens* or *animus* to the Aristotelian *anima*.

If in Scholastic circles such a *Problematik* is contemporary and indeed, for many, still novel, it is plain that neither Aristotle nor Aquinas handled the matter in a triumphantly definitive fashion. This is not to say, of course, that they anticipated positivists and behaviourists by systematically avoiding any use of introspection or any appeal to the data of consciousness. As we shall see, Aquinas explicitly appealed to inner experience and, I submit, Aristotle's account of intelligence, of insight into phantasm, and of the fact that intellect knows itself, not by a *species* of itself, but by a *species* of its object, has too uncanny an accuracy to be possible without the greatest introspective skill. But if Aristotle and Aquinas used introspection and did so brilliantly, it remains that they did not thematize their use, did not elevate it into a reflectively elaborated technique, did not work out a proper method for psychology and thereby lay the groundwork for the contemporary distinctions between nature and spirit and between the natural and the human sciences.

It is time to turn to Augustine: a convert from nature to spirit; a person that, by God's grace, made himself what he was; a subject that may be studied but, most of all, must be encountered in the outpouring of his self-revelation and self-communication. The context of his thought on *verbum* was

trinitarian, and its underlying preoccupation was anti-Arian. It followed that the prologue to the Fourth Gospel had to be freed from any Arian implication. To achieve this end Augustine did not employ our contemporary techniques of linguistic and literary history. He did not attempt a fresh translation of the Greek word, *lógos*, but retained the traditional *verbum*. Church tradition, perhaps, precluded any appeal to the Stoic distinction between *verbum prolatum* and *verbum insitum*.⁶ In any case he cut between these Stoic terms to discover a third *verbum* that was neither the *verbum prolatum* of human speech nor the *verbum insitum* of man's native rationality but an intermediate *verbum intus prolatum*. Naturally enough, as Augustine's discovery was part and parcel of his own mind's knowledge of itself, so he begged his readers to look within themselves and there to discover the speech of spirit within spirit, an inner *verbum* prior to any use of language yet distinct both from the mind itself and from its memory or its present apprehension of objects.

Though I cannot attempt here to do justice to the wealth of Augustine's thought or to the variety of its expression,⁷ at least it will serve to illustrate my meaning if, however, arbitrarily, I select and briefly comment on a single passage.

Haec igitur omnia, et quae per se ipsum, et quae per sensus sui corporis, et quae testimoniis aliorum percepta scit animus humanus, thesauro memoriae condita tenet, ex quibus gignitur verbum ante omnem sonum, ante omnem cogitationem soni. Tunc enim est verbum simillimum rei notae, de qua gignitur, et imago eius, quoniam de visione scientiae visio cogitationis exoritur, quod est verbum linguae nullius, verbum verum de re vera, nihil de suo habens, sed totum de illa scientia de qua nascitur. Nec interest quando id didicerit, qui quod scit loquitur; quando enim statim ut discit, hoc dicit; dum tamen verbum sit verum, id est, de notis rebus exortum.⁸

⁶ On the distinction, G. Kittel, TWNT IV, 84, 12 ff. (Kleinknecht); M. Schmaus, *Die psychologische Trinitatslehre des hl. Augustinus*, Munster 1927, p. 33 n. 11. On the tradition, cf. St. Ambrose, *De fide ad Gratianum*, IV, vii, 72, ML 16, 631; also DS 140 can. 8.

⁷ I would like in this connection to draw attention to a forthcoming work in the series, *Analecta Gregoriana*: S. Biolo, *La coscienza nel "De Trinitate" di S. Agostino*.

⁸ *De trinitate* XV, xii, 22; ML 42, 1075.

In this passage, then, the Augustinian *verbum* is a non-linguistic utterance of truth. It differs from expression in any language, for it is *linguae nullius*. It is not primitive but derived: *gignitur, exoritur, nascitur*. Its dependence is total: *nihil de suo habens, sed totum de illa scientia de qua nascitur*. This total dependence is, not blind or automatic, but conscious and cognitive: *quod scimus loquimur; de visione scientiae visio cogitationis exoritur; qui quod scit loquitur*. Finally, this total dependence as conscious and known is the essential point. It makes no difference whether the *verbum* has its ground in memory or in recently acquired knowledge. What counts is its truth, its correspondence with things as known: *verbum simillimum rei notae; imago eius; verbum verum de re vera, nihil de suo habens, sed totum de illa scientia de qua nascitur; dum tamen verbum sit verum, id est, de notis rebus exortum*.

Such, at least, in one passage, is what Augustine had to say about *verbum*. Many more passages might be cited and they would reveal him saying different things or the same things in a different manner. But sooner or later it would be necessary to advance from the simpler question of what he said to the more difficult question of what he meant. Since I am writing not a study of Augustine but an introduction to a study of Aquinas, I must leap at once to the more difficult question, though not to answer it in detail, but only to indicate the source from which the answer must proceed.

A blind man may listen to a disquisition on colour, but he is bound to find it obscure. A person who is deaf may read a book on music, but he will have a hard time deciding whether the author is talking sense or nonsense. In similar fashion it is only by introspection that one can discover what an introspective psychologist is talking about. If what Augustine had to say about *verbum* was true, then it corresponded exactly to what Augustine knew went on in his own mind. If what Augustine had to say about *verbum* was universally true, then it corresponds exactly to what Augustine knew goes on in any human mind. If one supposes Augustine to be right and, at the same time, entertains an admiration for Newman, one is going to ask whether the Augustinian couplet of *memoria* and

verbum is parallel to Newman's couplet of illative sense and unconditional assent. But if one desires to get beyond words and suppositions to meanings and facts, then one has to explore one's own mind and find out for oneself what there is to be meant; and until one does so, one is in the unhappy position of the blind man hearing about colours and the deaf man reading about counterpoint.

About such matters Augustine was explicit. *Unde enim mens aliquam mentem novit, si se non novit? Neque enim ut oculus corporis videt alios oculos et se non videt. . . Mens ergo ipsa sicut corporearum rerum notitias per sensus corporis colligit, sic incorporearum per semetipsam. Ergo et semetipsam per se ipsam novit . . .*⁹ Moreover, for Augustine, the mind's self-knowledge was basic; it was the rock of certitude on which shattered Academic doubt; it provided the ground from which one could argue to the validity both of the senses of one's own body and, with the mediation of testimony, of the senses of the bodies of others. So the passage we have quoted and explained begins with this threefold enumeration: *quae per se ipsum, et quae per sensus sui corporis, et quae testimoniis aliorum percepta scit animus humanus*. The enumeration merely summarizes what had been set forth at greater length in the immediately preceding paragraph;¹⁰ and that paragraph, of course, only resumes a theme that is recurrent from Augustine's earliest writings on.

Clearly enough, it was neither *per sensus sui corporis* nor by *alienorum corporum sensus* that Augustine knew of a *verbum* that was neither Latin nor Greek, neither sound nor even the thought of sound. The Augustinian affirmation of *verbum* was itself a *verbum*. For it to be true, on Augustine's own showing, it had to be totally dependent on what Augustine's mind knew through itself about itself. On the existence and

⁹ *De trinitate* IX, iii, 3; ML 42, 962 f.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* XV, xii, 21; 1073-75.

nature of such knowledge Augustine had a great deal to say, and there is no need for us to attempt to repeat it here. Though it cannot be claimed that Augustine elevated introspection into a scientific technique, it cannot be doubted that he purported to report in his literary language what his own mind knew immediately about itself.

So we come to Aquinas. Because he conceived theology as in some sense a science, he needed Aristotle who, more than anyone, had worked out and applied the implications of the Greek ideal of science. Because his theology was essentially the expression of a traditional faith, he needed Augustine, the Father of the West, whose trinitarian thought was the high-water mark in Christian attempts to reach an understanding of faith. Because Aquinas himself was a genius, he experienced no great difficulty either in adapting Aristotle to his purpose or in reaching a refinement in his account of rational process—the *emanatio intelligibilis* that made explicit what Augustine could only suggest. Because, finally, Aquinas was a man of his time, he had to leave to a later age the task of acknowledging the discontinuity of natural and of human science and of working out its methodological implications. For performance must precede reflection on performance, and method is the fruit of this reflection. Aquinas had to be content to perform.

My study of that performance is divided into five articles, and the division is dictated by the quite different systematic contexts in which Thomist statements about *verbum* are involved. Already I have noted the cumulative character of Aristotelian categories, in which psychological statements presuppose biological, biological presuppose physical, and physical presuppose metaphysical. In a somewhat similar fashion Thomist statements about *verbum* will be theological in their primary intent; they will involve technical terms drawn from physics and metaphysics; their meaning will turn on metaphysical explanations of gnoseological possibility; and embedded in this structural complexity there will be a core of psychological fact. To reach even an approximation to what

Aquinas meant, it is necessary to explore separately the several hermeneutical circles that, in cumulative fashion, are relevant to an interpretation.

The first two articles are concerned with the core of psychological fact. Aquinas identified *verbum* with the immanent terminal object of intellectual operation; he distinguished two intellectual operations, a first in answer to the question, *quid sit*, and a second in answer to the question, *an sit*. So we have a first article on *verbum* as definition, and second on *verbum* as *compositio vel divisio*.

Throughout the first two articles the reader will be troubled by the recurrence of technical terms of a metaphysical or physical origin. Quite apart from any intrinsic difficulty they may offer, the determination of their meaning is enormously complicated, *first*, by Aristotle's efforts to adapt the Greek language to his own technical purposes, *secondly*, by the imperfect coincidence of the earlier Latin equivalents, mediated by Arabic culture, and the later fruits of direct translation from the Greek, and *thirdly*, for those who approach Aquinas through manuals and commentaries quite innocent of the methods of literary and historical research, by such interpreters' proclivity to smooth out linguistic oddities by giving free reign to their talent for speculative invention. The third article is an effort to cut through this jungle.

The fourth article deals with matters intermediate between metaphysics and psychology. Such is the doctrine of abstraction from matter. Such also are the relations between immateriality and knowledge.

Finally, St. Thomas's thought on *verbum* occurs, for the most part, in a trinitarian context. If Thomist philosophers, quite comprehensibly, are reluctant to venture into his field, it remains that a historian must do so. St. Thomas was a theologian. His thought on *verbum* was, in the main, a statement for his technically minded age of the psychological analogy of the trinitarian processions. Its simplicity, its profundity, and its brilliance have long been obscured by in-

terpreters unaware of the relevant psychological facts and unequal to the task of handling merely linguistic problems.¹¹ So it is that the final article deals with the trinitarian meaning of *imago Dei*, and there, I hope, the many levels of our study come together.

¹¹ This may appear harsh, but I find no other explanation for the startling discrepancies that exist. In his account of intellectual procession no less eminent a theologian than L. Billot could write: *Et simile omnino est in imaginatione (De Deo Uno et Trino, Roma 1910, p. 335)*. But St. Thomas explicitly restricted the trinitarian analogy to the minds of rational creatures. *Sum. theol.* I, q. 93, a. 6 c.: *nec in ipsa rationali creatura invenitur Dei imago nisi secundum mentem*. Cf. *In I Sent.*, d. 3, q. 3, a. 1; *De Ver.*, q. 10, aa. 1 sec. 7; *De Pot.*, q. 9, a. 9 *ad fin.*; *C. Gent.*, IV, 11.