

Module outline for Thomas on the Human Being

NAME: Thomas on the Human Being

LECTURER: Rev. Dr Joseph Vnuk OP (accredited lecturer at Catholic Theological College, a member college of the University of Divinity)

DESCRIPTION This module follows questions 75 to 102 of *Prima Pars*: the essence, powers and operation of the human soul, and the creation and attributes of the first human being.

MODE OF DELIVERY

The module will be taught over four weeks, with two one-hour lectures on each Thursday evening, starting on Thursday 12th September 2024. Classes will be face-to-face only.

Readings will be distributed by email to all students before each class, with one or two questions to help guide the reading.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1 To situate Thomas' theory of the human soul in the context of his theories on animal souls, the nature of angels, and the knowing and willing of God.
- 2 To situate Thomas' theory of the human soul with respect to other theories: archaic, ancient, mediaeval, modern and contemporary.
- 3 To evaluate the compatibility of Thomas' theory of the body and the soul with Christian teaching.
- 4 To identify challenges to Thomas' theory of the soul that have arisen since his time.

PROPOSED LECTURE OUTLINE

Session 1: The Essence of the Human Soul

Text: *Summa Theologiae* I^a 75-76.

Lecture 1: The Essence of the Soul

Text: I^a 75

Tracing how Thomas, starting with a heuristic definition of the soul, clarifies the properties that the soul must have or lack, and how this distinguishes the human soul from an animal soul or an angel. How this soul differs from the Platonic soul.

Lecture 2: The Union of the Soul to the Body

Text: I^a 76

Following through the implications of the soul's being the form of the body, particularly in contrast to other contemporary views. In particular, to look at different sorts of forms (substantial, accidental, accidental form that is "composition and order"), and to see how the soul is more than the mover of the body. The relation of all this to the resurrection.

Suggested further reading

Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) 47-99.

Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas* (London: Burns & Oates, 2008) 7-50.

[Thomas Aquinas \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) 5

Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1993) 129-159.

Session 2 The Powers of the Soul

Texts: *Summa Theologiae* Ia 77-83

Questions on the reading to ponder before class:

Do animals have interior senses?

Choose two sorts of intellectual activity that Thomas says relate to the one power.

Is there a difference between an appetite and a drive as a motive for action?

To which power does conscience belong? Why?

Lecture 3: *The Powers in General; the Powers of Perception*

Text: I.77-79

The concept of a power (*potentia*) of the soul, and how it differs from *potestas* and ministerial power

The exterior and interior senses. The intellectual powers.

Lecture 4: *The Appetitive Powers of the Soul.*

Text: I.80-83

Sense appetites (concupiscible and irascible); intellectual appetite (as well and as free choice)

(The operation of the will is dealt with at length in the sixth module.)

Herbert McCabe, *On Aquinas* (London: Burns & Oates, 2008) 115-141

Denys Turner, *Thomas Aquinas: A Portrait* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013) 47-99.

[Thomas Aquinas \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) 6.1, 7

Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1993), 59-88.

Session 3: The Operation of the Intellectual Powers

Texts: *Summa Theologiae* I^a 84-89

Questions on the reading to ponder before class:

According to Thomas, do we know scientific laws?

According to Thomas, do we know ourselves?

Could your deceased grandparents be appalled at something you do? What if it were a good thing, but different from their expectations?

Lecture 5: *Basic Knowing*

Text: I.84-86

Thomas' description of knowing. How much do we actually know, and how much is just conjecture? The role of this section in Thomas' overall system

Lecture 6: *Advanced Knowing*

Text: I.87-89

Self-knowledge, both solid and elusive

Our partial knowledge of angels and God

The knowledge of the separated soul: how well does Thomas cater for Christian belief and practice?

[Thomas Aquinas \(Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy\)](#) 6.2-6.3

Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London: Routledge, 1993), 15-58.

Session 4: The Creation of the Human Being

Texts: *Summa Theologiae* Ia 90-102

Questions on the reading to ponder before class:

How does Thomas treat women in his account of the first human beings?

Is the human being the image and likeness of God?

Do you think that Thomas is justified in attributing so much knowledge to Adam?

Lecture 7: *Creation of God's Image and Likeness*

Text: I.90-93

The individual creation of each soul

Thomas' interpretation of the Genesis creation accounts: does Thomas treat women well?

Divine image and likeness: does Thomas treat our materiality well?

Lecture 8: *The Condition of Human Beings before the Fall*

Text: I.94-102

The theological motivation for these questions: the influence of Thomas' position that there would have been no Incarnation had there been no Fall

How these questions prepare for the resurrection? How do they justify God when we complain about our weaknesses and sufferings?

ASSESSMENT

This module can be undertaken for audit only or with assessment. It should be noted, however, that at this stage this module is not accredited towards any recognised degree, diploma or certificate. The assessment is an opportunity for the student to explore the material more deeply and to get authoritative feedback on their learning.

Task 1 Before sessions 2, 3 and 4, students should submit a 100 to 250 word response to one of the questions given for the readings for that session.

Task 2 By Friday 22nd November, students should submit a 1000 to 2000 word paper on one of the following topics.

- a) In what ways is Thomas' understanding of the human soul different from popular understandings?
- b) Why does Thomas repeatedly reject the idea that the soul is simply the *motor* of the body?
- c) How is our sense perception like and unlike the sense perception of non-rational animals?
- d) What does Thomas think that we can and cannot know about our own souls?
- e) Which of the perfections that Thomas attributes to the first human being would you agree with?

Students are also free to negotiate another topic with the lecturer.