

# *De Anima* II 3

Incorporeality, Subsistence, Immortality



# Three Approaches *DA* II 3.5

- Natural Reason
- The Wisdom of the Philosophers
- The Teachings of Faith



# Arguments from Natural Reason

- Prefatory: Arguments in this domain are not *a priori*, since we have no access to knowledge of the soul as it is in itself (*DA* II 3.6)
  - N.b. that in this connection '*a priori*' denotes in the first instance an argument which proceeds from a known nature to its necessary effects.
  - Instead, then, Suárez undertakes to argue from known effects to natures necessary to account for them.
    - These are not, however, abductive arguments, but rather, in outline, arguments with the following basic structure:
      1.  $x$  manifests feature  $\phi$  or engages in activity  $E$ .
      2. Nec.  $(x \text{ manifests } \phi \text{ or engages in activity } E \rightarrow x \text{ has nature } \psi)$
      3. Hence,  $x$  has nature  $\psi$ .



# Two Arguments from Natural Reason

- An Argument from plasticity (*DA* II 3.8-10)
- An argument from the reflexivity of intellectual activity (*DA* II 3.16)
  - These are arguments for immateriality and subsistence only.
  - A further argument is adduced on their basis for immortality (*DA* II 3.21-22)
    - This argument, says Suárez, ‘is quite metaphysical and acute and demonstrative and yet obscure’ (*Ratio quidem est metaphysica satis et acuta et demonstrativa, tamen obscura; DA* II 3.21)



# Plasticity

- ‘And so there is the first argument which is taken from Aristotle book 3, *De Anima*, chapter 4: “If the intellect, he says, “were corporeal, it could not understand all bodies.” But it is a fact that it understands all bodies. Therefore, it is not corporeal.’ (*DA* II 3.8)
  1. If the intellect were corporeal it could not understand all bodies.
  2. It does (or can) understand all bodies.
  3. Hence, the intellect is incorporeal.



# On Behalf of (1)

- Three background theses:
  - Thinking is a sort of change involving form acquisition. The general model:
    - $S$  thinks  $o$  if and only if: (i)  $S$  has the capacity requisite for receiving  $o$ 's intelligible form; (ii)  $o$  acts upon that capacity by enforming it; and, as a result, (iii)  $S$ 's relevant capacity becomes isomorphic with  $o$ .
  - Isomorphism here involves not shared property exemplification, but rather *encoding*.
  - Nothing can be changed into what it already is.
- With that much assumed, 'The major is obvious because that which receives must be devoid of the nature of that which is received.' (DA II 3.8)



# An Interesting Twist

- ‘St. Thomas uses this argument *ST* 1. p. q. 75, a.2. Nevertheless this is a difficult argument, and it does not seem to be convincing to some, since with this same argument it could be proved that a spiritual intellect [*scil.* an angel’s intellect] could not understand all spiritual things—because the recipient ought to be devoid of the nature of what is received—and what is interior impedes what is exterior.’ (*DA* II 3.8)
- Two counters:
  - Cardinal Cajetan: ‘You will say that the spiritual intellect can know all things because it is determinable through the species of all things, but a corporeal power is not so determinable.’ (*DA* II 3.8)
    - Forget that: it’s question-begging
  - ‘One must only be devoid of that which it receives in the manner in which it receives it. Hence, if it really receives it, it is devoid of that in real being, just as, since matter really receive every form, it thus must be free from every form in its own being. Thus, because the intellect receives a form intentionally it is sufficient that it be devoid of it in intentional being. . . .’
    - Not so fast: ‘Nevertheless, that that which receives other things intentionally must be devoid of the whole nature of the things received according to real being does not appear to be based on any reason.’ (*DA* II 3.8.2)



# Reflexivity

- ‘Seventh argument: The intellect reflects on its own actions — The immateriality of the intellect is shown by the reflexivity of intellect, for, after the intellect conceives something, it in turn conceives itself to have conceived, and it considers and measures with what certitude and in what manner it knows that thing. If necessary, it reflects again and again upon its own acts of reflection. But this is beyond the power of a material thing.’ (*DA* II 3.16)
  1. The intellect has the reflexive power to operate upon itself.
  2. No material thing has that power.
  3. Therefore, the intellect is immaterial.



# On Behalf of (1)

- The reflexivity of intellect allows it to operate on its own activities *as intellect*.
- It thus is able to engage in native, non-derived intentional representation of itself—including, evidently, its own intentionality.
- Suárez's suggestion: no materialistically adequate account of the aboutness relation has been given.