

Substantial Forms:

Unitarianism vs. Pluralism

DM XV.10

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Thomistic Unitarianism

“In the thirteenth century perhaps no other problem aroused such heated controversy as the question of the plurality of forms.” (D. A. Callus, “Two Early Oxford Masters on the Plurality of Forms,” 411)

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274): Single substantial form for each material substance

- ❖ “One thing *simpliciter* is produced out of many actually existing things only if there is something uniting and in some way tying them to each other. In this way, then, if Socrates were an animal and were rational in virtue of different forms, then these two, in order to be united *simpliciter*, would need something to make them one. Therefore, since nothing is available to do this, the result will be that a human being is one thing only as an aggregate, like a heap, which is one thing *secundum quid* and many things *simpliciter*.” (*Quaest. de anima* 11)
- ❖ “One must say, then, that a human being has no substantial form other than the intellective soul alone, and that just as it virtually contains the sensory and nutritive souls, so it virtually contains all lower forms, and that it alone brings about whatever it is that less perfect forms bring about in other things. And the same must be said for the sensory soul in brutes, and the nutritive soul in plants, and generally for all more perfect forms with respect to the less perfect.” (*Summa theol.* 1a 76.4)

Scotistic Pluralism

John Duns Scotus (1265/66-1308): living things have 2 substantial forms

- ❖ “The body remains when the form of soul does not remain. Therefore, universally, in any animated thing whatever, it is necessary to assume that the form by which body is body is different from that by which it is animated ...” (*Opus oxon.* IV, d.11, q.13)
- ❖ Animating soul (nutritive, sensory or intellectual) + “form of corporeity” (*forma corporeitatis*)
- ❖ What about unity?
 - ❖ “This way the whole composite is divided into two essential parts: into its proper act, viz., the last form by which it is what it is, and the proper potency of that act, which includes prime matter together with all the preceding forms. This way I grant that the whole existence is complete by one form that makes the whole what it is. But it does not follow from this that the whole includes precisely one form or that it is not the case that the whole includes many forms, not as what constitutes the composite in a species but as certain [things] in the potential part of that composite.” (*Opus oxon.* IV, d.11, q.3, n.46)

Henry of Ghent (1217-1293): form of corporeity required only for humans

- ❖ Primarily to address theological concerns

Ockhamist Pluralism

William of Ockham (1288-1347): humans have 3 substantial forms

- ❖ “[T]he vision of a man and the vision of a brute with respect to the same object are acts of the same kind. Therefore, they have subjects of the same kind. But the subject of vision in the brute is the sensory soul insofar as it is distinct from the intellectual soul. Therefore, the same is true in man.” (*Rep.* IV, q. 9; *Oth* Vii.162).
- ❖ Main view: since human sensory soul like sensory souls of brutes, it is material and divisible, and so distinct from immaterial and indivisible intellectual soul
- ❖ Accepts Scotistic form of corporeity, and denies that there is a nutritive soul distinct from sensory soul in brutes and humans
 - ❖ Follows from fact that sensory soul material/divisible like nutritive soul, and so can include its powers
 - ❖ Not clear whether he holds that nutritive soul distinct from form of corporeity in plants
- ❖ **Plants:** form of corporeity + prime matter / **Plants:** form of corporeity + nutritive soul + prime matter; **Brutes:** form of corporeity + sensory soul + prime matter; **Humans:** form of corporeity + sensory soul + intellectual soul + prime matter

Suárez vs. Thomas

Suárez supports version of Thomistic Unitarianism, **but**

- ❖ Thomas: prime matter “pure potentiality” and thus nothing apart from form
 - ❖ Helps to explain substantial unity
- ❖ Scotus: prime matter something that can exist on its own, thus *res* really distinct from substantial form
- ❖ Suárez: agrees with Scotus, thus holds that material substance composite of distinct *res* (substantial form + prime matter)
 - ❖ See *DM* XV 9.9-10; also XIII 4.8-17

Problem: What about substantial unity? Isn't material substance a mere aggregate of substantial form + prime matter?

Suárez's Soution: Substantial form (including human intellectual soul) and prime matter *incomplete* substances

- ❖ Essences of substantial form and prime matter *incomplete* insofar as they involve each other: aptitude to inform and be informed
- ❖ In contrast, material composite substance has *complete* essence

Structure of *DM XV* 10

- ❖ 10.4-6: Against plural essential forms
- ❖ 10.7-15: Against form of corporeity
- ❖ 10.16-27: Against plural substantial forms
- ❖ 10.28-39: Against plural partial forms
- ❖ 10.40-58: Status of the elements
- ❖ 10.59-60: Against informing of non-subordinate forms
- ❖ 10.61-64: “True view” of Thomas and Thomists that “one substantial composite has only a single formal cause and that in one natural composite there is only one substantial form”
- ❖ 10.65: No infinite regress of formal causes
- ❖ 10.66-69: No infinite regress of material causes

Against Plural Essential Forms

DM XV 10.4-6:

- ❖ Against multiplication of forms according to essential predicates
 - ❖ E.g., genera and species
- ❖ “This opinion ... is now out of date and totally improbable”
 - ❖ Recall Thomas: on this view human being a heap, not one thing *simpliciter*
- ❖ From account of universals: genera and species distinct from singular things only *entia rationis* “extrinsically denominated” of such things
 - ❖ E.g., Socrates only extrinsically denominated as having universal nature of humanity

Against Form of Corporeity

Scotistic Arguments (10.7):

- ❖ (1) *A priori*: animating soul requires matter already organized into body by form (not required for inanimate bodies)
- ❖ (2) *A posteriori*: after death animal body remains with form before new soul introduced
- ❖ (3) Theological: continuing identity of Christ's body in tomb

Implications that Conflict with Aristotle (10.8-10)

Against Scotistic Arguments (10.11-15):

- ❖ (vs. 1) Soul sufficient for making matter dependent on it: no need in addition for form of corporeity ("Ockham's razor")
- ❖ Note parenthetical comment (10.13) that prime matter remains after death as the subject of quantity and accidents
 - ❖ Against Thomistic view that composite subject of quantity and accidents; see *DM* XIV 3.10-15
- ❖ (vs. 2) Probable that new "form of corpse" introduced immediately on corruption of animal, as opposed to continuation of form of corporeity
 - ❖ Other option from Zabarella: corpse mere aggregate of several different substances
- ❖ (vs. 3) body of Christ special case given continuing union with Word

Against Plural Substantial Forms

Argument For (10.16-18):

- ❖ (1) Since intellectual soul immaterial and indivisible, can serve neither as material form of corporeity immediately united to matter, nor as material and divisible nutritive or sensory souls
- ❖ (2) Contrary operations due to presence of distinct souls (also found in Manicheans)

Arguments Against (10.19-27):

- ❖ “Hardly safe for faith”: pluralism condemned at Council of Vienne and Lateran Council, judgment backed by various theological arguments
- ❖ “Best argument”: subordination and dependence of power and faculties explained by fact that these are rooted in single substantial form that serves as their “principle”
 - ❖ But couldn’t this be explained by greater power of dominant substantial form?
- ❖ (vs. 1) Immaterial/indivisible intellectual soul can “eminently” contain powers found in material/divisible form of corporeity and nutritive/sensory souls
- ❖ (vs. 2) Contrary operations due to diversity of faculties or operations, not diversity of substantial forms

Against Plural Partial Forms

Arguments For (10.28-29):

- ❖ (1) Parts of living things have diverse operations explained by diversity of forms
- ❖ (2) Parts can retain their nature even when separated from whole
- ❖ (3) Heterogeneous parts differ in species, and so must have distinct partial forms

Arguments Against (10.30-39):

- ❖ Conceded in case of material substantial forms since these are divisible; partial forms of parts compose form of whole
- ❖ In case of indivisible intellectual soul, partial forms not required since this soul can serve as principle of operations attributed to such forms
- ❖ (vs. 1) Diverse operations can derive either from divisible substantial form or from indivisible intellectual soul that serves as principle of diverse operations
- ❖ (vs. 2) Same form does not remain in separation
- ❖ (vs. 3) Parts can differ accidentally, more so with diverse organic parts than with parts of a homogenous form

“True” Unitarian Position 1

Arguments for “true view” that “one substantial composite has only a single formal cause and that in one natural composite there is only one substantial form” (10.61-63):

- ❖ (1) Plural substantial forms can
 - ❖ neither be subordinated as act and potency (since subordinate forms in act);
 - ❖ nor be ordered as disposition and form (since subordinate forms not mere dispositions);
 - ❖ nor simply be concomitant without order (since there is ordering of powers and operations);
 - ❖ but these are the only possible relations
- ❖ (2) Ockham’s razor: single substantial form suffices to explain effects, so additional forms not necessary
- ❖ (3) Coordination of faculties and operations of living things must be explained in terms of the fact that they are rooted in a single principle

“True” Unitarian Position 2

In line with traditional view in Thomas, as opposed to deviant and theologically dangerous views in Scotus and Ockham

Suárez follows tradition where he can, and definitely tries to steer clear of theological danger

But again, Suárezian Unitarianism distinct from Thomistic Unitarianism:

- ❖ Prime matter not pure potency, but *res* distinct from substantial form
 - ❖ Need to speak of prime matter, as well as substantial form, as incomplete substance
- ❖ Quantity inheres not in composite but directly in prime matter
 - ❖ And thus can survive substantial corruption
- ❖ More plausible view of corruption: not reduction to bare prime matter since quantity and other accidents inhering in quantity can persist through corruption
- ❖ Still, does this give us enough persisting structure? For pluralists, lower-level matter involved in corruption more complex than prime matter + quantity + accidents inhering in quantity
 - ❖ Think, e.g., of chemical composition