A Defense of St. Thomas' Doctrine
of Succession of Souls
in the Human Embryo

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> The active virtue [sperm] having become a soul like that of a plant (in so far different that this is in the way and that already arrived), that so works, that now it moves and feels as a sea fungus does [the lowest form of animal according to Dante]; and then it proceeds to organize the powers of which it is the germ....
>
> But how from an animal it becomes a rational being....
>
> ... know that as soon as the articulation of the brain is perfect in the embryo, the Primal Motor turns to it with joy over such an act of nature, and breathes into it a spirit replete with virtue, which draws into its own substance that which it finds active there, and becomes one single soul which lives, and feels, and circles [reflects] on itself.[1]

By these few lines, Dante, in poetic fashion, summed up the teaching of the succession of souls. In more simple words, this doctrine states that the matter which becomes man upon the infusion of a rational soul must be readied for this rational soul by first passing through the vegetative and sensitive or plant and animal stages of life. Man, before he is strictly speaking man, has successively a vegetative and a sensitive soul.

Another term for succession of souls is retarded (mediate) animation. By animation is meant the time when the rational soul unites with the body. Present-day mediate animationists say that this takes place about the third month after the meeting of the sperm and the egg. This infusion of the rational soul results in the change from embryo to fetus, from sensitive life to rational life.

Since I brought up these terms (embryo and fetus), it might be good to define them right now. By embryo is meant the child (speaking here in a broad sense) from the second to the eighth weeks. From the third month until birth, the child is spoken of as a fetus. During the two weeks before the embryo stage, the child is called an "ovum."

In opposition to the mediate animationists are, as might be expected,

the immediate animationists. They contend that the rational soul is infused into the child from the zygote (combination of the male sperm and the female egg) stage. In other words, the child has a rational soul from the very moment of its conception.

Through the ages, these two groups have not been able to agree upon when the rational soul is infused. And since they cannot agree on that, they naturally disagree on whether or not there is a succession of souls in the human embryo. So the whole problem of the time of the infusion of the rational soul hinges on mediate and immediate animation.

Historically speaking, this problem goes back a long way. Already in the <u>Old Testament</u>, the distinction was being made between the animated and the inanimated fetus.[3] But the first philosopher to bring the question to the fore was Aristotle. He might be called the "Father of Mediate Animation," since he was its first defender. "Il est, du reste, bien entendu qu'apres cette première âme, nous aurons à parler de l'âme sensible et de l'âme douée d'entendement, car il faut nécessairement que les etats aient toutes ces sortes d'âmes en puissance avant de les avoir en réalité."[4] In holding the hylomorphic theory (the soul and the body uniting as matter and form to make up one substance), he held that this matter had to be developed to a certain degree before the soul could be received by it. Like St. Thomas, he thought that "... natura ordinate in suis operibus procedit, et non procedit aliquid ab uno extremo ad aliud, et nisi per media essentialiter et per gradus ordinata."[5] Matter is not immediately informed by a rational soul, but is mediately informed by first being prepared by vegetative and sensitive souls.

The Greek Fathers were split up over the animation theory, with the

majority writing and fighting for the immediates. St. Gregory of Nyssa and his brother, St. Basil, were of this majority. St. Maximius followed in the footsteps of the Cappodocian brothers, because he could not see how man could ever have a vegetative soul, since plant comes only from plant. But Theodoret, the principal representative of mediate animation during this time, invoked Moses and Job as authorities to prove his theory.[6]

While Sts. Gregory and Basil brought most of the Greek Fathers around to the side of immediate animation by upholding it as psychologically correct, Tertullian, by holding the same theory, influenced the Latin Fathers to hold the opposite viewpoint. The reason for this was his teaching of traducianism, which says that the rational soul of the child comes from the parents instead of being created by God. To combat this error, men such as St. Augustine, Gennadius, and Cassiodorus distinguished between "la conception et l'animation; la conception est l'ouvre des parents, l 'animation est le résultat de la creation de l'âme par Dieu."[7] The writer of De Spiritu et Anima, falsely attributed to St. Augustine, says that the human body lives a vegetative life, moves itself, grows and acquires the human form in the womb of the mother before receiving a rational soul: "Humanum namque corpus nec vivere nec nasci potest sine anima rationali; vegetatur tamen et movetur et crescit et humanam formam in utero recipit, priusquam animam rationalem recipiat."[8] What the Latin Fathers started continued through the Middle Ages in theology and scholastic philosophy.

The most noted of the scholastics who taught the theory of mediate animation was, of course, St. Thomas. But what he taught will be dealt with later. Besides St. Thomas, almost all of his commentators, such as Cardinals Satolli and Cajetan,taught this doctrine. Others who taught it

are Maldonat, Covarruvias, Dicastillo, Sylvester Maurus, and Alexander of Hales. Needless to say, although all of these philosophers taught mediate animation, many (especially those that were not commentators) taught it somewhat differently than St. Thomas.

It was not until the early 17th century that men began to decry the theory of mediate animation and the immediate came back into vogue. The trend started with "une étude plus approfondie de l'embryologie, l'observation scientifique substituée au raisonnement a priori."[9] In 1620, Fienus, a physician of Louvain, published the first modern book proposing the theory of a more immediate animation. He said that the foetus was animated on the third day. In 1658, a Servite priest of Lyon, by the name of Florentius, had this to say in his book, De Hominibus Dubiis Baptizandi: "Any foetus that can be distinguished from a mola should be baptized."[10] By mola is meant the egg as an indistinct mass of tissue, having no resemblance to the human being. This was rather revolutionary for that period, for fifty-five years later, the Holy See was still teaching: "si vero non suppetat rationabile fundamentum, nullatenus potest baptizari."[11] And by "rationabile fundamentum" she did not mean just anything that could be distinguished from a mola.

A man who did much to popularize the theory of immediate animation was Zacchias, the very famous physician of Innocent X, in his work Quaestiones Medico-Legales. And Innocent XI can be quoted as condemning, a few years later, "Videtur probabile omnem fetum quando in utero est carere anima rationali."[12] Although this statement does not necessarily call for immediate animation, the fact that the Pope is just now getting around to condemning it shows a movement in that direction.

The closer we come to modern times the larger is the group coming over to the camp of the immediate animationists. These men are not all philosophers. In fact, the greater part of them are theologians, moralists, and scientific men such as doctors. And that is much the way the problem stands at the present day. To sum up this "modern" view with a rather smug statement, we will quote a paper given in 1852, before the Academy of Medicine of Paris, by Dr. Cazeaux:

> Nous ne sommes plus au temps où thélogiens, philosophes, et médecins disputaient a l'envi de animatione foetus. Les progrès de la science ont mis un terme à toutes ces discussions. Le germe reçoit, au moment de la conception, le principe vital, le souffle de vie, et il n'est pas possible, sous ce rapport, d'assigner aucune différence entre l'enfant qui vient de naître et celui qui est encore refermé dans le sien maternel, entre le foetus de neuf mois, et l'oeuf feconde depuis quelques heures.[13]

To give some idea of the grounds on which the controversy between mediate and immediate animation is based, we will state two arguments for each side from the fields of scripture, theology, and philosophy. These arguments will be taken, for the most part, from _Dictionaire de Theologie Catholique_, columns 1311-1317.

Arguments for Mediate Animation:

From Scripture—

1. Septuagint version of Exodus, Ch. 21:22. "Si quis percusserit mulierem in utero habentem et abortiverit, si non formatus fuerit foetus, multetur pecunia; sim autem formatus fuerit, det animam pro anima."[14]

2. Job, Ch. 10:9-12. "Recall now that thou didst make me like clay.... And with bones and muscles thou didst knit me together. Life and kindness thou hast exercised with me...." This is said

to be an example of mediate animation, because the first place is given to the formation of the body and the second place to the infusion of life.

From Theology--

1. Pope Sixtus, by the bull _Effraenatam_, condemns by excommunication those aborting any foetus, whether animated or not animated. In 1591, Gregory XIV, by the bull, _Sedes Apostolica_, lifts the penalty of excommunication for the aborting of an inanimated foetus and places it only on the abortion of an animated foetus.

2. The Roman ritual says: "Nemo in utero matris clausus baptizari debet. Sed si infans caput emiserit et periculum mortis immineat baptizetur in capite.... At si aliud membrum emiserit, quod vitalem indicet motum, in illo, si periculum impendeat, baptizetur."[15]

From Philosophy--

1. In the generative order, a subject cannot receive a form until it has all the proper dispositions. The body of man is not properly disposed to receive a soul until it has its proper parts in an organized manner.

2. Matter must pass through degrees of perfection (plant and animal souls) before it can reach its greatest perfection (the rational soul).

Arguments for Immediate Animation:

From Scripture--

1. Job 3:3. "Perish the day wherein I was born, and the night which said, 'a man is conceived.'" The bible here seems to sub-

stantiate the theory that the body and the soul are conceived at the same time.

2. Luke 1:31. "You are going to conceive in your womb and you will give birth to a son...." Luke 1:36. "And your cousin, Elizabeth, has herself conceived a son in her old age, and the one who was called sterile is now in her sixth month." The immediate animationists see a parallelism between these two texts and the fact that the conception (of) St. John Baptist is told in the same words as that of Jesus. Since Jesus' conception and animation took place simultaneously, as theology clearly teaches, so must have St. John's.

From Theology--

1. On December 8, the Church celebrates the Immaculate Conception, that is to say, "... la sanctification de son âme au moment où elle était créée et unie au corps."[16] Nine months later, September 8, her birthday is celebrated. So Mary's conception and animation must have taken place at the same time.

2. The Holy See seems to favor immediate animation in Canon 747. "Curandum sit omnes fetus abortivi, quovis tempore editi, si certo vivant, baptizentur absolute; si dubie, sub conditione."[17]

From Philosophy--

1. The human soul is the only soul competent to organize and construct the human body.

2. To form the body, the human soul needs only the power to exercise some of its vital powers. And from conception, the soul can exercise in the seed its faculties of nutrition and growth.

Therefore it can exist from that instant.

So much for the contentions of mediate and immediate animationists. From this point on, this paper will deal with the doctrine of St. Thomas regarding animation. An attempt will be made to defend his doctrine by proving it to be correct, or at least disproving the arguments that disagree with it. We will deal mostly with philosophical doctrine, not because we think scripture and theology prove St. Thomas wrong but merely because we are not well enough versed in either of them to even attempt to analyse them critically. As Longfellow says, "The strength of criticism lies in the weakness of the criticised."

St Thomas closely follows Aristotle's De Generatione Animalium in his teaching of the succession of souls. The basis for this succession is the idea of the soul as the first actualization of a physical organic body, a body disposed to receive the soul. Matter depends on its organization for the reception of a form. Body and soul are united as matter and form. The disposition of this matter gives the clue to the particular and peculiar type of form that is united with it. "Forms must be proportionate to their proper matters, since they are related to one another as act to potency, the proper act corresponding to the proper potency."[19]

The seed and the egg are both living potentially before they unite, the egg living passively and the seed actively. The seed unites with the egg by impregnating it. This is the moment of conception. And at this moment of conception is begun embryonic life (still called ovum although it has begun to differentiate, because it still has the appearance of a many-celled egg), for here we have the first actualization of the passive matter (egg) of the mother by the active form (sperm) of the father. This is the

beginning of the nutritive soul. Since this soul was not created but came from the formative power of the potentially living sperm uniting with the potentially living matter, it is said to be deduced from the potentiality of the matter. This vegetative soul is the source of the vital acts which permit the egg to nourish, develope, and organize itself and finally to construct the organs of sensation.

After a period of developement of the embryo, the vegetative soul gives way to a sensitive soul.

> The more noble a form is and the farther it is removed from the elemental form, the more numerous must be the inter-mediate forms, through which the ultimate form is reached step by step.... Thus the vegetative soul which is present first (when the embryo lives the life of a plant), perishes, and is succeeded by a more perfect soul both nutritive and sensitive in character, and then the embryo lives an animal life.[20]

This sensitive soul, like the vegetative, is educed from the potentiality of the matter. These souls are dependent on matter for their being (they operate through bodily organs); so must they depend on matter for their becoming. Contrary to the thought of some, this animal soul is not merely a developement of the vegetative soul, but is a new soul, having been gen-erated at the corruption of the old one. "... quando perfectior forma ad-venit, fiat corruptio prioris; ita tamen quod sequens forma habet quidquid habebat prima, et adhuc amplius."[21] This sensitive soul continues the or-ganic developement and prepares for the arrival of the rational soul, which comes about only when the body is sufficiently developed.

As soon as the body is developed to the stage where it can strictly speaking be called a body (having its organs, nervous, digestive, and oth-er systems, and general shape and form), the rational soul is infused. This soul is not drawn from the potentiality of the matter, because it

does not depend on the body for its operation or for its being. Rather it is created by God. "Et cum sit immaterialis substantia, non potest causari per generationem, sed solum per creationem a Deo."[22] At this stage, there is truly present a new man. Up until this time, there was merely a "homo in potentia."

To point up this whole process of succession, here is a passage from the Sentences:

> ... virtus formativa convertit materiam a mulieri preparatam in substantiam membrorum per modum quo est transmutatio corporis in augmento; et secundum quod proceditur in perfectioni organorum, secundum hoc anima incipit magis ac magis actu esse in semine quae prius erat in potentia; ita quod conceptum primo participat opera vitae nutritivae, et tunc dicitur vivere vita plantae; et sic deinceps donec perveniat ad completam similitudinem generantis.[23]

There in summary fashion, we have St. Thomas' teaching of succession of souls. Because of the problem this theory is supposed to pose for theologians and moralists and because of all the scientific findings since St. Thomas's time, it has become more in vogue to hold the teaching of succession of souls as incorrect. The present-day consensus of opinion states that the soul is immediately present; therefore, no succession of souls has to be posited. And to posit this succession is simply to multiply forms unnecessarily. St. Thomas was wrong with regards to his theory of mediate animation, or at least so say his opponents in this matter.

But not all of us agree with the modern ideas on animation. Some of us say, with Pope Innocent VI: "His teaching above that of others, the canons alone excepted, enjoys such an elegance of phraseology, a method of statement, a truth of proposition, that those who hold to it are never found swerving from the path of truth, and he who dares assail it will al-

ways be suspected of error."[24] Now this does not, of course, mean that we think that St. Thomas is infallible. It can be seen from some of his other teachings (e.g., each heavenly body having an angel to guide it through space) that this is not the case. But we are pretty certain of any of his teaching that is built upon such a good system of observation, logic, and reasoning as mediate animation. It seems rather illogical that the whole hylomorphic theory would be true, that the idea of forms being received by materia disposita would be true, but at the same time there would be an exception in the body and the soul, matter and form, of man.

It is our opinion that no such exception exists, because there is no reason for one. In the rest of this paper we will attempt to substantiate this statement. We will attempt to uphold mediate animation and the succession of souls. This will be done by examining the theory with regards to its philosophical and logical aspects first of all. Second, we will quote what some persons more authoritative than ourselves have to say in its favor. Next, will be shown the convenience of mediate animation and the succession of souls. And last, we will show that if there are no scientific and embryological discoveries that prove the truth of mediate animation, there are also none that prove it to be incorrect.

As we have said before, the joining of the body and the rational soul to form a human being comes under the hylomorphic theory. The body or matter is potentiality; the soul or form actuality. The body and soul separated are two incomplete substances, but united they form the human person or composite. Now matter has to be developed to a certain degree before it can receive its proper form. So we, with St. Thomas, contend that the body does not receive its soul, and therefore does not become a human

being, until it is developed or disposed to a certain degree, just as a piece of wood will not burn until it reaches a certain degree of heat.

"Forma non sit propter materiam, sed potius materia propter formam; ex forma oportet rationem accipere quare materia sit talis...."[25] Matter, in time, comes before form, because potentiality is always before actuality. But by its very nature form comes before matter, because all matter must exist under some form, all potentiality exists in something in act. Form causes matter naturally antecedent to it to exist temporally prior to it. And since this matter is for the form, it cannot be just any matter but must be matter determined to that form. "Matter nude considerata is indifferent to all forms, because according to its own substance it is not more determined to one form than to another but is receptive to each according to its own nature; considered however as perfected through some disposition or the power of the agent it does not look at all forms indifferently."[26] The body must be determined to a certain degree to receive the rational soul.

The parents through the power of the seed and the egg are capable of generating the body. "... unde Philosophus dicit quod caro et os generantur a forma quae est in his carnibus et in his ossibus: secundum cujus sententiam non solum agens naturale disponit materiam sed educit formam in actum."[27] But they are not capable of generating the rational soul; this must be created by God. Since nature always acts according to a strict order, the parents first form the body through the unification of the sperm and the egg. But this zygote is not strictly speaking a human body until it developes to the point where it is rendered capable of receiving the rational soul. This takes time. And while it goes through these stages of

embryonic life, the body has respectively the vegetative and sensitive souls.

Nature always acts according to a certain order, going by degrees from the lower to the higher. Therefore it is not just an assumption to say that the embryo developes from the vegetative to the sensitive to the rational soul stage. The matter in the zygote is in a very elemental form; it is hardly actualized at all. So it is only proper then that it have the least actual of souls, the vegetative soul. "... natura ordinate in suis operibus procedit et non producit aliquid ab uno extremo ad aliud, nisi per media essentialiter et per gradus ordinata."[28] The other extreme is the reception of the rational soul. When this takes place, the material of the body receives its greatest possible actualizaiton. But this does not happen all at once, but is only worked up to by degrees. "Anima humana, non statim dum foetus concipitur, a Deo creatur et corpori infunditur, sed postquam foetus per formas priores et imperfectiores dispositus est ad animam humanam suscipiendam."[29] The formas priores et imperfectiores are the vegetative and sensitive souls. The process of the generation of a human being is not an instantaneous thing but rather is continual and gradual.

Before a body can receive a rational soul, it must be organized, i.e., have its organs developed to a certain degree and arranged in their proper order:

> Now nature is wanting in nothing that is necessary for the fulfillment of its proper operation; thus to animals whose soul is endowed with powers of sense and movement nature gives the appropriate organs of sense and movement. Hence, if the human soul needs the senses in order to understand, then that soul would never have been made in the first place without the indispensable assistants which the senses are. But the senses do not function without corporeal organs. The soul, therefore, was not made without corporeal organs.[30]

From this we see the necessity for an organized body as a receiver of the rational soul. The developement of the organization of the body does not take place at the moment of conception, for then the body is only potentially organized. But it is a gradual and continual process that takes place while the body lives a vegetative and sensitive life, before the advent of the rational soul. Before this bodily organization has taken place, the body is not actualized to its full capacity. "When this organized body, by the fact that it is organized, passes into act, it becomes animated, and then, and not before, it acquires a rational soul."[31]

"Generatio non sequitur, sed praecedit formam substantialem."[32] Since the substantial form of man is not had until the body is united to the rational soul, and since this substantial form is the term of generation, the body must be organized by the generative process before receiving the soul. "Cum forma non sit principium, sed terminus generationis, anima humana (quae est forma corporis humani) non infunditur antequam organismus corporis humani efformetur, sed solum postea, quando scil. foetus ad animam humanam suscipiendam est sufficienter dispositus."[33]

From all the things said so far, mediate animation necessitating a succession of souls in the human embryo seems to be the correct explanation for the developement of the human being and the origin of its life. St. Thomas seems to be correct in following the teaching laid down by Aristotle. What could be more logical than the teaching that proportionate matter and form are united as one substance and the resulting teaching that an organized body receives a rational soul similar (... ostendens animam, cum det esse substantiale et specificum tali corpori, habere essentialem habitudinem ad corpus, intantum quod anima quae dat esse uni cor-

pori, aliud perficere non possit.[34]) to itself in the coming-to-be of a human being? Both of these teachings are built upon a very rigid system of logic. And both of these teachings are accepted by the best philosophers today, at least among the Thomists. The Church, by telling us to follow St. Thomas, agrees with both of these teachings. Even most of the immediate animationists agree with both of them, for most of them would and do teach that the rational soul enters a body only when it is organized to the proper degree. Well then, just where do they differ?

The immediate and the mediate animationists disagree on one not-so-small point-- this point being the time when the bodily material is organized to the proper degree for the reception of the rational soul. The immediates say that this organization takes place at the moment of conception. The mediates differ rather widely on the exact time, but they do agree on one fact, namely that it does not take place at the moment of conception. Some of the older teachers, such as St. Thomas, held the Aristotelian notion that the organization of the male is completed in forty days and that of the female in ninety days. But most of the modern mediate animationists hold that this organization takes place sometime between the second and the third months.

No one so far has been able to conclusively prove either side to be correct. However, we hope to show that St. Thomas' opinion is the one that can be defended. We will attempt to do this by arguments from authority, convenience, and from embryology, having already shown its logical correctness.

Authority is purported to be the weakest of arguments, and it is especially weak when used as a philosophical argument. But even philosophers

should have respect for the thoughts, ideas, and teachings of other men who hold high positions in their respective fields. And if authority shows nothing else, it shows that the case for the succession of souls is not completely closed; it shows that mediate animation is not a doctrine to be relegated to a mistaken antiquity, but is a teaching that may very well be correct. For so it is believed to be by many famous men in philosophy, theology, and science-- not just men who lived before and during the scholastic age but men who live in the twentieth century.

Some students of scholastic philosophy, like Mercier, hold that the rational soul could come about through either immediate or mediate animation. But they seem to think, "... la seconde est la plus vraisemblable."[35] And they go on to say that science, instead of disproving this as is believed by so many, really confirms it. "L'embryogenie confirms d'une maniere frappante ces vues speculatives des anciens scolastiques."[36] Others are less noncommital. They, like Remer, say that imperfect act always precedes perfect, so there is needed some actualizing principle before the rational soul, the perfect act of the human body.

Moral theologians and canon lawyers usually raise the loudest cry against mediate animation. The reason for this is quite simple. They have to rule or legislate against abortion. They are concerned mainly with the fact of telling people it is wrong and keeping them from practicing it. Mediate animation says that before the third month, the material in the womb of the mother is not yet a human being. So naturally the moralists and canonists are afraid of people getting the idea that up until the third month abortion would not be a sin (this was taught by some during the Middle Ages). So they say that animation is immediate. That is why

the followers of mediate animation are said to come from "... praesertim inter philosophos qui, profundius quam moralistae et canonistae, rem scrutari solent."[37]

Mediate animation also holds that abortion at any time is a sin, but it does not say that it is the killing of a really living human being. But it says that it is the killing of a "homo in potentia," which, though not strictly homicide, is still a mortal sin. Some of the best moralists and canon lawyers have held this opinion, e.g., Merkelbach, Vermeesch, and Prümmer. To quote just one of them:

> Immediata ista animae rationalis infusio nullo solido argumento probari potest. Contra, recta philosophiae documenta de anima, forma corporis, postulant (secluso miraculo, quale Christi conceptionem secutum est) ut cum St. Thoma et omnibus scholasticis, post plures Patres, dilatam ad aliquod tempus infusionem istam teneamus; quod recentiores physiologiae observationes (prorsus sane diversae atque illae quae aetate S. Thomae admittebantur) confirmant.[38]

Besides the men that I have mentioned, many others of equal fame could be added to the long list of the mediate animationist. Men such as Barbado, Jolivet, Carbone, Maquart, Pirotta, Lottini, Guidi. All of these men, by agreeing with St. Thomas, add weight to our contention of the truth of his teaching regarding succession of souls. Lacroix speaks for all of them when he says: "Nous cryons très solide la position des anciens scolastiques, enseignant que l'embryon ne reçoit l'ame raisonnable que lorsque sont formes les principaux orgenes du corps humain."[39]

So much for authority. It was said that neither theory of animation is able to be demonstrated scientifically. Even so mediate animation outshines immediate with regard to convenience in some respects and is less convenient in no respects. Mediate animation is more fitting and suitable than

immediate. First of all, it is best suited to and best explained by Thomistic philosophy, which the Catholic Church has called the highest philosophy. It is fittingly explained by Thomistic philosophy, because it fulfills all that St. Thomas taught with regards to the uniting of body and soul: 1) Each form is received into its own proper and proportionate matter. 2) Matter is on account of form and not vice versa. 3) The way of generation proceeds gradually from the imperfect to the perfect. 4) Substantial form is the end and not the beginning of the generative process.

Mediate animation is also the more lenient of the two theories. George Washington Corner, professor of embryology at John Hopkins University, has said that one-third of all fertilized ova fail to remain the full term.[40] If this is the case, one-third of mankind must go to Limbo if we are to believe the immediate animationists. One-third of mankind, through no fault of its own, loses heaven simply because it is not baptized. Now of course God owes nothing to man, so He has every right to do this. But we hardly wish to think of an all-merciful God as doing this. Now if we hold mediate animation, we do not see these "ova" as human, so there is no deprivation of heaven. "... the intermediaries (vegetative and sensitive soul stages) do not have the complete species but are on the way to species and therefore are not generated to remain, but through them the ultimate generation is reached."[41] These are not man and consequently there is no loss of heaven.

Mediate animation is just as suitable in all theological questions as immediate, e.g., the case of abortion which I have already explained. It goes against none of the postulates of theology; the trouble arises only because it looks at some of them differently and thus necessitates a some-

what different explanation of them. St. Thomas would most assuredly have

agreed with the Church in proclaiming the Blessed Virgin immaculate from

the moment of her conception if he had thought that conception was the time

of animation. He simply did not understand conception as we do. "Simili

modo quia haec vox concipi apud S. Thomam numquam occurrit in sensu moder-

norum pro constitutione personae, sed tantummodo pro ortu foetus...."[42]

Since he knew original sin came from the parents and that the Blessed

Virgin was not sanctified until she received her rational soul, he had to

hold that the embryo (and thus Mary) had original sin, though strictly

speaking, as he knew, the embryo was not yet Mary but only Mary in potentia.

To clarify this further:

> Quod peccatum originale trahitur ex origine inquantum per
> eam communicatur humana natura, quam respicit proprie peccatum
> originale. Quod quidem fit quando proles concepta animatur.
> Unde post animationem nihil prohibet prolem conceptam sanctifi-
> cari: postea enim non manet in materno utero ad accipiendam hu-
> manam naturam, sed aliqualem perfectionis eius quod jam accipit.[43]

Besides being more convenient with regards to Thomistic philosophy and

at least as convenient with regards to theology, mediate animation is not

challenged by any of the scientific studies such as embryology. Although

many men have tried to make a case against mediate and for immediate anima-

tion from these studies, they have not in our opinion succeeded. And in

the opinion of some of the scholastic philosophers and some moral theologi-

ans, they have done just the opposite. Whatever they have done, they have

proven neither side conclusively.

To prove conclusively that one or the other groups of animationists is

correct, a person would have to prove when material is sufficiently formed

for the reception of the rational soul, since, as we said before, that is

the basic point at issue between the two groups. And this is going to be well nigh impossible for science. For science deals with material things-- things that can be tasted, touched, seen, heard, smelled, and measured. The rational soul fits in none of these categories, for the rational soul is immaterial. It is not something that science can measure or analyse. Science can know of the presence of the rational soul only by its effects, its psychic manisfestations. And it cannot know of the presence of the soul before the presence of these manifestations. Since there have been found so far no apparent manifestations before the birth of the child, science cannot conclusively say whether or not the rational soul is present before the birth of the child and if present, at what time. But science has discovered some things which make probable the mediate presence of the rational soul.

The uniting of the sperm and the egg is the uniting of two simple cells living a vegetative life. It would seem that these two cells are not sufficiently determined to merit a rational soul. "... it is now conceded that the chromosomes of the fertilized egg have, localized in their genes, definite determinative powers over developement."[44] In other words, it seems that the fertilized egg is only in potency to its determination but is not actualized fully enough to receive the soul. And it is certainly evident that as far as the microscope can show us, it does not have the organs that one generally associates with the normal human being. If it does have them, they must be there only potentially. As St. Thomas says, this egg must go through a process of developement before being animated. This the egg does by differentiation, i.e., a multiplying of cells to form the various organs. The different organs are brought about by the different

directions the cells take in their growth and by the speed with which some groups surpass others in this growth.

Another argument that science brings forth in favor of mediate animation is parthenogenesis or virgin birth. The ability of the egg to develope without the sperm is said to have been proven satisfactorily in the case of some mammals, notably the rabbit. This is thought by some to show that the sperm is not really needed for life but is only a sort of intiation-- one that can be replaced by a needle. For puncturing the egg by a needle is one of the means used to start the egg to develope. This leads to the idea that a certain disposition of matter is needed for the soul to exist, and that this disposition does not exist when the sperm and the egg as single cells are united.

Also the instability of the egg is said to show that the rational soul would not be present right away. Eggs have been cut into two pieces with the result that two complete individuals developed. If the egg of the human is as unstable as this (It is clear why no experimenting has been done with the human egg.), then certainly the rational soul would not be infused immediately. And the human egg does resemble others in its developement. The only other explanation would be that there are present in the egg in which developement has been initiated many souls potentially, the explanation usually given for identical twins, who develope from the cleavage of one egg. But it seems a little foolish to say that every egg be set up in this way, since every egg does not divide and become twins.

Now just what is said against these arguments by the scientists who uphold immediate animation? First of all, very little. As far as we could find out, many of them say it has to be this way without giving any

reasons for it. But others, in trying to give reasons always fall back on the idea that all the organs are not fully developed at birth. "That doctrine (mediate animation) must be rejected, because the cerebral cortex of the human new-born child is not yet fully developed; it developes later. Were we to accept Fr. Sertillanges doctrine (advocator of mediate animation) then a prima-facie case could be made that the infant, in the strict sense, was not a human being."[45] Why did he stop there? He may as well have gone on to say that man does not have a rational soul until he is an adult. For "only at about the age of twenty-five are the last of these progressive changes (completion of some organs and a gradual remolding of the body shape) finished."[46] Mediate animation does not say that the rational soul does not come in until the body and its organs are completely developed. That would be ridiculous. It says that the rational soul does not enter until the body and its organs are sufficiently developed. And this is thought to take place about the third month when the embryo begins to take on the appearance of a human being.

As is evident, all of these arguments are very weak. That is just our point-- to show what little merit there is in what science has found out with regard to this problem. Science seems completely out of its field when it tries to deal with the rational soul. All that the philosopher can hope for from it is that it will tell him to what degree the matter of the embryo is determined at any certain time. Then he should be able to make use of this knowledge to decide when the rational soul is infused.

But so far science has not given to philosophy this knowledge-- at least not backed up by any conclusive proofs. So men have no reason to go

against the teaching of a system of philosophy such as St. Thomas' simply because of a few scientific discoveries that prove nothing conclusively. It is the duty of philosophy and not of science to deal with the soul by explaining it and its origin. St. Thomas has done this in a very adequate manner. And he has logically brought into his explanation the succession of souls. It would seem then to be much safer to believe the philosophic explanation of the soul than to believe in the scientific— especially if the philosopher was higher, wiser, and knew his field better than most of the scientists know theirs. As Pope Leo XIII says:

> Philosophy has no part which he (St. Thomas) did not touch at once finely and thoroughly; on the laws of reasoning, on God and incorporeal substances, on man and other sensible things, on human actions and their principles, he reasoned in such a manner that in him there is wanting neither a full array of questions, nor an apt disposal of the various parts, nor the best method of proceeding, nor soundness of principles or strength of argument, nor clearness or elegance of style, nor a facility of explaining what is abstruse.[47]

Deo Gratias

FootNotes

1.   Dante Aligheri, _Divine Comedy_, "Purgatory," XXV, 53-74.

2.   For a complete history of mediate and immediate animation: "Animation," _Dictionaire de Théologie Catholique_.

3.   _Exodus_ 21:22, Septuagint version.

4.   E. Portalié, "Animation," _Dictionaire de Théologie Catholique_, col. 1306.

5.   Fr. Francisci de Sylvestris Ferraniensis, O.P., _Commentaria in Libros Quattuor Contra Gentiles_, II, cap. 89, p. 509.

6.   _Exodus_ 21:22-23, _Job_ 10:9-12.

7.   E. Portalié, _op. cit._, col. 1307.

8.   Migne, _Pat. Lat._, vol.40, col. 784-785.

9.   E. Portalié, _op. cit._, col. 1310.

10.   Rev. E.C. Messenger, "The Theological Status of the Mediate Animation Theory," _Irish Ecclesiastical Record_. 40(1932)286.

11.   _Ibid._, p. 287.

12.   Rev. M.J. Browne, D.D., "The Theological Status of the Mediate Animation Theory," _Irish Ecclesiastical Record_. 40(1932)459.

13.   E. Portalié, _op. cit._, col. 1310.

14.   Dominicus M. Prümmer, O.PR., _Manuale Theologiae Moralis_, p. 126.

15.   E. Portalié, _op. cit._, col. 1313.

16.   _Ibid._, col. 1316.

17.   _Canon_ 747.

18.   Aristotle, _De Anima_, II, 1, 412b6.

19.   _Summa Contra Gentiles_, II, cap. 83, 35.

20.   _Ibid._, II, cap. 89, 11.

21.   _Summa Theologica_, I, q. 118, a. 2, ad 2.

22.   _Ibid._, I, q. 118, a. 2c.

23.   *Libri Sententiarum*, d. 18, q. 11, a. 3c.

24.   Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, p. 18.

25.   *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 76, a. 5c.

26.   Fr. Francisci de Sylvestris Ferraniensis, O.P., *op. cit.*, II, cap. 89, p. 509.

27.   *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 4c.

28.   Fr. Francisci de Sylvestris Ferraniensis, O.P., *op. cit.*, loc. cit.

29.   Lottini, O.P., *Compendium Philosophiae Scholasticae* II, quoted by P. Hyacinthus-M. Hering, O.P., *Angelicum.* 28(1951)19.

30.   *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II cap. 83, 26.

31.   A.D. Sertillanges, O.P., *Foundations of Thomistic Philosophy*, p. 188.

32.   *De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 12.

33.   P. Hyacinthus-M. Hering, O.P., "De Tempore Animatione Foetus Humani," *Angelicum*, 28(1951)28.

34.   *Libri Sententiarum*, d. 17, q. 2. a. 2.

35.   D. Mercier, *La Psychologie*, vol. 3, p. 333.

36.   *Ibid.*, p. 337.

37.   P. Hyacinthus-M. Hering, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 19.

38.   Arthurus Vermeersch, S.I., *Theologiae Moralis*, tomus 2, p. 581.

39.   Lacroix, *L'origine de l'ame humaine*, quoted by P. Hyacinthus-M. Hering, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

40.   George Washington Corner, *Ourselves Unborn*, quoted by *Newsweek*, 24(October 1944)86.

41.   Fr. Francisci de Sylvestris Ferraniensis, O.P., *op. cit.*, II cap. 89, p. 526.

42.   C. Friethoff, O.P., "Quomodo Caro BVM In Originale Concepta Fuerit," *Angelicum*, 10(1933)328.

43.   *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 27, a. 1, ad 4.

44.   Leslie Brainerd Arey, *Developmental Anatomy*, p. 4.

45. M.A. Mac Conaill, "Causality in Embryology," _Dominican Studies_, 3(1950)233.

46. Leslie Brainerd Arey, _op. cit._, p. 2.

47. Pope Leo XIII, _op. cit._, p. 16.

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