

Angelic Metaphysics

Angelic Nature

Nature of Spirits

Psalm 104:4 *you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.*

Hebrews 1:14 ¹⁴ *Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?*

Scripture states that angels are spirits, but does not precisely define the concept of "spirit". The Hebrew word is "רוח" and can mean physical wind, (Gen 8:1, Job 15:2) a persons' inner self in some sense, (Ps 31:5, Isa 19:3, Ezek 13:3) the idea of life, (Gen 6:17, Ezek 37:10) and separate entities. (an intelligent "lying spirit" in 1 Kings 22:22) The Greek uses "πνεῦμα" and this carries the same range of meanings. (Luke 1:80, Luke 8:55, John 3:8, John 11:33, John 19:30, Acts 23:8)

What are spirits made of? There are a couple of instances where Scripture contrasts spirit to physical bodies. In one instance, after the resurrection, to assure the disciples he is not a ghost, (πνεῦμα) Jesus states that "spirits/ghosts do not have flesh and bones as I have". (Luke 24:39) Jesus also contrasted spirit with flesh in Matt 26:41, although sees them as part of the whole person. James 2:26 says that the body without the spirit is dead. In that verse "spirit" is being used to mean "inner life", but is still being contrasted with the physical body.

It is important to remember that the same word does not have to mean the same thing in every context. It can be easy to conflate all these meanings, like some do with Paul's usage of "flesh" to declare the physical body evil. Instead what we have is a range of meanings, and in this case they are all well related. Due to the connections I think we can be confident to declare that Angels are some form of incorporeal being, or at least have no full physicality. When they do appear materially and interact with material creation it is likely under temporarily assumed bodies, a kind of artificial construct to interact with everything else.¹

Angels and Gender

In the history of Christian iconography the gender of angels has changed over time. As we saw from the Old Testament, many times angels were portrayed as human/animal hybrid creatures, but in general they appeared as males. In the New testament as well angels are referred to as male when they appear. In early Christian art they typically use male figures with or without wings. Medieval art attempted to portray angels as androgynous as to communicate their incorporeality. During the renaissance they started to take on stronger female characteristics, and in much of the modern western world are now portrayed as female if not as either.

The reason for the change in the middle ages has to do with the growing desire for art to be theologically consistent. If angels are spirits, and spirits do not have bodies, then

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.51.2

angels cannot have gender either which was viewed entirely as an aspect of the physical body for humans. In some ways this was inconsistent in that deceased saints were still seen as male and female, so perhaps there was some idea of gender outside of the body. However at least for angels the common idea was that in Scripture they assumed bodies, (cf Aquinas, *ST I.51.2*) but this did not reflect the way they truly were and could conceivably take on the body of a man, woman, or animal if they so desired. Along with this, theologians noted Jesus saying angels do not marry, (Luke 20:34-36) and why would there be gender if there is no marriage?

C. S. Lewis had a different idea that he portrayed in his *Space Trilogy*. In it the Eldil (angels) are not male or female, but they are masculine and feminine. There is for Lewis some concept of gender that transcends the body allowing for the idea of angels to have gender. There may be one strand of biblical support for this as well, or at least for the idea that angels could appear as female. In the Book of Zechariah, Zechariah is guided through a vision by an angel. In that vision there appears to him two women with wings like a stork carrying a basket full of the iniquity of the people. (Zech 5:9) It is unclear if the women are good or evil, or even in the context of the vision are actual beings or just symbols. They are not called angels, but if they are at least some type of spirit then it could give evidence of female spirits.

Angels and Time

In classic and medieval theology, God is seen as entirely outside of time, which following St. Augustine is a created thing itself. (Augustine, *Confessions* 11) However, angels live with God in the empyrean heaven (the spiritual realm “above” the stars) and were seen by medieval theologians as eternal in some sense. They could not be fully eternal, however, because they are created beings and have a starting point. Theologians at the time coined the term “aeviternity” to describe this relationship. It was not without issue and although Bonaventure used the term, Aquinas found it inadequate.² This discussion relies a lot on the philosophy of “time” itself, a concept beyond of scope of this study.

Angelic nature in Justin Martyr

The only location in his writings where Justin gives a theology of angelic origins is in his *Dialogue*, 128. Emanationism forms the foundation for his Christology as well as his angelology.³ In seeking to prove that the Son is both from the Father and distinct from the Father he makes the comparison of the sun and the light. Just as light rays emanate from the sun, and so are distinct, they are also inseparable from the sun. This is the process that God uses to exert his power, and in each instance, this returns to him. E. Goodenough helps to explain Justin’s thought here as a response to the Jewish idea of angels being temporary manifestations of God’s power that are continually reabsorbed.⁴ In contrast, says Justin, there are some angels that are permanent, and exist in the same manner as

² Keck, David. *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 23

³ L.W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr: His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 108.

⁴ Erwin Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr* (Jena: Walter Biedermann, 1923), 189.

“fires kindled from a fire”.⁵ Justin has followed Jewish thought on angelic origins, but adapted them to his purposes, and in turn provided a foundation for his theology of spiritual beings such as angels and demons.

Due to this emanation, permanent angels, including the fallen ones are substantive. In being substantive, they possess a quasi-physicality that allows them to interact with the rest of material reality. Following Jewish precedent of the time, Justin associates angels with the substance of fire.⁶ In this, Justin is following a minor strand of Christian tradition that saw angels as material beings, only with a finer substance than the rest of creation.⁷

The first case of demonstrating a substantive angelology in Justin occurs in reference to the manna eaten in the wilderness. In *Dial. 57* he takes a very literal reading of Ps 77:25 LXX where the Israelites are said to have eaten the bread of angels in the context of deliverance from Egypt.⁸ Justin uses this psalm in defense of the pre-incarnate Christ appearing to Abraham stating that the angels with Abraham, like other angels, are “not nourished by food similar to that which mortals use.” He makes a distinction between food of men and food of angels, but still implies that angels need some form of nourishment, and that they “eat” in the same way fire is said to “eat.” It is as substances that angels require this nourishment, and demonstrate that in Justin’s theology that are not entirely “spiritual” beings.

The second place indicating a substantive angelology is in *2 Apology 5* where in process of explaining the origin of demons, he comments on their need for sacrifices. Most of the acts with which Justin states the demons subdued humanity have no obvious necessity for the fallen angels themselves, such as magical writings and fear of punishment. Both of these cases may bring benefit, in terms of pleasure, but there is no indication of need. Unfortunately, there is no explanation for why the demons metaphysically need sacrifices, only that it is a result of their fall into “lustful passions.” Do the demons need these sacrifices *per se* because of the fall, or only circumstantially, in they are now cut off from other previous forms of nourishment? Although Justin is unclear in this passage, a consistent demonology would imply the latter.⁹ The demons before the fall ate the bread of heaven, as indicated in *Dial. 57*, but the fall cut them off from heavenly nourishment. Now they must find other ways to fulfill this nourishment, relying on lesser forms of matter than they used to enjoy. There is another possibility, however, that must be admitted.

⁵ Christ is seen, however, as the unique emanation from the Father. Justin’s argument is from the lesser to the greater, from angels to Christ.

⁶ Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 195. Goodenough argues Justin has no concept of immaterial reality at all but that all emanations share in the materiality of what they emanate from. The evidence is too inconclusive for a statement that strong. It is evident from his writings that Justin saw angels in a similar manner as some current cultural views of angelic substance, but not that all reality must be material in some manner.

⁷ Everett Ferguson, *Demonology of the Early Christian World* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984), 110.

⁸ ἄρτον ἀγγέλων ἔφαγεν ἄνθρωπος

⁹ It may be that he is not being consistent. Considering his acumen as a theologian and philosopher it is preferable to give him the benefit of the doubt if a solution is possible.

Angelic nature in Thomas Aquinas (Theory of Angels as pure Form)

Forms = Universals, the ultimate aspects of reality that make something what it is in and of itself.

Matter = That from which things are made. For Aquinas there was an indescribable “Prime Matter”, that when forms are applied to make a thing a thing.

Substance = Form + Matter; Something in an of itself: a person, a tree, a car.

Accidents = Things that modify a substance such as a color or motion.

For Thomas, angels are not hylomorphic beings and are instead pure forms.¹⁰ Universal hylomorphism was a debated idea of medieval metaphysics. Bonaventure held that all creation was both form and matter, which would include the angels.¹¹ On the contrary, Thomas Aquinas argued angels must be immaterial substances because they are spirits, and a spirit is only form without any matter. His main arguments are from the perfection of creation, the nature of prime matter and the statements of scripture.

Aquinas sees universal hylomorphism as leaving creation imperfect as it would posit a metaphysical gap between God as pure spirit and humanity as spirit and matter.¹² The best way to understand Aquinas’ metaphysics is as a chain of being. In a chain of being, creation is an ontological succession from the greater to the lesser.¹³ In arguing that angels have form and no matter, creation achieves ontological perfection in having a complete chain of being. Angels are spiritual and immaterial, humanity is spiritual and material, animals are unspiritual and material. Universal hylomorphism would seem incomplete and imperfect, and so Thomas sees this view as inadequate. Thomistic hylomorphism preserves perfection in creation by positing creatures that exist in ontological mediation between God and humanity.¹⁴ These creatures then make sense to be the angels who are spirits and thus made of form only.

¹⁰ “Hylomorphism” is the idea that a thing is made of both form and matter. Form is the universal which transcends or is part of the thing itself, depending on the view. Matter is the stuff from which the thing is made.

¹¹ Although it seems that Bonaventure and Aquinas may have been operating under different ideas of “matter”. See Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure*, Great Medieval Thinkers, ed. Brian Davies (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 44-5. and discussion in David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 96-9.

¹² “For the perfection of the universe seems to be such that it does not lack any nature which can possibly exist” *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, V. “Hence the perfection of the universe requires that there should be intellectual creatures” *Summa Theologiae* I, q.50, a.1.

¹³ “We cannot go from one extreme to the other except through intermediaries...It is not possible, then, for corporeal substance to be located immediately below God, for it is altogether composite and divisible”. *De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, V.

¹⁴ It is important to note that Aquinas still views angels as composite creatures and thus not absolutely simple like God. Instead of form and matter, however, the composition is made of essence and existence. (*De Ente et Essentia*, 4) The overarching framework for Aquinas is essence

In addition, Aquinas sees the necessity of immaterial substances in relation to the nature of prime matter. Prime matter is that which God created first with which to create all other things.¹⁵ Forms are those things applied to prime matter to create material substances. Aquinas argues that the distinction between corporality and spirituality in created substances cannot reside in differences of matter.¹⁶ If spiritual substances and material substances both receive matter, then spiritual substances must receive a much finer matter to their form.¹⁷ Forms, however, are what individuate matter itself and thus there cannot be a pre-formed distinction in matter. If there is a distinction before forms are applied then there must be a prior matter from which both are derived, but due to the differences in types of matter Aquinas finds this impossible.¹⁸ Instead, there would have to be two separate types of matter for corporeal and spiritual substances. If this were the case, however, this prior distinction of matter would destroy the very meaning of prime matter. Aquinas' view preserves the uniqueness of angels compared to the rest of creation and the nature of prime matter by positing that angels are immaterial forms.¹⁹

Finally, Aquinas sees the belief in immaterial substances as a required part of the Catholic Faith itself. He refers to the ancient belief in spiritual matter as "the error of the Sadducees."²⁰ Aquinas makes a distinction between something being incorporeal and something being immaterial, and argues angels must be both according to scripture. "That angels are incorporeal is proved from sacred scripture" he says.²¹ Aquinas quotes four texts in support of this position; Psalm 103:4, Isaiah 31:3, John 4:24 and Hebrews 1:14.²² All of these verses describe angels as "spirits", and Isaiah specifically contrasts spirit with flesh. Beyond incorporeity, Aquinas insists that scripture demands angels be immaterial as well.²³ For this argument he works off the idea of angels as "powers."²⁴

and existence and not act and potency. See discussion in Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, 98-9. and also in Stefan Swiezawski, *St. Thomas Revisited*, trans. Theresa Sandok, Catholic Thought from Lublin, ed. Andrew Woznicki, vol. 8 (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 81-94.

¹⁵ "Prime Matter" is pure matter without form or accidentals. It has no color or texture or size or shape and is pure potency and has no being of its own. See Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*, trans. L.K. Shook (New York: Random House, 1956), 177.

¹⁶ "this position [of spiritual matter] destroys the true nature of prime matter. For it is the nature of matter that it be in potency...it is not predicated of any actually existing thing" *De Substantiis Separatis*, 27.

¹⁷ *De Substantiis Separatis*, 32.

¹⁸ *De Substantiis Separatis*, 32.

¹⁹ Another way of looking at this is to consider prime matter as cookie dough and forms as the cookie cutters. For hylomorphism the same dough must be used to make both angels and humans but this would create difficulties with calling angels "spiritual beings". On the other hand there is only one kind of dough to make things out of, either that or there has to be a prior dough which both dough are made from. This analogy is imperfect but helps to explain the issue for Aquinas.

²⁰ *Summa Theologiae* I, q.50, a.1.

²¹ *De Substantiis Separatis*, 99.

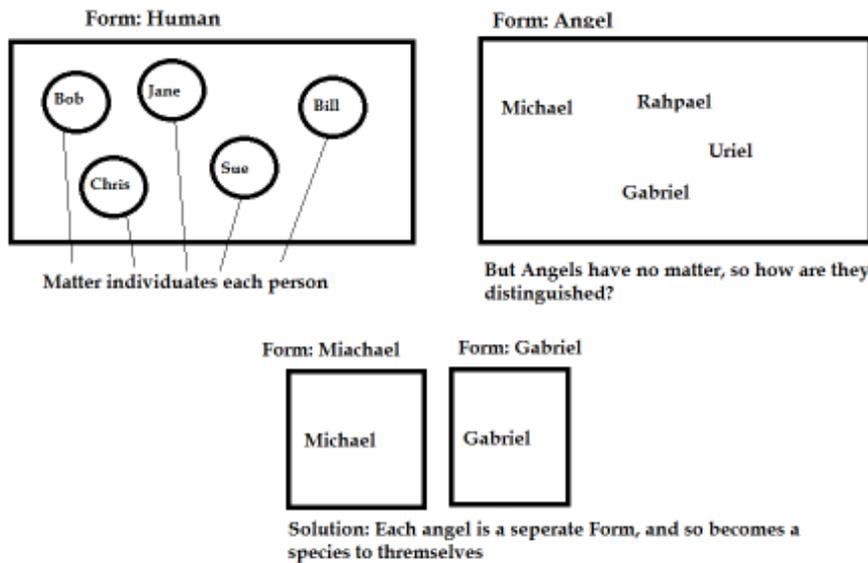
²² *Ibid.*

²³ The central debate in angelic metaphysics of the middle ages was not concerning incorporeality but immateriality. Bonaventure as well held to angelic incorporeality but his doctrine of universal hylomorphism lead him to posit angels as material.

²⁴ *De Substantiis Separatis*, 99.

Angels are powers not because they have power, but because they are power.²⁵ Being powers in nature, they are by definition immaterial and so must be pure form.

NB: One interesting result of this theology is that every angel must be a species unto himself. For corporeal beings such as humans we all share the same nature but are individuated by matter. For instance, I can “locate” Bob as distinct from Sue because they both have separate material bodies. But if Bob and Sue did not have any matter to distinguish themselves but are both by nature (form) “human” then what makes one human different from another? Aquinas’ solution was that every angel was a different Form. If each angel is a different Form, and a Form was a species then every angel is a separate “species”. The classification “angel” indicates they are beings who by nature are incorporeal and immaterial, but is not a species indicator like “human” in the philosophical sense.



²⁵ Riedl in Robert E. Brennan, ed. *Essays in Thomism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1942), 145.

Confirmation of the Holy Angels

The Confirmation of the Holy Angels is a theory that developed primarily starting in the early middle ages and was fully expounded upon by the scholastics. There is some discrepancy among Church Fathers over the possibility of good angels to still fall.²⁶ Scripture is completely silent on this, but an answer against it would posit some things that even the Reformation did not want to deny, such as the idea that Gabriel or Michael could still fall. The idea was also needed to preserve the integrity of Guardian Angels.²⁷

The Thomistic theory is based on the premise that angelic nature as "simple" so what goodness, or beatitude, is not a process but something that for them happens directly. (Aquinas, *ST I.62.5*) In scholastic theology the will always desires that which is good. For instance, someone who steals does so because they believe it is good for them (perhaps the good of paying a debt or buying food). It is the intellect that distorts the will. In angels, their knowledge and intellect was such that after the moment of creation, (*ST I.63.5-6*) some chose God for perfection in beatitude and some wanted to attain it via themselves. (*ST I.63.3*) The Holy Angels merited at this one act the beatific vision, and because the will always desires that which is good (and God's essence is goodness) they cannot but keep their wills on God and conform themselves to him. (*ST I.62.8*)

Some of this theory would not align very well with the Church Fathers understanding of the fall however. Primarily, many held to an angelic fall before Noah in Genesis 6. Of course this could imply two falls, but it is difficult from the writings of the Fathers to determine their exact thoughts on this matter. Either way, this theory of Genesis 6 eventually fell out of favor in the Western Church, and the fall of the angels began to be seen entirely as something that happened either at the moment of creation or right afterwards.

Angelic Circumscription

Thomistic Theory, Dancing on Pinheads, and analysis:

Angelic localization and interaction with the material world is a matter of function rather than ontology. A material substance is in a place by virtue of taking up space in that place. Material objects also truly exist in the place of their location even if not active. Material substances are in a location ontologically such that no other material substance can take up the same space. For instance, a dead body is in the ground but not active or thinking and no other body can take up the same space. Angels, however, have no matter with which to take up space. Angels localize and interact by virtue of their power in a place and not by "being" in the place. Instead of being enveloped by a place they envelop a place.²⁸ Under this paradigm, physical location does not "contain" an angel, because being contained by physicality does not define where they are circumscribed.²⁹ Angelic

²⁶ Francis J. Hall, *Dogmatic Theology 5: Creation and Man*. (New York: Longmans and Green, 1912), 157.

²⁷ Keck, David. *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 26

²⁸ See Mortimer J. Adler, *The Angels and Us* (New York: Collier Books, 1982), 130.

²⁹ Aquinas says "The application to a body of the power of a spiritual substance is, in effect, a containing of the body by that substance and not vice versa: thus thus the human soul itself is in

circumscription, or location, is a result of angelic interaction with a material object or material location. A dancing angel is one who is moving about the pinhead as a power. The functions of an angel make it to be in a material location, and not the being of the angel itself, which as pure form does not exist in a place.

For Thomas, angelic interaction is functional in the same way as angelic location. Angels have a causal relationship to the material world. Aquinas demonstrates this view in his discussion on how many angels can be in a given place at the same time.³⁰ His main argument centers on the idea of sufficient causality. "It is impossible", he says, "that one and the same thing should depend entirely and immediately on two causes".³¹ Aquinas' example of a ship being tugged by a rope demonstrates his point. Although there are many people tugging the rope and moving the ship as mediate and extrinsic causes, there is one and only one cause for the movement of the boat, that of the force of the rope. He points out that in this example the mediate causes are insufficient to tug the boat individually. Angels are different in being sufficient causes and so it is unnecessary to have more than one angel exert its power on the same place at the same time.³² If there can only be one cause acting on a pinhead at a time it appears Aquinas' answer to the question of how many angels can dance on a pinhead would have to be one and only one angel.³³

It would seem that only one angel could dance on the head of a pin under a Thomistic paradigm. Peter Kreeft states that for an undivided place such as a pinhead, only one angel can dance due to a spirit surrounding a place with its power to the exclusion of others.³⁴ Although he notes that for a divided place an infinite number of angels may dance because spirits do not take up space in a material manner.³⁵

Further, Mortimer Adler argues that an angel occupying a place by spiritual power completely excludes other powers.³⁶ The basis for this argument is the distinction between an object being enveloped by a place and enveloping it. As an angel envelops a place, then there is no room in that place for another spiritual power.³⁷

Further, Aquinas argues that only one angel can be in one place at one time. This is not due to an angel taking up physical space, but that because an angel is in a place by exerting its power in a place it becomes the sufficient cause in a place or on an object. As there can be only one sufficient cause, then only one angel can be in a given place as discussed above.³⁸

On the contrary, the Scriptures show more than one demon possessing the same person. For instance in the case of the Gerasene Demoniac the demon is said to be "legion" and when driven out they got into a herd of pigs, demonstrating the plurality

the body as containing it and not as contained by it. In somewhat the same way, an angel is in a given bodily place, not as contained by, but as containing it." *Summa Theologiae* I, q.52, a.1

³⁰ See *Summa Theologiae* I, q.52, a.3.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, 111.

³³ This is how Adler interprets it as stated below, p8. See Adler, *The Angels and Us*, 130. This all also assumes a pinhead is a space that cannot be divided.

³⁴ Kreeft, *Angels (and Demons): What do we really know about them?*, 71.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Adler, *The Angels and Us*, 130.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ p.6

inside the person. (Mark 5:1-20) If, assuming demons are fallen angels, angels only take up space by virtue of their power on a place.³⁹ This passage indicates the focus of more than one demon on the mind and will of the person. If there is more than one demon in focus on a person, then there must be more than one demon in the same location, as all are acting on the same mind, will and body.

In answering the question, it is important to keep the immaterial nature of angels in mind. Angelic immateriality would indicate that it is not of their inherent nature to prevent room for other angels, as they do not take up space in any meaningful materialistic sense. Either one angel or one hundred could focus themselves on the same spot without anything inherent to their nature preventing leaving enough room for other angels. It is true that angels do fully envelop a place with their power, but there is no reason to assume that this type of presence would prevent another angel from enveloping the same place. The best answer based on all of Aquinas's ideas of angelic nature and location would be infinite. The fact that Aquinas does not consider the nature of angelic location in itself preventing more than one angel in the same place is indicated by his need in *Summa Theologicae* I, q.52, a.3 to discuss the issue. In this third article he does not rely on his previous argument in the first article, but introduces a new argument from causality. If Aquinas viewed the nature of angelic location itself as ruling out several angels in the same place then he would not have needed the argument in *Summa Theologicae* I, q.52, a.3.

The objection found in Kreeft is similar to that in Adler in being dependent on the Thomistic idea of angels enveloping a place. Kreeft's interpretation of Aquinas, however, is more helpful than Adler. An angel's ability to dance on a pinhead is connected to the nature of the pinhead itself as either a divided or an undivided place. More than one dancing angel in Thomistic angelology is only an issue for an undivided pinhead. For a divided pinhead, the answer would be infinite. For an undivided pinhead the initial answer of Kreeft is only one. His argument for a single angel is based on *Summa Theologicae* I, q.52, a.1. As pointed out above, however, Aquinas' argument for the nature of angelic location does not rule out more than one angel in the same undivided place.⁴⁰ However, he himself expresses doubts about this answer. Kreeft brings up two main objections.⁴¹ First, if more than one person can concentrate on the same object, then why not angels? If angelic location is the result of angelic power and concentration, then more than one concentrating angel on the same object would be the same as more than one angel in the same place. Second, angels cooperate in battle, then why not to dance on a pinhead? The objection from Adler is very similar to Kreeft, only without the distinction between divided and undivided place. The same issues expressed in Kreeft's doubts on a single angel position apply to Adler as well.

The objection from Aquinas seems inconsistent. Aquinas' framework of angelic nature indicates that any number of angels should have the ability to be in the same place at the same time. Instead he answers that no, only one angel can be in the same location. Instead of taking up room, or as Kreeft and Adler argue by somehow overwhelming a place with themselves, angels exert a sufficient cause on a place. Aquinas in his *Summa Theologicae* I, q.52, a.3 argues first that because no two souls exist in the same body that

³⁹ This is an assumption Aquinas makes in *Summa Theologicae* I, q.63

⁴⁰ p.7

⁴¹ Kreeft, *Angels (and Demons): What do we really know about them?*, 71.

therefore two angels cannot exist in the same place. His example of the boat, as stated above,⁴² rules out co-operation for angels because for humans one person may not be enough to pull the boat, whereas one angel always provides sufficient ability for a task.

However, in *Summa Theologicae* I, q.52, a.1 his contrary argument against angels existing in a place at all is to quote the Dominican Breviary that says “May thy holy angels dwelling therein preserve us in peace”. It is ironic that his primary answer to one question also asserts a plural number of angels in the same place, that of the worshipping space of the monastic community. Aquinas does not define a “place” so it is difficult to tell if there is a different usage in article one and article two. Kreeft’s insight on divided and undivided place may be helpful here. In the first article, Aquinas may be thinking of a divided place, as the example is a chapel. In the second article, it would make sense to view the “place” as an undivided. An undivided place would come under the restriction of sufficient causality. A pinhead, however, could be easily seen as a divided place and so allow an infinite number of dancing angels.

There are three main issues with this explanation of Aquinas. First, it is difficult to determine what exactly an undivided place would be. How much division can a thing undergo before becoming indivisible? If things can be either divisible or indivisible by genus, then what exactly is an undivided substance? It would seem all substances are to some degree dividable. Second, sufficient causality on even an undivided place is not sufficient to explain why more than one angel may act on the same place. Human beings do not only cooperate out of necessity, but also out of mutual enjoyment. For instance, a husband and wife preparing a meal together would only require one person, but they would have a greater reason to cooperate.⁴³ In combat as well, where two angels are in conflict over the same space, there would be more than one angel exerting their power on the same location, and so by Thomistic angelology be considered to be “present” in the same place regardless of divisibility of the place. Third, and most difficult to get around, is the fact that Aquinas himself does not make this type of distinction in place.

Overall, the answer of infinite is the most defensible, even though it causes issues with *Summa Theologicae* I, q.52, a.3. An infinite number of angels is the best answer from the overall writings of Aquinas. Introducing the issue of sufficient causality does not work as well as Aquinas would like. He does address this issue in his first reply in article three and acknowledges that the issue is not angels filling up space. This would indicate that without the idea of angelic sufficient causality the rest of his system would indicate more than one angel could be in the same place at the same time. His third reply almost addresses the issue of demonic possession by more than one entity, but instead only focuses on a soul and a demon “in” the same body. A proposed answer from Aquinas depends mostly upon this question in the *Summa*, but his answer seems insufficient and does not integrate well with the rest of his theology. Instead the best answer from his system is an infinite number may dance on any given pinhead.

Angelic Locution

Thomistic Theory:

⁴² p.6

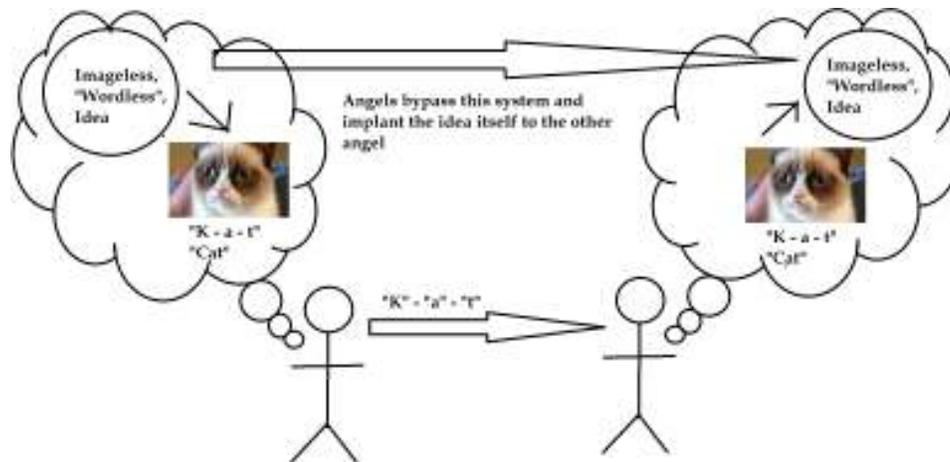
⁴³ I am indebted to Dr. Xavier Bannis, Instructor of Philosophy and Ethics for this analogy.

For Aquinas angels are entirely immaterial, and so movement does not work as it does in humans. For us, movement is based on us being material and traversing from one material location to another. For immaterial substances, "location" means the substance is acting on a place, not that they are taking up space in that place. So movement for angels must take that into account. Angels therefore do not "traverse" space. An angel "moves" when he applies his knowledge or power at one place or person.

Angelic Communication

Thomistic Theory:

Human beings communicate in entirely material ways. For immaterial creatures communication must happen without sights or sounds or sense organs of any kind. The general scholastic theory was a form of what we would call telepathy. However this is not a telekinesis of language, not a construction of words but a direct implantation of ideas.



Angelic Knowledge

Thomistic Theory:

Angels, being bodiless, do not think and know the way humans do. Humans know via sense perception. We look, or hear, or touch the world when our brains use that information to piece together ideas and concepts about the world. In theory an angel knows things intuitively. Intuition in this sense is an instantaneous conception of the reality of something without the need to reason to a conclusion. They are able to know in this manner because God implanted in them at creation knowledge of universals. Although there is an inverse relationship between the number of universals an angel knows and the amount of particulars it knows. The more perfect the angel the broader and more universal ideas it understands, and thus has more knowledge of all particulars that participate in those universals. The lower an angel, the more concepts it knows but they are less comprehensive.