

PROLOGUE

The need for an introductory study of the problem of individuation in the scholasticism of the later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation should require no justification. Although there are some studies of individuation as it appears in a few individual authors from these periods, so far no one has attempted a general study of the development of this problem in scholasticism from 1150 to 1650. Yet, individuation is not only one of the major philosophical problems of all times, a fact amply demonstrated by the continued attraction it has exercised on philosophers, but it is one that has especial fascination for late medieval and Counter-Reformation scholastics. Indeed, most scholastic authors of those periods dealt with individuation in one way or another, and the number of questions, disputations and treatises devoted to it is impressive.

The fascination that the problem of individuation had for scholastics can be explained not only on the basis of its perennial philosophical interest and the implications that it has for other philosophical issues such as the problem of universals, but also because of its substantial theological ramifications. In an age where theology was regarded as the queen of the sciences and philosophy as the handmaiden of theology, any philosophical issue that had theological bearing necessarily acquired importance. The theological doctrines to which the problem of individuation is related are many, but five in particular stand out: the Trinity, original sin, the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, and the nature of angels. Individuation had to do with trinitarian doctrine because, according to orthodox Christian belief, God was both one and three. Christian authors from the very beginning of the Christian era realized the need to express this belief in intelligible philosophical terms and to do so it became necessary to discuss the nature of individuality and the principle of individuation. The doctrine of original sin was also related to individuation, because it required an explanation of how sin can be committed by one individual and its effects passed down to others. In the thirteenth century medieval authors became particularly sensitive to the importance of the problem of individuation for the problem of personal immortality. To account for the preservation of the individual person after death and for just punishments and rewards, it was necessary to understand what individuality is, how it is brought about, and how it is preserved. Related to immortality was the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. This

doctrine raised important questions concerning the identity and individuality of the body and the composite of soul and body. Finally, the question concerned with the explanation of the uniqueness of purely spiritual entities and the differences among various angelic natures prompted scholastics, particularly in the thirteenth century and later, to raise questions related to their individuation.

Nevertheless, in spite of the importance that the problem of individuation had for scholastics and the need to understand its development in the later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation, no study attempts to present an overview of its historical development at the time. The reasons are obvious. Not only is this a very long stretch of time, covering half a millenium, but it is crowded with major philosophical thinkers. It is difficult enough to try to understand and present a clear exposition of the thought on this issue of any major scholastic figure such as Thomas Aquinas or Duns Scotus, let alone attempt to do so with several of them. Moreover, the 500 years in question witnessed great changes in philosophical and theological outlook as well as major institutional developments whose impact was felt, directly or indirectly, in the perception of and solution given to various philosophical problems, including the problem of individuation. The changes were so many and of such magnitude that even their mere enumeration would be out of place in an introductory preface such as this. But at least those that had the greatest impact on the age must be mentioned in passing: the translations of Arabic and Greek philosophical and scientific works into Latin, the foundation of the universities and major religious orders, the official ecclesiastical condemnations of ideas perceived as dangerous and heretical, the rise of humanism, and finally the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. It would be foolish, then, for anyone to attempt single-handedly a study that takes into account the historical development of scholastic views on individuation throughout a period as long and complex as that constituted by the later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation. Nor could any single work aspire to cover the thought of the many figures who discussed this topic. What to do, then? Should one simply give up and regard the history of the problem of individuation during this key period in the West as unchartable and the attempt to understand its major developments as impossible?

To answer the last question affirmatively would be, I believe, a serious mistake. True, no individual scholar could undertake the task, and no single work could hope to discuss fully all the figures involved in the scholastic controversies surrounding individuation. But there is another procedure that, although not so ambitious, may be of use to future scholars and that has been adopted in this volume. What we have attempted to do here is to present an introductory, selective account of the major developments in the period. Two principles have guided the procedure. First of all, the number of scholastic

figures to be discussed was reduced to a manageable number. All towering figures are included, but only some lesser thinkers are discussed; they are included to help explain the transitions among the major figures and make clear the climate of opinion at particular times during the period. The application of this principle in the composition of this work has resulted in a collection of articles on various authors that serves as an introduction to the history of the problem of individuation by establishing the main parameters of that history. Second, the work was divided among scholars well acquainted with particular authors, for only those familiar with their thought can hope to understand, on the one hand, the role that the problem of individuation played in the development of their ideas and, on the other, the way their overall perspective affected their views on individuation.

The disadvantages of the procedure we have followed should be clear. This book is not a comprehensive and complete study of the history of the problem of individuation in the scholasticism of the later Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation; many and important gaps remain and need to be filled, but we hope the book will encourage others to study this matter further. Moreover, as with any collective work, it contains differences of terminology, style, emphasis, and method. I have tried to promote cohesiveness and coordination not only by making appropriate editorial suggestions to the contributing authors, but also by circulating semifinal versions of the articles among the contributors. I have not, however, asked that the authors adhere to a definite format and structure or that they adopt a determined terminology or methodology. Rather, I have allowed the contributing scholars to follow their own counsel on these matters with the hope that such procedure would produce both a more accurate rendition of the views of the scholastic authors discussed and a better picture of diverse approaches used in current medieval and Counter-Reformation scholarship. There are, therefore, some disadvantages to the procedure adopted, but I trust the indicated advantages, together with the benefit of having an initial chart of the development of an important problem whose course has lain largely uncharted until now, will override the minor problems which the reader will find in the volume.

The temporal boundaries of the book have not been established arbitrarily. Obvious historical reasons justify them. The middle of the twelfth century marks an important beginning in the history not only of the problem of individuation but of scholastic thought in general. In the second half of the twelfth century the impact of the translations from Arabic and Greek sources began to be felt in the West, and it is well known that this impact changed the course of Western philosophical and theological thought in various ways. The introduction of previously unknown texts from Aristotle and the commentaries on those texts by Islamic and Jewish writers initiated Latin medieval authors into philosophical problems and ideas of which they were ignorant.

These texts and commentaries also provided them with conceptual tools to address not only new problems, but also many issues with which they had already dealt. The middle of the twelfth century, therefore, is an appropriate starting point. On the other hand, the middle of the seventeenth century marks a good point at which to end the book for two reasons. First, this was the time at which the last and most complete scholastic synthesis became a standard reference work on metaphysics in European universities. I am referring to Francis Suárez's *Disputationes metaphysicae* (1597). And, second, the year 1644 saw the death of the last major scholastic to have a substantial impact on the future course of mainstream European philosophy, John of St. Thomas. Scholasticism and scholastic influence did not end with Suárez and John of St. Thomas, of course. Indeed, Suárez's thought in general and his *Metaphysical Disputations* in particular, as well as the work of John of St. Thomas and many of their scholastic contemporaries and predecessors, had considerable impact in the philosophical speculations of later centuries. Scholastic thought continued to be influential in many ways, as the writings of most modern thinkers such as Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz indicate. But it can hardly be denied that after 1650 scholasticism ceased to be the primary philosophical current of the times; philosophy was moving in new directions. It is appropriate, then, that a study of scholastic views on individuation end at the middle of the seventeenth century.

The unavoidable temporal and spatial limitations imposed on the study mean that some important materials having a bearing on scholastic views on individuation have been left out. The thought on individuation produced by nonscholastic Renaissance and Counter-Reformation figures, for example, has not been taken into account. Moreover, except for one illustrative article at the end, no attempt has been made at studying the important influence of scholastic thought concerning individuation on early modern philosophers; that will be the subject of a different volume to appear in this series. Nor has it been possible to make explicit the relation between the problem of individuation with the other philosophical and theological issues of concern to scholastics. All such areas require research and thinking, but they have been left untouched here for the aforementioned reasons.

In accordance with the stated general policy, my original plan was to invite a dozen scholars to write articles on two dozen late medieval figures, but the volume grew to include contributions from sixteen scholars, who deal with more than twenty-five different scholastic authors. The body of the volume is composed of eighteen articles covering the thought of various scholastic figures. These articles are preceded by four propaedeutic pieces and followed by an article illustrating the impact of scholasticism on modern philosophy and an epilogue. The first of the propaedeutic pieces is a short Introduction in which the problem of individuation is systematically presented.

Its purpose is to make it easier to understand both the issues involved in individuation and the relations among the various positions that philosophers have adopted with respect to it. I have taken the opportunity to identify in the footnotes some of the contemporary writers who hold versions of those positions in order to facilitate the research of those readers whose philosophical interests are not parochial to the Middle Ages and the Counter-Reformation. Although the Introduction presents a systematic framework that naturally entails certain philosophical views, I have tried to keep it as neutral as possible with respect to philosophical commitments and I have neither asked nor expected in any way that contributors to the volume adhere to it or interpret the authors they study in its terms. Indeed, the Introduction was written as an aid to readers rather than as a guide for contributors. The other three propaedeutic articles are historical rather than systematic. The aim of the first two is to provide some background to the currents of thought that were at work in the middle of the twelfth century and which were to influence the future course of scholastic discussions of individuation. The aim of the third is to acquaint the reader with a current of thought that flourished alongside that of the Latin West. The first summarizes the state of medieval discussions of individuation prior to 1150. The second article deals with the Islamic background, and particularly with Avicenna and Averroes, the two Islamic thinkers who had the greatest influence on later Latin philosophy. The third article discusses the thought of Maimonides and two later members of the Jewish tradition whose thought should help to illustrate the cross-fertilization between Jewish and Christian ideas in the area of individuation at the time. At the end of the volume a short piece on Leibniz has been added; its aim is to illustrate with one example the impact that scholastic discussions on individuation had on modern philosophy. Finally, the Epilogue aims to draw together a very general picture of the development of the problem of individuation from 1150 to 1650 and to indicate areas where particular research is needed. The Bibliography contains the titles of the sources used in the book; it is not meant as an exhaustive list of sources on individuation in the later Middle Ages, but rather as a tool for the location of references. Indices of authors and subjects have been added at the end for the convenience of readers. The volume closes with short biographical notes on the contributors.

The particular choice of major scholastic authors to be discussed in this book posed no serious difficulty, they are easily identifiable, but the decision as to which minor figures to include and which to leave out was difficult. The final list of inclusions and assignments was the product of discussions between the editor and the contributors. As far as the choice of contributing authors is concerned, I decided at the beginning to include both senior scholars as well as representatives from younger generations. This approach should help to present a more accurate panorama of the different styles used by those inter-

ested in the problem of individuation and gives an indication of the past, present, and future course of scholarship on the history of scholastic philosophy.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have cooperated in this project. In particular I would like to thank the authors of the articles for meeting the deadlines I established, for their willingness to accept as well as to offer suggestions for the improvement of the book and for correcting the page proofs of their articles. In addition, I would like to thank Paul V. Spade, Alfred J. Freddoso, John F. Quinn, and Marilyn McCord Adams for their suggestions of possible contributing authors. I should also mention that five of the articles included here are based partly on previously published material, although in all cases, with the exception of Wippel's article, substantial modifications have been introduced. The article by John F. Wippel on Godfrey of Fontaines, Peter of Auvergne, and John Baconthorpe was originally published in *Essays Honoring Allan B. Wolter*, Ed. William A. Frank and Girard J. Etzkorn (St. Bonaventure, NY: The Franciscan Institute, 1985, pp. 309–349). Part of the discussion of Gerson by Tamar Rudavsky is based on an article published in *The New Scholasticism* 56 (1982), pp. 30–50. My discussion of Suárez is indebted to the Introduction to my *Suárez on Individuation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982), pp. 1–27. And both the systematic introduction and the piece on the legacy of the early Middle Ages use materials contained in my *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages* (Munich and Washington, DC: Philosophia Verlag and The Catholic University of America Press, 1984; 2nd rev. ed., Philosophia Verlag, 1988). I would like to thank, therefore, the editors and publishers of the pertinent texts for their gracious permission to use them. I would like to express my appreciation to Ky Herreid for proofreading the parts of the volume written by me as well as for his many helpful stylistic suggestions, and to Marie Fleischauer and Eileen McNamara for the patience and expertise with which they typed various drafts of parts of this volume. Finally, I also wish to thank Peter H. Hare, chair of the Department of Philosophy at Buffalo, for his unwaivering support of this project.

Jorge J. E. Gracia
1988