

# On Being and Essence

---

## Prologue

Because a small error in the beginning is a great one in the end, according to the Philosopher,<sup>1</sup> and because being and essence are what are first conceived by the intellect, as Avicenna says,<sup>2</sup> then—so that error does not come about due to

- 5 ignorance of them—to explicate their difficulty we should state:
- (a) what is signified by the name ‘essence’ (and ‘being’);
  - (b) how it is found in diverse conditions;
  - 10 (c) how it is related to logical intentions,<sup>3</sup> namely to genus, species, and *differentia*.

Now we should acquire the cognition of simples on the basis of composites and arrive at what is prior from what is posterior. That way, beginning with easier matters, learning takes place in a more suitable fashion. Hence, one should proceed

15 from the signification of ‘being’ to the signification of ‘essence’.

## Chapter 1

Note that, as the Philosopher says,<sup>4</sup> ‘being’ is said on its own in two ways:

- 5 (a) what is divided by the ten genera; (b) what signifies the truth of propositions. The difference between (a) and (b) is that according to (b), anything of which an affirmative proposition can be formulated can be called a being, even if it puts forward nothing in reality. According to (b), privations and negations are
- 10 called beings: for we say that affirmation *is* opposed to negation, and that blindness *is* in the eye. But according to (a), only what puts forward something in reality can be called a being. Accordingly, blindness and the like are not beings according to (a).

---

<sup>1</sup>Aristotle, *On the Heavens* I.9, 271b8–13.

<sup>2</sup>*Metaphysics* I.5.

<sup>3</sup>For Aquinas, an ‘intention’ is a cognitive act understood as directed *toward* something. Should that toward which it is directed be itself a mental act directed toward something, it is called a ‘second intention’—roughly, a concept of concepts. It was commonly held at the time that, e.g., a species such as human being was a second intention, that is, a mental act directed at the individual concepts of Socrates, Plato, and so on. The ‘logical’ intentions correspond to the basic elements of logic: genus, species, *differentia*, and definition.

<sup>4</sup>*Metaphysics* V.7, 1017a22–35.

15 Hence the name ‘essence’ (*essentia*) is not taken from ‘being’ (*ens*) said according to (b). For some items are called beings according to (b) that do not have essence, as is clear in the case of privations. Instead, ‘essence’ is taken from ‘being’ said according to (a). Accordingly, the Commentator says that ‘being’ said according to (a) is what signifies the essence of a thing.<sup>5</sup> Since, as noted, ‘being’ said according to (a) is divided by the ten genera, ‘essence’ must signify something common to all natures. And diverse beings are classified into diverse genera and species by these natures. For example, humanity is the essence of human being, and so on for other cases.

That by which a thing is classified in its proper genus or species is what is signified by a definition indicating *what* the thing is. For this reason, the name ‘essence’ is changed into the name ‘quiddity’ by philosophers. This is also what the Philosopher often names the ‘what-it-is-to-be’<sup>6</sup>—that is, that by which something has the feature of being *what* it is. It is also called ‘form’, in that the definiteness of any one thing is signified by ‘form’, as Avicenna says.<sup>7</sup> The essence is also called by another name, ‘nature’—taking ‘nature’ in the first of the four ways that Boethius gives,<sup>8</sup> namely in that one calls ‘nature’ everything that can somehow be grasped by the intellect. For a thing is intelligible only through its definition and essence. Thus the Philosopher also says that every substance is a nature.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the name ‘nature’ taken in this way seems to signify the essence of a thing in that it has an order to the proper operation of the thing, since no thing is devoid of its proper operation. Now the name ‘quiddity’ is taken from the fact that it is signified by the definition, but ‘essence’ is said in that through it and in it a being has existence.

But because ‘being’ is said of substances absolutely and primarily, and said of accidents as posterior and as though in a respect (*secundum quid*), it is thereby the case as well that essence is strictly and genuinely in substances, but is in accidents in a certain fashion and in a respect. Now some substances are simple and others are composite. There is essence in both, but it is in the simple ones in a more genuine and excellent way, in that they also have a more excellent existence. For simple substances—at least, the first and simple substance (which is God)—are the cause of those that are composite. But because the essences of those substances are more hidden from us, for this reason one ought to begin with the essences of composite substances, so that from easier matters learning happens in a more suitable manner.

---

<sup>5</sup>Averroës, *Metaphysics* V.14.

<sup>6</sup>The ‘what-it-is-to-be’: *quod quid erat esse*, the standard Latin translation of Aristotle’s formula τὸ τὶ ἦν εἶναι. See for example Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.3, 1028b34.

<sup>7</sup>*Metaphysics* II.2.

<sup>8</sup>*On the Two Natures* ch.1.

<sup>9</sup>Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.5, 1014b36.

## Chapter 2

In the case of composite substances, then, form and matter is familiar, e.g., soul and body in human being. However, it cannot be said that either one of them alone is called the essence [of the composite substance]. Indeed, it is obvious that  
 5 the matter alone of a thing is not the essence. For a thing is both cognizable and ordered in a species or genus by its essence. But matter is not a principle of cognition. Nor is something determined to a genus or species according to its matter,  
 10 but rather according to what the thing actually is. Also, neither can only the form of a composite substance be called its essence, although some philosophers try to assert this. For it is clear from what has been said that the essence is what is signi-  
 15 fied by the definition of a thing. But the definition of natural substances contains not only the form but also the matter, for otherwise natural and mathematical definitions would not differ. Nor can it be said that matter is put into the defini-  
 20 tion of a natural substance as something added to its essence or as a being outside of its essence. For this kind of definition is more proper to accidents, which do not have a perfect essence, and as a result accidents must admit into their defini-  
 25 tion a subject that is outside their genus. Therefore, it is clear that the essence of a composite substance includes both matter and form.

Furthermore, it cannot be said that ‘essence’ signifies either (a) the relation that exists between matter and form, or (b) something further added to matter and form, because this of necessity would be an accident and extraneous to the  
 30 thing, and the thing would not be known through it—and all these features are suitable to the essence. In fact, the matter is rendered a being in actuality and something concrete (*hoc aliquid*) by the form, which is the actuality of the matter. Accordingly, that which further advenes does not give actual existence *simply*  
 35 to the matter, but rather it gives actual existence *as such-and-so* to the matter, just as accidents also do—for example, whiteness makes something actually white. And, accordingly, when such a form is acquired [the composite substance] is not  
 said to be generated simply but rather to be generated in a respect.

Therefore, it remains that in the case of composite substances the name  
 40 ‘essence’ signifies that which is composed out of matter and form. Boethius’ remark that ‘*ousia*’ signifies the composite<sup>10</sup> is in harmony with this. For ‘*ousia*’ among the Greeks is the same as ‘essence’ in our language, as he himself says.<sup>11</sup>  
 45 Avicenna, too, says that the quiddity of composite substances is the very composition of the form and the matter.<sup>12</sup> Also, the Commentator says: “The nature that species have in the case of generable things is a certain mean, i.e., composed out  
 50 of matter and form.”<sup>13</sup> Reason too is in agreement with this. For the existence of a composite substance does not belong only to the form, nor only to the matter, but

<sup>10</sup>In *Categorias Aristotelis* 64:184A.

<sup>11</sup>Boethius, *On the Two Natures* ch. 3.

<sup>12</sup>*Metaphysics* V.5.

<sup>13</sup>Averroës, *Metaphysics* VII.27.

to the composite itself. However, the essence is that according to which the thing  
 55 is said to be (*esse*). Accordingly, the essence, by which a thing is denominated as  
 a being, must be neither only the form nor only the matter, but rather both the  
 form and the matter—although the form alone is, in its own way, the cause of  
 this kind of existence. Indeed, this is the case in other things that are constituted  
 60 out of several principles: We see that things are not denominated on the basis of  
 one of those principles only, but rather by that which embraces both principles.  
 This is clear in the case of flavors. For sweetness is caused by the action of heat  
 dispersing moisture, and although heat is the cause of sweetness in this way, still  
 a body is not denominated ‘sweet’ by the heat but instead by the flavor, which  
 65 embraces heat and moisture.

But since matter is the principle of individuation, it would perhaps seem  
 to follow from this that the essence, which embraces in itself matter and form  
 70 together, is only particular and not universal—from which it would follow that  
 universals would not have a definition, if the essence is that which is signified  
 by the definition. Hence, it should be known that the principle of individua-  
 75 tion is not matter taken in any way whatsoever, but rather only signate matter.  
 (I call ‘signate’ that matter which is considered under determinate dimensions.)  
 Furthermore, this [signate] matter is not put into the definition that pertains to  
 human being as human being, but it would be put into the definition of Socrates  
 80 (if Socrates were to have a definition).<sup>14</sup> However, non-signate matter is put into  
 the definition of human being. For *this* bone and *this* flesh are not put into the  
 definition of human being, but rather bone and flesh absolutely, which are the  
 non-signate matter of human being.

Therefore, it is clear that the essence of human being and the essence of  
 85 Socrates differ only according to signate and non-signate. Thus the Commenta-  
 tor says: “Socrates is nothing other than animality and rationality, which are his  
 quiddity.”<sup>15</sup> So too the essence of the genus and of the species differ according  
 90 to signate and non-signate, although there is a different manner of designation  
 in each case. The reason for this is that the designation of the individual with  
 respect to the species is through matter determined in its dimensions, whereas  
 95 the designation of the species with respect to the genus is through the constitu-  
 tive *differentia*, which is taken from the form of the thing. Furthermore, this  
 determination or designation that is in the species with respect to the genus is  
 not through something existing in the essence of the species that is not in any  
 100 way in the essence of the genus; instead, whatever is in the species is also in the  
 genus as not determinate. For if animal were not the whole that is human being  
 but merely part of it, animal would not be predicated of human being, since no  
 integral part is predicated of its whole.

---

<sup>14</sup>Aquinas, following Aristotle in *Posterior Analytics* 2, 3, 90<sup>b</sup>30, holds that individuals do not have definitions as such: Socrates does indeed have a definition, but only insofar as he is human.

<sup>15</sup>Averroës, *Metaphysics* VII.20.

105 Moreover, we can see how this occurs by looking closely at how body differs  
 when it is put forward as: (a) part of animal, and when it is put forward as (b) the  
 genus of animal; for it cannot be a genus in the way in which it is an integral part.  
 110 Hence, this name ‘body’ can be taken in many ways. Insofar as it is in the genus  
 of Substance, ‘body’ is said on the basis of the fact that it has such a nature that  
 three dimensions can be designated in it. In fact, these three designated dimen-  
 115 sions are the body that is in the genus of Quantity. Now it happens in things that  
 what has one perfection may also reach to a further perfection, as is clear in the  
 case of human being, who has both a sensitive nature and, beyond that, an intel-  
 lective nature. Likewise, too, another perfection can also be added beyond the  
 120 perfection of having such a form that three dimensions can be designated in it,  
 e.g., the perfection *life* (or something of the sort). Therefore, this name ‘body’  
 125 can signify a certain thing that has such a form from which there follows in [the  
 thing] designability in three dimensions with an exclusion (*praecisio*)—that is,  
 such that no further perfection follows from that form; rather, if anything else  
 were further added, it would be outside the signification of ‘body’ said in this way.  
 130 And body will be an integral and material part of animal in this way, since then  
 soul will be outside that which is signified by the name ‘body’ and it will enter  
 upon body—with the result that animal will be constituted out of these two, body  
 and soul, as out of parts.

135 The name ‘body’ can also be taken so that it signifies a certain thing that  
 has such a form on the basis of which three dimensions can be designated in it,  
 whatever that form may be, whether some further perfection can issue from it or  
 140 not. In this way, body will be the genus of animal, because there will be nothing  
 to take in animal that is not implicitly contained in body. For the soul is not a  
 form different from that form through which three dimensions were able to be  
 145 designated in that thing. Hence, when we said that “body is what has such a form  
 on the basis of which three dimensions can be designated in it,” it was understood  
 as regards whatever the form may be—whether it be the soul, stoneness, or any-  
 150 thing else. Thus the form of animal is implicitly contained in the form of body,  
 insofar as body is its genus.

Such is the relationship of animal to human being as well. On the one hand,  
 if ‘animal’ were to name only a certain thing that has a perfection such that  
 155 it can sense and be moved by a principle existing in it, with the exclusion of  
 another perfection, then, whatever other further perfection were to enter upon  
 it, that perfection would be related to animal in the manner of an associated  
 part and not as implicitly contained in the account (*ratio*) of animal—and thus  
 160 animal would not be a genus. On the other hand, animal is a genus in that it  
 signifies a certain thing from whose form sensing and motion can issue, what-  
 ever that form may be, whether the soul be only sensitive, or it be sensitive and  
 rational together.

165 In this way, then, the genus signifies indeterminately the whole that is in the  
 species, for it does not signify the matter only. Likewise, the *differentia* too also  
 signifies the whole, and it does not signify the form only. The definition—as  
 well as the species—also signifies the whole. Yet they signify the whole in diverse

170 ways. The genus signifies the whole as a certain denomination determining that which is material in the thing, without the determination of the proper form. Accordingly, the genus is derived from the matter, although it is not matter—as is clear, because ‘body’ is said on the basis of the fact that it has a perfection  
 175 such that three dimensions can be designated in it, and this perfection is materially related to a further perfection. But the *differentia*, conversely, signifies the whole as a certain denomination derived from the determinate form, apart from the fact that determinate matter pertains to the primary understanding of it—as  
 180 is clear when one says ‘ensouled’ (i.e., that which has a soul), for one does not determine what it is [that is ensouled], whether body or something else. Accordingly, Avicenna says that the genus is understood in the *differentia* not as a part  
 185 of its essence, but only as a being outside the essence, just as the subject also pertains to the understanding of its attributes.<sup>16</sup> Hence, even the genus, strictly speaking, is not predicated of the *differentia*, as the Philosopher says,<sup>17</sup> except  
 190 perhaps as a subject is predicated of an attribute. But the definition or the species includes both, namely (a) the determinate matter that the name of the genus designates, and (b) the determinate form that the name of the *differentia* designates.

195 On this basis, the reason is clear wherein the genus, species, and *differentia* are related proportionately to the matter and the form and the composite in nature, even though they are not the same as the latter. For the genus is not the matter,  
 200 but derived from the matter as signifying the whole. Nor is the *differentia* the form, but derived from the form as signifying the whole. Accordingly, we say that human being *is* the rational animal, and not composed *out of* rational and animal, as we say that human being is composed out of soul and body. For human  
 205 being is said to be composed out of soul and body as a certain ‘third thing’ constituted out of two things, which is neither of them, for human being is neither soul nor body. But if human being were said to be composed out of rational and animal in some way, it will not be as a third thing composed out of two things,  
 210 but as a third understanding out of two understandings. For the understanding of animal lacks the determination of a specific form, expressing the nature of a thing by the fact that it is material with respect to its further perfection. On the other hand, the understanding of the *differentia* rational consists in the determination  
 215 of the specific form. The understanding of the species or of the definition is constituted out of these two understandings. Hence, just as a thing that is constituted out of other things does not admit the predication of the things out of which it is  
 220 constituted, so too neither does an understanding admit the predication of those understandings out of which it is constituted. For we do not say that the definition is the genus or the *differentia*.

225 Now although the genus signifies the whole essence of the species, still there need not be one essence for diverse species whose genus is the same. The

---

<sup>16</sup>Avicenna, *Metaphysics* V.6.

<sup>17</sup>*Metaphysics* III.3, 998b24–25; *Topics* IV.2, 122b20.

reason for this is that the unity of the genus proceeds from its very indeterminateness or indifference—not, however, in such a way that what is signified by the genus is numerically one nature in diverse species, on top of which  
 230 another thing enters in that is the *differentia* determining it (as the form determines matter that is numerically one). Rather, it is because the genus signifies some form, yet not determinately this form or that one, which the *differentia*  
 235 expresses determinately (and this is none other than the form that was indeterminately signified by the genus). Hence, the Commentator says that prime matter is called ‘one’ by the removal of all forms, whereas the genus is called  
 240 ‘one’ by the commonness of the signified form.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, it is clear that through the addition of the *differentia*—since it removes the indeterminateness that was the cause of the unity of the genus—what remains are species that are diverse in essence.

Now the nature of the species is indeterminate with respect to the individual, just as the nature of the genus is indeterminate with respect to the  
 245 species, as stated above. For this reason, it follows that just as that which is the genus, insofar as it was predicated of the species, implied (although indistinctly) in its signification the whole that is determinately in the species, so too  
 250 that which is the species, in that it is predicated of the individual, must signify (even though indistinctly) the whole that is essentially in the individual. The essence of Socrates<sup>19</sup> is signified by the name ‘man’ in the manner described  
 255 above. Accordingly, human being is predicated of Socrates. However, if the nature of the species were signified along with the exclusion of designated matter, which is the principle of individuation, then the species will be related to the individual in the manner of a part. The nature of the species is signified by the name ‘humanity’ in the manner described, for ‘humanity’ signifies  
 260 that whereby human being is human being. Yet designated matter is not that whereby human being is human being, and so it is not contained in any way among those elements due to which human being has the feature that it is human being. Therefore, since humanity includes in its understanding only those elements due to which human being has the feature that it is human  
 265 being, it is clear that the designated matter is cut off or excluded from the signification. And because the part is not predicated of the whole, it is thereby the case that humanity is predicated neither of human being nor of Socrates. Accordingly, Avicenna says that the quiddity of a composite is not the very  
 270 composite of which it is the quiddity, even if the quiddity itself is composite<sup>20</sup>—just as humanity, though composite, is not human being. Rather, it must be received in something that is the designated matter.

<sup>18</sup>Averroës, *Metaphysics* XII.14.

<sup>19</sup>Following the manuscript variant *Socratis* rather than the reading *speciei*, which would give the sense “The essence of the species...”

<sup>20</sup>*Metaphysics* V.5.

275 But, as mentioned above, the designation of the species with respect to the  
 genus is through form, whereas the designation of the individual with respect  
 to the species is through matter. From this it follows that the name signifying  
 that whereby the nature of the genus is derived along with the exclusion of the  
 280 determinate form perfecting the species must therefore signify the material part  
 of the whole, as body is the material part of human being. On the other hand, the  
 name signifying that whereby the nature of the species is derived along with the  
 exclusion of the designated matter signifies the formal part of the whole. Hence,  
 285 humanity is signified as a certain form, and it is said that it is the ‘form of the  
 whole’—to be sure, not as though it were further added to the essential parts of  
 the whole (namely form and matter) as the form of the house is further added  
 to its integral parts, but rather it is the form that is the whole, that is, embracing  
 290 the form and the matter, yet along with the exclusion of those elements through  
 which the matter is apt to be designated.

Thus it is clear, then, that the name ‘human being’ and the name ‘human-  
 ity’ signify the essence of human being, but in diverse ways as described. The  
 295 name ‘human being’ signifies it as a whole, namely insofar as it does not exclude  
 the designation of matter but contains it implicitly and indistinctly, just as one  
 says that the genus contains the *differentia*. Hence, the name ‘human being’ is  
 300 predicated of individuals. The name ‘humanity,’ however, signifies the essence  
 of human being as a part, since it contains in its signification only that which  
 belongs to human being as human being, and excludes any designation of mat-  
 ter. Accordingly, the name ‘humanity’ is not predicated of individual human  
 305 beings. It is due to this fact that we find the name ‘essence’ on the one hand  
 predicated of a thing (for we say that Socrates is some essence), and on the  
 other hand it is denied of a thing (e.g., we say that the essence of Socrates is not  
 Socrates).

### Chapter 3

Having seen what is signified by the name ‘essence’ in the case of composite sub-  
 stances, it should be seen how it is related to the account of the genus and species  
 5 and *differentia*. However, since that to which the account of the genus or spe-  
 cies or *differentia* is suitable is predicated of this signate singular, it is impossible  
 for the account of the universal (namely genus or species) to be suitable to the  
 essence in that it is signified in the manner of a part, e.g., by the name ‘human-  
 ity’ or ‘animality.’ Hence, Avicenna says that rationality is not the *differentia*, but  
 10 rather the principle of the *differentia*.<sup>21</sup> By the same reasoning, humanity is not a  
 species, nor animality a genus. Likewise, too, it cannot be said that the account of  
 15 the genus or species is suitable to the essence in that the essence is a certain thing  
 existing outside singulars, as the Platonists maintained, since then the genus and

---

<sup>21</sup>*Metaphysics* V.6.

the species would not be predicated of this individual. For it cannot be said that  
 20 Socrates is what is separate from him, nor again that what is separate would assist  
 in the cognition of this singular. Hence, it remains that the account of the genus  
 or species is suitable to the essence in that it is signified in the manner of a whole,  
 e.g., by the name 'man' or 'animal,' insofar as it implicitly and indistinctly con-  
 25 tains the whole that is in the individual.

Now 'nature' or 'essence' taken like this can be considered in two ways. (a) It  
 is considered according to its own account, and this is the absolute consideration  
 30 of it. In this first way, nothing is true of the nature except what is suitable to it in  
 that it is of this sort. Accordingly, whatever else may be attributed to it, the attribu-  
 tion will be false. For example, rational and animal (and other features that fall  
 under the definition) is suitable to human being as human being, whereas white  
 35 or black (or anything of this sort that does not pertain to the account of human-  
 ity) is not suitable to human being as human being. Accordingly, if the question  
 were raised whether the nature considered in this first way can be called one  
 or many, neither ought to be granted, for each is outside the understanding of  
 40 humanity, and each can accrue to it. Indeed, if being many were to pertain to the  
 understanding of the nature, it could never be one, even though it nevertheless is  
 one in that it is in Socrates. Likewise, if being one were to pertain to its account,  
 45 then the nature of Socrates and of Plato would be one and the same, and it could  
 not be multiplied in many. (b) It is considered according to the existence that it  
 has in this or in that condition, and so something is predicated of it incidentally  
 by reason of that in which it is. For example, it is said that human being is white  
 50 because Socrates is white, even though white is not suitable to human being as  
 human being.

Furthermore, this nature has a twofold existence: one in singulars and the  
 other in the soul. Accidents follow upon the aforementioned nature, accord-  
 55 ing to each kind of existence. The nature, in singulars, has a multiple existence  
 according to the diversity of the singulars. Yet none of these kinds of existence  
 is appropriate to the nature itself according to the first consideration, namely  
 the absolute consideration [described above]. For it is false to say that the essence of  
 60 human being as such has existence-in-this-singular, because if existence-in-this-  
 singular were to be suitable to human being as human being, it would never be  
 outside this singular. Likewise, too, if existence-not-in-this-singular were suitable  
 65 to human being as such, it would never be in this singular. But it is true to say  
 that human being, not *as* human being, has the feature that it is in this singular  
 or in that one, or in the soul. Therefore, it is clear that the nature of human being  
 considered absolutely abstracts from any given existence, yet in such a way that  
 70 the exclusion of any of them does not occur. And it is the nature considered  
 in this way that is predicated of all individuals.

75 Yet it cannot be said that the account of the universal is suitable to the nature  
 taken in this way. For unity and commonness pertain to the account of the uni-  
 versal, whereas neither of these is suitable to human nature according to its abso-  
 lute consideration. Indeed, if commonness were to pertain to the understanding  
 of human being, then commonness would be found in whatever humanity is

80 found in—and this is false, since no commonness is found in Socrates; rather,  
 whatever is in him has been individuated. Likewise, it also cannot be said that  
 the account of the genus or species accrues to human nature according to the  
 85 existence that it has in individuals. For human nature is not found in individu-  
 als in accordance with a unity such that it is some one thing that is suitable to  
 all, which the account of the universal requires. Therefore, it remains that the  
 account of the species accrues to human nature according to the existence that  
 90 it has in the intellect.

Indeed, human nature itself in the intellect has existence abstracted from  
 everything that individuates. Hence it has a uniform relation to all individuals  
 95 that are outside the soul, for the reason that it is equally the likeness of all and  
 leads into the cognition of all (insofar as they are human beings). And in virtue  
 of the fact that it has such a relation to all individuals, the intellect devises the  
 account of the species and attributes it to the nature. Accordingly, the Com-  
 100 mentator says that the intellect is that which makes universality in things,<sup>22</sup> and  
 Avicenna says this too in his *Metaphysics* [V.2]. Although this understood nature  
 has the account of the universal in that it is paired with things outside the soul,  
 105 since it is one likeness of all of them, nevertheless, in that it has existence in this  
 intellect or in that one, it is a certain understood particular appearance (*spe-*  
*cies*). Hence the Commentator's failing in *De anima* III [n. 5] is clear, where  
 100 he wanted to deduce the unity of the intellect in all human beings from the  
 universality of the form that is understood. For universality does not belong to  
 that form according to the existence that it has in the intellect, but rather in that  
 it pertains to things as a likeness of things. For example, even if there were one  
 115 corporeal statue representing many human beings, it is the case that the image  
 or appearance of the statue would have a singular and proper existence in that it  
 would exist in *this* matter, but it would have the account of commonness in that  
 it would be the common representative of many.

120 Now because it is suitable to human nature according to its absolute con-  
 sideration that it is predicated of Socrates, and also because the account of the  
 species is not suitable to human nature according to its absolute consideration  
 125 but rather pertains to the accidents that follow upon it according to the exis-  
 tence that it has in the intellect, then for these reasons the name 'species' is not  
 predicated of Socrates such that one says "Socrates is a species." This would  
 happen of necessity if the account of the species were to be suitable to human  
 being according to the existence that it has in Socrates, or according to its abso-  
 130 lute consideration (namely as human being), for whatever is suitable to human  
 being as human being is predicated of Socrates.

Yet being predicated is suitable to the genus of itself (*per se*), since it is  
 135 put into the definition of the genus. Indeed, predication is something that  
 (a) is accomplished through the intellect's action of combining and divid-  
 ing, and (b) has as a foundation in the thing itself the unity of those items of

---

<sup>22</sup>*De anima* I.8.

which one is said of the other. Accordingly, the account of predicability can  
 140 be encompassed in the account of the [logical] intention that is the genus,  
 which likewise is completed through the intellect's act. Yet nonetheless, that  
 to which the intellect attributes the intention of predicability, combining it  
 with another, is not itself the intention of the genus, but instead is that to  
 145 which the intellect attributes the intention of the genus—e.g., what is signified  
 by the name 'animal.'

Therefore, it is clear in this way how the essence or the nature is related  
 to the account of the species. For the account of the species is not among the  
 150 characteristics that are suitable to the nature according to its absolute consid-  
 eration; neither is it among the accidents, such as whiteness or blackness, that  
 follow upon the nature according to the existence that it has outside the soul.  
 But it is among the accidents that follow upon it according to the existence that  
 155 it has in the intellect. And in this way the account of the genus or *differentia* is  
 also suitable to it.

## Chapter 4

Now it remains to look at the way in which there is essence in separated sub-  
 stances, i.e., in soul, Intelligence, and First Cause.<sup>23</sup> Yet even though everyone  
 5 grants the simplicity of the First Cause, some nevertheless attempt to introduce  
 the composition of form and matter into the Intelligences and into the soul.  
 The originator of this position seems to have been Avicbron, the author of the  
*Fountain of Life*. However, this is generally incompatible with the remarks of phi-  
 losophers, because it is matter that they refer to these substances as "separated"  
 10 from and they prove that these substances are free from all matter. The strongest  
 demonstration of this is based on the power (*virtus*) of understanding that is in  
 them. We see that forms are intelligible in actuality only in that they are sepa-  
 rated from matter and from its conditions, and they are rendered intelligible in  
 15 actuality only through the power of a substance that understands, in that forms  
 are received in it and they are in actuality through it. Accordingly, there must be  
 20 complete exemption from matter in any given substance that understands, such  
 that it neither has matter as a part of itself nor even, as is the case among material  
 forms, is it as a form impressed in matter.

Nor can anyone say that not any matter whatsoever prevents intelligibility,  
 25 but only corporeal matter does. For if this were so by reason of corporeal matter  
 only, then, since matter is called 'corporeal' only in that it stands under a cor-  
 poreal form, it would be necessary that matter have this feature (i.e., preventing

---

<sup>23</sup>The First Cause is, of course, God. The Intelligences are the angels, who came by this name due to the role they play in Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology, in which each separate sphere is caused to rotate by the action of an intelligent being—identified with an angel, who causes physical motion by love for God.

30 intelligibility) by its corporeal form. This cannot be the case, because even a  
 corporeal form itself is actually intelligible, just as other forms are, in that it is  
 35 abstracted from matter. Accordingly, there is not a composition out of matter  
 and form in any way in a soul or an Intelligence such that ‘essence’ is taken  
 in this way in them, as it is in the case of corporeal substances. But there is a  
 composition of form and existence. Accordingly, it is said in the comment on  
 40 the ninth proposition in the *Book of Causes* that an Intelligence is something  
 that has form and existence—and ‘form’ is taken in this passage for the quiddity  
 or simple nature itself.

It is plain to see how this is the case. Whatever items are related to one another  
 such that one is the cause of the existence of the other, the one that has the  
 45 account of the cause can have existence without the other, but not conversely.  
 Furthermore, the relationship of matter and form is such that the form gives  
 existence to the matter. Hence it is impossible that matter exists without form.  
 On the other hand, it is not impossible that some form exists without matter. The  
 50 reason for this is that form as form does not have a dependence upon matter. Now  
 if one were to discover some forms that can only be in matter, this feature accrues  
 to them in that they are distant from the first principle, which is primary and pure  
 55 actuality. Accordingly, the forms that are nearest to the first principle are forms  
 subsisting on their own (*per se*) without matter. For form does not require matter  
 according to its genus as a whole, as stated. And the Intelligences are forms of this  
 sort [that do not require matter]. Hence it is not necessary that the essences or the  
 60 quiddities of these substances be other than form itself.

Therefore, the essence of a composite substance differs from the essence  
 of a simple substance in this regard, that the essence of a composite sub-  
 stance is not only the form but rather embraces the form and the matter,  
 65 whereas the essence of a simple substance is only the form. Two other differ-  
 ences [between the essences of composite and simple substances] are also  
 grounded on this fact. The first difference is that the essence of a composite  
 substance can be signified as a whole or as a part, which happens due to  
 the designation of matter, as stated above. Hence the essence of a compos-  
 70 ite thing is not predicated in any way of the composite thing itself. For it  
 cannot be said that human being is his quiddity. On the other hand, the  
 essence of a simple thing, which is its form, can be signified only as a whole,  
 75 since nothing else is there apart from the form as though it were receiving  
 the form. Hence however we take the essence of a simple substance, the  
 essence is predicated of the simple substance. Accordingly, Avicenna says  
 that the quiddity of a simple thing is the very simple thing itself, since there  
 80 is not anything else receiving the quiddity.<sup>24</sup> The second difference is that  
 the essences of composite things, in virtue of the fact that they are received  
 in designated matter, are multiplied according to its division—whereby it  
 happens that some composite things are the same in species and numerically

---

<sup>24</sup>*Metaphysics* V.5.

85 diverse from one another. On the other hand, since the essence of a simple substance is not received in matter, there cannot be such a multiplication in this case. Hence in the case of simple substances it is necessary that one does not find many individuals belonging to the same species. Instead, in this case there are just as many species as there are individuals, as Avicenna says explicitly.<sup>25</sup>

90 Therefore, even though substances of this sort are forms only, without matter, still there is not every kind of simplicity in them. Nor are they pure actuality. Instead, they have an admixture of potentiality. This is clear as follows. What-  
 95 ever does not pertain to the understanding of the essence or quiddity advenes as external and produces a composition with the essence, since no essence can be understood without the elements that are parts of the essence. However, every essence or quiddity can be understood without this feature: that something be  
 100 understood pertaining to its existence. For I can understand what human being or phoenix is, and yet be ignorant whether they have existence in the world. Therefore, it is clear that existence differs from the essence or quiddity. This conclusion holds unless, perhaps, there is some thing whose quiddity is its own  
 105 existence itself. This thing whose quiddity is its own existence itself can only be one and primary, since it is impossible that the multiplication of anything occur unless it does so either (a) by the addition of some *differentia*, which is how the nature of the genus is multiplied in the species; or (b) by the fact that the form is received in diverse matters, which is how the nature of the species is multiplied  
 110 in diverse individuals; or (c) by the fact that the one is absolute and the other is received in something, which is how, if there were heat separated [from matter], it would be different from non-separated heat in virtue of its very separation. [With regard to (a)]: if some thing that is only existence were postulated, such  
 115 that its very existence were subsisting, this existence will not receive the addition of a *differentia*, since then it would not be existence only, but rather existence and, apart from this, some form. [With regard to (b)]: so much the less would it receive the addition of matter, since then it would be not subsisting existence  
 120 but material existence. Accordingly, it remains that there can be only one such thing that is its own existence. Apart from this exception, then, in the case of anything else whatsoever, it is necessary that its existence is one thing and its quiddity or nature or form another. Accordingly, there must be existence apart  
 125 from form in the case of the Intelligences, and so it was said that an Intelligence is form and existence.

Furthermore, whatever is suitable to something either (i) is caused due to the principles of its nature, e.g., the capacity for laughter in human being; or  
 130 (ii) advenes by some extrinsic principle, e.g., the light in the air due to the sun's influence. [With regard to (i)]: It cannot be the case that the existence itself is caused by the very form or quiddity of the thing—I mean 'caused' as by an efficient cause—since then some thing would be the cause of itself and make

---

<sup>25</sup>*Metaphysics* V.2.

135 itself exist, which is impossible. Therefore, every such thing whose existence  
differs from its nature must have existence from another. And since whatever is  
through another is reduced to that which is through itself (*per se*), as to a first  
140 cause, there must be some thing that is the cause of being (*causa essendi*) for all  
things, in that it is existence only. Otherwise one would proceed to infinity in  
causes, since every thing that is not existence only has a cause of its existence, as  
just stated. Therefore, it is clear that an Intelligence is form and existence, and  
145 that it has existence from the first being that is existence only—and this is the  
First Cause, which is God.

Now whatever receives something from another is in potentiality with  
respect to what it receives, and what is received in it is its actuality. There-  
150 fore, the very quiddity or form that is an Intelligence must be in potentiality  
with respect to the existence that it receives from God, and that existence is  
received in the manner of an actuality. And so one finds potentiality and actu-  
ality in Intelligences. On the other hand, one does *not* find form and matter in  
155 Intelligences, except equivocally. Accordingly, *undergoing, receiving, being a*  
*subject*, and everything of this sort—features that seem to be suitable to things  
by reason of their matter—are equivocally suitable to intellectual substances  
and to corporeal substances, as the Commentator says in *De anima* III [n.  
160 14]. And since the quiddity of an Intelligence is the very Intelligence itself, as  
stated, then its quiddity or essence is itself what it is, and its existence received  
from God is that by which it subsists in the world. For this reason, some say  
165 that substances of this sort are composed out of “by which it is” and “what it  
is,” or out of “what it is” and existence, as Boethius says.<sup>26</sup>

Because potentiality and actuality are put into the Intelligences, it will not be  
difficult to find a multiplicity of Intelligences—which would be impossible if no  
170 potentiality were in them. Accordingly, the Commentator says in *De anima* III  
[n. 5] that if the nature of the possible intellect were unknown, we could not find  
multiplicity in separated substances. Therefore, the distinction of these Intelli-  
175 gences from one another accords with their degree of potentiality and actuality,  
such that the higher Intelligence (which is nearer to the First Being) has more of  
actuality and less of potentiality—and so on for the others.

This progression is finished in the human soul, which occupies the low-  
180 est degree among intellectual substances. Accordingly, the possible intellect  
belonging to the human soul is related to intelligible forms just as prime matter  
(which occupies the lowest degree of sensible existence) is related to sensible  
forms, as the Commentator says in *De anima* III [n. 5]. Hence the Philosopher  
185 compares the human soul to a tablet on which nothing is written.<sup>27</sup> Due to the  
fact that the human soul, among the other intellectual substances, has more  
of potentiality, it is thereby rendered to that extent near to material things, so  
that a material thing is drawn to participate in its existence—namely such that

<sup>26</sup>*On the Hebdomads* (*Theological Tractates* pp. 41–43).

<sup>27</sup>Aristotle, *De anima* III.4, 429b30–31.

190 from soul and body there results one existence in one composite, even though  
 that existence, insofar as it belongs to the soul, is not dependent upon the body.  
 Hence after the form that is the human soul, other forms are found having  
 195 more of potentiality, and nearer to matter to the extent that their existence is  
 not without matter. Also, in these other forms one finds there to be order and  
 degree all the way down to the primary forms of the elements, which are the  
 nearest to matter. Accordingly, these other forms do not have any operation  
 200 except due to the exigency of active and passive qualities, and other qualities by  
 which matter is disposed to form.

## Chapter 5

Now that we have looked at these matters, then, it is clear how essence is found in  
 diverse cases. In fact, a threefold way of having essence is found in substances. In  
 the first way, there is something (namely God) whose essence is his very existence  
 5 itself. Hence some philosophers are found to say that God does not have quiddity  
 or essence, since his essence does not differ from his existence. It follows from  
 10 this that God is not in a genus, since whatever is in a genus must have quiddity  
 apart from its existence. The reason for this is that the quiddity or nature of the  
 genus or species is not distinguished according to the account of the nature in  
 the substances whose genus or species it is, whereas the existence is diverse in the  
 diverse substances.

15 Nor is it necessary, if we say that God is existence only, that we fall into the  
 error of those who said that God is that universal existence by which any given  
 thing formally is.<sup>28</sup> For this existence that is God satisfies a condition of this type:  
 20 that no addition can be made to it. Accordingly, God's existence is distinct from  
 all other existence by its very purity. For this reason, it is said in the comment on  
 the ninth proposition in the *Book of Causes* that the individuation of the First  
 Cause, which is existence only, is through its pure goodness. However, just as  
 25 existence in general does not include in its understanding any addition, so too  
 it does not include in its understanding the exclusion of an addition. For if this  
 were the case, nothing in which something were added beyond existence could  
 be understood to be.

30 Likewise, too, even though God is existence only, the remaining perfec-  
 tions and excellences need not be lacking in him. Rather, God has all the  
 perfections that are in all genera, for the reason that 'perfect' is said simply, as  
 35 the Philosopher and the Commentator say.<sup>29</sup> But God has them in a way that  
 is more excellent than all other things do, since in him they are one but in

<sup>28</sup>Amaury of Bène (†1207), while lecturing on theology at the University of Paris, was accused of holding this view—taken to amount to pantheism. It was formally condemned by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1210. See below, ST I.3.8 reply.

<sup>29</sup>See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* V.16, 1021b30–31, and Averroës, *Metaphysics* V.21.

40 other things they have diversity. This is because all those perfections are suitable together according to his simple existence—much as if someone through one quality could produce the operations belonging to all qualities, he would have all qualities in that one quality. In this way, God has all perfections in His very existence.

45 In the second way, essence is found in created intellectual substances. In them, existence differs from essence, even though the essence is without matter. Accordingly, their existence is not absolute but received, and hence finite and limited to the capacity of the nature that is the recipient. On the other hand, 50 their nature or quiddity is absolute, not received in any matter. Hence it is said in the sixteenth proposition in the *Book of Causes* that the Intelligences are infinite below and finite above: for they are finite as regards their existence, which they 55 receive from above, yet they are not made finite below, since their forms are not limited to the capacity of some matter receiving them. As stated, one does not find a multiplicity of individuals in one species in the case of such substances— 60 except in the human soul, due to the body to which it is united. And although the individuation of the human soul depends on the body as an occasion as regards its inception, since it only acquires an individuated existence in the body of which it is the actuality, nevertheless it is not necessary that individuation cease 65 when the body is taken away. The reason for this is that because the human soul has an absolute existence in virtue of which an individuated existence has been acquired for itself, due to the fact that the human soul was made as the form of this body, it follows that that existence always remains individuated. Hence Avicenna says that the individuation and multiplication of souls depends upon the 70 body with regard to its beginning, but not with regard to its end.<sup>30</sup>

Because quiddity is not the same as existence in these substances, they are thereby able to be ordered in a category. For this reason one finds genus 75 and species and *differentia* in them, even though their proper *differentiae* are hidden from us. Indeed, even in the case of sensible things the essential *differentiae* are unknown. Accordingly, the essential *differentiae* of material substances are signified by the accidental *differentiae* that arise from the essential 80 *differentiae* (as a cause is signified by its effect), e.g., two-footed is postulated as the *differentia* of human being. However, the proper accidents of immaterial substances are unknown to us. Accordingly, the *differentiae* of immaterial substances cannot be signified by us either on their own or through accidental *differentiae*.

85 Nevertheless, this point should be noted: one does not take the genus and the *differentia* in the same way in these immaterial substances and in sensible substances. The reason for this is that in the case of sensible substances, the genus is taken from that which is material in the thing, whereas the *differentia* 90 is taken from that which is formal in it. Accordingly, Avicenna says that in the case of things composed out of matter and form, the form “is the simple

---

<sup>30</sup>*Liber de anima* V.3 (pp. 107, 109).

*differentia* of that which is constituted from it”<sup>31</sup>—not, however, such that the form is itself the *differentia*, but rather because the form is the principle of the *differentia*, as he says.<sup>32</sup> Such a *differentia* is called the ‘simple *differentia*’ because it is taken from that which is part of the quiddity of the thing, that is, from the form. However, since immaterial substances are simple quiddities, the *differentia* in their case cannot be taken from that which is part of the quiddity, but rather from the whole quiddity. Hence Avicenna says: “Only species whose essences are composed out of matter and form have a simple *differentia*.”<sup>33</sup>

Likewise, too, in these immaterial substances the genus is taken from the essence as a whole, but in a different way. For one separated substance is suited to another in immateriality, and they differ from one another in degree of perfection, according to their distance from potentiality and their proximity to pure actuality. Hence in these separated substances, the genus is taken from what follows upon them insofar as they are immaterial, such as their intellectuality or something of the sort. In these substances, however, the *differentia* (though unknown to us) is taken from what follows upon the degree of perfection in them. Nor is it necessary that these *differentiae* be accidental because they are in accordance with greater and lesser perfection, which do not diversify the species. For the degree of perfection in receiving the *same* form does not diversify the species, as for instance *more white* and *less white* do not diversify the species in participating in a whiteness of the same character (*ratio*). But a degree of perfection that is diverse in the very participated forms or natures *does* diversify the species, e.g., nature advances by degrees from plants to animals through certain cases that are intermediate between plants and animals, according to the Philosopher.<sup>34</sup> Nor again is it necessary that the division of intellectual substances always be through two genuine *differentiae*, for it is impossible that this happen in all things, as the Philosopher says.<sup>35</sup>

In the third way, essence is found in substances composed out of matter and form. In them, existence is both received and finite, for the reason that they both have their existence from another. Again, their nature or quiddity is received in signate matter. Hence they are finite both above and below. Also, the multiplication of individuals in one species is now possible in them, in accordance with the division of signate matter. How essence is related to logical intentions in the case of these composite substances has been stated above.

<sup>31</sup>*Liber de anima* I.1 (p. 19).

<sup>32</sup>*Metaphysics* V.6.

<sup>33</sup>*Liber de anima* I.1 (p. 19).

<sup>34</sup>*History of Animals* VIII.1, 588b4–12.

<sup>35</sup>*Parts of Animals* I.2, 642b5–7.

## Chapter 6

Now it remains to look at the way in which there is essence in accidents, for how it is in all substances has been stated. Now since the essence is that which is signified by the definition, as stated, accidents must have essence in the way in which they have a definition. However, accidents have an incomplete definition, since they can only be defined if a subject is put into their definition. The reason for this is that they do not have existence on their own apart from a subject. Instead, just as substantial existence results from form and matter when they are combined, so too accidental existence results from accident and subject when an accident advenes on a subject. Hence a substantial form does not have a complete essence, and neither does matter, since one must put into the definition even of a substantial form that of which it is the form. Thus its definition is through the addition of something that is outside its genus, just as the definition of an accidental form is. Accordingly, body is also put into the definition of the soul by the natural philosopher, who considers the soul only insofar as it is the form of a physical body.<sup>36</sup>

Yet there is still this much of a difference between substantial and accidental forms: Just as a substantial form does not have absolute existence on its own without that on which it advenes, so too neither does that on which it advenes, namely matter. Hence from the conjunction of substantial form and matter there results the existence in which a thing subsists on its own, and from them something that is one on its own is produced, for the reason that a certain essence results from their conjunction. Accordingly, the substantial form—although considered in itself it does not have the complete account of the essence—nevertheless is part of the complete essence. In contrast, that on which the accident advenes is a being that is complete in itself, subsisting in its own existence, which naturally precedes the accident that supervenes. Hence the supervenient accident does not cause that existence in which a thing subsists ([i.e.,] through which a thing is a being on its own) by the conjunction of itself with that on which it advenes. Instead, it causes a certain ‘secondary existence’ that a subsisting thing can be understood without—just as the primary can be understood without the secondary. Accordingly, what is one of itself is not produced from accident and subject, but rather what is one incidentally (*per accidens*). Hence no essence results from their conjunction, as it does from the conjunction of form and matter. For this reason, an accident neither has the account of the complete essence nor is part of a complete essence. Rather, just as it is a being in a respect (*secundum quid*), so too it also has essence in a respect.

Yet since that which is said most of all and most genuinely in any genus is the cause of those that are after it in that genus—e.g., fire, which is the extreme case of hotness, is the cause of heat in things that are hot, as is

---

<sup>36</sup>See Aristotle, *De anima* II.1, 412b5.

said in *Metaphysics* II [993b24–26]—then substance, which is the first in the  
 55 genus of being, having essence most of all and most genuinely, must be the  
 cause of accidents that secondarily and, as it were, in a respect participate in  
 the account of being. Nevertheless, this happens in diverse ways. Since the  
 60 parts of substance are matter and form, some accidents thereby follow prin-  
 cipally upon the form and others upon the matter. However, one finds some  
 forms whose existence does not depend on matter (e.g., the intellectual soul),  
 65 whereas matter has existence only through form. Accordingly, in the case of  
 accidents that follow upon the form there is something that does not have  
 an association with matter, e.g., understanding, which, as the Philosopher  
 proves, does not take place through a corporeal organ.<sup>37</sup> There are also some  
 70 accidents that, in virtue of following upon the form, have an association with  
 matter, e.g., sensing. However, no accident follows upon matter without an  
 association with a form.

Nevertheless, a certain diversity is found among these accidents that follow  
 75 upon the matter. For some accidents follow upon matter according to the order  
 that the matter has to a specific form—e.g., masculine and feminine in the case  
 of animals, the diversity of which is reduced to matter, as is said in *Metaphysics*  
 X [1058b21–23]. Accordingly, were the form of animal removed, the given acci-  
 80 dents would not remain (except equivocally). Yet other accidents follow upon  
 matter according to the order that the matter has to a generic form, and so, were  
 the specific form removed, these accidents would still remain. For example, the  
 blackness of the skin in an Ethiopian is from the mixture of the elements and not  
 85 from the account of the soul, and so will remain in it after death.

Now since any given thing is individuated from its matter and classified in  
 a genus or species through its form, then the accidents that follow upon matter  
 90 are accidents of the individual, according to which individuals, even those of the  
 same species, differ from one another. However, accidents that follow upon the  
 form are proper attributes either of the genus or of the species. Accordingly, they  
 are found in everything participating in the nature of the genus or the species. For  
 95 example, the ability to laugh follows upon the form in the case of human being,  
 since laughter takes place due to some cognitive apprehension belonging to the  
 soul of human being.

It should also be noted that accidents are caused by essential principles accord-  
 100 ing to either (a) perfect actuality, e.g., the heat in fire, which is always hot; or (b)  
 aptitude only, but in this latter case there occurs a complement from an external  
 agent, e.g., transparency in the air, which is completed by a bright external body.  
 105 In such cases as (b), the aptitude is an inseparable accident, but the complement  
 that advenes from some principle that is outside the essence of the thing or does not  
 enter into the constitution of the thing is separable, e.g., being moved and the like.

Furthermore, it should also be known that in the case of accidents the genus,  
 110 the *differentia*, and the species are taken in a different way than they are in the

<sup>37</sup>*De anima* III.1, 429a22–26.

case of substances. The reason for this is as follows. In the case of substances, what is one of itself is produced out of substantial form and matter, with a definite nature that is one resulting from their conjunction (and this nature is properly classified in the category of Substance). Hence, in the case of substances, the concrete names that signify the composite (e.g., ‘human being’ or ‘animal’) are properly said to be in the genus [of Substance] as species or genera. Furthermore, the form or the matter is not in the category in this way, except by reduction, as principles are said to be in the genus. But from an accident and a subject there does not come about what is one of itself. Accordingly, there does not result from their conjunction any nature to which the intention of the genus or the species can be attributed. Accordingly, accidental names said in a concrete fashion, e.g., ‘the white’ or ‘the musical’, are not put into a category as species or genera except by reduction—but only in that they are signified in the abstract, e.g., whiteness and music. Because accidents are not composed out of matter and form, the genus cannot be taken in them from the matter and the *differentia* from the form, as [one can] in the case of composite substances. Instead, the primary genus must be taken from their very manner of being (*modus essendi*), in that ‘being’ is said in diverse ways of the ten genera that are the categories according to the prior and the posterior. For example, one says ‘quantity’ in virtue of the fact that it is the measure of substance, and ‘quality’ in that it is the condition of substance, and so for the other categories, according to the Philosopher.<sup>38</sup>

Now in the case of accidents, the *differentiae* are taken from the diversity of the principles by which they are caused. Because proper attributes are caused by the proper principles of the subject, the subject is put into their definition in place of the *differentia*—if they are defined in the abstract (according to which they are properly in a genus). For example, it is said that snubness is the curvature of the nose. However, the converse would be the case if the definition of accidents were taken in that they are said in a concrete fashion. In this way, the subject would be put into their definition as the genus, since then they would be defined in the manner of composite substances, in which the account of the genus is taken from the matter. For example, we say that the snub is the curved nose. This is likewise the case if one accident is the principle of another accident, as the principle of relation is action and passion and quantity—and so the Philosopher divides relation according to them.<sup>39</sup> But since the proper principles of accidents are not always obvious, we then sometimes take the *differentiae* of accidents from their effects. For example, combinative and separative are called the *differentiae* of color, and they are caused by the abundance or the scarcity of the light by which the diverse species of color are caused.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup>*Metaphysics* IX.1, 1045b27–32.

<sup>39</sup>*Metaphysics* V.15, 1020b26–32.

<sup>40</sup>See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* X.9, 1057b8–9.

**Conclusion**

Therefore, it is clear in this fashion how essence is in substances and accidents,  
165 how it is in composite and simple substances, and the manner in which universal  
logical intentions are found in all these—with the exception of him who is First,  
who is entirely simple; because of his simplicity, no account of genus or species  
170 is suitable to him, and so neither is definition. May the end and consummation  
of this discourse lie in him. Amen.