

John Duns Scotus

Reportatio II-A (Wadding, XI)

Translated by Daniel Shields

[p. 315 of Wadding text]

Distinction XII.

Question I.

On the nature of matter

Whether matter be an entity distinct from form?

1.

[Obj. 1]

In regards to this twelfth distinction I ask first: Whether matter in the generable and corruptible thing be a positive entity distinct from form?

That it is not: Proof: [Aristotle,] *Metaphysics* VII, text comm. 8: “Matter is not a something, nor a quality, nor a quantity, nor anything of the beings by which being is determined,” etc.

It will be said perhaps that matter is a *determinable* being only, and not any of those things by which being will be determined, as the Philosopher says, because it is in potency only.

On the contrary, if matter is a being in potency, either it is a being potentially matter, or potentially form, or potentially the composite. It is not form in potency, nor the composite, because if either were posited in being, matter would not exist. Similarly, if it were posited in being that either of them were, the impossible would follow from the positing of the possible, etc. And in the same way matter is not matter in potency, because then matter would not be matter. The first consequence is clear, because being is not said in more ways, from *De Anima* VII(!? II?).

[Obj. 2]

Again, in *Physics* V. text 2 & 8, Aristotle proves that generation is not a motion in this way: “What is generated does not exist; what is moved does exist; therefore, what is generated is not moved; therefore generation is not a motion.” The major is not true, except in regards to the subject of generation, not in regards to the term of generation, because that exists when it is generated. From this it is argued that if the argument of the Philosopher is valid, it is necessary that “existence (*esse*)” be affirmed of that which is moved and denied of that which is generated in the same sense. But “existence” as affirmed of that which in a manner is, is “existence” in potency, because “motion is the act of what exists in potency, insofar as it is in potency,” (*Physics* III, text 6.) Therefore what is denied of that which is generated is “existence” in potency. Therefore matter is not a being in potency, and it is clear that it is not a being in act.

[Obj. 3]

Again, *Physics* I, text 69, matter is not knowable, except through analogy to form; but if it were a positive being really distinct from form, it could be known *per se*, therefore, etc.

[Obj. 4]

Again, if matter were a being distinct from form, it would be a being in act, different from form. Is it, therefore, an act, or something having an act, or a composite of act and potency? It cannot be the first, because act separates and distinguishes, *Metaphysics* VII, text 49. In the fundament of nature, however, which is matter, nothing is distinct, *Metaphysics* II, text 7. Nor can it be a composite of potency and act, because then it would not be a first principle. Therefore, it is no positive reality.

[Sed contra]

On the contrary, *Physics* II & *Metaphysics* V, “Matter is that out of which a thing becomes, while it is in [the thing].” Through the phrase “out of which,” it is clear that it is not form. Therefore matter is what endures, and the terminus of production is form, and that out of which a thing comes to be precedes form.

2.

[Body of the question]

[Article 1]

[The views of some others]

There is one opinion which posits that a generable and corruptible thing has in itself only one positive reality. But certain people holding this say that it is matter, and others form, but those opinions differ only verbally, and not really. For those saying that that one reality is matter say that matter is perfected in the grade of its own entity when the thing is generated, just as indeterminate quantity when it is given boundaries (*terminatur*) does not acquire a new reality or entity really other than itself, but is perfected in the grade of its own proper entity when it is given boundaries. Just so it is said that form is the intrinsic determination (*terminus*) of matter, and therefore for a thing to be generated is nothing other than for matter to be perfected by acquiring the intrinsic grade of its own proper entity.

Others, however, saying that matter does not differ from form, say that matter advances to form under the grades of its own entity: both matter as it is under this intrinsic determination and the composite as it is in under another intrinsic determination and the other composite.

[Scotus’ view: that there are two positive realities in the generable and corruptible substance, and that matter has its own positive reality distinct from that of form]

On the contrary, *Phys* I, text comm. 60, & *De Gen.* I, text comm. 23 & 12, & *Metaph.* XII, text comm. 6 & 10: “Every natural agent corrupts something and produces something in natural generation.” Therefore in generating it is necessary that there be something contrary beforehand. Due to this Aristotle accepts the following proposition in the abovementioned places: “Everything which comes to be, comes to be from the opposite.” But one of the opposites

does not become the other. For whiteness does not become blackness, nor does concord come to be out of discord. Therefore it is necessary that something else common remains under each of the terms. And this is to argue in the following way: Every natural agent requires a potency on which it acts, and it transforms that potency from opposite to opposite. The opposite however is not transferred to the opposite in such a way that nothing remains common to each of the opposites. For whiteness does not become blackness; therefore something is presupposed of which it can be said “this becomes this.”

3. [Objection]

But it is said here that every natural agent requires another thing on which it acts, and the other is the whole thing which is going to be corrupted, not a subject remaining the same under each of the terms, but the very thing which is going to be corrupted, which does not remain the same. This is confirmed by Aristotle, *De Gen.* I, text 10 & 23, where he says that generation differs from alteration, because [p. 316] in generation the whole is transformed into the whole, but in alteration the part is transformed into the part, and in this way when air is generated from water, the whole water is transformed into the whole air, and nothing common remains the same, but the whole is the terminus from which and the whole is the terminus to which. Whence a natural agent presupposes something passive, on which it acts, and this passive thing is corrupted and nevertheless [is] not a passive power common to each of the terms, because no such common thing remains, because the whole is converted into the whole.

[Response]

On the contrary: that which is to be corrupted is corrupted prior in nature and order than the generated is generated. Therefore in that instant of nature in which the generated is generated, nothing is presupposed for the action of the one generating, while that is nevertheless a truer and more perfect action than the preceding corruption, which was another action prior in order, and therefore something would be produced from nothing.

4. [Objection]

You say that to produce something from nothing is twofold, either because not from a presupposed part, or because not from a presupposed terminus, and in that [latter] way a created agent does not produce something from nothing, but necessarily presupposes something. God, however, presupposes nothing.

[Response]

On the contrary, every agent having the whole effect in its power—through which power it produces the whole—is not less capable of producing that effect through the removal of anything whatever through which no virtue in acting is conferred on it, but rather is such that through it [i.e., the obstacle] its own [i.e., the agent’s] power is weakened. Such, however, is the contrary to be corrupted according to its whole, if there be nothing in it common, which is naturally susceptible to form. Therefore the fire generating fire would produce [it] better if nothing were presupposed.

This is confirmed in the following way: a natural agent capable of some effect produces it of necessity if it is not prohibited. But that fire has the whole fire to be generated in its own power, and it is not impeded if a contrary is not posited. For it is rather impeded by its presence,

and by its absence is helped to produce this composite. Therefore a natural agent would be able to create.

5.

Again, generation is not natural on the part of the one generating, but on the part of that from which generation comes to be. This is clear from distinction 18 of this book, in the first question concerning seminal reasons. If, therefore, in the generated something is not naturally presupposed to form before its production, production would not be in any way more natural through something prior in it than creation [is].

A certain argument made above can be formed another way, like this: Nothing prohibits an effect from being produced by an agent containing the effect virtually except that which, when posited, leads to the power of the agent being weakened rather than strengthened. But the presence of that contrary from which generation comes to be, when out of water fire is generated, impedes the active power of generating fire from water, in such a way that that power is rather weakened. Therefore fire can be generated even if there were not the presence of that contrary, since that form is totally in the power of the one generating if matter is not a thing other than form, and because the fire to be generated is one simple form. Therefore the whole fire to be generated is in the active power of the generating fire, or of the natural agent, since it exists in a simple fashion. Therefore it can produce the whole fire in reality without a contrary, which rather impedes the active power, than promotes it.

Again, under another form, thus: A natural agent not impeded acts of necessity, or produces the whole which is in its active power. But if matter is not another reality than form, the whole thing to be generated is in the power of the one generating. Therefore since the active power of the generator is not impeded in the absence of the contrary—nay, rather, is impeded by its presence—it follows that the generator can place the whole effect in being without a passive power or subject.

6.

Again, the second principal argument thus: Another substance is corruptible by intrinsic principles in that way in which the heaven is not corruptible, *Metaph.* VII, c. 5, text 22. But if a generable and corruptible substance is simple, it will not have principles of corruption in itself, because it would not have a principle in itself by which it naturally can be and not be, insofar as it is in itself, therefore, etc.

[Objection] Perhaps it will be said that although it be a simple form, nevertheless it has a contrary. But this does not work, because this substance is not different in itself through the fact that it has a contrary. For although it has a contrary, nevertheless it would not have in itself a principle by which it would be in potency to form, and it would be its opposite simply. Therefore in itself it is not corruptible since it does not have in itself a principle by which it is able to be and not be. Whence Aristotle, *Metaph.* VII, text comm. 22, proves that “every generable thing has matter, because every generable thing is able to be and not be.” This, however, in anything, is matter. Therefore, nothing would be intrinsically corruptible if it did not have matter different from form.

7.

Again, third, in this way: If matter is not a positive entity other than form, there will not be generation, nor corruption, nor other change. It is proved that there would not be generation

nor corruption, because generation is from non-subject to subject, and corruption conversely, as is had in *Phys.* V, text 7. But if the generable substance is under form, no subject will remain there. Again, neither will there be other change, because to be changed is to be disposed otherwise now than before, from *Phys.* VI. But otherness is a condition of a being, for same and diverse are differences of being. Therefore that which does not exist is not otherwise disposed now than before. Therefore it is not changed. Again, change is from privation to possession. But if that which is to be corrupted is form only, there cannot be there [change] from privation, because privation does not exist except in something susceptible naturally apt [to possess], and a simple form is not susceptible of another contrary to itself. Therefore there is no change.

8.

[Objection & Response] If it is said that the whole is converted into the whole, as the bread is converted into the body of Christ, that [comparison] is not true. But let it be that it comes to be that way. Nevertheless, such conversion is not change, because nothing is there which is disposed differently now than before.

[Objection] And if it is objected from Aristotle, as is commonly said, that “in generation the whole is transformed into the whole,” I say that in other transformation or in change outside of substance, as in alteration, the whole is not transformed into the whole, as hot wood into wood, because there there is not truly a whole *per se*, because it is only a whole *per accidens*, and a whole in a certain respect, which is nothing other than the parts, just as a heap of stones is nothing except stones. And therefore in alteration the change is not said to be of the whole into the whole, but in substantial generation—let it be that there there are many forms—the whole is truly one, and therefore when fire is generated from water, the whole water (which is a certain whole having parts really distinct, which truly make [something] one *per se*) is transformed into fire, which is a whole truly one. But it does not follow that nothing common remains, because the first whole was one whole *per se*, and, the first form receding, a new form came to the matter, which makes a different [p. 317] whole *per se*. And therefore because one whole succeeds another, therefore it is said that the whole is converted into the whole; nevertheless a common subject remains.

9.

Again, fourth, in this way: In every genus of cause one is to find a *per se* order, and a stop, from *Metaph.* II, text 5. Therefore, in the genus of material cause one is to grant one first receptive [cause]. But the first receptive [cause] is really distinct from that which is received, because the same thing does not receive itself. Therefore in every generable substance there is some positive entity, different from form.

Again, some being is caused by the four causes. But if the composite is nothing except form alone, not having matter [as] a part of itself distinct from form, there would not be something caused by the four causes, because then matter would not be a cause distinct from form.

Again, substance is divided into simple substance and composite. But composite substance necessarily has another positive entity really distinct from form. Otherwise it would not be really composed.

Again, Augustine, book XII of the *Confessions*: “Lord, you have made two things, one near to you, as the angelic nature, another near to nothing, as unformed matter.” And in the same

place he says “Matter is not nothing at all.” And similarly, *Super Genesim ad literam* VII, “And Matter is some entity.”

10.

When, however, it is said according to those of the above-mentioned opinion that matter advances in the grade of its own entity, that is not valid, because form would be an intrinsic term, and in this way generable and corruptible thing would not be distinguished in species, because that intrinsic term does not vary the species.

Again, it is manifest that an intellective soul is not an intrinsic term, nor can matter achieve that grade. Therefore, it is to be held that matter is something positive and potential, having a natural inclination to another natural form, which includes the non-being of the form which it has, and in this way due to it generation is natural *per se* and primarily, insofar as it has a natural inclination to another form. Whence generation is natural due to the inclination of that principle, corruption, however, is due to the consequence of the natural inclination of the same principle. I say, therefore, that matter is another entity than form.

[Article 2]

11.

Secondly, it is to be seen what sort of being matter is. I say that it is a being in potency. But this can be understood in two ways. For something is said to be in potency as the term of potency, and potency is towards that. Another thing, however, is said to be in potency as the subject of potency and as the imperfect are in potency to another, in such a way that in itself it is some being naturally susceptible of perfection and of act from another.

The first potency is called objective, the second is called subjective. For a surface is in potency to whiteness in one way, and whiteness is in potency before it comes to be in another way. And sometimes those two potencies are not really distinct, because in regards to a natural agent there is never objective potency except founded in subjective potency, because nothing can come to be by a natural agent except from subjective potency. But it is possible for objective potency to be without subjective potency, as is clear in creation, where there is only obediential potency.

Those, therefore, who say that matter is a being in potency which continues to exist in potency, just as that being in potency which does not yet exist, but is only in the power of its cause, cannot save any change. For then nothing would be presupposed by the agent, because what is in potency in that way does not exist any more than a whiteness which will exist one or two years hence, nay rather it is nothing in itself. Whence if matter were such a being in potency, there would not be any change, because there would be nothing disposed now otherwise than before, and by consequence matter would not be the subject of any change, but the terminus.

12.

In what way, therefore, is matter a being in potency? I say that matter is a principle *per se*, from *Phys.* I, text 52. It is also a cause *per se*, from *Phys* II, text 7 and *Metaph.* V, text 28. It is also a part of the composite *per se*, from *Metaph.* VII, text 2. It is *per se* the subject of generation, from *Phys.* V, text 17, remaining the same in the whole change, from *Phys.* I, text 7 & 8, and as has been proved by the third reason. It is also the term of [an act of] creation, through Augustine, *Confessions* XII and also through Aristotle, *Phys.* I, text 30, it is ungenerated and



incorruptible. Therefore it is some positive being outside of its cause, not only a being in potency, as is the Antichrist or something else which only has being because a sufficient agent of its production is given, because such a being is not a cause *per se*, nor is it a principle *per se*, nor a part of the composite, nor also does such remain the same under each extreme, because it is the terminus of change. Nor can matter be a being in potency, as potency names a relation to the terminus of change, because such a relation is changed by the change of the terms, from *Phys.* III, on being able to be healed and being able to work. Matter however, remains the same under opposite terms. It will therefore be in potency as a potential principle.

13.

Again, creation is not terminated at that which only has being within the power of its cause. Matter, however, is a terminus of true and real creation, as is clear through Augustine, in the place cited above. Therefore it is a true being distinct from the entity of form.

It is also said that it is a being in potency because [it is] a being receptive of the substantial act first, and of the accidental by mediation of the substantial form, and therefore although in some way it is said to be a being in act, according as a being in act is distinguished from being in the potency of its cause, because it is something outside its cause, nevertheless it is distinguished from distinguishing act, and the completion of the species, and therefore it will be described by “a being in potency” because it is maximally receptive of act, not because it is not a being at all except in potency, as the soul of the Antichrist.

14.

[Objection 1] But against this it is argued, firstly, that according to this opinion it does not seem possible to save generation, because Aristotle, *De Gen.* I, text 23, argues against the ancients who posited some being in act as the subject of generation, such as body, because then generation is nothing except alteration, because everything which accrues to a being in act is an accident. In that way it is argued in the case at hand that if matter were some actual positive entity, distinct from form, and were only said to be a being in potency because it is receptive of an act of a complete species, then indeed when [the act] accrues to it it will constitute a being *per accidens*, and generation would be only alteration.

[Objection 2] Again, in every other genus, what is potential in that genus is nothing of that genus, as is clear in every genus of accident, for what is susceptible of color is not in the genus of color. Therefore, it is the same way with what is first receptive of forms in the genus of substance. Therefore matter is no substance distinct from form in the genus of substance.

[Objection 3] Again, from two things existing in act something truly one does not come to be, from *Metaph.* VII, text 49. Therefore if matter is such an actual entity, from it and form something truly one would not come to be. For then the composite would collect in itself two entities, therefore also two unities, and then it would not be truly one.

15.

[Reply to the 3<sup>rd</sup> objection] I respond to that third objection first, because either it is necessary to say that every generable and corruptible thing is wholly simple as a form, or that it is composed out of something and nothing, or that it is composed out of something and something. The first has been disproved above, because nothing is generable and corruptible *per se* except a composite substance. The second option is not intelligible. The third option remains, therefore, namely that it is composed out of something and something, and nevertheless is truly

one, insofar as not everything one is one simple thing. Nay rather, “one” is divided into “one simple thing” and into “one which is composed.” Therefore it is not repugnant to what is truly one that it have in itself this and this, that is, many entities. Or it should be said that either no composite is one *per se*, or that something can be composed out of nothing and a being, which is one *per se*, or that a composite of two entities can be one *per se*. The first two are not true; therefore the third is to be held. Whence it is to be known that since “one” is *per se* an attribute of being, and being *per se* is not only simple, but composite, even so one *per se* is not only that which is simple, but the composite. Therefore, because to be a cause of the composite being in its own order belongs to matter *per se* and essentially, and, similarly, it is essential to form in its own order, therefore due to this they have essential unity with one another in one composite. For form is not the cause of a thing essentially according to itself, but in order to matter, and conversely. And, due to the opposite [holding in their case,] this is the reason why out of man and white something one *per se* cannot come to be.

16.

But you will say, perhaps, “why, therefore, can ‘white man’ not be one, although it has in itself two entities? I say that one *per se* is an attribute of being, and this either immediately, in such a way that nothing is a middle through which it can be demonstrated other than from being and the quiddity of the thing, or, if there is another, middle attribute, it is not more known to us than being. And just as one in general is an immediate attribute of being in general, so too in specific one [as an attribute] of such a being is immediately consequent upon its nature, nor can it be demonstrated through anything more known to us, or prior.

17.

If, therefore, one asks concerning something why it is one *per se*, I say that because it has such a form, through which is a being *per se*, therefore it is one *per se*. For the same reason, that is not one *per se* which does not have a form through which it is a being *per se*.

[Objection] On the contrary, you assign this unity on the part of the whole, so that because the whole is a being *per se* through the form, therefore the whole is one *per se*. But why is the whole one *per se* on the part of the components, and why do these two—matter & form—constitute something one *per se*, and man and white do not?

I respond: because Aristotle says in *Metaph.* VIII, text 15 & 16 that in simple things there is no doubt about why each is one *per se*, because such immediately are that which they are. But beyond the unity of the simple it is necessary to posit the unity of the composite, and in their case to provide a reason why those two constitute something one *per se*, and he did not know how to provide another cause beyond the fact that this one is act, and that one potency. For because A is a being of a certain sort, not principiated nor caused as far as its own nature goes, it is of a nature to be part of another being, and [because] B, on the other hand, is a being of a certain sort, namely a principle of being, and [because] it is of the nature of such a being that it be a part of a being—therefore from A & B something one *per se* comes to be, because its parts, A & B, are naturally intrinsic to it. Whiteness, however, is not of such nature that it is known from its own nature to be an intrinsic part of another being. Therefore it does not make something one *per se* with its subject. Matter, however, is a *per se* and intrinsic part of a being and is so of its own proper nature, because it is receptive of act and perfection. Therefore matter and form make something truly one.



When, therefore, it is argued that from two beings in act something truly one does not come to be, I say that potency as distinguished against act, and as a *differentia* of being together with act, is something which only has being in the power of its cause, which is able to go forth into effect, and in this way in every created thing there is act & potency. In this way matter is not a being in potency, because it has true being outside its cause, but matter is truly act, as it is distinguished against potency. In another way act and potency are taken in such a way that that is called act which actuates another thing and informs another thing while that is called potency which is actuated and perfected. And act and potency are taken in this way in *Metaph.* VII, text 4 & VIII, text 15, where it is said that “act separates and distinguishes,” and potency is that which is distinguishable & actuable, and matter in this way is not act, but potency, and that [sort of] act and [that sort of] potency cannot be *differentiae* of being, because those only befit simples, but act and potency said in the first way, as they divide being itself, befit simples and composites.

18.

Through this, I respond to the argument that out of two things in act in this second way of taking act—which is a principle of acting, according as act is named from “to act”—something truly one cannot come to be, because such act is of a nature to endow accidental perfection to the composite whole, and therefore [two such beings in act] are not compatible with one another in a composite one *per se*. But taking act in the first way as act names positive entity distinct from its cause which is outside of its cause, as a *differentia* of being, in this way something one does come to be from two things in act, indeed, something one never comes to be except from two things thus in act, because something one cannot come to be from two things, unless each is something positive outside of its cause—unless something one comes to be out of something and nothing.

[Reply to the 1<sup>st</sup> objection (see § 14)] To the other [objection], where it is said that then generation would be nothing but alteration, I say that although Aristotle said that generation is not alteration, nevertheless [p. 319] he did not say that it is not change (*mutationem*). Similarly, although he said that a being in act is not the subject of generation, nevertheless he did not say that *nothing* is the subject of generation. But that would follow if matter were a being in potency, in the sense that *potency* is a *differentia* of being, just as has been argued above. Whence it is to be said, as said before, that matter names a positive entity which is capable of substantial acts, which are acts and forms simply speaking. Thus, also, they require of a subject that it be a being. For however great is the act which is induced, so great is the potency which is supposed, but this does not impede it from being a positive being.

The ancients, nevertheless, as Aristotle describes them, posited that some body in act is the subject of generation, as is clear, *De Gen.* I, text 1, as water according to some, and earth according to some [others], etc., and such a body is a being completely in act, and it is actual *per se*. Therefore, a form is acquired by it through alteration, and it is thus a being in potency only to alteration, and to act *in a certain respect*. For just as there is act simply speaking and act *in a certain respect*, just so there is potency simply speaking and potency *in a certain respect* corresponding to those acts. But in the case at hand, [in generation as opposed to alteration,] a being in act is not the subject of generation, and if it is not a being completely in act, it is not then nothing, nor only a being in potency in that way in which whiteness is fundamentally a being in potency because only in the power of its agent.

19.

[Reply to the 2<sup>nd</sup> objection (see § 14)] To the other [objection], where it is said that that which is potential and receptive in one genus of accident does not belong to the same genus, I say that if it were posited that whiteness were composed from essential principles from the genus of quality, then that proposition would not be true. But let it be that it is not that way; the argument still does not conclude to the opposite [of my position], because what is potential in one genus of accident is actual in another prior genus, as what is potential and receptive in the genus of color is something actual from the genus of quantity, such as a surface. Therefore what is potential and receptive in the first genus cannot be from some prior genus, because there is not any other prior genus. Therefore it is necessary that it be from the same genus, since it is something, and there is not a regress to infinity. Therefore matter is from the genus of substance, distinct from form.

But how is it distinguished from form? I say that it is distinguished from it really, by a certain receptive reality, of a wholly different character (*rationis*) from form, and of a different essence, and it is primally diverse from that [i.e., form], because those things are primally diverse which relate to each other in such a way that nothing of the one is included in the other nor conversely. Form, however, and matter are such. Therefore, etc. Proof: if something of form were included in matter, form, in that respect, would not be of a nature to be received, but rather to receive. Therefore it would not be the first receptive thing [*sic*; perhaps *receptivum* is a mistake for *receptum*, so that it should read: Therefore it would not be the first received thing], but something of it would be not received, because [it would be] receptive. In the same way, if something of matter were included in form, it [i.e., matter] would not be the first receptive thing, but received in regards to some [part] of it.

If, however, it is asked how matter and form will make something one *per se* if they are primally diverse, I say that it follows that however much two things are more diverse, to that extent they are more disposed to making something one *per se*, because in that [kind of] constitution similitude in nature is not required, but a fitting proportion, which can exist between primally diverse things.

20.

[Objection] Against the conclusion: *Metaph.* VIII, text. com. 15: from act and potency something one does not come to be, except through an agent drawing out the act, which agent does not bestow multitude, but perfection. But if matter imported some positive entity, other than the entity of form, the drawing out of this from potency into act would bestow multitude, and not only perfection.

I respond that in a generable and corruptible thing two potencies concur. One is objective potency, which is the terminus of generation, which is of the whole in potency to act, or to being. And that which is in potency in this way, is drawn out into act by the agent. Such drawing out does not cause multitude, but perfection. Because whiteness in act is not more composed than [whiteness] in potency. And the other [potency] is the potency in generation, which is of something to another, namely, to the formal terminus of generation, because it is necessary that something be prerequisite to generation which is a part of what is generated, as is clear, *Metaph.* VII, text. 5, where it is said that “matter is that out of which a thing comes to be,” when it is in it. And the extraction of form from matter is concomitant with that potentiality. And concerning this extraction it can still be said that it does not bestow multitude, but perfection, because that same form which has been educed into act existed beforehand in the potency of matter. If,

however, you wish that it not bestow multitude in such a way that there is nothing new which beforehand was not, you ask for the impossible. For in this way it is necessary that the generator bestow multitude, because something is in act which before was not. Otherwise it would not be generation.

21.

To the first principal argument [obj. 1, see §1], where it is said, according to Aristotle, that “matter is neither a something,” etc., it is to be said that he says this in opposing a false view, which is clear from the following epilogue: “or a certain thing, therefore, from these species,” etc. It is clear also from the direction in which he argues to the opposite view: “but impossible” etc. It is not Aristotle’s custom, however, to place the determination of the question among the argument *pro* and *contra*.

If you say that Aristotle says that in expounding the nature of matter, i.e., what we ought to understand by it, whence he expresses the note of exposition, speaking in this way: “I say, however, that matter, which according to itself is neither a something,” etc,

I respond that that exposition is according to the opinion of the ancients, according to which he was arguing immediately prior that only matter is substance, because he was arguing in this way: “That alone seems to remain, the others separated.” The ancients, however, were positing that matter, or the subject of generation, is some being in act, such as vapor, or some body. If this were true, since form is primally diverse from matter, it would be of another genus, and so it would not be a something, nor a quality, etc.

Or, if the authority is conceded, it can be said that that [problem] solves itself which says that matter is not something of those by which being is determined. For such are the species and differences by which being is divided, and I concede that matter neither is a species nor a difference. Beings also [*sic*; perhaps *etiam* should read *enim*, for beings] are determined and distinguished through acts and forms.

22.

[Objection] But it is said that the philosopher says there that all other things are predicated of matter denominatively, therefore none of them is essentially that same [as it], because in denominative predication one extreme is not the essence, nor of the essence of the other, due to which essential predication is distinguished from denominative [predication].

I respond that this does not include [*includit*; perhaps it should be *concludit*?], because Aristotle, *Metaph.* IX, text. 25, wants [it to be the case] that matter [p. 320] is predicated denominatively of the composite. Whence he says that “this is not that, but thaten, or of that, and a chest is not wood, but wooden.” Non-being, however, is not predicated denominatively of anything. Therefore, matter according to him is not non-being.

I say, therefore, to the argument, that denominative [terms] differ from principal ones only by case (*cadentia*), as is clear in predicates. Form, however, can be understood to fall (*cadere*) to another in two ways. For it can fall either from its own quiddity to a supposit of its own nature, or to a supposit of another nature. In the first way there is denomination less properly speaking, for in this way the superior is predicated denominatively of its inferior, as “a human being is an animal,” or “Socrates is a human.” “Animal,” however, is predicated denominatively through a fall (*cadentiam*) from its proper quiddity to its inferior, which is outside the notion of “animal.” In that way a part is not predicated denominatively of the whole, because a human is not [his] soul, nor is the composite matter. In the second way, however, there

is denominative predication properly speaking, as when it is said “Socrates is white.” For here “white” falls (*cadit*) from its own quiddity to a supposit of another nature, and the denominative predication of the part of the whole, or conversely, is reduced to that way of predicating denominatively, as when it is said “a human is animate.” For “animate” signifies the form of the soul contracted and falling (*cadentem*) from its proper quiddity to supposit other than is the supposit of its own nature, or of the quiddity of the soul itself. Nevertheless [this] is not properly denominative predication, because that is not converted, but it is only likened to denominative predication of the accident of the subject. For it is not predicated by denominative predication of another genus, nor is it accidental predication or denomination. And in this way matter said of the composite denominatively is not said of it accidentally.

23.

To the other [argument (obj. 2, see § 1)] from *Phys.* V, I say that “existence” is affirmed of the subject of motion and is denied of the subject of generation unformedly (*informiter*). “Existence,” however, affirmed [reading *affirmatum* for *affirmativum*] of the subject of motion is existence in act. For although the subject of motion, insofar as it is motion, is being in potency, nevertheless to that existence in potency is necessarily conjoined existence in act, even if *per accidens* insofar as it is the subject of motion. Whence something can be necessarily correspondent to another *per accidens*, although it is not of its formal notion, and it necessarily requires the other. For in this way privation is called a *per accidens* principle of nature, *Phys.* I, text. 66. In this way I say that with existence in potency, which is attributed *per se* to the subject of motion, existence in act simply speaking is necessarily conjoined, although *per accidens*. The subject, however, of generation, of which existence is denied, is not necessarily a being in act. Therefore [this] suffices for Aristotle’s proof to conclude that generation is not a motion.

To the other [objection (obj. 3, see § 1)], it is to be said that matter is knowable by some intellect without analogy to form, but not by our intellect. The first is proved by the fact that it has its own idea in the divine mind, if it be something positive, and therefore according to itself it is knowable without analogy to form, but nevertheless by us it cannot be known without analogy to form, because our knowledge is only through sensible operations. For from operation we come to knowledge of the principles of operations, which are forms. Whence when in the same thing we see operations distinct in species we argue that there are distinct principles, and in this way from generation and change in regards to form we know that something common remains, which is called “matter,” just as the Commentator, *Metaph.* VIII, c. 12, teaches that as change according to “where” will makes us known place, so change according to form will make us know matter, and thus we know matter through analogy to form. But this does not follow: It is not knowable by us except through analogy to form, therefore it is not another positive entity distinct from form. For neither the most perfect and supreme thing in nature, nor the most imperfect and lowest, are knowable by us in the present state, nor are they proportioned to our intellect, but only the middle things, and nevertheless the former are in themselves truly being and distinct from the others.

24.

Or it can be said concerning the knowability of matter, that there he [i.e., Aristotle in *Phys.* I] speaks about matter as it has an order to change as a principle, and in this way neither matter nor the subject of motion is knowable *per se* insofar as it is such. For up to the fifth book [of the *Physics*] he speaks of matter and of the subject both of change and of motion

indifferently. But speaking of each—and they are certain absolute natures—either is knowable *per se*, but more so the subject, to the extent that it has more of being, because matter is not knowable by us, except through analogy to form. Because our intellect does not understand anything except that by which it is moved effectively to the act of understanding, either through itself or through a species caused by it effectively. Whence just as matter does not have entity sufficient for making something else in act effectively, or formally in regards to real being, even so neither in regards to intelligible being. In this way the extremes of being [i.e., matter and God] are not proportioned to modifying our intellect, one because of excess, the other because of the defect of its entity.

To the final [argument (obj. 4, see § 1))] the response is clear: how matter is called a being in act and how not, but rather a being in potency.

## Question II

Whether matter is able to exist without form in virtue of any cause?

1.

That it is not:

[Obj. 1] To the degree that some things are more one, to that degree are they more inseparable. Matter and form are more one than subject and accident. But God cannot make a subject without an attribute, nor magnitude without figure. Therefore, all the more so neither matter without form.

[Obj. 2] Again, what cannot be *per se* is inferior to that which can be *per se*. But a relation cannot be *per se* by divine power. Therefore, if matter were able to be *per se*, relation would be a lower being than matter in its own nature. The consequent is false, because according to Augustine, *Super Genes.*, I, c. 8, at the end, “You have made one thing near to you, another near to nothing,” & *Confess.* II, c. 32. Matter would not be next to nothing, if something were inferior to matter.

[Obj. 3] Again, just as forms are contraries, so privations [p. 321] of forms. But two contrary forms cannot be in matter at the same time. Therefore, neither two contrary privations. If, nevertheless, matter were without every form, the privations of all forms would be in it at the same time.

For the opposite:

An accident seems less capable of being without a subject, than matter without form, because the subject has some causality with respect to the accident, but matter depends on form in no genus of cause. But an accident will be able to exist without a subject [as in the Blessed Sacrament], therefore also matter without form.

2.

[Body of the question]

This question is responded to in different ways according to diverse conceptions of matter. Those saying that matter is not a thing other than form, say that it cannot be without form. Those sustaining the second opinion—that a generable thing is composed from potency and act, say that matter cannot be without form, because matter according to itself has nothing at



all of act, and such a thing cannot be *per se*. Nevertheless, those people save the fact that a substance is composite because matter and form have two realities and two proper being's. Notwithstanding, if they understand by being or by reality, that matter exists really outside its cause, in regards to that being matter does not depend essentially on form, and therefore to that extent God could make it exist *per se*.

Others have a different idea (*imaginationem*) about matter, that it is another being than form, because it can be the terminus of creation, and nevertheless they say that it is a contradiction that it exist without form, both because [1] it would follow that it would be, and not be an act, and [2] because, according to Boethius, *On the Trinity* I, c. 3, every being (*esse*) either is of form, or from form. Therefore matter does not have being unless it is an act, or has an act. [3] Furthermore, God does not have an idea of matter, therefore he cannot produce it *per se*. [4] Finally, because whenever many things are analogous in regards to a certain characteristic, that characteristic does not exist formally except in one of those, as is clear concerning "healthy," because it only formally exists in an animal, and other things are called healthy—as urine thus called—not from a healthiness which exists formally in them any more than in a stone, but because they have an attribution to that in which healthiness exists formally. But being is said analogically of matter and other things. It is not therefore called a being or said to have being except through attribution. Therefore "to be" does not formally exist in matter. This is seen through that text, *Metaph.* VII, comm. text. 8: "Matter is neither a something, nor a quantity," etc. Whence Aristotle says there: "Or matter, which according to itself is neither something nor quantity, nor anything else by which it is determined," that is, divided. And he adds: "For it is something of which all the others are predicated, and anything which is predicated denominatively is another being from that of which it is predicated. It is manifest, therefore, that the ultimate subject, that is, matter, is different according to its essence from every form, substantial and accidental." And the expositor says that the prior reason given for the opposite view proceeds from ignorance of matter to show that it is most of all a substance. Therefore in the aforementioned passage Aristotle manifests what matter is.

3.

I say, nevertheless, that the expositor errs there just as in many other places, because that is neither in accord with the flow of the text nor true in itself, because Aristotle argues there against the second opinion of the ancients who posited that matter is something in act, such as vapor, or any such thing. And Aristotle says that according to them all things are predicated of matter denominatively, even denominatively properly speaking, and he argues to the opposite, adding, but "it is impossible that matter be most of all substance. For to be separable from others, and to be this something most of all seem to inhere in substance." Wherefore matter and the composite seem more to be substances than matter. Nevertheless, the Philosopher says well that the "to be" of matter is different from any of the other categories, but it is manifest that he does not say this as his own position, because if it is the species of the composite substance, as he wishes in *Metaph.* VIII, text. 7, it is not therefore other than the category of substance, when it is there by reduction. Beyond this, this exposition contradicts in its intentions this opinion, because if the "to be" is other, therefore matter is not nothing, because same & other are differentiae of being. If, therefore, matter did not have a "to be" other than form, it could not be said to be other.

Beyond this, the Philosopher argues there that matter is predicated of the composite, and conversely, by proper denominative predication. And he says: "I say neither this, nor this, but according to them it will be predicated by proper denomination of the composite," which,



nevertheless, is false simply speaking, because such predication is not said because that denominative falls to something extrinsic in nature, but such denominative predication can be *per se* in the first mode, as “a human is an animal,” not “animality,” and in this way the composite is mattered, and not matter. Nevertheless, that denominative predication is not something extrinsic from the essence.

4.

I say, therefore, that the composite generable *per se* has two parts really diverse, and matter can exist without every form.

I prove this. First, in this way: because an absolute thing prior to another absolute thing can exist without that thing without contradiction. Matter is an absolute thing other than form, and prior. Therefore it can exist without it without contradiction. The major premise is clear, because the prior does not necessarily co-require the posterior at the same time, unless that thing is prior only in origin, co-requiring the posterior at the same time by simultaneity of relatives. But due to the fact that matter, as form, is an absolute being, distinct from the other, as has been proved before, it follows that matter does not co-require form by the simultaneity of relatives. The minor premise is clear, namely that matter is prior to form in origin, because it is receptive of form, for it is the fundament of nature, *per* the Philosopher, *Metaph.* II, text. 9. Therefore it is prior in origin, and it is not relative. Therefore, according to the notion of receptive it is prior to form. Therefore, to that extent it does not depend on form.

Similarly, Augustine, *Confess.* XIII, wishes that matter be prior in origin to form, because it is created prior in origin than form.

[p. 322]

5.

Second reason for the same [conclusion]: Whatever in regards to an absolute thing God creates through a secondary cause which is not of the essence of the thing, God can cause immediately without a secondary cause. But He causes being in matter through form, and it is not of the essence of matter. Therefore, He can cause being in matter immediately without form. The major premise is clear, because it is not a contradiction that the caused be without a secondary cause which is not of the essence of the thing. For there is a contradiction only in this: that God cause the composite of matter and form without a secondary cause, because those secondary causes are of the essence of the thing. And it is certain that God is just as powerful without a secondary cause as with it. Therefore, He can cause any absolute thing whatever without another absolute thing which is not of the essence of the thing, although perhaps an objection could be raised concerning a necessarily consequent relative thing. The minor premise is clear because form is not of the essence of matter, nor is the being given to matter by form of the essence of matter. For it is removed from the essence of matter when it is changed from form to form, and the being given by the prior form does not remain, because [otherwise] with equal reason the being given by the other form would remain, and thus many beings would be together. Therefore, [matter's] own being presupposed to the reception of form is not from some form.

6.

The third reason for the same [conclusion]: What God creates immediately, He can conserve immediately. But He creates matter immediately, because matter is something created,

for it is not a being wholly uncreated and it is not subject to the power of created nature, because created nature can produce nothing unless something is presupposed. Therefore God can conserve matter immediately without another absolute entity.

Fourthly, in this way: It is not necessary that God will a thing other than Himself simply speaking. Therefore, if He wills a thing other than Himself, it is not necessary on His part to will something other than that [first] willed thing, but only if there is such an order on the part of the willed things that He cannot will one without the other. Therefore, if He wills that matter exist, it is not necessary because of this that He will form to exist unless this is because matter in its own entity determines for itself the entity of form. But on the part of matter there is no necessity of determining for itself some form. Proof: It is not necessary that a designated singular necessarily determine for itself an absolute genus unless it determine for itself something specific in that genus. And everything which determines a species for itself of necessity determines being for itself in some individual of that species. For although it could be objected in regards to something common, nevertheless, if the something is a designated singular, it does not determine for itself one absolute genus by absolute necessity, unless it determine one specific thing of that absolute genus.

Confirmation: What relates contingently to any species whatever of that genus, relates contingently [to] the whole genus. For it cannot be that one singular be dependent necessarily on many things of diverse character (*rationis*) in the same order. Therefore, if matter depends on form, it will depend essentially on one [form] only, because of one singular dependence there is one primary terminus.

7.

You will say, where will that matter in potency to every form be? Also, how will matter have part outside of part without quantity?

To the first [question] I say, asking in opposition: where will an angel be? Or can God create him without a location (*ubi*)? And there will not be a greater reason why He cannot create matter [without a location]. Or if you say that He cannot [create an angel without a location], you assign for me a location which is necessary for the angel, and I will assign a necessary location for matter.

To the second [question]: There is not a greater difficulty there than in the following question: Does matter have partibility only through quantity? If one holds that the answer is yes, then one would have to say that it is not partible. Nevertheless, if one holds that it has partibility and not through quantity but in essence, which I believe is more true, it would still be partible [existing without every substantial and accidental form], but it would not have part outside of part as something circumscriptively located [does]. Whence if God were to annihilate form while conserving matter, it would not have a different being than it has now.

They say that matter has a relation to God in the character of efficient [cause]. It has been said before that that relation is not a thing other than the essence of the creature.

8.

To the first principal [argument (obj. 1, see §1)], I say that there is an equivocation there concerning “unity.” For it is twofold: a certain [unity] is [one] of identity of extreme with extreme; the other [unity] is of the resulting composite. In speaking of the first unity, to the extent that things are more one to that extent they are more inseparable. Speaking of the second unity, the proposition is false, because things most of all independent of one another are more of

a nature to come together to something more truly one resulting from them. Matter, therefore, and form, although they are not identically one by such great unity, because they are not dependent on one another as accident on subject, nevertheless they more truly make one resultant, and are more separable than accident from subject.

To the other [argument (obj. 2)]: I concede universally that that to which being *per se* is repugnant is lower in entity than that to which it is not repugnant. And therefore I concede that a relation is a being much inferior to matter. Nay more, any genus of accident is inferior in entity to matter. And when Augustine says “God made one thing near to nothing,” it is true: nothing is nearer to nothing in the genus of substance than matter. Whether something more near to nothing in the same genus could be caused is in doubt. They say: the angel is more near to God than something else of the any genus whatever, therefore matter [is] more remote than something of any genus whatever. It does not follow, because the reason why the angel is more near is because he is a more perfect being of the first genus. If, however, another thing were of a more perfect genus, nothing would prevent the angel from being more near to God in his own genus, and nevertheless something of another genus more near [to God absolutely]. Now, however, there could well be something of another genus more imperfect than the most imperfect of the genus of substance. Nevertheless, there cannot be something of another genus more perfect than the most perfect thing of the genus of substance.

To the other [argument (obj. 3)], I say that privations of contrary forms are not opposites unless they are of opposite forms immediately concerning the same thing. Whence, *De Caelo* I, when they are opposites necessarily immediate concerning the same thing, that thing cannot be under the opposite of one, unless it is under the other, as is clear concerning contradictory opposites. For they are not more able to be denied of the same thing at the same time than they can be affirmed. But it is not a contradiction to posit matter without every form in respect to God, because there are not any immediately contrary forms necessarily concerning matter. Although, therefore, a created agent cannot deprive matter of one form unless it induces another, nevertheless the privations of all forms are not necessarily impossible in matter at the same time.

To the first [argument] for the prior opinion [see §2, second paragraph, [1]], I say that “act” is used equivocally, because speaking of act as it, with potency, divides every being, in this way I say that matter is in act, nay more, privations are in act in that way, because blindness is in act in the eye, not in potency as it is when [the eye] has sight. And in this way matter [p. 323] is [in act], as “to be in act” is distinguished from “to be in its cause.” In another way, speaking of act and potency as “act” names receivable act and “potency” what is receptive, in this way matter is not act.

To the other [argument, [2]]: When Boethius says that being is of form, or from form, it can be said that he understands that every perfect being either is of act itself or of that which has act. The being of matter is not perfect. Or let it be that matter does not have being without form, nevertheless it does not follow that otherwise it *could* not be.

10.

To the other [argument, [3]]: I say that matter has an Idea in God, if an Idea is a known object as known. For the object known is not other than that produced in act. For the house in the soul in cognized being is not one thing, and that produced in external reality another. If it is posited that an Idea is an imitable character (*ratio*), matter still has an Idea. For matter is something and God can make something in regards to matter. Whence some say that no natural

agent can enact anything immediately in regards to matter, but only God. Therefore matter is not nothing.

To the other [argument [4]], when it is said “when things are analogous in some characteristic, that is only in one of them”: I say that that proposition taken universally is impossible. For if it is true in one singular case, it is false in a thousand, because “being,” “one,” and “good” are not said of creatures except in attribution to God, and by a certain analogy. Therefore, it would follow that not creature were more a being, more one, or more good than urine is healthy, and there is not more healthiness in urine than in a stone. Again, being is said of an accident in attribution to substance. But for this reason—that it is said analogically of substance and accident—an accident ought not to be called nothing.

11.

Beyond these things, in one way the assumed proposition can be true, in another way not. Because if “healthiness” is understood as a proportion of humors, then from this abstract [term] “healthiness” one concrete [term] “healthy” is taken, and it is said of diverse things in attribution to healthiness. And although the spoken word (*vox*) is one, nevertheless the concept of “healthy” is equivocal in any designated [individual] whatever, according to which it is said that animal is healthy formally, urine not, but [only as] a sign, and a diet as conserving [health.] If, nevertheless “healthiness”—or the analogy of “healthy” according to which there is an attribution of the concepts—is understood in such a way that it is a proportion not only of humors, but absolutely, in such a way that proportion is the analogate, then what signifies health or effects and conserves it have attribution and are analogous in proportion, and anything whatever that formally has that analogate.

[A statement on behalf of someone else:] Nevertheless, concerning that which was said before, that matter has its own being (*esse proprium*), it is said that beyond this matter has being given by form, and its own being communicated by God. Now, however, it does not have [God-given being] when it is under form, because in that way the composite would not be truly one. Notwithstanding, when it does not have that being given by form, it has its own being given by God. [Scotus’ response:] That, nevertheless, is in one way true, in another way false. For if it is understood that some being is positively given to it when it is separated from form, which before it did not have, it is false, just as some positive being is not conferred to the accident when it exists separate [from its subject], but the accident remains according to the same being according to which it was informing bread.

In another way it can be understood that positive being is not communicated to matter, but a certain negation, that it not be actuated by form, and this is being added as regards negation. And if matter in the composite were to have that being, the composite would not be something *per se* out of matter and form, because it would not be actuated by form. In this way in regards to the accident, when it exists *per se*, the relation which it has to the subject according to actual inherence is taken away. For if the subject were given being in the first way, matter would not remain without actuating act, the contrary of which the four reasons given above prove.

12.

[Objection] Against that it is argued: Corporeal matter depends more on corporeal form than conversely. And corporeal form cannot exist without matter, for thus it would be immaterial, and consequently intellectual, as Avicenna wishes [to say] *Metaph.* I, c. 4.

I say that matter depends less on corporeal form—since it is prior in origin—than material form on matter, although form is a more perfect being so it is not similar. Or better yet, [I say] that form is not the formal cause of matter, as Avicenna wishes [to say], *Metaph.* II, c. 3, nor matter the material cause of form, but of the composite. And therefore since each is an absolute being, I concede that each can be without the other, nor on this account is corporeal form immaterial, because although it be separated it is not repugnant to it to perfect matter. Let it be, therefore, that immateriality were the reason why something is of an intellectual nature—which I do not believe—it is still required that it not be naturally apt to perfect matter to be called an intellectual and immaterial form.