

THE UNIVERSAL TREATISE

of

Nicholas of Autrecourt

The beginning of the Universal Treatise of Master Nicholas of Autrecourt, aiming to determine whether the discourses of the Peripatetics were demonstrative.

FIRST PROLOGUE, PART ONE

Proper procedure requires me to mention at the start what motive led me to compose this treatise, so that the justifying reason for so great a project might be known. The reason is that many things came to my mind which, when put together, I considered an unmixed good. Moreover, further delay was displeasing to God.

First I inspected the teaching of Aristotle and his commentator Averroes. I saw that a thousand conclusions, or quasi-conclusions, had been demonstrated by them in abstruse matters, and especially in those which the intellect most wants to know. It is true that I did not find demonstrative arguments to the contrary in all cases, but there came to mind some by which, it seemed to me, contrary conclusions could be held as probably as the ones proposed by these men.

Secondly, I saw that some persons studied their doctrines for twenty or thirty years; indeed, some until old age.

Thirdly, it became clear that one could in a short time have the knowledge which is possible about things according to their natural appearances and to the degree that those men seem to have had it.

Fourthly, I pondered how they all deserted moral matters and concern for the common good because of the logical discourses of Aristotle and Averroes. Indeed, among other things, there are some reverend fathers whose heads are now growing grey, whose moral fibre is so well attested that I would scarcely, in my considered judgment, have dared claim to be worthy to sit on the ground at their feet; and yet (it is most painful, if it be true) I have seen, although not with a perfect view, them apparently having so spurned, alas, the practice that is called moral that, when a friend of the truth¹³

¹³ Nicholas himself. See *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, tom. II, p. 581.

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arose and sounded an alarm in order to arouse the slumberers from their sleep, they sighed, indicated clearly their displeasure, and, recovering their breath, attacked him like men armed for mortal combat.

And what are these men doing for God? Certainly charity does not seem fervent in them. Rather they seem subject to rivalries, jealousies, murmurings, the grasping for empty praise, and all the miseries in which men are involved. Their life seems to differ only for the worse from the life of the crowd. To have spoken thus in general terms does not harm those I am speaking against. May my tongue be cut off with a sword if I attack their reputation in some particular, or if I intend to do this in what I shall write.

Let me return now to what I was saying. I saw that scarcely any certitude about things can be acquired through their natural appearances, and that what can be obtained will be obtained in a short time if men turn their minds directly to things, as they have turned them to the opinions of men (Aristotle and his commentator Averroes). When it became clear, indeed, that man ought to place little confidence in natural appearances, I came to the conclusion that, if those who are well-endowed in the political community knew this, they would turn to moral matters and attach themselves strongly to the sacred law, the Christian law, which, of all laws, has embraced the most honorable way of life. They would live in charity. The perfect would direct the less perfect in his action. They would not have matter for pride when they considered that by merely natural means they can have little certitude about things. They would purify their hearts. Envy, avarice, and cupidity, which blind the intellect, would depart. They would live soberly, they would live chastely. At last, in the course of time, they would seem like divine men, so to speak, who would not consume the whole span of their life in logical discourse or in clarifying obscure statements of Aristotle or in quoting the comments of Averroes. Rather, they would explain the divine law to the people and, diffusing the rays of their goodness on every side, so live as to appear, in the sight of the most glorious Prince of all nature, as spotless mirrors, and images of His goodness.

This is my goal, this is my aim. Perhaps it would have been more cautious not to have expressed it, but it seems to me so divine that ultimately it will gain the effect it deserves, [whether] through me or someone else. I humbly beseech the reverend fathers, under whose wings we are protected, who are the model of all sanctity, that they allow this work to be finished. Indeed, I really do not see how [God] ought to grant the breath of life to him who would stand in the way of this thing. Should there be need [of testing its worth], its ability to last will make the matter clear.

I declare that, neither in this treatise nor in others, do I wish to say anything which is against the articles of faith, or against the decision of the church, or against the articles the opposite of which were condemned at Paris, etc.¹⁴ I wish only to ask, setting aside all positive law, what certainty can be obtained concerning things, and whether the arguments of Aristotle were demonstrative.

FIRST PROLOGUE, PART TWO

I begin my second discussion with something men syllogize about against those who try to change popular notions and to throw new light on conclusions that lie hidden in things. And their one statement divides in effect into two: one involving such a man's judgment in regard to conclusions he sets down about things; the second involving his judgment in regard to the opinion he holds of his own capacity. I join the discussions into one and present the argument as follows: "Those conclusions are not true and so his judgment is not sound. Likewise, a man seems to think higher of himself than the facts warrant if he teaches conclusions contradictory to those long generally approved by men of every level of understanding. But the conclusions which in your introduction you have set down as probable, and which you are to list in the present treatise, are of this kind, for they contradict Aristotle and his commentator Averroes. Therefore, etc."

So that the possible answers to this argument might be seen more distinctly, I begin by freeing myself of what seems to argue a bad disposition of soul toward conduct in the ethical realm, where the good is at issue. And to bring the truth to light, I shall set down one rule, a moral rule which seems to me to be very useful and noteworthy. It is as follows. There comes to a man all the concepts (concerning certain questions) which come to a certain whole group concerning those questions; and [the case is] of special interest [when they come], so to speak, naturally from within him, not by being received from another. Beyond these [concepts] there come [to the individual], as though from within himself and not by being received from another, other concepts as clear¹⁵ as the former, and clearer. By means of these he seems to reach things themselves better and to bring them more intimately within himself. Every such understanding can set down in these questions, without heat or presumption, some conclusions beyond those set down by the whole group, indeed directly opposed to them, and with a certainty which fairly satisfies his judgment.

¹⁴ Possibly a reference to the condemnation of 1277. See the *Chartularium*, tom. I (1889) 543-558. There is an English translation in J. Katz

and R. Weingartner, *Philosophy in the West* (New York, 1965) pp. 533-542.

¹⁵ For *ita*, *alibi* read *alibi ita*.

The basis for the rule is this: Anyone with a natural pre-eminence in understanding principles has a natural pre-eminence in reaching conclusions. Now, from the combination of those other concepts other principles result, and consequently other conclusions. For it would not be right that principles be communicated to someone and the conclusions denied. A person, then, perceives and experiences that many concepts occur to him about some questions. He knows also, so far as certainty is possible in such matters, that he forms all those concepts which others form, and many other concepts by which he gains closer contact with reality, penetrating it, as it were. He then sees that, as concerns the questions about which he forms as many concepts as the whole group, he is like the whole group in capacity. In addition, as concerns the other concepts, he is a sort of third party of special authority. Thus he learns that he is such that the knowledge of conclusions finds its natural abode in him above others.

This provides an answer to a certain argument that has a great influence on young men when they begin to see the direction men take according to their differences and their appetites. [They see] that, whatever men may say, in fact the whole lot of them abandon concern for the intellectual virtues and ceaselessly devote themselves to the pursuit of riches and positions and to doing favours for their "carnal" friends. They consider this situation and see that there are very few of the opposite persuasion. Then they experience a kind of struggle. Their heads argue that they should do what is in fact generally approved. The argument runs as follows: "Those should be followed whose judgment is sounder; now, it is likely that the judgment of the whole human community is sounder than that of two or three members of that community."

Of course [the man I have described] does not use this argument, but the rule stated above. For he sees that he has all the concepts of the group concerning that question, and many more. So he knows that if they were asked why they are so eager for riches, then prestige, etc., he has many other concepts beyond these. He knows that wealth is not a help to proper living. He knows the good that lies in the contemplation of God and in the practice of moral virtues. Thus he can surmise that others do not have a natural capacity, as he has, to rejoice in this good, since divine thoughts do not constantly reach their soul. Similarly with regard to many other things he can know that he is exceptional, standing outside the common throng.

Anaxagoras seems to have used this rule of the privileged, according to Aristotle's account in Book 10 of the *Ethics*.¹⁶ When the objection was raised against him that everybody disagreed with his

¹⁶ 1179a12.

statements, he replied that he was not surprised at this, because they perceived only externals, as if his meaning were: "I see the concepts of others well enough, but beyond those I have worthier ones which set me right."

I am not invoking the protection of this rule, since I do not say that I have all the concepts of others about the matters to be investigated below, and other concepts besides. Therefore, for my own vindication, I lay down another, more modest rule, which is as follows: "On some questions a person gets some thoughts that run counter to the general opinion. He discusses the matter with persons whose judgment he respects. After he has stood fast for a long time because his views have appeared and still appear [clear] to him, he can and should, particularly in purely speculative matters, declare his own judgment honestly, and set down his views as true, yet so as to expose [his judgment] in those matters to examination. And therefore, since a person like that does not have a false opinion of his own judgment, he does not fall into the fault referred to above."¹⁷ Now, I am such a person; and, [keeping in mind] what has been said in the major premise, the minor can in this manner be used under it properly.

Since a conclusion was drawn above concerning poor judgment, I set down two criteria for recognizing whether someone's judgment is sound. What makes one man's judgment sounder than another's is that the proper concepts of propositions, whereby truth can become apparent in the soul, come to his intellect with clarity and fully developed. A sign of this is that, in primary propositions, everyone makes a right judgment concerning them once the soul grasps the proper concepts of the terms which determine the truth of the proposition, but, if the proposition is not obvious, the intellect will need to do a lot of analyzing before it gets down to those concepts which determine its truth.

Accordingly, the rule seems to be as follows: "Whenever anyone can analyse obscure points, able to make distinctions as if by his own power, not by habits acquired from others, when he abstracts one concept from another, not remaining on the surface, but so to speak piercing to the heart of things in his grasp of causes, that man's judgment is sound." For it is evident that such a one can get right to the proper concepts wherein the truth about the problem is contained. With this rule let those well-endowed with judgment consider the quality of the minds from which men's doctrines have come.

The second criterion is as follows: "In moral questions there are certain rules which are posited universally, but, when particular cases

are pointed out, it is often unclear whether the universal rule should be extended to them. Here one needs a sense of equity (as Aristotle says,¹⁸ to whom recourse is made as to a sure guide). Now, if it could be known of anyone that he is well endowed with this quality, it would be a sign that his judgment was sound. This reveals itself in the process of getting back to motives. For a person of that sort could not bind himself by a rule in deciding a particular case without investigating all the possible motives of the lawgiver. When he sees that those apply in the particular given case, he says that the rule ought to be extended to that case. Because he can perceive the motives, he grasps the proper concepts of the terms. Therefore he can judge soundly."

I might have said this with respect to the argument set down above insofar as it seemed to conclude that I have a higher opinion of my own capacity than the truth of the matter would warrant. The argument seemed to contain a further conclusion, that is, that the conclusions I shall give are not true because they directly contradict conclusions generally approved.

In the first place, one thing is clear, that such a method of arguing is not the proper kind to give proof for the conclusion. Thus, even if God simply said to a blind man, "White is the most beautiful of colours," and the blind man knew that it was God [speaking], nevertheless the fact [that white is the most beautiful of colours] would not be evident to him, because he would lack the proper concepts of the terms, even though he assented to this proposition as true. Now, in speculative matters, our only aim is knowledge itself, that a thing's appearance might come into the soul. It is not like the obedience due to the law, where the aim is not knowledge, but action. There the lawgiver uses such arguments as may win men's assent, for he knows that, when assent is given, action will follow.¹⁹ But here our only aim is proof, and so it seems unworthy to use arguments of this kind. Nay, rather let us seek the truth concerning the matters at issue in self-evident propositions and in experience.

Also, if anyone hobbles himself by such maxims [that the traditional should not be contradicted], he will at once be put in a quandary by my saying in turn that Aristotle's teaching is not likely to be sound since he contradicted all his predecessors.

Likewise, by your argument you can reach only the conclusion that "your teaching is not likely to be sound, etc." I say that, even if your conclusion is true, the possibility of [my teaching's] being true is not thereby eliminated, because even according to Aristotle

nothing prevents some false assertions from being more probable than some true assertions.²⁰ And now, though I have other ways of refutation, I leave off for brevity's sake.

It seems to me that there is no naturally unprejudiced person who is bound by such maxims in investigations which are said to be made according to natural appearances, but, if there were a thousand [so bound], they would not believe a proposed conclusion to be evidently true nor its opposite evidently false.

We must also look at one point which is very important. There could have been some reason why the reverend fathers who followed Aristotle wanted indeed to allow the sayings of Aristotle to be held in respect and people in general to place great confidence in them. For they knew that not all men have a natural capacity for enjoying the benefit of speculation; on the contrary, even if they went to pains, they would never acquire a knowledge of a single piece of abstruse thought. Now if these persons did not have a respect for Aristotle's sayings, with the result that they did not believe that by studying them they were acquiring an important science, they would despair of [attaining] the goal of speculation and would turn to the pleasures of the flesh. Therefore [the fathers] wanted to allow them to advance in study in this simple fashion. Now I see that the process has gone too much to an extreme, for dangerously few turn to the nature of reality, while the majority turn to the opinions of men. Therefore, to restore the balance, I am quite eager to show which is the true way of investigating difficult matters.

¹⁸ *Nicomachean Ethics*, V, 10; 1137b26. ¹⁹ F. H. Hourani, *Averroes* (London, 1961) p. 64.

To Master Odo,⁷⁴ and to all others who want to seek the truth and accept it.

When my mind in its deliberations turned to thinking of those who call themselves searchers of truth as it is found in natural appearance, [I found] one matter among others which of itself is very displeasing to any lover of truth. For those who would claim to proceed discursively to diverse conclusions by [reasoning from] acts which we experience in ourselves and from principles self-evident from their terms agreed so much with the mob that their final solution in their investigations was in accord with the conclusions and words of Aristotle and his commentator Averroes. They used these as principles, and gave them such great credence that they considered it entirely irrational to argue against someone denying their conclusions, as though to argue against such a one were to argue with a half-wit. Lest I seem to seek glory in imputing falsity to these I have been speaking about so that thereby I might appear to the people as a corrector of errors, I adduce some examples and some probable conjectures which ought to suffice in this matter.

The first is this. When for the first time the doctors of this university heard that some people were asserting it as probable that material substance and quantity are not really distinct,⁷⁵ I heard from the elders among them that it was unfitting to argue against such people because they denied self-evident principles. But I have a query. They thought that to be a principle either simply because it was said by Aristotle—in which case the contention [is established]—or because the intellect grasps it naturally as soon as it understands the terms, or because it is something we experience within ourselves. But neither [of these last] can be said, because either there would then be no question about such a proposition or, if there were, its solution would be quite easy. And yet their master Aristotle, whom they wish to follow so closely, said that this is a very difficult problem, and accordingly lists it among the most difficult problems in Book 3 of his *Metaphysics*, near the beginning.⁷⁶

Briefly let the argument be as follows: "One should not think it irrational to argue with someone upholding the other side of a very difficult problem. It would not be called very difficult unless each part of it were difficult, either in itself or by reason of the arguments ap-

⁷⁴ Page 186.

⁷⁵ Add *secundum* after *verum* in line 44.

⁷⁶ Add *non sit* after *quod* in line 48.

⁷⁷ This may be Gerard Odo. See *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, XXIV (1896) 349.

⁷⁸ William of Ockham, *Sentences*, lib. IV, q. 4 (Lyons, 1494-96) f. R viii ff.

⁷⁹ III, 1; 996a12 ff.

parently leading to its solution. But, as has been said, it is a very difficult problem whether substance and quantity are really the same. Therefore it must not be rational to judge that it is irrational to argue against someone upholding the other side. If they have thought this to be a principle whereas (as is clearly shown by Aristotle, whom they follow implicitly) it is not, it is most likely that they act similarly in other matters, so that, especially since they have no arguments and have always used Aristotle's conclusions as principles, they will say that men deny principles when a man merely asserts conclusions which are true but different from those usually held. Let each person, then, leave these [supposed principles] aside, and take care to persuade his soul that the true philosopher should distinguish himself from the crowd by not accepting some things as principles merely because they are commonplace."

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There is a second example which confirms the contention stated above. The doctors who gather to keep occupied fill books during their deliberations and compose long courses in expounding the words of Aristotle. But, if the precise cause of their accepting Aristotle's words as true is an evident reason, it seems utterly superfluous for them to thus set aside the consideration of things and turn to a man's words. For no one doubts that [the purpose] could have been accomplished in a shorter time if each person gave his reason for holding a conclusion.

The third example concerns teachers who settle fully scarcely one out of ten arguments in their questions. They merely allege a statement of Aristotle or of his Commentator for the major or minor proposition. Yet, as would be evident to one looking at their books, the propositions are not known from their terms, nor are they such as the intellect spontaneously assents to, nor [do they concern] something which we experience in ourselves.

My mind has seen all these things and more like them, and it thought that there was error in them and no little deception. Moved by a charitable zeal, I thought that their opinion needed help. God knows [that I was] not [moved] by love of glory, but by the belief that, when there is a search based on principles, truth will reign in the soul and there will not be room for falsehood any longer.

And so I proposed, among other things, to show against these misguided persons that there are some conclusions which it is certain that Aristotle taught and which they do not call into doubt, but which they could not know at all. In the course of this there were a great many conclusions which will be examined, not by settling them but questioning them.

FIRST TREATISE: THE ETERNITY OF THINGS

We must investigate the eternity of things especially. And first partially under this form: "Can our intellect state a conclusion that is certain from the fact that some things absolutely permanent are not eternal, those things of which it is commonly said that they are generated and decay or that they are subject to alteration and the movement of growth?" The proof deals first with things in which, as it seems, it is more obvious that there is a passage from non-being to being and from being to non-being, as in [the case of] sensory qualities. But it should be known at the outset that it can be shown in two ways that we do not know this conclusion: "Not all things are eternal." [We can] either show that the opposite is true; or show that the only arguments which appear sufficient to show the proposed conclusion are not sufficient. Hence it is possible that someone might think this an open question because the first way is ruled out but not the second. Therefore we shall begin with the second way.

No intellect, to which it is certain and evident that something exists at some time, can say for certain at a later time that that thing does not exist, unless it has some argument with the power to induce a knowledge of that negative proposition asserting that the thing which existed previously no longer exists. In the case of sensory qualities which exist now, the intellect is, or can be, certain that they exist. Therefore at a later time it ought not to deny the thing's existence unless it has some argument with the power to induce the knowledge of this negative proposition. The major premise is known, since the intellect, as a rational power, ought not to change from the extreme of an affirmative proposition to the negative extreme without an inherent reason for the change, since there is no self-evident principle. For, take a proposition about a thing previously existing which is said to be non-existent: "The whiteness does not exist." My question is whether that [proposition]⁸⁰ is known to you from its terms, or is first known through experience as something you experience in yourself. Not in the first way, because it would be always known to you, and so its truth was known to you when the opposite was a fact; even in the absence of sensation that negative proposition would be known once its terms were understood. Nor in the second way, for all we experience in ourselves is that, before blackness takes over, there seems to be a cessation of the act of appearing that we had, so that we no longer experience in ourselves the act of seeing that we had before. Therefore, since [the proposition] is not known as a principle, it must be as a conclusion, and so by virtue of some argument.

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⁸⁰ Read *illa* for *alta* in line 41.

But there is no argument inducing a knowledge of this negative proposition that a thing, or whiteness, does not exist. For both propositions of that argument would be known either from their terms or through experience. I shall prove that it is not from their terms because, if they were known from their terms or were dependent on such, such a proposition would always be understood once they were understood, and thus in the absence of whiteness itself one would have certainty about it.

Therefore [the proposition] must be known through experience, from sensory acts which we experience in ourselves. Therefore, the proposition "This whiteness does not exist" is assumed on the basis of either a positive sense act or the cessation of a sense act which at first was experienced with regard to whiteness. Not from the first, because that would point rather to the existence of the whiteness than to its non-existence. Therefore from the second, that is, from the cessation of an act which at first was experienced with regard to the whiteness. If, therefore, there is produced some suitable argument leading to the conclusion that the whiteness which formerly existed exists no longer, it seems to be the one stated.

This is clear also from the fact that what the intellect seems to naturally resort to when asked about a proposition is what serves as an argument for the intellect in regard to the proposition. But when it is asked if water is hot, men at once resort to an act of touch. When it is asked if this wall is white, it resorts to an act of sight. And similarly in other cases. With some young men a more adequate argument might seem to be: "Because blackness inheres, therefore whiteness does not." But the intellect cannot use this as a primary argument because, if the intellect says that on the advent of blackness whiteness is removed, this is only because it sees that on the advent of blackness the sense of sight loses the appearance of whiteness. Thus it seems that the argument ought to be declared the one into which all others are finally resolved, and the one which seems to suffice by itself.

It would be tedious and useless to discuss all the arguments that could be given, and it is customary enough that the argument be taken for granted that is more probable and more suitable for the question at issue. And if there is another,⁸¹ he who claims he is certain of his conclusion should propose [this argument]. Otherwise we should be forced to wander through almost endless arguments. Similarly, it has been proven well enough that there is no other argument, or, if there is, that it reduces to this one as the basic argument.

Now, indeed, it is shown that the cessation of appearance is an inadequate argument to conclude that a thing does not exist. Let us

⁸¹ Read *alium* for *alius* in line 30.

phrase the argument so as to make its force more apparent by arguing: ["Everything which previously appeared to a sense but now does not appear, no matter what the sense fixes its attention on, no longer exists. But this is the case with the whiteness which previously appeared, but now does not appear. Therefore, etc."] The inconclusiveness of this reasoning can be shown in three ways. The first of these ways seems to me to be more probable than the others, even though I do not have an evidently demonstrative conclusion. Here it is: "As concerns the major premise, let it be said that it does not contain truth. For natural forms are divisible into their smallest units in such a way that these, when divided off from the whole, could not perform their proper action. And so, though they are visible when existing in the whole, they are not visible when dispersed and divided or separated. For this is true even according to the mind of Aristotle when he says⁸² that natural beings have maximum and minimum limits."

The second way would be to say that the case is analogous with the power of movement, which sometimes performs its act and sometimes is at rest. When it functions, it appears. When it is at rest, it then does not appear, but it is not therefore said to be destroyed. The same could be said of all other powers. [~~If the contrary is true,~~] then a man is said to be destroyed when those of his faculties are at rest which relate to his principal function. And, when this happens in all the parts of some region, then the world is said to be destroyed as far as that region is concerned. So it has been countless times, and so it will be, if the world, because of natural appearances, is said to be destroyed.

The third way would be to say that the nature of no thing's appearance is lost. For if you see whiteness in Socrates' face, blackness in his hair, and a scar on his forehead, all these things you will see when he is said to be destroyed. You will not see them where you saw them before, but elsewhere: the whiteness in John, for example, the blackness in a horse, the scar on Peter. But you will say: "I shall see something similar and specifically the same, but not numerically the same." The answer is that, regarding things which come exactly the same to sense and intellect, so that the intellect, at least of itself, does not posit a distinction, you ought not deny some degree of identity unless because of a diversity of some external characteristics from which it might be concluded. Now, these two things come exactly the same to sense and intellect as in the case of two eggs totally alike, so that no diversity is conceived except the diversity of location. And so, if location is set aside, no diversity would be conceived there. Therefore, if there is diversity, it comes from something external.

⁸² *Physics*, I, 4; 187b14 ff.

This gives rise to the argument: "Things in numerically diverse places are at least numerically diverse. But these two whitenesses are in numerically diverse places, as sight makes known. Therefore they are numerically diverse, since the same thing cannot be in diverse places."

Though this argument is probable, it is not conclusive. The major premise, though denied by some who assert that the same thing can be in diverse places, may be granted—I am not willing, as some think, to proceed by means of principles so at odds with sense experience. But the minor premise is denied because, in order to prove that the whiteness appearing in two eggs is⁸³ in diverse places, you cannot adduce the argument that whiteness is in diverse places because sight sees whiteness when it fixes its gaze on diverse places. This is invalid. For, suppose in front of or around you several mirrors in diverse places. According to common doctrine, if you fix your gaze in one direction, you will see yourself and nothing else formally inhering in the mirror. Similarly, if you look in another direction, you will see yourself. Thus in looking in diverse directions you will see something which will not be in numerically diverse places. So in the case under discussion the position might be stated that here there is only something material underneath, and that separated principles are responsible for the actions of things, as Plato claimed;⁸⁴ for example, a separated whiteness for the action of this whiteness. (I refer to a separateness of the kind attributed to the intelligences and also to the possible intellect according to the Commentator.)⁸⁵ And then that material that is looked at is only a sort of mirror in which the whiteness can be seen when the gaze is fixed in that direction. This is how Plato understands it.

Each of these three ways is possible, and I do not see that any of them would have been adequately disproved by Aristotle. However, for the present I choose the first. But the reasoning given under the first theory, which was chosen as more probable, does not apply to motion, if [motion] is a thing distinct from the movable object, since, unlike other natural beings, it does not consist of permanently existing atoms that can be dispersed. But before the end of the whole treatise we shall investigate whether motion is distinct from the movable object, and also what their relationships are.⁸⁶ For, if they are not distinct, it is unnecessary to inquire carefully into them. We shall also deal separately with the acts of our soul.⁸⁷

⁸³ Put *esse* after *ovis* in line 26.

⁸⁴ For example, *Timaeus*, 52.

⁸⁵ Averroes, *De Anima*, III, comm. 4 and 36.

⁸⁶ Page 205.

⁸⁷ Pp. 223 ff.

Thus in natural things there is only local movement. When this movement results in an assembly of natural bodies which gather together and acquire the nature of a subject, this is called generation. When they separate, it is called destruction. When through local movement there [are joined] to a certain subject atomic particles of such a kind that their arrival seems unrelated both to the movement of the subject and to what is called its natural functioning, that is called alteration. Perhaps there is something there which connects and retains the indivisibles in this union, as a magnet does with iron. The stronger the force of this thing, the longer the subject survives as a subject. If there were [a force] of this kind, it would be called the quasi-formal principle of the thing.

What should be said about the light in a medium? What is it in the night? It could be said that the light itself is nothing but certain bodies that naturally accompany the movement of the sun or of some other luminous body also. If in this regard it is objected⁸⁸ that light is generated instantaneously, one must reply that, though it seems to be generated instantaneously because it happens as if all at once, nevertheless it takes time. According to the common doctrine, sound multiplies itself successively in the intervening space because [it proceeds] by a kind of local movement; yet it seems to arrive as if all at once. So, too, it is not difficult to imagine that there are some finer and more penetrative bodies which seem to diffuse themselves almost instantly throughout the whole intervening space. [This will become clear] particularly from certain considerations about movement and rest which will be discussed⁸⁹ when this subject is treated.⁹⁰

The point of the first chapter would be that, if a well endowed man reflects without falling under some misleading influence, he will say that men of this age cannot say for sure that they know that some thing has passed from being to non-being. From this it seems that, if my intellect has an alternative to suggest, it ought to claim that things, especially permanent things, are eternal. For, if in each thing eternity is better than [the thing's] destruction, it will be seen that the universe is more perfect if its parts, particularly its permanent parts, are posited to be eternal, just as its being is admitted to be eternal. [There is a connection between a thing's perfection and its being,] for, if movement is distinct from the movable object, as is commonly thought, perhaps one should say that its perfection, like its being, lies rather in the negation of permanence. It may be argued as follows: "That hypothesis about the universe should be made which reveals a greater perfection in the universe, as long as the hypothesis involves no impos-

⁸⁸ Read *in stando* in line 13 as one word.

⁸⁹ Read *dicentur* for *dicetur* in line 19.
⁹⁰ Pages 206 ff.

sibility. But the hypothesis that permanent natural things, which have been discussed above, are eternal, reveals a greater perfection in the universe, and involves no impossibility. Therefore, etc." The major premise is known because it is not to be thought that the universe lacks any possible perfection. If one were lacking, in the same way [there could be lacking] two perfections, or three, or infinite perfections infinitely multiplied; and thus there would be no limit, nor [would there be one] with regard to the rule for measuring divine truths. The minor premise, too, appears true from what has been said previously.

This conclusion may be further argued as follows: Things ought to be said to decay in a way more befitting the nature of a thing. If [this proposition] is considered carefully, it is known from its terms. However, if it is considered carefully with regard to the cessation of permanent natural things, there does not take place the total annihilation of some permanent being, but there takes place the removal or separation of small bodies, or even the withdrawal of bodies previously inhering and their replacement by others. Consider the case of sticks that are being burned, or a lighted candle, and you will see that there constantly occurs a certain withdrawal of bodies. Hence death, too, as Aristotle says in his book *On Death*,⁹¹ in one way befalls a man because the enveloping heat attracts the heat that was within. So, in things that rot, the natural heat is being released. In brief, by induction from similar cases it is not clear that decay takes place in things in another way than through the withdrawal of bodies. If in some instance the process appears to take place otherwise because of the minuteness of the bodies withdrawing, it is not therefore to be denied. Even according to Aristotle, in Book I of the *Meteorology*,⁹² there constantly arise from water and earth bodies which leave their imprint in the air; and so, when a lake has dried up, one must not think that it passes over to non-being, but there occurs only a separation and raising-up of its component bodies.

There is still another [argument]: "Every whole that is most perfect because of the inclusion of every perfection and the exclusion of every imperfection, one in which there is no deformity, ought to have all its parts as good as possible, especially where the nature of the thing permits. The universe is [a whole] of this kind. Therefore, etc." The major premise is obvious because, if a city seems to be disfigured when any house of that city falls down, much more must the whole universe be thought to be disfigured in its totality by a deformity in a part. The minor premise, namely, that the universe itself is perfect

because of the inclusion of every perfection and the exclusion of every imperfection, seems known. Even Aristotle agrees.⁹³ Hence, granted that something in the universe could in a way be called imperfect by comparison with something else in the universe that is more perfect, it is still true that there is nothing in the universe which is imperfect absolutely speaking, so that it would be better for it not to exist. For in the universe good should be set up as a standard, since it has the nature of an end. Hence the only⁹⁴ reason you will find why a thing is what it is, rather than its opposite, is that it is better for this thing to exist than for its opposite; and similarly in other cases.

Those who delight in looking for ways of evading what seems truer so far as natural appearances are concerned might reply to this argument first by saying that it is species, and not individuals, that make up the perfection of the universe, and that species, indeed, survive perpetually. I counter by asking what you mean by species. [You may mean] universal concepts. But they do not seem to make up the perfection of the universe more than the external natures of things do. Or you may mean by a species something absolutely one in itself, really existing in all the individuals of the species. This seems more probable. It is what might be said by those who posit that the specific nature really exists in individuals as absolutely one in itself so that it is differentiated in them only by the addition of the individual differences, and so is differentiated only extrinsically.

Now I ask why in the case of two whitenesses you posit some differentiating principles superimposed upon that nature absolutely one in itself. It does not seem unreasonable for me to ask this. For [the two] are completely united in the senses and in the intellect's first grasp of [the nature], so that the intellect would make no distinction unless there were difference of location. But the location-argument (i.e., that it is impossible for something numerically one to be in different places, etc.) would be inconclusive. It is inconclusive because, according to those who use this argument, the specific nature, which is absolutely one in itself, is in several places. If they can maintain this, it can similarly be maintained against them that, as this is absolutely one in itself, so also is that (what is numerically one).

The argument based on generation and decay would be inconclusive to those who say that, when this whiteness decays, whiteness itself does not decay (except extrinsically) but simply ceases to be shared. This could be said even if [whiteness and this whiteness] were not differentiated at all.

⁹¹ 470a29.

⁹² I, 9.

⁹³ Perhaps *On the Heavens*, II, 11; ⁹⁴ Add *nisi* before *quia* in line 21. 291b14.

Coming back to the argument given above, one could make another seemingly probable reply: "It might be said that a particular thing contributes to the perfection of the universe, but contingently, in the sense that in nature it is possible to produce perfections the exact equals of this, so that another will replace it when it decays." I think this reply improbable. For one thing, first of all, this replacing seems to smack of a certain imperfection. This is true, and the spokesmen of the adversaries do not deny it, but openly admit it. The Commentator Averroes in Book 2 of *On the Soul*¹⁰⁸ says that, when the divine solicitude saw that the individual could not survive in numerical identity, it took pity on it by bestowing upon it at least the ability to survive in specific identity.

But there is an argument against this opinion. A cause which produces its effect by a single causation, to an extent sufficient for the nature of the whole, is more perfect than one which does not produce at all, or, if it does, produces by several acts of causation. But, according to this opinion, God would not produce an effect as final cause by one act of causation to a sufficient extent, nor as efficient cause except by many acts of causation. Therefore he would not cause those effects in the most perfect manner either as final or as efficient cause. Hence it seems better, particularly because it does not appear impossible, to posit one perfect effect than to posit so many replacements. It also seems that you cannot say, according to this, that the destruction of a particular thing has a final cause and therefore no efficient cause whatever. For, since it is necessary to substitute in its place another thing equal in perfection, it seems that it would be better, or at least good, for [the original] thing to continue in existence.

✓ = bottom of p. 64

✓ = p. 64 bottom

Mention was made above of an argument that runs: "Every perfect whole, etc."²¹ It is plain that the distinction there made between the universal and the particular, in an explanation adduced against this argument, fails to prove that particulars do not contribute to the perfection of the universe. The insufficiency of the argument is made plain by an exposition of the principles upon which the argument was built.

One principle is that the good is present to the intellect as a measure for quantifying beings and generally for determining the properties they may have, so that [the intellect] may recognize that the beings in the universe are most justly disposed, and that things are such as it is good for them to be, and not such as it would be evil for them to be.

The intellect grasps this proposition when it considers what happens in natural objects and artifacts. In artifacts the workman has a good as his yardstick. Hence, a house is made just as he thinks

²⁰ Perhaps *Topics*, VIII, 2; 157a33.

²¹ Page 202. This prologue was written after the treatise proper.

it is good for it to be made—it is not made roofless, it is not made of feathers, for all these would be contrary to the purpose on which the goodness and desirability of this house seem to depend. If there were no good, there would be no obvious plan for the construction of a house, since there is no end to evil or to the negation of good. And so there would be no more reason for building the house in one way than in another, or in countless ways, or not at all.

Now, just as the good and the orderly arrangement is seen to serve as a yardstick in a craft, the same seems to hold true in nature, and even much more so, according to Aristotle's teaching, in proportion to the greater strictness of principles on which being depends. That this is so in natural objects we perceive from two considerations. First, from a certain inductive process. The desirability of stones seems to lie in their use for building monuments for man. Do we not see that they are not up in the sky because they would be useless [there]? A horse is not as tall as the sky, for then man could not mount it. Man's front teeth are sharper for breaking up food, and his back teeth broader for chewing—this example Aristotle uses.²²

In other things, too, the proposition becomes evident for the reason that there is no limit to evil and the negation of good, as [was said] above [when speaking] of artifacts.²³ For it would then be unintelligible why [things] are made in one way rather than in another, nor would we know how to settle the questions which arise in us naturally when we consider how things are arranged in their inherent quantity and quality. Therefore, just as the craftsman aims at the most suitable disposition of his product, and one that pleases him most, similarly we must suppose that the beings of the universe are disposed as would please a sound intellect more.

186 The second principle is that the beings of the universe are connected to one another, so that one seems to be on account of another in some way. The intellect grasps this principle when it considers the origin of its sense of the desirability and pleasingness of things. Thus, it is immediately seen that, if you take away from a house its ability to protect from heat and rain, its goodness and desirability are taken away. Take away man, and it is immediately seen that there is taken away that which makes protection a good; and similarly in other cases. The basis for the proposition seems to lie in the assumption that there is some first being, because no goodness is found in beings except in conjunction with that being which is the first good. Now, such beings subordinate to an end do not seem to be joined to [the first good] except through the end to which they are subordinate.

²² *Physics*, II, 8; 198b24.

²³ This same page.

The third principle is one that seems to follow from the preceding. Since the universe is so interconnected, there is nothing whose existence does not benefit the entire multitude of beings. Hence this being is for the sake of that, that for the sake of another, and so on forever.

The fourth principle is that the universe is always perfect to the same extent. For if there were a deterioration to some degree of imperfection, it could proceed to a yet worse degree, and so on indefinitely forever. Likewise, assuming a first being, it seems that if all things take place as the first being demands, and this being itself never varies, then whatever it demanded at one time [it will demand] also at another.

Philosophers have used these principles; and, having expounded them so, I wish to use them as probable in order to show that this particular thing which now exists exists always. The argument runs as follows: "Everything whose present existence benefits and embellishes the whole multitude of some totality that is always perfect to the same extent, exists always. But this holds true of this thing. For, in accordance with what was said above, it exists only because its existence is good, according to the first principle set down above."²⁴ It is for the good of the whole multitude of beings because the universe is an interconnected whole, according to the second and third principles; and the universe is always perfect, according to the fourth principle. Therefore this thing will always exist."

Likewise, on the basis of the principles set down above, it seems that nothing in the universe, either in particular or in general, can be useless, for, if it were, then it would be better for it not to be than to be. Therefore, since the existence of any existent thing is good, it seems that nothing can be removed without involving a deformity in the whole, just as in a very well-arranged house, in which nothing would be superfluous or incomplete, one could not imagine the removal of any item except as disfiguring the whole house. We must believe the same about the whole multitude of beings.

Here is a further argument for the principal conclusion. When the intellect knows some extremes between which stands a middle position [produced] by negating the extremes, if the extremes have any consequences, the middle position will also have a consequence midway between those consequences and [produced] by the negation. The truth of this norm will become evident in applying it to the case at hand. Well, then, it goes as follows. There are, so to speak, the extremes: "Some being never exists; every possible being

²⁴ Page 185.

always exists." And there seems to be a kind of middle position: "There are beings that sometimes exist, sometimes do not exist." Now the consequence of "Some being never exists" is "There will be a total lack of good." The consequence of "Every possible being exists" will be "There will always be a total complement of good." Therefore the consequence of "Sometimes a being exists, sometimes it does not exist" will be "There will not always be a total complement of good." And so the universe would not always be perfect to the same extent.

187 The propositions become evident from the fact that "being" and "good" are interchangeable. And so from "Some being never exists" will follow "A good never exists." The intellect notices that "being" and "good" are interchangeable because the intellect always takes pleasure in the fact of "being." Hence we also feel displeasure when we believe that a thing has become non-existent, and we would feel it more strongly except that familiarity has made us callous.

Moreover, there is another argument for the conclusion about the eternity of things which brings out the kind of response to this reasoning which would be given according to Aristotle's principles and conclusions. The argument runs as follows: "A conclusion which can safeguard the rewarding of good men and the punishing of the evil seems closer to the truth than one which could not so safeguard these, since the good order of the universe seems to demand that the good be rewarded and the evil punished, and universal justice seems to require this. But this safeguard is lacking in Aristotle's contention about the decay of things. For, when each and every man becomes completely non-existent as regards all that is proper to him, it does not seem possible to understand how one person would have a greater share in good than another. Hence [Aristotle] himself in the *Ethics* seems to mean that the dead have in them neither good nor evil.²⁵ But will not this be a perverse ordering of the universe?"

Now, from what has been said about the eternity of things it will be easy to understand wherein the good man has the advantage over the evil. First, someone might wish to say: "Let us imagine in a good man two spirits, of which one is called intelligence, and the other sense. The sense-spirit is subservient, as it were, because universal and divine likenesses are not so constituted as to come to the spirit called intelligence except when particular and more material likenesses come first to the spirit called sense. Now, when one speaks of the decay of the subject [in which these spirits reside], this means only the dispersal of the atomic bodies. The spirits called intelligence

²⁵ I, 10; 1100a12.

and sense remain. An infinite number of times these will be in the same excellent condition in which they were in the good man, according as those indivisibles will be re-assembled an infinite number of times. In this very fact lies an advantage for a good man over an evil man, who will recover his evil condition an infinite number of times just as the other his good condition." Or, one might say that, when that subject is said to decay, those two spirits will take up their abode in another subject composed of more perfect atoms; and, since the subject would be more adaptable, intelligibles would come to [the spirits] more than before.

Before God I pray that these remarks exert no evil influence on anyone. For although in my opinion they appear far more probable than what Aristotle said, yet, just as for a long time Aristotle's statements seemed to be probable, though now perhaps their probability will be lessened, so someone will come along and undermine the probability of these [statements of mine]. Let us also hold fast to the law of Christ and believe that there never occurs a rewarding of the good or a punishing of the evil except in the manner stated in that holy law.

But to return to the main point: Any conclusion that can be known when formulated in terms of being can be known through the concepts of being or of the consequences of being. But the conclusion "Not all things are eternal" is formulated in terms of being and cannot be known through such concepts. Therefore it cannot be known and consequently you cannot say that that conclusion has been demonstrated by the Peripatetics.

The major premise is known. According to my opponent metaphysics is a science embracing all fields,²⁶ and, because of this property, by means of transcendental propositions it seeks truth concerning any recondite proposition at all. The minor premise is clear. For [the conclusion] cannot be known through the concept of being, because the concept of being seems rather to argue for eternity than for deficiency and corruptibility. Neither [can it be known] through the concept of good; rather, [thinking] in terms of [good] argues for the opposite, for it is better for any being at all to be eternal than not to be [eternal], as it seems. Neither [can it be known] through [the concept of] plurality, because plurality and distinction in beings are consistent with the eternity of being.

Nevertheless, it might seem to someone that this conclusion would be knowable even in concepts of being, or at least that the ex-

²⁶ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XI, 3; 1060b 31.

istence of such a [non-eternal] being is possible. The argument runs as follows: "Every being which does not contain an incompatibility in its concept is possible; but there is nothing incompatible in the concept of a corruptible being, because there is no incompatibility in the concepts that something exists now and that it does not exist later."

The answer is as follows. What contains an incompatibility in none of its concepts is possible. Thus the major premise is true, but not the minor. The minor, indeed, is not true if one admits that "corruptible being" contains an incompatibility in its concepts, that is, if one says that "a corruptible being which is part of a whole that is always perfect to the same extent" contains an incompatibility and contradiction. (Keep in mind what was said above in the argument running "Every perfect whole, etc."²⁷) If you should say "Every impossibility in secondary concepts reduces to an impossibility in a primary concept," I say that this is true when speaking of a primary concept which it is possible for us to have insofar as reality is concerned; but there is no need for the reducing always to be such that we have an evident reduction to a primary concept which we actually possess.

There is another argument for the main point. It is strengthened by supposing what the adversary Averroes says in Book 2 of the *Metaphysics*, that there is no question which the human intellect can never answer.²⁸ This is the argument: "The conclusion that there would be some question which the human intellect could never answer, or which might even seem unanswerable to every intellect, does not seem probable. Thus it is when, for instance, things are caused in a segment of eternity. Suppose a definite duration, for instance a hundred years. The question arises why things have not been caused with a greater length of duration; and it does not seem that that question can be solved.²⁹ It seems then that they are caused with every degree of duration. But this seems to be impossible since, whatever finite degree of duration be granted, there are still infinite degrees between it and eternity. Therefore [things have been caused] with either every degree of duration (which seems to be impossible, as has been said) or certain particular degrees [which has also been ruled out]."

Likewise there is an argument against Aristotle, who posits that things pass from being to non-being absolutely. For Aristotle posits

that friendly relations towards another proceed from what a man desires for himself;³⁰ he also posits that for the sake of the common good a virtuous man ought to expose himself to death.³¹ Now, then, how can these [propositions] be reconciled so that it can be argued in this way? Nothing in whose eyes its own existence is most highly desirable ought to perform an act tending to the destruction of its own existence. But this is the case here according to him. Not so, however, according to the conclusion that we posit. For it gives better reason for urging that one should die for the common good than does his conclusion previously mentioned, since we have not posited a change to non-being absolutely. "If these arguments. . ."³²

²⁷ Page 185.

²⁸ II, comm. 1; in *Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis* (Venice, 1562-74) vol. VIII.

²⁹ This argument is recounted by Algazel. See S. Van den Bergh, ed., *Averroes' Tahafut Al-Tahafut* (London, 1954) vol. I, p. 1.

consider those to be self-evident principles when virtually all Aristotle's predecessors, at least the more illustrious, agreed upon their opposites. However, making use of this opportunity, I shall devote a chapter later to the self-evident proposition.⁹⁶ Moreover, students of philosophy should not let them get away with the verbiages behind which these incompetent resisters of the truth take shelter.

I adduce also an argument that seems probable, but perhaps I have given it before.⁹⁷ (Then [see] the passage marked in the first prologue;⁹⁸ then the paragraph [from] "If these arguments" down to "I adduce also";⁹⁹ and afterwards the passage "These arguments, then . . .")¹⁰⁰ How much will they be worth? If everyone naturally desires something and, not having it, does not rest and, indeed, finds his existence somewhat unsatisfying, as it were, [that thing] exists. But everyone desires his own eternity. Therefore, etc. The major premise seems known because such a universal desire in nature seems not in vain; otherwise the disposition of the universe would seem unfitting because there would be a universal desire for something that will never exist. The minor premise we experience in ourselves. For everyone wants his own eternity and naturally tends towards it. Thus, if you set aside all positive law and declare to the generality of men that they will cease to exist, like horses that they think cease to exist absolutely in the natural course of events, they will grow sad and think that they are left with only a conjurer's trick: Now it is, now it isn't ("or *i est, or n'i est une*").

Marginalia:
annot.
(Kalva)
specul.

These arguments, then, I have brought forward as probable arguments for the conclusion [that things are eternal]. It is certain that this conclusion cannot be proved by an explanation of the concepts of the terms of the conclusion (these means of proof are called formal causes, so than one who knows by them is said to know by means of a formal cause). Explain as much as you will, the explanation of the concepts will not provide you with either an affirmative or a negative conclusion. Therefore, in considering this matter, I had to resort to a final cause and show that it is better to say that things are eternal, and that greater perfection is thereby attributed to the universe. And, since that is not impossible, it should be stated; at least it deserves more assent than its opposite.

These assertions are made in conformity with the natural appearances in which we are now involved. I know, indeed, that the truth is, and that the Catholic faith holds, that not all things are eternal, nor do I seem to contradict this, because I am saying only that this conclusion

⁹⁶ This promise is not carried out. 234-33 ⁹⁹ Page 203.

⁹⁷ Page 193.

¹⁰⁰ Page 204.

⁹⁸ The passage is not marked in the extant manuscript.

* → If these arguments should not be found altogether conclusive, yet the position taken is probable, and more probable than the arguments for the opposite conclusion. For, if those who hold opposite conclusions have arguments, let them declare them; and let the lovers of truth make a comparison between [the two positions]; and I believe that to anyone not inclined in favor of one side rather than the other the degree of probability will appear higher in the arguments I have given. I speak in this way because, in the books of others, I have seen in favor of recondite conclusions few arguments to which I would not know how to give probable replies. If they say that I deny self-evident principles, it is amazing how they express such falsehoods openly, for they cannot do so without lying. Has it not, indeed, been adequately shown above that, when blackness takes over, to say that whiteness does not exist is neither a principle known from its terms nor something that we initially experience in ourselves? It is also amazing how they

⁹⁵ *De Anima*, II, comm. 34.

is more probable than its opposite with respect to the natural appearances in which we are now involved.

From this conclusion, indeed, it can be concluded that the assertions of Aristotle in various places are false, and sometimes in certain places there is only fiction. For what he says about prime matter is neither relevant nor true, because his basis in that investigation is that things pass from being to non-being, and vice versa. Observe that Aristotle has not at all removed the reason for the ancients' hesitation. They did not see that it was in some way necessary to say that, for something to be generated it would receive being after non-being, or that for it to be destroyed it would receive non-being after being. For, in their view, when something is said to decay, there seems to be a certain withdrawal of atomic particles; when it is generated, there is a gain of others in addition. So they said that nothing decays into non-being, nor is anything generated from non-being, as is reported in Book 1 of the *Physics* and Book 1 of *On Generation*.¹⁰¹ This objection Aristotle in no wise removed. It was, no doubt, difficult for them to imagine how something which previously would have had no being at all could come into being. Aristotle says here that, though there is not a being actually, yet there is a being potentially in the prime matter. Granted that on this assumption there seems to be something to receive that form if it is produced, nevertheless it is still not apparent how that can be a being which previously was not a being at all. Also, many things which he says about generation have been invalidated. Also, when he says that there is no movement towards substance, but towards other things,¹⁰² this similarly has been removed by the foregoing discussion, because, as was said above,¹⁰³ there is only local movement, though it may be allotted different names.

Likewise, on the basis of what has been said, it is clear what must be said about many statements which have been unintelligible. It was asserted that an accident inheres in a subject,¹⁰⁴ but the mode of inherence is not clear because it cannot be posited to be like the inherence of skin in the bones. This gave rise to many difficulties: for example, whether inherence concerns the accident's substance. On the basis of the foregoing discussion it might be said that these accidents are only certain atomic particles, and that they are not in the subject except as a part in the whole, but a part, one must understand, that is essential and necessary to the whole. Still more can these difficulties be stated about the substance of the subject. Upon the departure of these atoms [in the substance], what is called the functioning of the

thing, and the movement which previously appeared in the thing, cease to appear. Upon the departure of the other atoms they do not go away. These ought more properly to be called accidentals of the subject; yet they, too, are as a part in a whole.

Likewise, the irrelevance is evident of the debate whether form or matter is the whole essence of a composite,¹⁰⁵ or whether form is the essential and primary term of generation.¹⁰⁶ Likewise, there is evident the falsity or irrelevance of many propositions long employed by some as of prime significance: for example, that every form in matter is subject to decay¹⁰⁷ (unless by matter you mean the atomic particles in flux). (A heavenly body is not composed of atomic particles in flux, and is therefore perpetual.) Likewise, there ceases the dispute whether privation is an essential principle of natural things;¹⁰⁸ likewise, whether a composite is distinct from form and matter taken together;¹⁰⁹ likewise, whether the potentialities of matter are infinite.¹¹⁰ In short, very many difficulties, even impossible of solution, befall those holding Aristotle's principles, but will be of no concern to those who will not posit the principle about the decay of things, on which Aristotle based himself. Arguments could be formed against those men out of all the difficulties besetting them.

Likewise, on the basis of what has been said, it can easily be seen what could be said if the heavenly bodies to whose movements these lower bodies accommodate themselves at some time return to the same place they are in now. It can be said that the same individual which now exists will exist again at some time. For, according to the proposed conclusion, all atomic particles of which things are composed survive, and so, once they are assembled, the individual will be numerically the same as before.

If the question is raised whether the atoms are of the same kind or are of different kinds, one must say, of different kinds. But the means of proving the difference of kinds will perhaps become apparent later.¹¹¹

What must be said about the acts of our soul? Certainly we have so little knowledge here that there is no question about them which the doctors can settle. We have no sure definition (for example, of what cognition is), which ought to have been the means of demonstration in the aforesaid problems. Nevertheless, we can say that it can be

¹⁰¹ *Physics*, I, 4; 187a30. *On Generation*, I, 1; 314a7 ff.

¹⁰² *Physics*, V, 1; 225b5 ff.

¹⁰³ Page 200.

¹⁰⁴ Averroes, *Metaphysics*, VII, comm. 18.

¹⁰⁵ Averroes, *Physics*, II, comm. 31.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I, comm. 64 ff.

¹⁰⁷ A widely held doctrine.

¹⁰⁸ Siger of Brabant, *Questions sur la Physique d'Aristote*, lib. I, q. 31 (Louvain, 1941) p. 65.

¹⁰⁹ Siger of Brabant, *Questions sur la Métaphysique*, lib. VII, q. 12 (Louvain, 1948) p. 375.

¹¹⁰ Siger of Brabant, *Questions sur la Physique d'Aristote*, lib. I, q. 40 (Louvain, 1941) p. 80.

¹¹¹ This is not treated.

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maintained as a probability, and that it is probable, that the acts of our soul are eternal, by recapitulating some of the previous statements above:¹¹² "Every perfect whole requires that its parts exist, just as, in their way, these material beings do. In them (at least in the case of absolutely permanent beings) nothing is new. Nevertheless, through local movement a particular thing is at some time present to someone to whom previously it was not present. So, through spiritual movement, [the same thing happens] there, that is, in our soul." This is rendered intelligible by considering some things concerning the senses, which our opponents admit, for example, that species multiply themselves across the whole intervening space right up to the [sense] organ. If you understand this, you will understand my position, or be well enough prepared to understand it.

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If this conclusion is true, it will dispose of almost all of Book 3 of Aristotle's *On the Soul*, which gives rise to insoluble difficulties, all providing arguments against those who posit such things. We are also freed from the dispute about the agent intellect and the possible intellect.¹¹³ There will still be left many matters for consideration, for example, whether the soul can have many intelligibles in act (as they are called) at the same time. One must consider, also, the connection of one intelligible to another, the difference between them, and the relationship they have to [their] objects. Yet one must know that the grouping of such spiritual atomic beings sometimes turns out inharmonious, sometimes harmonious. Just as external material things, because of disharmony or harmony in the grouping, are said sometimes to be monstrosities, sometimes to be well put together, so in [the case of] the soul an inharmonious grouping is called a false composition, a harmonious one ([i.e.,] when it is properly related to what is in reality outside) a true composition.

One must consider, also, the differences between cognition, composition, judgment, assent, willing, not willing, and so on; also, whether there is a distinction between the concept and the appearance of a thing; also, in what way we are to number those beings called acts of understanding, whether according to the natures proper to the species or according to the number of subjects. All these matters are not yet clarified by what has been written above.

Returning to the matter in hand, it could be said that the intellectual act now present to me will later be present to another subject, and so on forever. When in my youth I first heard Book 3 of *On the Soul*, it occurred to me, supposing the Commentator's opinion that the intellect is numerically one in all men,¹¹⁴ to say instead (see how easy the

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substitution is) that understanding can be called eternal. According to him, although the intellect is one as regards Socrates and Plato, yet Socrates does not always understand when Plato does; although the intellectual act is in the intellect which belongs to him he understands only when the intellect is joined to him¹¹⁵ (this [being joined] depends upon an image). Now, I, too, would say that Socrates understands by an act of understanding which is eternally in the possible intellect, and when the possible intellect actually possesses the same form as is in the image actually existing in his cognitive power. The argument would be as follows: "If understanding were posited to be subject to decay, the reason would be because man sometimes understands and sometimes does not. But this gives no difficulty because, even though an act of understanding is in the intellect, he does not understand [with it] because it does not have the same form as in his image." ← *

¹¹² Page 202.

¹¹³ *On the Soul*, III, 5.

¹¹⁴ III, comm. 5.

Now, as for acts of the soul, in a special treatise on the soul³³ we shall investigate more closely whether there is one intellect for all men and, if so, whether there is numerically one act of understanding, or more; and so on concerning some other matters. But I do not want at the moment to take much trouble to remove all doubts arising about the proposed conclusion. I hope that somewhere else I shall have need to speak again about this matter; and should there be no need, I shall write pertinent special treatises.

It should be noted that I said before³⁴ that when a thing is said to be in the process of dissolution, this is nothing but the separation of the particles which are dispersing and parting. Although this is clear enough in some cases, still it is not in all cases so clear to the senses as it is when grain is separated from chaff.

Now, one should know that there are some men who are willing to accept only those propositions that come into sense experience. Thus, when it is said that a whiteness is disintegrating, if they saw that minute whitenesses, like mustard seeds, were separating, they would then believe the statement. Such men are always asking "How is this?" and are unwilling to believe unless a man gives a sense demonstration of it. Nevertheless, not all truths are so demonstrable by us. Thus some men, by abstraction and analysis, see many things which these fellows never see, and are well aware that not all things are of such a nature as to come in this way into sense experience.

Now, use your imagination, and you will have something like the dispute in which men are now involved. In some country everyone is blind from birth. Some among them are eager for knowledge and aspire after truth. Sooner or later one [of these] will say: "You see,

³⁰ *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX, 4; 1166a1 ff.
³¹ *Nicomachean Ethics*, III, 6; 1115a 33.

³² These last three words are quoted from page 203. The prologue was written after the treatise proper.

³³ Page 253.

³⁴ Page 187.

sirs, how we cannot walk straight along our way, but rather we frequently fall into holes. But I do not believe that the whole human race is under such a handicap, for the natural desire that we have to walk straight is not frustrated in the whole race. So I believe that there are some men who are endowed with a faculty for setting themselves straight."

Another will say: "Your supposition goes right against experience. What would that faculty be? Not intellect, for we have that, and we still do not walk straight. Not taste, not smell—these senses effect nothing."

And indeed, through his metaphysical argument based on natural desire, he will not be able to make the other assent to what he says because he will not be able to make something appear to his senses. He could not do this unless he made him see, thus bestowing on him the power of sight. Nevertheless, he himself will have certitude through his metaphysical argument, and he will know that many things can exist which are not naturally fitted to reach their senses; at least there is no incompatibility [here].

So I have here arguments probable enough to conclude that the conclusion about the eternity of things is probable. Some perhaps will withhold belief because I cannot show that those minute whitenesses come and go like seeds; but that is no reason for a denial. They will perhaps make the mistake of saying that I am denying what is self-evident, as that ignorant blind man would say to his knowledgeable fellow. Let these men take note that there are many things which are not naturally evident to sense. Thus, as perhaps will be said later in the treatise on indivisibles,³⁵ in a clock there is a certain wheel that moves, but, no matter how fixedly one watches it, he would not see it move. Similarly, the faster an arrow moves in the air, the less its movement is seen. And so, it seems, its motion could be accelerated so much that it would not be evident. For boys play with certain toys, like a top, or a hoop with or without a string; and, the faster these move, the less they are said to move, to the point that, when one of them is moving very fast, it seems that it is at rest, and the boys say that it is sleeping.

This also ought to carry special weight because, according to those who hold Aristotle's conclusions, there are many things which cannot be readily imagined at first sight; nevertheless men because of Aristotle's pronouncements (or, let us say, giving them more credit, because of reasons which they have not known how to fathom) have ended by scorning imagination and clinging to reason. They say,

indeed, that, if there is a mountain visible twenty leagues away, this is because it causes certain realities which they call "species." These multiply themselves through the whole intervening distance, so that they are infinite in number and [can be produced] an infinite number of times; and thus they go on multiplying until they reach the sight. And the whole process takes place in an instant. In sound the production is successive and yet it seems to happen suddenly. They also posit a memory which retains the forms of non-sensory concepts which sometimes move [the memory] and sometimes do not; and many such things. 19

Now, for our part, we do not set down that some such things [as species] are caused by objects from scratch. We simply say that, when an object is present to the vision, and the eye is open, etc. (understand that these are simultaneous), some reality is now present to the soul which previously was not present [to it], though it existed. Nor do we say that particular atoms are released, but just that, as if by some special motion,³⁶ what is there imagined is sometimes present to this thing, sometimes not. And perhaps, if God grants, I shall compose a special treatise on the soul, where more will be seen about these matters. And so we shall have said that things which are called permanent are eternal. ("Now, if the . . . , etc.")³⁷

³⁵ Page 196.

Now, if the problem about movement were settled, and it were shown that movement is not distinguished from the movable object, as far as what is outside the intellect is concerned, and that relationships are not distinguished from their terms, it could be universally concluded as probable that all things are eternal. But I want to defer these matters until I have treated of indivisibles, because some of the points to be raised about them will prepare us for the question of movement.

← #

If things are posited to be eternal, as above, it will not be clear how the worth of one thing over another can be proven; for it will not be proven from the efficient causality required to produce some new being. It is true that a difficulty also arises for those who posit generation and corruption, according to the mind of Aristotle. For, according to this, the conclusion seems to be that the generative power in man would be nobler than the active intellectual power, since every active power whose effect is nobler seems to be nobler. Now, this is the case; the effect of [the generative power] is a substance; the effect of [the intellectual power] is an accident.³⁶ But, according to Aristotle, every substance is nobler than any accident.³⁷ From this, in conjunction with the other points set down above, the argument could be derived that natural things are eternal, because otherwise you would be left with the absurdity that the generative power would be nobler than the active intellectual power.

Likewise, according to them the argument of efficient causality does not suffice [to prove nobility] because God is the noblest of

³⁶ See pages 205 and 225.
³⁷ A reference to page 206.

³⁸ *Metaphysics*, IV, 2; 1003b17. Averroes, *De Anima*, II, comm. 2, in *Averroes . . . Commentarium . . . in . . . De Anima . . .* (Cambridge, Mass., 1953).

beings, and yet according to them, several of them at least, he is the efficient cause of nothing according to its natural appearances.

Likewise, the rank of individual seems nobler than the specific nature, since it is later in generation, and things which are thus later³⁹ in generation seem to be prior in perfection, as Aristotle seems to say in Book 8 of the *Physics*;⁴⁰ and yet it does not seem to have any efficient causality.

Likewise, the receiving of some quality or accident, whatever it may be, does not seem to be a sufficient argument [to prove nobility] because every agent is nobler than the recipient [of an action] (*On the Soul*).⁴¹ Therefore they encounter a difficulty in solving that problem with certainty.

In keeping with the thought stated above about the eternity of things, it might conjecturally be said that, just as in the case of taste that flavor is called better which is more attractive to the taste, and in the case of vision that color, so in the case of the intellect that being seems nobler and more perfect which pleases it more and in which it naturally delights more, or which gives itself greater pleasure because of its nature. Now if you compare a man to an ass or a horse, and a horse to a stone, the one has a natural satisfaction and pleasure in being this rather than that.

As a man knows that somehow the likenesses of all things come to him, so he knows that somehow he seems to be all things. And, as it is in natural sense-objects, that things move towards things of the same nature, as fire to the fire in the concave part of the moon's orb, and earth towards the centre, so it does not seem that those beings which thus come to the soul would come except because of a certain sameness of nature. This seems to give evidence about nobility and perfection. That capacity does not seem to be in the stone, for which reason there are no indications by which we might know it is in it. Therefore man is nobler and more perfect than a stone. I have spoken about sameness in nature; what I have said, I believe to be true; and so the person who speaks about the earth so that paltry ideas come to men's souls seems in some fashion himself to have a soul of the same nature, and therefore paltry.

Concerning the heavenly bodies, with respect to shape, quantity, motion, light, and that change in beings which seems to be a consequence of changes of the heavenly bodies, we conjecture that there is nobility there, and so they give us much pleasure; and we conjecture that they would be more pleasing and satisfying if we knew

³⁹ Read *posteriora* for *posterior* in line 27.

⁴⁰ 261a13.

⁴¹ III, 5; 430a18.

everything in them. But in this case I do not see that demonstrative reasons are possible. Nevertheless, what has been said is sufficient to answer the question.

Therefore, things are eternal. Indeed, this can be further proved as follows: "Nothing should be called absolutely false which binds together the whole multitude of men with a view to communal actions and generally to the goal of the whole human race; for this arrangement of the universe would not seem to be fitting or right. But all men, of whatever sect they be, unite in good works because of their belief in eternity; therefore this [belief] ought not to be called absolutely and altogether false."

But now we encounter two ways of speaking. One would say that [things] pass over to non-being and later return. And, though this way would be, absolutely speaking, closer to the truth, yet the opposite is said to have been the mind of Aristotle, for in Book 5 of the *Physics* he says: "Things whose substance perishes do not return numerically the same."⁴² The second way encountered would deny a transfer to non-being, and here, as is certain, the proposition [that things are eternal] would be conceded.

But against this conclusion about the eternity of things there arises a difficult argument. When a man throws a stone, there exists in the stone, which moves when the man's hand leaves it, either something which did not exist previously (and there [you have] the contention, it seems) or nothing (which cannot be asserted because the indivisibles which are in the stone naturally move downward).

It can be answered that there is nothing there which did not exist previously. This is Plato's teaching, as reported by the commentator Averroes in Book 4 of the *Physics*.⁴³ According to Plato, the motion of the stone is produced because the hand moves and the stone yields to it, part of the air yields to the stone, that part of the air is supplanted by another part which moves the projectile; and this continues to some point determined by the amount of the air which first yielded or by its motion in a particular pattern. Or it might be said that there is present in the stone something that was not present before, but yet existed, just as according to absolute truth and the Catholic faith there are some things, angels for example, who do not have a being circumscribed in space but only a determined location; that is, they are present in one place in such a way as not [to be present] in another.

⁴² V, 4; 228a3 ff.

⁴³ IV, comm. 68; in *Aristotelis Opera cum Averrois Commentariis* (Ven-

ice, 1562-74) vol. IV. The reference is to Plato, *Timaeus*, 79.

The principal conclusion is further proved as follows: "A thing ought not to be posited to endure in diminished being rather than in absolute being, but rather the other way round, since absolute being is more in keeping with the intent of nature. But, when Socrates is said to be decayed, he still endures materially in diminished being, for example, in memory. Therefore, etc."

Likewise I raise an argument which perhaps will be shown not to be valid. It would follow that, in the case of a whiteness which we see, we would not be certain that it would have the same identity now as before, because it is not sufficient to argue that the present whiteness and the former whiteness are completely united in sense experience. Now, according to [the arguments] men use, this is not sufficient because, if I take two equal whitenesses, Socrates' whiteness and Plato's whiteness, these are completely united in sense experience and yet are not simply one whiteness, as [men] admit. Nor is identity of site or place sufficient, because in numerically the same place different things can succeed one another. By such inference I do not see that there could be another argument except by reasoning [this way]: "It was previously, therefore it is now, and so it has the same identity now as previously." And this reasoning would be proved through the arguments adduced above for the eternity of things: "Every part of a whole that is always perfect to the same extent always exists, etc."⁴⁴

And let no one think it ridiculous to make use of the arguments adduced above⁴⁵ concerning the eternity of things. For they are metaphysical, and such are most certain, as Aristotle says in the preface to the *Metaphysics*.⁴⁶ (Not only, as the expositors say, are they certain from the nature of the matter, but also as regards us, if there were someone naturally fitted to use them.) Hence they depend upon propositions which are not received by sense except incidentally.

Moreover, if things passed from non-being to being, it would follow that there would have to be something to act as subject (which would be matter), and something which would be form in the being; for such is Aristotle's description of generation.⁴⁷ But there is no necessity for matter to exist. For this [necessity] would result chiefly from two arguments. The first would be Aristotle's,⁴⁸ as it seems: "A substantial change is comparable to an accidental change, but in the latter there must be something acting as subject to the termini of the change. For example, if something changes from whiteness to blackness, there is given a surface which acts as subject to both white-

⁴⁴ Pages 186.

⁴⁵ Pages 186 ff.

⁴⁶ I, 2; 982b2.

⁴⁷ *Physics*, I, 7; 190b1 ff.

⁴⁸ *Physics*, I, 7; 190a33 ff.

ness and blackness." But, admitting that in accidental change a subject is necessary, this argument requires the positing of matter only because accidents, according to Aristotle,⁴⁹ are beings only in a relative sense, so that they can have no independent existence. It does not follow from this that the same holds true in substantial generation. For Aristotle also, in Book 7 of the *Metaphysics*,⁵⁰ seems to mean that accidents are beings only because they belong to a being.

The other argument in proof of prime matter seems to be the Commentator's.⁵¹ If there were no prime matter, one of two things would follow: either [something] would be changed without change, or the change would be based upon non-being. Now, either there is change or there is not. If there is not, and it is certain that something is changed from non-being to being, then it will have been changed without change. If there is change, then it has as subject either non-being (and thus [you have] another unsuitability) or the *terminus a quo* or the *terminus ad quem* (and each is false because these are the limits of the change). Therefore [there is] something besides these, and that is called matter or subject.

It is certain that to those who posit the eternity of things this argument proves nothing. It assumes as known that something is being changed from non-being to being, which would be denied it. Nevertheless, supposing that I posited generation and corruption in things, as men generally do, I would still not be positing prime matter. I would reply to the argument with the premise that by this statement "This being is being changed in substance" I understand merely "This being is, and previously it was not." Nor do I mean therein something other than non-being and being; or, if something, I would mean a relationship founded in being. If you should reply, "This means that being is acquired through change," I would say, "If this is true, it ought to be understood so as to mean: 'A being which is changed is and previously it was not.'"

And [now] for the replies. Since he who says "This being is being changed" seems always to understand something by way of subject, I would say: "Remove that verb 'is changed', and substitute all the appearances, and see if from them a subject is necessarily inferred." According to [my opponents] the appearances are: a thing is which previously was not, or a thing is not which previously was. According to them this is known or, more truly, inferred. But, now, on the basis of these propositions a subject would never be inferred. If you say, "The ancients agreed that nothing arises from nothing,"⁵² I should

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ VII, 1; 1028a10 ff.

⁵¹ Averroes, *Physics*, I, comm. 68.

⁵² Aristotle, *Physics*, I, 4; 187a27.

reply: "If by this proposition the ancients meant to denote the natural order which exists among beings (for when one being is generated, another decays, and so nothing is generated without being preceded by something to which the emergent being had a natural ordering in its emerging), then their meaning would be true on that interpretation. But, if by the aforementioned proposition they meant something else, they would be contradicted." So, granted that I posited generation and corruption in things as is commonly done, yet I would not posit prime matter, and I used to say so before there occurred to me the conclusion about the eternity of things.

Concerning what has been said before, a doubt is raised by recalling a certain argument previously touched upon to some extent, namely, that it seems that eternity cannot be demonstrated from the concept of plurality, since there are in nature as many things as are possible (as was said above),⁵³ but corruptible things are possible (as it seems and as was asserted above).⁵⁴ So one might argue as follows: "Just as the existence of an individual object is possible in nature so is that of its equal. But neither will exist at the same time [as the other] because the other would be superfluous. Therefore, they will exist in succession. In this way the universe will remain always perfect to the same extent, and it is better thus by substitutions in that one may posit as large a plurality as is possible."

In this way they could answer the argument I gave above⁵⁵ for the eternity of things, for it is known, through the reasoning given, that some things are corruptible because they pass into non-being. Therefore, either [the corruptible things] are those things which are always in evidence (which is false and contradicts sense experience) or they are those things which are not always in evidence. And then either they have non-being when they are in evidence (which is against sense experience) or they have non-being when they are not in evidence (and this would be the contention).

To this argument, which seems to do away with the eternity of things, I have a reply. When it is said that one must posit a plurality, I am ready to agree, although it ought not to be posited unnecessarily, as they themselves admit.⁵⁶ But I say that eternity does not seem to do away with plurality because, though you imagine as many things as you like, they can still be eternal. Concerning this point, indeed, it was objected that we [can] imagine some individual equal [to another]. But here I say that plurality ought not to be posited except to reveal the First Being. Now, since the other is altogether

⁵³ Page 187.

⁵⁴ Page 188.

⁵⁵ Page 186.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *On the Parts of Animals*, III, 4; 665b15.

equal, they are identical in relation to the First Being; and so to posit corruption would be pointless. Likewise, one individual object does not exclude another. If you say it does, this is only because the second would be superfluous and so the existence of one is as good as if there were a pair of things.

It was argued that it seems that man's natural desire for eternity is not in vain.⁵⁷ But a counter-argument is raised, first, because we see that many things are in vain. For example, someone has a natural desire to be somewhere and yet he will never be there. This is no obstacle; nay, rather it seems to confirm the proposition. That natural desire is a thing that will always be, and, though the journey to a particular thing may not follow now, it will follow on another occasion. So even now [the desire] is not in vain.

Therefore you must know that on this subject I picture [the situation] as follows. Each thing is in the first place intended by nature for its own sake, so that each thing has, so to speak, its own divinity and its own goodness, and it is for this that it is intended by nature in the first place. In the second place, as regards a secondary intention, a connexion is found in some way among beings so that one is for the sake of another. Now, then, it would seem unfitting for the secondary purpose of the thing never to be achieved. But, if at some time it is not achieved, [that] does not seem unfitting, because the first purpose for which it was intended by nature remains. This could be said here. Hence that desire is something which at some time will be followed by movement towards Notre Dame.

Some, however, from the Rue Fouarre,⁵⁸ might perhaps want to make a different rejoinder to the argument given. When it is said "Then the natural desire would be in vain," they might say: "Not so, for men achieve their purpose. They contemplate eternity, for they have it in the intellectual soul, which Aristotle⁵⁹ (as they claim for themselves) posited as eternal." But this does not hold good because not only do men desire eternity, but they desire it in such a way that each desires to achieve it in a manner proper to himself.⁶⁰ But according to them the intellectual soul is common, so as to be numerically one in all men.⁶¹

But a doubt is raised over the statement that the natural desire to go to Notre Dame (and in general with regard to other acts of the soul)⁶² is present now to one individual and now to another. There-

⁵⁷ Page 203.

⁵⁸ The University of Paris was located there.

⁵⁹ *On the Soul* III, 5; 430a22.

⁶⁰ For *alio* in line 9 read *modo*.

⁶¹ This was taught by Averroists, of whom there were many at Paris. See E. Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1954) pp. 387-402, 521-527.

⁶² Page 205.

fore, let us determine that mode of presence. My opinion is that that mode cannot easily be explained or determined. But this [difficulty] is not peculiar to the one who posits eternity in things, but happens to others also. For it is not evident, if the intellect is numerically one in all men, what mode of presence it has with respect to each individual. Also—and this seems better known—it is not evident what is meant by the statement "An accident inheres in a subject." Hence, it is true that the intellect somehow seems to abstract this concept of inherence from certain things, as when it says that skin inheres in the bones, and afterwards it applies [the concept] to accident and subject as if imagining that it belongs there, but the truth about the real situation is not evident. Similarly one does not posit the inherence of intelligence.

What, then, its mode of presence is in this world, it is not easy to say. Hence in some matters he have a concept, as it were, through a concept that a thing is or if it is, but do not have a concept of its essence or properties. It would be like a blind man's being told by a being that cannot lie (and the blind man would know this [veracity], as was said above)⁶³ that white is the most beautiful of colours, for example. The blind man would know this to be true, and yet would not know how to attach to his statement any meaning as regards essence or property. So in this case we satisfactorily conclude that the act of understanding is now present in this individual (indeed, it seems to be evident enough), and yet we cannot describe the presence.

Another argument for the eternity of things applies especially to those who posit a plurality of formal causes in the same subject.⁶⁴ For, according to them, when the whiteness in a wall is said to give place to blackness, it does not pass away insofar as what appears is concerned, because it does not appear except as regards something common to itself and to another whiteness equal to it (hence they are completely united in sense-experience). Now, insofar as it is the same as another whiteness, it does not pass away except as regards the singular [concerned], which is an extrinsic consideration. Therefore, since it does not pass away as regards the being which appeared—and it is not evident that it passes to non-being as regards other being—it seems that it does not pass to non-being in any way. It seems that those who posit a plurality of formal causes ought easily to be converted to a belief in eternity. For, according to them, when it is said "The whiteness which was in the wall is destroyed," one ought to say that nothing that was there has been destroyed, although nothing appears there of what appeared there previously. However, what ought to be said about this plurality of formal causes is not now among the matters falling within our scope.

⁶³ Page 184.

⁶⁴ The Scotists.

Nevertheless, incidentally, it seems to me that it may be more probable to say that in the whiteness of Socrates and the whiteness of Plato there is some one thing in reality itself, one thing which, isolated from anything subsequent to it, is of itself in no way differentiated in the two; and that I call the specific nature.

That this would be the case is shown. Granted that some devise many highly abstract arguments, I do not think that any is more probable than the following: "Things that are completely identified in sense experience and in the intellect have a real unity. For, where the intellect makes a discovery in reality so that it can point out that this [object] has two existences, it then says that there is plurality there. Where [it can point out that it has] only one, there it must assert unity. Now, since they are completely one in sense experience and in the intellect, it is evident that the intellect cannot point out this thing twice without repetition. But this is the case. Assume two equal whitenesses. These are completely identified in sense experience and in the intellect."

But you will say: "The major premise is true if they are completely identified in sense experience and in the intellect so that the intellect has neither an *a priori* nor an *a posteriori* means of positing a difference. But this is not the case here; on the contrary, the intellect posits a difference on the basis of different locations. For it is evident to the intellect that one thing cannot be in several places at the same time."

I retort with a question about the major premise which we assumed before, namely, that what are in themselves completely identified in sense experience and in the intellect are in some way one thing in reality itself. Either this assumed [premise] is necessarily true, or it can be untrue. If the first, the contention [is established], because you readily grant the minor premise. But, if the assumption can be untrue, then we shall have no certainty that something is the same now as previously, because unity in sense experience and in the intellect will be inconclusive. Unity of place is inconclusive because different things can succeed one another in the same place.

Also, no identity ought to be rejected except the one about which your argument draws a conclusion, arguing from the difference in location. But [this identity concerns] only a subject numerically one, or the formal constitution of a subject which is numerically one. It is true that such a thing cannot be in several places, but it is not true that the specific nature cannot.

But it seems that I shall prove not only identity as regards species between these whitenesses but an absolute identity, because the same

kind of argument proves that this whiteness is completely the same now as before. For it seems that the only way of showing this, as was said above, is that in sense experience and in the intellect it is exactly the same.⁶⁵ But this argument is inadequate to prove that a particular whiteness is completely the same now as before. Or we might say: "We have a way of proving identity, and because no way comes to mind of proving diversity, therefore we do not posit it." And then this falls short of full certainty.

Here, though, we do have a means of proving diversity, namely, [diversity] of location. Therefore we have proved identity in nature and diversity on the individual level. That level does not come as such into sense experience, for this whiteness is seen only according to something common to itself and another whiteness equal to it. Hence, concerning [individuality],⁶⁶ we have, as it were, a concept that it is, but we do not have a concept of its essence or a concept of its properties, as was said above, in the case of the blind man.⁶⁷ If someone who could not lie (and this [veracity] were known to the blind man) were to address him and tell him that white is the most beautiful of colours, the blind man would have a concept of the fact but would not have a concept of its content. Hence, if he were asked "What do you mean?", he would say: "I don't know." Therefore, when it is asked whether [the individual], taken as such, is nobler than the nature, the question cannot be fully settled since the concept which ought to be the means of settling that question lies hidden. Nevertheless, whichever may be said, I do not see that it has impossible consequences. If it is said that [it is] nobler, on the other hand it seems not to have a function. [But] this is not an obstacle, because neither is the nobility of God dependent upon some [function] in Him different from Himself. Thus the [individual] itself sets an end, and its function is like an end because all that precedes it exists for it.

Were it said that it is less noble, there is no great difficulty in what was said concerning things later in generation being more perfect,⁶⁸ because in our view there is no generation. And, granted that there were, I do not see that that rule could be proved except by induction in some instances. And such inductions, when they are not confirmed by a cause, are like Priscian's argument: "If there is order in some, there is order in all." But enough of this for the present. Perhaps I shall discuss it at greater length elsewhere, for the confirming of this conclusion will prepare men's minds to a great extent for the conclusion

⁶⁵ Add *sit eadem* after *omnino* in line 32.

⁶⁶ Read *ipso* for *ipsa* in line 41.

⁶⁷ Pages 184 and 194.

⁶⁸ Page 190.

about eternity as related above.⁶⁹ For, when whiteness is said to give place to blackness, it does not cease appearing insofar as it was like some other whiteness. Nevertheless, previously nothing else appeared, and so as much appears now as did before.

[There may be] those who still have doubts about the argument first adduced for the eternity of things.⁷⁰ In its minor premise it was said that it does not follow that, if something does not appear, therefore it does not exist. It can be objected: "Then, if you are in one place,⁷¹ we would not be certain you were not in another, because it does not follow that, if you do not appear there, you do not exist." The answer, indeed, is that we shall be certain enough, because, while you exist as an individual, you are not elsewhere. For, when there are posited those things which an appearance will follow, the appearance is posited as it follows them. Now, this is the case, for we do not posit in the instance given indivisibles which are scattered, but we posit that they are gathered together so that they are⁷² here when the individual is here, and elsewhere [when he is elsewhere].

There is another reason, too. It is evident that you are now in one spot. Positing this, it is evident to the intellect that you are not elsewhere, because it is unintelligible that one individual would be simultaneously in several places. Therefore, according to this, it would not be proved by non-appearance.

But there is still a doubt from another source: according to this, it could not be proved that a moving object is not always in motion, because it will not follow that, because it does not appear to move, therefore it does not move, as in [the case of] a certain clock-wheel, which moves without appearing to. My answer is that you are speaking either of an individual sense object which moves in a straight line (and then it is known not to be moving because it appears here now as previously, and thus is here now as previously, and so is not elsewhere; as [was said] above)⁷³ or of one which moves with a circular movement (then it is not entirely certain whether it is moving unless this appears *post factum*; for example, if some mark were placed on that clock-wheel, then it would be evident that the mark had changed when movement had previously been present).

Now, an argument is raised against some bases of the above discussion. A basis was the concept of good. Now, it seems that it cannot provide a sure argument in things because men sometimes judge the false to be true. Thus a person's act is spoiled, and thus it would seem better for it not to exist. I say that, even though it is evil or imperfect

⁶⁹ Pages 186 ff.

⁷⁰ Pages 198 ff.

⁷¹ Omit *non* after *te* in line 18.

⁷² Add *sunt* after the first *nunc* in line 24.

⁷³ Page 191.

in some respect, yet absolutely it is better for it to be than not be. Consequent on that judgment are some good movements and some good operations, the existence of which is better than their nonexistence. Let that be our answer, even though it seem to destroy one of the arguments given above.⁷⁴ Hence, unless we wish to say that everything happens by chance, it seems to me true (according to⁷⁵ the imperfect concepts which we now use) that there is nothing in the universe whose existence is not better than its nonexistence. And perhaps he to whom the false judgment is attributed ought rather to wish to exist with this state of affairs than not exist at all, with no actions whatever.⁷⁶

Goets to
206.28
at #

⁷⁴ Page 186.

⁷⁵ Add *secundum* after *verum* in line 44.

⁷⁶ Add *non sit* after *quod* in line 48.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND PROLOGUE

To Master Odo,⁷⁷ and to all others who want to seek the truth and accept it.

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When my mind in its deliberations turned to thinking of those who call themselves searchers of truth as it is found in natural appearance, [I found] one matter among others which of itself is very displeasing to any lover of truth. For those who would claim to proceed discursively to diverse conclusions by [reasoning from] acts which we experience in ourselves and from principles self-evident from their terms agreed so much with the mob that their final solution in their investigations was in accord with the conclusions and words of Aristotle and his commentator Averroes. They used these as principles, and gave them such great credence that they considered it entirely irrational to argue against someone denying their conclusions, as though to argue against such a one were to argue with a half-wit. Lest I seem to seek glory in imputing falsity to these I have been speaking about so that thereby I might appear to the people as a corrector of errors, I adduce some examples and some probable conjectures which ought to suffice in this matter.

The first is this. When for the first time the doctors of this university heard that some people were asserting it as probable that material substance and quantity are not really distinct,⁷⁸ I heard from the elders among them that it was unfitting to argue against such people because they denied self-evident principles. But I have a query. They thought that to be a principle either simply because it was said by Aristotle—in which case the contention [is established]—or because the intellect grasps it naturally as soon as it understands the terms, or because it is something we experience within ourselves. But neither [of these last] can be said, because either there would then be no question about such a proposition or, if there were, its solution would be quite easy. And yet their master Aristotle, whom they wish to follow so closely, said that this is a very difficult problem, and accordingly lists it among the most difficult problems in Book 3 of his *Metaphysics*, near the beginning.⁷⁹

Briefly let the argument be as follows: "One should not think it irrational to argue with someone upholding the other side of a very difficult problem. It would not be called very difficult unless each part of it were difficult, either in itself or by reason of the arguments ap-

⁷⁷ This may be Gerard Odo. See *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, XXIV (1896) 349.

⁷⁸ William of Ockham, *Sentences*, lib. IV, q. 4 (Lyons, 1494-96) f. R viii ff.

⁷⁹ III, 1; 996a12 ff.

quantity
self